

# Magonia 47

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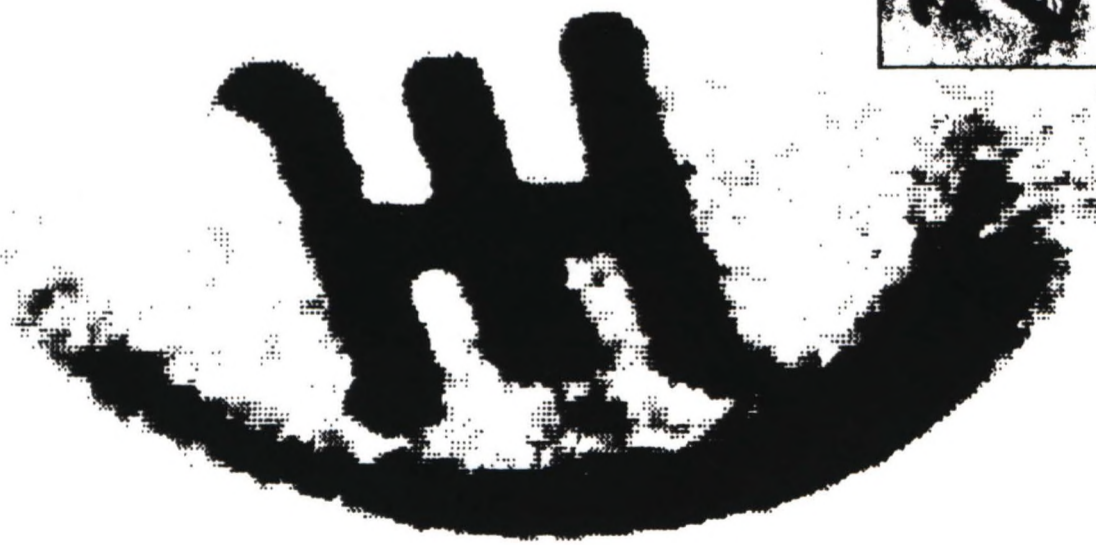
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**Interpreting Contemporary Vision and Belief**

# Magonia

Interpreting Contemporary Vision and Belief

MAGONIA 47 (MUFOB 94)

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## PETER ROGERSON'S NORTHERN ECHOES

### LIVING LABORATORIES a further survey of 90's abduction literature

In a rather more serious *Northern Echoes* than usual I intend to continue the themes of my article in this issue, and look at a range of recent publications which span a variety of ideological positions reflecting the increased splintering of the American abduction scene.

New Age journalist Keith Thompson [1] takes the broadest sweep in his historical and mythological overview of the UFO topic. He argues that whether or not individual UFO experiences are misidentifications of Venus, or Martian spaceships "they are profoundly important gateways to provocative mythic horizons and imaginal realms... symbolic worlds [which] are real, vital and filled with significance. The UFO stories hint at realms of ambiguity to which the neat little box reality of believers and sceptics alike do scant justice."

Ufology, argues Thompson, has many of the hallmarks of a modern mythology - complete with its creation story - Kenneth Arnold's encounter - which like all dream-time history remains part of the present past. Arnold himself is often evoked as a foundation hero, with comments such as "if Kenneth Arnold himself were to come to our conference, what would he make of our proceedings?" Revisionist critiques such as Martin Kottmeyer's can be seen as a parallel to the 'search for the historical Jesus' of the rationalist theologians. Vigorous ripostes from traditional believers can be expected.

As an outsider, Thompson takes us through a whistle-stop history of American ufology, with interviews with well-known participants. The problem is that, while Thompson can often view the Byzantine politics of American ufology with a detached, but sometime jaundiced, eye, his actual grasp of this extremely complex subject seems often to be sketchy.

In this sketch Thompson sees reflected figures from mythology: Proteus, who changed shape to avoid being trapped into prophecy; Hermes, the tricky messenger; Trickster himself; Dionysius, the wildness which disrupts ordinary society. Thompson shows himself to be well aware of the connectedness of anomalous experience, and of ufology's links into a general belief in the power of The Other to intrude and control our lives. He highlights the debate within American ufology as to whether these parallels are coincidental or fundamental.

Pontolillo [2] is equally aware of these parallels, and is equally clear that they are fundamental, concentrating on a much narrower spectrum of events: the abduction reports. Pontolillo is able to demonstrate that these parallels go much beyond superficial outlines. There are often close correspondences between the description of the sexual experiences of abductees and, for example, those who claimed encounters with the incubi's cold sexual member.

It is in tone that Thompson and Pontolillo contrast most starkly. For the latter abductions are a mirror of the abuse of women in society, and their message is "women cannot have control of their own bodies, either in this world or an imaginary one". The abduction experience, for Pontolillo, grows out of an increasingly repressive climate, with attacks on sex education, abortion, and contraception. Perhaps even more relevant is the perceived mechanisation and dehumanisation of conception, pregnancy and childbirth, as documented by Robyn Rowland [3] who sees women being relegated to the status of living laboratories or walking life-support systems for their foetuses, by doctors who employ the rhetoric of agriculture and even industry.

For Thompson however, the encounter, even the abduction, is the start of the grand adventure, the Heroic Quest "venturing forth from the world of common day into a realm of supernatural wonder [...] a fateful realm of treasure and danger" - the journey from secular habitat to sacred wilderness, which journey is a rite of passage. (I was pleased to see that Thompson understands the importance of the ideas of Victor Turner.)

These divisions run across American ufology. Pontolillo's critique is directed at the 'standard story' of Hopkins and Jacobs, which he finds evidentially vacant, a product of the age of anxieties, which reflect what we might think of as the implosion of habitat. The wild and dangerous Other is not just in the street outside the apartment, it comes in through the walls, dragging us out with it. Women in particular are not safe anywhere. In pursuit of this standard story Pontolillo ignores, as do his targets Hopkins and Jacobs, the religious dimension of many of these stories.

Thompson, for whom the Other may be angels or archetypes, symbols of trans-

cence, skirts over the darkness implicit in the narratives, reflecting the New Age's inability to confront evil. There is within such stories a connection between abuse and initiation. A study of the initiation rituals of many cultures points to this too intimate connection - scarification, circumcision, clitorectomy. We should also perhaps note the rôle of masks in initiation rituals, where the neophyte is confronted by his culture's fearsome demons, then note the similarity between the slit mouth and wrap-round eyes of the Grays with the human face seen through a balaclava helmet - the savage mask of our culture's demons - the terrorist, bank robber, mugger, the universal outlaw on the fringes of society.

The books of personal accounts also highlight this ambiguity. Bryant and Seebach [4] present themselves as 'healers of shattered reality', adding the language of the social worker to that of the contactee and channeler. For those who can plough through the pages of channelled gunge there is an important theme: the identification of their encounter with the unknown as simultaneously religious revelation and a species of rape. We should perhaps bear in mind the etymological common origin of 'rapture' and 'rape', of being seized and possessed by the Other.

Traumatic events not only have the obvious shock effect, but can also lead to a shattering of the most profound sense of self and reality, which can be more disturbing than the original event. Our reactions to trauma can also be traumatic. Take an example from Bryant and Seebach's book, in which an abductee/contactee denounces as a 'screen memory' what obviously happened in reality, because it offended her sense of self: while out driving one night a speeding car nearly collides with her, going off the road and overturning. Instead of stopping, she speeds away and rather than feeling shocked and shaken as she believed she should, she is exhilarated by the sense of survival. She stops in the middle of nowhere to phone her family and tell them she loves them and remembers the experience as incredibly positive. This euphoria of survival she finds unacceptable; she should have stopped to help. She cannot accept her feelings, so begins to reconstruct reality to fit in with her image of herself. The UFO abduction scenario helps her do this.

Bryant and Seebach clearly belong on the Mack and Fowler wing of abduction research, and implicitly accuse Hopkins and Jacobs of fostering a 'victim mentality'. Yet a number of 'contactees' discussed by Seebach and Bryant show much more severe psychiatric problems than is generally conceded in the literature, including hospitalis-

ation and drug or alcohol abuse, representing a range of behavioural backgrounds similar to those of many of the self-proclaimed 'adult-survivors' of Satanic abuse. This considerably blurs the distinctions made by Bill Ellis in *Magonia* 40.

The response to this traumatic collapse of the given world can be anomie, but another possible response is the re-forging of a new sense of reality and identity. Hypomanic responses may include not just the elation of survival, but a sense of power. 'Victims' may become public personalities and the tendency of abductees or contactees to join the lecture circuit should not be taken to imply that they are 'in it for the publicity', as parallels can be drawn from many 'normal' traumas.

**Women are relegated to  
the status of living  
laboratories or walking  
life-support systems for  
their fetuses by  
doctors who employ the  
rhetoric of agriculture  
and industry.**

This does not mean that the trauma-producer was anomalous in any trans-personal sense. One only has to read Hendry's *UFO Handbook* (as far too few ufologists do today) to see how traumatic a misrepresentation of Venus can be. Abductees are not fonts of wisdom: their revelations are recycled from popular occult and New Age culture, often simply parroting the beliefs of the first investigator they meet.

Pontolillo points out the continuity between the scars of the abductee and witches' marks and stigmata, as they bear no relationship to known medical procedures. Perhaps one should note the resonances with the scarification of the initiate, or the 'mental scars' of the trauma victim. Such scars form a central theme of the second personal narrative reviewed here, that of Karla Turner [5]. Assuming this is not a case of a novel presented as fact, it demonstrates both how abduction beliefs originate and spread, and just how complex the pre-standard abduction narrative was.

It is a haunting reminder of the fragility of the world of daylight reason. During a period of tension in the lives of her and her husband, Karla Turner sets her students a term paper on UFOs and similar

topics as an exercise in logic. In the course of this she reads the books of Strieber and Hopkins. After this, dreams in which she sees her husband and friends as vampires take on a new significance. Soon her husband presents her with an abduction narrative, and her teenage son, his girlfriend and disturbed, attention-seeking best-friend are swapping every dream, anomaly and hypnagogic hallucination they experience. Between them they produce an incredible melange of ufological, paranormal and shamanic imagery. There are nightly abductions, sometime the participants examine their bodies two or three times a day for possible scars. There are poltergeist effects, and encounters with 'The Ancestors' and the 'Old Ones'. There are regular hypnotic sessions with a local ufologist.

Reading through this one can sense that in the end all this provides a welcome sense of drama. Furthermore, it diverts attention from their real problems and gives the family a new sense of unity.

For Bryant and Seebach, and even ultimately for Thompson, the abduction experience is the encounter with the wholly other. Only Pontolillo, correctly in my view, locates the source of abduction motifs within human culture, tracing their origin to Classical times. Yet Pontolillo never seems to unify the point: why did people believe in abductions by gods and fairies or intercourse with demons? They seem to represent humanity's encounter with wild anti-society, the idea that one can be enticed out of the human circle by the forces of the wild bush. Pontolillo's interpretation of the abduction narrative as a contemporary form of the misogyny which led to the witchcraft trials, like Dennis Stacy's abortion trauma hypothesis, relies on the very high proportion of abduction narratives involving women. However, my own count of pre-1980 cases shows 40 involved females only, 24 mixed, and 119 men only - nearly two-thirds. There is a subjective impression that the situation has changed and Jacobs reported a 56% female sample, but in the absence of a comprehensive catalogue for post-1987 cases, judgment is best reserved.

This should not detract from Pontolillo's case against naive literalism, for he most effectively demolishes the claims of abductionists, pointing out the weakness of their techniques, their misuse of hypnosis and manipulation of data. Perhaps it is most curious of all that we should need to argue against people who claim that abductees can be physically carried through solid walls into invisible spaceships!

Can we present a working model of the abduction experience and what might

CONTINUED FOOT OF PAGE EIGHT >>>

In the second set of 'Notes Towards a Revisionist History of Abductions'

## PETER ROGERSON

finds that even now there is something new to be said about the Hill abductions, and hints at a case that might prove Budd Hopkins right.



# Fairylands Hunters

■36. *UFO Reporter* no. 1. 'A Supplement to Jessup's Case for the UFO'. cf. STRINGFIELD, Leonard G. *Inside Saucer Post 3-0 Blue*. Crifo, 1957, p.91

■37. First published in *Diario de Minas* 26 August 1962. Widely publicised by Coral Lorenzen in e.g. *APRO Bulletin*, September 1962; *FSR* November/December 1962; *Fate*, June 1963.

■38. KLOTZBACH, Hans P. *Der Urwelt unde Entgegen: ein UFO rettete mein leben*. Lucern, Verlag Rolph Koch, 1962 (Eberhard case 8712)

■39. CREIGHTON, Gordon. 'Healing from Saucers', op. cit.

A STUDY of the literature, even at my fairly superficial level, shows that far from being a unique event, the Hill abduction was just one of a number of such

stories to have emerged in the early 1960s. The best publicised case before the publication of the Hill and Villas Boas stories and the one which softened up the UFO community for the Hill story was the disappearance of Rivalino Mafra da Silva in August 1962, a story resonant with motifs of taboo and vengeful fairies; for Rivalino was said to have seen *them* in the shape of two dwarfs about their secret work. For this impiety he was haunted by small, shapeless, inhuman beings who entered through the closed door of his house, calling out his name, while a neighbour saw spheres above his house. 'They' told him he would be killed, and that 'prayer would be of no avail'. And, indeed, next day he was taken by the two spheres under the eyes of his boys. (36) Thus we see the imagery of the 'other' as being part of the implacable forces of outer wildness, against which no wall is protection. This Brazilian miner was said to have been not the only South American taken that year, for the *APRO Bulletin* of January 1963 reported the kidnapping of an Argentine soccer referee, Telemaco Xavier, who was taken by three men who came out of a silvery disc.(37) The little people of old were said to take sides in terrestrial battles; perhaps their descendants

do the same with soccer matches.

Other stories of this period show how artificial the line between abduction and contactee stories really

is. For example, in 1962 there appeared in Switzerland the story of Hans Klotzbach, (38) of which only a fragmentary English-language version exists. (39) The central theme seems to be that Hans passed out after injuring his legs jumping from a moving train, recovering consciousness in the illuminated blue interior of a UFO, where undescribed beings healed his legs while warning of impending terrestrial catastrophes. He then fell unconscious again, recovering by the railway track, his legs covered with blood, but uninjured. The story of Olaf Neilsen again shows a mixture of motifs. Walking near Halmstad in Sweden, in a lonely spot between a wood and fields, he found himself 'caught as it were in a dizziness and sucked up into the air'. About 20 m above the ground was a strange object, and as he felt himself drawn into it he passed out. When he came to he was lying on a couch in a small cabin of a pale green colour, illuminated by a faint, diffuse, sourceless light. A human-type being entered the room and apologised for abducting him. He was then taken to a subterranean base, where he was shown several 'saucers' and told about a protective magnetic curtain *they* were setting up to protect themselves from the

hostile 'Dark Ones' from Orion. There were many other bases in central Asia, Latin America, etc. In the latter case, they had adapted pre-Inca cities to their own needs. (40)

Another transitional tale is that of the Florentine tailor Mario Zuccala, who in the twilight of nine o'clock on an April evening was walking home through a wood when, at a crossroad clearing the path crossed a small canal, he felt himself struck by a sharp gust of wind. An object like inverted bowls passed overhead and came close to the ground about 6-7 m away. From its underside came a cylinder. This opened up revealing a diffuse white light, from which emerged two 1.5 m tall beings dressed in metallic suits, with helmets surmounted by antennae. These two men then took hold of him gently under the armpits and led him into the empty interior of the object, which was lit by the same diffuse light. He was unable to make out any details of the interior. They then let go of him as a voice '...from the inner part of the object...like one amplified by a microphone and as if resounding in a vast space', spoke to him in Italian. The only part Zuccala could remember was a message that at the fourth moon they would return at one in the morning to give him a message for humanity. He was then escorted out and somehow found himself outside his door. His wife heard four loud knocks which he did not remember making, and found him terrified on the front porch. He was very nervy that night. No traces were found at the site. Zuccala later claimed to have been contacted again and to have been given half a message which he kept in a locked case, the other half being given to someone in another European country. (41)

Many of the investigators considered the story, at least in part, a hoax for publicity, which supposition is rather strengthened by the similarity of the described beings to those in the notorious Monguzzi fake photographs; in which case it is interesting to see how folklore motifs introduced the story, the supernaturals met at the cross roads, and their arrival announced in the fairy wind. Then there is that public address system, a motif not to surface again until the stories told by David Jacobs. Both Neilsen and Zuccala introduce the diffuse light, while the former story has the classic doorway amnesia.

It might be thought that after the detailed studies by Sheaffer, (42) Kottmeyer (43) and Spencer (44) there would be little further to say about the Hills' own story; this turns out not to be the case. Take, for example, the news background. The weeks preceding the night of 19-20 September 1961 were ones of great tension, which may well have affected the politically active and aware Hills rather more than many of their more apathetic fellow citizens. On 15 August the Berlin Wall had been thrown up, with a further flare-up of tension during 8-10 September. On 31 August the Soviet Union ended its nuclear test moratorium and next day exploded a 'substantial' nuclear device, with further tests on 4 and 5 September, and on the 16th the United States resumed its tests. There were other unnerving events. On 1 September, 78 people had been killed in an airliner crash at Hinsdale, Illinois (the 4th worst in the USA to that date). On 5 September there was an assassination attempt on De Gaulle. Next day, Kennedy made a speech praising the desegregation attempts at Little Rock High School. On 11 September Hurricane Clara, the fiercest in over 60 years, struck Texas, and a United Automobile Workers

strike started. The Katanga crisis exploded on the 13th and that led to the death of United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold in a (probably non-accidental) plane crash on the 18th. (45)

The final event must have had a special poignancy for the Hills, members of their church's United Nations committee, an added depression as they drove home dog-tired, racing ahead of a feared hurricane. We must not forget that Barney in particular must have been very stressed indeed; he was worried about a forthcoming ulcer operation, and despite believing that at least in part the ulcer was caused by a gruelling 120-mile daily round trip to and from work in Boston, he chose to take a weekend's rest, not relaxing at home but making an unplanned and ill thought out marathon car trip to Canada, which ended as mentioned above in an all-night trip home ahead of the hurricane and with empty wallets. (46)

Anyone who reads Barney's encounter in the field with the light must suspect that his extreme reaction may much more likely have been a symptom of pre-existing post-traumatic stress than something new. His description of the alien as having a Mongolian-type face, wearing a sort of leather jacket and a scarf, is curiously reminiscent of a Kamikaze pilot. This figure is also seen as an evil Nazi officer and an Irishman (Boston Irish, traditional enemies of blacks). In other words, reflected in the unknown light Barney sees images of evil authority, intolerance and threat. It would be very interesting to know just where his war service was.

Barney's panic undoubtedly led to the so-called period of missing time. In fact there was no missing time. Barney had estimated his 2 to 3 am arrival time on the basis of 'speeds up to 65 miles an hour' on the freeway and 'fifty to fifty-five even if this should be shade above the limit' on the minor roads. In fact, once the strange light had caught their attention they spent much time dawdling along looking at it, got out along the route, ran the dog in the woods, looked at the object through binoculars then carried on stopping 'briefly' several times before the final stop and panic. After this neither was in any frame of mind to really notice where they were going, and a number of detours and wrong routes were possible, though probably not necessary, to swallow up much more than two missing hours.

Fears about nuclear testing seem a more likely source of concern about radiation on the car than spaceships, and it must be remembered that the published account of this case is based on the Hills' memories and interpretations in 1965 after months of association with ufology and 'investigators'.

As the Hills retold the story, the strangeness escalated. In her first report to the Air Force, Betty Hill made no mention of occupants. A week later, in a letter to Donald E. Keyhoe, they were introduced as 'the size of a pencil at arm's length and wearing uniforms' (a pencil at arm's length? an obvious exaggeration).

Betty had already read Keyhoe's *Flying Saucer Conspiracy*, and as we saw earlier this contained a number of hints about aliens kidnapping people, but other features are also of interest. Betty described her dream alien as having 'a larger chest than us', a feature which persisted into the hypnosis, and years later she

■40. CREIGHTON, Gordon. 'The Italian UFO Scene, part 4', in *FSR*, 9,4, July-August 1963, pp.10-11.

■41. SILVANO, Ceccarelli. 'Mario Zucala's Strange Encounter' in *FSR*, 8,4, July/August, 1962.

■42. SCHAEFER, Robert. *The UFO Verdict*, Prometheus, 1981, chapter 5.

■43. KOTTMAYER, Martin. 'Entirely Predisposed' in *Magonia* 35, January 1990, pp.3-10.

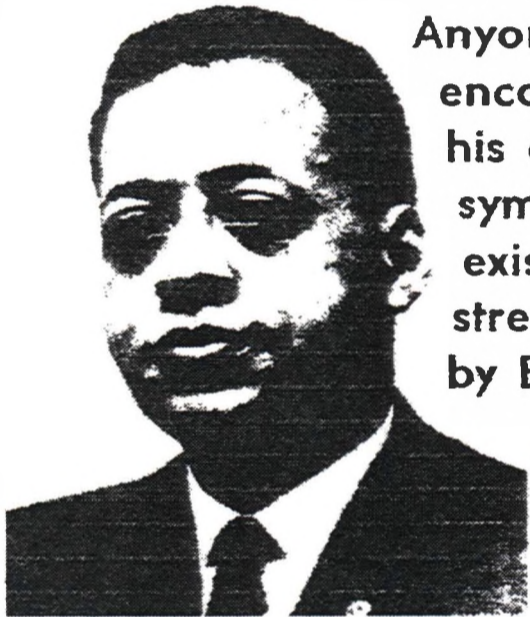
■44. SPENCER, John. *Perspectives*. Macdonald, 1990.

■45. FACTS ON FILE. *The 1960s Day by Day*.

■46. FULLER, John. *The Interrupted Journey*. appendix I, p. 296-7

was talking of large chests and frail bodies. It is perhaps significant that on page 207 of *Flying Saucer Conspiracy* Keyhoe refers to projectionist Willi Hodges's alleged encounter with beings with 'thick-set bodies, oversize heads and delicate legs'. In view of later developments it is also interesting to note that Keyhoe mentions a race of (human) pygmies with (supposedly) strange eyes.

*Flying Saucer Conspiracy* was not, however, the only book Betty read, for we can see another influence on her early, more human dream descriptions of the aliens. Compare 'their complexions were of a grey tone, like grey paint with a black base, their lips were of a bluish tint... Hair and eyebrows were very dark, possibly black. The men were all dressed alike..[in] a light blue navy colour with a grey shade in it. They wore trousers and short jackets, that gave the impression of zippered sports jackets but I am not aware of zippers or buttons. Shoes were the low, slip-on style resembling a boot. They were all wearing military caps similar to the air force, but not so broad on top', Betty's dream description with '...they all seemed to be wearing some sort of uniform unfamiliar to me. All but two or three of them wore black billed caps with a black band around the bottom...bareheaded one's hair was black and crew cut.



Anyone who reads Barney's encounter must suspect that his extreme reaction was a symptom of an already existing post-traumatic stress. The abductors seen by Barney Hill are figures representing images of evil authority, intolerance and threat.

[They] wore jackets like cowboys and trousers of a material which reflected a bluish-grey cast under the bright moonlight. their dark olive-hued faces were bland and without lines or blemishes, and their skin was taut and hard over the bone structure. (47)

This latter description was from Truman Bethurum's *Aboard a Flying Saucer* and the similarities are such as to make it near certain that Betty must have read it. No doubt she consciously dismissed it as nonsense but the influence on her dream is clear. Perhaps the physical description is not the only influence that Bethurum had on the Hills and general abduction lore. Bethurum was technically an abductee as the beings' 'invitation' on board was pretty forceful. They are described as being just shorter than himself, a Hills feature also. Bethurum's story contains many of the features that were to occur in later abduction stories; the absurd conversations; the evasiveness of *them* with ridiculous claims as to their origin 'the planet Clarion beyond the moon'; the fairytale atmosphere with quotes such as 'Our houses are our castles in a far away land' and 'I expect to be around for thousands of years, but the water in your deserts will mostly be tears'. Like the Hill humanoids, Truman's Aura Rhanes seemed to have no conception of time and distance.

Of course, Bethurum's tale of Aura Rhanes and her wonderful 'scow' is absurd, but it is the absurdity of dreams, and it seems clear that Bethurum's early experiences at least were just that. In fact, at one point in his naive book Bethurum tells how he met Aura in a restaurant, where she ignored him. No doubt the girl in the restaurant was quite real and quite terrestrial, and Bethurum in his loneliness incorporated her into his dreams and fantasies. Only later as he tried to get social support from George Adamski did Bethurum's tale take on elements of a more traditional contactee story.

While the Hills were debating about their 'missing time', a missing time episode appeared in the UFO literature, in an article by Leslie Lorenzen in *Flying Saucers* for November 1962. (48) This concerned a Private Gerry Irwin who had periods of amnesia and eventually went AWOL after witnessing a 'plane crash' of which no traces were found. The Lorenzens clearly interpreted this 'plane crash' as some sort of UFO incident, thus perhaps making this the first missing time incident to be published in the United States. Missing time, abduction and medical examination all featured together in a piece of fiction 'Control Somnambule' by William Sambrot, which appeared in the May 1962 issue of *Playboy*, in which an astronaut is abducted from a space capsule, given a medical, and returned with the hypnotic command to forget all about it, which he does until his memory is stimulated by hypnosis. (49)

The array of abduction stories generated in the three years 1964-66, from Barney Hill's first hypnotic session to the mass publication of the Hill story, continues to show both a wide variation of theme and the thin borderline between abduction and contactee reports. For example, there is little doubt that Ernest Arthur Bryant's tale of meeting with Yamski in 1965 would today have been called an abduction by ufologists, though the influence of Adamski is overt. Its central theme, that of the dead among the fairies, is a very rare one in ufology (I know of only one other case, from the Dominican Republic). Bryant had already had time, following the publication of the AVB case in *Flying Saucer Review*, to incorporate a reference to 'them' coming here to procreate. (50) The same year saw the publication in the 25 August issue of *Diario de Noticias*, and alleged 1954 meeting with tall slim beings of both sexes, with fair hair, light brown complexions and dark, slanted eyes, who showed the witness round their small craft, explained its workings and claimed to be from Arion 'beyond the furthest known star'. (51) Again, the influence of Adamski can be seen. A more genuinely transitional story was that of Arthur Berlet, whose alleged 1958 encounter surfaced in 1965. The story begins with classic abduction motifs; stunned by a beam of light; doorway amnesia; wakes up on a bed in a strange environment. Thereafter the story trails off into an exceptionally dull narrative of his adventures on the planet Acart (Mars), to where he had been abducted by an insubordinate saucer captain, who wanted him to tend the biological specimens. On Acart the contrite leadership gave him a guided tour while expounding on their population explosion. (52)

Overpopulation was one of the themes in another 1965 story, that of the Californian TV repairman Sid Patrick. Walking along a beach at night he saw an egg-shaped object flying low. He was invited on board where he met a crew of people of both sexes with dark 'short but uncut looking' hair, pointed chins

and long thin fingers, one of whom, the leader, spoke to him. Bullard's motifs of tour, journey, conference and theophany follow. During the tour the evasive leader always kept his right side towards Patrick, who noted that all surfaces in the uniformly lit interior were rounded. There was a 'third layer' to which he was not invited, but he was shown a sort of screen or lens in which he saw a cigar-shaped navigation craft.

The leader gave his name, but it was nothing more than a buzzing sound, variously transcribed as Zno, Zienna or Zeno. They are insectoid, and they 'live as one' in a war- and crime free, but highly regimented world with strict birth control and their children trained for set tasks, on 'an unseen world at the back of one we do see'. They do not measure time and distance as we do. They took him up on to a mountain top where he was allowed to walk alone. The beings said they were on a mission of exploration, but he got the impression that there is some unfathomable 'religious' aspect to it, and he had a mystical experience in a sort of chapel. (53)

Even in the rather fragmentary and sometimes rather contradictory published versions of Patrick's story we can see several of the themes of post-secular abduction lore. We can see in 'their' ambiguous utopia, in the year of the death of the American dream, the cusp point between the utopias of the contactees and the wasteland dystopias of the abductees. Ufology's was just one of many innocences lost that year. We should also note the influence of Truman Bethurum on this story as well as on the Hills'; the planet behind the known, the regimented society and absence of knowledge of time and distance.

The divide between contactee and abductee is not very apparent either in a 1965 letter sent to Dr Frank Salisbury, the botanist and ufologist, by a semi-literate 19-year-old shipping clerk, who claimed to have been taken from his house in a glassy sphere, to a large black object where he met a 6 ft 7 in leader and a 'beautiful copper skinned' girl, with blonde hair and blue eyes, who wore black uniforms with disc-shaped shoulder pads and serpent motifs on the pockets. (54)

Other stories portrayed abductors or potential abductors in a decidedly more hostile mode. Argentinian newspapers in February 1965 reported the story of an attempted kidnapping in Torrent in which the motif of size-shifting reappears - 50 cm dwarfs who grew to 2.2 m tall as they tried to kidnap members of a farming family whose rifle failed. They were supposed to have returned days later as cyclopean giants. (55) British newspapers reported a story of three young people parked near Felixstowe, when one lad suddenly left the car. Shortly afterwards his companions saw an orange oval above the trees and heard a buzzing sound. The young man who had left the car then staggered into the road and collapsed. They found burn marks on his back and a small lump under his right ear. He was taken to hospital where he was diagnosed as suffering from shock. On recovering he claimed he had been dragged from the car by an unknown force and had seen a man in flames pointing at him. (56) The Italian magazine *Oltre il Cielo* reported two stories from the Soviet Union. In one of these a woman parachutist was supposed to have been caught in mid-descent by a saucer with three occupants, taken on an immense journey to look back at the earth, and given a message in an envelope to give to the authorities. In the other story a mail plane was supposed to have vanished then been found on the ground with-

out crew, with a circular mark nearby. (57)

There is one final story from this period. Right at the beginning of Dr Simon's treatment of the Hills in April 1964 a story appeared in an American newspaper, was reprinted in a small-circulation bulletin, and even, in bowdlerised form, in a well-known UFO periodical. It may well be the most interesting story of them all. We have all seen how Hopkins, Jacobs and company report case after case of people telling them they were abducted as little children, and we've asked where is the contemporaneous evidence. Well, just maybe this case provides it. It is a case that cries out for re-investigation, yet there are overwhelming ethical objections to anything except the most delicate approaches, for one of the witnesses was a tiny child at the time and it is likely that he has retained no conscious memory of the event. The trauma that might be caused by a clod-footed investigator are obvious. An attempt is being made by an American correspondent to try to track down anyone who may have investigated the story at the time, so far without success. To protect the witness, neither the place, the state, nor the sources will be publicly revealed. Suffice it to say that it appears to have taken place in a rural area outside a town in the north central United States.

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Quoting from the original article:

'Mr and Mrs "John Doe" who live on the side of a mountain, say the object has landed within a few hundred yards of their home and aimed a powerful light beam through their windows "in an apparent attempt to see what we look like". [Their] young grandson told them he has talked with a man who apparently came from the craft. (Mrs Doe didn't even tell her husband till it appeared one night when he was at home.) [They describe it as] "a top-shaped ship with a row of lights around the circumference". (This is a fluorescent light which can fluctuate between dim and very bright.) One evening, as the Does were watching the ship, an airplane approached and the object's lights immediately went out. As the airplane passed the lights went back on...A strong beam of light projected from the ship late one night as Mrs Doe and her daughter "Emma Doe" slept in the front part of the house. They both awakened to see the beam of light about 3 inches in diameter pointing at their feet at the end of their bed. They both rose and... the light followed them around the room... Mrs Doe thinks the occupants of the craft were trying to see what human life looks like. (The full brightness of the light turns night into day.) Before the April appear-

■47. BETHURUM, *op. cit.* pp.34-5.

■48. LORENZEN, Jim. 'Wher is Private Irving?' in *Flying Saucers* 28, November 1962, p.28, quoted in VALLEE, Jacques, *Passport to Magonia*.

■49. Quoted in VALLEE, Jacques, *Confrontations*, Souvenie Press, 1990, p.190.

■50. BUCKLE, Eileen, *Scariton Mystery*, Spearman, 1967.

■51. CREIGHTON, Gordon. 'The Ruben Hellwig Contact Claim', in *FSR* 12, 6, November-December 1966, pp.27-9.

■52. BERLET, arthur. *Discos Voladores; da Utopia a realidade*. Poert Allegre, Argentina, published by the author. Translated as *UFO Contact from Planet Acart*. UFO Photo Archives, 1987.

■53. Compiled from CLARK, Jerome and COLEMAN, Loren, *The Unidentified*, Warner, 1965, pp.228-30; 'Two New Contact Cases' in *FSR*, 11, 3, May-June 1965, pp. 228-30; LORENZEN, J. *UFO Occupants, op.cit.* p.21.

■54. SALISBURY, Frank B. *The Utah UFO Display*, Devin-Adair, 1974, pp.145-8.

■55. INCAT files, information supplied by Richard Heiden from RIBERA, Antonio, *Platillos Volantes en Iberoamerica y España*, 1968. cf. CREIGHTON, Gordon, 'The Humanoids in Latin-America' in *The Humanoids op.cit.*, pp. 109-110.

■56. [CREIGHTON, Gordon] 'Knock-out Blow at Felixstowe' in *FSR* 11,6, November-December 1965, p.4, quoting *Ipswich Evening Star*, 21 December 1965.

■57. STEIGER, Brad and WHRITENOUR, Joan. *Flying Saucers are Hostile*, Tandem, 1967.

■58. INCAT files, sources being kept confidential to protect witnesses.

ances of the object Mrs Doe's place was constantly visited by wild game, including deer [and] bear...since that time no animals have been seen in the area...each occurrence of the craft "scared the dogs and spooked the horses". The dogs rushed to get into the house and the horses stampeded to the far side of the property. Mr and Mrs Doe say the object makes no real sound, but rather gives the impression of a noise. Mrs Doe says: "It's more like cessation of normal sound - almost like it's making a very loud noise which blocks off all other sounds but still doesn't seem to be making a sound itself." In addition there is another indication of the presence of the object; each time [it] is in the area the oil furnace in the house lights itself. (Mrs Doe checks the furnace to see if the object is near.)

'Mrs Doe's 3½ year old son "Richard" has told his mother and his grandparents of a man with whom he talks in the barn. He had told them the man's name but Mrs Doe said it is almost unpronounceable...Each time the boy has gone with the man the dogs have run into the house and the oil furnace has lighted. (The object goes away from time to time, these absences coinciding with reports in neighbouring localities. Mrs Doe is convinced that the object is "not of this world", "probably friendly" and "we have nothing to be frightened of".)

'Other odd situations accompany the presence of the object. Mrs Doe and her neighbours reported TV transmission (from a local transmitter) "completely disrupted" when the ship is near.

'Mrs Doe also said various personal articles have strangely disappeared for a short time then, just as suddenly, reappeared. Mrs Doe's sunglasses and several personal articles of clothing "have just vanished" then shown up again in a different place.' (58)

There you are; animal reactions, the enchantment,

electromagnetic effects, poltergeists and abductions all together as though this was Hopkins ufology full of repeater haunting abductions and night sieges: 1964 ufology had no way of handling material like this. In a sense, this case seems pivotal to the UFO debate. If a careful, competent investigation in the 1960s had shown the strange lights to be truly anomalous, then we would have to admit that the scales had tipped against the psycho-social approach. If, on the other hand, investigation had confirmed what ufological experience suggests, that reports of UFOs seen night after night in the same locality turn out to be astronomical IFOs, was so in this case, we would have come close to proving the psycho-social approach. It seems to be typical of the whole subject that it is unlikely that such a resolution can be made.

However one interprets this story, it seems to mark a point at which pre-existing supernatural beliefs are being incorporated into ufology. A generation earlier, spooked animals, enchantment, disappearing children and electromagnetic effects would have been interpreted in terms of witchcraft, fairies or ghosts; now it is space people.

I hope that this study of abductions before the mass publicity given to the Hills and AVB in October 1966 shows just how false is the notion of the 'founding case or 2 cases, or even 3 cases' is. The abduction stories emerged slowly and covered a wide variety of motifs. Why, then did the Hills' story gain such eminence? Suggestions we might make include its publication by a well-known journalist, the use of hypnosis which not only evoked myths of the royal road to the truth - the belief that one cannot lie under hypnosis - but also gave the impression of a story reluctantly dragged out of the witness. ●●●

In our next part we will see that the Hills' story did not have the first running, that the first years in the modern age of abductions are not as simple as you think.

>>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

generate it. Some pointers:

● The central theme of helplessness. In an article in the *Observer Magazine* last autumn Dr John Collee noted that surgery is the most radical experience of helplessness that adults are likely to undergo in Western culture. It is precisely this sense of helplessness which has been identified as a major component of post-traumatic stress. Children are also highly vulnerable to hospital trauma, this being especially so in the less enlightened days of restricted visiting. We can imagine the trauma of a small child who has never been away from their parents for more than an hour, abandoned in a strange place where bizarrely dressed figures perform painful procedures. Fantasies about these procedures, often involving ideas of punishment, may be more traumatic than what actually happens. Is it significant that the genito-urological, nose and throat, and eye examinations which tend to predominate in abduction medical accounts are the sort of medical procedures most likely to be carried out on small children.

● The proximate origin of many abduction experiences is a variety of altered states:

sleep paralysis, fugue, hypnogogic hallucinations. Sleep paralysis, combined with hypnogogic hallucinations - The Hag - is an especially traumatic experience, evoking sexual assault and a sense of absolute helplessness. The origin of the image of the bedroom visitor are obscure, but at a guess I would suggest it represents the 'demonic parent', and contains echoes of the infant's helplessness before parental wrath. It is hard to resist the notion that haggling may contain imagery of sexual assault, either real or fantasies based on parental sexual activity. Abductors who 'have the right' to treat us like property certainly seem to be negative parental images.

● There is a pervasive sense of threat in all abduction narratives: the theme that nowhere is safe, not the walls, not the door, not even our own skin can keep out the pervasive Other. The hybrid baby and the implants represent ultimate threats to our physical and psychological integrity. The Other wants to own and use our bodies and our minds. The imagery of foetus and implant show clear evidence of cultural influence, the implants deriving from the publicity surrounding the experiments on

mood-control conducted by José Delgado, while the gynaecological procedures show clear cultural tracking to public discussion of high-tech fertility treatment and related techniques.

● Part of this threat is the loss of our world. Whether from external forces which range from bombs to rape to military defeat and rapid social change, or from internal forces such as physical or psychological disease, our given world can be torn down. Then we may experience the implosion of traumatic despair, or the explosive collapse of all structures. We might for a moment or two see that we could be something other than units of production and consumption, living laboratories, being violated by the gods and angels of our own making. ●●●

1. THOMPSON, Keith. *Angels and Demons: UFOs and the mythic imagination*. Adison-Wesley, 1991. £13.95.
2. PONTOLILLO, James. *Demons, Doctors and Aliens*. INFO Occasional paper no. 2, \$10.00. (Available from *Magonia*, £6.50. (Cheques to 'John Rimmer')
3. ROWLAND, Robyn. *Living Laboratories: women and reproductive technology*. Lime Tree Books, 1992. £16.99.
4. BRYANT, Alice and SEEBACH, Linda. *Healing Shattered Reality; understanding contactee trauma*. Wildflower Press, 1991. £14.00.
5. TURNER, Karla. *Into the Fringe; a true story of alien abduction*. Berkley Books, 1992. £4.50.

# UMMO

# The Planet Of The Anonymous Correspondents

## 27 Years of Close Encounters of the Postal Kind

Luis R Gonzáles



IN

1958 Donald Franson wrote a short SF story, *The Time for Delusion* (1) about a debunker who, in order to make a fool of every cultist once and for all, decided to publish (under a pen-name) his own hoax, a book describing several telephone conversations with a Venusian. Among all the nonsense he planted many hidden clues proving its fallacies. The book became an unexpected best-seller, and when he disclosed his authorship to explode the affair, pointing out the buried evidence and self-revealing inconsistencies, nobody believed him. They all knew he *had been ordered to recant!*

Surely Bertrand Méheust was not thinking about this kind of influence when he wrote in his book *Science fiction et Soucoupes Volantes*, but I maintain that this form of counterattack is more frequent in ufology than is usually admitted. A classic example has already been revealed in *Magonia* concerning the book *Flying Saucer from Mars* by Cedric Allingham, a.k.a. Patrick Moore. (2) But there are many more.

Occasionally one of them achieves long-standing fame. The so-called "Ummo Affair", Spain's most important contribution to UFO folklore, has been around for more than 25 years, and is still controversial. In spite of the scores of Ummologists who painstakingly comb the 'sacred texts' in search of the definitive proof of extra-terrestrial origins, there is no doubt among serious Spanish ufologists that Ummo is a hoax. But that only addresses half of the problem.

Good hoaxes die hard. Any serious investigator can avoid their direct effects and point to their evident falsehood (not always soon enough to avoid embarrassment) but it is more difficult to avoid secondary effects.

I will quote our admired Peter Rogerson: "It may be comforting, flattering even, to imagine that the hoaxers who fooled you needed the huge resources of a government or an international agency to pull the wool over your perceptive eyes". Or even tertiary ones. .. a few sentences later Peter Rogerson himself wrote: "Ummo had, one suspects, a more serious purpose. It was samizdat literature saying things which could not be said openly in Francoist Spain." (3) More about explanations at the end.

To appreciate fully this amazing story of the unilateral contacts of an expeditionary group of aliens with some Spaniards under the Franco dictatorship in the sixties, I must begin by putting it in the appropriate context.

First, some pertinent antecedents. The contact era began in 1952 when a self-appointed 'professor', George Adamski claimed contact with the aliens aboard a flying saucer. Gradually this subphenomenon extended all over the world: Coniston, England, 15 February 1954; Oeydalen, Norway, 20 August 1954; Natal, South Africa, 27 December 1954; Madrid, Spain, 17 November 1954, etc., etc.

In the Madrid case, a male nurse, Alberto Sanmartin, allegedly received from a ufonaut that did not identify itself, a 'space-stone' covered with strange signs. During the preceding weeks another self-styled 'professor' (a civil servant working in the Telegraph Office, with a liking for cryptography and graphology) Fernando Sesma, had been writing a long series of articles about UFOs, including Adamski, in a local newspaper. Thanks to this publicity Sesma was able to form his own group, *Sociedad de Amigos de los Visitantes del Espacio*. During the following years

1. Compiled in *Flying Saucers*, 1982, Isaac Asimov, Martin H. Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh, eds.

2. *Magonia* 23, 'Flying Saucer from Moore's?', Christopher Allan and Stuart Campbell

3. *Magonia* 43, 'Book Reviews: Jacques Vallée's *Revelations*' by Peter Rogerson.

they will discuss the 'space-stone' and its meaning at length. In 1961 Sesma saw his first UFO, and began to receive anonymous letters: they were full of short, incoherent sentences. Then in 1962 arrived the first letters whose author identified himself as an alien: Saliano from the planet Auco, orbiting Alpha Centauri.

Meanwhile, more UFO folklore was being created everywhere. On 24 April, 1964 there occurred the famous Socorro case, the first one where the UFO showed a symbol on its hull. According to Jacques Vallée (4) it was the Arabic sign for Venus. Also in 1964 the French writer Robert

Charroux received several letters, (though an unnamed correspondent, MNY) allegedly from beings of Proxima Centauri calling themselves Baavi. They described their civilization, grammar, system of measuring, and even included several concepts of astronomy, physics and chemistry. (5)

George Adamski died on 25 April, 1965, and the following day in Scoriton, Devon, Arthur Bryant claimed contact with three occupants of a huge saucer, one of whom identified himself as 'Yanski'. After a second sighting on the night of 6 June, 1965, several pieces of machinery were found, as well as a small glass phial with a message rolled inside it. (6)

Also in 1965 Frank Herbert wrote an SF book that would generate some kind of a cult: *Dune*. Could it be a coincidence that it included the word UMMA, under the meaning: "one of the brotherhood of prophets (a term of scorn in the Imperium, meaning any 'wild' person given to fanatical prediction.)"

All the pieces of script are available, now let us have a look at the actors. Unfortunately the most important ones have decided to remain anonymous: the mysterious 'gentlemen from Ummo', the copyists (apparently two of them) charged with the duplication and delivery of the amazing documents, many of the alleged recipients (including everybody outside Spain, and any possible scientist), and even both photographers of the San Jose Valderas case. But it seems that many of those rôles (if not all) were played by the same person or persons.

Among the extras, first for mention must be the original members of the Friends of Space Visitors Society, each one with his own peculiarities. "Professor" Sesma, the charismatic leader; Mr Villagrasa, a civilian construction engineer who was to receive the most technical papers; Mr Garrison, a police officer who became a convert when his son's health, in need of a cardiac operation, was improved enough to allow for one, thanks to the Ummites and their 'microscopic UFOs'; Miss Araujo, a young lady employed in the American Embassy (providing the unavoidable CIA connection - so useful), etc. Around them gathered more and more spectators and jokers as the events developed.

And so the story began.

During 1965 Sesma became popular all over Spain with



**The UFO displayed upon its belly the same emblem used to 'authenticate' the Ummo documents: it very much resembled the alchemical symbol for Uranus**

his disclosures about the utopian Auco society, a real Eden in the heavens. His weekly gatherings in the basement of a pub called *La Balleno Alegre* ('The Joyful Whale') became a fashionable meeting point for all the most peculiar characters in Madrid. The temptation was insurmountable.

In January 1966, 'professor' Sesma received several phone calls, followed by an emissary who showed him surprising three-dimensional cards (very similar to Japanese ones, then unknown in Spain, as Sesma himself admitted several years later) to convince him of their extraterrestrial origin.

These were then followed by dozens of pages describing their home planet, their civilization and so forth. Each and every one of them was read aloud by Sesma to his acolytes, along with the messages from Saliano, and other personal experiences, as raw material for the continuing brainstorming of the group. But the Ummo papers did not look like another piece of moonshine. Their principle attraction was their non-proselytising, non-messianic aspects, plus their strongly rational philosophy. Also their authors asked not to be believed, and to keep the situation secret.

Nevertheless, at the same time that they proclaimed "do not believe us", a masterful psychological strike came from the skies. On 6 February, 1966, at 20.00 hrs., a UFO flew over an astonished witness, a Mr Jordán Peña, who was driving home, and landed for a few seconds in the outskirts of Madrid. It left some physical traces, photographs of which became front-page news in several newspapers. To establish an inescapable link between both sets of events, the UFO displayed upon its belly the same emblem used to 'authenticate' the Ummo documents: it very much resembled the alchemical symbol for Uranus. Besides the Ummites themselves confirmed the sighting, apparently a few hours *before* it was made public.

With the passage of time Jordán Peña reached the uncomfortable status of being the only credible (?) and identified witness of a close encounter with an Ummite spaceship. There were some journalist's comments about additional ones, but none were ever found.

Around 1955 Peña was living in Alicante (a town about 100 miles from Albacete where a macabre incident took place in 1954 which caused a great stir in the area, and later the Ummites claimed for their own) and studying with many esoteric and spiritual groups. He read at length about cultural anthropology, philosophy and history of religions, among many other subjects. He had learned several languages, and subscribed to *Nature* and other international scientific journals, back in 1965 at least. His investigations introduced him to fraudulent mediums, and prompted him to practise conjuring and sleight-of-hand. He declared himself an agnostic, rejecting his Catholic upbringing, and a sceptic (despite being a declared opponent of the paranormal he did believe in telepathy up until the '70s), but he was one of the founders of the Spanish Parapsychology Society, of which he had been vice-chairman for many

5. CHARROUX, Robert. *Le Livre des Secrets Trahis*, 1964

6. BUCKLE, Eileen, *The Scoriton Mystery*, 1967

years. He obtained a degree as a telecommunications technician, but preferred to introduce himself as a psychologist. In fact at the time of the sighting he was working at the personnel department of Agroman, one of the Spain's biggest Building Societies.

This short summary offers you just a very limited glance over such an amazing personality. Let me add a final touch: Mr Peña himself denies the extraterrestrial origin of the craft he saw! He maintains that it was some kind of experimental aircraft developed by the Americans and deployed in Spain thanks to the collaboration of Franco's regime. And the 'Ummo Affair' would be a psychosociological experiment masterminded by the CIA. In any case he unexpectedly joined Sesma's group, without at first revealing that he was the witness at Aluche, and quite soon he reached the leadership of the group.

The flow of documents was continuous. After the first set about daily life on Ummo, there followed all kinds of digressions about philosophy, sociology and religion (on Ummo and Earth), even featuring the most appealing coincidence for a Catholic readership: the life and teachings of UMMOWOA, a religious founder whose body disappeared from the table where he had just been vivisected on the orders of an ancient blood-thirsty Empress. In spite of all these 'proofs', Sesma gradually became dissatisfied with the Ummites; they were too rational - they did not even know about the so-called Liberal Arts. It was a mutual rejection, because the Ummites became obsessed with the minutiae of contact. They said they were monitoring every meeting, and asked for silence among the audience and a raised voice for the readings, to allow them to be recorded perfectly. They always complained to Sesma for mixing their messages with those of Saliano and others, up to the point that on several occasions they cut the supply as a punishment.

In what can be seen as a final attempt to convince Sesma, the Typist himself wrote to him, confirming everything. All the emotional overtones lacking in the arid paragraphs dictated by the Ummites, can now flow freely. Despite the Typist's anonymity (hopefully only a temporary measure) there at least was a human being who actually met and worked with the Ummites. So we get the first descriptions of these alien beings: completely humanoid, tall and fair, with blonde hair. Angelic, but also with a sinister side; as they communicate through telepathy (of course!) their vocal chords became atrophied, so on Earth they must use an artificial larynx that gives them a very peculiar voice without inflections. The copyist was oppressed by the whole extraordinary adventure in which he found himself caught up, and his letter revealed a mixture of fear and ingenuity that appealed to our most basic emotions. He added a final, almost surreal touch: the Ummites were accounting experts!

With the arrival of the summer holidays of 1966 contact was interrupted for several months, except for the occasional letter to keep the embers glowing. Maybe the Ummites needed time to evaluate their activities and plan further developments. At the start of 1967 they struck again, with renewed strength in an encircling movement. On one side there appeared another anonymous correspondent purporting to be a professor, the holder of a Chair on the Faculty of Medicine in Madrid University. His only letter described how he received (on loan) a piece of apparatus that convinced him of its extraterrestrial origin, as he saw, in a three-

dimensional screen a specimen of organic tissue, greatly enlarged, in colour, and alive. He recorded, and kept, a colour film of all the operation. He ended his letter proposing to all recipients a gathering to coordinate their actions, and should it be deemed necessary, inform the Spanish authorities... The plot thickens!

On the other hand, there really was a qualitative leap ahead. Deserting Sesma, the Ummites turned to some of his followers (Villagrasa, Araujo, Garrido, etc) with a barrage of pseudo-technical papers, trying to knock them into a definite faith.

First the extensive report about their arrival on our planet (written with their characteristic irrelevant detail): "At 04 hours 17 minutes 03 seconds GMT on the terrestrial day of March 28, 1950 an OAWOLEA UEWA OEM (lenticular-shaped spaceship) established contact for the first time in history with the lithosphere of EARTH (...) at a place some 8000 metres distant from the town of La Javie, Département des Basse Alpes, France". This long story (49 pages) is a masterly piece of work. The reader is absolutely touched when the expeditionary group make their first transcendental discovery: "some fragments of white-yellowed, flexible and brittle sheets... full of characters. .. and stained with faeces" to which they attributed ritual meaning. It is really too much that the first document preserved for galactic posterity should turn out to be some pages of the French newspaper *Figaro* used as toilet paper by a peasant!

After several initial blunders, the Ummites adopted so well to human culture that in the following weeks they committed "nineteen acts of transgression against private property", naturally to be returned "as soon as they were able to obtain money without robbery". To keep closely to their rôle as scientists, transgression meant to anaesthetise the inhabitants of a house, and besides taking assorted groups of objects, "to undress the humans and take samples of hair, nasal and vulvar mucus".

Second, a very peculiar group of documents about Spiritism and parapsychology describing, among other things, a supposed Ummite expedition to India in order to investigate, with their advanced technology, the 'miracles' of the fakirs. Naturally they discovered the hoaxes and disclosed to their readers the tricks employed. In short, a strong, sceptical commentary of the paranormal, from people who claimed to be born telepaths!

And finally, the long-delayed answers to everyone's questions: 1, how did they make the journey here, and 2, why are they so similar to us? These papers form the real core of the myth, what sets up the difference between Ummo and any other contactee tale. Unfortunately, in spite of all the favourable publicity around them, from Antonio Ribera in 1979 to Jean-Pierre Petit in 1992, they are just pseudo-scientific jargon at best. I will give a very rough and incomplete summary, just to give you the flavour of them.

1. To explain their easy crossing of interstellar distances, the Ummites employed a multistage strategy: a) there are an infinity of paired universes (matter and antimatter) that interplay between them creating certain space-warps which, when the isodynamic circumstances are right, become a kind of short-cut (for instance, a voyage to the stellar system UYI ABEE,



located at 9165 light-years from Ummo, only took 40078427.56 thousandth of UIW (86.06 terrestrial days). Unfortunately, these disturbances are unpredictable except for a very short time beforehand, a useful way out of any inconvenient appointment. b) Usually, these short-cuts are not enough, so they need additional help. Luckily, each Cosmos has "at least ten dimensions" fully interchangeable, and with the convenient property that in each new tri-dimensional space, the speed of light can adopt any velocity from zero to infinity! c) Now there only remains the simple problem of performing such a dimensional change. At the time (the sixties) when Earth physicists were confused with the endless discovery of sub-atomic particles, the Ummites introduced (in 68 pages and a few formulae) the IBOZOO UU, defined as an elemental (and immaterial) entity composed of orthogonal axes. According to the manner in which these axes are oriented, we see the production of matter, energy, space and even time.

Now everything is clear! [Yes, Ed.] You take a spaceship and its crew (just some zintillions of IBOZOO UUs), reverse *each and every one* of their axes with absolute accuracy, go into the suitable dimensional frame, and once at the desired destination (through an unexplained means of propulsion) you undo the reversing without missing a single atom, with the bonus of recovering all the energy previously used. Piece of cake!

2. To explain their incredible resemblance to us, the Ummites appeal to their *Biogenetic bases of the living beings that inhabit the Cosmos* (29 pages). In a shared trait with their human counterparts, they begin by denying random evolution with childish and trite arguments, to be replaced by *previous* information about *all* possible living beings in the Cosmos, coded into 88 pairs of krypton atoms (they have a real fixation with the noble gases) "in mysterious resonance" and located in every germinal cell in the universe that will express itself according to the environment. More precisely "each change of an electron in a suborbital layer codifies one of the possible animals". Confronted with an exponential branching they pull out of the hat a useful teleological convergence that will bring them together into Man (Ummite or Terrestrial) explaining our mutual likeness. Not satisfied, they maintain that the range opens again afterwards, to come together again in some future and final Superman.

There were many more pages like this, but the revelations seemed to point towards some immediate confrontation. The drama was mounting, as well as the real tension at the time in the Middle East. Then another *coup de théâtre*: the 'gentlemen from Ummo' learned about the proposed meeting with the 'professor' and prohibited it. Therefore the professor never revealed himself, and over the next few months the believers were kept busy trying to discover his identity, without success.

What God takes off, God returns. On the last day of May, 1967, about forty people present at the usual gathering of 'Professor' Sesma heard the announcement of the forthcoming arrival of three Ummo spaceships the very next day: one in Bolivia, one in Brazil, and the third nowhere other than Madrid itself! Unfortunately, even though they organised several reconnaissance parties, none was able to greet the spaceship as it allegedly performed manoeuvres in the sky over the Madrid suburban estate of San Jose Valderas and landed briefly nearby, at 2020 hrs. on the day in question. But they

were not to be disappointed. An amateur photographer immortalised the sighting with his camera and had contacted the same journalist who had covered the Aluche case, and had then gracefully parted with his negatives for free, and departed keeping his anonymity. The photos hit the front page, and left no room for the slightest doubt.

Surely this incident was intended to be the finale of the affair. Another summer was approaching, no better time to enjoy well-deserved holidays. A few days later the the Six-Days War between Israel and the Arab states exploded, providing a timely alibi for departure and the cessation of the correspondence. Dropping ballast, the followers received a bumper bundle, with papers about law, astronomy, etc, plus a personal letter from the anonymous Typist, confirming the extra-terrestrials' flight, without any date for return - and so did the Typist, talking about leaving his address and travelling abroad, to throw off any future searches. R.I. P?

As in any second rate SF plot, the Ummites did not count on the human element. Until then the Ummo affair was limited to a small group of believers, who did not show a high level of scepticism. But now, armed with these 'definitive' proofs it was decided to engage professional help. They decided to consult the ufologist Marius Lleget. The situation had suddenly opened up to a new level of interest and challenge. If called for reinforcements and very careful and close handling.

Out of thin air materialised "Antonio Pardo", a second anonymous photographer of the San Jose Valderas UFO. In a beautiful strike of synchronicity, he wrote to Mr Lleget *before* the Madrid group, enclosing new negatives, a detailed report of his own on-site investigation, and, to cap it all, an extraterrestrial artefact! It was a semi-destroyed capsule that contained a piece of green plastic engraved with the Ummo symbol.

Lleget refused to get involved, and passed the can of worms on to his friend Antonio Ribera, the most prestigious Spanish ufologist of the time. Fortunately, he was a kind of 'armchair ufologist', a SF writer and translator who won his fame rehashing foreign UFO books, but seems never to have been involved in a personal direct investigation. In this case the field work was left to his valued friend Rafael Fariols, who over the years will become the leading specialist in Ummo, to the point of founding some companies with Ummo trade-names, and securing all the documents received since then. As both Ribera and Fariols lived in Barcelona, their man in Madrid was... anybody guess?... Mr. Peña! Thanks to his praiseworthy efforts several witnesses were located. Most of them could only give circumstantial evidence after severe prompting, but those who allegedly witnesses the UFO always insisted on anonymity... it must be contagious!

With the Ummites safely far away, the work of keeping alive the myth was an easy and undemanding one for the Typist. Only a letter from time to time, delivered to members of the Madrid Group, full of trails to be followed all over the city by their eager recipients. Peña also received a couple of letters, but of a different nature. They are the only ones acknowledging the distribution of Ummo documents outside Spain, and were allegedly written by the members of an equivalent French group. As usual it has been impossible to



confirm them, despite the fact that they contained a postal address and the promise of a reward for any other capsule they obtained.

It was summer 1968. UFOs had already become acceptable in the Spanish media. Films like *2001* and *Planet of the Apes* attracted crowds. *The Invaders* appeared weekly on TV. Spain was in the middle of the first and biggest UFO flap in our history. So it surprised nobody when the Typist announced that *they* had returned. But the holidays passed without any word from them.

Finally, in September, the Ummites sent a letter of introduction from Paris to their new friend, Antonio Ribera. The show continued. But, as fate would have it, on September 17th, 1968, an indiscretion by Father Enrique Lopez Guerrero disclosed the affair to the public, making headlines all over the world with sentences like "thousands of years ago Jesus Christ incarnated as a slave on the planet Ummo, suffering persecution and death." Shocked, the contact was suddenly interrupted; it was never to be the same again.

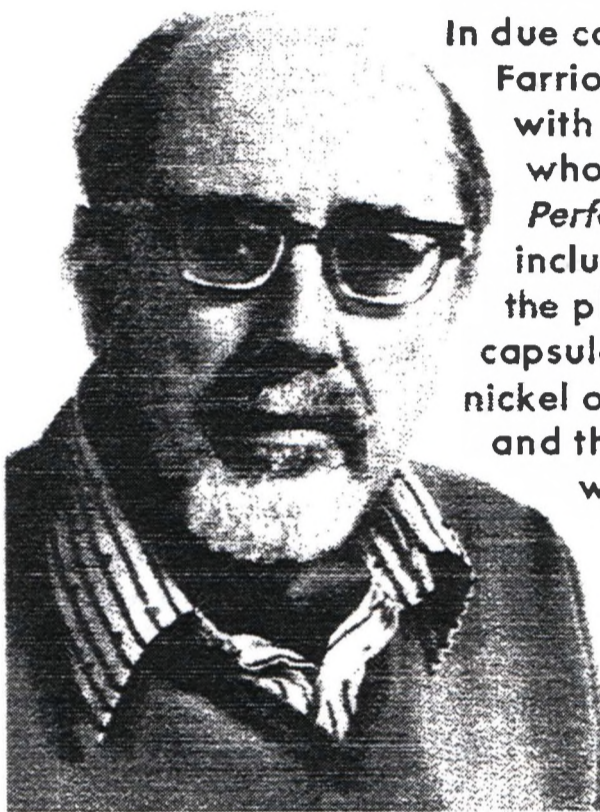
It restarted in 1969, but only with very short papers (4 or 5 pages each) exclusively addressed to Antonio Ribera and quite superficial, nothing with the depth they used to show. They also wrote to another contactee of the time, Sinod (who maintained telepathic contact with an extraterrestrial named Atienza, from the planet Urlin, descendant of a Spanish conquistador abducted in Argentina in 1650) in order to arrange a meeting. Small universe indeed!. Maybe they did not arouse the interest they wanted, because the contacts became less and less frequent and soon stopped.

In January 1970 Jordan Peña deserted Sesma and created his own group, ERIDANI. The Ummites followed him, in what can be seen as a return to the origins, and involved themselves strongly in the activities of this group. But Peña never received their written attentions. Their correspondence became paranoiac, advising about the evil intentions of secret services like the CIA, tapped phones, infiltrators, etc. On the other hand they also offered advice on proselytising new members, and useful tips to gain the control of the group. All this culminated in November 1973, with a real thriller as they predicted an imminent nuclear war because of the situation in the Middle-East.

The Ummites announced their definitive departure, but in a final stroke of sentiment offered their own nuclear refuge for the salvation of their flock. Our old acquaintance the Typist was the trustee of the code to the refuge's coordinates. Unfortunately we will never know them, especially now the Cold War is over.

And this is the situation as it remains today. An aging group of believers meets periodically, usually under the benevolent leadership of Mr Peña and Mr Farriols. At first (in 1971 and 1973) there was quite a lot happening: restricted symposia for the connoisseurs (but even so, infiltrated by Ummites, as they admitted afterwards) to discuss and analyse the sacred texts. But after Ribera revealed to the world in 1974 the contents and peculiarities of the Ummite papers, the Ummo affair became a myth in the making. the Ummo symbol has been sighted in Denmark, the USA, Poland and last but not least, in Voronezh. It is an established alien trademark. Anybody can borrow their cloak, from dangerous child-abusers (the Edelweiss sect in Spain) to Catholic Fundamentalists looking for additional help defending the Turin Shroud.

Now that you have a bare summary of these complex events, I should defend my thesis. I maintain that it all began as some sort of joke that got out of hand. The best evidence is the fact that *all* the quantitative data included in the very first document was (more or less subtly) wrong. Considering its galactic importance and the typical punctiliousness displayed by the Ummites, this is quite shocking, but true. They began by giving as the distance between Earth and Ummo 3.68502 light-years, identifying their star as Wolf 424. The distance was precisely that which was calculated by its human discoverer in 1938 but, as was already known in 1966, the correct distance was about

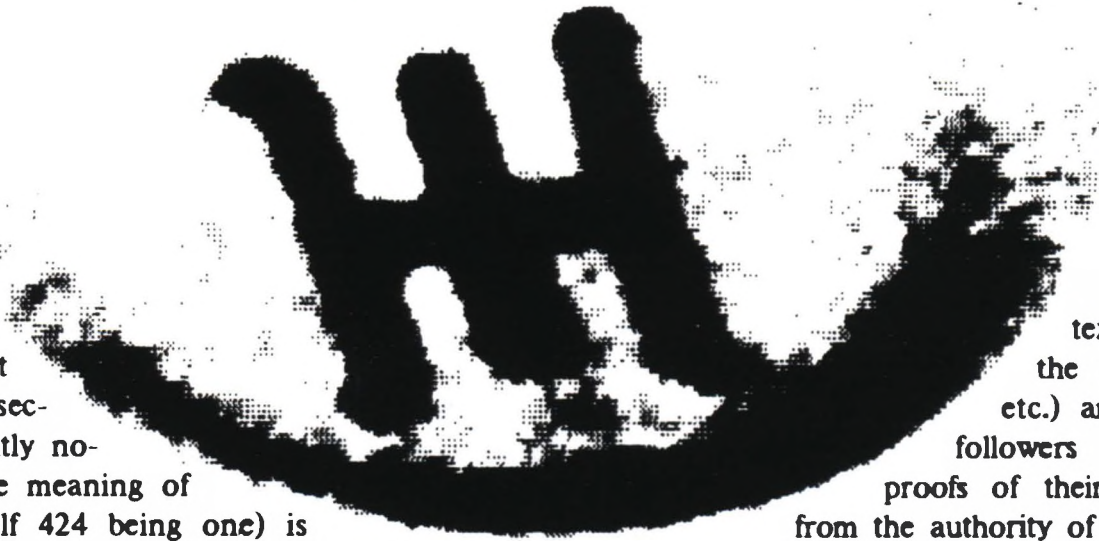


In due course, Ribera and Farriols published a book with their conclusions, whose title tells it all: *A Perfect Case*. In it the included an analysis of the physical evidence: the capsule itself was made of nickel of a very high purity, and the plastic material was polyvinyl fluoride. At the time of the events this material was made exclusively by du Pont de Nemours in the USA, under the brand name 'Tedlar'.

They pointed to "some NASA and military applications", but its main use was in the building industry. Ribera and Farriols also invented another acronym VED (extraterrestrial manned vehicle) and the Typist obliged. In what was to be his last appearance on the scene (except for a letter much later, in 1973) he enclosed a long report (60 pages and many drawings) about the UMMO VEDs, that nevertheless managed to tell us nothing useful and testable about them. It is surprising for instance, that people who claim to use gravitation waves for everything, including cooking, had to resort to spinning their *small* spaceships in order to obtain an artificial gravity.

14.6 light-years. Afterwards they gave both radii of their planet (equatorial and polar), the second being longer than the first. Next, they estimated Ummo's mass as  $5.4 \times 10^{21}$  tons, and its gravity acceleration as  $11.88 \text{ km/sg}^2$ . These measures are mutually incompatible.

The first inconsistency spotted was about the mass. The Ummites pleaded guilty of too much familiarity and explained that they should have used DUUOs instead of terrestrial tons (IDUOO=1.7333 Kg) The problem with distance offered a perfect excuse to attribute the shorter one to one of those wonderful isodynamic shortcuts! This procedure of claims, errors, and counter-claims continued throughout the correspondence.



When they wrote about their planet they referred to a second planet. Apparently no-one noticed that the meaning of 'binary system' (Wolf 424 being one) is quite different! As their sun (IUMA) has a spectral type M, with low surface temperature. Coherency imposes that UMMO must circle very near it, but the its sidereal period (orbit's length) did not square with it. This time they appealed to their ancestor's 'false conceptions', but even so it still missed Kepler's Third Law by ten per cent!

You must understand that it is not easy to point out errors to people who display a disgusting superiority, bordering on the most hypocritical paternalism. This submission was reinforced by planting careful traps. For instance when they insisted that the visual apparent magnitude of IUMA was *lower* than its absolute magnitude. Or when they wrote "weight two masses in a steel-yard, one kg. of straw and one kg. of iron... you will see how the pointer leans to the iron". Or when they explained how to prepare krypton compounds, unknown on Earth. Many sceptics laughed, but the Ummites laughed last.

In short, so many errors and inconsistencies could not be casual or due to lack of knowledge. They must have been deliberately included.

Let me finally present the Ummo affair, summed up in it appropriate dimensions:

- **Duration:** a little more than a year, from February 1966 to July 1967, plus another outburst at the beginning of 1969. From then onwards never more than occasional contacts.
- **Place:** Limited to Spain, despite the headings of some documents suggesting translations to languages as non-existent as 'Slav-Czech'.
- **Quantity of Material:** Around 1000 known pages, in 150 separate mailings, even though they themselves claimed "more than 6700 reports".
- **Contents:** A third of the known material (330 pages) is just pure gossip, 269 pages of various philosophical considerations, around 178 pages give some raw data (usually impossible to verify) and only 144 pages contained 'valuable' information, already commented on.
- **Quality:** The papers *never* offered anything really novel. For example the cosmological theories could be derived from the works of Eddington, and other material easily obtained in scientific journals of the time (like *Nature* and *Science & Vie*). Without doubt the author was familiar with foreign material (the Ummites made references to the work of Halton Arp (*sic*), and also extracted from books by Martin Gardner, *The Ambidextrous Universe*, and Isaac Asimov, *The Noble Gases*. But with the hindsight of 27 years, the contents look very naïve, and the real mystery is why so many people believed in them for so long.

These so-called Ummologists deserve special attention. Nowadays any religion or sect cannot rely solely on Faith, it needs some middlemen to analyse the 'sacred

texts' (the Bible, the Urantia book, etc.) and provide the followers with final proofs of their veracity, not from the authority of God, but from

science. So pseudo-sciences like 'scientific creationism' or 'TM Science' are born. It is also true that you can always find an expert to support your belief. The Ummo papers had been a peculiar kind of Roscharch Test: each follower had found what he was looking for: Father Guerro elaborated from them his own 'Christo-centric Thesis of the universe' (in a 618-page book); Jean-Pierre Petit (a French physicist long interested in Ummo) after studying hard the Theory of Relativity for several months, assures us that "nothing demands that the speed of light should remain constant" (7). Many people have been trapped in this vicious circle. They come across some hint, develop their own ideas around it, and in a final feedback, credit them to the Ummites, thus reinforcing their admiration of their "high scientific level".

Even the sceptics - and there were a lot of them, since the very beginning - had been mystified. In an ironic letter that clearly betrays their terrestrial origin, the Ummites themselves summarised many of the conspiracy theories that proliferated. From Opus Dei to the Rosicrucians, via CIA and the KGB. I have already said that Peña prefers a CIA-connection. In France Renaud Marhic recently published *L'affair UMMO; les Extraterrestres qui Venaient du Frois*. ('The UMMO Affair; the Extraterrestrials Who Came in From the Cold') championing a KGB-connection. In Spain, Carles Berché prefers a 'shared paranoia' explanation. (8) As we have seen, Peter Rogerson suggests anti-Franco resistance fighters. Make your choice.

Mine is a radical use of Occam's Razor: the Ummo affair is a single-person endeavour. The author may have enrolled some accomplices to forge traces and photos, and he also got the unexpected help of many other freelance hoaxers, but neither more people or a secret agenda are requires. Hoaxing is fun, and funnier if you mix with your victims and enjoy their doubts, the emotions, their naïvete, and even become their master, pulling the strings of your puppets at will. Besides, there is always the thrill of being unmasked. I will not even deceive myself by appealing to a higher rational motive like a sociological study or similar, as I suspect the author himself did. But who was he?

Such a good mystery story cannot end without naming the culprit. As it can never be proved, even with a confession now lacking, I can only offer my firm belief (shared with many other ufologists) that UMMO's creator was Mr. Jordan Peña. We do not have the 'smoking gun', but the circumstantial evidence is overpowering although controversial. To me, it does not matter, he has offered us the marvellous opportunity to follow through the making of a myth. ●●●

7. PETIT, Jean-Pierre. *Enquête sur des Extra-terrestres*, 1991

8. *Cuadernos de Ufología*, no. 3, 1988. Carles Berché Crux, 'Ummo, 20 años de paranoia compartida.'



# LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Some of us are well aware that the ufologies have taken over the asylum, but is it now no longer possible to do without politically correct Women's Lib propaganda at every turn?

Ufology is not primarily a dissertation about abortion. Our beloved Editor would be well-advised to investigate a blue pencil as a weapon against people who spoil what might otherwise be an arguable point by submerging it with trendy bees-in-the-bonnet.

Yours, Manfred Cassirer,  
London NW6

Dear Sir,

What if UFO entities and angelic entities are just future inhabitants of the Earth that have advanced technologically, in the first instance, to be able to leave the Earth at some former stage in its existence when disaster struck (Atlantis/Mu) or, in the second instance, become so spiritually advanced they didn't need bodies anymore.

Yours sincerely, Tony Sandy,  
Inverness.

P.S. I don't expect you to publish this letter considering your viewpoint, but as you like controversy I thought what the hell.

Dear John Rimmer

Have just received my issues of *Magonia*. Chris Allan is within a hair's breadth of 'the truth' as I see it when he refers to the Roswell case and the FBI teletype of 8 July 1947. It was a purposely deceptive balloon that was launched while flying saucers were newsworthy. It ap-

peared deceptive not only while floating silently high and reflecting light in the fashion of a silvery saucer, but also as a grounded one with its *faked* discoidal attachment.

The famous press-release (10 a.m., 8 July) was a consequence of the disc and balloon being of sufficient interest as to be one example responsible for the disc reports, which led several hours later to General Ramsey imposing his belief that it was a high-altitude weather balloon with a radar reflector, but was not confirmed by the time this device was sent to Wright Field for analysis, and afterwards disposed of and forgotten.

Best Wishes, Peter Brazinskas,  
Rochdale

Dear *Magonia*

Like Peter Rogerson, I'm sceptical. Among other things I'm sceptical about Peter's calm assertion that all recorded UFO phenomena can be explained as misperceptions, hoaxes or 'virtual experience' - a capacious bucket of a phrase, which seems to include anything which didn't really happen although somebody thinks it did. I can agree that any self-respecting investigation should start from the presumption that nothing out of the ordinary has happened; faced with assertions to the contrary, I can agree that hallucination, fugue states, paramnesia and downright delusion should be considered as possibilities as well as simple fraud. However, Peter's 'null position' seems to go further than this, to the point of suggesting that the right answer will always be some

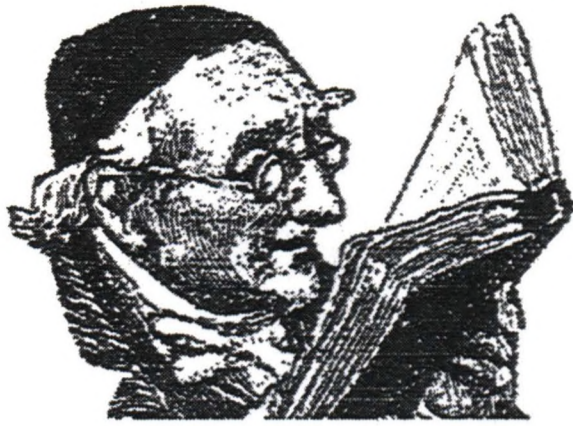
combination of misperception, hoax and virtual experience. This, to me, is the kind of dogmatism of which Terry Lee's letter (*Magonia* 45) - reminiscent of Stuart Campbell's statement a while back that there are no UFOs, only IFO *which haven't been identified yet*.

Perhaps the problem in the phrase 'virtual experience': all it really says is that somebody's experience didn't really happen. This isn't quite skepticism *a la* CSICOP - I suppose their phrase for an abduction would be "tediously unconvincing non-experience" - but the message is still "nothing really happened". The psycho-social hypothesis - come to that, Peter Rogerson - is usually less dismissive than this. If you want a two word phrase for the PSH, I suggest 'social fantasy'. 'Social' because an expression of hopes and fears, either contemporary or longstanding, which are common to the witness's society; 'fantasy' because, as the Napolitano case shows, there's a thin line between UFO experience and activities governed by fantasy such as psychic questing. ('Fantasy' because 'notphysically real', as well!)

Good issue, anyway - best wishes for the next 25 years, and all that jazz.

Regards, Phil Edwards,  
Manchester.

*Letters for publication in Magonia are always welcome, whether about articles which appear in the magazine, or any other aspects of the topics we discuss. Please send them to the address shown on page 2.*



# BOOK REVIEWS

**McCLURE, Kevin.** *Visions of Angels and Bowmen: Mons 1914.* Published by the author, 42 Victoria Road, Mount Charles, St Austell, Cornwall, FL25 4QD. £2.00.

The story of the Angels of Mons, as usually told, is a simple one: a story by Arthur Machen, the writer of supernatural fiction, describing a miraculous vision appearing to soldiers on the battlefield, was published in September 1914, as was immediately taken to be a true account, thus starting the legend. However, Kevin McClure's pamphlet surveys the evidence and concludes that, not for the first time, the sceptical version of the story is as much an over-simplification as the more credulous versions.

To begin with, there is some evidence that the rumour was around before Machen's story was published. The war diaries of General John Charteris, Sir Douglas Haig's chief-of-staff, published in 1931, mention the rumour as being current by September 5th, 1914, three weeks before the publication of the Machen story. It is possible that, like some others who keep diaries with a view to eventual publication, Charteris only made brief notes on the day in question, later writing them up at leisure. If so he may have later confused the Angel legend with some much vaguer tale of supernatural visions.

Far from immediately following the publication of the Machen story the first appearances of the legend in print did not come until the spring of 1915. They

appeared in a variety of forms, but chiefly involved angelic beings who had interposed between the retreating British troops and the advancing Germans, whereas in Machen's story the supernatural figures had been the ghosts of the bowmen of Agincourt. Machen denied having heard such rumours and then used them as the basis of his story, but it would not have been the only time he had done this. An earlier story, *The Great Return* describing the reappearance of the Holy Grail in a 20th century Welsh village, begins with the narrator reading reports of lights in the sky, clearly inspired by the 1905 wave of Welsh sightings.

The different places where the story appeared indicated its appeal to different audiences. For readers of the *Church Family Newspaper* it would have been a simple proof that God was on Britain's side. For the Society for Psychic Research and other Spiritualist oriented journals, it was a case which could potentially be investigated and authenticated, thus establishing evidence for higher powers not dependent on the authority of established religion. Unfortunately, the evidence that was amassed simply consisted of the same story retailed at second-hand, and accounts by witnesses who were alleged to be reliable but chose to remain anonymous, such as are familiar from contemporary UFO retrieval and satanic cult tales.

A third source of the legend was the leading Catholic journal, *The Universe*. This is interesting since at the time Irish Catholics made up a disproportionate number of British soldiers, and their cultural

influences can be discerned in other legends of the war. The most notable such case is the World War I version of the Phantom Hitch-hiker, which tells of two soldiers driving a cart or lorry who give a lift to a young nun. Their passenger delivers a prophesy (usually that the war will end by a certain date) and mysteriously vanishes. The two soldiers later discover that her face is identical to the statue of the Virgin Mary in a local church. A similar tale, showing even more clearly the influence of Irish tales of moving statues, is that of the Virgin of Bapaume. After this Western Front town was shelled, the statue of the Virgin teetered for months at the top of the ruined church tower. Army legend claimed that when it finally fell the war would end: it did fall, only weeks before the end of the war.

While Kevin McClure's study has done a creditable job of collecting the original sources of the legend, I feel it would have been stronger had it examined the wider context of wartime legends. Even more persuasive than the Angels legends, and just as mysterious, was that of the Russian Army that allegedly passed through Britain by troop trains in August 1914. A 1970's researcher who wrote to local papers appealing for information on this tale actually received accounts from elderly people who claimed to remember the Russian soldiers, a fact that clearly indicates the problems of witness testimony to long-past events.

It would also have been interesting to see the legend related to the revival in pre-World War I England of the cults of St

George and King Arthur (discussed the the historian Mark Girouard in his book *The Return from Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*).



(Sandell Collection)  
A World War I patriotic postcard depicts an Angel of Peace leading victorious troops

After the war the Angels were largely forgotten. Nobody, as far as I know, has argued that they were misidentifications of pre-1947 UFOs or their occupants in the way that has been done for the Fatima visions. The reason the legend has been assigned to oblivion is probably less to do with lack of evidence than the fact that the unquestioning combination of religion and nationalism was discredited by the carnage of the war. When England was again in peril in 1940 rumours told not of divine assistance, but of death rays and other secret weapons that would save the nation. However, as the 20th century draws to its close, and in the Middle East and the Balkans armies once more march under the banners of religion, it may be that similar tales will reappear.

Roger Sandell

**SCHNABEL, Jim *Round in Circles*. Hamish Hamilton, 1993. £19.95**

This book has already started fur flying amongst the crop-circle establishment who have been making accusations of unfairness, bitter personal attacks, blindness to reality and unspecified hidden agendas and conspiracies. Well, could it really be so good, I

asked? It is. Although Schnabel, if pressed for an 'explanation' for crop circles, would probably side with your reviewer in saying 'art', don't look here for a CSICOP-type debunking. Schnabel is more concerned with the sociology and personalities behind the crop-circle phenomena. His book tells us more about the English class-system than it does about plasma vortices or superior intelligences.

It is clear that the controversies of cereology are based around the yawning chasm in English society between the country gentleman and the scientist. Echoing the old ufological disdain of the "white-coated godlings of the laboratory" (copyright 1969, J Cleary-Baker), the supernaturally oriented cerealogists pour scorn on the grammar-school types pushing the plasma theory.

Not that the Meadenites come out of this as working-class heroes. Their reluctance to jettison the natural phenomenon explanation, even when it was seemingly producing designs which were clearly man-made, shows that pig-headedness was not the prerogative of either side in this controversy.

Its hard to pick the comic highlight, there are so many. Revealed to outsiders for the first time is the details of the ludicrous threats of libel action which were being thrown around amongst some of the circle groupies. The idea that this case would ever have got to court is even more far-fetched than the idea that crop-circles are made by extraterrestrials. I had never before realised that being accused of working for Test Valley Borough Council was enough to bring you into 'hatred, ridicule and contempt'.

Perhaps the funniest episode is from the Doug and Dave era. On one occasion Dave had had a couple of pints too many before setting out to make a 'pictogram': the finish result was a mess of wobbly lines and deformed circles. This was promptly described as an expression of the wounded sufferings of Gaia, or the creation of an unstable plasma vortex. The fact that it was done by someone who was a bit pissed at the time was far too down to earth an explanation for the high-minded cerealogists!

Schnabel throws a good deal of light onto the impenetrable complexity of the crop-circle world in the early 90's when

accusations of occult conspiracy and government cover-up were being thrown around. He is honest enough to admit that the incestuous, hot-house atmosphere was even getting through to him, and encouraging thoughts of huge conspiracies involving vast, sinister occult organisations involving the Knights of Malta, the Templars, and all the usual suspects.

The real moral of this book is how widespread is the will to believe. People who in most other aspects are quite normal, intelligent, well-educated people, are prepared to believe the most ludicrous things, whether it be deranged intelligences from another dimension, or artistically inclined meteorological phenomena, rather than admit that their belief, especially when it's a belief they have devised themselves, may be wrong. Nothing new in this revelation, of course, but it is extremely interesting and very entertaining, when this revelation is embellished with the names, ranks and serial numbers of people you know! (Schnabel only mentions *Magonia* in passing, revealing how even we were being manipulated by one side in the controversy, so maybe we got off lightly. Can't wait for his forthcoming book on abductions!)

John Rimmer

**ROTHMAN, Milton K. *The Science Gap: Dispelling the Myths and Understanding the Reality of Science*. Buffalo, New York, Prometheus Books, 1982. £15.95**

This would be a good book if the author confined himself to physics, a subject on which he has many years of experience in research and teaching. The basic principles are explained with great clarity and there are useful discussions on the practical limitations of applied science. However, he also deals with the philosophy of science. Although he seems to have read fairly widely on this subject, his grasp of it seems superficial. Also, as a card-carrying sceptic, he takes a swipe or two at religion.

Religion '...occupies a world of discourse separate from the world of science'. Of course it does. Then why discuss it in a book about science?

One of the most irritating things about sceptics is their tedious literal-mindedness, and this author is no exception. To

him a myth is simply a mistaken belief or an unscientific theory, rather than a story with a hidden meaning.

Rothman is much exercised by the distinction between realism and idealism. In a scientific context, the idealist stresses the role of the observers and the ways in which they influence the phenomena they observe, whereas the realist stresses the objective existence of things 'out there' which may or may not be observed. In philosophy the distinctions between realism and idealism are rather subtle and complex; it would need a rather long essay just to give a brief outline of the arguments. However, for Rothman it is all quite simple – realists are right and idealists are wrong.

He asks us: 'But what if we substituted a video camera and a computer memory for the human observer? Would it make any difference to the process of observation? He doesn't seem to see the problem which bothers the philosophers: the human observer must intervene at *some* stage of the proceedings or we would never know the results of the experiment.

As this is an American book, there is the usual amount of space devoted to fulminating about creationism which in other countries might be used for a more profitable discussion on controversies concerning certain details of the theory of evolution.

*The Science Gap* is well written and entertaining, but the author has too much to say on subjects on which he is plainly not an expert, a tendency he criticises in others.

John Harney

### RANDI, James. *The Mask of Nostradamus.*, Prometheus, 1993.

James Randi's enlightening exposés of Uri Geller and other paranormalists were based not solely on his own stage experiences; however he is not a historian, and his sceptical study of Nostradamus is poorly organised, and not very informative.

Much of it consists of a biography of Nostradamus with historical background. Unfortunately this includes some not very relevant digressions on matters such as 16th century medicine, while omitting some important areas. Reasonably, he looks at



*James Randi seems to miss almost as many targets as his subject Nostradamus in his study of the life and works of the prophet*

16th century astrology to find some of the background for Nostradamus's prophetic writings, but does not consider other important influences.

Although there are many astrological references in the writings of Nostradamus, these are certainly not the full story. His prophecies are frequently very obscure, unlike the astrological almanacs of the period which are for the most part fairly clear, whether or not their contents turned out to be accurate. The style of many of the Nostradamus four line prophetic verses is more like that of the spurious prophetic verses attributed to figures of the past that circulated widely in the 16th and 17th centuries. These frequently employing cryptic images and names. They were also influenced by contemporary ideas on the apocalyptic passages on the Bible, which were rather different from their modern equivalents.

While modern fundamentalists anticipate the dictatorship of the Anti-Christ, and anticipate nuclear war followed by the return of Christ, their 16th century counterparts viewed matters more optimistically. The persecutions and religious wars of the Reformation had already fulfilled the Biblical prophecies of tribulation, with Martin Luther or the Papacy (depending on the preferences of the interpreter) as

the Anti-Christ. The way was clear for the appearance of the messianic king (not, then, identified with Christ) who would reunite Christendom, convert the Jews, conquer the Holy Land and institute a reign of righteousness, culminating in the return of Christ at a very indefinite future date. While Randi notes that Nostradamus incorrectly predicted a long a glorious reign for his sovereign Henri II, he does not note that this was because of his expectation that Henri would play the Messianic rôle.

Generally, Randi seems poorly informed about the history of Nostradamus interpretation. He has a chapter on the use of Nostradamus for World War II propaganda, which seems largely based on earlier writers such as Ellic Howe, and omits such interesting details as the piece on Nostradamus in the fake edition of the *Evening Standard* dropped by the Luftwaffe on London in early 1940. He claims that some World War II Nostradamus quatrains forged by the intelligence services of both sides are still quoted by believers. This claim is simply untrue. German propagandists did not forge any quatrains, merely applied dubious interpretations. The one spurious quatrain was perpetrated by British intelligence and is hardly likely to be quoted by believers since it foretells Hitler being assassinated in his sleep.

(Incidentally, Randi also repeats the claim of the Nazi's interest in the cosmic catastrophe theories of Hans Horbinger, an oft-quoted story for which I have yet to see any primary documentation.)

Beyond this he almost totally ignores the rest of the history of Nostradamus interpretation, although it is a very important area of the subject. Modern belief in Nostradamus is largely based on 19th century French commentaries that were for the most part works of clerical-monarchist propaganda that used Nostradamus to denounce the iniquities and Napoleons I and III, and foretold a glorious future for the ten claimant to the French throne, the Comte de Chambord, who many Royalists saw as a near messianic figure. Many later books have simply copied these interpretations, while omitting any discussion of the original context. Similarly, many interpretations relating to English history are copied from an earlier 18th century commentary

by 'D.D.' (Doctor of Divinity, or even possibly Daniel Defoe?) which is a propaganda work in favour of the Hanoverian dynasty, produced at the time of the 1715 Rebellion.

It is not until page 162 of 223 pages that Randi gets down to considering the quatrains themselves in any detail. Of nearly a thousand he simply gives us a detailed look at ten, making very heavy weather of the detail, without adding much to the sceptical analysis contained in Edgar Leoni's *Nostradamus: Life and Literature* which, although thirty years old, remains the definitive serious study (Erika Cheetham one of the more recent Nostradamus believers, does not scruple to copy entire paragraphs from Leoni practically verbatim).

Randi seems impressed by the work of a recent commentator, Everett Bleiler, who has attempted to relate the prophecies to the politics of the period and argues that many of them can be related to then-contemporary concerns, and in some cases to events which had already happened when they first appeared. While this argument has a lot of merit, Randi and Bleiler weaken their case by resorting to some interpretations that seem just as forced as those of the believers.

By concentrating on a small number of the prophecies Randi misses many opportunities to make a sceptical case by ignoring many quite explicit and totally incorrect Nostradamus prophecies, such as the election of a villainous monk from Campania as Pope in 1609 (Paul IV reigned from 1605 to 1625). He also misses the chance to identify the recurring themes of the prophecies, such as a new crusade against the Moslems, an English bid to reconquer France, and a period of violence in England leading to the death of a king (he was right in the last case, of course, but since the twenty years immediately before Nostradamus wrote had seen a number of revolts in England, this was perhaps not sticking his head out. to far)

Randi's reliability is also undermined by some historical errors. At one point he speaks of the 16th century rivalry between France and Italy, although Italy did not exist as a political unit until the 19th century. Discussing another prophecy, alleged to relate to the invention of the balloon, he states that Napoleon was the

first person to realise their military potential. In fact he had a low opinion of their value and discontinued experiments that had been made with balloons by the earlier French Revolutionary armies.

Discussing another quatrain which believers have related to the French Revolutionary era Randi states that the Comte de Narbonne was so obscure that "his name appears nowhere in the many history books I have consulted". I don't know which books he looked in, but I found the Comte in the first book I consulted - he was Minister of War, hardly an obscure position.

With a well-know quatrain predicting some kind of obscure disaster for July 1999, we may well be in for a new wave of interest in Nostradamus. It is a pity therefore that this book has done the sceptical cause little service

Roger Sandell

**PINVIDIC, Thierry (Ed.)**  
*OVNI: vers une anthropologie d'un mythe contemporaine.*  
Heimdal, Bayeux, 1993. FF175.

A major compendium (over 500 pages) of current thinking on ufology, with contributions by such *doyen* of the French scene as Claude Maugé, Michel Monnerie and Jacques Scornaux, as well as contributions from writers outside France, including Hilary Evans and Paulo Toselli.

The essays are divided into four sections: firstly 'The Construction and Deconstruction of the Strange', largely studies of individual cases including UMMO and the recent Belgian wave; then 'Some Problems of Method' which examines the results of investigations and the work of ufologists. Part Three is 'Psychological and Sociological Approaches', which includes a summary of the sociological aftermath to the Cergy-Pontoise hoax; and finally 'The Historical Perspective', which puts UFOs into a broader historical and cultural context. All the essays are notable for their detail and depth of scholarship. Invaluable if you can read French even slightly - the writing is clear and comprehensible, although the volume could have been better signposted with contents lists and indexes. Let us hope some, if not all, of the material is translated into English.

John Rimmer

## 25 Years Ago (2)

MUFOB volume one, no. 3 was the first with which I had any input. The first two issues being produced entirely by John Harney and Alan Sharp. It continued the UFO Glossary, defining such concepts as 'Shaggy Saucer Story' - "UFO report which is, or is considered to be, merely a joke or hoax". Other articles outlined the recent TV documentary introduced by Dr Stephen Black, which though broadly sceptical took a refreshingly objective look at ufology, and brought news of the dissent within the Condon Committee, whose report was being eagerly awaited by ufologists across the world. John Harney concluded "The misgivings expressed by experienced ufologists when the Project was announced appear to have been well justified" as indeed they were.

Your humble Editor's first contribution to MUFOB came in the form of an *actual case investigation* (pause for gasps of incredulity from readers)! This concerned a large, glowing 'fireball' seen descending to earth over a public baths in north Liverpool. Boy-ufologist Rimmer could determine no explanation for this (and, offhand, still can't think of one.)

The first of a distinguished series of increasingly outraged letters from one-time BUFORA supremo John Cleary-Baker graced the correspondence column, decrying any suggestion that he would "suffer fools gladly" in BUFORA for the sake of their subscription money.

Issue no. 4 started with a straight science article by Alan Sharp on the chances of extraterrestrial life in the solar system. Concluding, not surprisingly, no chance. Like most straight science articles in MUFOB this produced no response whatsoever from readers. This issue was also notable for my first article, a rather naive piece on 'UFOs and Irish Folklore'.

In issue five John Harney asked 'Should MIB reports be taken seriously?' No conclusion was drawn except by MUFOB's intermittent *bête noir* Radio Merseyside, which produced a typical mickey-taking item complete with wierd electronic effects and silly voices. The book reviews in this issue included John Harney on Arthur Shuttlewood's latest *Warnings from Flying Friends*, concluding with the classic put-down: "From the depth of my armchair I recommend this book to connoisseurs of the Warminster phenomena". ●●●

# HOLD THE BACK PAGE

Miscellaneous ramblings from the ufological fringe

## J'accuse.. (or not, as the case may be)!

British readers may have noticed from the press that the last few months have seen a bizarre series of false claims from people alleging to have been victims of violent crime. Cases include a woman who touched off a major police alert by faking her own kidnapping, and more recently from a woman who falsely claimed she had been forced to drive several hundred miles by a man who climbed into her car at traffic lights. Most remarkable of all is the case of a man who nearly lost his sight as a result of superglue squirted into his eye, allegedly by burglars, but later admitted to be self-inflicted.

All of these people told stories which were convincing enough to fool experienced detectives. None of those who told them gained anything, other than the possibility of facing criminal prosecution for wasting police time. Yet investigators of abductions and similar cases still solemnly assure us that witnesses were convincing, or had "nothing to gain" from a hoax.

From the bare details of these stories reported in the press it is hard to judge the motives of the individuals involved. The woman who faked her kidnapping is said to have done so because she was unable to face a family Christmas. No doubt further knowledge of the backgrounds would reveal other motivations. Clearly, the attitudes of abduction researchers who accuse those prepared fully to scrutinise the background and motives of witnesses of being 'insensitive' or 'intimidating' are unsupportable, faced with cases like these. R.S.

## UMMO Wrestling

One thing that's always puzzled us about the UMMO affair: how does a race get to build fabulously advanced inter-dimensional spacecraft, when it can't understand how to use the shift-key on a typewriter?

## A real UFO?

Now that ufologists are increasingly turning their attentions inwards, looking for imaginary Greys under their beds and Nordics in their wardrobes they have little time to consider what is really going on out there in space. In the real world, the Spacewatch project is under way, searching for Earth-crossing asteroids and calculating the effects which would be produced if any of them collided with the Earth.

Now many of these objects, nearly all of which are very small (so you don't need to worry too much about them), have eccentric orbits taking them inward towards Venus and outward beyond Mars. The orbits also have fairly high inclinations (i.e. inclinations to the plane of the Earth's orbit).

One of these objects, known as 1991 VG, is puzzling the astronomers. It was discovered on 6 November 1991 and was

found to have an orbit almost coinciding with the Earth's orbit, having an inclination of only 0.25°. (1)

'1991 VG has been suspected to be of artificial origin because of its Earth-like orbit and unconfirmed evidence for rapid changes in its apparent magnitude, characteristic of artificial satellites.' (2)

Nearly all artificial satellites and assorted space junk are in close orbit around the Earth, so one would have thought it would have been easy to identify spacecraft in such an unlikely orbit.

If it is artificial, the failure to identify it is puzzling. The problem will not appeal to most ufologists though; whatever it is, it is a real object.

John Harney

### REFERENCES:

1 CHYBA, Christopher F., 'Explosions of small Spacewatch objects in the Earth's atmosphere', *Nature*, 363, 6431, 24 June 1993, 701-3

2 RABINOWITZ, D.L. *et al.*, 'Evidence for a near-Earth asteroid belt', *Ibid.*, 704-6

## Notes on the Case

One of the most famous historical cases from South America is Itaipu, where, in November 1957, two Brazilian soldiers were reportedly injured by 'heat rays' from a UFO which cut the electricity supply at the Itaipu Fort. Now minimalist composer Philip Glass has immortalised the location, the site of a giant five-mile wide dam and lake, if not the UFO case, in an orchestral and choral work, *Itaipu*. With a text based on Guarani Indian lore, and deploying massive orchestral and choral forces, the work has had a mixed reception. One reviewer's comments include: "triadic harmonies slowly lulling one into a sense of timelessness... the clarity leaves much to be desired... overblown bombast... gestural finale". Sounds like some UFO writers we could mention.

What next? Vaughan Williams' little-known *Warminster Suite* (the movement 'Circles Dance' is particularly charming), or Leonard Bernstein's *Linda's Song* from his lost masterpiece *Lower East Side Story*.

## THE BARMPOTS



I think it's something to do with them opting out of the Health Service.