

Three Cases of the Reincarnation Type in the Netherlands

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Abstract—This article presents brief summaries of three unsolved Dutch Cases of the Reincarnation Type (CORTs). The author believes these cases show a similar structure as the CORTs studied by Dr. Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia, his associates and other, independent researchers in the field. Therefore, he concludes that it is plausible to interpret these cases in a similar way. Furthermore, at least one of these cases seems to show paranormal features which appear to corroborate a reincarnation hypothesis. The main contribution of this paper may consist of the addition of Dutch CORTs to the literature about reincarnation research.

Keywords: Reincarnation—Cases of the reincarnation type CORTs—paranormal features—transcultural

Introduction

Dr. Ian Stevenson (1987, 1997), his associates and his independent colleagues have collected an impressive database of so-called Cases of the Reincarnation Type (CORTs). A typical case concerns a young child of between two and four who spontaneously makes remarks about a previous life he would have led before his birth. Very often, these remarks contain paranormal information about a historical person who died before the child was born and was unknown to the child's family before he started talking about his previous life. The child usually seems to forget most of these possible memories by the time he is 6 or 7 or when he starts following formal education at primary school. His statements are typically accompanied by emotional behaviour. The child often shows paranormal skills related to his activities in the past life he claims to remember. In many cases, birthmarks and birth defects have been recorded that specifically correspond to the cause or circumstances of death at the end of the claimed past life. CORTs are reported in many different countries and cultures and are not confined to religious or philosophical contexts in which the concept of reincarnation is generally accepted.

This article briefly presents three new unsolved CORTs found in the Netherlands (Rivas, 1998, 2000). The cases were investigated by several teams headed by myself, belonging to the *Foundation for the Scientific Study of Reincarnation* and *Athanasia Foundation*. My main intention in publishing these cases is to show that the Netherlands can be considered a country in which at least some typical CORTs occur. Also, at least one and possibly all of these

unsolved Dutch CORTs seem to possess paranormal features. Finally, some Dutch parents of children who claim to recall their previous lives did not believe in reincarnation before the cases developed, which seems relevant for the interpretation of these CORTs.

The Case of Cerunne

In the Spring of 2001, a friend of mine, Ms. Anja Janssen from Nijmegen, told me that she knew a married couple in Molenhoek who had a daughter with memories of a previous life. I met all the family members, Christine Thijssen, Sirat Bouts, and their four daughters, in May of 2001. My team also interviewed them by phone and asked them questions via (normal) mail on several occasions in 2001 and 2002. The girl who claimed to remember a previous life was called Cerunne and she was seven when I personally met her. Both her parents had some belief in reincarnation before the case developed, although they certainly weren't interested in propagating such a belief. During my investigation of the case, they were both very keen on a precise formulation of their statements even if this meant that the case would seem weaker from a scholarly point of view. Also, Mr. Bouts seemed quite eager to know my motivation for conducting the investigation before he would participate in it. Finally, Cerunne's father admitted he did not value scholarly research as much as meditation as a way to find truth. Thus, we have no reason to suppose the case was fabricated to promote a particular belief in reincarnation. Instead, both parents just seemed interested in sharing their experiences and in a possible verification of their daughter's statements. It is also important to note that Anja Janssen was mistaken about the daughter who would have had memories of a previous life. She thought it was Fanja, the youngest daughter, who was only three when I first met the family. If Cerunne's parents would have made up a story, it is very strange that they didn't choose Fanja as its protagonist.

Cerunne's mother, Christine Thijssen, had an announcing dream in the eighth month of her pregnancy with her daughter. She saw a strange shamanistic 'Pictic' woman in her forties, barefoot and dressed in fur, who held deer antlers in her hand. It seemed this woman told her telepathically that she was going to give birth to a daughter and that she should call her 'Deer'. Christine had not had a scan before the dream, so that she was unaware of the sex of her unborn baby. The woman also told her that the child had had a difficult past life. This experience made the parents choose a Celtic name for their daughter, Cerunne, which is derived from the Celtic divinity Cerunnos or Kernunnos who was associated with deer and a world between death and rebirth.

During the first two years of her life, Cerunne was a silent child but very quick in her motor development. She also seemed a bit boyish, both physically and psychologically. When Cerunne was about two or three years old, she spontaneously told her parents about a previous life as a (male) sailor. She commented on the waves in a swimming pool saying that she used to see

waves that were much higher, “as tall as a house.” She also told them that life at sea could be very strange. Sometimes there had been a storm all night and the next morning everything was completely silent. Often Cerunne would draw a sailing-ship and she claimed that the passenger-ship the sailor had sailed on had been called the Vurk. Aboard, he had many tasks, including watching the sail and pennants and being on watch, but also caring for the passengers. She also described where on the ship the adult passengers and the children were lying during the night, and stated that they didn’t have beds or hammocks, just a pillow and a blanket. They urinated somewhere on the floor, as there wasn’t any sanitation around. There were dead cows aboard, off which they cut pieces of meat. They also ate raw meat. Sometimes there were fights with knives among the sailors aboard, but she said the sailor whose life she claimed to recall couldn’t stand rudeness and aggression himself. Also, there was an accident in which a friend of his fell from a mast and broke his back. There was a large rudder. She also mentioned the word “moekille” (Dutch spelling), a pointed walking stick which was also used as a weapon. Her own name when she was a male sailor had been Peer and he was a lean man with a black beard. The ship sailed to la Garoonya or Karoonya (English spelling) to pick up poor families and take them to a harbour with palm trees, on an island. She also mentioned the name India in this respect. There were mountains in the background and only a few small shops. The poor families were not slaves and they were fair-skinned. Sometimes the ship moored illegally. On the island Peer sometimes slept in filthy huts, but the inhabitants were very nice, relaxed and easy-going.

When Cerunne was seven, her memories seemed largely intact to her parents, but she felt too embarrassed to talk about them with strangers such as myself. She did confirm, however, that she had memories of a life as Peer. In this period, she had just told her parents that Peer had been at least 95 years old when he died and had remained fit for most of his life. She mentioned dry biscuits they had been eating aboard the ship. She commented: ‘We were healthy men’.

A remarkable skill that might be related to her memories of a life as a sailor was an unlearned agility in climbing. She showed this skill from a very young age and never suffered from fear of heights. She couldn’t swim, however, though she was convinced she could. According to her parents, she also showed a toughness uncommon in girls of her age.

Our team, lead by historian Pieter van Wezel, established that in the 19th and early 20th Century la Coruña (which is phonetically very close to la Karoonya) used to be an important harbour for immigration to the Spanish colonies sometimes referred to as *las Indias*, including Cuba, an island with palm trees. The (white) Galician immigrants were so poor that they were known as “Galician slaves” (*escravos galegos*). The word moekille can be related to mak(h)ila or makil(l), an originally Basque pointed walking stick which was also used as a weapon. The makila had become known in the Galician region of La Coruña through the pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela. The names Peer and Vurk

may with some imagination be seen as distortions of the Spanish name Pedro and Barco or Barca (ship). We established that Vurk is not the name of a Scandinavian (or Dutch) ship and that as such it doesn't mean boat or ship either.

In my view, these features taken together seem to suggest a paranormal process rather than cryptomnesia or childish fantasy.

There also appears to be a strange link between Christine's announcing dream about a shamanistic priestess and La Coruña. The city of La Coruña, or part of it, was originally founded by the Celtic people of the Brigantes and known as Brigantia. Many elements of Galician culture are derived from this Celtic heritage. Besides, the divinity which was worshipped at Brigantia, Briga, was a fertility goddess and therefore thematically related to Kernunnos.

The Case of Kees

In February of 1997, Athanasia Foundation was contacted by a Mrs. Marja M.-V. who had been asked by theologian Dr. Joanne Klink (1994), author of an important book on Dutch CORTs, to tell me about her son's memories of a previous life. She wrote me that from the age of about two, her son Kees (pseudonym) had repeatedly crowed: "My heart stopped beating, then I went growing in the tummy and then my heart started beating again!" He was beaming with joy and threw his hands up in the air to express his delight. He repeated this ritual about twice or three times a week for months in a row. It was only when he had reached the age of three-and-a-half to four that he could formulate what he meant by this enigmatic exclamation. Mother and son were sitting on his bed together when he told her that he had lived before. He was called *Armand* then, and was not very old when he died, but not very young either. To his mother's surprise, he pronounced the name Armand with the typical French nasal sound. He had a girlfriend and they were engaged to get married. Next, Kees described a battle-field on which he was threatened by tall, strong and terrifying macho-men he termed "he-men." They had already killed all of his friends. He had laid on his belly and held a gun in his hands. All of a sudden he was hit in the back and his heart started beating in a very irregular pace. He was overcome by fear. Kees told his mother that he had seen the enemy getting closer to him and hitting him a second time.

When Kees was about seven, he added some details about what happened to him after he died. An angel came for him and took him to God who was pure goodness, the Big Light, and humour (sic). It was very difficult for Kees to describe the other realm and he told his mother it could not be recorded on a slide (sic). There was a beautiful waterfall and flowers and trees with delicious fruits, better than all the sweets in the world. Kees resisted the angels when after a long time they urged him to reincarnate. He did not at all feel like returning to earth. However, the angels assured him that they would stand by him and God would have added that it was his own responsibility to lead a good life (sic).

As a young child, Kees suffered from a severe phobia of dying, as it reminded him of his own painful death. It took his parents quite some effort to convince him that the dying process he recalled is not exactly very common.

In 1997, Kees was 11 when I interviewed him. He still had vivid memories of his death and even added a new element to his mother's account. He recalled he had lost a good friend whose wife had died during labour and claimed he had taken care of his son. He also remembered that an angel told him this adopted son was doing well, so that he shouldn't worry about him.

The Case of Myriam R.

Myriam R. was a woman of 31 when we met her at a so-called 'paranormal fancy-fair' in 1996. Born in Leiden, she claimed that as a young child of about three or four (i.e. around 1968) she had spontaneously remarked that her previous mother used to wear the same kind of dress as her present mother did. She asked her mother to take it off as it reminded her of her unpleasant past life in a desert-like environment. In her previous life, she had to take care of her brothers and sisters and look for food in the desert. One day, she had to fetch some water at a well, and she died in a sand storm. Though remaining unverifiable, her memories were quite extensive. For instance, Myriam recalled the appearance of her parents, a wooden house with a porch, and the respect she had felt for elderly people.

A friend of mine, Mr. Gerard M. stayed in New Mexico for some time as part of a social project and he was struck by Myriam's story. He declared that it reminded him very much of living conditions in the deserts of this state. The wooden porches Myriam had described would be quite common there as well. Gerard participated in our research during a visit to Myriam's home in Alphen aan den Rijn. Though he is a Roman Catholic and does not believe in reincarnation himself, he was struck by the lack of sensationalism on Myriam's part. There were months between the several interviews we conducted with Myriam and her story always contained the same elements.

Soon after we interviewed Myriam, we also got in touch with Myriam's mother who confirmed that she had indeed told her about such a previous life when she was about 3 or 4 years old. There were no discrepancies between her testimony and the story Myriam told us. She explicitly confirmed that Myriam was about three to four years old when she made her statements; that she compared her dress to that of a previous mother; that she told her about an unpleasant life in a desert; that she had to take care of her brothers and sisters and look for food; and that she died in a sand storm.

Apart from her memories of a previous life, Myriam also claims to have memories of an intermission period after her life in a desert-like environment. She found herself in a very beautiful afterlife. In the present life, she experienced a Near-Death Experience during a caesarean section which strongly reminded her of these memories of an intermediate state.

It is important to note that her Roman Catholic parents certainly did not believe in reincarnation when Myriam told them about a past life. Also, we have no reason to believe that Myriam embellished her story to attract our attention.

Discussion

The three case-studies I have briefly presented in this paper seem ‘classic’ in that they show the same basic structure as most other cases in this field. I have indicated why I believe the cases aren’t based on attention-seeking or attempts at proselytising beliefs about reincarnation. Therefore, I think it is a matter of parsimony to interpret these unsolved CORTs in a similar way as other classic cases. Also, the apparently paranormal features in at least one of these cases, that of Cerunne, seem to suggest that the reincarnation hypothesis may be the most fitting interpretation of them. The case of Cerunne may seem stronger in this respect than the other two cases, though they appear to show the same basic structure as well.

The occurrence of Dutch cases of children who claim to recall previous lives can be seen as corroborating evidence of the concept of Cases of the Reincarnation Type as a transcultural, natural phenomenon. Perhaps the addition of Dutch CORTs to the literature about reincarnation research may be seen as the main contribution of this paper.

Furthermore, in two of the CORTs there is mention of intermission experiences which may well occur more frequently in Dutch cases. Also, all three subjects seem to retain their memories longer than the average subject of Cases of the Reincarnation Type. Further research is needed to establish if these features may be typical of Dutch (or more generally, European) cases and if so, what causes these specific characteristics.

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