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magonia



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WELCOME TO MAGONIA

MAGONIA

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Magonia is an independent journal devoted to a broad examination of anomalous phenomena and their interaction with society and the individual. It is published independently by the Editors, and has no connection with any other magazine or group. Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily shared by the Editor.

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With this issue, Magonia enters a new phase. Firstly, we welcome the many former Common Ground readers who join us with this issue. We hope you will find Magonia as informative and stimulating as Common Ground always managed to be. Secondly, you will already have noticed that Magonia has expanded - to 28 pages. This is a tangible result of the extra input - both literary and financial - from Kevin McClure and Common Ground. This gives us an opportunity, not only to extend our coverage in line with our original aims when we adopted our present title, but to make the magazine more attractive, with the use of graphics, and a range of new features. We have given our two most prolific writers a page apiece for regular columns, and we aim to carry on some of Common Ground's most popular features - journal reviews, for instance.

We hope that the new Magonia will be able to combine the best elements of both magazines, yet forge its own individual character.

DOWN TO BASICS

Kevin McClure

I MUST admit that it comes as something as a relief to bring *Common Ground* to a close after ten decidedly lively issues. It has served its purpose, and I'm looking forward to the chance to spend time on some independent research in some new areas. Editing a magazine in our field is a mixed blessing - you meet and correspond with some fascinating people, read the best of contributions to our literature long before anyone else, and have the opportunity to wield influence, for better or worse. But it's very easy to lose your perspective, and I wonder if my vigour in trying to defend what I regard as intelligent paranormal research against the excesses and absurdities of the earth mysteries mob has not led to a certain degree of myopia. Perhaps those who are fascinated by the primitive to the extent that it comes close to ancestor-worship are better ignored than constantly brought to public attention. I suspect that time could be better spent.

So what to do? After hacking around in the paranormal field for some sixteen years or so, writing a variety of articles, a monograph, a book, and editing CG for a few years, rather irregularly, what would be my most useful contribution? Apart, that is, from the considerable pleasure of becoming involved in *Magonia*. As I've said, I reckon that the time for persistent criticism is over, that the efforts of others deserve better than constant carping. This is not to say that all is right, or that there are not still criticisms to be made. But *Magonia* has a different function from CG, and a different readership, a much higher proportion of it abroad. It is a repository of ideas, rather than an exchange and compendium of practice, as CG was meant to be. And in passing it is worth saying that ASSAP now seems to be on a much sounder course than when I last commented on it. Not thanks to any intervention of mine, but

because common-sense will usually out in most situations.

I think I'm going to try a theory, or model, or whatever word is in vogue at present. It's probably something a good many of us should try to do, but it's a very daunting task, which is why I hope to enlist the help of *Magonia* readers in establishing the basics of it, and then in commenting on and developing it when I put it in some coherent form. I hope that will be in the very next issue.

Two things I certainly can't try to do. One is to explain away the vast range of phenomena, and the repeated occurrence of those phenomena, of which we have substantial evidence, albeit anecdotal rather than experimental. And the other is to tell you all about the interconnecting or intermingling alternative universes, or the summerland where the good spirits live, or faraway planets or any other part of the panoply of the definitively unprovable, that somehow is made to derive from the same set of reported events.

If we start from the premise that there is a question to be answered, rather than debunking without respect for the huge number of bewildered witnesses who have provided us with our raw material, I think there is one vital choice to be made before we set about serious investigation. This choice involves the decision as to whether we are dealing with human abilities and activities alone; or whether we are looking for an influence, a form of intelligence, external to the purely human. This decision involves a vital choice between possible cosmologies, and must surely be a prerequisite of any coherent investigation.

I have long believed in the survival of individual human consciousness after bodily death, though it is some time since I believed in an external, non-human explanation for any aspect of the UFO problem. I cannot any more provide evidence for the former than I can prove the non-existence of the latter, but I'm sure we all have some beliefs with which we feel particularly comfortable and would not like to have unsettled. Such are mine. Yet our first responsibility must surely be to accept as the most reasonable explanation for any phenomenon that which is least unreasonable, unless we have any clear evidence to the contrary. And on that basis, after a good deal of thought, any theory I put forward must (unless other evidence arises) rest on the premise that there is no external agency involved - much as I would like to believe otherwise. This will involve assuming a very wide range of psi and ESP abilities indeed, more than

would be accepted even by the average intelligent Spiritualist, far more than psychic researchers would contemplate. But it is more reasonable to assume uncomprehended human abilities than unknown non-human ones. We know we are here, we do not know that they are.

Unless I am labouring under a long-lived misapprehension, it is this latter problem that *Magonia* is primarily about. While there has been vast human experience of encounters with the apparently non-human, and what has been reported is likely to be only a small proportion of the whole, we have no solid objective evidence for any of it. And the anecdotal evidence points in so many different ways at once, that if there is one common source our perception of it is wholly unsatisfactory. The first task in sorting out this 'experience without evidence' is surely to de-mystify wherever we can, to remove the pseudo religious trappings that surround so many reported experiences. And then to establish the features that recur within those experiences, establish patterns, and attempt to interpret them.

The access of any researcher to cases must inevitably be less than total - and it may always be the vital link that we miss. To this end, I would like to ask all of you to send me brief (or otherwise!) details of the one case in your area of parapsychological research, from Spiritualism, to ufology, to hauntings, to any other point of your own choice, which you feel most comprehensively suggests the work and existence of an agency external to even a humanity that can become aware of information over long distances, appear to others at times of crisis, bend metal, heal disease and produce physical phenomena without apparatus external to the body. For I suspect all these abilities can be seen as being displayed, often unwittingly, by various individuals over the past eighty years, and do not of themselves argue against my provisional proposition that we are alone.

If you'll be good enough to send me your favourite case, event, or investigation report (in confidence, as requested), I will collate these and present and review them in *Magonia* as we go on. I am sure it will be a valuable and intriguing activity, and will hopefully, with your comments, start to present us with a consensus of conclusions. Who knows - we might even be able to publish our results as a separate entity!

Please write to me, from wherever you are in the world, at 11 Asquith Boulevard, Leicester, England. I'll look forward to hearing from you.



APOCALYPSE WHEN?

ROGER SANDELL

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the heyday of belief in prophecy. Popular chapbooks told of the amazing abilities of figures like Mother Shipton, and quoted after the event verses which appeared to foretell events such as the Spanish Armada and the Civil War. Real historical figures like Roger Bacon might be invoked, and prophecies allegedly discovered hundreds of years after their death would turn out to be relevant to the news of the day.

THE writings of Nostradamus are the only survivors of this literature that continue to be republished and evoke a response in public consciousness. To some extent it

is easy to see why. Alone among the alleged authors of the prophecies of his era, Nostradamus was a real person rather than a legendary figure, who published his prophecies himself. However, the reputation of Nostradamus remains a semi-underground one, with many who have never read a single book on the subject vaguely believing "there must be something in it", or aware that Nostradamus is credited with foreseeing World War II or future nuclear devastation.

The reception of Jean Charles de Fontbrune's book **Nostradamus** [1] has been the most remarkable recent manifestation of belief in Nostradamus. Its first appearance

in France in 1980 was the subject of major news stories in the popular press of several European countries, and even inspired cover stories in journals such as *Der Spiegel* and *Die Ziet*. An opinion poll in France shortly after its publication revealed, astonishingly, that 75% of the French population were aware of this book, and 25% believed its forecasts of the future.

To a large extent this book has now discredited itself. It is now 1985 and there is no sign of the Soviet-Arab invasion of Europe, which should already have taken place, according to de Fontbrune's readings. And while sudden surprises do occur in the political world, there seems little reason to expect the restoration of the French monarchy by 1986, his final date for these events. (These facts however did not prevent Hutchinson bringing out the British edition in 1983, when some predictions had already been falsified, and Corgi from reprinting it last year, an eloquent testimony to the scant regard publishers have for their own books on occultism and their low opinion of the intelligence of potential readers.) However, since this is unlikely to be the last Nostradamus book, it is worth examining de Fontbrune's methods in some detail.

To vindicate the prophet's previous record, the author translates Nostradamus's sixteenth century verses into modern English (or French in the book's original edition) and compares them with later events from the sixteenth century to the present. A wide variety of events are claimed as fulfilling Nostradamus's predictions, including the careers of Louis XIV and Napoleon, the Russian Revolution and the World Wars. To a casual reader the results may seem impressive. However it does not take a very detailed examination to arouse great doubts not only about Nostradamus, but about de Fontbrune. First there are some cases in which the prophecy manifestly bears no relation to the event de Fontbrune claims fulfilled it. Take for instance the prophecy

*L'aisne Royal sur coursier voligeant
Picquer viendra si rudiment courir;
Gueule lipée pied dans l'estrein pleignant
Traine tire, horriblement mourir.*

[The king's eldest son, on a runaway horse, will fall suddenly headfirst in its rush, the horse's mouth being injured in the lip, with the rider's foot caught, groaning dragged and pulled, he will die horribly (all translations de Fontbrune's)] This specifically describes a riding accident in which a rider falls with his foot trapped in the stirrup and is dragged by the horse. de Fontbrune is obviously unable to find any royal heir who has died in this manner, so he claims

this relates to the death in 1842 of the eldest son of Louis Phillippe of France, who, as the book itself makes clear, died by being thrown out of a coach pulled by a bolting horse, a very different matter.

Other prophecies bear more relation to their alleged fulfillment, but are too vague to be taken seriously. For example, de Fontbrune solemnly claims the failure of East-West disarmament talks is indicated by the prophecy:

*Plusieurs viendront et parleront de paix
Entre monarques et seigneurs bien puissant
Mais ne sera accordé de si près
Que ne se rendent plus qu'atres obeissant.*

[There will be talk of peace between powerful heads of state but peace will not be agreed for the heads of state will be no wiser than any others] Surely it would be tedious to list the number of failed peace conferences that could be claimed to fulfil this prophecy.

The game of finding alternative interpretations of Nostradamus can be carried on indefinitely.

The game of finding alternative interpretations of Nostradamus can be carried on indefinitely. Thus de Fontbrune claims that the Jewish settlement of Palestine is foretold by:

*Nouveaux venus lieu basti sans défence
Occuper la place par lors inhabitable
Prez, maison, champs, villes, prendre à
plaisance
Faim, peste, guerre, arpen long labourable*

[Newcomers will build town without defence and occupy hitherto uninhabitable places. They will take with pleasure fields, houses, lands and towns. Then famine, sickness and war shall be on the land tilled for a long time] In fact these words could apply equally well to the opening of the American West, followed by the Civil War and the Indian Wars, or to the British settlement of the Falkland Islands and the recent war.

Even when specific place names are given, plenty of ambiguity remains. de Fontbrune relates the lines:

*Par vie et mort changé regne d'Ongrie,
La loy sera plus aspre que service...*

[Power will be changed by life and death in Hungary. The law will be more pitiless than customs...] to the Hungarian uprising

of 1956, but they fit the Communist revolt of 1919 or the nationalist rising of 1848 just as well. Indeed, it would be hard to think of a country that, since the time of Nostradamus, has not had some kind of revolution to which these words might apply.

There are other serious objections to Fontbrune. The most serious is that, like most modern commentators, he makes no attempt to put Nostradamus in the context of his own time and analyse what his languages and references meant to his original audience. As anyone who has ever read any commentaries to Shakespeare will know, this is a job which as with any writer of the past calls for a great deal of knowledge. With someone like Nostradamus, who deliberately cloaked his words in obscurity, it is doubly difficult.

De Fontbrune refers to this problem in his introduction, and at times makes a great play of deciphering Nostradamus's obscure classical references. However, at other times he chooses to ignore the plain meaning that the prophecies would have conveyed to their original audience. Thus he takes references to 'les rouges' as meaning 'reds' in the modern sense, whereas in the sixteenth century it would have been understood as referring to Catholic cardinals. One particularly blatant example is his interpretation of the verse that states:

*Du Lac Lemman les sermons fascheront,
Des jours seront reduits par les semaines
Puis mois, puis, an puis tous défailliront
Les magistrats damneront leurs lois vaines.*

[The speeches at the Lake of Geneva will cause ferment; days will be followed by weeks then months, then years, then everything will collapse and legislators will curse their vain laws.]

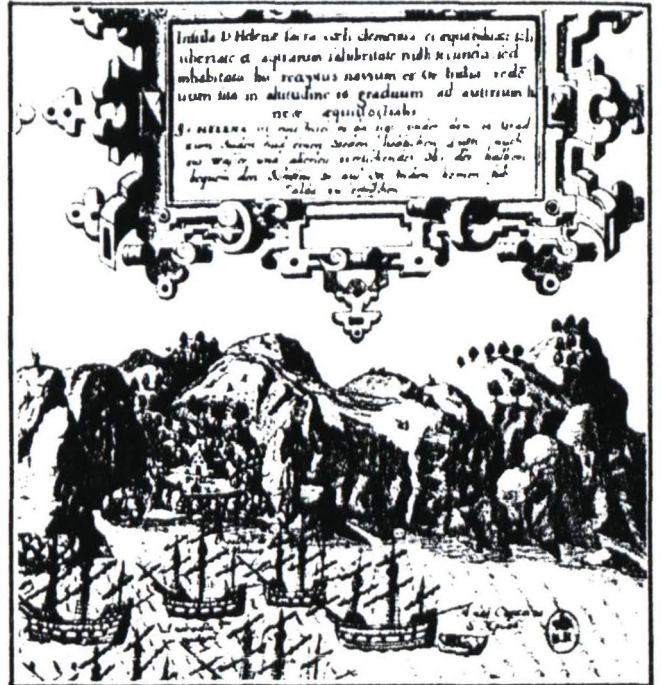
This is taken to refer to Geneva's modern role as a centre for peace conferences, and neglect of the Geneva Convention in modern warfare. But it would have been obvious to any reader of Nostradamus's time that this was simply a prediction of the fall of Calvinist Geneva, which was then known throughout Europe for its long sermons and harsh laws.

When one attempts to look at Nostradamus in this light, many apparently impressive hits start to fade away. Like many writers de Fontbrune is impressed by one verse that contains the names of two twentieth century Spanish leaders: Rivera and Franco (in 'Castelfranco'). However, Rivera and Castelfranco are both towns in northern Italy, where many wars were fought in the sixteenth century. There is a similar explanation for the repeated claim (not, however,

to be found in de Fontbrune's book) that Nostradamus's mentions of 'Hister' are prophecies of the life of Hitler. Although this is perhaps the best known of Nostradamus's 'hits', in fact Hister is simply the Latin name for the Danube, and it is clear from the contexts in which this name appears that Nostradamus is writing of a river, not a person.

Worse is to come. There are places where Fontbrune's translations into modern language are gravely misleading. For some reason he seems to be determined to conceal from his readers that astrology is central to the prophet's writings. In one instance he translates the line:

Satur au boef, love en l'eau, Mars an fleiche
as: When the time comes for violence and revolution wars will spread. It clearly means nothing of the kind, and is an astrological reference to Saturn in Taurus, Jupiter in Aquarius and Mars in Sagittarius. On other



St Helena: "A rocky island with a population of 5000"

occasions he misrepresents the original to make it appear that a prophecy has been fulfilled. When we are told that Nostradamus wrote:

The leader who will have lead the immortal people far from its own sky will end his life in the middle of the sea on a rocky island with a population of 5,000 whose language and customs are different.

it seems a convincing prediction of Napoleon's exile on St Helena, but on turning to the original one finds:

*Le chef qu'aura conduit people infiny
Loing de son cil, de meurs et langue estrange
Cinq mil en Crete et Tessalie finy.*

Crete and Thessaly have somehow become "a rocky island". There are many similar examples; the line

Le saint empire viendra en Germanie

becomes "The Russians will come into Afghanistan". We are told that Russia is 'le saint empire' because of its traditional name of Holy Russia, but there is no hint of how 'Germanie' has become Afghanistan.

Can misrepresentation go further? Indeed it can. The whole context of the prophecies is misrepresented. The majority of them come from the **Centuries**, Nostradamus's main collection of prophetic verses, but some of them are reprinted from another of his works, the **Presages**. However the reader is not informed that the **Presages** were a sort of almanac with predictions attached to specific months in the immediate future, very unsuccessfully. De Fontbrune ignores this, and links verses from the **Presages** with events centuries after Nostradamus.

He also suppresses the introduction Nostradamus wrote to his original **Centuries** in which he gives a prose outline of his predictions for the future of Europe, which bears no resemblance to anything that has really happened. For example he predicts a revival of the Venetian Empire so that by the end of the eighteenth century it would be as powerful as Rome. The compiler quotes merely half a sentence from this introduction, and does it in such a way that makes his deliberate misrepresentation clear. Nostradamus foretells that the eighteenth century will see a major persecution of the church which will last to 1792. De Fontbrune takes the second half only of this sentence as quotes it as: "It [the French monarchy] will last till 1792".

From the past, de Fontbrune moves on to depict an immediate future (when the book was written) in which Europe is invaded by Soviet and Arab armies, liberated by Anglo-American forces. A restored French monarch, King Henry, completes the rout of the invaders. Apart from the presence of Russians and Americans all these themes do in fact correspond to important elements in the prophecies of Nostradamus, but here again they must be taken within the context of their times.

Most of the prophecies relate to what Nostradamus expected for his near future. He states in his introduction that he cloaks his prophecies in obscure language to protect himself from the authorities, a procedure

that would be pointless if he really thought they related to events centuries hence which would be meaningless to his contemporaries. There are certainly many verses that indicate he expected a major war between Christendom and Islam in the future, but this would hardly be surprising in an era when the Turks still threatened Vienna and Arab pirates raided all over the Mediterranean. Similarly the lines de Fontbrune interprets as referring to an Anglo-American landing in France against the invaders do indicate that Nostradamus expected to see another era when the English occupied much of France as they did in the Middle Ages. Once again, with the English only expelled from Calais in 1555, the year he published his **Centuries**, and English kings still formally claiming the French throne, this would not have seemed surprising to his contemporaries. As for the all-conquering Henry, all the evidence is that Nostradamus expected his contemporary, King Henry II of France to fulfill this role, in accordance with the conventions of the prophetic literature of the period. This frequently proclaimed that some contemporary ruler would prove to be a messianic figure who would unite Europe, reconcile the churches and conquer Jerusalem. Oliver Cromwell, Edward VI of England and Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden were all candidates in different writings. [2]



Oliver Cromwell: another candidate for Messiah?

Much interesting background to Nostradamus is to be found in the book by David Pitt Francis [3], who, unlike de Fontbrune, makes a serious effort to present Nostradamus in the context of his times and as a result comes to largely sceptical conclusions. However, in the process he does resort to some dubious arguments. His attempt to compile a statistical analysis of Nostradamus does not seem convincing to me, in view of the difficulty of properly quantifying much of

the data. Neither does there seem to be much real evidence for his suggestion that some later rulers may have deliberately undertaken certain acts to make it look as if Nostradamus predicted their actions.

It is not until the final section that it becomes clear that the author is an evangelical Christian, who believes that some of Nostradamus's successes may have come from his knowledge of the prophetic books of the Bible. I find this suggestion neither necessary or convincing, although, like most other authors of the prophetic literature of the period, Nostradamus was probably influenced by the apocalyptic sections of the Bible.

The revival of interest in Nostradamus

Although Nostradamus is by far the best known of prophetic writers who attempted to descry the future history of Europe, his was by no means alone; there is a whole literature of such prophecy, one example is examined here by

WOJTEK GAWORZEWSKI

If it could be proved that prophecy exists, i.e. that some human beings can accurately forecast future events which could not have been predicted using conscious or subconscious reasoning power, then it would be a powerful boost to our understanding the nature of time, and perhaps using it.

Despite the vast quantity of prophecies published, from the Bible onwards, and the even vaster literature of theories on how precognition might work, examples of verifiable prediction are extremely rare (a recent book by Jeanne Dixon confidentially gave 10 predictions for 1984 - she got 2 out of 10). I was therefore excited to discover what appeared to be a remarkable prophecy of the election of Pope John Paul II to the Papacy, made ninety years ago. It was the more remarkable in that I found it amongst the bad grammar and obscure verbiage of a chap-book prophecy written for political purposes.

England now is mercifully free of this variety of literary undergrowth - prophecies

at the present time is an interesting phenomenon. De Fontbrune was probably fortunate in that his book, which touched much of the interest off, first appeared in 1980, at a time when international tension was growing and fears of a nuclear war were reaching public consciousness. Although there is no real reason to believe Nostradamus foresaw any of this, the revival of interest in centuries-old apocalyptic works is a very real sign of the times.

REFERENCES: 1. FONTBRUNE, Jean-Charles. *Nostradamus Countdown to Apocalypse*. Hutchinson 1983, Corgi, 1984. 2. THOMAS, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Weidenfeld, 1971. 3. FRANCIS, David Pitt. *Nostradamus, Prophecies of Present Times?* Aquarian Press, 1984.

written to score political points, influence public opinion, or just for the self-aggrandisement of the author. However in Germany, France and eastern Europe this kind of writing has been widespread for 200 years. An example, translated below, was given to me by a relative in the 1950's. It is typical of the genre: obscure, ungrammatically written and jingoistic. It was written to comfort a people who had once had a great empire, had lost it, and were not to regain independence for another 25 years.

Analysis of 'hits and misses' in such a prophecy is difficult. Each new edition printed tends to be doctored to make it conform with what has happened. This one seems to have been left alone, but the earliest text I have dates to the 'fifties, and I cannot vouch for events which occurred before then. However the lines:

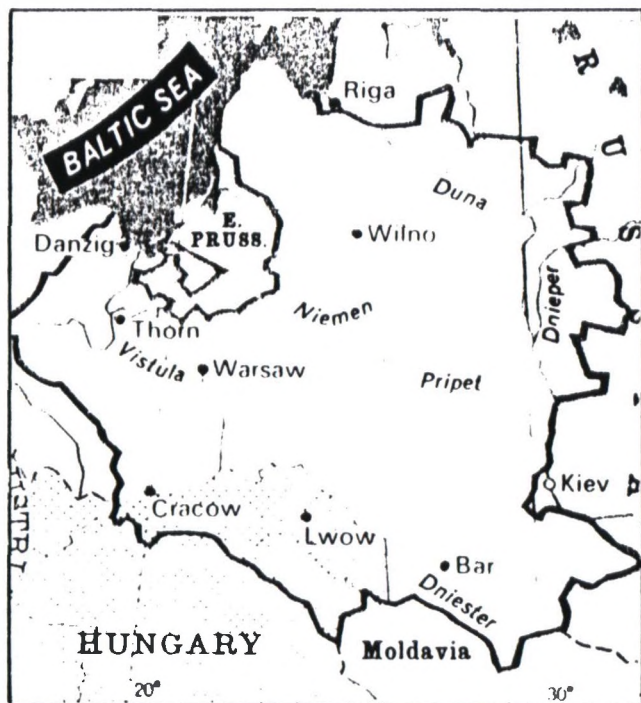
"...will give three crowns

To the anointed one from Krakow"

seems to be a very clear forecast of the triple crown of the Papacy being given to Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Krakow in 1979. But is it? The tenor of the whole prophecy speaks of Poland's rise to eminence. A Polish Pope would be quite a likely ingredient is such a scenario.

If a Polish Pope were to be elevated he would probably be based in Griezno, Warsaw or Krakow, the three main centres of Church activity. Of these in 1894, Krakow was under Austrian rule, and the Church had a good deal of freedom. In Griezno and Warsaw, occupied by Lutheran Prussians and Orthodox Russians, Catholicism was discouraged.

Even so, had someone predicted even in 1978 that a Polish Pope would be elected in 1979 it would have been a remarkable feat. Should there be a union of Hungary, Romania and Poland in the next few years - remember, you read it first in *Magonia!*



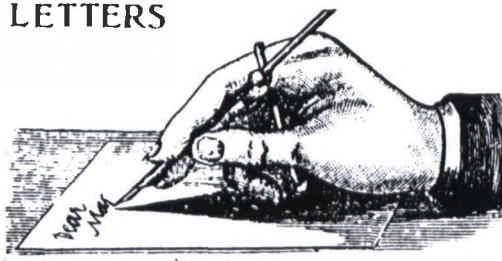
The Polish realm before partition between Austria-Hungary, Prussia and Russia.

The first part of the prophecy (the text is too long to be given in full here) is a summary of events in Poland and the rest of Europe since 1884 to the time of the Second World War, in flowery and sometimes obscure symbolism. As mentioned above, it seems likely that most of this is the result of subsequent accretions, up to the nineteen fifties. The later part of the prophecy continues:

*The Danube again lounges in luxury,
When peace comes to Warsaw
Three kings water their horses in it.
Three rivers of the world will give three crowns
To the anointed one from Krakow
Four allied forces
Will pledge him allegiance
The Hungarian and Pole, when they join hands
Three countries together with Romania
Will join in eternal union. The Crimean Tartar,
when he reaches the river
Although he will not change his religion
Will ask for Poland's powerful protection
And will be faithful to the land.
A Poland will arise from sea to sea*
Wait half a century for this.
God's mercy will always protect us
So, man, suffer or pray.*

*From the Baltic to the Black Sea, the frontiers of Poland in the 16th Century.

LETTERS



Dear John Rimmer

In his 'Plea for the ETH' John Harney referred approvingly to Papagiannis's idea that aliens are using the asteroid belt to obtain raw materials for refuelling and refurbishing their fleets. One of Papagiannis's articles on this theme was published in *The Journal of Transient Aerial Phenomena* [Jan. 1982], and I commented on it in the next issue of that Journal. To avoid repetition let me say just that P's ideas are specious, unsound, speculative, impausible and naive. There is absolutely no reason to suppose that aliens lurk among the asteroids, and good reason to suppose they do not. For one thing, an interstellar spacecraft would expend so much energy in its deceleration phase as it approached the sun that we would be bound to detect it. It would make no difference that it stopped at the asteroids.

The ETH exists to explain UFOs, but what are UFOs? Competent investigation shows that most UFOs are IFOs, and it can be argued (indeed it ought to be argued) that the small residue of unexplained reports exists because of the lack of adequate information or adequate investigation. Granted these two latter requirements, all UFO reports would be found to be IFO reports.

Of course, the one thing the UFO movement will not recognise is that there are no UFOs! Until it brings itself to face this possibility it will have no claim to scientific respectability. I claim that the evidence exists already to conclude that UFOs (as alien craft) do not exist, and in that event the ETH has no reason for existence. In short there is no evidence that aliens are visiting Earth, or have ever done so.

The lack of such evidence, and the implausibility of the ETH has led some to adopt less conventional hypotheses (e.g. Jenny Randles's Quasi-Conscious theory). Again, because there are no UFOs these hypotheses have no justification; in any case they are mere flights of fancy. Randles in chasing dreams and is in danger of losing grip on reality.

Yours sincerely

Steuart Campbell, Edinburgh.



UFO stories constitute a major theme of modern folklore; not necessarily the 'pure' folklore of oral tradition, but a contemporary folklore transmitted by the popular media. This is a not altogether novel situation, as there is no doubt that much 'traditional' folklore was similarly mediated by means of chapbooks, broadsides, tracts, sermons and almanacs, etc., rather than by word of mouth.

SAUCERS & BROOMSTICKS

Peter Rogerson

UFOLOGY belongs in a rather special facet of folklore, that of **participative folklore**. People actually have UFO experiences, they do not just read about them or hear of them from 'friend of a friend' or 'whale tumour' stories. Instead of merely listening to a tale the witness becomes an actor in a drama, scripted by the influence of the tales, and made manifest in outer reality by the 'perceptual gap' of radical misperception.

History affords other examples - the 'witchcraft craze' is an excellent example. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth century large numbers of people believed that they or their cattle had been bewitched, that they had been visited by the spectres of neighbourhood witches, or that they themselves had participated in pacts with the Devil or attended supernatural orgies. This hallucinatory, 'spectral' evidence has caused great problems for historians, who have produced widely disparate interpretations.

The Murrayite school interpreted these stories as exaggerations of real events - the rituals of a pre-Christian religion which survived amongst certain sub-cultures until the Renaissance and even later times. Another group of historians have argued that the testimonies of alleged participants were

entirely imaginary, the result of 'confessions' extracted by torture. But neither of these explanations seems to be truly viable, and the perspective of 'participative folklore' looks attractive.

Parallels with modern beliefs are obvious. The person visited by a witch is not much different from that visited by a space person, whilst the nocturnal flying witch finds a pale echo in today's abductee.

At the core of the 'spectral evidence' of both witch and victim there are, although strongly modified by contemporary beliefs, many of the cross-cultural features discovered by anthropologists. The image of the night witch who preys on the living and makes pacts with the enemies of society appears to be truly universal [1]. The classic accounts of spectral visitations by witches [2] are obviously the same experiences as those described as 'hags' by Hufford [3]. Similarly, accounts of nocturnal journeys can be compared with out-of-the-body experiences and hypnogogic imagery [4,5].

It is extremely interesting that witchcraft beliefs develop out of social tension, for this would suggest that interpersonal conflicts generate hallucinatory experience. The 'victim' or accused acts out - 'really' acts out - a drama which seeks to resolve social tensions.

Within Europe (and no doubt in other

societies) witchcraft 'victims' were not only recruited from those who felt they had genuine reason to be afraid - those who for instance turned away the local old dame begging for food - but also those who saw a means of getting control over others by becoming a centre of attention and sympathy; others may have just had grudges to work off. However, we should not assume that the claimed experiences of the latter two groups were any less authentically 'participative' than the first set.



'Swimming' a witch to try her guilt; from a 16th century woodcut.

The role of participative folklore in the generation of witchcraft confessions is of continued topicality, for the circumstances of pressure, torture, guilt, etc., were exactly calculated to induce fantasies of responding with terrible vengeance on ones persecutors. So in a society where witchcraft beliefs were prevalent such fantasies - "If I were I witch I would do such-and-such to so-and-so" - would be very difficult to resist. No one could be sure they weren't a witch!

One might hope that such situations were of only historical or anthropological interest. However, the regular parade of people who make hoax confessions after sensational crimes shows otherwise. When such fantasy producing devices as hypnotic regression, polygraphs, 'truth serums', etc. are introduced[6]; when persons are subjected to interrogation by those skilled in asking tricky and (mis?)leading questions, anything is possible. The sinister nature of such proceedings seems to be lost on some ufologists, in Britain and elsewhere, who are really too naive for their own good.

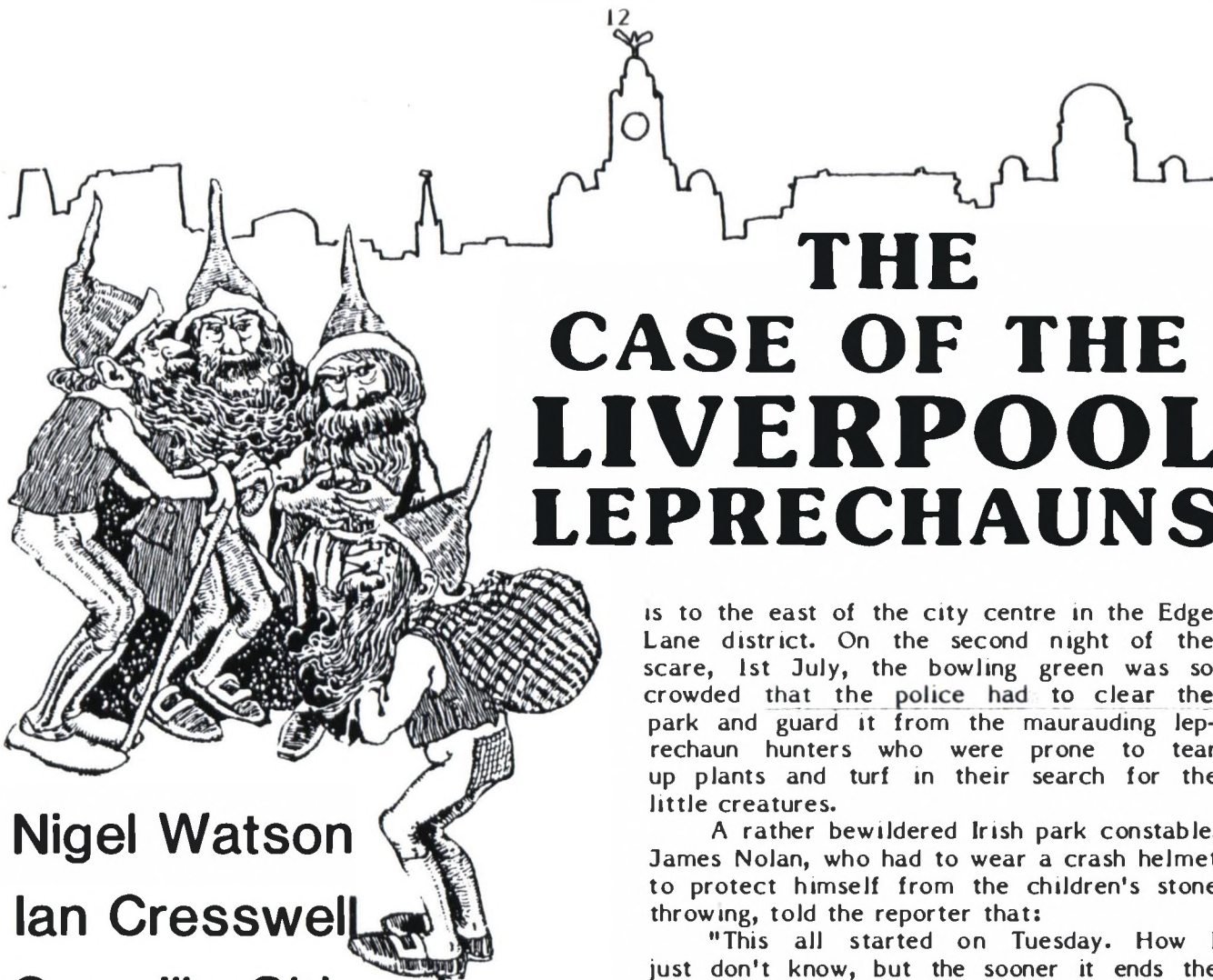
The hypnotically regressed abductee or the suspected criminal under interrogation has just as much access to a culturally determined pool of appropriate responses and perceptions as any confessing witch. Nor

can the role of radical misperception be safely relegated to the paranormal or other marginal situations. Studies have show that the police will misperceive neutral situations as suspicious or menacing [7]; other studies have demonstrated that white people presented with images of a white man threatening a black man with a knife will transmogrify them into images of black attacking white [7,8]. Perceptions of highly charged situations such as recent confrontations between miners and police in British coalfields are heavily dependent on the political prejudices of the perceiver. Perception can be a political as well as a psychological process.

It would be nice to draw limits to all this, and in private correspondence one critic argued that "while we might disagree about who threy the first punch, no one saw police trampled by elephants, or decapitated pickets". True, but the limits of misperception are themselves probably determined by cultural expectations. It is possible to imagine an Indian villager presented with pictures from Cokely or Orgreave, and interpreting them in terms of his experience with elephant stampedes. Similarly, a Bolivian miner, told that these were scenes of a clash between miners and police, might well find evidence for the numerous bodies such a 'violent mining strike' would convey to him.

It would take a far less radical misperception of a radar track to launch the missiles, and lest it be thought that this is purely idle (and alarmist) speculation, there is no doubt that misperceptions of stars and planets as airships in 1909 and 1913 helped to build up the atmosphere of war hysteria which broke in 1914.

1. The following provide excellent discussions of various facets of witchcraft: Douglas, Mary, *Witchcraft confessions and accusations*, Tavistock, 1970; Kluckhohn, Clyde, *Navaho Witchcraft*, Beacon Press, 1967; Peters, Edward, *The magician the witch and the law*, Harvester, 1978; Parrinder, Geoffrey, *Witchcraft; European and African*, Faber, 1963; Mair, Lucy, *Witchcraft*, Weidenfeld, 1969; Cohn, Norman, *Europe's inner demons*, Paladin, 1976; Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the decline of magic*, Weidenfeld, 1971.
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THE CASE OF THE LIVERPOOL LEPRECHAUNS

Nigel Watson
Ian Cresswell
Granville Oldroyd

EXCEPTIONAL things were happening in Liverpool during 1964. When the Beatles returned to the city on 10th July for the premier of their first film 'A Hard Day's Night', 150,000 people lined the streets to greet them. A less well known fact is that a few days earlier thousands of children, and curious adults, went hunting for leprechauns in a Liverpool park.

This incident is of interest because of the rapid spread of the rumour and because it appears that the rumour was restricted to school children, and was especially strong among pupils of Roman Catholic schools in the area.

According to the **Liverpool Daily Post** dated 2nd July 1964, the leprechauns were first seen on the night of Tuesday 30th June. Nobody knew how the rumour started, but one nine-year-old boy told the **Post** reporter, Don McKinlay that:

"Last night I saw little men in white hats throwing stones and mud at each other on the bowling green. Honest mister, I did."

The centre of this leprechaun activity was the bowling green in Jubilee Park, which

is to the east of the city centre in the Edge Lane district. On the second night of the scare, 1st July, the bowling green was so crowded that the police had to clear the park and guard it from the marauding leprechaun hunters who were prone to tear up plants and turf in their search for the little creatures.

A rather bewildered Irish park constable, James Nolan, who had to wear a crash helmet to protect himself from the children's stone throwing, told the reporter that:

"This all started on Tuesday. How I just don't know, but the sooner it ends the better. Stones have been thrown on the bowling green and for the second night running no-one has been able to play. The kids just won't go away. Some swear they have seen leprechauns. The story has gone round and now we are being besieged with leprechaun hunters."

Such was the violence of their search that the police had to set up a temporary first-aid shelter to treat at least a dozen children who suffered from cuts and bruises.

The **Liverpool Echo and Evening Express** for the 2nd July 1964 described the strange visitors as: "little green men in white hats throwing stones and tiny clods of earth at one another."

The 'little green men' part of the story was possibly inspired by the testimony of a Crosby (north of Liverpool) woman who said that on the 1st July, she had seen: "strange objects glistening in the sky whizzing over the river [Mersey] to the city from the Irish Sea."

This, apparently, explained how the leprechauns managed to emigrate from auld Ireland, though it was more likely a tongue-in-cheek addition by the editorial staff in order to make a 'neat' story. This supposition is supported by the fact that no exact date nor any information about the witness was

given, and the local paper for the Crosby district did not report anything of this nature to its readers. It is also worth noting that the leprechaun hunt had already been going on for two days before this report was published, so the newspapers cannot be regarded as the originators of this scare.

However, the newspaper reports could well have inspired or fuelled a second leprechaun panic in the Liverpool area a few days later. Details of this will be given later in this text, but for the time being it is interesting to see that leprechauns were associated with UFOs in the public mind six years before the British publication of Jacques Vallee's book *Passport to Magonia - from folklore to flying saucers*.

The Liverpool Leprechauns could have remained in our files as yet another datum of the 'damned' if it had not been for certain revelations published in the 26th January 1982 edition of the *Liverpool Echo* [3]. In this report a man called Brian Jones claimed he was responsible for the scare when he started to tidy his grandfather's garden in Edge Lane, which backed onto the park. He wore some clothes suitable for gardening in, which comprised a red waistcoat, a pair of navy-blue trousers, Wellington boots, a denim shirt and a woolen hat with a red bobble on it. As he sucked on his pipe, no doubt reflecting upon his sartorial elegance, he saw some children sitting on the ten foot high wall which separated the garden from the park. He heard one of the children say "It's a leprechaun".

Realising that his short stature, emphasised by the height of his grandfather's weeds, and his extraordinary clothing, gave the children this impression, he decided to capitalise on their deluded perception.

So he claims that: "I bounded into view, babbling made-up words, I jumped up and down, picked up turves and threw them at the children." Not surprisingly the children ran away in a 'blind panic'.

The next evening he was again in his grandfather's garden when he heard the noise of a crowd in the adjacent park. Looking over the wall he saw 300 children on top of a covered reservoir which gave them a good view of the bowling green. On seeing him they shouted: "There he is. There's the leprechaun!" However, the children remained where they were, so for the next hour Brian entertained them by angrily shaking his fist at them and by tossing turves into the air.

Afterwards he changed his clothes and visited the park to find out the reaction to his leprechaun impersonation. Here he

found children boasting that they had seen two leprechauns, although some had to top this by saying they had seen six, or more!

The next day, a Saturday (according to Brian), crowds of children and adults went to the house in Edge Lane in search of the little people. Despite the efforts of the police the crowds did not disperse until after 11 o'clock at night. In the next two weeks children raided the garden in their search for the little people, causing damage to a shed and the garden itself. Things came to a head when Brian overheard two boys saying that they planned to shoot the leprechauns with an air rifle and deposit the bodies in jam-jars to prove to their teachers that the story was not a figment of their imaginations.

At this juncture Brian decided that something had to be done, so for three evenings he put on his leprechaun act in the garden of an empty house six doors from his grandfather's home. This did the trick so effectively that within a couple of months the city council had to demolish the house because of the devastation caused by leprechaun hunters.

Is Brian's belated confession then the solution to the great Liverpool leprechaun panic? More than a brief glance at his statements will show that he simply makes matters more complicated rather than clearing them up. His story is full of contradictions and errors when compared with the contemporary press reports. For a start, Brian claims that the leprechauns were first seen on Thursday and Friday, and that on the Saturday crowds gathered near his grandfather's home; yet the press tells us that the creatures were first seen on Tuesday, 30th June. Perhaps with the passage of time he just forgot the correct days and dates of the sightings, and just remembered the dates of the newspaper reports?

It seems odd that the newspaper descriptions of the leprechauns do not tally with Mr Jones's description of his elegant outfit. None of the children noticed his red waistcoat, the red bobble on his hat, his navy trousers or his denim shirt.

The ten-foot-high wall is of interest too. It could not have been the most simple thing in the world to climb, either for the children, or particularly for Mr Jones considering his short height and Wellington boots.

It is also difficult to understand why the children on the second day did not approach the wall in large numbers and scale it in order to catch the 'leprechaun'. The children of Liverpool are not normally that shy! Furthermore, all the children's reports speak specifically of leprechauns in Jubilee Park and bowling green: there was no mention

of any sightings in private gardens - and many of the children said they saw more than one creature. A search through the two Liverpool daily newspapers for the period covering July, August and September did not reveal any more reports of leprechauns seen in the neighbourhood of Jubilee Park, and no mention of the rather newsworthy event of a house being demolished through the deprivations of their hunters.

For these reasons we suspect that Brian Jones might be mistaken in his belief that he was responsible for starting this panic: perhaps after twenty years two separate events have become confused.

Whatever the explanation for the start of the rumour, it is noteworthy that it spread very quickly, and generated sufficient interest for substantial crowds, including many adults, to gather in the park. It is also intriguing to see the injection of the UFO sighting into this context, even if it was a humorous attempt at an explanation for the presence of the leprechauns. In addition, the children who wished to insert the entities into a jam-jar remind us of those ufologists who believe (or hope) that the USAF has succeeded in preserving bottles or frozen 'little green men'

No sooner had the Liverpool rumours subsided than a similar scare erupted several miles to the north-east of the city in the overspill town of Kirkby. The *Kirkby Reporter* on the 17th July 1964 [4] featured the following story, under the headline "Little Folk - and 'Flying Saucers'":



Flying saucers and leprechauns came to Kirkby last week - at least according to local children. What the connection was the children were not quite sure, but scores of excited youngsters invaded the Reporter offices on Friday, eager to tell they had seen both these things

A "strange object in the sky", which changed the colour of its lights from red to silver, and was moving slowly at first, then very fast, was their description of the flying saucer.

The 'flying saucer' faction vied with the 'leprechaun' group for colourful descriptions. About eight inches high, with red and green tunics, and knee-breeches, thus the 'little people' were described. And, of course, they spoke with a strong Irish brogue.

Origin of the wee folk remains a mystery, but so convinced were the children that hundreds of them plagued the vicar of Kirkby (Rev. J. Lawton) by invading St. Chad's churchyard in search of the little people. At times the numbers were such that the police had to chase the children away.

In the *Liverpool Echo*, 13th July 1964 [5] was the first account of scores of children searching the churchyard at St Chad's for leprechauns. After what was described as two days of hectic activity, which probably began on Friday, 10th July, a relieved Rev. Canon John Lawton told the *Echo's* reporter on the night of Sunday, 12th July, that: "The children seem to have been convinced at last that there are no leprechauns." During the same period, children had also searched the grounds of St Marie's Roman Catholic School and Mother of God Church, Northwood, Kirkby [5].

In many ways this panic seems to have been a continuation of the primary rumours originating in Liverpool. We should note that they could have been influenced by many reports from the general Liverpool area of UFO activity that July, which by their very quantity might have linked leprechauns with UFOs more firmly in the minds of the Kirkby children. Indeed, we might even speculate that the 'original' Liverpool rumours were inspired by a report in the *Newcastle-upon-Tyne Journal* (9th June 1964), which may have reached some of the national or regional press. *Flying Saucer Review*, vol. 10, no. 5, page 18 [6,7] reproduced the following report from that paper:

Flashes of light... loud buzzes in the night... little green men chasing each other round haystacks... egg-shaped flying saucers... No, the leprechauns aren't loose and it's

no Irishman who is telling this tale - just the good people of Felling. For stories are going around Leam Lane Estate that flying spacemen in egg-shaped flying saucers are using the area for manoeuvres. So persistent are the stories that a full scale investigation has been launched by one organisation.

And the little green men? They were seen by 14-year-old David Wilson. He said: "I saw several small green creatures about two feet high running around a haystack on a farm near the estate." But not everyone believes the stories. Last night Mr M. Coates, headmaster of Roman Road junior school, denied that he had called a special assembly of pupils to discuss the little green man, or that he had told the children to stay away from the farm. He said: "There is no truth at all in these silly rumours."

Obviously Brian Jones could not have been responsible for all of these scares. So if he was not the cause of them, who or what was? In the case of the Liverpool happenings it could be argued that a 'tall story' got circulated at a local school and rapidly spread by word of mouth. The stimulus could have been the factors already discussed, or might have been an invented story that came to be regarded as relating to a real event. We must remember that older children are more receptive to 'fantastic' ideas and situations which might be regarded as a rejection of the assumptions of their parents and teachers about the nature of reality [8].

Freud claimed that fantasies are mental constructs of the imagination, liberated from the constraints of reality, and that: "the motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfilment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality." [9]

Indeed, we can say that because most of the children attended Roman Catholic schools and (in the Liverpool and Kirkby areas at least) were most likely of Irish descent, their Irish cultural background might well be regarded as a strong influence on the way such wishes might be expressed. Leprechauns play an important role in Irish folklore, and Kathrine Briggs [10] reminds us that the leprechaun was a fairy cobbler who lived underground beneath a fairy hill. Attempts at capturing him always failed. Another legend asserts that a boy with fairy blood in his veins was able to recover treasure from a cave guarded by the leprechaun.

Can this legend, or some dim remnant of it, have been the reason why the children so vigorously sought to discover the leprechaun? Or was the rumour just an excuse for vandalism and some excitement? As with most aspects of folklore, and ufology,

such rumours can be generated and sustained by a multitude of purposes and reasons.

In this case we have attempted to outline some of the difficulties involved in arriving at or accepting any 'face value' explanation of a set of rumours which consist of a psychologically and sociologically complex pattern of behaviour.

Although these rumours were short-lived (although the newspaper accounts which gave this impression may be false. It is difficult to guess how long such rumours may continue to bubble beneath the level of media attention), the same urges for excitement and change from old ways of viewing the world can also be expressed by young people via pop music. It may be that the blossoming of 'Merseybeat' at that place and time was a manifestation of urges not far removed from those which brought the Liverpool Leprechaun into 'reality'.

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- REFERENCES: 1. *Liverpool Daily Post*, Thursday, 2nd July 1964. 2. *Liverpool Echo*, Thursday, 2nd July 1964. 3. *Echo*, 26th Jan. 1982. 4. *Kirkby Reporter*, Friday, 17th July 1964. 5. *Echo*, Monday, 13th July 1964. 6. *Journal* (Newcastle), 9th June 1964. 7. *Flying Saucer Review*, vol.10, no.5., p.18. 8. See for instance 'Enigma Variations' in *Fortean Times* 33, or the articles on Paul Bennet in *MUFOB* n.s. 11 and 12. 9. FREUD, S. (1908) 'Creative Writers and Day Dreaming' in *Creativity*, P. E. Vernon (ed.), Penguin, 1970. 10. BRIGGS, K. A *Dictionary of Fairies*'



Alternative viewpoints on the Liverpool Leprechauns

by Granville Oldroyd and Ian S. Cresswell

WE feel that there is a very real danger of making the mechanisms at work behind Liverpool leprechauns more complicated than need be by the over-use of complex sociological theories when more simple and easy to understand explanations are near at hand. We would rather suggest that the more likely cause behind this series of events was rumour which very quickly spread within the restricted confines of school, playground and neighbourhood, which got out of hand and spread to other groups of children within the Liverpool area, before finally becoming just another silly season story and dying out. Word of mouth is

one of the quickest ways of spreading such stories.

Regarding the deeper psychological motivations behind the spread and belief of this story, there are many possible factors which could have played a part, but we see limits to this line of thinking. It is hard to see just what the significance the 'Merseybeat' mania had on the leprechaun rumours, and we doubt that the rumours were merely an excuse for malicious damage. It is also difficult to accept that the rumours were solely 'wish-fulfilment', or to put the incident down to an adolescent rebellion against the acceptable viewpoint of the adult majority.

There often appears to be a fertile ground in which the seeds of rumour may be sown. Perhaps in this incident it was the Roman-Catholic background of many of the children, and the real possibility that the largest group of them were of Irish ancestry. This being so, the initial story of the leprechauns would strike a responsive note in their cultural background. This does seem to be more likely that any belief in a link between leprechauns and UFOs.

Perhaps this whole incident may be called a modern day fairy story, which in the fullness of time could have become a local legend. Indeed, have similar rumours been responsible for the corpus of fairy belief, a 'mere rumour' being handed down over the years? This may not be as strange as one might think, as rumour has often been shown to be the agency for the production of eyewitness accounts to events which have not taken place.

Last Words, by Nigel Watson

In reply to those comments, I would agree that it would be nice to dispense with "complex sociological theories", but by calling the collective behaviour of the type displayed by the children involved in the hunt for leprechauns just a rumour does not help us very much. We have to find out why **this** rumour had such a powerful influence. Certainly the Roman Catholic background of the children could have been an important factor, but that does not exclude the possibility that wish-fulfilment or rejection of concensus reality, boredom or mischeviousness, were not equally significant factors.

I was not attempting to show that 'Merseybeat' had any direct influence on the leprechaun rumours. My intention was to show that at approximately the same time and place there was a blossoming of popular music which, for the performance and audience, was a vehicle for the expression of emotions which are normally kept under check.

Common to both the leprechaun rumour

and popular music trends are the "spontaneity, transitoriness and volatility. It is these properties rather than the irrational behaviour of individuals under the sway of collective forces or the pressures of 'group influence' as such that set the phenomena of collective behaviour apart..." [K. & G. E. Lang, 'Collective Dynamics: Process and Form', in **Human Behaviour and Social Processes**, RKP, 1971]

Obviously, we could argue about the causal, functional and cognitive aspects of the leprechaun hunts for several more pages without resolving the matter. Instead, I hope that we can examine some of these issues in more detail in futures studies of phantom airship and UFO 'panics'.



Final Last Words by John Rimmer.

On the basis that this is not a private fight and anyone may join in, I would like to add one or two comments as a Liverpoolian who was living just two miles away from the events described, but regretablely remained blissfully unaware of them.

I think both sides may be over playing the question of the religious background of the children involved. Certainly, Liverpool has a high proportion of Roman Catholics, the highest of any major city in the UK, as a result of the massive Irish immigration during the nineteenth century. Although it would certainly be probable that any group of schoolchildren in Kirkby would be predominantly Roman-Catholic, this would not necessary be the case in the Edge Lane district (unless, of course a Roman Catholic school was specifically mentioned in the account). Although most Liverpool Catholics are of Irish origin, it must be remembered that most such families were, by the time of these events, fourth or fifth generation immigrants, and it is a matter of considerable doubt just how commonplace folk tales and legends of Ould Ireland were around the firesides of Liverpool in 1964!

I think the point raised about the Merseybeat phenomenon is valid. As something of an insider, I can confirm that this had a tremendous social effect in Liverpool, not just restricted to teenagers. In many ways this was a period of massive social change in the city, which has yet to be adequately charted by social historians.

NORTHERN E·C·H·O·S

THE PETER ROGERSON COLUMN

FOR some reason the review column of *Magonia* has got the reputation of being an 'axe column', giving savage, almost libellous reviews to virtually everything that comes our way. This prompted me to a little survey of just what we had been saying. Of 185 books reviewed since **MUFOB** new series 2 (when we really got going) the tally was: very good or excellent, 32; good, 61; neutral (either even handed or making no evaluative comment), 29; poor, 32; bad, 31. A subjective estimate, no doubt, but it gives the general picture, which is hardly that of an assembly-line abattoir. My own view is that if anything we have often been generous (my review of Clive Harold's **The Unidentified** for example; slated by one reader however, because I refused to take tales of teleported cows at face value)

It appears that some authors have the odd idea that reviews should be mere contents lists; or worse still, mere rehashes of the publishers blurb. Others have such colossal egos that nothing short of total adoration will suffice. A third group have great difficulty in accepting that the reason many people misunderstand what they are saying is because they have problems communicating their often interesting ideas.

* * * * *

In his 'farewell' column in **Common Ground**, Kevin McClure suggested that the kind of phenomena we are studying are on the decline. From my perspective of working in a Local History and Reference Library, I doubt this very much. In fact there is probably a vast reservoir of such data which never gets into print.

I have had to deal with several enquiries from people researching into their houses to try to find out who or what is haunting them. Other enquirers have been trying to make sense out of ouija board messages - occult revelation being to some

far more impressive than documentary evidence, dealing with such queries can require some tact.

The most interesting story was that from a woman, to whom the teenage girl next door had confided that she was being visited by the ghost of a farm labourer (shades of the succubus here?) who had committed suicide after his lover (a servant girl of course) had died in childbirth. Fortunately it was quite easy to point out that the name given, which also happened to be that of a famous pop-star, would not have occurred in that area at that time.

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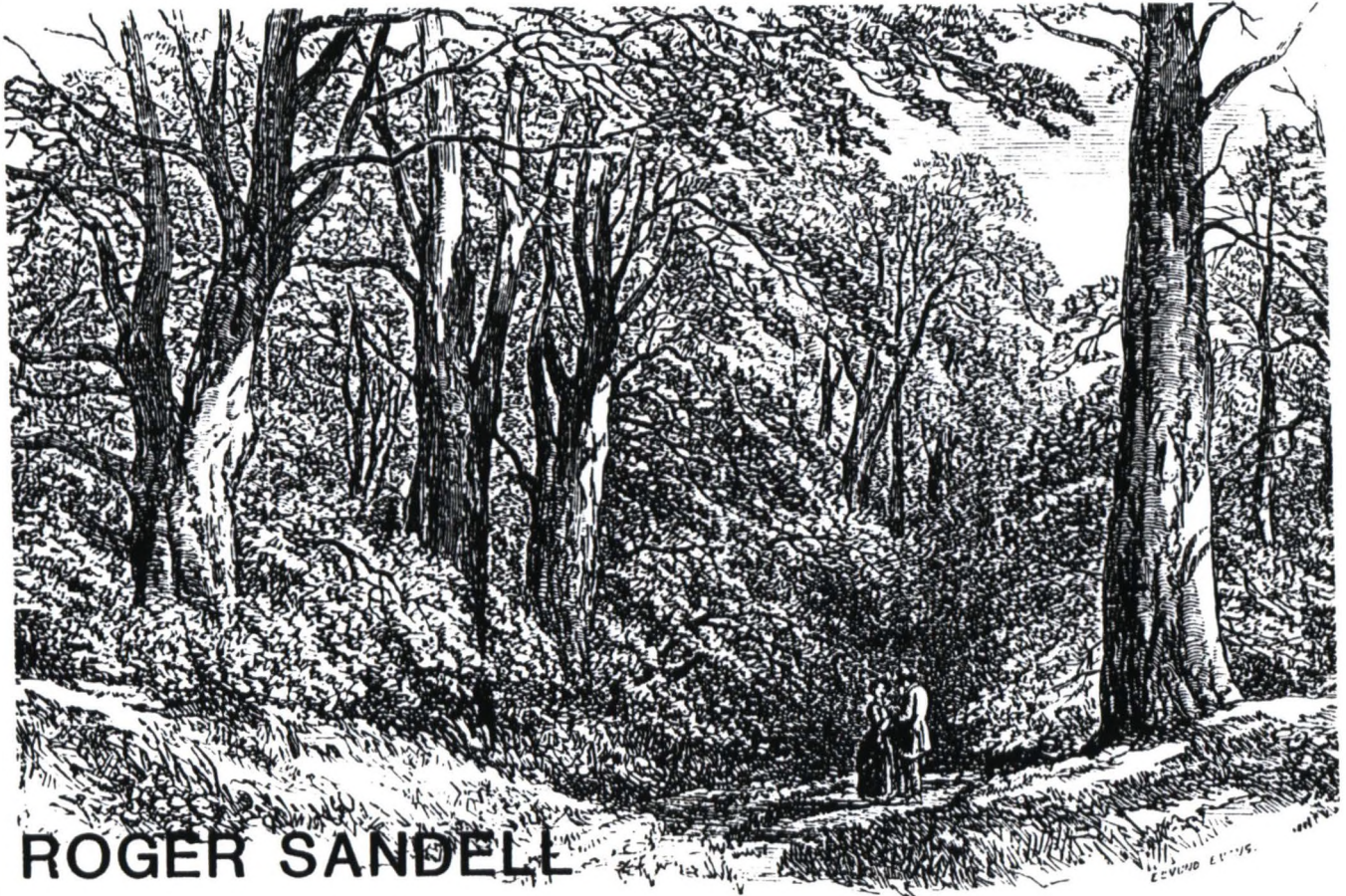
All this however is as nothing compared with Runcorn, where I was previously employed; and where, it seems, every other building, including the one where I worked, had its ghost story. Prominent amongst them was the local ghost light (whoops, I mean Unexplained Atmospheric Phenomenon), "The Green Light of Halton", which was supposed to travel the route of an old tunnel. Old tunnels were very much the concern of a local character who may or may not have been associated with APEN, but clearly spent a good deal of time and effort hunting mysterious tunnels, on instructions from the ouija board.

Runcorn was also the home of a couple of fundamentalist churches who spent much time exorcising the local inhabitants. It was my experiences at Runcorn which led me to take an increasing interest in the sociological aspects of the "fringes of human experience".

* * * * *

In her interesting article in the last issue of *Magonia*, Jenny Randles suggested we should analyse the symbolism of UFO encounters. This of course has been suggested before, in the pages of this magazine, and most notably by Jerry Clark and Loren Coleman in their self-underrated book **The Unidentified**. The case of Dr X., as reported by Aime Michel contains an array of symbolism. The percipient is wounded in war, and is left as a healer with a wound which will not heal, a musician who has lost his muse (cf. The Fisher King). His second wound is sustained while chopping a log, which comes from a tree - the roots of which go under the ground. His wound makes it impossible to keep his foot on the ground. After his miraculous healing by the UFO he claims to undergo levitations in which he cannot keep his feet on the ground, and so on.

DOWN IN THE FOREST SOMETHING STIRRED...



ROGER SANDELL

THE question of what may really have been seen at Rendlesham in December 1980 is dealt with elsewhere by Ian Ridpath. However there are several other aspects of the book 'Sky Crash' that are important to comment on.

First of all, as the title implies, the idea of conspiracy is central to the book, which attempts to document the claim that a highly significant event was deliberately covered up by the British and American governments. The authors are certainly assiduous in finding evidence for the cover up:

Have officers from the base been promoted since 1980? - their silence is being rewarded.

Do people the authors wish to interview prove, like most of us, not to have unlimited reserves of time or courtesy, especially when dealing with complete strangers? - they have been ordered to stay silent.

A kind of Occam's Razor in reverse seems to operate, whereby a sinister explanation is always prepared to a mundane one. Thus when one supposed witness, a local

councillor, refuses to co-operate, he is said to be frightened. The possibility that he merely did not feel that his reputation in the community would be enhanced by being featured in the type of newspaper that commonly features UFO stories is not considered.

Similarly, Colonel Halt, the US Base Commander is throughout depicted as engaged in a cover-up, even when his 'suspect' behaviour merely takes the form of refusing to be buttonholed by the authors in his house at 11 o'clock at night. (Colonel Halt, constantly on the receiving end of the authors' importunities, seems most of the time to be acting in a harrassed manner, reminiscent of his near-namesake of TV's *Sergeant Bilko*.)

All this is not to say that the authors' descriptions of harrassment, obstruction and surveillance by the authorities are simply imaginary; just that any they ran into was not necessarily UFO related. The book does, indeed, have a chapter speculating that the events at Rendlesham may have been in some ways connected not with UFOs but to some other secret operation - possibly something to do with the disintegration

of the Soviet satellite Cosmos 79 over Europe at the same time.

The willingness of the authors to entertain such a hypothesis is curious, given the categorical statement in the introduction to the book that the Rendlesham events were "the world's first officially observed and officially recorded landing and contact".

If the Cosmos story were true, it would certainly explain official attitudes, but such a theory does not seem to be really necessary. If the base personnel had been guilty of the misidentification Ian Ridpath describes one can well understand that the military authorities would not want such a fact to be made public, since it would be taken to cast doubt on the reliability of such personnel, and perhaps even revive fears of accidental nuclear war. This would be especially relevant if alcohol or drugs (which may well have been circulating in the post-Christmas atmosphere) were a factor influencing the behaviour or perceptions of any of those involved.

Wallace seems to talk in dialogue straight from ancient B-movies

In discussion of all this it must be remembered that the period of the authors' investigations coincided with the height of the public controversy over the siting of Cruise missiles in Britain. Bearing in mind that one result of this has been demonstrations at, and invasions of, US bases, it is hardly surprising when the authors describe how an attempt to ask questions on the base married quarters ends with them being seized and interrogated by US security police. (Indeed, many would see this as part of an encroachment on civil liberties in the name of security that provides an excellent argument against the presence of such missiles.)

However, when one looks at the evidence put forward by the authors it is scarcely surprising that they are driven to postulate dark conspiracies. Without invoking the activities of sinister silencers it would be embarrassing to admit that the civilian residents of the forest seem, in the majority of cases, to have witnessed nothing untoward on the night in question.

The witnesses who are produced to back up the story include some decidedly dubious ones. The authors describe an interview in which the landing of an alien craft is confirmed by Colonel Halt's son Chuck.

But it is painfully clear that Chuck Halt is a lonely teenager (his parents' marriage had recently broken up) who was no doubt pleased to find new people to talk to, and was telling them what they want to hear (as well as, on his own admission, hoping his story might be sold to the media enabling him to return to the USA).

Also described in detail are the claims of 'Art Wallace', a pseudonym for an American civilian who claims to have been in the USAF at Rendlesham on the night in question, and to have been sworn to silence after having witnessed a contact between aliens and high ranking US officers. Wallace seems to talk in dialogue straight from ancient B-movies: "I'm a dead man... Bullets come cheap..." There is no real evidence that he was even in the US Air Force. The authors are fair minded enough to draw attention to some other reasons to distrust Wallace, but inexplicably still seem to regard his story as something other than the product of a fantasizing paranoid.

Paranoia may be infectious, to judge by the authors' attitudes to the media. In 1983 the **News of the World** took a brief break from its usual in-depth reporting of the doings of Joan Collins, Prince Andrew and sex-change vicars to headline the 'Art Wallace' claims. As a result sceptical items appeared on the BBC and in the **Times** and **Telegraph**, a fact which leads the authors to suggest darkly: "these three sources are close to Government thinking within major media outlets." This is a somewhat curious phrase which, in so far as it means anything at all, is presumably a suggestion of an official cover-up. It is of course true that the **Times** and **Telegraph** generally support the present government, but so does most of Fleet Street, with the **News of the World** being one of the most vocal, so it is hard to see what point is being made. Also, if the **Times** is involved in a cover-up, it is strange that these machinations do not extend to the **News of the World**, which has the same proprietor!

The authors' take the sceptical sector of the press to task for shoddy and inaccurate investigations and statements, but their own record in this respect is hardly above criticism. Much is made of some allegedly curious radiation readings at the site, but we are given no data which allows us to assess their significance. At another point we are solemnly assured, in connection with some alleged animal reactions, that "animals do not suffer hallucinations and if they do respond to something strange it is safe to assume that something strange really is

happening." The only answer needed is to refer the authors to Allan Hendry's *UFO Handbook*, particularly the section where he details cases involving animal reactions that turned out to have purely mundane explanations.

At another point there is a description of an object seen in the sky by one of the authors during the course of the investigation. It is described as being "as big as a football". Tedious as it is to go into such basic matters yet again, such a description is quite meaningless, since the apparent size of objects varies, according to how far they are from the observer. As a result most investigators who use similar comparisons to gauge the size of aerial object ask witnesses to compare size with an object held at arms length. However, most people have a tendency to over estimate the apparent size of such objects. If the author concerned did really see a UFO the size of a football at arm's length, this must clearly have been a most spectacular sight, and the object responsible must have either been huge, or very near. The reader can verify this simply by holding

***This is a very serious
charge which they should
either document in detail
or withdraw***

a football at arm's length and seeing how much of the sky it covers.

Carelessness like this extends to several other areas. They describe how Derek Jameson, the editor of the *News of the World* at the time of its Rendlesham story (a fact it might be wisest not to comment on further in view of this gentleman's fondness for libel actions) wrote a letter to the *Telegraph* to complain about a sceptical piece on Rendlesham written by the latter paper's science editor, Adrian Berry. We are told that the *Telegraph* printed this letter "without comment" when, in fact, a rebuttal appeared a few days later. Dealing with the involvement of the American CSICOP group in UFO matters, the authors denigrate this committee by claiming that James Randi, one of its leading members, has in the past deliberately falsified evidence. This is a very serious charge, which they should either document in detail or withdraw.

A recent expose of Fleet Street journalism (*Lies, Damn Lies and Some Exclusives*, by Henry Porter) devotes some space to the *News of the World* coverage of Rendle-

sham as an example of shoddy sensationalism. Nothing in *Sky Crash* seems to suggest that this was a false estimation. (It has since been hinted that Porter's book is to be the subject of a libel action by some of the people involved in the reporting of Rendlesham. We await the case with interest.)

Continued from page 28

as comprehensive as his knowledge - and access to - significant but often less than famous cases. Ideas and lines of thought are introduced throughout the narrative, and are brought together in a diligently crafted concluding section of over 60 pages. Most of the sensible ideas I've ever heard are in there somewhere, discussed as a succession of hypotheses, then brought together logically, primarily drawing conclusions about the nature of our minds and perceptions that are unorthodox, but far from unreasonable. Then moving on to suggest that there is some evidence for the influences of an external agent or intelligence, though this could be explained away given further developments in our own knowledge and understanding.

Just as in its time you would not have been able to find a more clear and comprehensive account of evidence suggestive of individual survival of death than Myers's book, so you will not, yet, find a better account than this of the evidence suggestive of humans having dealings with non-human entities, over a very prolonged period, in every part of the world. That to me is the real achievement of this book. It has done a great deal of work for us - structuring evidence of different but related kinds into a cohesive whole, to which we can go on and relate our own research, and our reviews of research and investigation. If you like, some of the material here can be represented by very large and exotic mathematical expressions, but the common factor between all those grand and mysterious numbers is a relatively small and simple one - the range and ability of the individual human mind, of which, so far, we have remarkably little understanding. And without an understanding of the small numbers we're never going to get to grips with the big ones.

This book, marketed correctly, could sell very well as a paperback. It is eminently readable, attractively presented, and readily understood by anyone with a decent education and a modicum of imagination. I hope the publishers will change the title, put some money into publicity, and get on with selling it. It will do much for the credibility of our subject, and for those of us working within it.

Kevin McClure

THE NIGEL WATSON COLUMN



Sometime during October 1943, the American destroyer escort USS Eldridge (DE 173) which was based at the Philadelphia Navy Yard was at sea when it became invisible. Later, in 1946 the same ship got teleported briefly from its Philadelphia dock to Norfolk, Virginia, then returned. Most frightening of all, the crew on board became 'mad as hatters', disappeared or spontaneously combusted.

ALL this was revealed to Morris Jessup, a UFO writer during the 1950's, by a person who occasionally called himself Carlos Miguel Allende. His letters as associated annotations to Jessup's paperback edition of **The Case for the UFO** have been a focus of interest in many UFO and occult books

The most recent and extensive account of what has become known as the 'Philadelphia Experiment' was written by Charles Berlitz and William Moore who used this title for their book (Souvenir Press, 1979).

When Moore actually spoke to a person who claimed to be Allende, he said that from the deck of the SS Andrew Furuseth he saw DE 173 vanish, though he did admit that he had embellished his earlier written accounts of the nasty after-effects on what he "pieced together mostly from dockside scuttlebutt." [p.75]

Like the accounts of pickled aliens preserved in secret vaults by the US Government, this story entertains all who enjoy conspiracy theories, weird mysteries, coincidences, rumours whispered in dark corners, etc. Like any self-respecting rumour it cannot be easily explained, unless one regards it as a hoax which has grown increasingly complex over the years. Of course, if one takes this view then one is likely to be branded a closed-minded sceptic not fit to lick the boots of a little green man.

Having said that, it is worth noting that several well-known science fiction writers were working at the Naval Air Experimental Station, which was part of the Navy Yard. In volume three of **The Early Asimov** (Granada, 1974) Isaac Asimov tells how Robert Heinlein encouraged him and L. Sprague de Camp to work there during 1942.

So at the time of the first alleged disappearance of the USS Eldridge these three imaginative and influential writers were at the very locality of the 'Philadelphia Experiment'. Could it be too far a stretch of the imagination to suggest that they started this rumour, or at the very least encouraged its development? At a time when many rumours of secret weapon research and experimentation were prevalent, they might have thought it 'fun' [or a valuable experiment] to invent their own story and sit back and see what would happen.

This hypothesis is reinforced to a certain extent by the fact that Isaac Asimov was delighted to discover that many people were taken in by his mock-scientific thesis, 'The Endochronic Properties of Resublimated Thiotimoline' published in the March 1948 edition of **Astounding Science Fiction**.

Is it too far-fetched to speculate that Asimov was inspired to write this treatise after the success of the Philadelphia rumour? Were these three authors responsible, either as a group or as an individual project, for the creation of the rumour; or was it just that the presence of a few SF buffs encouraged the generation of an SF rumour? Or did DE 173 really disappear from sight sometime in October 1943?

Any answers would be appreciated, unless your name is Carlos Miguel Allende!



Arkana Books is a new imprint from Routledge & Kegan Paul, which aims to reprint some of the classic works of the esoteric traditions. Many of these works have had a formative influence on the intellectual

climate in which the sort of issues which are treated in *Magania* are discussed. As part of the wider perspective which we intend to introduce into the magazine, Wojtek Gaworzewski introduces the series.

OUSPENSKY, Peter D. *A New Model of the Universe*. Arkana, (Routledge Kegan Paul), 1984. £5.95.

GURDJIEFF, G. I. *Views from the Real World*. Arkana, 1984. £4.50.

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff taught a system of philosophy and psychological/physical exercises which would, it was claimed enable a person to gain full consciousness and hence control over their own destiny. Throughout his life he was a controversial figure and it appears that this controversy continues to grow as time elapses since his death (in 1949).

Reading his works, and the voluminous literature about him and his system, it is difficult to doubt that he did have access to ideas and insights into the human condition, which were not previously available. His effect on those who met him suggests strongly that he was, at the very least, a man of mesmerising presence.

He always insisted that his system could only be taught by personal contact between pupil and master in a 'school'. It is ironic that since his death all his writings (including those meant to be limited to a circle of pupils) has been published. The volume of literature about him continues to increase, a film has been made of his life, and an underground school in London sells his ideas (without acknowledgement) for £12 for a course of lectures.

But we should be grateful. However pale a reflection of the man, his words give us an insight into one of the most distinguished minds of the century.

Views from the Real World is a collection of Gurdjieff's teachings, compiled by his pupils, first published in 1973. It is a good introduction to the flavour of his thought, for the beginner: although a more structural approach may be found in Ouspensky's ***In Search of the Miraculous***. For those familiar with Gurdjieff's thought the book is full of illuminating insights.

Apart from a small circle of devotees, many of whom knew him personally, Ouspensky is chiefly remembered today as the foremost interpreter and exponent of the teachings of Gurdjieff. His ***In Search of the Miraculous*** is still the best explanation of Gurdjieff's system, more comprehensive than any volume to appear since, and clearer than Gurdjieff's own voluminous writings which

were intended to provoke thought and action rather than provide an easy exposition of his system.

A New Model of the Universe was written in 1914 (published in English in 1930) just before Ouspensky met Gurdjieff, and is a summation of his own philosophy. His ***Tertium Organum*** published in 1912 tried to formulate a picture of the universe based on a number of disparate concepts. Chief of these was Ouspensky's concept of the fourth dimension, which drew heavily on Theosophical ideas; his theory of the various levels of reality accessible to humans; and perhaps his most important contribution - a revival of the Pythagorean idea of Eternal Recurrence. This last concept is in some ways the most terrifying of all ideas concerning the human condition. All humans are condemned to relive the same lives over and over again; at death one experiences the identical birth which brought one into the world, and the same life is repeated until eternity.

In ***A New Model of the Universe*** he expands on these ideas and adds an exposition of subjects which were new and startling to his readers at the time: Esotericism, Yoga, and the Tarot.

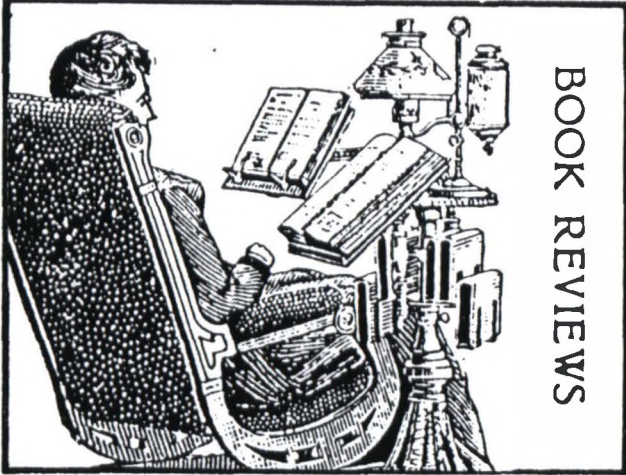
To the modern reader Ouspensky's thought is dated. The physics he knew predates the theories of relativity and quantum mechanics, his psychology predates modern dream research. In addition his work is imbued with a curious melancholy typical of the intellectual atmosphere of Tsarist Russia; who but a Russian could have written on "The Feeling of Inevitability Connected with Sex"?

Nevertheless, his book is thought provoking, and invaluable in giving us an impression of Ouspensky's mind before he came into contact with Gurdjieff's system.

LETHBRIDGE, T. C. *The Power of the Pendulum*. Arkana, £3.50.

To review objectively the work of a man who has been one of the formative influences on one's life is an impossible undertaking. Consider this to be a panegyric.

Lethbridge is primarily an author of ideas and theories; one of that very select group whose ideas cannot be adequately summarised. His books are a cornucopia of insights into a wide range of parascience subjects, ranging from ancient astronauts, a theory of how ghosts are formed, the nature of time,



GROUP, David. **The Evidence for the Bermuda Triangle.** Aquarian Press (in association with ASSAP), 1984. £2.95

Intended for the general reader who just wants to find out if there is 'anything in' the Bermuda Triangle, this book summarises several dozen of the more notable Triangle 'mysteries'. Like Larry Kusche's book,

and the discoveries he made on the hidden properties of matter using his dowsing abilities with a pendulum. Each theory he proposed and tested is original, each idea is somehow stamped with his unique personality.

Lethbridge died in 1971, having written nine books. **The Power of the Pendulum** was his last book, edited posthumously by his wife. It is in the nature of a notebook, each chapter discussing one of his favourite themes, expanding what he had to say on the subject in his previous books, and is a summation of all he had to say. Equally, it is a good summary for the new reader seeking an introduction to Lethbridge. Whether any of his theories are subsequently proved to be true is unimportant. This is a book to inspire thought and experimentation.

WILHELM, Richard. **The Secret of the Golden Flower.** Arkana, £3.95

Secret of the Golden Flower is the prime text on a certain system of Chinese yoga available in the West. In this edition Wilhelm's 1929 translation is amplified by Carl Jung's commentary, and other writings.

To the non-initiate the book means nothing. It speaks earnestly of setting currents in motion round the body by various meditations. Whether these be physiological, spiritual or imaginary is probably only known to the practitioner. Jung valiantly tries to equate the texts to Western psychological concepts, and

which must be the yardstick for all future Triangle literature, David Group re-examines the individual circumstances of each case, and attempts an explanation in non-sensational terms.

After an introduction which puts the whole Triangle legend into the perspective of the many thousands of maritime deaths and disappearances which take place around the world each year, two chapters look at selected disappearances, and at accounts of a variety of strange happenings in the area by eye-witnesses who fortunately lived to tell their tales.

The chapter on theories and explanations reviews the wide range of natural mishaps and disasters that the area is prone to. The more bizarre offerings - Atlantean Death Rays, time-reversals, and so forth - are given the short shrift they deserve.

The author's personal assessment, however, raises problems. Group appears to accept that there is some as yet unknown factor which has been instrumental in at least some Triangle disappearances. The problem is that the rest of his book has just proved pretty conclusively that this

as always his thought is probably closer to the truth than any other interpretation. To the non-practitioner this book must remain an enigma, giving some insight into the Chinese mind, but at the same time causing more confusion than enlightenment.

The I Ching is the most widely known system of divination to come out of the East, serving the same purpose as the tarot did in the West. Like the tarot it works, giving the enquirer answers to problems which on the surface perplex him. How it works is a matter for debate, many holding there is some intrinsic power in the book itself; more likely is the explanation that following the procedure in the book stimulates a part of the intellect not normally used for problem solving, just as the tarot is used to stimulate unused emotional facilities.

Part of the process of getting answers from the I Ching is following the complicated procedure and meditating on the complex commentary. The **Pocket I Ching** seeks to make the I Ching more accessible by simplifying the imagery and commentary originally translated by Richard Wilhelm in 1924

To one who is used to the very complete Legge translation and who delights in the richness and depth of meaning in the original, this is in some ways a great innovation. However, the I Ching can take it. If the simplification introduces the system to a wider audience the net gain will be worth the cost.

is not the case! The evidence presented shows that all the reported disappearances are capable of rational explanation: those which are nor are largely the older cases where original documentation does not exist.

At the end of the book is a table of disappearances which summarises 211 Triangle incidents. Of these only five ('Wild Goose', 1944; Super-Sabre, 1960; 'Crystal', 1968; Cessna 172, 1969; Super Constellation 1971) are coded 'Mystery - cannot be explained by rational means'. It is interesting that in all these cases the original references seem to be the discredited and sensationalist works by Berlitz and Winer, the two writers who between them created the Bermuda Triangle legend.

It is a great shame that David Group had to end his book by attempting to perpetuate the non-existent 'mystery' of the Bermuda Triangle, and that he could not go where his own evidence ultimately leads - to an outright dismissal of the sensation-mongering, manipulation, and downright deception which has created the Bermuda Triangle.

J.R.

GOSS, Michael. **The Evidence for Phantom Hitch-Hikers**. Aquarian Press (in association with ASSAP), 1984. £2.95.

Once again, a distinctive theme seems to have arisen unbidden in the pages of this issue of *Magonia*. Articles by Peter Rogerson and Nigel Watson *et al* explore the theme of 'participative folklore' - where real, flesh and blood people actually experience some of the traditional themes of folklore. Such themes - witchcraft, leprechauns - lie on a thin dividing line between real experience and literary artifice; and no theme more, perhaps, than the phantom hitch-hiker.

The PHH (please excuse yet another paranormal acronym) has become almost a symbol of that type of encounter which lies just beyond the reality of individual experience; students of contemporary folklore have used it almost as a symbol of their fugitive subject matter. Until now the only books which have looked seriously at the PHH legend have been those like Brunvand's **The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and their Meaning**, which have looked on the stories as archetype, and sought a meaning to the accounts in terms of social imagery. They have seen the PHH perhaps as a symbol of the transience and rootlessness of much of western society. Another tradition of writing has seen the Hitch-hiker simply as a ghost story, a good yarn to anthropologise, without too much concern as to where the event may lie in a spectrum of reality and myth.

Michael Goss is aware of the symbolic significance of the PHH, and analyses it expertly and authoritatively in his study. But also he has travelled the road in search of the one or two original Hitch-hiker witnesses; not friends of friends, or second cousins of the man who came to mend his auntie's washing-machine, but the man sitting opposite telling of how he met the Phantom, with all its time-honoured attributes. Even then, the evidence is slight, the stories uncorroborated - how could they be otherwise? - the final link in the chain just that little bit too elusive to pin down. But we know that it happened, we can be sure that one or two people, not many more, will put their hands on their heart and tell you: "I met the Phantom Hitch-hiker!"

But that said, we still have the mystery; after all, a thousand people will tell you "I met an alien", and are we any closer to understanding what is happening? If the PHH is out there stalking the highways of the world, is it symbol, reality, illusion or hoax? Michael Goss leads us carefully through the welter of interpretation, and brings us out, much wiser, at the other side. He will not please the sceptic, who wants him to say that all is just a mass of rumour; he will not please the eager-believer, who wants to hear that they are the ghosts of picturesquely slaughtered wanderers. But he will satisfy those who are glad that at last the PHH has been brought firmly into the field of human experience, and can be studied as a paranormal event, but who is still willing to accept its meaning in terms of myth, belief and archetype.

This is a fine book, closely argued - it repays careful reading - well written, and, so far, easily the best title in the **Evidence Series**, bar none.

J.R.

GOOCH, Stan. **Creatures from Inner Space**. Rider, 1984. £8.95.

Much of this book covers similar ground to Hilary Evans's (reviewed below) and appears to be reasonably sensible, taking a psychological view of a variety of 'paranormal' experiences, and critical of evidence for survival. However, one should beware of taking a book at face value just because you agree with some of its arguments. Perhaps one should be warned by his willingness to take Frank De Felitta's claim that **The Entity** movie was based on fact, and then quote from it as if it were a documentary record. By the end you begin to realise that everything is being explained by the author's belief - that the cerebellum is the seat of the unconscious, and his odd racial theories: in a previous book he argued that the Jews were the de-

scendants of Neanderthal man, who was especially mystical and left-handed and psychic and the sort of person who would pass the Graham Phillips psi tests with flying colours. Be warned: not all pseudo-science is as transparent as von Daniken's. P.R.

COHEN, Daniel. **The Great Airship Mystery: a UFO of the 1890's.** Dodd & Meard, New York, 1981. \$9.95.

Daniel Cohen is a sympathetic sceptic, and in this first full-length study of the airship phenomenon of the 1890's he takes a view of the subject not dissimilar from that of *Magonia*.

Despite the popular treatment, the book deals with all the most important features of the 'wave', from the San Francisco sightings to the Aurora 'crash'. The role of early science fiction, and popular speculation about mystery inventors is highlighted.

There were many tales of encounters with airship occupants. One of the most interesting comes from the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* of April 23rd, 1897, which reported that a St. Louis resident named Joseph Joslin was "walking along Skinner Road at Forrest Park when he came upon an airship". A short time later a strange creature, "two legged but shorter than the average man" appeared, and hypnotised Joslin into following it aboard the airship. He was held captive for three weeks, but because of the hypnotism he was unable to remember much of what happened, or how he was returned to earth. Joslin was dismissed as an alcoholic.

Also included are many classics, such as W.G. Hopkins and his nude 'Adam and Eve from Mars'; Judge Love and the visitors from the twelve lost tribes of Israel at the North Pole; the airship at Farmington, whose crew handed out temperance tracts; and the ever-present hint of the coming war with Spain.

It is a pity that in popular books like this important areas do get obscured. For example there is little discussion of the political and social background. The role of traditional folkloric themes is underplayed: for example some of the 'obviously ridiculous' airship reports contain motifs from contemporary tall-tales, themselves descendants of a once much more serious folklore. To assess such cases one would need to know the extent to which the small-town newspaper was the medium of a transformation from an oral to a literary story telling.

It is difficult to resist the observation that some of the apparently jocular tales conceal a hidden moral - Hamilton's depiction of an all-American family rendered "hideous" and betwixt angel and devil, in the glare of the new machine.

Cohen convincingly argues that the 1897 airship and modern UFO stories can be explained as an amalgam of misperception, hoax and tall story, yet admits of a nagging doubt - which exactly echos my own feelings after compiling INTCAT. P.R.

OBERG, James. **UFOs and Outer Space Mysteries: a sympathetic sceptics report.** Donning, Va., 1983. \$6.95.

This is by far the most lightweight of the works of the 'Sceptical Three' of American ufology, and is basically a collection of essays written for such prestigious scientific journals as *Omni*, *Saga's UFO Report*, etc. Chapter 3, dealing with the variety of folktales surrounding alleged UFOs seen by the crew of Apollo 11, and Chapter 9 dealing with the Petrozavodsk 'UFO' (actually the launch of a spy-satellite) and the bizarre 'explanations' dreamt up by Soviet scientists to hid the truth, are of interest, but much of the rest is pretty pedestrian stuff. It is a sad commentary of current standards of education that Oberg felt it necessary to refute such nonsense as 'spaceship moon'.

The chapter on 'Close Encounters' is rather poor. As usual, the Klass version of events is taken for granted, and easy targets chosen. Oberg makes a good point when he mentions that libel laws (notoriously fiercer in the UK than in the US) can keep many cases in the 'unexplained' camp. On the other hand, they do not appear to deter Oberg overmuch, and ufologists should beware of accepting unverified gossip about the private life of UFO percipients as much as gossip about crashed spaceships and radio contact with aliens. P.R.

HOARE, Rodney. **A Piece of Cloth: the Turin Shroud investigated.** Aquarian Press, £7.95. 1984.

The main reason why the Turin Shroud arouses such interest is, of course, the belief of many that it is the cloth in which according to the Gospels (Matthew 27:59, Mark 15:16, Luke 23:53, John 19: 38-40), the body of Jesus was wrapped after it had been taken from the cross and given to Joseph of Arimathea for burial.

Some people maintain that the marks on the cloth are faked and that they were painted on it some time in the fourteenth century. In the first part of this book, Hoare reviews the physical evidence and concludes, not only that the marks were caused by the cloth being in contact with a man who had been crucified, but that the man was not dead but merely unconscious.

In the second part of the book he uses

these findings to argue that the shroud was indeed that of Jesus, and proceeds to develop his own interpretation of the Gospel accounts of his crucifixion, entombment and resurrection

Hoare's interpretation of the evidence of the cloth and the Gospel stories are certainly controversial, but any peice of writing on this subject could hardly be otherwise. However, unlike too many books on controversial topics, this one is logically constructed and soberly written. **J.H.**

LE SHAN, Lawrence and MARGENAU, Henry. **Einstein's Space and Van Gogh's Skys: Physical reality and beyond.** Harvester Press, 1982.

A critique of reductionism in physics and human affairs. The authors trace the development of the idea of a single reality governing all domains of experience, to the eighteenth century idea of the rational cosmos created by the one rational God, who made all things in the same way. This view, they believe, is incorrect: different domains of experience inhabit different 'realities', which cannot be reduced, one to another. One consequence of this is that attempts to explain 'psychical' experiences in physical terms is seen as an error.

While closely reasoned, and persuasive in parts, the authors ultimately fail to convince this reviewer. Cohen for example, in arguing that a man working in an office, living with a loved wife, praying for a child's health, etc. is inhabiting different realities, seems in error. The man is surely **perceiving** reality in different ways, yet however he perceives reality he must surely react to certain events in the same way. If in contemplation of the beloved or distraction over the child he steps in front of a car the result is the same - at least to outside observers.

A more useful exploration might be to suggest that most domains of experience can be 'explained' at several different perceptions of reality; some of which are highly insightful, others of which are supremely uninteresting (e.g. an 'explanation' of Van Gogh's art in terms of allergy to cheese*)

A demanding and thought-provoking book, and a good antidote to some of the pop physics-cum-parapsychology we get: but very technical in parts. **P.R.**

* But even this may not be universally true. It is possible to imagine a situation in which it could be shown that Van Gogh only produced his great art in periods of spiritual anguish which occurred after eating cheese. It would have been supremely important to Van Gogh to inform him of this, so that he could make a free choice as to whether or not to carry on eating cheese!

COLEMAN, Loren. **Mysterious America.** Faber & Faber, 1983, £6.95.

After a diet of academia, Coleman's introduction to American Forteanism made a welcome change. It is a good straightforward account of mystery animals and related anomalies, with little attempt at critical analysis, but happily lacking the bludgeoning tone of much anomaly literature.

Coleman suggests that people living in trailer homes on the limits of cities expanding into the countryside are the most prone to Fortean experiences; and it is interesting to note that many societies view the 'wilderness' immediately adjacent to settlements as the home of all sorts of ghosties and ghoulies.

In some cases, such as the 'Mattoon Gasser' and the phantom clowns who were reported all across the States in the spring of 1981 enticing young children into vans, the line between anomalous experience and urban folklore is very thin indeed. Given that much traditional folklore has an experiential basis, there is no reason why contemporary folklore should not have an experiential basis also. However, interpreting such experience in terms of 'paraphysical entities' can easily lead to some pretty absurd conclusions.

It is interesting to note that virtually all of America's mystery beasts can be found in Britain, where explanations in terms of relict species, etc., seem very implausible. The true pleasure of Forteanism is surely in the willing suspension of disbelief, and a receptiveness to a folklore which speaks of the mystery of the world and the fragility of the human world of 'daylight reason and common sense', where life is 'scientific' and delineated by street lamps and TV sets. **P.R.**

ALCOCK, James E. **Parapsychology, science or magic: a psychological perspective.** Pergamon, 1981. [Foundations and Philosophy of Science and Technology series]

A sceptical critique of parapsychology by a member of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. After a hesitant start in which Alcock deals with the reasons for the belief in psi and spontaneous cases in a most inadequate matter - emphasising trivial examples - the author comes into his own in discussion of the psychology of experience and judgement, and in a critique of experimental parapsychology.

Alcock quotes critics of pseudoscience:

- a. a subjectivist theory of knowledge, with aspects available only to the initiated.
- b. modest formal background, with only rare involvement in logic and mathematics;
- c. fund of 'knowledge' contains untestable or false hypotheses which are in conflict with

a large body of knowledge;

d. methods are neither checkable by alternate methods nor justifiable in terms of well-confirmed theories;

e. there is little borrowing or overlap with neighbouring fields of knowledge;

f. no specific background of relatively confirmed theories;

g. unchanging body of beliefs;

h. world view admitting elusive immaterial entities.

He argues with some cogency that parapsychology fits many if not all these criteria. He also points out that lack of replication on demand, non-falsifiable 'theories', no consensus as to which phenomena are valid, unpredictable occurrences, and no real theoretical progress in the last hundred years.

Despite the cogency of these criticisms, a number of features of Alcock's approach (and the general CSICOP approach) are of concern. As much as any 'anti-materialist' they wish to subject the universe to metaphysical tests. Their critiques extend well beyond parapsychology, into any interpretation of physics which they perceive as irrational (they clearly find aspects of quantum physics and cosmology disturbing), and the tone of moral crusader creeps in repeatedly.

Part of the sceptics dilemma seems to come from being unable to distinguish between anomalous experience and the interpretation put upon them. In his exasperation at the often absurd views of parapsychologists, the author too easily dismisses anomalous experiences, and often falls into an old-fashioned kind of rationalism.

P.R.

BINNS, Ronald, with R. J. Bell. *The Loch Ness Mystery Solved*, Open Books, Shepton Mallet, 1983. £7.95

Ronald Binns comes close to doing to Nessie what Larry Kusche did to the Bermuda Triangle! The legend of the Loch Ness Monster is shown to contain many fictional elements. The 'history' of pre-1933 sightings turns out to consist of misquotations or untracable or fictitious sources. Some of these derive from "an eccentric letter which appeared in *The Scotsman* newspaper on 20th October 1933, and which has been quoted ad nauseam ever since."

The Loch Ness Monster 'tradition' has depicted the Loch as an isolated wilderness before the opening of the 'new' road in 1933. In fact it was a popular tourist resort in the last century, and had been the scene of military operations during the '45 Rebellion; the so-called new road was merely an improvement of a route dating back to the eighteenth century. In these years, despite being visited by a wide cross-section of people of note, no

tradition of a monster emerged.

Binns convincingly shows how the Loch Ness Monster was promoted by water-bailiff and newspaper stringer Alex Campbell. Campbell, who wrote the original piece on the monster has claimed many personal close encounters, and emerges as a figure rather like Arthur Shuttlewood, as someone to whom the curious come on pilgrimage.

The photographic evidence is shown to be, at best, ambiguous. The famous 'surgeon's photograph' appears less impressive when one realises it was taken on April 1st! The Dinsdale film may well, indeed, have been a boat, the Rines pictures may be little more than driftwood.

Binns emphasises the role of expectation and preconception in fleeting eyewitness testimony, and points out that sceptics such as Maurice Burton can equally be made to look foolish when they take such testimony at face value and try to 'explain' every last detail.

Binns, like the 'new sceptics' in ufology, has emerged from the ranks of the investigators rather than professional debunkers, and has reached similar conclusions.

He makes the following very interesting comment a propos monster witnesses: "A 'sighting' is to them something almost akin to a 'miracle', an occurrence so rare that it is like (to quote one witness) 'the time of revelation' - something which exerts an often benign, strongly spiritual influence over the observer. The effect has also been noted on those who have seen flying saucers. Not for nothing is Loch Ness a place of pilgrimage, and the Monster a creature whose very existence depends on the word of 'witnesses'."

Yet people will still see in the gothic Loch of the Wilderness, reflected on its mirror-like surface, reflections of real monsters - those which lie in the depths of the human psyche.

P.R.

GRIM, Patrick (editor). *Philosophy of Science and the Occult*. State University of New York Press, 1982. £31.15 hardback.

A selection of articles using parapsychology and 'pseudo-science' to illustrate problems in the philosophy of science, and the demarcation between science and pseudo-science. Topics discussed include astrology, parapsychology, UFOs, ancient astronauts and mysticism. 'Believers' and 'sceptics' get about equal time, and most argue in a fairly coherent manner. A noted exception is a bizarre defence of Erich von Daniken by one Pasqual S. Schievella. Hardly anyone is likely to want to buy a copy, but worth the 25p. - £1.00 it costs to reserve a copy at your local library.

P.R.

EVANS, Hilary. **Visions: Apparitions: Alien Visitors.** Aquarian Press, 1984. £9.95.

I'm hardly going to have to introduce Hilary Evans to regular readers of **Magonia** or **Common Ground**. If he were older (or acted older!) he could be the elder statesman of British ufology, but he's still too lively for that, and his influence stretches further, for his roots don't lie in ufology as you'll know if you read his **Intrusions**. His newest book is an elegant exposition of the range of his knowledge. It is the finest and most comprehensive survey and analysis of the range of entity experience yet published in English. I'll go further, it's the best book in the paranormal research field since the classic works that arose from the collected cases of the SPR in the early part of this century.

It is also a classic, in the mould of Myers's **Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death** *et al* but written with the advantages of modern communications, a vastly increased range of sources, and one of the finest private collections of books in the world. Few writers could have access to better source material.

But it's what you do with source material that matters. What has been done here is that accounts of a cross-section of all types of entity experience have been organised into "a field survey" in which people "seem to see a more-or-less human-like figure which there are good reasons for believing is not as 'real' as it seems to be". Or to use the title the author originally chose, changed for some peculiar reason to that now used, a detailed study of 'The Entity Enigma', extending to 309 pages of smallish print, plus a good bibliography/references, and illustrations.

There have been previous such attempts, not all by any means unsuccessful. The ones that spring to mind most readily are the 'new ufology' paperbacks of the mid 1970's - **The Unidentified, The Haunted Universe, UFOs, the Psychic Solution**, etc; really exciting and highly influential in their time. They took a wide range of apparently spontaneous - and mostly humanoid - phenomena and attempted to build up a cosmology from them; the source material from which they worked was interesting and original, but the theories themselves have mostly been debunked since - in several cases by the authors themselves.

Perhaps the key to Hilary's success in dealing with this most complex of all phenomena is his ready acceptance of what I now regard as the first real law of paranormal research - there are no facts. Or, to quote:

"In the course of this study I shall be citing a great many case histories by way of example. Let us face the fact here and now that virtually every one of these cases is purely anecdotal, comprising witness testimony to an event for which that testimony comprises the only evidence. It is not unlikely that one or more of these cases is in one way or another spurious: I have reported them as they were reported by the percipient, but I would not care to say of any single case that it is beyond question genuine."

The book is written on the principle that, evidence of deliberate fraud being uncommon, the entity experience is generally real to the percipient, in that a sequence of perceived events occur, and cannot be readily avoided or ignored. That is a very different approach from that of Vallee, Keel, Clark, Hopkins, Randles and so on where the experiences are so recounted and framed that it is unavoidable that in climaxing the book theories and explanation for probably subjective experiences have to be conjured from nowhere, and almost always spoil the careful narrative and assessment that preceeds them.

*It is a classic in
the mould of Myers'*

Given that no single case is beyond question, rigid conclusions must be - and are - avoided. More so than in the author's **Evidence for UFOs** where I feel that pressure of space led to too decisive and apparent espousal of the ETH - one not repeated in this later book. It would be difficult to communicate the breadth of the content without reprinting the contents page, so suffice it to say all usual lines of approach are there, and are complemented by assessments of the doppelganger, of 'companions and counsellors' providing surprise ways out of sticky situations, and coverage of 'experimental' entities including age-regression, practical magic, seances, hallucinogenic experience, and the creation of thoughtforms. And in first place amongst these the important evidence involving sleep and dream-related experience, which this author has done much to bring to public notice in recent years. He freely acknowledges the influence of David Hufford's **The Terror that Comes in the Night** on both structure and content of this book, and his evidence confirms the importance of the state of awareness and wakefulness in the origins of many types of entity experience.

The author's knowledge of possible theories and explanations appears to be

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