

## [REVIEW]

# The Return of Repressed-Memory Satanic Ritual Stories

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Book  
Cover

## *Twenty-Two Faces*

By Judy Byington. Tate Publishing, Oklahoma City, 2012. ISBN: 978-1620240328. 428 pp. Softcover, \$19.95.

It is often speculated among those who claim first-hand familiarity with Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) that the many objections raised regarding the scientific legitimacy of this controversial diagnosis are nothing but the propagandizing of those who have a vested interests in maintaining a culture of “denial.” Skeptics, some MPD defenders have resolved, either cannot face the brutal reality of child abuse (the traumas of which are alleged to have fractured the MPD-afflicted psyches into various repressed memory-harboring “personalities”), or—a more sinister take—they are willfully protecting perpetrators. Broad application of this line of argument has proven effective in shielding even the most implausible recovered memory narratives—supposedly brought to consciousness during the course of reintegrating the multiple mind—from scrutiny.

Judy Byington, former therapist and author of *Twenty-Two Faces*, the supposedly true story of an MPD-diagnosed survivor of satanic cult abuse, preemptively strikes at skeptics in her epilogue. “Some contend that Satanic Ritual Abuse [SRA], dissociation [MPD], and repressed memories are false, or don’t exist,” she writes. However, having “interviewed hundreds of SRA survivors, therapists, and police investigators,” as well as having reviewed “dozens of successfully litigated cases that have satanic overtones,” Byington warns that she “would seri-

ously question why one would defend such a stance” (417). To be sure, this is where the battle lines are drawn. To express doubts regarding Byington’s claims of a satanic cult conspiracy will doubtlessly be interpreted—for her convenience—as an assault not only upon dissociation and repressed memories but as a heartless assault upon victims of child abuse in general. After all, if traumas may be repressed and recovered memories are true, then recovery of any narrative, no matter how bizarre, is evidence of its own veracity.

It is, of course, worth pointing out that “recovered memories” are the stuff of past life regression, and that recovered memories form the evidentiary basis of “abductology,” the study of earthly kidnappings perpetrated by extraterrestrial beings.

A voice of authority further warns that disbelief in the *Twenty-Two Faces* narrative is at best naive. Joyanna Silberg, president of the International Society for the Study of Trauma & Dissociation (ISSTD)—an organization for professionals studying dissociative disorders—assures readers in a blurb endorsing the book that she and her peers “are all too familiar with the kinds of crimes and disorders described in *Twenty-Two Faces*.”

However, an honest appraisal of *Twenty-Two Faces* must acknowledge that it is, undeniably, a supernatural tale. The protagonist, Jenny Hill, is born under the auspice of a prophecy,

predestined to “do important things on this earth” (402). Early abuse endows her not only with a convoluted family tree of alternate (“alter”) personalities—some of which sever into further alters of their own—but with extrasensory perception (ESP) as well.

Her abuse is overseen by a cartoon-like villain, Dr. Greenbaum, who manages to fulfill nearly all conspiracy theory stereotypes by being not only Jewish but a *Jewish Nazi* and a *Satanist* brought to the United States under the sponsorship of the CIA.

Greenbaum and his two bumbling teenage henchmen (upon whom the evil doctor liberally applies beatings with his gnarled cane) are like most B-grade villains in that they discuss much of their devious plans while in the act, with Hill remembering every word...including full sentences spoken backward (in Satan-ese, if you will).

For all his powerful alliances, Greenbaum is still careful to ensure that Hill returns home—brainwashed of course—from her demon-appeasing torture sessions on time to finish her chores and enjoy supper, so as not to raise the ire of her parents. However, a senseless twist in the plot comes when we learn that her parents were in on the whole thing all along. (Further narrative incoherence occurs when Hill, after recovering “memories” of her father sexually abusing her and accusing him of such, is nonetheless distraught at not being invited over for the family Christmas.)

The climax of the story comes early in its pages when Hill is spared, by way of divine intervention, from being executed during a ceremonial sacrifice. A barefoot “white-robed male personage, surrounded in a glorious White Light” (393) appears hovering above the altar-bound toddler, sending the Satanic scofflaws scattering in fear.

Hill, a devout Mormon, is exonerated from every misdeed she’s committed—years of prostitution and drug abuse—on the grounds that impious alters were acting without Hill’s conscious knowledge. But if this sounds a

bit much like spirit possession, Byington is clear that the phenomena are separate and that Hill has suffered from both.

Some who are familiar with the Satanism scare of the 1980s and ’90s, may recognize shades of the early “Satanic Panic” classics *Michelle Remembers* by Lawrence Pazder and Michelle Smith (1980) and *Satan’s Underground* by Lauren Stratford (1988). These books, too, were supernatural recovered memory tales (*Michelle Remembers* featuring guest appearances by both Christ and Satan) marketed as true stories. Outlandish as these books self-evidently were, their popularities provoked a growing fear of a hidden satanic threat. Journalists, investigating the claims in each, ultimately debunked even the more mundane elements of the stories, with *Satan’s Underground* being discredited to the point of being withdrawn from publication. Disgraced (yet shameless) Stratford changed her name and was found years later, still posing as a victim of abuse, this time as a Holocaust survivor.

Either unaware of or unconcerned with these facts, Byington lists both books in the *Twenty-Two Faces* bibliography, openly crediting *Michelle Remembers* with bringing the satanic cult epidemic into the public awareness.

The references to spirit possession and ESP contained in *Twenty-Two Faces* are especially interesting given that the book contains a forward by Colin Ross, MD, famed dissociation expert, past president of the ISSTD, and lead author of the Dissociative Disorders Interview Schedule (DDIS), a survey that measures dissociative tendencies. A section of the DDIS questions interviewees regarding their experiences with paranormal phenomena, including possession and ESP. As a psychiatrist, Ross should be concerned about the *perception* of paranormal happenings. However, his endorsement of *Twenty-Two Faces* suggests a belief in their reality. (Ross, in fact, is a known conspiracy theorist twice sued for malpractice related to instilling clients with

false memories of satanic abuse).

Silberberg, Ross, and Byington are by no means unique. The ISSTD—indeed, the entire psychotherapy subculture devoted to dissociative disorders—is fraught with this lunacy. Ideas that in any other context would find one locked in a room devoid of sharp objects still find a credulous audience—ironically, and insultingly—among licensed therapists who, of all people, should be able to distinguish reality from delusion. Organizations like S.M.A.R.T. (Stop Mind-control And Ritual abuse Today)—headed by Neil Brick, a licensed therapist who claims to believe he was once a top-secret brain-washed assassin for the Freemasons/CIA/Illuminati (whether together or separately isn't entirely clear)—hold annual conferences where attendees may not only purchase electromagnetic beam-blocking hats but also learn *from mental health professionals* how theories of dissociation and repression prove their most hysterical conspiracy theory fears. On her website, Byington cites S.M.A.R.T. as an “excellent information” resource.

The time is overdue to stop allowing crass paranoid fantasists to falsely claim a place in the fight against child abuse while flagrantly infecting vulnerable clients with toxic delusions. It is time to call out prurient pulp pornographies like *Twenty-Two Faces* for what they are. And it is, I daresay, high time to remove MPD (now listed as Dissociative Identity Disorder [DID]) from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). The fact is, *Twenty-Two Faces* does not errantly misappropriate DID/MPD to its outrageous narrative. *Twenty-Two Faces* correctly shows DID/MPD for what it has always been—a collaborative delusion between a therapist and an obscenely mistreated client. ■

psychotherapy cults, and false memories. His writings may be found at [www.process.org](http://www.process.org).

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