

Still as they run
They look behind,
And hear a voice
In every wind.

Thomas Gray

Rocks, rivers and lakes as smooth as glass...

So wrote William Wordsworth, a man completely familiar with Lakeland, this my chosen home for more than fifty years. Travelling south from this house, I come, in turn, to two stretches of water. First, I arrive at the estuary of the Duddon, a river that the poet fished and wrote about. Then, after a short journey, the upper reaches of Morecambe Bay come into view. Both are inlets of the sea and respond to the surges of the tides. At full tide, the expanses of water are extensive, and, if I travel on a sunny day, the sight is spectacular as the sun on the water gleams and sparkles at me when I look down from high points of my route. Low water creates equally stunning views as the sands and mud are exposed, and the water diverts into a multitude of channels, creeks and runnels.

Upon the walls of this room hang two paintings of the Duddon estuary, created by local artists now dead. The smaller is a keepsake given in memory of a friend on her death – a gentle view, done in Jane's unique style. The larger painting, by a man who was 'unique' in a variety of different ways, captures the scene with a wildfowler's eye and brush – a wild waterscape with scudding clouds, and the mud banks and saltings favoured by the wild geese and widgeon in the winter. Both estuaries have been a source of bounty for the hardy gatherers of food in times past. Even today, the sands of Morecambe Bay yield food for sale, and an income for the 'harvesters' of cockles and fluke – the local name for a variety of flatfish.

The saltings and sand look benign and approachable, especially in summer sun, and the maps show the red broken lines of the routes that would lead one from shore to opposite shore. Foolhardy would be the one who ventured out to gather a few cockles or tread for fluke. Reckless would be those who set out to cross the sands guided solely by the red lines on the map. The history of the area lists many who have perished in both types of venture. The summer just ending adds a father and son who were isolated by the sudden descent of a mist and drowned – just a short distance from, and in earshot of the shore, on what had been a bright sunny day.

The greatest source of danger is quicksand. Ever changing, apparent only to the trained eye, the sand first holds and then overwhelms. The cockle gatherers and fluke fishers are experienced and know the signs, although there are numerous records of horses, carts and tractors having been trapped and abandoned. As the numbers of experienced people diminish, their lore will be lost irretrievably. The guide who even yet escorts parties across the Bay sands is old and has no trainee to follow him – his experience of the daily changing conditions is irreplaceable.

At the outset, I linked the quicksand of the shore and the 'quicksand' of the mind, with the dire, lonely peril of the one who is lost in the latter. I offered myself as a guide on the merit of my experience of becoming trapped and nearly overwhelmed, but I am not immortal, and I am training no one. Sometimes I think that I am continuing to write in a

vain hope – a hope that my experiences will truly influence the way in which individuals classed as 'schizophrenic' are treated and actually helped to regain control of their minds and lives, and not just to be subdued by mind-altering drugs. In the medicine of the body, many practitioners have encountered personally some of the conditions that they set out to treat. Lucky is the one who, arriving at early adulthood, has not had a variety of infectious illnesses, fractures or sprains. Such is not the case in psychiatry or psychology – essentially the practitioners are theorists, never, except in a small minority of instances, having experienced the mental conditions that they yet feel competent to diagnose and treat.

As you read my accounts of the various ploys, I would ask you to recollect that I am, or have been, aware of them because I was aware and observant from the very beginning. Not having been made ill by the 'invasion', but, nevertheless, having experienced times of disturbance, I have been sensitive to all that has been worked within me, and have recorded much. As you read, then, I would ask you, further, to try to put yourself in the place of someone visiting his G.P. for the first time. Aware that all is not in control within mind and, or body, and yet not sufficiently articulate to be specific – does he end up with an anti-depressant or tranquilliser just to give the impression that something is being done? Should he return for a second consultation, he might not even see the same G.P. – but, by now, he has some sort of label.

In my own case, a non-nervous illness (*Cryptosporidia* infection) was misdiagnosed as an anxiety ailment, and I began taking Librium. After two years continuous use, an involuntary addict, and exhibiting many of the acknowledged side effects of the drug, I was referred to a Consultant Psychiatrist – who saw me as a 'garrulous hypochondriac' (albeit of above average intelligence!). Changing the Librium to Tryptizol overnight, and giving me 'cold turkey' in the process, my bizarre reactions were put down to an 'idiosyncratic reaction' to the replacement drug, not to the sudden withdrawal of Librium. In his next communication to my G.P., and discussing the hitherto unrecorded reactions, the Consultant writes - "The same quality of description is, alas, also seen in schizophrenic psychoses in this sort of person. I am beginning to lean towards the latter diagnosis although I have nothing definite to confirm it. Meanwhile, hedging my bets, I have put this man on Melleril 25 mgms. T.d.s..." Melleril is an 'anti-psychotic' drug, and has a large and frightening list of side effects, including 'drowsiness, apathy, pallor, nightmares, insomnia, depression, agitation...blurred vision, cardiovascular symptoms (assorted)...' - need I go on?

In the short space of time between 22nd November and the 7th December, I had progressed from having a mis-diagnosed 'anxiety state', to being a suspected 'schizophrenic psychotic'. In spite of that, and with no credible reason given, the Consultant (who admitted in correspondence to "...lacunae in my training...") yet prescribed Nardil – a potent anti-depressant, having the usual range of most undesirable side effects, among which are '...psychotic episodes with hypo-manic

behaviour, confusion and hallucinations...!' I will not continue; all of the heart-breaking details are covered in full at the beginning of my opus. I am reprising them here simply to make the point that a person can be made very ill as the result of wild and unstructured interventions. I would make the further point that *no intervention* other than understanding and support may be the best course of action for many who are experiencing non-specific mind disturbance.

It can be comparatively easy to describe the most overtly serious, threatening and obscene intrusions. Far more subtle and insidious – and arguably more effective in disrupting one's life and thought – is the intrusion that itself appears to be an extension of one's own thoughts. I have already written about the ambience that can be created in the moments of first consciousness after waking. Unless one has established a personal 'drill' aimed at excluding any responses that one may be tempted to make in one's mind, it is exceedingly difficult not to respond. The semi-automatic and instant reaction closely resembles the interchange that can take place between couples who have shared their lives for many years. A stage can be reached when it can appear *rude* not to respond in ones thoughts.

This ploy is one that frequently is used at the start of what promises to be a productive day in whatever activities one plans to be engaged. As one begins to address one's mind toward the first task, *they* will put forward a pressing alternative. Then, if that is rejected, another, and another, and so on, inducing a feeling of panic and the thought that nothing will be commenced, the whole lot aborted, and the day completely wasted.

In time, it will be realised that this particular ploy is often used, and used most effectively, when the meteorology is such that a woolly brain is being induced. By 'meteorology', I do not mean wet or dry, hot or cold, windy or still. Instead, I must refer you back to where I wrote about the Föhn wind and the effects that may be induced in sensitive individuals. I wrote that while we in Britain do not have named winds such as the Föhn, Chinook, Santa Ana and the rest, we do have movements of air across the country that can provoke reactions in people similar to those produced by the notorious winds. The property of these winds that is replicated in those that blow across Britain, is the excess of positive ions over the more desirable negative ones.

It is so relevant that one should consider the effects of all winds and other ambient influences that I believe it to be worth repeating the quotation from the book *The Ion Effect* that I included earlier:

"The search for information that led to this book actually began in 1970 as an attempt to prove to myself that I was neither a manic-depressive nor a hypochondriac. For ten years I had lived and worked in Geneva, and almost from the moment I moved there from New York I suffered totally inexplicable fits of anxiety, depression, physical illness, and the kind of bottomless despair that at times even led me to flirt with the idea of

suicide. Neither doctors nor a psychiatrist could explain what was happening to me, but when one said vaguely that it might be "something electrical" in the air of Geneva I seized upon it as a possible explanation and spent five years travelling through Europe, the Middle East, and North America meeting scientists and amassing an awesome pile of scientific literature.

I made three discoveries. The first was that in certain places at certain times – in Geneva, in a large part of Central Europe, in southern California, alongside the Rocky Mountains and in at least a dozen other parts of the world – the air becomes sick not because of the pollution we all know about, but because of imbalances in the natural electrical charge of the air..."

In archive material that I obtained from the *Boston Globe* newspaper, I found interesting corroborative comments:

Folklore has the so-called devil winds bringing out crazed behavior among Californians. In her essay collection "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," sixth-generation Californian, Joan Didion, calls the time of the Santa Anas "...the season of suicide and divorce and prickly dread, wherever the wind blows."

While Raymond Chandler wrote: "Meek little wives test the edge of the carving knife and study their husband's throats".

In the main, the winds across Britain do not blow for long periods at a time, certainly for insufficient time for them to acquire a name or a 'character'. It is undoubtedly one of the benefits of our rapidly changing weather pattern of which the majority are unaware. However, because the changes are so frequent, and because there is a lack of awareness about the *quality* of the winds, their effects upon the behaviour and mental health of individuals are largely ignored.

The wind most favoured by the originators of the ploy that I am describing comes as a mild, warm south westerly. It flows from the Azores 'high' and traverses many mid-Atlantic miles. Perhaps the most noticeable effect, and the one frequently remarked upon, is the ability that it has to activate every source of ache or neuralgia that exists in someone's body. (To anyone who doubts that the weather can induce such effects in people, I must refer to one of the many Websites devoted to weather, and to one that I use that shows a map of North America indicating where it is anticipated that individuals will suffer 'aches and pains'. The forecast is based on the predicted levels of temperature, humidity, wind chill and other factors, and divides the country into areas of anticipated severity.)

In the context of my ploy, it is the second effect that is most exploited by *them*. Unless one has identified the effects and consequence in oneself, it is difficult to envisage them in others. As I mentioned earlier, brains turn to cotton wool, the ability to think coherently vanishes, and a sensitive or vulnerable person is potentially at the 'mercy' of the

intruders. Into the mind that is made sluggish, inert or confused by such winds, *they* will introduce a controversial topic, a topic that is skilfully aimed at provoking one into response. Just as stupid and pointless domestic arguments can develop out of nothing, and go on and on with no resolution until one party recognises the futility and waste of time, so can the inner controversy. Looking back at the times when I have been drawn by *them* into such stupidity, I can recognise those occasions when it has happened and when I have been about to make something that requires precise measurement or neat fitting, and acknowledge the frequency of the times that the result has been a cock up. Either material has been wasted, or I have had to waste time in a 'rescue' operation. In both such cases, one can end up feeling exactly the same as I did when I had the 'know all' partner of the second marriage, who always seemed to be about when anything went wrong.

Dramatic images downloaded from NASA satellites have provided me with a wider understanding of the effects created by the next two winds. I have to emphasise that often it is not a 'wind' in the accepted sense, but rather an air movement or gentle breeze. The first of the two also arrives from the southwest, but has a different origin from the previous south-westerly. The drought-ridden regions of North Africa are shown from space, and from them huge dust clouds appear, clouds that then ride the air streams. From the Western Sahara, Morocco and Mauritania the clouds of dust stream out into the Atlantic where they are caught up in an air flow that skirts Iberia and France and floods over Britain. By virtue of its origins, the air has already been deprived of its negative ions, while many of the remainder attach themselves to dust particles and become ineffective.

There are a number of individuals who make regular contact with me and ask my advice about these phenomena. To a person, the comments describing the effects of this wind are the same. No longer are there neuralgic aches, but a feeling inside the head as if someone is trying to restructure it from within. Adding to the confusion that this can cause, eyes become difficult to focus and lose the cleansing effect of blinking, resulting in the effect of looking through a distorting glass. The inability to focus the eyes parallels the inability to focus the mind, a situation that is exploited by *them*. The day is often warm and the air can feel 'electric' as it might do prior to a thunderstorm, effects that are made worse when a person wears clothing that incorporates a high proportion of man-made fibres.

Even further confusion can be caused within locations such as a supermarket by the mass of fluorescent lighting and the electrical fields created by all of the display cabinets. The person who is already plagued by voices and presences can find himself harried and 'jostled' to such a degree that confusion can be piled on confusion and mistakes can be made that may result in accusation of shoplifting.

The air that makes up the third wind also has its origins over North Africa, but this time from the area of Libya. Satellite pictures show vast clouds of dust that delineate the course of the wind as it sweeps across the Mediterranean, over Italy, Greece and the Balkans, swings in a big arc across Central Europe, and arrives over the British Isles from the *southeast*. As this air passes over Austria, Switzerland and South Germany, it becomes the notorious Föhn wind with its destructive powers both to the physical landscape and to the human mind. Even as I write, (15.11.02), the European news bulletins show pictures of huge swathes of trees and mountainside homes, blown down, destroyed by the Föhn that is still blowing. The weather charts for the day illustrate dramatically the exact weather conditions that I am trying to describe. It is, however, the *electrical* properties of the wind that create its well-known and frequently acknowledged qualities. The effects that are created by these characteristics may be observed in Britain by certain sensitive individuals, although the consequences are markedly different between males and females. It would be invidious to identify any particular woman; instead, I will present a conglomerate of all observed behaviour. A loss of a sense of immediate reality is accompanied by a continuous tirade in which all of the partner's alleged defects and misdemeanours are meticulously rehearsed and added to. Depending upon the partner's response, the tirade is often the prelude to a physical attack.

The male might, in the meantime, have a type of headache that has a gnawing, aggravating effect, which may provoke either of two responses. In the first, he may simply endeavour to remove himself – a move that might further infuriate. In the second, he may respond in kind – either verbal or physical, with possibly devastating consequences. This is a situation that *they* seize upon and exploit with immense skill, stoking anger, 'feeding' the words that accompany it, and subliminally encouraging violence. I have noted reports of several spontaneous and seemingly inexplicable domestic killings that, weather wise, appear to fall into this category. One bizarre sequel to the whole sequence of events is that, assuming no actual physical damage, the female emerges from the conflict with, seemingly, no recollection of the events, or possibly exhibiting a slightly sheepish demeanour. The male, thankful that the storm has passed, usually, and wisely, lets it pass without comment.

In case anyone should suggest that I am presenting a fictional picture, let me assure you that female *animals* also exhibit odd and frequently observed behaviour when such a wind blows. This will be apparent to anyone who has ever kept mares. Mine used to live in a field that I can observe easily from my kitchen. She used to prance stiff legged, back and fore along the eastern boundary of the field, tail arched over her back, snorting and then backing into the wind and behaving exactly as if there was a stallion in the next field and she herself was in season. Quoting the poet Virgil when he wrote "The mares to the rugged rocks repair and with wide nostrils sniff the western air, when, wondrous to relate, the parent Wind, without the stallion propagates the kind"

illustrates one of the many primitive beliefs that foals were sired by the wind.

Female animals obviously experience interesting internal frissons. I have never been bold enough to enquire further about those experienced by the human female. Repeating what I wrote above, this behaviour and these reactions are understood and exploited fully by the elements that intrude into the bodies and minds of individuals, often with devastating effects upon the lives and behaviour of the latter. As I have written before, will write again, and will continue to write and declaim, one is dealing with 'beings' of inordinate intelligence, which understand and exploit many aspects of the human condition, for what purpose, one can only guess.

During the normal change of the seasons, the prevailing *courses* of the wind flow move north in the spring and back south in the autumn. These changing times coincide with some observed peaks in the behaviour of individuals with nervous and psychiatric conditions. A colleague obtained for me a graph that plotted psychiatric 'incidents' among a wide population of individuals who were under the charge of 'Care in the Community'. The graph showed two pronounced peaks – one in May-June, and the other in October-November, both of which coincide with the seasonal shifts of the air movements that I noted above. The peaks were also mirrored by those that appeared in a graph that recorded incidents of personal injury, possibly resulting from confusion and resulting accident, although it may be reasonable to suggest that some may have been inflicted by self or others.

Finally - and this really *is* a wind! From the east, emerging from a Scandinavian or Siberian 'high', usually in late February or early March, it arrives in Britain from across many frozen miles. Every drop of water has been frozen out of the air and every available particle of dust has been sucked up from the land. The possibility of any negative ions surviving in such an airflow is minute. More than that, the friction of the air over the frozen ground creates additional positive ions that add to those already present and combine to create a wind that is antagonistic to human mental well-being. My notes record many instances of the reactions of myself and others during these times – my own records showing many comments about the nature of the intrusions that I have experienced, and describing a number of the ploys that I am trying to illustrate. Incidentally, this is a wind that here has a name – possible just local to the area. In Kendal and district particularly, it is known as the 'Helm' wind, and is notorious because of its effect upon people in such ways as I am describing.

I make no apology for dealing at length with these causes and effects. Until there is a greater understanding of the electrical nature of living things and their interaction with their electrical ambience, many triggers of mental ill health will be ignored. Many researchers have recorded a variety of triggers and reactions within the field of body

function, but there appears not to be an appreciation and understanding of the need for the body and mind to be treated as an electrical totality, nor of its interaction with its *total* electrical environment. While not specific to my chief concern with the 'schizophrenic', let me consider someone who is manic-depressive. So manic-depressive that she is a 'world expert'. She is a professor of psychiatry in the United States whom I heard in a radio programme, together with her insistence that lithium, lithium, lithium was the only treatment for the condition. Following the broadcast, I obtained and read her book – mainly autobiography.

Spending most of her pre-teen years on the east coast of North America, she did not show any apparent signs of manic-depression until the family moved to Los Angeles, *home of the Santa Ana wind*. She spent one of her undergraduate years in St. Andrews, Scotland, with its robust North Sea climate – where she was not affected. In her immediate post-graduate years, two sabbaticals took her to London and Oxford, where again her problem diminished considerably. She had many desperate years coping with manic-depression and lithium, until her career took her once again to the east coast of the U.S., where her condition improved. Significantly, the life and career of her father disintegrated after the move to California – a career that had taken him to a number of locations worldwide with no apparent harm to his health.

There are aspects of manic-depression in certain individuals that parallel many peoples' conception of 'possession' by intrusive spirits. Harry, the former G.P. who used to stay with me, told me of many of his escapades undertaken when he had been 'manic'. They were so bizarre that they confounded the rational mind – and Harry's mind when *he* was rational. The thought of 'possession' never entered our discussions, but many of his remarks and descriptions unconsciously paraphrased the state. The word was actually used in connection with the behaviour of someone with whom I once had contact. An artist and sculptor, his appearance naked in church wielding a sword at the candles and panicking the congregation, earned him a period of 'sectioned' confinement. It was his partner, a sensitive and perceptive woman, who used the term and speculated about it.

Someone whom I had known for a number of years of struggle with this same distressing condition was a highly intelligent man who was establishing himself most successfully in his career. He had no need financially to shoplift; yet, in one strange aberration, he did and was caught. I am simply speculating, never having discussed the events with him, but it was so out of character that I find it easy to believe that he had been prompted in his mind to behave in that way.

If one stops to analyse the spontaneous behaviour involved in certain events, it is possible to speculate further that many who have no psychiatric problems nevertheless respond to an inexplicable prompting and behave out of character – often with unfortunate results, as happened to two men whom I know.

The first man worked near my house, and every day went home by the same route. Yet, one day, for no reason that he could afterwards identify, he chose an alternative route, met a speeding car on a narrow bend, crashed, was injured, and wrote off his car. The second normally cycled to his work. He is a man who is completely engrossed in what he does, and freely acknowledged that as soon as he got on his bike, his mind went into 'automatic' as he began to think ahead to the tasks that he knew were waiting for him. He rode a cycle with dropped handlebars, and I can just visualise him, head down, engrossed in his thoughts, as he powered along eager to get to work. One morning, for reasons that have since baffled him, he took his son's baseball cap from its hook on the back door and put it on to cycle. Riding along a fast straight stretch as he neared his work, vision limited by the peak of the cap, he suddenly found himself on the back seat of a stationary car, blood pouring from his face and neck, having entered the car through the rear window. The driver, being early for work, had parked and was reading his newspaper. My friend, also, cannot account for the sudden impulse that induced him to take the baseball cap. I have never suggested to him that he might have been prompted in his mind to do so, but, with my own experience of being aware of injections of thoughts into my own mind, I can believe that both men were incited by malevolent external intrusions.

Having arrived inside a car, albeit by an unconventional route, it will be profitable to stay there and analyse some of the simple, yet effective ploys that can be used to influence a driver. If you yourself are a driver, try to recall the instances when, having been driving for some time, suddenly your eyes seem to focus, and you say to yourself 'How did I get here?' Like my friend on his bike, you have been on automatic pilot. One part of your mind has been driving the car while the other has been – where? Only you can know – or perhaps you cannot recall. The mind, or the part of it that is not driving, has been in free-fall, possibly continuing the row that you have left behind at home; possibly ahead, mentally conversing with a difficult customer/boss; possibly – *anywhere!*

The mind in free-fall is easily entered and manipulated, and the isolation of the driver makes the process even easier. The resentment that has been simmering against someone, or possibly over an injustice, is suddenly switched on, and you are in the middle of an aggressive dialogue in your mind, unaware that it is being fuelled and fanned skilfully. Totally engrossed, back on automatic pilot, suddenly around the corner there is a badly parked vehicle, or a driver stupidly overtaking and on your side, or – any one of the possible driving hazards. It is a 'classic' ploy that can be triggered in any one of a number of situations, and not only when driving, and not only by resentment or dispute, for a salacious thought can be introduced just as easily, and stoked with recollections. Then, if you were guilty of doing something ill-judged or stupid yourself, even though there was no accident, a perception can be created around you similar to that that would exist if there was a back-seat driver actually in your car. You may find yourself feeling hangdog, head down, low

profile, as the nagging 'ambience' persists around you – and your driving may be affected and erratic.

Remaining with the car and driving, *they* will attempt to build a camaraderie, pretending to be, in my case, my father who taught me to drive. *They* will often insert thoughts and feelings about other road users and their styles of driving, all the time trying to develop reliance upon *them* and *their* opinions or advice. The relationship might develop to such a degree that a subliminal suggestion that it safe, say, to overtake is accepted. Often it *is* safe, but woe betide the one who relies unthinkingly upon this 'advice', for, with guard dropped and not taking normal precautions, the time will come when one has been 'set up', and the inevitable crash happens. Fortunately, I recognised the ploy for what it was before it could become effective, but recognition of this or any other ploy does not confer immunity from attack. There is only one safeguard, and that is constant vigilance.

The same ploy involving the building of confidence in the apparently inspirational source can be used in other situations in which the unwitting can be set up. The gambler can be fed impeccable advice, and, seemingly, every bet can be a winner, until, with confidence at its height and a belief in personal infallibility in place, 'all' is staked on a 'certainty' – and all is lost. Hounded by creditors, life in ruins, persecuted and tormented in the mind, suicide is often presented as the only escape – escape into what, one can only guess.

While one may be congratulating oneself on the recognition and avoidance of a particular ploy, there can 'appear', as at one's elbow, an entirely new character, representing the cynical, 'seen it all before' individual who attempts to build on the mood of self congratulation and tries to develop a fellowship. It is quite easy to fall into this trap and warm to the 'smooth', cynical recognition and association, just as in real life, one may warm to someone who can see through the deviousness of politicians and advertisers, for example. Many of the ploys and their variants are devices by means of which one unconsciously accepts a subliminal 'companion' and in doing so, indirectly, and ultimately completely, loses one's capacity for original thought and self-determination.

Always it is the solitary mind that is easily entered. The solitude does not have to be that of physical isolation. Many are intellectually isolated, but are, nonetheless, working in company with others. Someone whom I know well spends much time welding complex structures. Although he works in a busy workshop, nevertheless, with his welding mask down and his ear-protectors in place, he might as well be on Mars for all of the contact that he has with his mates. I have known him for over twenty years and have had many deep and long conversations with him, and never cease to marvel at the scope and intricacies of his thoughts. At times, I have been struck by the way in which some of the 'exchanges' within his mind when he is isolated resemble those of someone who, if they lost control, would be classed as schizophrenic.

Solitary, isolated, often for many hours at a time, are the artist and sculptor, the author and composer, and the solo performer. Many have acknowledged the existence of a 'muse', without whose presence they are unable to create their best work or even perform at all. (I have already mentioned *The Unknown Guest* by Brian Inglis, a book that explores this phenomenon). Many unconsciously accept the input of the muse into their work without specifically realising that there is an 'other' within their personal equation. The subtle intrusion, accepted and used, but not recognised for what it is, can often become a dominating presence, and eventually take over full control.

Two who owe much to acknowledged spiritual inspiration are Rosemary Brown and John Lill. The former received through direct 'dictation' within her mind, music that was alleged to come from deceased famous composers. A competent pianist, Ms. Brown wrote down music that has been assessed by many others who are experts in the field as being well beyond her undeveloped ability as a composer. I have just been re-reading the sleeve notes of a recording on which she plays music that she has received, allegedly from the specified composers. The sleeve has many comments from eminent people – performers and musicologists, and from Sir George Trevelyan, a man of acknowledged spirituality and insight who actually sat with her as she received and wrote down music. All recognize her honesty and integrity, while the specialists agree that the music could well pass for that of the designated composer.

I also have a recording of renowned concert pianist John Lill O.B.E., although it is not of his actual playing. My tape is of a broadcast programme in which he freely and lucidly describes his awareness from when he was as young as three – awareness of an inner compulsion to play the piano, and of an innate ability to play with a competence well beyond that of his age. My reason for recording the broadcast – of *Desert Island Discs* – was in expectation that Mr. Lill would describe what happened when he was in Moscow to compete for the Tchaikowsky prize – a prestigious accolade for pianists. His parents were not well off, and he desperately wanted to win in order to help them out of their poverty.

The evening before the competition, and while he was practicing, and in his own words: "The surprising thing was I had a very strong vision...and you could call it a ghost, but it was more real, and it said quite strongly and quite clearly 'You are going to get first prize'. Then I thought 'This has to be. If I *do* succeed and get first prize I shall have to reconsider this' - for it was such a strong material force. That has happened many times in my life, and when I am playing, there are times when I feel inspired – inspired means 'of the spirit' – and I have often seen myself playing from *outside* myself, and feeling disastrously reluctant to go back to that dank earth shell at the end of the concert. That to me is inspiration. It doesn't often happen, but when it does, you never forget."

"I saw a person in old clothing, smiling in a strange way – unmistakably Beethoven. I thought that I was imagining things, for I was working a bit hard at that time. But when the message came across that '...you would absolutely win first prize, and let that be a reminder that we are working through you...', it meant a lot to me...it was very strong thought transfer. The words weren't English, but the meaning of the thought transfer was unmistakable, and one of many I have received before from different sources ...and during concerts. It is often the case that I am talked to by other forces...(By other composers?) Yes, and by other people. It is not something unique; it is not just for you. It is like your (Sue Lawley's) own voice now going out over Radio 4 – you can be heard all over the world. It is not geographically confined – it is virtual spiritual help; it is always available; it is always there for all people."

(Inevitably, people will think that it is very mystical...)

"Yes, I have learned that you can't talk about it. It is a very personal, private thing. Although I have been given a great musical gift, my greatest gift is the evidence that I have had that there is no death; that the mind *does* continue; that the spiritual soul *does* carry on. I have learned that it is wrong to talk about it. The only way that I can prove the experiences that I have had is to do better what I have done before."

I would dearly like to be present as a fly on the wall if someone was to tell John Lill that he is deluded, hallucinating. Yet that is what happens to many other individuals, is it not? Not everyone has the standing and prowess of a world-renowned concert pianist. Not everyone is as articulate, nor yet has the understanding that his own personal experiences and convictions allowed him to achieve. Thus if someone describes visions, voices and presences – phenomena that are overwhelming and disturbing to them – what then? Do you recall something that I wrote much earlier? I described how a former parish priest would deliver homilies based upon the experiences of someone, undoubtedly saintly, who had achieved marvels at the behest of voices and visions, and yet how he inevitably concluded with "If any of *us* hear voices, we should consult a psychiatrist". I also described how someone had compared the visions and ecstasies of Teresa of Avila with those described in the diary of an anonymous female schizophrenic. If you can recollect, the descriptions provided by both women were virtually identical. Saint Teresa had the support of a religious community, and had spiritual advisors whom she consulted regularly if she had any doubts about the origins of the 'locutions', as she called them - doubts about whether they came from a desirable or undesirable spiritual source.

Many people accept without question the presence of an inner voice and do not find it disturbing. 'Everyone hears voices', said one friend when I described some of my own experiences. Another friend made an interesting remark after she had joined a prayer group into which I had introduced her. After several visits, she said 'Now I know to whom I have been talking in my mind all my life – it's God', and was delighted at her discovery. Yet another had been aware of voices and

visions or presences from the age of three, when she had 'seen' her deceased grandfather. This friend accepted without question, and, apparently without discernment, all that came from 'them'. I remember well an occasion when she stood in front of me and began 'They say...', and went on to describe what 'they' said about my inner state of mind – how my calm exterior supposedly hid an inner turmoil. The assessment was totally incorrect, and in my mind I was formulating words to describe what I thought of 'them' and their opinion, words that were far from complimentary. What surprised me was that 'they' did not appear to pick up this adverse commentary, and she went on at some length undeterred.

This particular friend worked untiringly through a variety of complementary therapies in her endeavours to alleviate suffering. However, she also gave 'readings' derived from 'them', and, no doubt, by virtue of her intrinsic personal goodness, the content would be accepted by the recipient without question, providing, as I have illustrated before, potentially life-changing influences. I know a number of individuals who 'channel' in addition to giving unstinted help to many people through the therapies that they practice. What alarms me, and especially so in the context of my writing and its attempts to describe the variety of ways in which vulnerable and 'accepting' individuals can be influenced, what alarms me is the way in which channellers appear to accept without question the 'source', the 'guide' and what is fed from them.

Referring back to my own development and enlightenment: Initially I had been led to believe that I had four attendant named 'guides', until, as I described subsequently, I was shown, and shown without equivocation, that henceforth *all* communication within my mind deriving from desirable sources would be entirely anonymous and not from any named and identifiable 'individual'. Harking back to those naïve beginnings, I cringe at the recollection of my supreme gullibility. Feeling the vibrant presence of 'an other' within me, and imbued with a strong sense of being 'chosen', I gushed out virtually any crap that was fed into my mind. That is now twenty years behind me, twenty years in which I have fought shy of passing on *anything* that has come spontaneously into my mind. In all of that time, there have been at most ten occasions when I have felt confident enough to tell a person what has come to me, and what seems to be directed to them. Two of the ten stand out in my memory. I have already described how Judith literally thumped me in the back as she urged me to tell her mother that, following her early death, she was now happy within her spiritual environment. On the other occasion, I was inspired with words and a healing touch that went to the core of a mother grieving so desperately for a daughter just in her twenties. Only a few days ago, I came across the letter that the mother subsequently wrote to me, asking me to recall what I had told her and what had so moved and comforted her, a letter that evoked so many poignant, yet happy memories.

The latter occasion was instantaneous and spontaneous. At all other times I have pondered at length before finally speaking. As I gained

experience and became aware of what was being attempted within my mind and thoughts, I recorded some of the different ploys. I have already described several: in this particular context, I wrote -

"When composing in my mind what I intend to say to someone, *they* will 'offer' a suitable word where an alternative exists; it is often the most obvious or best choice, but *they* will try to create the impression that it is *their* choice. This can lead to a situation or continuing state in which one becomes reliant on being fed the appropriate word or sequence. If one has not had cause to question the source, but indeed believes it to be 'genuine' and benevolent, one can end up waiting to be 'inspired' and believing that one is a 'chosen channel'. Indeed, when one is writing or speaking, possibly promoting an idea or cause, they will invade the mind and/or body, creating an impression of excitement and implying that one has been 'chosen' to channel words from an 'exalted' source. In the euphoria of believing oneself to be so chosen, it is possible to lose any critical or common sense analysis that one would normally apply, and to let oneself be used solely as a mouthpiece, often destroying one's credibility in the eyes of those whom one is trying to convince."

My brother, as I have mentioned, is an Anglican priest, though now on the point of retiring. He was ordained late in life, but from the time of his late teens, he has preached, and was often in demand in South Wales as a preacher. From the outset, my brother has always acknowledged that much that came into his mind at those times was by inspiration, but always knew that he, himself, had the ultimate power of censorship over what actually issued from his mouth. As I have mentioned before, but it is worth repeating, he has always had a dedicated prayer life, and recognised that many times, as he settled to his private prayer or approached the moment of consecration in the Eucharist, his body was entered physically and spiritually – if that does not appear to be a contradiction. Always my brother's mental response has been the same – "If you are from God, you are welcome. If not, please go".

For some time many people have chosen to reject traditional medicine and to enter the expanding world of complementary therapies. Concurrently countless others have moved away from the spirituality of traditional and mainstream churches and sought an alternative spiritual focus in their lives. Many of the latter believe that their own 'hot line' to the world of spirit supersedes the seemingly outdated and sterile one of 'religion', and they are drawn into the world of 'channelling'. They might even buy a book that I found advertised on the Web:

"CHANNELLING - What it is & how to do it"
by *Lita de Alberdi*

Lita de Alberdi is a gifted spiritual teacher who has taught hundreds of people in the UK to channel their guides. In this accessible and practical book she explains how to contact and channel your own spirit guide.

In this book, Lita includes channelled material from her guides and answers the many questions that people ask.

If you want to learn to channel successfully and safely and if you want to learn from an experienced channel and teacher, this is the book for you.

Full of easy to follow meditations and exercises based on her successful courses. Channelling will enable you to:

- Shift your awareness to an expanded state of consciousness.
- Work with guides and angels. Use psychic protection effectively.
- Channel to receive help with health and past life issues.
- Conduct channelled readings. Enhance your confidence and creativity.

As with the hypnotherapy advertisement that I quoted earlier, there is no personal contact between the teacher and pupil. Always, I am concerned with the vulnerable. Having read about and practiced such techniques, and no doubt willingly accepting the desired contact within the mind, the aspirant is wide open to mental intrusion from any source. The blurb promises instruction in how to "use psychic protection effectively". I squirm inside as I read, and think to myself... "How can authors be so insensitive to the dangers that they are creating for readers, and how can readers be so gullible as to believe that they can somehow weave 'psychic protection' around themselves". As I have noted several times, all of the main religions have well tried and tested systems of induction of the novice. All are aware of the dangers that threaten the 'opened' mind, and all have experienced novice masters to give guidance and support. There is none of this in the 'do-it-yourself' readily available book or weekend 'workshop'.

By today's post, I received my regular update of a catalogue of books on a variety of alternative and complementary practices and lifestyles. Glancing through it, I responded as I usually do – with a sense of wonder that so many books can be written about so many techniques and practices and beliefs. In the various categories there are numerous volumes of introduction or instruction covering virtually every form of 'divination' that one can think of – I Ching, Tarot, dowsing in its varied forms, to name but three. It is also possible from the same catalogue to buy, for example, a set of Celtic Wisdom Sticks '...a powerful divination tool drawing on the ancient memory and wisdom of the trees and the Celts...Further advice is given for phrasing questions to the Oracle and interpreting the responses given...'

Many individuals will, probably light heartedly, have tried such devices as an ouija board or planchette, and moved on equally light heartedly. Some, and often the most open and vulnerable individuals, will have been influenced, become 'hooked', - and even disturbed. I reflect how easily I became so obsessed with the contacts that I was making by using a pendulum and alphabet chart. I began so innocently and naïvely, not seeking 'divination', and initiated a most dramatic change in my life – a change that subsequently has influenced more than twenty years of it, and now ties me to my computer to write this, and, hopefully, warn others of the inherent dangers.

Responding to the ever increasing demand for alternative and complementary therapies and therapists, the catalogue reveals the extent to which the demand may be met – at least, through the medium of 'how to do it' books. One therapy that, more than others, has come to the fore in recent years is Reiki. Of itself and originally described by its modern founder, Dr. Usui, reiki is a simple and effective therapy, differing very little in practice from other forms of natural 'hand-healing', touch therapy. The chief difference lies in the 'atunements' that a potential practitioner undergoes, and in the acquisition of 'symbols' and 'mantras', leading the aspirant into a world of mysticism and contact with 'others' – so-called Ascended Masters and the like. It is possible for someone who is prepared to spend £260 and two days, to become a certificated Reiki practitioner, and for a further £290 and two days, to become a Reiki Master. With this 'training' and possibly little actual experience, it is now open to the Master to 'train' more aspirants, provide them with mantras and atunements, and links to Ascended Masters.

I am not seeking in any way to deride the dedication and desire to heal of many practitioners. What I am seeking to illustrate is yet another route along which vulnerable individuals can be 'entered' by intruding and unwelcome 'entities'. The whole process of their Reiki induction is aimed at an opening up to – to what? Information that I receive describes courses that, ultimately, lead to "...channelled and psychic and spiritual techniques. Communicate with spirit guides, learn astral travel, clairvoyance, psychometry, how to see auras...". Nowhere in the literature or course descriptions can I find any reference to the possibility of any adverse psychic experiences occurring. Undoubtedly, many who participate in these and similar courses, whether as aspirant or instructor, are completely unaware of these possibilities

There is a danger that by continually listing and describing some of the hazards and pitfalls that may be encountered in a variety of practices and life-styles, I may be overshadowing many of the *benign* activities of the limitless, desirable spiritual sources. As I have written in earlier sections, I have had considerable help and received much enlightenment "...and got great knowledge and courtesy from dead kinsmen and kinswomen, ancestors and friends". Even though I repeat myself, in the main these interventions are and have been anonymous – for which small mercy I am infinitely glad. Always I have resented unsolicited intervention or comment, and so the thought of 'Grandad' overseeing me and making comments would be more than I could tolerate!

Not always anonymous, though. I once had a friend who was a long time a-dying from an inoperable brain tumour. David was nursed at home until that became impracticable. As time went on, he became obsessed with imagined problems involving his catheter. Many times during a visit, he would disappear beneath the bedclothes to check its function, and had an array of tissues that he named 'dabber, mopper and wiper'. On the day of his funeral, I arrived early at the crematorium and

sat looking at the burnished brass 'catafalque' that awaited his coffin. Its appearance made me think of some ancient priestly altar, and as I sat musing, I distinctly 'heard' David's unmistakable voice in my head, saying portentously "O Ra, O Osiris!", and chuckling. Then, as I made sure my handkerchief was easily accessible to staunch the inevitable moisture in the eye, again I heard his distinctive voice say, "Have you got your dabber, mopper and wiper?" And finally, as the coffin came in – "Have you got the regulation lump in the throat?" Then there was Val, who had been my secretary at work and who was also a very good friend. Val's spine had become twisted as the result of illness in her youth, and one day, while turning her head to see to reverse her car, she had blocked the blood flow to her brain and died. Someone else who died too soon in a seemingly unjust world. Val also had a distinctive and unmistakable voice, and a few days after her death, as I was shaving, I 'heard' it saying – "Can't catch me, I'm a bumble bee!" – and no doubt revelling in the untrammelled freedom after release from her twisted body.

I have already told how I rolled about laughing at the comment that accompanied my efforts to drain a hot water cylinder. Recalling the incident acknowledges the fact that droll comments can be made in the mind that are so apposite that one is bound to laugh. Recently I rode my bike, and on the outward journey went easily down a long and gentle slope. On the return, however, the slope no longer seemed gentle – long, yes, but not gentle – and I carry excess weight! As I put increasing effort into my pedals, I heard a friendly voice in my head saying, "You need a banker". The meaning was immediate, and I laughed as much as my breathless state allowed. But only meaningful if one knew a little railway history. In the days of steam, express trains from London to Glasgow used to stop at Tebay, at the approach to the notorious Shap hill, in order to connect a 'banker' – a supplementary engine to assist the train up the bank. And yes, I needed a banker!

Again, very recently, I searched the Web for an obscure CD that I could not find at my usual suppliers. It was probably my first attempt at an on-line purchase, and seemed to go very smoothly. As I put away my credit card, I reviewed in my mind the skill with which I had negotiated the various hurdles, and was congratulating myself, when I distinctly 'heard' in my mind just one word – "Cool": but 'said' with all of the savvy of the culture of today.

Constantly, as I write, I am aware of the ultimate purpose of my writing, although, as I weave through the convolutions of my story, it would be very easy to lose sight of the goal. I am reasonably content with the way in which I have covered the first part. This has been to create an understanding, with all of the writing skills that I possess, that the intrusions that create the voices and other phenomena within the bodies and minds of individuals are of spiritual origin. My greatest difficulty is with my current task – namely the 'how to do it' bit. How to avoid attracting the intrusions in the first place: how to recognise them for

what they are: how to cope with them when they are active: how, ultimately, to eliminate them.

There are times, as at this moment, when I feel as must an expert rock climber who is engaged in trying to write a manual of rock climbing. He can write and describe all of the skills and preparations that a climber will need. He can describe hand-holds and belays and such, and can even provide minute detail of 'classical' routes up well-known pitches. What he cannot do, however, is to *climb* on anyone's behalf. The novice climber can read and read, and mentally picture individual situations, but the reality is on the rock face. Success or failure will depend upon so many factors, the range of which I shall leave to your own imagination. I have described earlier how, in my teens, I read avidly anything that I could find about small boat sailing, and how, when I finally took the helm of a boat, I recognised every factor and effect about which I had read. My reading and study did not, even so, prevent me shortly afterwards from allowing a dinghy to capsize because of not observing a fundamental precaution.

In writing for the person who is disturbed and whose life is out of control, however, I am conscious of the fact that such a person cannot tackle the rock face of their life alone. The novice climber is roped securely to someone who leads, fixes pitons and belays, and always secures the rope. Who will lead and secure for the disturbed individual who cannot go it alone? 'Individual' is a most appropriate word. No two climbers are alike. Height and reach, weight and its distribution, size of foot even – all, either alone or in combination, define the unique person on the rock face. Within small limits, the rock is the same for everyone and predictable.

Would that there was some degree of stability and predictability in the world of the voice hearer and the way each, he or she, is understood and helped. To continue the climbing analogy, it is as if each has to begin climbing from scratch, with no training and with no foreknowledge of *where* to climb, and to climb in shackles and loaded with extra weights. The shackles are the drugs that suppress and subdue someone's natural abilities and resources. The extra weights are all of the preconceptions that exist in the world of psychiatry and psychology. Physical illnesses have recognisable and measurable symptoms and, within reason, predictable outcomes. Temperatures and pulses can be checked, bowel movements studied, breathing deficits analysed and blood pressure taken. In all probability, the physician and medical staff will have experienced various forms of physical illness themselves and will have a degree of understanding. How many workers in psychiatry can say "I have experienced such-and-such, and can understand and sympathise with you in what you are going through". How many?

Within the last week, I have listened to radio programmes devoted to the phenomenon of synaesthesia. "Synaesthesia is an extraordinary condition in which the five senses mingle. (The programme)...discovers how it is changing our understanding of

neuroscience and explores the world of synaesthetes who experience flavoured words or coloured letters, or see music as patterns and colours." As the programmes unfolded, I listened with growing surprise as speakers described what they saw or tasted in response to the various stimuli. The one, for example, who told of her problems when young and learning to write. She could not form the letter 'R'; then realised that it was simply a 'P' with an added stroke. As she added her stroke to her P, the colour of the letter changed to what has since become her 'R' colour, entirely different from her 'P' colour. Or the one, an artist, who would lie back and listen to music, and from the colours and patterns forming in her mind's eye, she would compose her abstract paintings, which were much sought after.

There were numerous contributions to the programmes from psychologists and psychiatrists. None had experienced the phenomena themselves, neither could they offer any positive explanation of how they occurred. All believed that the descriptions given by the synaesthetes were real as the latter saw them, and all were excited at what a coherent study might reveal in the future concerning unknown reactions and responses in the human brain. I repeat: to a person, the psychologists and psychiatrists said "I have not experienced the phenomenon: I do not doubt what you are telling me: I do not know the cause."

If only – *if only* - psychiatrists would have the courage to say those same words to the individuals who experience inner voices and other unseen phenomena! Whereas the synaesthetes were engaged in lively discussion and their descriptions of their experiences listened to intently, voice hearers are told that they are deluded and hallucinating, and no one engages them in a discussion of equals with the intention of actually finding out what is in reality happening to them. That has already been decided; it only remains to decide which drug or drugs will suppress the voices and render the individual 'manageable'.

'How to avoid attracting intruders in the first place', I wrote a few paragraphs ago. Apart from realising and acknowledging that the 'intruders' really do exist, what do you actually *tell* a young person? Most of today's Western young would probably laugh uncontrollably if they heard the word 'restraint' mentioned. 'Square', 'uncool' are two of the milder epithets that would be used. One has only to witness the way in which young people who choose to remain virgin before marriage are regarded to realise that they are considered to be some sort of freak. From their earliest years at school, youngsters are warned and counselled on the subject of illegal drugs, to such an extent that not one of them should have reached their teens ignorant of the dangers to health and the problems of addiction. Today, (24.11.2002), a report has been issued that states that in the last three years amongst 14 – 15 year olds, cannabis use by boys has increased from 19% to 29%, and by girls, from 7% to 25%. Of all drugs, the teenagers believe, cannabis is the least harmful, and less harmful than tobacco.

"Cannabis is the least harmful". It is unlikely that the young will read or care about a report in the British Medical Journal of three days ago. "Early use of cannabis can lead to schizophrenia and depression", is the bald summary. The report analyses three papers, a short extract of which follows:

The increase in use is of concern because cannabis may be a gateway to other drugs, and it may cause psychiatric illnesses. The link between cannabis and psychosis is well established, and recent studies have found a link between use of marijuana and depression. Does cannabis cause these conditions, or do patients use cannabis to relieve their distress?

The explanation most accepted is that cannabis triggers the onset or relapse of schizophrenia in predisposed people and also exacerbates the symptoms generally. Establishing direction of causality is difficult and is most appropriately assessed in non-clinical samples, but a low incidence of the illness and the fact that most drug users take other drugs in addition to cannabis create methodological problems and explain the dearth of reliable evidence.

The study often quoted in support of the causal hypothesis examined the incidence of schizophrenia in more than 50 000 Swedish conscripts followed up for 15 years. It showed that use of marijuana during adolescence increased the risk of schizophrenia in a dose-response relation. Questions have, however, remained about the validity of the diagnosis, the possible causal role of other drugs, and prodromal symptoms of schizophrenia that might have led to the use of cannabis, rather than cannabis triggering the psychosis.

A longer follow up and reanalysis of this cohort published in this issue confirms the earlier findings and clarifies that cannabis, and not other drugs, is associated with later schizophrenia and that this is not explained by prodromal symptoms. In a similar vein, a three year follow up of a Dutch cohort of 4045 people free of psychosis and 59 with a baseline diagnosis of psychotic disorder showed a strong association between use of cannabis and psychosis. Length of exposure to use of cannabis predicted the severity of the psychosis, which likewise was not explained by use of other drugs. Participants who showed psychotic symptoms at baseline and used cannabis had a worse outcome, which also implies an additive effect. In a New Zealand cohort, individuals who had used cannabis three times or more by age 15 or 18 were not more likely to have schizophreniform disorder at age 26, although they showed an increase in "schizophrenia symptoms" (but not schizophrenia). The meaning of "schizophrenia symptoms" requires clarification to interpret these results.

Earlier in my writing I made a facetious reference to the "longitudinal study of 50,000 Swedish conscripts, and 2,000 neurotic soldiers". Imagine my surprise when I saw that they have surfaced in one of the papers cited, having been followed for 15 years of further study. As I read, I reflect upon the task that I have set myself, and the constant uphill struggle and intense frustration. Knowing, as I do, that what is called 'schizophrenia' results from the intrusion of spiritual entities, and knowing, as most intelligent people know, that cannabis, mescaline and similar hypnotics are used by such as shamans and other 'ecstatics' to

induce a suitable condition for the entry of the controlling spirit or spirits - is the result of the use of cannabis not obvious?

The shaman is born to his role... he does not become a shaman simply by willing it, for it is not the shaman who summons up the spirits, but they, the supernatural beings, who choose him. They call him before his birth. At the age of adolescence, usually at the period of sexual ripening, the chosen one suddenly falls into hysterics with faintings, visions, and similar symptoms, being tortured sometimes for weeks. Then, in a vision or a dream, the spirit who has chosen him appears and announces his being chosen. This call is necessary for the shaman to acquire his powers. The spirit who has chosen him first lavishes the unwilling shaman-to-be with all sorts of promises and, if he does not win his consent, goes on to torment him. This so-called shaman illness will anguish him for months, perhaps for years, as long as he does not accept the shaman profession.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica from which that is taken does not qualify the entry in any way that throws doubt on the intrinsic belief that the shaman and 'medicine' man or woman is controlled by, and is the mouthpiece of, a spiritual entity. The fact that the same beliefs are held world wide - from Oceania to Siberia to North America and beyond - should say something to the sceptic. Part of my frustration lies in the seeming inability of researchers in the field of mental health to make the connection and accept the link between the mind opening properties of the drugs and the subsequent intrusions.

I doubt very much whether anyone seeking the effects of cannabis includes amongst the desirable 'benefits' the ability to communicate with spirits, nevertheless, the door to intrusion is wide, wide open. I doubt whether many of today's young think about the consequences of drug taking, or *any* of their actions. The dramatic increases in the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in the young, and in the numbers of teenage pregnancies, are indicators from another field of activity where the pursuit of instant gratification, or 'peer pressure', are the driving forces. Among many there appears to be a total contempt for their body and mind. The only purpose for having them seems to be as vehicles for hedonistic 'pleasure'. Every source of substance abuse is used, every means and orifice for sexual abuse is used, and every available surface is tattooed and pierced, while the delicate brain is subjected to loud and violent forms of head-banging 'music' and movement.

"...the human body is vapour materialised by sunshine mixed with the life of the stars" wrote my much admired Paracelsus. Fanciful, I know, but surely a more inspirational way of looking at this ultimate product of evolution than the vacant shell that is many a human life. "The body is the temple of the spirit", declares many a religious text. Unfortunately, I have learned to recognise that this is an area of thought into which many are reluctant to go. Apart from an instinctive shying away from anything with a 'religious', 'spiritual' tag attached, it is an area where interpretations are as numerous as the interpreters, and words and

concepts acquire meanings that depend more upon the origins and experiences of the interpreter than those that derive from dictionaries and documentary sources.

With reason did Humpty Dumpty say, "When I use a word, it means exactly what I want it to mean, no more, no less". I thought of Humpty when I read part of the report quoted above:

"...In a New Zealand cohort, individuals who had used cannabis three times or more by age 15 or 18 were not more likely to have schizophreniform disorder at age 26, although they showed an increase in "schizophrenia symptoms" (but not schizophrenia). The meaning of "schizophrenia symptoms" requires clarification to interpret these results."

The report queries the exact meaning of 'schizophrenia symptoms'; I would add 'schizophreniform disorder'. Just as it is not possible to be 'just a little bit pregnant', so one is hearing voices or not hearing them; experiencing physical intrusion or not, and so on. Earlier in my writing, I quoted from a radio discussion on schizophrenia that I had recorded, and how the definition might vary depending upon from which side of the Atlantic it came. Surely, when the mind and sanity of individuals are at risk, the necessity of precise definition must be paramount. Yesterday I watched EuroNews and a report showing from the air extensive floods over Italy. The woman presenter made me sit up when I heard her say "The floodwaters are spreading mayhem over Northern Italy". 'Mayhem' is used frequently in a variety of contexts, and I decided to find out from the dictionary exactly what it means. Imagine my surprise when I read, "The crime of maiming someone to prevent them being able to defend themselves" – and figuratively. I have just asked the genii within the computer for synonyms of 'mayhem', and was fed the following: chaos, disorder, confusion, turmoil, havoc, pandemonium, bedlam, and anarchy. I will not even begin to try to disentangle the linguistic twists that have so changed and distorted the original meaning of 'mayhem', just as it would be impossible to follow the sequence of changes that have, for example, transformed 'Alzheimer's disease' from its original definition of 'pre-senile dementia', to just about any form of senility that besets an *old* person, and which would, in the past, simply have been called 'senile dementia'.

Throughout I have tried to be precise and specific in an imprecise and non-specific region of thought and activity. Only *I* have experienced the events and incidents about which I am writing: the moment and action of my initial 'intrusion' are as clear to me and as potent at this moment as they were initially - now more than twenty years ago. Twenty years in which I have experienced and recorded all of the 'first rank' symptoms of schizophrenia – yet I am not, nor ever have been ill: I am not 'schizophrenic'. I wrote that just to remind myself where I have come from, and to remind you of my status. Constantly I am aware of intrusive presence and the subtleties of potential influence, but only aware of them because I have 'grown up' with them.

While my initial event was obvious and, in its way, dramatic, many initial intrusions may be so subtle as to be unobserved, and to be exerting influence before influence is even noticed or becomes commanding and dominating. Increasingly we are informed of the way in which the Internet is being used by paedophiles to 'groom' unsuspecting youngsters. Unwittingly the latter are gulled into believing that they are chatting on line to someone who is just what he says he is – young, possibly interesting and amusing, maybe a bit provocative or cheeky – all the time just edging towards sexual innuendo and excitement and the potential meeting and what may follow.

No matter by what route or mechanism the voice intrusion into the mind may arrive, it can be accomplished so subtly that it may seem always to have been there. The gentle sharing of thoughts and opinions as with a constant companion may become as natural as breathing. With this in mind, I wrote the following:

'They maintain a constant delivery of good, impeccable advice and an ambience of support, which, at first, is comforting. However, it persists into every act, or thought of an act or plan, to a degree that it becomes obsessive, by which time one can have reached a state of dependence and find difficulty in detaching oneself. But more than that, this can constitute a form of 'jamming' which can cause one to reject the desirable counsel that may come from a good source.'

Always, I return to the concept of 'ambience', and seemingly have come full circle, in that I began my sequence of 'ploys' with the silent creation of moods, influences and ambience. Unique to the person at the centre of the experience, it is the most difficult concept to describe, and, as I set out originally with reference to a former marriage, only really explicable by analogy. Over recent weeks, I have felt undermined and depleted as the result of natural phenomena that are currently in train. I am reassured by the fact that numerous comments and queries from friends show that others are equally affected. One result that is relevant is that I have been experiencing difficulty in collecting my thoughts sufficiently to make them coherent and continue my writing. My own natural frustration has been compounded by the creation around me of an unspoken 'atmosphere' such as I might have experienced within that former and unlamented marriage.

My personal frustration is supplemented by the feeling of physical inertia that is often a feature of life in November. The arrival within of the desire to begin 'comfort eating', and one's own commitment to resist it, provide even more openings through which the intruders can work. Nothing has to be said – the unspoken comment or anticipation of – what? Nothing is specific, but there is sufficient going on to induce the hunched 'if I keep my head down it will go away' posture. The fact that such a reaction reduces even further the ability to concentrate compounds the frustration, and many an hour, or even day, is lost in futile attempts to get something, *anything*, achieved.

Once again I have found it necessary to return to 'natural phenomena'. To those who have never experienced the effects that I describe, I might equally be trying to describe central heating to a Bedouin tent dweller in the Sahara. Much earlier, I quoted Paracelsus when he wrote "...a doctor must seek out old wives, gypsies, sorcerers, wandering tribes...and take lessons from them". Any suggestion that people may be influenced by the presence or phase of the moon is usually, and with contempt, dismissed as an 'old wives' tale. Think again, O ye scoffers! Ask yourselves why mammals have a circadian rhythm of 25 hours. If isolated from any perception of day and night, the sleep/wake cycle of mammals becomes 25 and not 24 hours. The one natural timepiece of planet earth that has a cycle of approximately 25 hours is the moon. The passage of the moon determines the rise and fall of the tides. When the mammalian 'body clock' was set ticking, the mammal was, in fact, a fish, for which creature the *tides*, and hence the moon, are of greater importance than daylight and darkness.

To those who may dispute my analysis by saying that *birds* by contrast, have a circadian rhythm of 23 hours, I suggest that the body clock of birds began its function when the earth had a faster speed of rotation, and when the length of day was, in fact, 23 hours. As the life of birds depends upon the presence of light in order to look for food, their daily cycle must inevitably be that of visible daylight and of darkness. The evolution of fish into mammal, and the gradual slowing down of the earth, have happened over such long periods of time that there has never been one significant moment when a step-change in the circadian timing could feasibly have occurred, and so daily we and the birds reset our inner workings to our respective ways of responding to the current *daily* cycle. *But the moon is still there.*

Those who dismiss the potential influence of the moon and also of other planets as old wives tales, are abandoning a whole realm of knowledge, albeit one that has not been studied systematically by people with open minds. I do not subscribe to astrology in any way, and regard the 'predictions' derived from the 'stars' with as much enthusiasm as I would those derived from an examination of the inside of a chicken, the flight of birds, or the shape of a piece of candle wax that had been dropped molten into a bowl of water. I arrived at a realisation that there *are* such influences pragmatically and from first-hand experience.

Other than making my home in a tent, I could not dwell closer to the living earth than I do. My house is constructed of the natural granite boulders that have come from my immediate neighbourhood and which can be seen in the many dry-stone walls nearby. In fact, the construction of the house walls is similar, only more precisely built; over two feet thick and rendered or plastered inside and out. The boulders – or, locally, 'cobbles' – rest without foundation upon fifteen feet depth of clay, the result of outflowings from the glaciers with which the area was once covered. Looking south now I can see, just two miles away, the

mountain that was once a volcano, while on some occasions, when I take water from my deep borehole, I see traces of iron that was mined just half a field away in a primitive manner by long dead miners. Free from industrial, noise and light pollution, I have become finely tuned to my environment and to its subtle changes.

I did not choose to live here with any 'back to nature' motive in mind. As I have related, I bought the property over thirty years ago because I kept horses and was fed up having to rent land and buy in hay. Having lived here for so long, and being free from all of the influences and stresses of an urban environment, I have become finely tuned to subtle variations in the 'ambience'. Nevertheless, I did not set out to analyse myself, or compare myself with dwellers in polluted and less tranquil locations, nor do I sit navel-gazing and speculating 'about life, the universe and everything'. I simply observe, record and analyse, and try to relate feelings, reactions, mood shifts in myself and in others to *anything* that at the time may have had an influence.

I do not intend to describe in great detail the manner in which I first became aware of the influence of the moon, other than to say, as I did in an earlier chapter, that, having begun to wear vari-focal glasses, I became conscious of the fact that from time to time I became irritated by them, and by the frequent need to keep readjusting them on my nose. After about six months of this, I began to realise that the irritation coincided with the new and full moon. People are often express surprise when I mention the new moon, commenting 'but it's so *small*', and forgetting that the moon is there in its entirety, but that only a little of it is *visible*. There is another factor that determines the apparent location and size of the moon, and that is the tilt of the earth on its axis. In mid-winter the moon is almost overhead when full, and appears very large in the sky, while the new moon is low and seemingly insignificant. Conversely, in mid-summer it is the *new* moon that is almost overhead, while the full moon is low in the sky. However, because the new moon is not visible when it is at its most potent, i.e. midday, its presence and effect are never considered amongst the influences that may contribute to the behaviour of a person.

For almost twenty years I have obtained copies of the ephemerides of the moon and other planets in order to keep track of them. I am principally interested in what is called the 'transit time' - i.e. the time when the planet is at local south. (I also use what I call the back transit to refer to the point when the object is due north). I include all the planets, for in time I began to realise that alone or in combination they all appear to exert an influence.

Now I come to the bit where I have to describe central heating to a desert tent-dweller! First, let us observe others. Television provides innumerable opportunities for studying human behaviour when the subjects are not aware that they *are* being studied. At times, I like to watch snooker, indoor bowls and, less frequently, tennis - games in which the participants are functioning as individuals and not as part of a team. When one has seen players in action over a number of years, it is possible

to acquire a knowledge of their game and mannerisms. I can think of one very well known snooker player who seems to be particularly affected, whose game will fall off for several frames, during which, and when sitting out, he may be seen massaging his forehead between the eyes, and looking ill at ease. Looking at my tables is almost unnecessary, for at that time I realise that I, also, have an imprecise 'discomfort' in my head – not a headache, but an unquantifiable unease, almost as if attempts are being made to restructure the head from inside.

In all probability, the tables will reveal that there is coincidentally a transit of the moon, possibly in conjunction with other near or major planets. There is a further probability that I will get a phone call from one of my 'controls', asking me what, if anything, is happening. With indoor bowls, there are often two or three scrappy ends when both players have gone off the boil and, again, it will usually be found that they could be responding to an external influence that is disturbing their concentration and judgement. These and similar events have occurred far too many times for them to be the result of coincidence, and as they are not happening to me but to the players, there can be nothing subjective about my observations.

There is nothing subjective about dying, nor about the actual time of dying. Several years ago, and using the obituary columns of the Daily Telegraph, I plotted on a year-long graph the number of deaths on each day. It soon became apparent, even before the year had ended, that the numbers peaked at the new and full moon, with higher peaks if the moon should happen to transit simultaneously with one or more of the nearer planets. What was even more remarkable was that of the deaths reported as 'sudden', more died at these times than at others. Listening also to reports on radio or television of the deaths of well-known individuals, likewise it will often be found that the death happened at these key times. The bodily stresses experienced, and however they are caused, appear to determine the actual time of release, especially after a long illness. Someone whom I knew died at such a very strong conjunction, and in the hospital the staff remarked that they had never known so many deaths in such a short time.

On one occasion that I remember, and just after a major grouping of planets, I rang a friend who is a night nursing sister on a ward that is close to a cardiology ward. She told me that while her ward had been comparatively normal, the ambulances were busy all night attending the other. Someone else with whom I am in regular conversation works in a major psychiatric hospital and, as much as protocol allows, she is able to tell me of the ups and downs of admissions and 'incidents', and nearly always tells of significant increases. The psychiatric hospitals appear to have abandoned the practice once used at Bedlam Hospital, of beating inmates for a week before full moon just to 'compose' them. Although on reflection, the beating probably had a shorter lasting and less damaging effect than E.C.T. does!

I have mentioned above how the head can feel 'as if it is being restructured from within'. Random effects within the body having no apparent cause can also become noticeable. The busy person with a full life to get on with will probably work through such events with help from a suitable analgesic, and as the events are transient, they will hardly merit a comment. For the person already troubled in the mind and already experiencing inner voices, there is a different story. At such times, it is possible that the tormentors will assert that *they* are the cause of the physical distress, and that the effects are part of a process of the destruction of the brain, and even of the creation of cancers over which they have control.

Many of the moon-induced effects are created around midnight and shortly afterwards, say, until 3 a.m., when often waking is frequent anyway, and the mind is a racetrack for worrying and alarming thoughts. There are occasions when sudden awakening so early in sleep is accompanied by a form of paralysis, when the body will not obey the mind. At such times, the half awake mind and the unresponsive body may be exposed to even greater torment. These are often times when the tales of incubus and succubus arise.

Whatever tales and myths are attached, the physical influences of the moon and close planets are real. I have no means of determining how the effects are produced. I can only speculate on the possibilities of changes in gravity induced by the pull on the Earth of the other planets, and potential changes in the electrical and magnetic ambience that their proximity might induce. My difficulties in describing and quantifying cause and effect are magnified manyfold by the fact that each individual person is just that, individual and unique, and that the range of effects created by the external influences is wide, but also unique to a particular time and location. One can only deal in generalities. But do not let that stifle understanding and prevent research, for in so far as *I* am having great difficulty describing these phenomena and reactions, how very much greater are the problems of a disturbed person trying to describe something that is intangible and ephemeral?

I am not generally given to making predictions, but in this field I do. Frequently I assess the locations of the planets from their ephemerides stored on the computer, and note their respective transit times. If from this information I see that a major conjunction is impending, and I believe that certain individuals will be affected, I send out a warning, giving days and times. Feedback that I receive tells me that my forewarning is usually correct and appreciated. I have a good friend whose former partner was grossly affected, especially if the planet Mars was involved. I used to send him a 'hard hat' warning, for his partner frequently became violent.

Is it not curious that the Romans named that planet after their god of war? Not, as is commonly supposed, because the planet is red, for in parts of the world where red is *not* associated with war, the name used is often that of the local god of war, pestilence, famine, disaster, death

and terror. The Greeks even went so far as to name the two satellites of Mars, Phobos and Deimos – Fear and Terror. The reason for the naming can be deduced from an examination of Mars' behaviour. It has an eccentric orbit, which can greatly increase or reduce its distance from the Earth (56 > 400 million kilometres). The close approach to Earth is called the perihelion. From time to time, the perihelion and the opposition of Mars coincide. This means that the planet is at its nearest to Earth, but is also on the side of the Earth away from the sun. At such a time, not only is Mars at its closest, but also is at its most visible. It is comparatively huge in the night sky, and its presence is obvious.

For whatever reason, people are disturbed by the physical proximity of Mars. They are disturbed as individuals and as groups and nations. Disturbed individuals, governments and nations are frequently joined in conflict at these times, as history shows. Was it coincidence that Hitler's invasion of Poland, and Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal that precipitated the 'Suez Crisis', both occurred within six weeks of the perihelion oppositions of 1939 and 1956, respectively, or that Napoleon's ill-fated invasion of Russia happened within the 'sphere of influence' of the one in mid-1813? I have no way of knowing, and leave it to more fervent students of history. However, as individuals, people are already declaring themselves to be undermined and disturbed in advance of the *next*, which will happen on August 28th, 2003. Between nations the events in Iraq have already appeared directly on cue, while at an individual level, many human tragedies and family murders are almost daily occurrences.

Recollecting that the ancients linked Mars with famine and pestilence, the coincidence of the Irish potato famine with the perihelion opposition of 1845, and the present outbreak of the so-called SARS virus should provide food for thought.

Nonetheless, it is the effect upon individual people that concerns me in my writing, and upon which I shall continue to concentrate, although the added uncertainty being created by world events must inevitably have its effect upon those who are already stressed in their minds. Yet again, I must make the point that the spiritual sources of intrusion into vulnerable minds are intelligent and appear to know how to exploit these periods of disturbance. The fact that there are being created *physical* influences on our planet, which in turn generate effects in sensitive people, will most probably be seen as the latter react to the same physical stresses that are already increasing the numbers and magnitude of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions worldwide. Was it, in fact, coincidence when a most devastating earthquake in Armenia occurred very shortly after the September 1988 perihelion opposition?

We all are human mammals and must be seen and understood in our total milieu, and not in such artificial settings as consulting rooms, laboratories and hospital wards. The effects of which I write are not respecters of people and locations: a white coat does not confer immunity,

nor a building, protection. All, whether patient, consultant, researcher, are within the range of influence: some, simply, are more sensitive than others are.

Something as simple as living in a different part of the country can affect some responsive individuals. I have known four such who, having grown up on the east coast of Britain, became depressed when marriage or work took them to live on the west coast. One woman described graphically how her depression lifted as she travelled east on visits, but was felt almost as a physical burden descending as she came back into the Lake District. In the general sense, she was happy in her marriage and everything else associated with her life in the west. One good friend of mine was born and grew up in Essex, where she frequently suffered from hay fever and asthma. These ailments vanished when she came to live in the northwest of England. However, her hay fever returns immediately when she pays visits to East Yorkshire, only to clear the moment that she crosses the Pennines on the return journey.

From anywhere in the world that one cares to look for examples they are there, where ambience or milieu influences strongly the mindset and behaviour and bodily functions of those who are sensitive. A one-time friend had worked as a nurse in Australia, in a remote north-western town called Fitzroy Crossing. I still recollect her vivid descriptions of those who at certain times in certain local conditions went 'troppo' - a graphic word for an easily imagined condition that affected 'strong men' as well as wimpish Poms.

Staying in Australia, the experiences of one young woman are relevant to my total story. Robyn Davidson set herself the challenge of crossing the desert at the heart of the continent alone, with camels as her pack animals. Properly trained in the management of camels and in desert lore, she nevertheless arrived at a situation where everything that could go wrong did. Sick camels, waterholes that had dried or were not where the maps said they should be, and nebulous tracks that petered out or went off at a tangent. In the graphic account in her book *Tracks* she wrote:

"...Some string somewhere inside me was starting to unravel. An important string, the one that held down panic. I walked on. That night I slept in the sandhills...The hour before the sun spills thin blood colour on the sand I woke suddenly, and tried to gather myself from a dream I could not remember...There were no reference points, nothing to keep the world controlled and bound together. There was nothing but chaos and the voices.

The strong one, the hating one, the powerful one was mocking me, laughing at me.

'You've gone too far this time. I've got you now, and I hate you. You're disgusting aren't you? You're nothing. And I hate you now, I knew it would come sooner or later. There's no use fighting me, you know, there's no one to help you. I've got you. I've got you.'

Another voice was calm and warm. She commanded me to lie down and be calm. She instructed me not to let go, give in. She reassured me that I would find myself again if I could just hold on, be quiet and lie down.

The third voice was screaming."

I have written elsewhere myself:

"Sometimes very vivid dreams are followed on waking by a deliberately fragmented conversation, often with the suggestion that one's mind is being taken over at a deeper level. If one is gullible, one can be convinced that one is losing one's mind, or that this is part of a process by means of which one will become integrated into the 'spirit mind'."

Robyn Davidson recovered her composure and control by going into 'automatic', following established procedures, and staying in touch with what was visible and tangible - "...just one step and another, that's all I have to do. I must not panic", and after another trying day, there came the night and - "I slept deeply and dreamlessly, woke early and rose easily and cleanly as an eagle leaving the nest". She went a very short distance further and came to the abundant water that had eluded her.

I was once acquainted with someone whose philosophy and 'life skills' rested on strong foundations laid down in her youth. Jean Cooper had been born in China, and had lived as a Taoist all her life. The simple pragmatism of the Tao - the 'Way' - she said, equipped her to face most of life's situations. Jean 'stayed in touch with the visible and tangible'. She had no time for long periods spent in silent 'meditation': her very concentration on 'the moment' and with what she was meant to be filling it was meditation enough for her. Thus: 'I am going to fill the kettle'. That was the focus, not, while on the way to the tap - 'Oh that plant looks as if it needs water'; 'The dog needs a walk'; 'I must address that envelope' - and so on, in the way that many of us behave, bestragglng our tasks along so many side alleys and byways and inconsequential deviations.

There, in the behaviour of the two women, the one a reaction to an overwhelming situation, the other responding to the conditioning of a lifetime's belief and practice - there one can find clues to the ways in which individuals can be helped when they are in the grip of intrusive voices and presences. Jean Cooper's 'Way' had been a feature of her life from childhood, and had provided her with markers and references, both in the mundane daily functioning, and in the spiritual understanding and interchange. Robyn Davidson had resource and resilience, the accumulation of experience from upbringing on a Queensland farm, to her most recent tuition from an Afghan camel man. The two women coped unaided, having the core anchorage and stability of training, experience and belief.

Essentially, they were able to cope with all that their circumstances threw at them because, in their different ways, they were single minded and they had a direction and focus. I was reminded forcibly of the need for focus and single mindedness earlier today when out in my workshop. I am making something in wood that requires intricate curves to be cut on my band-saw. This type of saw is probably one of the most dangerous of all of the powered tools used in woodworking. Guiding a curving cut can bring ones fingers very close to the fast moving blade. To make the cut accurately and avoid the need for a lot of subsequent cleaning up with files and sandpaper, one has to be focused totally on the point where the curve that has been drawn on the wood meets the saw blade. The mind has to be emptied of unconnected thought – in fact, it has to be emptied of *all* thought. If all one's preparations have been appropriate, the wood will pass smoothly through the saw, and the cut will be near perfect.

One fundamental part of the preparation is disciplining oneself in concepts and practice of safe working. If it has not already become an instinctive part of one's working practice, the cut has to be planned ahead so that the wood can be held and moved securely without bringing one's fingers dangerously close to the blade. It is also necessary to anticipate difficulties and make so-called 'escape cuts' – i.e. cuts made up to the intended line at which the main cut can be halted safely and intelligently without losing the continuous flow.

If an instinctive safety strategy is not rigorously planned and cultivated, if thoughts are allowed to stray, one can become a sitting target for 'intruders'. As with the strategies that are used to divert the car driver into folly, so *they* have similar ones to distract the woodworker or anyone operating dangerous equipment, with resultant and potentially serious injury. Likewise with a chainsaw. I also used one of these today, and many of the same considerations apply – the inculcation of safe practice; the focus and planning of tricky cuts; the added dangers of electricity out of doors, and of branches and small trees that might fall differently from the intended direction. The possibilities of distraction and diversion are greater here even than in the workshop – the robin that always appears, the snowdrops that might be crushed – and *they* are always on hand to exploit any lapse with, perhaps, a sudden interjection into the mind, or a reminder of some topic that has been filling one's thoughts earlier in the day.

Returning to the band saw, I would like to remind you of the earlier occasion when I wrote about it. You may recall that I was making a shelf with a different curve at each end, and that, having attempted one cut before breakfast, I had boded my work, and left it in disgust at my clumsiness. At that time I had an active prayer life that was more specific than now; then the target for my 'work prayers' was Saint Joseph, patron of woodworkers. After breakfast I returned to my saw and the other curve. When I started, I was held physically and mentally in such a one-

pointed focus that, even if I had deliberately willed differently, *I would not have been able to wander from the line of the cut.*

Time and time again, and as now, I have to write by analogy. Potentially, the 'life encounters' confronting an open and vulnerable mind can be as hazardous as those facing one's hands when working a band saw, or one's whole self when using a chainsaw. Many of the same 'safety strategies' may also apply. Likewise, and essential, is the need for establishing a personal mind discipline. Importantly – and probably of much greater relevance – is the need to understand that vulnerable individuals will have the greatest difficulty in establishing safe mental 'working conditions' on their own. There is an overwhelming necessity for them to be supported and 'held in a one-point focus' – supported by others who have a complete understanding and belief in what I am writing.

In many lives, none of these prerequisites have ever been established, or, if once there, have ceased to exist. Self discipline; self control? Increasingly, hedonism is the driving force. Discipline, control – definitely not part of the vocabulary of many, where 'cool' is everything. As I have repeatedly pointed out, I am not writing from the standpoint of any religion, or of religion in general. However, all of the world religions have something in common which is worth reflecting upon. All promote a way of behaving that minimises wrongdoing and which promotes a standard of thinking that discards the obscene and reprehensible, while encouraging what is normally regarded as 'purity of thought'. Further, all of the faiths recognise the existence of spiritual good and evil, and of the contrast between the availability of the former, if invoked through such as prayer, to provide support and encouragement within the challenges of life, as against the deliberate intervention of spiritual evil to intrude and undermine through any weakness of behaviour and thought.

Unfortunately, purity of thought and intent do not always guarantee protection, and the vulnerable may still be defenceless. Someone with whom I am well acquainted lived an impeccable life within a well-integrated and loving family. Entry into university and living away from home in the isolation of student accommodation created a situation within which she was subject to vile and undermining intrusion. She had not followed any of the irresponsible practices that I am trying to illustrate, nor indulged in any form of 'divination', or other spiritually dubious activity. The intrusion was completely spontaneous.

My friend tried to get help through the 'usual' mental health channels, but soon realised that there was remarkably little understanding from those responsible for student welfare, and marshalled her own resources. She ploughed a very lonely furrow for much of her professional life, subject to frequent and unpleasant intrusion, until a unique spiritual awakening gave her the resource to combat and eliminate what had plagued her for so long. 'The isolation of student accommodation' may seem to be a contradiction in terms, but for someone who has not mixed outside school and family, who is not outgoing, student accommodation

"...listening to the silences..."

Chapter 12

can be a very lonely place, and an imaginative mind can provide easy entry for intrusions that are determined to plague and torment.