



Investigating Contemporary
Vision and Belief

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MORAL PANICS



I recently attended a conference organised by the alarmingly named 'Revolutionary Communist Party' on the subject of 'Moral Panics', along with Editorial Panel member Roger Sandell. Despite the name of the organisation staging the conference, there was very little of a conventional political agenda on display at the various meetings and workshops which constituted the two-day event at the London Institute of Education. Indeed, a great deal of the proceedings were devoted to demolishing some of the 'politically correct' attitudes usually linked with left-wing politics.

Topics discussed included analysis and criticism of such 'moral panics' as computer pornography, killer bugs, genetic engineering, AIDS, video nasties, a variety of health scares, and, of particular interest to *Magonia*, the Satanic Panic. Although the discussion on this topic covered ground that will be very familiar to anyone who has followed the series of articles in this magazine, and supported the approach we have taken, it was in one way flawed. Although the leading speaker at the session touched on the subject of alien abduction as a comparable phenomenon, this was done largely to emphasise the non-reality of Satanic abuse, by showing its similarity to an 'obviously' unreal phenomenon. Participants were perhaps a little too keen to see the Satanism panic as part of a nexus of 'fundamentalist' inspired social panics rather than as something that can also be an intensely real personal experience for the individual.

Nevertheless, the concept of the Moral Panic is an important one. As listed above, moral panics include such undeniably real problems as AIDs, where the debate involves whether the degree of

concern generated is proportionate to the actual physical danger it represents to individuals. It covers Satanic abuse, where the debate is largely concerned with whether it exists or not, and also such topics as pornography, video violence and drugs, where, although everyone agrees they exist (although in the case of computer pornography not nearly as much as the panic promoters think) there is considerable debate as to the effect, or lack of effect, they may have, and the role of law enforcement and state intervention in controlling them.

Where do moral panics come from? Some seem to be a development of urban legends - the great skinned cat scare is one such, which seems to be taking on particularly xenophobic characteristics - see later in this *Magonia*. Others appear to be almost entirely media-created; many food and health panics fall into this category, with newspapers sensationalising some already contentious 'report' from a particular pressure group. Some - last year's 'flesh-eating bug' is a prime example - seem to arise from a murky borderland of tabloid sensationalism, genuine public concern, misunderstood science and wild rumour. Others, including panics based around drugs, censorship and crime can be manipulated by governments and other agencies as forms of social control or to promote specific agendas.

Moral panics, like urban legends, rumours and reports of claimed scientific and social anomalies, structure the beliefs - rational and irrational - of our society. These are topics which shall be returning to again in future issues of *Magonia* as we attempt to interpret contemporary visions and beliefs.

John Rimmer

still seeking satan

Roger Sandell



AMONG several recent books on the subject of Satanism, Lawrence Wright's *Remembering Satan* fills a notable gap by giving a detailed account of one particular Satanism case, the Olympia, Washington State, case of 1988-89.

Even by the standards of such cases the story he has to tell is bizarre and grotesque. The two teenage daughters of Sheriff Paul Ingram, an evangelical Christian, attend a church summer-camp where a speaker 'prophesies' that someone in the audience has been a victim of child sex abuse. The daughters respond by having flashback memories of abuse by their father. When arrested, Ingram has his own flashbacks where he sees himself sexually abusing his children, and immediately confesses.

The charges escalate until Ingram is no longer merely a sexual pervert but the leader of a gang of Satanists carrying out human sacrifices. Two other police officers are arrested as cult members, but protest their innocence.

Throughout all of this Ingram continues to supply flashback memories of any suggestion put to him, including deliberately false ones put by a sceptical psychologist to test the validity of his confessions. The bottomless credulity of the investigating officers survives this revelation, as it does a claim by one of his daughters to have been raped by police dogs and the discovery that she has forged a letter to herself purporting to be a threat from Satanists. Finally Ingram, now repudiating his confessions, is sentenced to life imprisonment while his co-accused are acquitted. **1**

Lawrence Wright tells this story with the help of transcripts of police interviews which reveal a series of abuses that make it extremely surprising that they were ever accepted as evidence. Leading questions are asked; Ingram is told that if he does not make a full confession his daughters may kill themselves, and a potential witness is told he will be able to take out a profitable claim for compensation.

Interestingly there are hints at some points of tales that might have been interpreted in a completely different way. Ingram's son when first interviewed by police remembers no abuse, but when pressed further to recall odd happenings in his childhood tells of a dream of little men floating through his bedroom window and standing round his bed. This story, which would have immediately been seized on by UFO abduction believers,

is interpreted by police as a cover memory disguising child abuse.

The problems of 'flashback memories', 'cover memories' and 'false memories', which Wright also explores, have in the last few months been the subject of a number of reports in the British press and television. The False Memory Society, a US group of parents who claim to be the victims of false memories of abuse planted in adult offspring by dubious therapists, now has a British branch. Although none of the British cases have yet ended up in court, some of them also involve tales of Satanism and human sacrifices. Another British group recently founded is Accuracy About Abuse, which champions the validity of work done by therapists to recover memories of abuse. However, Marjorie Orr, the founder of this organisation is scarcely likely to dispel doubts about therapists since, although described as one, she is better known as the write of the *Daily Express's* horoscope column and the voice on a recorded message fortune-telling by phone service - activities which the evangelical Christian promoters of the Satanism scare would regard as 'Satanic' themselves.

Wright shows that both sides in the memory controversy can point to evidence in their favour. Loftus and Ganaway, two sceptical psychologists, have conducted experiments claiming to show that children will endorse and elaborate on totally imaginary events which they are told happened to them in the past. A survey conducted at an American school where a deranged gunman had fired on children showed that several months after children who were absent on that day gave accounts of allegedly seeing the gunman. **2**

On the other hand a recent survey of adults who were child victims of sex offenders allegedly showed that up to 38% had no memory of the incident. However, this survey has come under attack for including former victims who were very young at the time of the assault. One wonders also whether in some cases 'don't remember' actually means 'don't want to discuss with a complete stranger after twenty years'. And did the survey make any distinction between former victims of systematic, long-term abuse and those where the abuse had been a single incident? The distinction is a vital one since there is a very big difference between repressing the memory of a brief trauma - which is known to

1. A historical equivalent of Sheriff Ingram might be Major Weir, the former Cromwellian officer who in 1670 made an unprompted confession to a lifetime of witchcraft and bizarre sex crimes.

2. A recent case involving demonstrably false memories of child abuse is that of Roald Dahl who in his autobiography claimed to have been beaten by Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, whilst attending Repton School. In fact Dr. Fisher was not a Repton master at the time Dahl was there.

3. Similarly, the current image of ghosts as transparent figures seems to rest not on witness account, but early cinema trick photography.

happen after involvement in accidents or disasters - and the alleged repression of memories of long passages of one's life.

There are wider questions, too, than can easily be settled by surveys and experiments. Is the model of the human memory propounded by the therapists who gradually uncover memories of satanism one that is simply based on the not uncommon film plot device in which the audience is initially shown a brief unexplained flashback to a character's memory which is gradually expanded on as the narrative progresses? (A recent well-known example is Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective*, recently shown on BBC-TV) ◀ 3

Another aspect of the controversy which deserves more sceptical scrutiny than it has received is the use by both sides of the term 'brainwashing', which is variously depicted as a means whereby evil Satanists force victims to forget their abuse or commit crimes, or as a means whereby evil therapists force sinister memories on unsuspecting patients.

Little of this stands up to scrutiny. The mysterious and sinister techniques allegedly used somehow failed to re-surface in Vietnam. The lower rate of collaboration amongst British POWs in Korea and its total absence among the Turks (the next largest UN contingent) suggests that low US army morale and motivation had more on an influences on the behaviour of American troops in captivity. However the belief in the existence of sinister techniques to control directly the human mind has been an enduring one.

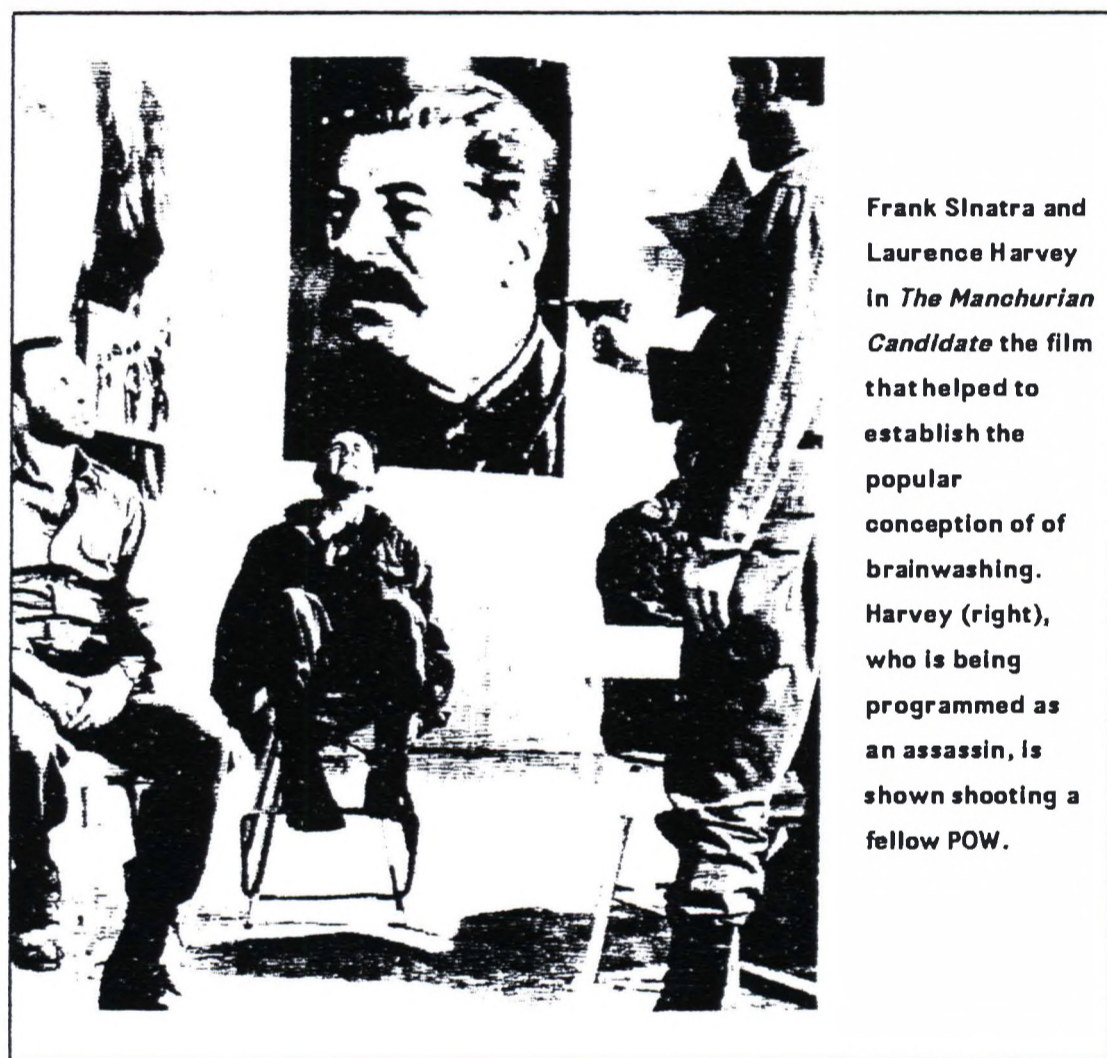
Equally suspect is the idea implied by some sceptics that it might be possible to isolate some kind of 'False Memory Syndrome' as a specific medical condition that might explain claimed memories of bizarre and highly improbable events. This would indeed be a convenient portmanteau explanation but it is probably more accurate to see these tales emerging as part of a wider interaction involving both social and psychological factors as well as group dynamics, and no more have one single explanation than all false confessions to the police or all false claims to be the victims of crimes. Individual Satanist cases probably have a variety of roots, including family tensions (which can be glimpsed in Wright's account of the Ingram case), the very existence of 'survivor' groups that foster a climate of self-reinforcing fantasy, and the subconscious desire of those who have paid large amounts of money to therapists to come up with recovered memories sensational enough to justify the expense.

The fact remains, however, that the ranks of American therapists include many bizarre and sinister practitioners. Just how bizarre can be seen by reading Daniel Ryder's *Breaking the Circle of Satanic Abuse*, a book so eccentric that one might dismiss it as a product of the lunatic fringe were it not for the fact that its author is a licensed social worker, and the cover contains endorsements from police officers, psychologists and child welfare groups. It appears to be a product of the so-called 'Christian Counselling' movement, a synthesis that makes clear the similarities between evangelical Christianity and 'recovery therapy'. Notably their common emphasis on confession and rebirth, and emphasis on individual evil rather than social factors as an explanation for people's problems. Thus Ryder's accounts of work with alleged ritual abuse victims alternate between exhortations to remember that Jesus has been victorious over Satan, and passages of psychobabble that defy parody:

Tim, who's a 37 year old computer programmer guesses that his inner child is six. Tim's next task was to do some activities appropriate for a six year old. He got some coloring books for his inner child. He was also doing daily affirmations holding a teddy-bear and talking into a mirror. Bianca, a 40 year old manager was doing some experimental inner-child work. She was skeptical until she found herself too late for a corporate conference because she had found herself engrossed with a dolls house she was playing with.

If these methods fail to produce memories of Satanic abuse, apparently the therapist should go on a fishing expedition through any memories that are the slightest bit out of the ordinary:

If the client is ready there are other ways to jog memories. One is to go back to the neighbourhood one grew up in. Walk around if possible, remembering the adults, remembering the children. What were their personalities like? Did anything ever seem odd? Do you remember any adults who seemed especially sadistic or overtly sexual? What's



Frank Sinatra and Laurence Harvey in *The Manchurian Candidate* the film that helped to establish the popular conception of brainwashing. Harvey (right), who is being programmed as an assassin, is shown shooting a fellow POW.

In each case the model for explanation is a dubious one. The term first appeared during the Korean War, when it was used to explain why large numbers of US prisoners of the Chinese and North Koreans were prepared to collaborate and publicly denounce US policy. According to the brainwashing model of explanation they had been the victims of a combination of advanced and sinister mind-control techniques devised by Soviet psychologists, and fiendish Oriental tortures. This belief was partly responsible for setting off a mind-control arms race between Soviet and US intelligence services in which innocent people suffered as unknowing guinea-pigs, and - like the rather similar ESP race - exaggerated reports of each side's capabilities led the other to make frantic attempts to catch up. The film *The Manchurian Candidate* depicted some of the alleged capabilities of brainwashing to plant memories of imaginary events, and transform people into robot assassins, to be activated at a given signal. ◀ 4

4. TIm Tate, the leading British journalistic proponent of Satanic abuse also scripted the 1994 Channel 4 documentary claiming that Sirhan Sirhan had been brainwashed by the CIA.

happened to some of the children who lived in the neighbourhood? Did some develop psychiatric disorders?

Ryder's therapy produces Satanic cult tales that one might think would test the credulity of the most gullible believers (but to judge by the book's endorsements have not done so). His Satanists have paranormal powers and, it seems, that they may use these to make evidence vanish. Thus neatly explaining why no-one ever finds any. Demons and non-human monsters are present at ceremonies, according to Ryder.

Tales like this underline another problem that the Satanic cult memories share with memories of alien abductions and past lives. Not only do different therapists not only keep on finding lots of whichever of the above is their speciality but never anything else, but also each finds a particular sub-type of their speciality unique to themselves. Thus Budd Hopkins' alien abductors are rather different from John Mack's, and reincarnation researchers tell tales about the process which completely contradict each other. Similarly, Ryder's cult stories are very different from those found by more secular investigators. But Ryder also reports a new type of abuse which he claims to find emerging:

A certified therapist who requested anonymity for safety reasons said that some clients had memories of being abused in laboratory type settings. This laboratory abuse is seen as experimental. This therapist said survivors have remembered being hooked on to electrodes. [Another therapist] said survivors report having memories of surgical procedures. [She] also reported more than one of these survivors claim they remember being programmed to assassinate powerful people if cued.

Such stories seem to be becoming more common, and Ryder's version of them is not the most bizarre. Cary Hammond is the producer of a video on Satanic abuse used by various American police departments, who, according to Lawrence Wright, claims:

Such cults were developed by Satanic Nazi scientists who were captured by the CIA after the war and brought to the US. The main figure was a Hasidic Jew, Dr. Greenbaum who saved himself from the gas chambers by assisting his Nazi captors and instructing them in the secrets of the Cabala.

Dr Hammond is quoted as saying:

People say what's the purpose of it? My best guess is they want an army of Manchurian Candidates, tens of thousands of mental robots who will smuggle drugs, engage in arms smuggling, very lucrative things, and eventually, the megalomaniacs at the top believe, create a Satanic order that will rule the world.

For writers like Bill Cooper and John Lear, UFO retrieval tales have linked with themes such as drug barons and 'treason in high places', now the Satanic cult stories are linking up with abductee-type medical experiments, political assassinations, Nazis-in-America conspiracy theories and Jewish ritual murder tales.

Two new collections of essays on Satanist abuse, mostly by health professionals, are *Out of Darkness* from the USA, and *Treating Survivors of Satanic Abuse* from Britain. Since their formats are similar, it is easiest to deal with the together, using their initials to locate individual essays. Most of the contributors to both books work in the public sector and so avoid some of the more extreme claims that come from therapists in private practice. However each book contains one essay indicating clearly that impressive qualifications and prestige jobs are no guarantee against writing total absurdities.

Catherine Gould of the Los Angeles Ritual Abuse Task Force writes on 'Diagnosis and Treatment of

Ritually Abused Children' (OOD), a large part of which consists of a quite ludicrous checklist of symptoms of Satanic abuse which includes items such as 'child refuses to worship God', 'child resists authority' and 'child is extremely controlling with other children, constantly playing chase games'. A notable feature of this catalogue is that it includes a large number of contradictory items, which cause practically any type of behaviour to become evidence of Satanic abuse, including both 'child is afraid to separate from parents, cannot be alone and clings', as well as 'child seems distant from parents avoiding close physical contact'.

'Satanic Cult Practices (TSSA) by Dr Joan Coleman, a psychiatrist, relates uncritically the most extreme claims. Satanists include 'police, politicians, ambassadors and aristocrats'. they carry out human sacrifices, burying bodies on the country estates of wealthy cultists. their leaders hold regular meetings at a national level to plan activities such as gun-running and drug dealing. They are divided into local groups of eighty or so members which are run by a group of officials whose titles include Scribe, High Priestess and Thane. (In fact the word thane has no connection with and form of magic or supernatural belief but was simply the title of a village headman in Anglo-Saxon England. Has Dr Coleman become confused by *Macbeth* which has both thanes and witches.) One authority which she cites for all of this is *Satan's Underground* by 'Laurel Stratford, a US 'survivor' story which has been proved to be a hoax. Apart from this she cites alleged testimonies from her own patients. The first patient to describe apparent Satanic abuse told of witnessing the sacrifice of three Vietnamese children around 1976 "brought to Southampton from the USA, among the first Boat People". Readers may remember that Boat People were initially housed in centres such as disused army camps and were closely supervised by the social services. That the disappearance of three such children could have gone un-noticed by the authorities seems very unlikely. Did the parents report it, or were they Satanists too?

Dr Coleman is impressed, like many abduction researchers with the apparent unanimity of the witnesses. One example is that apparently witnesses agree that the altar used in ceremonies will have a sword, a skull, a chalice or a book on it. Given that one would expect an altar to have something sinister and suitably archaic on it one would hardly expect claims that the altar was decorated with a mobile phone or a pop-up toaster!

Equally credulous is a piece by a member of the team responsible for the 1992 Channel 4 programme, *Blasphemous Rumours* (TSSA). This programme featured irrelevant, manipulative images such as shots of an empty children's playground filmed in polarised light and accompanied by discordant music. It gave credence to manifestly absurd claims such as one interviewee who recounted being present at a ceremony in a specially constructed underground chamber where hundreds of people were present. The documentary makers made no attempt to check out matters which could have been investigated, such as a claim to have been in a Satanic temple that was a windowless building in London's Docklands.

It is enlightening to compare this programme with one broadcast on Channel 4 in 1994 in which a woman claimed that she and her children had been sexually abused while members of the Children of God



group. While flawed in some respects - notably its use of the dubious 'brainwashing cult' model of explanation - it centred on witnesses who told their stories directly to camera, showed photographs of themselves with other cult members, and produced old letters and internal documentation: the kinds of details which are conspicuously absent from the Satanism cases.

The producers of the Satanism documentary seemed impressed by the nearly two hundred calls Channel 4's switchboard received after transmission, telling tales of Satanist abuse. One wonders what they would have made of the several hundred calls received after the recent British radio appearance of UFO abduction writer John Mack.

Both books attempt to take some kind of historical perspective. Brett Kahr, a psychotherapy lecturer, contributes an essay 'The Historical Foundation of Ritual Abuse' (TSSA) which argues that modern Satanism cases are a continuation of child sacrifice which he contends was widespread in ancient times. He can point to the Tophet cult in the ancient middle east as a genuine example of such practices. Beyond this he shows how little historical understanding he has. He cites the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, and the Greek legend of Medea as evidence for widespread child sacrifices. In each case the story was set about a thousand years before it was written down, at an era which even the original audience would consider remote and barbarous. Moreover, the tone of each tale is evidence, not for the popularity of human sacrifice, but for the universal abhorrence it inspired.

Kahr's ignorance is also clearly indicated by the fact that he seems impressed by the ridiculous and misleading 'historical survey' in Tim Tate's *Children for the Devil* which I analysed in detail in an earlier review.

Martin Katchen's *History of Satanic Religions* (OOD) is no better. Most of his historical 'evidence' relates to tales told about medieval heretics by their enemies, and allegations made by the clerical anti-Masonic movement in the nineteenth century. Both these essays share certain characteristics with most historical writings on Satanism by believers: there is no reference to works on witchcraft by mainstream historians such as Hugh Trevor-Roper, Keith Thomas and most particularly Norman Cohn. Cohn has discussed in detail how medieval heretics became associated with tales of orgies and human sacrifice. There is no attempt to analyse the main legend of human sacrifice, that even the writers here would presumably agree to be baseless, that of Jewish ritual murder (the US book devotes on throw-away sentence to this point in its introduction, while the British one's silence is surprising since its editor, Valerie Sinason, is Jewish).

Moreover, one wonders exactly what point these essays are supposed to be making. By exactly what process were grim ancient rituals transmitted to proprietors of Californian day-care centres and semi-literate families on British council estates? Did they exist underground for centuries unsuspected by contemporary social commentators or later historians? Ryder claims that "various forms of occult practices, including Satanism", were brought to America from "European countries, Africa and Australia" (Australia??) but beyond this there is no explanation.

A second essay by Katchen, 'Satanic Belief and Practices' (OOD) attempts to make sense of Satanic cults in terms of sociology, anthropology and comparative

religion. He sees the brutalities allegedly inflicted by such groups as analogous to US Marine Corps training in which abuse and harshness is used to form group loyalties. This attempt is unconvincing. There are certainly cultures, both amongst tribal peoples and in advanced societies in which initiation into the group is a brutal process, but in all of these the brutality leads up to a final initiation - like a coming-of-age or a passing out ceremony - when it stops and the newcomer is recognised as a member of the group. At what point does this happen with the Satanists? No survivor tale gives us any clue. Once again, there are many



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cultures and subcultures that practice and reward extreme brutality against outsiders. What is inexplicable about the Satanic cult stories is the way cults that are alleged to be trans-generational supposedly practice, on those who are to be the carriers of the tradition, grotesque and meaningless brutalities that could hardly be endured without total traumatising that would make normal functioning, even within the cult, very difficult.

Any attempt to apply any sociological analysis to these groups also breaks down in the total failure of those telling the stories to give any account of their day to day functioning - something which might be comprehensible in the case of children but not with adults. Do different groups choose their own leaders, or are they imposed from Satanist National Headquarters? Are there ever any internal disagreements or schisms? What impact has AIDS had on Satanism? Have the cults been devastated as one would expect from groups whose rituals involve sex orgies and drinking blood? Have they changed any rituals as a result? On all of these points there is silence, and in fact on any description of the minutiae of day to day life there is silence. Lawrence Wright's book illustrates this very well. At one point Sheriff Ingram is providing his interrogators with a detailed description of a horrific Satanist rite. However a

5. One exception is the allegations of child abuse against Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago, a cleric who has been active in ending the church cover-up on these matters. These allegations were made by a complainant undergoing regression therapy and who later withdrew them. The therapist involved had no qualifications, except one awarded by 'John-Roger', the New Age guru who has been accused by the American press of influencing Arlanna Stassinopolos-Huffington, wife of Michael Huffington the Californian right-wing Republican candidate in the recent US elections

sceptical psychologist intervenes to ask what sort of things the cultists talked about when the ritual was over. This reduces Ingram to incoherence, totally unable to provide a reply to this sort of mundane query.

The contents of the two books under consideration are not wholly credulous. There is a contribution by Kenneth Lanning, an FBI specialist in child abuse cases (OOD) that makes an impressive and informed sceptical case, not denying the possibility of satanic abuse, but pointing out the many problems involved in the evidence so far presented. (18th century magistrates' manuals recommended a similar strategy, saying that magistrates faced with accusations of witchcraft should not deny the existence of witches, but point out the problems involved in proving an allegation) Lanning points out the complete discontinuity of Satanism cases with other cases of child sex rings, where features such as the involvement of women and allegations of the victimisation of adults as well as children, are practically unknown.

An interesting comparison which Lanning does not explore is with the other wave of child sex allegations currently rife in the US - those against Roman Catholic priests, some of which, like the day-care cases, involve allegations of whole institutions incorporating cultures of child sex abuse. However the similarity stops here. The cases involving priests have resulted in many guilty pleas and supporting evidence in the form of long histories of allegations against individuals before action was taken. There are no tales of the involvement of women (in spite of many institutions where nuns look after children) or of murder, or of paraphernalia that is never found in searches. Recovered memories rarely form the basis for such allegations and there are certainly no 'experts' alleging these cases validate anti-Catholic tales of past centuries. **5**

Another writer, George B. Greaves, a forensic psychologist, contributes an essay 'Alternative Hypotheses Regarding Claims of Satanic Cult Activity' (OOD). While faulting believers for their methodology, he ultimately argues for the reality of Satanic cults, rejecting folklore-based explanations on grounds very similar to those advanced by Eddie Bullard for rejecting folklore explanations of UFO abduction tales. He argues that Satanic cult stories are not like urban legends - structured narratives leading to a climax in the same manner as jokes. ~~XXXX~~

This is however to take an over-restrictive view of the nature of urban legends. To illustrate urban legends to his readers he gives the example of a cat killed by being placed in a microwave cooker. In fact, just such tales of babies being killed in microwaves have appeared in Satanism allegations!

Valerie Sinason, the editor of the British book, seems to take a rather ambiguous position. In spite of accepting the reality of Satanist abuse she contributes an introduction to the Lawrence Wright book, accepting, somewhat grudgingly, that a miscarriage of justice occurred. Her introduction thanks for her suggestions, Dr Sherrill Mulhearn, the anthropologist and leading Satanism sceptic, although any input by Dr Mulhearn into the book is not evident.

Her own essay, 'Internal and External Evidence' at least has the merit of being frank about the fantastic content of some survivor stories:

Malcolm, aged 27, a lawyer, could clearly describe the expensive furnishings in the place where he was ritually

abused. However, whilst in a trance state he spoke about being in a huge palace where everyone, including some famous people, could fly.

However, she concludes that the Satanist may use drugs to implant false memories in their victims, and, bizarrely, that these stories are the fault of investigators who do not believe everything they are told. **6**

Where patients correctly experience another's response as irrational disbelief they can then unconsciously fabricate to a point where everything is disbelieved: this makes them angrily in control of further rejection. By the same action they have also protected their allegiance to the cult.

The one first-hand survivor account she includes in her book is hard to assess. The author claims to have been abused in a residential centre, a setting which is easily exploited for sexual abuse. He claims to have been the victim of a child sex ring whose members were Freemasons, who chose him as their boy god, and made him the centre of their rituals: a procedure which bears no relation to other survivor tales. There is a reference to human sacrifice, but the claimant states that his abusers gave him drugs, and as a result he is uncertain about what was and was not real. A puzzling and inconclusive story made even more so by the absence of any information about whether any attempt has been made to report it to the police or other authorities.

It is a relief to turn from these books to the official report *The Extent and Nature of Ritual Abuse*, by Professor Jean La Fontaine. The version currently available is merely a 35-page summary of main findings, with a more detailed report to follow. Even so its summing up of some eighty British allegations, few of which were reported in the press, is full of interest. First of all the claim made by many believers that there are a large number of separate cases with similar details supporting each other is shown to be false. Many allegations are unique to individual cases. Even basic features of the image of ritual abuse, such as the use of robes or costumes only feature in about a third of the allegations.

A particularly significant section of the report is 'The Class Context of Allegations of Ritual Abuse', which looks at the people who face these charges.

There were 203 adults (11 men and 92 women) reported. Of the men only 35 were reported as being in work. Six had casual labouring jobs, eight had more skilled manual jobs, and three had middle-class jobs. The work of the other 18 employed men was not specified in the files but there were indications that they were low paid. Few women were working, all but one in manual work. In 12 out of 38 cases the poverty of the children's parents was referred to. Only one man owned the house he lived in. Run-down urban estates were mentioned in twelve cases.

A similar picture is given in an essay in the Sinason book; 'A Systematic Approach', by Aaron Bentovim and Marianne Tranter, which gives the case history of a family accused of taking their children to a

6. Although administration of drugs as part of sex abuse is not improbable, mystery drinks feature both in Satanic abuse and abduction stories. Peter Rogerson has reminded me that in some reincarnation accounts the claimants state

One important issue Lanning raises is the influence of private groups offering "training seminars" to the police. Today the offering of such seminars in the private and public sector, often by those whose qualifications are very dubious or non-existent, seems to be a growth industry, and one to which some small US police departments with little intelligence capacity of their own are particularly vulnerable. Some of the conduct of these seminars, especially in the 'business motivation' and 'racial awareness' fields have distinctly cult-like characteristics.

that between lives they were given a 'drink of forgetting' by a supernatural figure, but somehow avoided drinking it.

7. The use of Satanic Imagery by heavy metal bands seems to have increased following the evangelical anti-heavy metal campaign. A new development has been the appearance in Scandinavia of 'Death Metal', a sub-genre linked with skinhead-style racism. Britain's first Death Metal fanzine has recently appeared - *Harsh Reality*, an ugly publication combining music reviews with occultism and Holocaust revisionism

'Satanic church' to be abused by robed figures:

The details of the case reports indicated the children had always been subject to poor standards of hygiene and the results of poor financial management. Clothing was poor and inappropriate to prevailing climatic conditions. Diet was adequate but of poor quality... It was extremely difficult for the social worker to describe the chaos within the household. Children as they grew older became more unruly, left to fend for themselves beyond the mother's control. The mother yelled rather than talked, school attendance became poorer, social isolation became marked... Dental and personal hygiene was non-existent. The children were left unsupervised on the estate and there was regular concern and complaints from other families... acts of vandalism, bullying, stoning elderly people begging and burglary, although always unproven. [Note the way the writers solemnly record allegations of vandalism as unproven while accepting allegations of Satanic abuse.]

Here we are clearly a world away from Joan Coleman's fantasies of wealthy Satanists burying their victims on private estates, or from the US cases featuring expensive therapists or middle-class day care centres. What seems to be happening in Britain is that allegations of Satanism have become part of a wider social image, that of the 'underclass'. As employment has

1. **Public Satanists.** These are followers of groups such as Anton LeVey's Church of Satan, who, as even the anti-Satanist concede, are rarely involved in criminal offences.
2. **Teenage Dabblers.** Young people with an interest in the occult derived from such sources as heavy-metal music and horror films. In Britain few of these have been involved in any crimes more serious than minor church vandalism, but in the US, anti-Satanists can point to dabblers involved in more serious crimes including murder/ However when these cases are examined drugs and the wide availability of firearms seem to be more significant causes than occultism. Ironically some of those involved in such cases have been from evangelical Christian households, and have adopted Satanist symbols as a sign of rebellion. ◀ 7
3. **Psychopathic Satanists.** Unbalanced individuals obsessed with the idea of Satan either acting alone or with a small number of accomplices. Here again there is a well-authenticated history of such cases with the most famous being the Manson gang.
4. **Transgenerational Satanists - Satanic Cults.** This is the category on which the controversy centres: the existence of large, highly organised and well-equipped groups, including groups carrying out elaborate ceremonies involving crimes such as murder, and involved in a variety of criminal conspiracies to support their activities.



In Britain allegations of Satanic abuse have become part of a wider social issue, where housing estates inhabited by Rab C. Nesbitt 'underclass' figures are now seen as a modern 'Dark Continent' awash with idolatry and witchcraft.

collapsed in many communities there are arguments amongst policy-makers as to whether or not the poor are a violent, threatening rabble, responding only to authoritarian measures. Images of the underclass move from such discussions to mass audience images including TV characters such as the Jackson family on *EastEnders*, Rab C. Nesbitt, and Harry Enfield's Wayne Slob. Now it seems housing estates are seen as a 1990's equivalent of a 'Dark Continent' awash with idolatry and witchcraft.

Writers such as Tim Tate have attacked the Fontaine Report for allegedly making light of the eight or so cases of ritual abuse that have resulted in convictions. Fontaine argues that these have all involved either an individual or a group of at the most four, and that they have not involved any of the bizarre features such as human sacrifice. However it seems to me that she is on less secure ground in arguing that the rituals were only incidental to the abuse, as a means to intimidate the children.

Motives are not always easy to assess, and to see how the cases she mentions fit in it is useful to adopt the typology of the believers in satanic abuse. Several of them divide types of Satanists as follows:

When these categories are adopted it becomes clear that all of the authenticated cases discussed by Fontaine fall into the third category. By contrast, Valerie Sinason, who has also responded critically to the Fontaine Report, cites as examples of Satanism, cases that have little to do with any of the categories. Thus her book includes a case of a girl sexually abused by an elder brother who claimed to be possessed by spirits, and a case where an abused child states "Daddy eats poo", a very different matter from allegations that children are being forced to eat excrement as part of ceremonies where they are tortured.

It may well be wise to bear this typology in mind while considering both recent press coverage of Satanism allegations, and possible coverage in the near future. When these allegations first surfaced in Britain in 1989-1990 they were for a time treated uncritically by the press, a position which soon moved to general disbelief, unaccompanied by detailed investigations (except in the cases of the *Independent on Sunday* and *Mail on Sunday*) and this attitude was reflected in coverage of the Fontaine report. However some tabloid coverage of the extraordinary Gloucestershire 'House of Horror' mass murder case currently awaiting trial has hinted at some occult motivation, and if this claim is vindicated by the trial it will no doubt be taken as vindicating the Satanic cult tales, in spite of fitting, on the worst interpretation, into the category of Psychopathic Satanist.

In spite of the increasing number of studies into the Satanism panic, credulous and sceptical, there still seems to be no single overall historical account of its growth. I was therefore interested to see Michael Newton's *Raising Hell: The A-Z of Satanic crime*. Unfortunately the book is flawed in many ways, including its authors credulousness, and its use of an alphabetical case by case format which makes it hard to refer to unless one is already familiar with the cases. The accounts of the British cases, and the history of witchcraft, are extremely inaccurate, making it hard to rely on the book's accounts of other cases I am not familiar with. However it does cover a wide range of US cases and so provides some overall perspectives. Apart from summarising a number of the most prominent day-

care centre and Teenage Dabbler cases, it gives some indication of other components of the myth. It looks at some of the magical practices that are current among some Latin and Caribbean migrants to the USA which, although they have perhaps contributed to the wider fear of Satanism, have little overlap with any of the major anti-Satanist allegations, in which an interesting but little remarked feature is the almost complete absence of black people as either accused or accusers.

It also looks at various occult groups which formed part of the 'sixties underground, such as the Process Church of the Final Judgement. Such groups were certainly involved in some nasty activities, as sections of the underground declined into a drug-laced morass of squalor, irrationality, violence and sexual exploitation, just as fringe political groups such as the Symbionese Liberation Army did. However the claim that they gave birth to Satanist cults now stalking America is unconvincing.

What this book does suggest is that rumours and urban legends concerning sinister occultists were a part of the underground culture and later spread to the wider American scare. Another example of the same process is the way 'sixties tales about great secrets hidden in the music or designs of Beatles albums have been transmuted into tales of sinister Satanic messages in rock songs.

One interesting feature of Newton's book is that it makes clear the origins of the anti-Satanist panic in the cattle mutilation scare of the early 'seventies. Sixties films such as *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Devil Rides Out* had established the image of Satanism. As a result of the US release of the latter film, the original novel appeared as a US paperback, the first Dennis Wheatley title ever to be published in America, giving the image further visibility. Consequently Satanism was seen as one frame of reference for the cattle mutilation reports. Tales were

told, similar to UFO occupant stories, of mysterious hooded figures seen by night time motorists in the South Western states (like aliens, Satanists, with a whole desert to choose from, seem always to stand where they will be seen). Kenneth Bankston, a Kansas convict, told a widely reported hoax tale of his membership of a cult of Satanic cattle mutilators.

The film *Race With the Devil*, recently shown on BBC-TV, demonstrates that the main components of the Satanism scare were already in place in 1975. In this film the heroes, played by Peter Fonda and Warren Oates, stumble on robed figures carrying out open-air nocturnal rituals. As the cultists pursue them, apparently respectable individuals turn out to be secret Satanists. Thus a piece of fiction anticipated many of the details that were to reappear in subsequent, allegedly factual, stories, just as many elements from UFO abduction accounts appear in earlier fictions. **B**

The cattle mutilation panic did not merely provide the origins of the Satanism myth; attempts to link the mutilations with UFOs were a major factor in the dominance of US ufology by abduction and conspiracy theories. A process which has now gone so far that actual unidentified flying objects seem hardly to figure in most American UFO publications at all. The mutilation panic also coincided with the Watergate scandal and a new interest in the JFK assassination on its tenth anniversary. This coincidence influenced theories of the mutilations as being the result of sinister government experiments, setting the pattern for many subsequent government conspiracy tales.

Seen in isolation the Satanism panic is one of the most extraordinary events in late twentieth century US social history. In a wider context it forms part of a more prevalent and alarming abandonment of rationality.

8. Logically, one should consider the possibility that by now a real cult might have emerged deliberately aping the feature of the stereotype that had become established, just as groups like Anton LaVey's 'Church of Satan' were influenced by films like *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Devil Rides Out*. However, this would explain little, since many of the survivor stories relate to Satanic activities allegedly occurring in the 1960s, 1950s and even 1940s

Two recent British cases:

In spite of endorsing Professor Fontaine's report, few of the press covered in any detail the Pembrokeshire sex ring case that ended shortly after the Report was published. *Magonia* would be extremely interested to hear from any readers who can provide us with any local press reports on this case, since the limited information printed in the national press makes it difficult to assess. After verdicts had been delivered, one of those found guilty of sex acts with children was revealed to have earlier incest convictions. However, many aspects of the case were disturbing. The prosecution dropped charges against several of the defendants as the trial proceeded, and others were acquitted by the jury. Some prosecution witnesses

retracted earlier statements in court, claiming that they had been pressurised by social workers who had threatened to take their children into care. None of the robes and videos mentioned in the evidence were uncovered by police searches. The medical evidence offered in support of the allegations was no better than ambiguous and unsupported by testimony from teachers or other carers who had been in contact with the children. The judge, when passing sentence explicitly rejected the ritual allegations. Most disturbing of all, the allegations included stories of children thrown into the sea from a boat and only rescued when they promised to stay silent, a detail similar to some of the American day care cases. An appeal is now

pending, and future developments will be awaited with interest.

Meanwhile another potentially significant British case comes up for trial in January. This involves a group of neighbours in Sunderland who face allegations of child abuse in which they are stated to have dressed up as devils and held children down while rats bit them. The social status of the accused, a lecturer, a primary school teacher, a health visitor and their partners, is more reminiscent of the American cases than most earlier British ones, and reports that the house of the accused have been attacked by a mob led by a clergyman suggests a Christian fundamentalist input into the case.

BOOKS REVIEWED IN TEXT:

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- NEWTON, Michael. *Raising Hell: the A-Z of Satanic Crime*. Warner, 1994. £5.99
- SAKHEIM, David and DEVINE, Susan (Eds.) *Out of Darkness: Exploring Satanism and Ritual Abuse*. Lexington Books, 1992. \$24.95
- SINASON, Valerie (Ed.) *Treating Survivors of Satanic Abuse*. Routledge, 1994. £14.99
- WRIGHT, Lawrence. *Remembering Satan*. Serpents Tail, 1994. £9.99

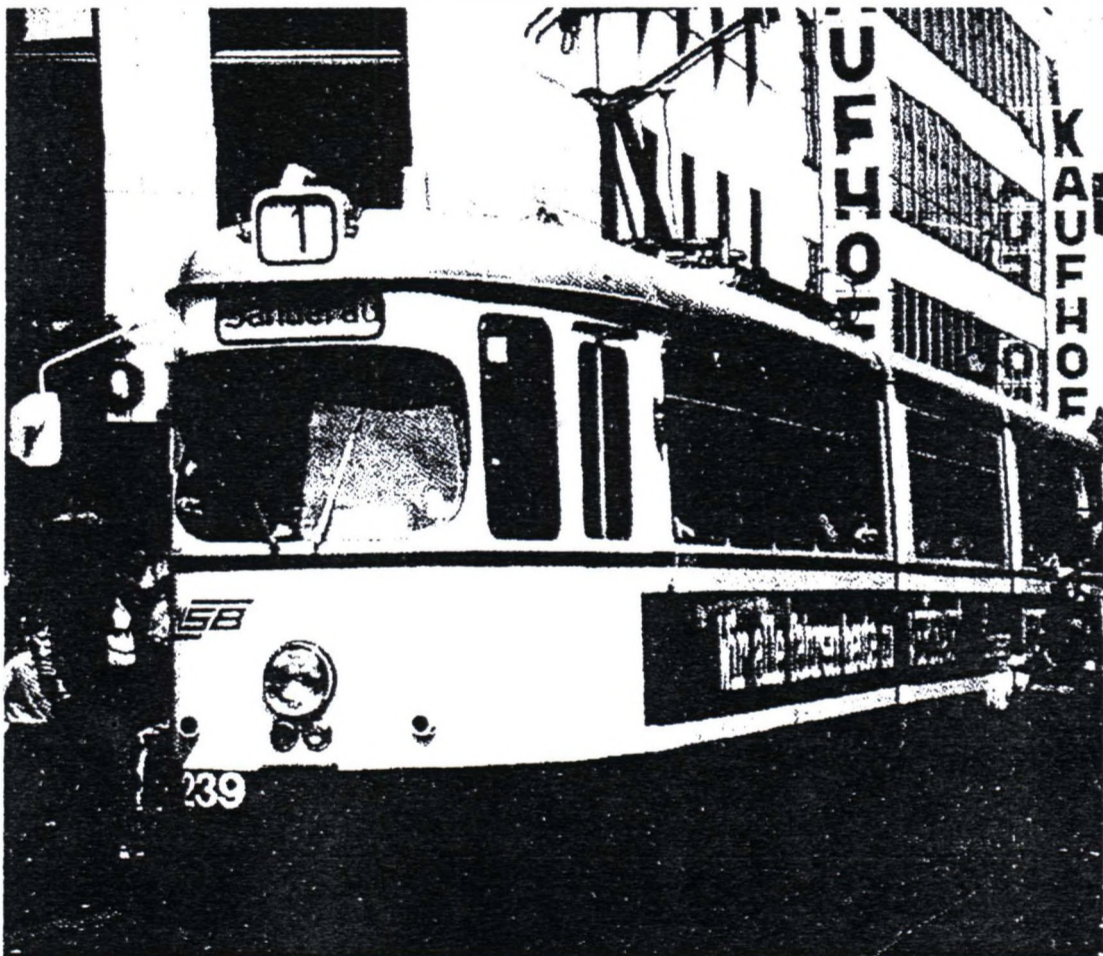


Have Europe's transport networks become the haunt of ticket-eaters, maniacs and shameless lovers?

JOHN HARNEY

our man on the metro with the all-day rover ticket, investigates

tramtales



IN OUR last issue we reported on an urban legend which has apparently been circulating in Germany since the mid-1960s. It goes something like this: An old woman is sitting in a bus/tram/train. A young punk/foreign/black man sits next to her. The woman loudly makes offensive remarks about punks/foreigners/blacks. The young man shows no reaction, but when the ticket inspector approaches he suddenly snatches her ticket and eats it. The inspector does not believe her story and she is ejected at the next stop. Passengers who notice the incident invariably side with the young man.

We have now received further information about this story, thanks to Véronique Champion-Vincent (Paris)

and Bruno Mancusi (Payerne, Switzerland). The story was circulating in Geneva in 1988 and was discussed in the local papers. Some of the press coverage was apparently stimulated by a letter in *24 Heures* (Lausanne) from a man seemingly claiming to have witnessed such an incident. However, his vagueness about the date and form of transport suggests that he was probably just using the story to make a moral point (*L'action se déroule ces jours derniers dans les transports publics genevois...*). Swiss journalists referred to the man as *Le cannibale* and *Le fantôme du tram*.

So far, this story has been the subject of at least four films: *Schwarzfahrer*, the prize-winning German film made in 1993; another German film made in Bielefeld about six months earlier; a film made by the Oslo transport authority, using the story to persuade passengers to buy season tickets; and *La dame dans le tram*, made in Brussels, and written and produced by Jean-Philippe Laroche, who first heard the story in 1990 and judged it to be "perhaps not true, but typically from Brussels".

European folklorists seem to think that the story started in the mid-1980s in Scandinavia and then spread to France and the French-speaking parts of Belgium and Switzerland, helped by television programmes which featured it.

However, as we have already noted, it has been current in Germany for much longer, so its spread has obviously been slowed by language differences.

The ticket-eater has apparently not crossed the channel yet, possibly inhibited by the fact that there are very few trams in Britain. (The European reports nearly all seem to involve trams, though even in Germany they are far outnumbered by buses and local trains. Why?)

Anyway, in Britain there seem to be two kinds of tales concerning public transport. Most of them are not

urban legends at all, but concern the technicalities and administrative problems of the form of transport involved. One hears endless stories of wet leaves on the track, nasty accidents at level crossings, power failures, influenza epidemics among bus crews, etc., and most of them are perfectly true and not at all incredible.

The other kind of public transport story, though, is indeed incredible. For instance did you hear of that incident that happened a few years back? There was this young couple, see, who were coming back on the train from a day out at the seaside. To round off a perfect day, they decided to have sex. Yes, right there in a crowded railway carriage. Passengers suddenly became engrossed in newspapers and magazines, or were enraptured by the passing scenery. It looked as if they were going to get away with it until they made the obvious mistake. If you're French you'll never guess; if you're British, yes, you're right! They lit up cigarettes, defiantly ignoring the no-smoking notices plastered on the windows. There were cries of outrage. Someone fetched the guard, and police were waiting for them at the terminus.

Another story concerns a maniac who haunts the platforms of the London Underground system, pushing unwary passengers in front of trains. Michael Goss overheard this yarn on the Underground some years ago and wrote us an article about it ('The Maniac on the Platform', *Magonia* 19, May 1985). One of his comments on the tale was: "What strikes me as neither believable nor faintly possible is that a bona-fide maniac (or more than one of them?) is prowling the LT Underground stations and pushing passengers from platform to perdition on some kind of regular basis."

Unfortunately, it wasn't so very long after this article was published that a woman was killed at Wimbledon station (south-west London) when a maniac pushed her off the platform in front of an approaching train. There have been several similar incidents since. Also the story about the couple coupling on the train is perfectly true, even though it is admittedly implausible and seems to be a version of the very old joke that you can get away with anything in a British train so long as

you don't light up in a non-smoker.

No doubt we'll read about the ticket-eater in action in Britain shortly, and no doubt it will be perfectly true, the only other difference from the Continental version being that the incident would lead to a riot.



Scenes from Oslo's film version of the ticket-eater legend.

John Harney, Editor Emeritus and self-appointed Chairman of the Magonia Tramways and Fine Arts Committee, announces the results of our latest competition. Readers were invited to suggest names for Manchester trams. We received two entries, and here they are.

Peter Christie from Devon suggests:

Car No.	Name	Advertiser
2001	<i>Ubiquitous</i>	Black Obelisks Ltd
1010	<i>Binary</i>	IBM
0000	<i>Martortem</i>	Count de St Germain rejuvenating pills
0666	<i>Ezekiel's Chariot</i>	T.R.A.M. (Totally Realistic Anomalous Manifestations) Co. Ltd.
?	<i>The Magic Bus</i>	Townsend Songs Ltd.
999	<i>Stygian Tourer</i>	Blackpool Tram Co.
500,000,000	<i>Zombie</i>	Maxwell Pensions plc
20	<i>T.Ram</i>	T. Rex Fan Club

And from Tom Ruffles, Norfolk, we have:

Name	Organisation
<i>If you say it's true it must be</i>	Psychic News
<i>If the papers say it's true it must be</i>	Fortean Times
<i>If I say it's true it must be</i>	Magonia
<i>One step forward, two steps back</i>	SPR
<i>I refuse to believe it</i>	CSICOP
<i>Fetch the ping pong balls</i>	Koestler Chair

Competition Result

After much deliberation the Committee has decided that both contestants have not missed the point and are on the right lines, having suggested names almost as daft as the real ones. Therefore a (model) tram has been despatched to each of them. Groovy!

Your Editor adds: Tom Ruffles first three names give me the idea for another comp. Can you think of similar slogans for other magazines and organisations in the UFO, Fortean, anomaly and general wierdness area? Mystery prize for best half-dozen received by March 31st 1995.



**On the trail of further
feline scare stories
JOHN RIMMER
peeps into
more
cat
flaps**

1. Birch, Colin, "Fur flies over 'sick' moggy toy"
Richmond and Twickenham Informer, week ending 2 December 1994, p.18

AT ONE of the seminars at the recent conference on Moral Panics (see Editorial Notes) I raised the topic of the cat-skinning rumours that we have touched on from time to time in *Magonia*. They seem to be an example of the way an urban legend can be turned into a moral panic. It has many of the features of both genres. Implicit in it is xenophobia: the phantom villains are usually foreigners or other outsider groups like gypsies. The fact that the British rumours so often seem to identify the culprits as being from other European nations, perhaps links in with current 'Europhobe' attitudes and fears - worry over loss of British identity in the European Union, and continuing concern over perceived cruel attitudes to animals in other European nations. Current campaigns over the transport of live farm animals, bullfighting and hunting of songbirds are helping to reinforce this stereotype in the minds of many British people.

One way in which this fear and suspicion has fed into discussion over public policy has been the current debate over British quarantine laws ostensibly intended to keep rabies out of the country. The Channel Tunnel incorporates the most elaborate system of fences, traps and electrified sections to prevent French wildlife making it under the Channel. However, a recent Parliamentary committee has recommended that the laws should be revised or scrapped altogether. This suggestion has produced a hostile reaction from animal protection groups in Britain, despite the fact that rabies cases in Western Europe are now very rare indeed. Many critics feel that the quarantine laws are now less a practical defence against animal disease than a symbolic attempt to prevent "infection from less happy lands" to misquote John of Gaunt, and maintain Britain's island status against such intrusions as the Channel Tunnel itself, and the threatened European super-state.

Indeed, the catnapping scare does now seem to be on the verge of transformation into a fully-fledged moral panic. A participant at the conference told of recent events in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Here a local shop was selling small toys made of fake-fur which looked like a cat's tail popping out of a paper bag. Some sort of balancing mechanism made the tail wag about when the bag was moved. Soon, after press attention was called to this novelty by the sight of children standing outside the shop laughing at the 'cat in the bag', a campaign was started by the local paper to 'ban this cruel toy'. Amazingly, the shop complied and the item was withdrawn from the shop window and from sale.

Amazing coincidence department: Literally minutes after typing the above paragraph, a copy of my local free-sheet, the *Richmond and Twickenham Informer* dropped through my letterbox, and there on page 18 was a story headed 'Fur flies over sick moggy toy'. The 'cat in a bag' had arrived at Mayfair Cards, Kingston, where it was spotted by 'Teddington window cleaner Doug Petts, 62, browsing for some early Christmas gifts'. "It's disgusting" the appositely named Mr Petts said, "If this is someones idea of a joke they must have a sick sense of humour. I found it offensive". An RSPCA spokeswoman contacted by the *Informer* claimed that the animal charity had received a 'flood of complaints from all parts of the country'. "We are particularly upset because there has even been a suggestion that this toy was actually approved by the RSPCA. That is completely ridiculous". The manageress of Mayfair Cards has responded to the complaints by putting up a sign saying 'This is not a real cat - please don't do it at home with your pet'. Concludes Wendy Bragg, 25: "We have had a few complaints since we started stocking it. It's all down to your sense of humour".

When we started writing about the cat scare - after it featured in our local paper in Richmond-upon-Thames, we had no idea of its long history. Now a London reader, Gareth Medway, has sent us photocopies from a book published in the 1930s, which recounts the legend-panic in its most extreme form.

Elliott O'Donnell is better known for his books of classic ghost stories, but in 1934 he published *Strange Cults and Secret Societies of Modern London*.

In assessing the credibility of the book, Gareth Medway comments: "The interesting thing about this book generally is that whilst almost everything in it is over the top, those societies and events that O'Donnell claims to have been personally involved with are far more implausible than those where he invokes some witness. The only reason I can think of for this is that when he had been told a story by a witness, they would know if he altered it too much; whereas when he himself was the witness he could let his imagination run wild. Thus a Pagan Lesbian sect, the Gorgons, are described in such a way that they might have been real, his informant having been a woman, of course. 'The Gots', whom he had investigated personally (he says) break the boggle-barrier for me. Anyway, I think the



Wendy Bragg with the 'Cat in a Bag' toy

skinned cats stories are probably narrated much as they were told to him."

Here then, in O'Donnell's own words, is his account, compare it to the stories from Richmond and Bracknell reported in *Magonia* 43:

"Some years ago a shocking case of cruelty to cats was reported in the Press. Somewhere in the East End, of the exact locality I cannot be quite sure, a man saw a sack lying on the ground, and noticing it move he opened it. To his horror it was full of skinned cats, some of whom were still alive. The man told the police, but the culprits were never caught. It was surmised at first that they were a gang of foreign East Enders, who made a living out of flaying cats alive, for the sake of their skins; the skins being of more value when taken off a living, healthy animal. Afterwards, however, it was mooted that these cat-skinners belonged to a cult out to get thrills from any and every kind of cruelty; and that they were responsible for the skinned dogs that had, from time to time, been found floating in the Thames. It was said, by the way, that they had meant to throw the sack of cats they had skinned into the Thames, but were prevented.

Police protection is of little use against these organisations, because they are so subtle and secretive, and they number amongst them some persons who are outwardly thoroughly respectable and law-abiding

"Soon after reading about all this in the Press, I met, quite by chance, a school teacher in the East End who was able to confirm it. She told me she had learned, from some of her pupils, that secret societies existed by the riverside in the City, and as far east as Dagenham, who made a practice of stealing cats and skinning them alive. If the cats were fine and healthy, they sold the skins to foreign Jewish fur merchants for a few pence a skin; and if they were poorly nourished they skinned them alive all the same, just for the fun of it.

"Bodies of cats and dogs are constantly to be seen floating in the Thames," she informed me, "and no one ever queries how they got there or thinks of examining them. If they were examined a large percentage of the cats would be found to be minus their skins... Dogs are often stolen from the humble homes and sold to doctors, medical schools and vets. I have been told these things as facts," she went on, "but there it ends. It is impossible to discover any details about the secret societies, because of intimidation. The children, who tell me about them, make me promise I will never give them away. They say if it leaked out they had told me about the cats, they would go about in fear of their lives. Police protection is of little use against these organisations, because they are so subtle and secretive, and they number amongst them some persons who are outwardly thoroughly respectable and law-abiding. The police probably know of their existence, but they find it as difficult to prove anything against them as they do to lay hands on the people who smuggle dope into the Port of London."

"And the various societies for the protection of animals, can't they do anything?" I asked.

"The same applies to them," the schoolmistress responded. "I have told some of them about the skinning of cats, and they want to know names which I cannot give them. It is useless for them to send officials to make enquiries, because the societies are always on the alert. They spot strangers at once and take very good care that they discover nothing. After all, the majority of people do not trouble about their cats because they are of no monetary value. They would rather say nothing about the loss of their cat and enjoy immunity from malice than take any action that might antagonise the secret organisations."

Later, describing a case of cruelty to children, O'Donnell reports that a woman living in the King's

1. O'Donnell, Elliott. *Strange Cults and Secret Societies of Modern London*. Philip Allan, 1934

Cross district of London (nowadays notorious for drugs and prostitution) told him of secret societies of young people: "their chief delight was in being cruel to children and animals". The woman, who was the caretaker in a house O'Donnell was considering renting, told him of a recent court case, in which a nurse maid employed by a West End doctor was charged with cruelty towards the doctor's children. This had caused a great deal of interest in the King's Cross area because "the girl belonged to a secret society of young people whose homes were mostly in this neighbourhood, and who were known to do all sorts of wild and savage things". Apparently many members of these societies were in service with wealthy families in the West End, "I know that they always very much resent taking their employers' Pekinese dogs out for constitutionals, and hate having to clean up after them".

It seems that what we thought were a few silly-season stories in local papers are turning out to be symptoms of something very significant

What is most remarkable about O'Donnell's account is the way it mirrors exactly the preoccupations of modern legends and panics. The 'secret societies' which contain 'outwardly respectable and law-abiding' people corresponds exactly to Joan Coleman's description of Satanic cults sheltering wealthy aristocrats who are the main organisers and instigators of the groups' atrocities. Here too we see the alleged indifference of the police and the impotence of animal protection societies in the face of a lack of evidence and a wall of silence.

The cat-skinning culprits are, of course, foreigners, or even 'foreign Jewish fur merchants'. I have no idea how practical cat-fur would be for clothing - not very, is my guess - but the modern catnapping tales also point the finger of suspicion to fur traders. It is perhaps relevant that concern has been expressed that the present day anti-fur trade campaign has attracted some unwelcome anti-Semitic elements.

Elliott O'Donnell was reporting from the East End of London. An area which to most of his readers would have a remote, violent and sinister reputation, and which in many people's minds would still be overshadowed by the memory of Jack the Ripper. Even as late as the 1930's it bore scars of terrible poverty, and was dominated by immigrant communities: Chinese, Jews, 'Lascars', a frightening 'underclass' which, to quote Roger Sandell earlier in this magazine, would

seem like "a modern 'Dark Continent' awash with idolatry and witchcraft". No wonder respectable West End matrons worried about their little Pekineses when they were entrusted to servants who had emerged from this urban hell! (All this youthful torture and mayhem was taking place, it is worth pointing out, without the influence of television or video nasties.) It was doubtless the case that some domestic servants did feel resentment against their wealthy employers, and perhaps occasionally took out their anger against a pampered pet - understandable if, as may have been the case, the pet was costing almost as much to keep as the servant was earning to maintain a family. What is interesting is that such acts, if they were taking place, were ascribed to a secret society organising random acts of cruelty, rather than to a possible combination of personal resentment and class hostility. After all, a violent East End secret society the wealthy West End lady could not do much about apart from whisper about in shocked and muted tones; acknowledging the personal hostilities and resentments of her staff might involve paying them more money and treating them better. Far easier to blame it on the mysterious men in the shadows of Limehouse or Whitechapel!

The June 1994 issue of that excellent magazine *Foafstale News* has a round-up of stories of birds of prey attacking and/or carrying away domestic animals and even children. It describes reports from the Northcliff suburb of Johannesburg, where residents were convinced that cats were being caught and eaten by spotted eagle-owls living in the area. Although an ornithologist claimed that the owls would be incapable of picking-off anything bigger than a rat, one Northcliffe resident was adamant that she saw "an owl in our driveway stalking our cat". The bird was chased away but next day the cat had vanished. Another resident tied two great panics together with the comment "at least it's nature taking its course and not something sinister like Satanists who steal and torture cats". It is perhaps no coincidence that this report should also be coming from a society still divided rigidly along lines of class and race, but undergoing massive social and political change.

As we read more about the Cat Flap, it seems what we first thought of as a few mildly amusing examples of silly-season stories in local papers are turning out to be symptoms of something very significant. There are clear links to other topics which we have looked at in the past, from Satanism to animal mutilations and secret cults. It seems like our society - perhaps any society - *needs* monsters within. In many cases this is as a form of social control: "look at the terrors that are going on outside your front door, aren't you lucky to have us (police, secret police, KGB, Gestapo or any other oppressive control system you care to name) looking after you". But in other cases we create the monsters to explain worrying random events. Is it easier to believe that acts of cruelty and violence are random separate incidents caused by a complex of unknowable social and personal stimuli, or that they are organised in a rational way by secret organisations that control their members with ruthless efficiency? In the latter case we may feel that there is the hope - remote but always there - that these master criminals, or whatever, will actually be caught, and the evil they are orchestrating will end. Paradoxically we may be creating monsters of uncontrollable violence to control the frighteningly random and chaotic universe we see around us. ●●●



Letters

Dear John

After perusing *Magonia* 50, and speculating upon what it could all mean, my eyes fell upon an article in *The Observer* of Sunday 28 August 1994, entitled 'Cultists go round in circles'.

The Observer explained that a group called the London Psychogeographical Association had discovered that Britain is run by a group of Freemasons called the Occult Establishment. It was when I came to the phrase "John Dee, the Tudor alchemist who founded the Freemasons" that things started to become clearer. Who do I know whose house is named after John Dee?

The article was fascinating. The leading writers in the field we are told are dismissive of those investigating the matter as crazies. How like the home life of our own dear *Magonia*!

Things started to fall into place. Readers will remember that in *MUFOB* April 1974 (6:4) a Dr Ron Westrum suggested in a letter (concerning the investigation of UFOs): "as a minimum, the creation of a real-time communication system at least on a national scale, whose sole purpose is to report on UFO happenings."

The attitude of *Magonia's* predecessor towards Dr Westrum can be gleaned from the same issue: "Dr Ron Westrum is the author of *Social Intelligence about UFOs: an essay in the sociology of knowledge*. This paper is strongly recommended by the Editors of *MUFOB*"

It has taken long research to piece the story together. For example in *MUFOB* March-April 1968 (1:2) we are told "On March 26th the Editor went to the studio of BBC Radio Merseyside to record a short interview concerning the Bulletin, but as far as we know this has not been broadcast". It was well known that more people appeared on Radio Merseyside than listened to it. Was its real function that of a real-time communication system to spread knowledge of UFOs? What is the national

system set up since? My favourites are BSkyB or Radio One - neither of which have any obvious purpose. Why has *Magonia* not returned to the matter since 1974?

My researches have taken me to the editors. Why does J. D. Wetherspoon never write? I have strong evidence of a complex link between the editorial panel and J. D. Wetherspoon in which monetary considerations play an important part.

And what of P. L. A. Driftwood? He never seems to write either. *The Observer* article previously referred to makes a point of importance of Greenwich, on the River Thames and the Prime Meridian, to the psychic life of London. I have evidence of a connection between P. L. A. Driftwood and the Thames. Coincidence? I think not.

Again, *The Observer* reveals that the Isle of Dogs (across the river from Greenwich) as the Omphalos (or psychogeographical centre) of London. It is well known that in this area a modern tramway system is being installed. How does this link with the competition to name a tram in *Magonia* 50?

My suggestions are: *Omphalos, John Dee and Ron Westrum*.

Be warned, *Magonia*, I am hot on your trail.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Harney, Bromborough, Merseyside.

Dear Sir

In his review of my book *The UFO Mystery Solved*, John Harney claims that I ignored William Viezee's chapter on mirages in the Condon Report. This is not true, as a glance at my index shows; in particular (on p.142) I referred to Viezee's calculations of the curvature of light rays around the Earth. I also referred (twice) to Raman brightening which, as Harney observed, was discussed by Viezee.

Is Harney trying to suggest that I have overlooked an important and relevant contribution to the study of mirages? Is he

challenging my claim that conventional mirage theory is incomplete and incapable of explaining many UFO reports? Pouring scorn on my attempt to extend the theory is neither justifiable nor polite. It is not even competent. It is true that "many UFO reports can be reasonably be explained with reference to stars and planets without the need to invoke mirage phenomena". However that is not the point; many cannot! My book deals with the latter.

Yours sincerely

Steuart Campbell, Edinburgh.

Dear Sir

I refer to Peter Brookesmith's article in *Magonia* 50 regarding the April 1991 mid-air encounter of a UFO with an Alitalia jet over Kent. Much as I hate having to constantly reply to Brookesmith's incessant whinging about my work (this must be the fourth time within a year), I guess it is necessary that your readers see his allegations in proper context.

Firstly, what Brookesmith fails to tell your readers is that my book *the Paranormal Year* was a general review of 1993 - as is clearly implied by the title. The UFO chapter covers many events in relatively few pages and did not have the room to provide a full-length analysis of one particular sighting. Brookesmith infers that it should, and assumes that because I did not devote a dozen pages to this case that no proper investigation was carried out.

More seriously he fails to report my discussion in the same chapter of several other similar British encounters which occurred that same summer and my objective assessment of allegations that they were small objects - quite possibly escaped toy balloons. It is hard to avoid the feeling that to mention my discussion of this in your magazine would have negated the point of Brookesmith's article - that I credulously turn a case into a classic, while he - champion sceptic - reveals the truth. But

this assumption as to his motives hardly makes your actions fair, especially as your heading literally accuses me of having an idle mind. [The introductory heading to the article was the first paragraph of Peter Brookesmith's own text; my apologies if the layout did not make this clear. JR]

Regardless of what your article states, I was BUFORA's director of investigations at this time and investigations were carried out. BUFORA has published some of its work in *UFO Times* and I featured fuller reports in *Northern UFO News*, nos. 149 and 155. Brookesmith evidently thinks this a useless parochial journal of no interest (given his quote about it in *Fortean Times* - for which even that magazine's own editors felt sufficiently guilty to publish a retraction of his remarks). So no doubt Brookesmith can be forgiven for not actually reading our full work on this case before writing of our incompetence. However that does not excuse him from inferring that no such work was done - not does it avoid the fact that *Magonia* editors read *Northern UFO News* (20 years old this year - having published near on 170 issues - and read literally all over the world). Hardly a fledgling news-sheet.

So what gives here? Why have you allowed such misinformation to be published in your pages?

For the record, after the sighting occurred the report was made by the pilot in the usual way to Air Staff 2A at the MoD and LATCC at West Drayton. Immediate investigations began here and by the CAA's air miss divisions. During this time - whilst attempts were made to establish if the objects were a rogue missile launch - the MoD and CAA decided not to go public with the story - i.e. they 'hushed it up'. Meanwhile Captain Zaghetti talked of it in Italy and the story hit the wires. The MoD were then put on the spot by journalists and admitted they had no solution to offer - the sighting was in their words a UFO. Eventually we managed to get hold of Zaghetti's written report to the MoD and confirmation from the MoD and CAA that they had not resolved the case, but acceptance that in their view it was not a missile. Nothing more about the radar return was made public, beyond what is in Zaghetti's report - which is what I cite in my comments on the case.

I would be interested to know in what way the above facts differ from my presentation of the story or indeed my other writings about it elsewhere? I ask this as you infer what I say may be in error. I would be even more interested to know why you have completely ignored my discussion (again in both sources) of the toy balloon solution - making perfectly

clear to my readers in the process that press accounts in some cases inferred that these encountered objects were large when clearly they were not? Indeed I await with considerable interest your explanation for printing Brookesmith's article - in effect defaming my competence - when you very evidently made no attempt to verify its factual accuracy for yourself and even compounded his allegations through your 'idle mind' sub-heading.

I trust that you will reply by return (after you check out what I say for yourself) advising to the effect that you take these points on board, will set them completely right for your readers in issue 51. If so, we can leave it at that. All I ask is that you be honest about this matter - which, patently, so far your coverage has been anything but.

Jenny Randles, Stockport, Cheshire.

Dear John

I am sure there must be others like myself who have noticed the increasingly outspoken attacks that have appeared in various magazines on behalf of one Peter Brookesmith, the former editor of *the Unexplained* magazine, criticising Jenny Randles. First we had Brookesmith's somewhat misleading account of Randles' lecture at the 1993 Independent UFO Conference (*FT* 72;44), a lecture I also attended. Not surprisingly Randles took exception to some of Brookesmith's comments and responded in *Northern UFO News* (164;10). Brookesmith replied with a snide attack against Randles magazine (*FT* 75;57), which he somewhat uncomplimentary described as "a species of ufological parish magazine of minuscule circulation". Brookesmith accused Randles of being discourteous by failing to respond to his comments in the pages of *FT*. Randles responded again in *FT* 76;57. Following this debacle we had Brookesmith's dismissive review of Randles' and Hough's *Spontaneous Human Combustion* (*FT* 73;56), a book he dismisses as "a barrel of laughs". This was shortly followed by Brookesmith's 'Screen Memories' in *Magonia* 50, which contains multiple accusations of incompetence against both Randles and Tim Good.

I am sure Brookesmith must know that constructive criticism of anomaly research is fully justified and a valued part of the scientific method. However, I am sure that regular readers of *Magonia* will be surprised to, learn that in addition to these articles Brookesmith was implicated by Bill English in the latter's outrageous revelations about Randles' personal life of the FIDO UFO bulletin board in December 1993. English's action aroused

sufficient public outrage that he felt compelled to publish a public apology to randles a few weeks later on his own bulletin board system. Of course Brookesmith's investigations into the Grudge Report and Bill English's somewhat peculiar claims led to the extensive article in *FT* 75 and 76. Sadly in June these same details about Randles' private life were spread all over the *News of the World* and read by its five million readers.

Now I emphasise that I am quite sure that Randles is more than capable of defending herself against public criticism and big enough to admit that sometimes she makes mistakes. However I raise these issues not to imply that Brookesmith was behind the disgraceful *News of the World* article (there are plenty of better candidates to choose from) but to ask one question. Just what is Brookesmith's personal agenda?

Yours sincerely

Paul Fuller, Romsey, Hampshire.

We have recently had a lot of demand for back issues of *Magonia*, and some issues are in short supply. We have copies available of the following numbers, which are all available for £1.50 each, including postage (overseas £2.00 or \$4.00). Highlights of each issue include:

- 25: Strange Helicopters; Earthlights
- 26: Craoee Case, Witches; Magnetism
- 27: UFOs as Theatre, Mirages; Haunted Houses
- 28: Temporarily out of print
- 29: History of ley-hunting; Earthlights
- 30: UK Government Files; UFOs on TV
- 31: Nightmares, Sex and Abductions; The Urban Legendary Elvis
- 32: Boundary Deficit Hypothesis; European Ufology; Imaginal Realm
- 33: UFOs, the American Way; Moore and Bennewitz
- 34: Kottmeyer on Abductions; more on Abductions, 'The American Way'
- 38: Spontaneous Combustions; Abductions
- 37: Death of Ufology; Bullard defends The American Way
- 38: Temporarily out of print
- 39: Eyes from Space; Seeing Things
- 40: Flying Saucers from Hell; Eyes, part 2
- 41: Roswell; Abduction Variations; Eyes, part 3; Corn Circle Criticism
- 42: Folklore; Satanism Panic
- 43: Victorian UFO Crashes; the start of the Cat Flap
- 45: UFO Paranoia; the Napollitano Case; 'Secret Life'; Crashed Saucers
- 48: Satanism Panic; Paranoia, part 2
- 47: Living Laboratories; UMMO; Fairyland's Hunters
- 48: Mattoon Revisited; Virtual Banality
- 49: In Search of Real UFOs; Sex, Science and Salvation; Allentating Fantasies
- 50: Influencing Machines; the Forgotten Abductions; Radar Visual Controversy

Order from address on Page Two. Cheques etc. payable to "John Rimmer", US, please pay in dollar bills. (Include alternatives in order)



BUDDEN, Albert. *Allergies and Aliens.* Discovery Times Press, 1994.

This small book has been published as a sort of 'taster' for a more complete exposition of Albert Budden's theories which is expected later in 1995: perhaps a full review should wait for this. Budden relates the abductions, and what he terms the 'visitation experience' to a range of environmental sources. He argues in particular that electromagnetic radiation, from a variety of sources both natural and man-made, are directly affecting parts of the human brain and triggering off a range of hallucinatory, visionary experiences, which are interpreted by the percipients as abductions or similar phenomena.

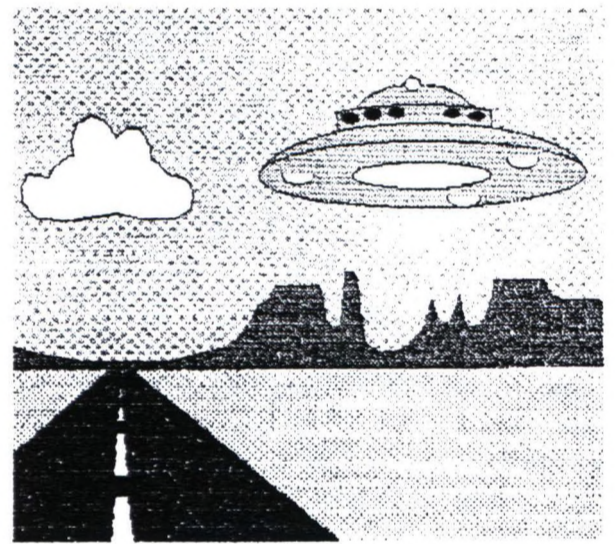
Variations on this theme have been around for some time. Deveraux and Persinger have put forward similar ideas, that naturally occurring electrical fields in the vicinity of geological faults are provoking visionary experiences in people in their vicinity. Budden goes further even than this, however, and claims that allergenic stimuli such as food additives may also be contributing to these phenomena. This is certainly an issue which is the subject of much current debate amongst health workers and environmentalists, but it is one which is very controversial.

Although in our eco-conscious era many people automatically assume that just about any aspect of modern life, from microwaves to aftershaves, is likely to be poisoning us in one way or another, the evidence is by no means clear. In a recent legal case in London, in which a group of local residents attempted to prevent the construction of a high-tension underground cable, because of concerns that such cable were linked to 'clusters' of childhood cancers, the scientific evidence produced, which was largely statistical, did not

Goddard, Jimmy. *Earth People, Space People.* Star Fellowship. 1994. £2.00 plus 40p p&p from the author, at 25 Albert Rd., Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 2PX.

This little booklet from *Touchstone* is a delight, recalling the lost age of contactee ufology with photos and short biographical accounts of such figures as Howard Menger, Arthur Bryant and Philip Rogers (I was fascinated, incidentally to see that the composer Sir Malcolm Arnold wrote a piece dedicated to Rogers - another one for our list of classical music with ufological connections). Reading through such items as 'The Inhabited Solar System' or the glossary of 'Solexmal', the common language of the Solar System, one does feel that an optimistic and in some ways progressive view of the universe has been lost. Buy

EARTH PEOPLE, SPACE PEOPLE



Jimmy Goddard

this booklet and read it as an antidote to some of the black despair that surrounds ufology today.

John Rimmer

convince the court. Statistical evidence has also been used to promote the idea that nuclear power stations in various parts of Britain are identified with clusters of leukemia. Again, the evidence is contradictory, and some scientists have claimed that such clusters occur in places unrelated to nuclear energy, and indeed some have been found in areas where nuclear power stations were proposed, but never built.

Much of Budden's evidence is based on abduction and similar cases which have taken place near sources of electromagnetic energy, but then we realise that his definition of 'near' can mean up to a mile away, their significance is diminished. Most people in the developed world are living

closer to sources of electro-magnetic energy than this, quite often even having one in their homes. The source of the abduction phenomenon must be something rather more specific than a phenomenon which is affecting virtually everybody.

Perhaps Budden's planned book will describe in more detail the actual mechanisms involved, and be more specific about why some people are affected and not others. Perhaps any future review should be by a doctor rather than a ufologist. Perhaps also Budden will move away from the irritating Jenny Randles school of typography and start putting spaces after full stops and other punctuation marks in his text.

John Rimmer

Nagaitis, Carl and Mantle, Philip. *Without Consent*. Ringpull Press, £16.99. 1994.

Subtitled "a comprehensive survey of missing time and abduction phenomena in the UK" (and with a completely false claim to be the "first ever BRITISH [their emphasis] investigation into... the Abduction Phenomenon". In fact the first British book on abductions was my own *Evidence for...*, and the first book just about British abductions was by Jenny Randles), this book is a compendium of short scissors and paste accounts of about two dozen such cases. They are all presented in a series of brief, uncritical, unreferenced reports, written in an irritating sub-tabloid style.

There is no indication of the nature or depth of the investigation of individual reports, and investigators or hypnotists are generally not named. In a field such as abduction research where the personality, background and approach of the investigator seems very largely to determine the nature of the percipient's virtual experience this omission in itself renders the book worthless. Sources are not given and there is not even a 'further reading' list which might steer the general reader towards some of the more detailed accounts of the cases described. This makes it impossible to follow up on any of the incidents, and does not allow the reader to make any sort of evaluation of the cases, which are presented simply as 'take it or leave it' anecdotes.

This book fails as a serious overview of the abduction phenomenon in this country, and does not even work as a piece of populist sensationalism, despite such stunningly original chapter headings as "Close Encounters of the Sexual Kind." In the blurb for the book Philip Mantle is described as the 'Director of Investigations' for BUFORA. This book does that organisation no credit - but as even BUFORA's own official magazine is accusing the organisation of 'confiscating' case reports these days, what credit does it have left?

John Rimmer

Kossey, Donna. *Kooks: a guide to the outer limits of human belief*. Feral House, Portland, OR. £12.99

Quasi-Fortean publishing seems to be a growth area in the U.S., and this example is an interesting if somewhat disorganised ramble through the field of contemporary American fringe beliefs.

Much of the content centres on individuals propagating their ideas through self-

published manifestos, a number of which are reproduced. Interestingly, many of them resemble each other in their visual style, consisting of strange collages of type faces, littered with exclamation marks, whole paragraphs in capital letters, and interspersed with press cuttings of cryptic significance.

Unfortunately the emphasis on this type of material rather negates the issue of a wider climate of irrationality in present-day America, in which beliefs that were once on the fringe, such as anti-Satanism or 'Afrocentric history' can now be taken seriously by major public bodies.

Two of the books most substantial essays deal with Christian Identity, the name given to a number of groups that combine Anglo-Israelite beliefs with survivalism and neo-Nazi politics, and with Black Messianic sects, many of which share the Christian Identity preoccupations of antisemitism and the search for the lost tribes of Israel. Particularly interesting is the way some Black Messianic sects are based on contactee-type experiences by their founders, or have incorporated UFO retrieval stories into their conspiracy theories.

Roger Sandell

Collins, Andrew. *Alien Energy*. ABC Books, 1994.

Andy Collins's questing books are a swashbuckling mixture of occult derring-do set in the suburban wastlands of south east England - a kind of Dennis Wheatley meets EastEnders. Even if you think they are a load of absolute balls, you still want to read them through just to see how outrageous he can get. They are written with a sort of raw energy. How different then *Alien Energies*, for here Andy leaves the sword and sorcery world of questing and plunges into the dear, dead world of



Andy Collins: fails circular quest

crop-circles. I suppose if anyone was going to make this rapidly stiffening cadaver lumber to life again it might be Andy, but it was not to be.

Quote from the book: "The presence of this pre-atomic energy continuum, or matrix, is responsible for the many strange effects often reported in connection with ancient or sacred sites and Reich's orgone energy accumulator. Such energetic states provide a perfect garden, or gateway, in which trans-dimensional intelligences can penetrate space-time and catalyse pseudo-interactive confrontations..."

Oh dear, Andy. Get back down to public bar in The Griffin, start talking to the mysterious stranger in the big hat, get a few lagers in, and a packet of Bensons. Let's have *The Black Alchemist III: He's back, he's mean and it's his round*. And leave stuff like *Alien Quest* to those people who are much better qualified than you at writing tedious, boring pseudo-science.

John Rimmer

Shaw, William. *Spying in Guru Land: inside Britain's Cults*. 4th Estate, 1994. £14.66

William Shaw had the simple idea of trying to find out what was really happening in the world of religious cults by the simple process of joining them and recording his experiences. Before trying this he was warned of the dangers by Ian Howarth of the Cult Information Centre: the cults use twenty-six separate techniques of mind control, joining one, even as an observer "is like playing Russian roulette with your mind."

Shaw survived and brought back a fascinating glimpse of the world behind sensational headlines about 'Waco Wackos' and shaved heads in Oxford Street. He joined and participated in four cults: the Emin, Krishna Consciousness, the School of Economic Science and the Jesus Army, as well as looking more briefly at the Aetherius Society and talking to a survivor of Waco.

There is certainly very little in common between the cult surveyed, and if any of them are using mind-control techniques they are hidden to the point of invisibility. They vary in style from the Jesus Army, which seems to be a genuine religious revival amongst disposed and marginal elements of society: the very groups which in the eighteenth century created Methodism and in the nineteenth century founded the Salvation Army. There could be no greater contrast than with the School of Economic Science, a curious mixture of Social Credit economics, Hinduism, Mozart-

worship, and typical English middle-class snobbery. With its Hampstead Christmas parties and country-house craft fairs, it is hardly surprising that the 'School' seems to attract Establishment figures including prominent members of the Liberal Democratic Party and an advisor to John Major.

Disappointingly, although the Aetherius Society is looked at in rather more depth than in some surveys of the 'lunatic fringe' I am still baffled, as I think is Shaw, as to exactly what is going on there. It is so obviously barmy that one cannot imagine why any of the apparently intelligent members that Shaw meets should take it seriously. Is it all an elaborate piss-take, a front for something more sinister, or do people join it on the same basis as grown men join the Dennis the Menace Fan Club?

The most moving and important part of this book does not involve Shaw's own experience, but is a conversation with a shattered survivor of the Waco siege. Interviewed in a drab Manchester neighbourhood, he tells a frightening story, not of cult brainwashing, but of the wall of incomprehension and hostility that develop around cults. Created to some extent by the strange beliefs and demands of the cult, but also by the blinkered attitudes of mainstream society, guided to a large extent by the anti-Cult movement. I do not know just how much of the truth Derek Lovelock, the Waco survivor, is telling us what happened in Texas, but it is very clear after reading his account that we have been lied to about Waco by the authorities that destroyed the Koresh cult. Why, for instance, although about a third of the people at Waco were British, was there never any involvement, or even comment, by the British Embassy in the USA or by the Foreign Office? Why has the US Government withdrawn practically all its allegation of child abuse and cruelty at the Waco compound, without explaining why it still went ahead with the attack? The reason, presumably is that Waco was just a cult, its members mindless zombies dominated by some of the twenty-six methods of mind control known only to the Cult Information Centre.

This important book shows some of the reasons people join cults: it could be to find some meaning to life when they are sleeping in shop doorways, or to distinguish themselves from the common herd by learning arcane truths. Some join on the same basis as they would take an evening class in pottery making. The world of cults is complex. At times it can be sinister. This book is a better guide to it than simplistic slogans about mind control. What we now need is a look at the other cultists: the anti-cultists.

John Rimmer

25 Years Ago

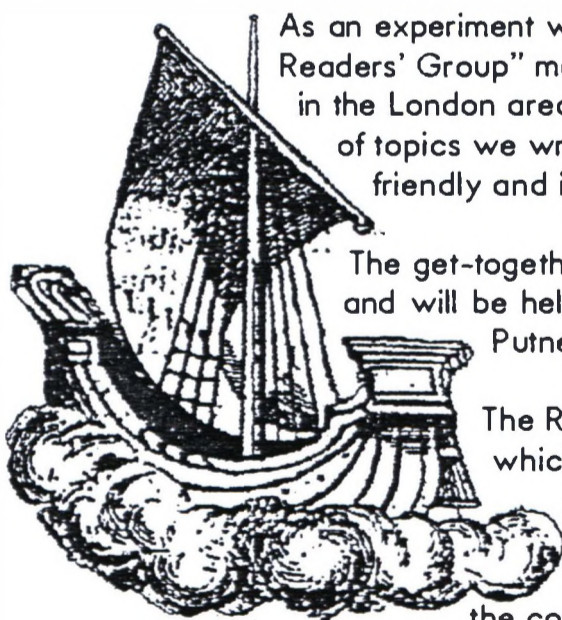
As the 'seventies dawned a sort of creative tension arose between the members of the editorial panel of MUFOB. Alan Sharp, our Science Editor, had become increasingly unhappy with many recent developments in ufology, particularly the rise of writers like John Keel and Jacques Vallee. Increasingly article in the magazine took the form of a dialogue between Sharp, who saw ufology as belonging essentially to the physical sciences, and John Harney and myself who, in different ways, saw the subject moving into such fields as folklore, sociology and psychology. The last issue of 1969 brought some of this debate to a head in a set of articles which looked back on the 'sixties, and looked forward to the 'seventies - the prognostications turned out to be as vague and inaccurate as most others. However, these articles did prefigure what has now happened, that ufology is only marginally, if at all, concerned with unidentified objects seen flying. Alan Sharp struck his colours firmly to the mast: "Mysticism must be eschewed. Objectivity must be the watchword. The extraterrestrial hypothesis must be staunchly adhered to as the fundamental precept."

In the issues that began the new decade much of the magazine was taken up by this internal debate. At the times this may have smacked of navel contemplation; in retrospect it seems to have been this debate that defined the approach which MUFOB (and subsequently

Magonia) pioneered. So the first issue of 1970 (a rather slim one) comprised largely of an article I wrote outlining some of the alternatives to the ETH which were beginning to be discussed in ufology. In the subsequent issue (May-June 1970) Alan Sharp responded vigorously to my goading, announcing "if the evidence for extraterrestrial visitation disappears, that will be the end as far as this commentator is concerned...". And indeed in subsequent years it was.

Not all of the magazine was taken up by internecine debate. The April 1970 issue contained my account of a talk I gave to the notorious DIGAP group in Manchester, at which I heard that John Harney had been silenced by the MIB, and just to show that MUFOB editors sometimes got out of their armchairs John Harney (still unsilenced) and Alan Sharp reported on a skywatch in Warminster - yes folks, in those days even MUFOB editors went on skywatches!

At this time we were still, for whatever unfathomable reason, in Arthur Shuttlewood's good books, and he submitted a splendidly titled piece called 'Great Truths Forming in the Void'. This was a sighting report mixed up with a mish-mash of backyard numerology - he seems never to have noticed before that the angles of a triangle always add up to 180 degrees - concluding with the typical, totally meaningless Shuttlewoodism: 'The UFO enigma may constitute a many sided coin of the Unknown; but Truth equates them all!' And so say all of us!



As an experiment we are going to hold a series of "Magonia Readers' Group" meetings, so that any readers and subscribers in the London area who would like to meet to discuss the sorts of topics we write about in Magonia, can do so in a friendly and informal atmosphere.

The get-togethers will be on the first Sunday in each month, and will be held in the upstairs bar at the Railway pub in Putney, from 7.15 p.m. until as long as it takes.

The Railway is a comfortable Wetherspoon's pub which does an excellent range of drinks and food at reasonable prices. The upstairs bar is non-smoking. The pub is directly across the road from Putney British Rail station, on the corner of the High Street and Upper Richmond Road, and about 5 - 10 minutes walk from East Putney underground station in a westerly direction (naturally!).

There's no need to book - just turn up. The bar is not booked specially in our name, so look for the group of people brandishing copies of Magonia! If you're coming a distance though, you might like to ring 0181-876-7246 or 0181-876-6602 beforehand, just to check that the meeting is going ahead.

hold the



Come on down

Hypnotism seems increasingly to be under attack from a variety of quarters. In the USA hypnotists who claim to have unearthed memories of child abuse and Satanism are facing several court actions, not merely from those they have accused, but from former patients who have now repudiated their alleged memories - a development we predicted in *Magonia* some time ago.

In this country there have been calls for bans on stage hypnotists following stories, not at present fully authenticated, of people suffering long-term psychological damage after taking part in these shows.

On the other hand, total scepticism as to the reality of hypnotism is becoming more widely expressed (as it was in a recent programme in Channel 4's *Equinox* science series). Discussing the stage hypnotists who provide most peoples' image of the subject, some argue that these are no different from programmes in which TV game show hosts such as Bruce Forsythe and Michael Barrymore persuade people into bizarre behaviour by force of personality and social situations encouraging compliance. Today sceptics even include some performers such as the American conjurer and mentalist Kreskin who formerly featured hypnotism in his stage act. A British performer interviewed for the *Equinox* programme frankly admitted that his act depended largely on his ability to pick out suitably extrovert members of his audience.

The analogy with the TV game show is worth pursuing beyond hypnotic shows. If we take the work of people like Budd Hopkins with abductees, and other researchers in related fields, we see that the investigator himself takes on the game show host's role of dominant personality. He is likely to be richer and more famous than most of the people he works with, and is able to define the rules of their encounter. Like contestants on TV shows his abductees are aware beforehand of what is expected of them (many of them will have sought him out specially). Although the investigator or therapist is not able to hand out Caribbean cruises or new cars to

anyone, he too can offer a reward to those who give the best performance. Namely, membership of his inner circle of abductees or 'survivors', and possible celebrity in a media world increasingly obsessed with personal stories.

It is increasingly clear that hypnotism does not reveal truth and that its practitioners are risking accusations from their subjects, amid an increasingly litigious culture on both sides of the Atlantic, and may possibly be psychologically damaging those with whom they come into contact. The sooner it ceases to be regarded as a tool of serious investigation, whether of UFOs or child abuse, the better. R.S.

Carrying on from the Editorial Notes, hypnotism seems to be turning into our latest moral panic. Already we are seeing demands for Parliamentary legislation to outlaw stage hypnotism, fueled by stories of people who have been hypnotised to behave in a bizarre manner and are unable to break the 'programming' after the performance. In one case the sad death of a young woman in an accident is being blamed on her previously being hypnotised. A shock-horror story in the *Sunday People* (24 December 1994) reports "a young mother claims her life has been ruined by the filthy hypnotist who is one of the stars of Christmas Day's 'Blind Date' TV show". Jayne Swift claims that 'comedy hypnotist' Patrick Charles hypnotised her into simulating orgasm with an inflatable doll which she apparently thought was Patrick Swayze. This happened during a day-long coach trip with "as much food and drink as we wanted." She says she went up on stage when Charles asked for volunteers because "it was my 30th birthday and we wanted to make it special". Mother of three Jayne, from Southport, Merseyside (it says here) claims that the first she knew what had happened was when she saw a video of the events in a Tenerife bar later in the evening.

"What he did has had a terrible effect on my life. I'm scared to death of my children knowing." Not too scared however to allow the *People* to print a still from the video showing her astride the doll,

alongside a photograph of her (after she "had her long blonde hair cut and dyed brown so she won't be recognised in the video") and splash the story under the front-page screamer headline 'Christmas sex shock for Cilla!'

Cat Scan

As this issue of *Magonia* is being prepared for press we come across a report in the London *Evening Standard* of 28th December 1994. Under the headline "Pets clubbed to death for trade in fur", we read: "Stray domestic animals are being clubbed to death, gassed or poisoned in their thousands in Eastern Europe to supply a thriving fur trade".

An organisation called the World Society for the Protection of Animals claims that local authorities in Kiev and Odessa, Ukraine, have set 'kill quotas' for stray cats. In Kiev citizens can apparently earn 30p a skin. The carcasses are sold as food for mink-farms or to make soap (does this make any technical sense?). This is said to be a widespread practice throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which is apparently troubled by a massive problem of stray animals abandoned as a result of economic collapse. This does not sound too implausible, the economic situation in Ukraine and elsewhere is such that many people probably are forced to abandon pets. Using the corpses of stray animals to feed minks sounds a more practical way of getting furs than skinning cats directly. But the claim is still being made that cat skins are being sold directly to the fur trade and again we are left with the problem of whether it is actually possible to make anything out of cat-fur?

The *Evening Standard's* article concludes with the familiar claim that the cat-nappers are also active in England, this time in villages in the Cambridge area in early 1994. Reflecting the story in John Harney's local paper in Bracknell which brought this phenomenon to our attention, the animals are said to have had 'single coloured coats in good condition'.

Magonia has readers in both Cambridge and Ukraine - can they throw any more light on this?