

position. Almost literally her 'hands are tied' by position and riches. The skirts balloon out into a solid base like that of a legless sexless doll. She can only move slowly and ceremoniously. The contrasts show up the painful vulnerability of her youth and her status. The source of light is uncertain, diffuse, glowing from within. We see her as an attractive young girl, just on the point of blossoming into womanhood. Not ordinarily pretty, with her long face, but with beautiful skin and hands, embellished with several rings and slightly self consciously marking the place in her book. She shows poise, dignity and excellent breeding, as befits the daughter of a king. She is grave, demure and guarded. Her eyes are wide open and candid, but the set of her head on the neck and the folded lips show a wariness that gradually as one studies the picture becomes the most striking thing about it. There is a haunting loneliness about its reluctant but obsessive secrecy. No hint of laughter, of relaxed pleasure, or the delicious trial of innocent flirtation that should be the

inheritance of the pubertal girl, but a frozen watchfulness that recalls to me countless victims of deprived or abused childhoods. Perhaps it seems strange to compare a Royal portrait of 400 years ago with children from the psychiatric clinic but I have seen this face so many times in victims of emotional and sexual abuse. Streetwise children old before their time. Proud, stoical, watchful children, on whom the adult world has stamped its indelible mark too soon, children who betray behind their eyes a sort of wistfulness, as if some part of them knows what they have lost.

The picture serves to remind us of all child victims, who nonetheless can sometimes turn their trauma and insecurity into glittering success, even if the price is high.

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Stage hypnosis: a personal account of the *Kilroy Programme*

Tom Trevelyan, describes his impression of a debate for which he was considered too reasonable.

Stage hypnosis is as old as hypnosis itself. Mesmer would hypnotise groups of 200 and Mesmerism for entertainment was alive in the 1780s. Recently stage hypnotism has been undergoing a revival, particularly in Germany and England although it is banned in some Western countries including most states of the USA, Denmark and Israel.

There is a common format. Members of the audience are asked to lock their hands together by interlocking their fingers and then to pull them apart. Those who feel they cannot are invited on to the stage, often in groups, hypnotised rapidly and induced to undertake a number of 'entertaining'

activities. These range from forgetting their wives' names or impersonating Mick Jagger, to explicitly sexual or absurd acts like copulating with chairs or impersonating washing machines.

The Campaign Against Hypnosis (CASH) invites representations from people who have suffered as a result of stage hypnosis. Largely as a result of their work the matter was raised in the House of Commons on 12 December 1994. An enquiry by Home Office officials was promised. The *Kilroy Programme* broadcast on this subject a week later.

I was invited to take part a day before the show as my name had been mentioned in association with a particular victim whom I was treating. I received early warning of the style of the programme. A young lady

discussed the subject with me over the phone and hesitated about me because my views were "too reasonable". Nonetheless the invitation remained, exhibitionism overcame caution, and I took part.

A literature search found 450 articles on hypnosis but only two descriptive papers of untoward after-effects. There was an article describing the differing interests of different groups practising hypnosis and a review article by a medic which recommended the banning of amateur and stage hypnosis.

The benefit for a curious psychiatrist came as much from the gathering of participants in one room for an hour before the programme as from the programme itself. I was able to talk to five people who had enjoyed and benefited from stage hypnosis. None of them seemed surprised that their hands had been stuck together when they performed the test. The universal account of the stage experience was "I knew exactly what I was doing but I was so relaxed I could not stop myself". Two people had sought therapeutic hypnosis as a result of their experience.

The six victims I spoke to had all gone to the shows completely unaware of any vulnerability. They admitted no history of psychiatric disorder. They all had stable private and working lives. Two complained that their doctors would not believe that their problems had been caused by stage hypnosis.

The debate itself was much more rigidly coordinated than I had expected. Participants were carefully seated to heighten the confrontation. The first row had lapel microphones. The rest depended on catching the eye of the star.

From the start the anger and distress of the victims and their families dominated the show. What was particularly startling was the chronicity and severity of the sequelae and the collapse of previously well adjusted lives. One woman had spent 16 years uneasily feeling that she had lost a breast and had to look for it. A young gentleman had lost his job and stability because he had become preoccupied with the suggestion that he would not be able to utter the Pope's name for two years. One man had been told that his sexual powers would be 5000 times what they were before. Margaret Harper, the doyenne of

CASH, whose daughter died five hours after a show, explained how she had been told to expect a massive electric shock.

Not all had been the subject of post-hypnotic suggestion. Most had experienced fear and a sense of lost control. Many had shattered lives and chronic psychiatric histories after attending the shows. Temporary problems were also described, from leaving the stage in an abnormal state and getting into fights to several weeks of headaches, depression and shame.

The defence of the practitioners was straightforward. The vast majority of people had harmless fun at their shows. The volunteers were all willing subjects who knew what they were doing. Stage hypnosis was already regulated by the Stage Hypnotism Act of 1952 which required shows to be licensed with the local authority, proscribed practices such as regression and post-hypnotic suggestion, and banned the hypnosis of vulnerable subjects. Nobody could be hypnotised to do anything they did not want to do, it was said. Peter Casson of the Federation of Stage Hypnotists (FESH) was of the view that the regulations were adequate. They simply had to be enforced properly.

I managed to get in a point about the selection process, which I felt picked out particularly vulnerable people. I wanted to speak further about the effect of the group, or audience, on the individual's freedom of action and the fact that one might on stage do things of which one would later be ashamed. Kilroy, however, was busy orchestrating the confrontation between victims and a provocative young stage hypnotist. The latter could not defend the fact that no qualification was required, or that no disciplinary process was available to control stage hypnosis.

And then the time had gone. No balanced conclusion had been reached. The victims had made their case. The practitioners had not defended themselves well. I felt shocked by the suffering that had been described, the chronicity, and the anger and distress expressed.

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