

Book review on the terror that comes in the night

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



The Terror That Comes In The Night" By David. J. Hufford

Throughout history, human existence has been grounded on a certain pattern of beliefs and traditions that have guided them in their ever-changing environment. Moreover, these sets of beliefs and traditions have compounded to form a formidable culture that has become a point of reference to members of a particular community. However, these beliefs have been limited to what can be explained by the human conscious while ignoring crucial events that make a huge proportion of the human experience.

The book "The terror that comes in the night," by David Hufford seeks to emphasize the importance of such events, and their impact on the individual if such problems are not addressed. A lot of activities occur in the subconscious part of our brains that are difficult to explain. Moreover, such events mostly occur at night when the subconscious mind takes over from the conscious mind while we are asleep. In this book, Hufford does not seek to provide physiological, parapsychological or psychological explanations for traditional beliefs. He adopts a methodology based on empirical data collected from many interviews, surveys and questionnaires. These provide supported explanation for this traditional belief or Old Hag or witch riding. However, he uses an experience centred approach where accounts of such experience that result into traditional beliefs have a clear methodology based on empirical data on how they can be explained and ultimately solved.

In his province of Newfoundland, Hufford identifies a pattern of subjective experiences that his islanders refer to as the "Old Hag". These subjective

experiences come in form of impression of wakefulness, paralysis, accurate perception of surroundings', and fear. He realises that the people in Newfoundland experience the Old Hag frequently, and it has become a belief that is spread throughout the island. As a result, this has become accepted as the tradition of the people.

However, he extends his research across cultures through surveys and secondary data to realise that this patterns of subjective experiences are psychological experiences that might be interpreted according to cultural backings but occur regularly. Therefore, he argues that traditions always stem from subjective experiences rather than cultural sources. However, these subjective patterns of events are difficult to explain and many refer to them as nightmares since they are considered as bad dreams or sleep disturbances.

He seeks to clarify on the established psychological notion that tradition arises from culture rather than experience. Moreover, psychological studies rationalize beliefs and do not consider the events that occur in an experience. As a result, the subjective experience can later be expressed in form of sexual repression, hostility, delusion that is not normal psychological experiences.

Physiologically, the processes of sleep are accompanied by certain physical events that resemble some of the primary events that characterize Old Hag. The factors of sleep paralysis, rapid eye movement during REM sleep hallucination that occurs prior to waking, and aware of wakefulness. However, sleep only provides medical terminologies that help in the description of observable physiological processes. Folklorists have described

these processes as Old Hag just on the basis that they appear together in particular cultural settings.

He further realised that people across different cultures experienced these events. This number constituted fifteen percent of the human population, and included those individuals who had never experienced the Old Hag tradition before. This is because the primary events that he describes in the Old Hag Tradition match the characteristics in different stages of sleep experienced by many individuals across different cultures.

Moreover, it is the realisation and appreciation among a population that they share this experience as a community that leads to its transition from a belief into a tradition. However, it is difficult to establish a concrete relationship between the subjective experiences or the Old Hag tradition and normal dream processes. This is because in the Old Hag tradition, people experience secondary events that other individuals do not experience. For example, it is abnormal to report incidences like an old woman or footsteps while paralysis in sleep is understandable. His work is based on theoretical interpretations that ultimately point out that large portion of humankind is victims of delusions and deceptions, which happen to manifest themselves in similar patterns.

This experience centred approach provides valuable data but does not indicate the source of the culture. However, it defines culture as based on subjective experiences by individuals across different cultures and his primary interest in the validation of an experience rather than the analysis of a tradition. The primary focus of the study was physical experience of the Old Hag because of the myriad interviews illustrating types of the experience

under various settings.

His condemnation of the cultural hypothesis and presentation of his experience source explanations allow us to appreciate the role played by valid experience in traditions. When the subjective experiences occur to individuals in a particular culture or to individuals across different cultures, it becomes a generally accepted among this population. Eventually, the belief evolves across different generations to become accepted among a given population.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that The book "The terror that comes in the night," by David Hufford seeks to emphasize the importance of such events, and their impact on the individual if such problems are not addressed. A lot of activities occur in the subconscious part of our brains that are difficult to explain. Moreover, such events mostly occur at night when the subconscious mind takes over from the conscious mind while we are asleep. In this book, Hufford does not seek to provide physiological, parapsychological or psychological explanations for traditional beliefs. He adopts a methodology based on empirical data collected from many interviews, surveys and questionnaires. These provide supported explanation for this traditional belief or Old Hag or witch riding. However, he uses an experience centred approach where accounts of such experience that result into traditional beliefs have a clear methodology based on empirical data on how they can be explained and ultimately solved. In his province of Newfoundland, Hufford identifies a pattern of subjective experiences that his islanders refer to as the "Old Hag". These subjective experiences come in form of impression of wakefulness, paralysis, accurate perception of

surroundings', and fear. He realises that the people in Newfoundland experience the Old Hag frequently, and it has become a belief that is spread throughout the island. As a result, this has become accepted as the tradition of the people.

However, he extends his research across cultures through surveys and secondary data to realise that this patterns of subjective experiences are psychological experiences that might be interpreted according to cultural backings but occur regularly. Therefore, he argues that traditions always stem from subjective experiences rather than cultural sources. However, these subjective patterns of events are difficult to explain and many refer to them as nightmares since they are considered as bad dreams or sleep disturbances. This paper has therefore comprehensively and coherently reviewed the terror the terror that comes in the night" by David. J. Hufford.

Work Cited

Hufford, David. "The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions". University of Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982. Print.