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about 4,000 words

DETECTION OF ATMOSPHERIC PANPSYCHIC PHENOMENA:
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

by Elaine McIonyn

What follows is *not* the report that Frida McColl was requested to submit to the Committee. In lieu of said report, she has submitted several documents contained in a single C4 envelope, which she handed to the skipper of the fishing trawler *Kamilla-Sofia* that was sent to the island of Havsuløya to collect her. She refused to board.

Handwritten documents from this package have been faithfully transcribed, with some difficulty, for the benefit of the Committee.

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[The following note is paperclipped to the frontmost document]

#

Dear members of the Climatology Research Committee,

Do not book another return journey for me. I will remain here for some time. Cannot make final report yet—so much left to do. Explanation can be gleaned from enclosed.

Tell Axl he was right. Far-reaching implications.

— F. McColl

#

[The following passages are handwritten on pages torn from the branded diaries issued to all Norwegian National University staff]

#

13 April

Waiting with a coffee at Trondheim harbour; weather bloody freezing + the fishing trawler that will bring me to Havsuløya is late. Would have preferred a helicopter due to seasickness but apparently island is too small for one to land. ‘Island’ is generous term. Map suggests glorified rock.

Wish Axl had been chosen instead. He’s actually read Janne’s material in full. Trusts her, for some reason—seemed keen to go to godforsaken island even though he’s in Neurology of all things. Why so interested in Atmospheric Chemistry report? Lovely man, but often odd.

In actual Climatology department, short straw fell to me because Janne demanded it. Wanted me to interview her because I’m fully bilingual. (Must complain to Dad when I get back—his native language, so his fault for raising me with it.) She doesn’t speak English, wants me to translate her... discovery? findings? ravings? for whole world to read. Very insistent, apparently, and some bigwig donor to department agreed.

Had brief look over her material last night. Heard it was eccentric—a wild understatement! Doesn’t faintly resemble a research paper, though she is well capable of writing one. Some of it written in blue wax pencil (where did she get that?), hard to make out against dense blue graph paper. Half of it looks like free verse. The ‘graphs’ look like pre-historic carvings.

Then there is the 2 cm-thick slab of dot-matrix paper, one continuous page folded like accordion. Flicked through first few folds—just cryptic words:

Cold

Flow

Push

Drift

Axl told me his interpretation, thinks it is all a revelation of great truth. I think poor man is overworked.

#

[A sticky note with handwriting was fixed to the bottom of the page]

#

Disavow earlier assumptions

J + A saw true nature of ~~findings~~ reality

#

[The following diary page is stained by spilled coffee; transcribers have recreated text nonetheless]

#

14 April

Took cinnarizine tablets. Helps a bit, but boat rolling around like misplaced egg, plus overwhelming smell of fish, so still nauseous. Can't get fresh air—deck lethally slippery.

Have to stay in this coffin-sized berth until we land.

Skipper popped in, chuckled at my suffering. Tells me there's no land for 400 kilometres in any direction, just Atlantic.

Trying to read Janne's 'report' between bouts of retching. Full of concepts she has

invented from scratch ('panpsychic quantum interaction', 'atmospheric quasi-neural agglomeration'). Why is atmospheric chemist dealing in 'quantum' or 'neural' anything?

Feel obliged to read dot-matrix slab in full. Total slog. Coffee might help.

#

Have read more now. I see why Axl interpreted it as he did, but whole thing = beyond insane. He agrees with Janne that list of words on 'slab' is transcription of thoughts, picked up by weather station instruments of all things?! He is less certain of Janne's conclusion, namely that only possible source of said thoughts must be clouds (! again).

#

[Further diary pages]

#

15 April

Skipper says landing at Havsuløya in less than 1 hour. Handed me binoculars.

Glorified rock indeed. Shaped like a long wedge—like a petrified storm wave. Some grass or moss. Lots of gannets.

Janne is sole human inhabitant, stays there for months at a time. Looking at island, more certain that simple madness is ultimate explanation for her 'findings'.

#

Night: lots to record, day was more eventful than could have imagined.

Landed at tiny natural harbour on island. Getting off boat precarious, but survived. Felt pang of regret as the fishing crew left—might be the last sensible people I'll see for the next week or so. Grateful for land, even this lick of rock.

Saw the research station for the first time. There's a small copse of steel poles up at the peak of the island, holding various instruments. Some of them spinning in the wind.

Could have sworn I saw one of them crackle like a Tesla coil against the grey sky.

Hut on slope just below the peak in what passes for shelter. All weather-beaten planks and patched with lichen, except for solar panels on the roof. In front of the door, small figure in a faded yellow raincoat, waving to me.

Trudged up zig-zag path watching my feet. Final ten yards or so were the steepest. On the final step, Janne helped to haul me upwards.

Was expecting frizzy hedge-witch, but no. Grey hair, yes, but tied back in severe ponytail. Weathered face, looks older than she is (57). Very sensible clothes.

She greeted me enthusiastically - welcome welcome, looking forward so much to talking to you, etc etc. Smile was too wide, I thought. Too much tooth on display. Maybe I imagined it, or maybe she has forgotten how to do it in front of other people.

#

[The page dated 15 April is full; supplementary pages (lined, A4) have been inserted]

#

15 April (cont'd)

Inside, hut is like aging camper van crossed with the university researcher's office it is: gas cylinders, peeling laminate fittings, vacuum-sealed bags of dried spinach, towers of dog-eared logbooks, armoured ThinkPad and the notorious (to me) dot-matrix printer, which was noisily printing new ream of single words.

We had coffee. Tried small talk; she's no good at it. Reactions and facial expressions all seemed delayed, like she had to think hard about it and arrange each small muscle.

She at least had manners to offer me only chair in the hut (hard, uncomfortable thing). I said no, but relented after polite stand-off. Some social habits must be hard-wired. Wonder if I should send psychologist colleague here to study her.

She ignored me while making coffee—seemed to be whispering to it like a child.

Caressing the kettle. Telling it how wise it was.

Felt plunge in stomach—knew it would feel like a long, long week.

Coffee itself was bitter even with sugar; could taste the vacuum packing. Janne sat on plastic crate and stated that her report (she *does* think it's a report!!) was not the full story, only a 'teaser'. I asked why she omitted some material.

"I knew people would not believe the full report. The revelation is too great. People fear what is new." (I recall these and the following words very clearly due to strangeness of it all.) I said nothing.

"Besides that—I only had one suitably sized envelope left to send it in." She asked me if I had read her report. I said yes.

"And do you also find it strange," she asked, "to hold this coffee in your hand, knowing its implications?"

Felt like I had missed something. Took me a moment, but it came to me: if she thinks clouds are sentient, then perhaps rainwater sentient. Presumably rain is only water source here, so coffee = heated sentient rain.

I was honest—said I wasn't sure about report's conclusions. She seemed crestfallen. Shoulders slumped even more (without raincoat, she looks spindly and under-nourished). I took pity.

"Perhaps you can fill in the gaps in my information," I offered. She nodded.

"The more I tell you, the more you can tell the world. This discovery changes our understanding of nature so profoundly... And even more so when you understand what happened after my report... You will see from my records..."

I can recall that clearly too. It invoked similar dread of wasting a week of my life on

crackpot theories.

Then she said I couldn't follow data trail until she organised it. Spent the next hour looking out at waves and listening to bzzping of dot-matrix printer inside + gannets outside while Janne re-organised logbooks, typed some stuff into ThinkPad, drew more occult-looking shapes on the graph paper. Record-keeping seems complete mess. Don't know why Axl trusts her.

Sudden drumming of rain on roof—she stopped. Insisted I come outside to 'be with elements'. I declined, said I was tired from journey. Watched her go out—no raincoat! Even took off boots and socks! Suspect she would have removed all clothing if alone (again, some social sense remains). Walked away from hut with arms outstretched, talking loudly to world at large.

Rain got heavier, but curiosity got better of me. Put on own raincoat, popped outside to see where she went. Found her standing at peak of island among weather instruments. Reading them (good normal scientist!). Putting ear to supporting poles as if listening to signals (not normal scientist!).

Closer look at Tesla coil thing, couldn't figure out what it is. Its electrical charge was flaring up a lot. Consists of thick upright cylinder with 'saucer' on top. Cylinder has a few hinged panels at intervals. And is wired up to decommissioned telephone box?? Did double-take, but confirmed it is. Very odd.

Wind was picking up—absolutely icy—and rain turned into massive water-bullets. Janne heading toward that device with arm outstretched. Electrical charge visibly picking up, looked utterly lethal. Couldn't just watch. I ran up slope, grasped her by elbow, pulled her back to the ground. She fought me like an animal. And I was blinded by pelting rain. Impossible to hold her back, small as she is.

Electrical charge was huge now, like localised lightning, rings of flashing light reaching 2 metres in all directions. Could barely open eyes to a squint, but saw Janne right in middle of rings of crackling electrical charge—she appeared as a frightening glow, white-beyond-white, like lightening turned human. Was certain she'd be killed. Screamed at her to turn back.

Could barely see a thing with sizzling light and rain now sheeting. Had to lie down for fear wind would knock me over. Looked up, struggled to see, but spotted her standing in cage of electrical charges. Standing at cylinder of device, I guessed mucking around with panels. Could do nothing to help, but couldn't abandon a fellow human being.

After some minutes—felt very long—rain eased slightly. Janne came towards me, pulled me up, escorted me to hut.

Dried ourselves with towels in front of weak gas-cylinder heater. Both of us shaking like leaves, but Janne strangely calm. I was too rattled and physically drained by wet + cold to question her about any of it.

She prepared hammock for me, made hot chocolate. (Same communing-with-kettle behaviour as before.) I accepted gratefully. While I shivered, Janne sat at desk, worked feverishly under weak light.

As I listened to typing and screeching of printer, had a thought I couldn't shake, even though objectively nuts. Janne was also typing, writing before rain and wind came: did she somehow summon it?

Started wondering if mentally destabilising effects of isolation could kick in so quickly (and noted I am technically not even alone). Fell asleep amid musings of this sort.

Woke at dawn, couldn't go back to sleep. (At least bloody printer finished.) Am crouched slightly furtively in hammock, scribbling by small battery-powered light. Had to

write it all down while still fresh and while I am still sure of reality of day's events. Don't want to wake Janne. Slightly raspy breathing confirms she is still alive (which bodes well for proper interview tomorrow).

#

[Another diary page]

#

16 April

Mid-morning: Janne in astonishingly fine fettle. No visible ill-effects of yesterday's adventures. Refused to be drawn on what she was doing with Tesla coil. Insisted I review some additional material first.

"You must appreciate the full extent of the discovery for yourself," she said. "I have completely fresh data from yesterday. You can read further into the cycle than before." Then weird smile again

Handed me another dot-matrix printout, much thicker than in original 'report'—like phone book—bearing yesterday's date and timestamped every 10 minutes. Started off same as before:

Cold

Rush

etc etc. I flicked further into document, beyond the 2-cm mark. Over the course of passing hours, longer entries began to appear. Text grew more complex, near-full sentences forming. Began to develop hypothesis in spite of myself—idea intriguing.

And then, found a separate, short printout tucked into main stack. Contents floored me. Felt that some witchcraft or drugs at work.

This 'hidden' document is (almost) proof beyond proof of one puzzling aspect of all

this. It was record of my own thoughts during storm, very much as I remembered them.

So much I want to ask Janne, but can't yet—she is down at bottom of rock fishing for our dinner. (Now that I am bit more open to idea: wonder what the water thinks about having fish in it. If clouds dense enough to think, Atlantic Ocean all around us must be vast, godlike intelligence.)

Am now bursting with curiosity and in state of feverish awe. My interpretation of new material = distinctly batty, but so is everything else on this rock.

#

Evening, after interview: still don't quite believe it, but idea alone exciting. Wish I had access to library—or to Axl, who turns out is dark horse.

#

[Several strips of torn dot-matrix printer paper, stapled together, were next in the sequence of the document package. The first printout is torn mid-sentence at beginning and end]

#

hell is she doing? What can I do, I can't fit my body in there or there or there, too much lightning, can't reach her, can't stop her, she'll be killed, what can I do, I can't I can't I can't

#

Cold

Flow

Push

Drift

#

Cold air flow.

Billowing. Toss and roll. Surge.

#

Quickening. Air warmer. Trickle of movement.

Streams above, beneath, through.

#

Rushes of air around us. Know this. Many times before, this rush. Push of wind.

Turbulent eddies. Warm, cold, warm again.

#

Around us flows cold air. It streams above us, beneath us, across our flank. It has done so many times before to every part of us. It is different this time because we are aware of it.

We are alive.

We have not always been alive. We became alive not long ago. Awareness came as a trickle. Then a rush.

It is good to feel. We are glad to be aware.

#

The wild air moves us by its whims. Energies flow through and across our shifting mass. We sense their crossings becoming more intricate. We move in pieces, but we know we are one mass. Knowing this, we pieces bond together. We do this not haphazardly as before, but with purpose now that we are alive. We bond to one and then another, passing from place to place, from piece to piece. We whirl together, and it is exhilarating.

#

[A sheet of lined A4 paper. Handwritten, felt-tip pen, large letters]

#

First interview with Janne. The following page is a transcription, and is verbatim as much as I could manage. 'Q' = my questions (simplified for expediency), 'A' = Janne's answers

#

[A sheet of lined A4 paper. Handwritten, apparently in haste, but transcription quality is unaffected]

#

Q: These are transcriptions of thoughts?

A: Yes.

Q: But not of a human or animal?

A: No.

Q: How did you capture them?

A: That was difficult. But I knew the principles because of my work with Axl Rasmussen, back when I still lived on the mainland.

Q: You worked with Axl?

A: Oh yes. We were firm friends and collaborators. I see your look! How would neurology and atmospheric chemistry overlap, you want to know. Have you heard of hylozoism (spelling?)? I thought as much. It is an intellectual interest we share. It is the philosophy that everything is alive and animated. *Everything*. Even the elements, which are my domain. And if something is alive, it must in some sense *think*, which is his domain.

Together, we developed methods and equipment. We have been refining it over the past twenty years or so. When the opportunity arose in the climatology department for a posting to this station on Havsuløya, I had to take it. We realised it was the perfect place for our continued research. It is so isolated, there would be no disturbance. As long as I

submitted occasional chemistry reports, the University would continue to fund my stay.

Q: Equipment—that Tesla coil at the weather station?

A: It is not *just* a Tesla coil, but yes.

Q: But no technology developed to date can read even human thoughts?

A: Why bother with human thoughts? Humans tell you their thoughts. Sometimes they are lying or misunderstand themselves, but psychology has mapped our common delusions. We understand it well enough that it is no longer interesting.

Let me tell you my great secret: I inherited considerable wealth and very fine house in Oslo, which I sold to fund our initial research. I bought a small site with an abandoned barn—that is our laboratory now. Axl and I built our device there. I live here now, with all my expenses paid. Axl manages the stocks that I inherited, and continues to work in our laboratory.

These funds are more than enough. No application forms, no administration! We have absolute freedom, and this has allowed us to advance our work at great speed. We have advanced so far that we can capture the activity of thought, and translate it into written words, though of course it is only ever an approximation. With the funds, I paid for a cargo boat to move the device here. Axl came too, and we installed it together.

Unfortunately I cannot tell you much about how it works. I am merely its user, and I process and interpret the data. The machine is all Axl's specialism, though he tells me that it detects and subsequently decodes ambient panpsychic wave-particles.

Q: Envious RE funding. Per your report—you captured thoughts of passing clouds. Is that correct?

A: Almost. I think of them as the thoughts of *water*. And why wouldn't water think? It is responsible for all thought. If your brain was *dry*, you would not think, so all brains have

held water, yes? Conversely, all water molecules have passed through a brain at some point. I believe it may have learned from this experience, and mimicked it. But this is simply a hypothesis.

Axl believes consciousness and thought emerge from a concentration of neurons. Clouds are concentrations of vapour, yes? That is, concentrations of molecules that have experienced the insides of brains. Surely it is natural that they would be sites of conscious activity?

Q: Perhaps. One point intrigues me about yesterday's readings. The transcriptions—earlier transcriptions were unformed thoughts, later ones were quite developed. You mentioned a 'cycle'—implying increasing complexity of thoughts over the hours as cloud develops?

A: Precisely the latter. I believe this happens repeatedly—clouds accumulate, molecules become more excited, and so consciousness grows more complex over the lifecycle.

Q: Until...

A: Until it disintegrates into separate rain droplets, and ceases to be a whole entity.

#

Interview discontinued. Janne handed me new printout to examine.

#

[Another torn strip of dot-matrix printout]

#

In the warmth of the air and this rushing within us, we know we are one body, we are I. Within me, within us, lies knowledge gathered over eons. And now I know how it is to be alive.

The energies change. I know this from the currents of deep time: I know the textures of the high air. I am drifting towards a high peak. The air grows forceful. I know my body is approaching the peak. Deep memories emerge. I know what will happen: at this peak, I will become heavy and diverge. I will plummet to earth as separate pieces once more. I will cease to be aware. I will no longer be an I.

I bond my separate pieces together against the push. I amass my energies, my pieces come together,

They grow heavy

And fall to the earth

I lose pieces

I do not want I do not want I do not want I do not want I do not

#

[Another diary page]

#

18 April

Morning: couldn't sleep. Listening to rain all night. Can't un-know it now, all those clouds coming into to sentience only to lose it. More I think about it, more Janne and Axl seem like prophetic figures revealing unimagined wonders to the world.

Will be weird to drink first coffee today knowing it might have been thinking and perceiving last night, just like Janne suggested at start. And it has no means of movement, no way to escape fate. Horrible! Feeling same thing that made me vegetarian, but of course can't survive without water...

We stayed up late last night. Janne told me lots about her + Axl's research. Was riveting. I asked everything, wanted to know it all. Didn't transcribe—felt too restless, too

excited, just wanted to talk like colleagues in a bar after work. (No beer in hut—a shame.)

But then took unexpected turn, Janne confessed she has additional purpose for me. Not simply to translate and tell world in English, though she wants me to do that—just not for a long time yet. Whole trip here was partially a test, to see if I am committed to following evidence trail even if results are strange. Axl had secretly recommended me all along!!! And now there is another task, her real aim. It frightens me.

Best to explain in Janne’s own words, as best I can remember them:

“These consciousness in the air above us, they have no senses. They don’t know what is around them. They are simply pushed and pulled. They try to move, but without perception it is random. There is no coordinating mechanism for learning.”

She leaned forward on her crate at this point. Her expression still vivid in my mind—the hunger of it.

“I propose to find out what would occur if there were such a coordination mechanism. An experienced one.” At this point she put hand to own chest—she will be the mechanism.

That device of hers and Axl’s is not just receiver—also transmitter. The telephone box wired to it has some brain-scan-electrode setup, will somehow merge her mind with that of a chosen cloud. She will sit inside and watch cloud for a time through glass. Likely to take several tries, but aim is to teach it to move, keep it ‘alive’ long enough to learn more, share its thoughts, see what it thinks. I am to be technical assistant, setting up and controlling equipment, checking recordings etc.

Asked her about end-goal. What she plans to do—let it float around, or cause giant flood? Her answer sealed my decision.

“I would explore its deep memory of the world,” she said, “and find ways to record it. Of its life inside every cloud, yes, but also the rivers and oceans, and inside plants and

animals. And if I succeed, I will do the same with another cloud, and then another. Perhaps eventually, we will have some record of everything that has ever happened since the inception of the water molecule.”

This afternoon she will show me how to use equipment. Boat is due to arrive tomorrow to collect me—will cancel. So much to do. Can’t wait to learn.

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[There are no further documents in the package]

END