

The higher strangeness

Secret Life of Uri Geller: CIA masterspy?

Jonathan Margolis

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This is the second book about Geller by Margolis. The first, in 1998, was a biography, *Uri Geller: Magician or Mystic?* Writing that, Margolis began as a sceptic – assuming Geller was a fraud, essentially – and ended up accepting that he wasn't. This is in part a rehash of that with some new material added, the intelligence stuff – work with Mossad and the CIA – that was aired in the TV programme 'The secret life of Uri Geller';¹ plus some further reflections on Geller's life and experiences.

Running through the book is the story of how Geller's credibility was attacked (notably by James Randi) and the consensus formed that he was probably a fake, a magician. Margolis wonders if this wasn't part of the plan, probably done, or certainly encouraged by, the CIA who had been working with Geller in the early 1970s. (Mossad had traded Geller to the Americans for access to a satellite feed.) Trashing Geller's reputation, perhaps they provided the best cover story of all: a fraud.

I never doubted Geller was real. I saw the key bending on television with no-one touching it. It wasn't an illusion created by Geller saying, 'Look, it's bending!', as his denigrators claimed. Many people in this story describe the key/spoon/ring bending: it was Geller's basic calling card. Geller was what he looked like: a man with strange powers who, circa 1970, was both potentially an incredible asset in the Cold War and a big alarm bell about the possible military and intelligence uses of psi by the Soviet bloc. There was a small-scale psi arms race in the 1970s (on the American side tens of millions rather than billions of dollars) and Geller was the star: he could read minds! See into the future! Remote view! Wipe computer discs! Top stuff. And the witnesses to this? Margolis offers us a world-wide parade of scientists and

1 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b037k0c5>>

American intelligence officers.

Some of this story has been described or hinted at before; but this is more detailed, I think. (I don't have the original Margolis biography and my memory of it is slight.) Of course, you can say 'These CIA people and the profs are lying.' But they aren't; senior academics don't put their names to lies like these.

The really fantastic things in Geller's life were not his psychic and telekinetic powers (other people have had/do have those, though not as dramatically as Geller) but the poltergeist-like phenomena which accompanied him: teleportation, objects dematerialising and reappearing elsewhere. And stranger. A group of scientists at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory were working on 'the Geller effect' and d poltergeist-like phenomena: giant birds and miniature UFOs began to appear in their homes; and one man, Don Gregory, was visited by a disembodied arm with a hook instead of a hand. A meeting to discuss these events with two of the CIA officers was interrupted by a loud banging on the office door, followed by the entry of a middle-aged man with only one arm, who apologised and wandered out again. The meeting went after him but he had vanished.² This is David Lynch country; this is like the surreal sequences in his 'Twin Peaks'.³ The freaked-out scientists at Lawrence Livermore stopped work on Geller and the apparitions ceased.

What does *that* mean? No-one knows (not even Geller). But there is an unavoidable sense of *agency* in these events; and in this account Geller has not tried to pooh-pooh the story that his powers arrived after an encounter as a child with a shining globe. Margolis has even found a witness to that event. Close encounters of the third kind? This is what is being suggested.

Robin Ramsay

² The source of this story is the CIA officer, Kit Green.

³ I did ask Google and found no obvious evidence that Lynch knew of this.