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ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS, GODS AND GREYS

Gareth Medway

asks what Fundamentalists think of the Ancient Astronaut Religion

David Sivier

challenges Peter Brookesmith on the nature of the Flying Saucer Religion

EDITORIAL

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A few things seem to have come together lately to bring the extraterrestrial hypothesis back into the centre of discussion in ufology. The recently published 'Sturrock Report' (reviewed elsewhere in this *Magonia* by John Harney) has provoked an outbreak of rather triumphalist ETH comment on Internet discussion forums. We are making our own contributions to the debate with John Harney's controversial *Magonia ETH Bulletin* (available as a link from the *Magonia* website - paper copies are as rare as hens' teeth!) and with the response that my *Extremely Tenuous Hypothesis* article provoked from American researchers. Curiously, we heard nothing from ETH proponents for months after the publication of the article until Mark Pilkington posted the article on a number of Internet forums. This produced an almost instantaneous reply from Jerome Clark, who was the principle target of my comments.

The discussion has gone on now for several weeks, and wired-up readers can find the various contributions archived at www.ufomind.com/updates. Readers of the original *Extremely Tenuous Hypothesis* article will not be surprised to find that the debate is almost entirely polarised between ETH-supporting Americans and ETH-sceptical British ufologists.

One of the problems seems to be a basic misunderstanding of the basic premises of the 'psycho-social hypothesis'. In a way, it's a mistake to regard it as a means of explaining individual UFO reports in the same way as the ETH. With the ETH the chain of logic is clear: an anomalous observation cannot be explained by conventional means as a natural phenomenon or a misinterpretation of a mundane event. The investigator is satisfied that the description of events given by the witness is an accurate record of what actually happened. The investigator may also find physical evidence or further eyewitness accounts which seem to bear out the original report. As no mundane explanation can be found, and as elements of the witness's account suggest an extraterrestrial origin for the event, the investigator feels justified in proposing that as a likely explanation for the puzzling phenomenon.

I hope I have not misrepresented the ETH case here, and as I do not intend to rehearse the contrary arguments here, I will let it stand at that.

The psycho-social hypothesis is not directly comparable to the ETH, it is not a sort of 'opposition party' which has to come up with an alternative policy on every individual UFO investigation. That is the job of the debunker. It is concerned rather with the totality of cases, and the manner in which the UFO phenomenon is interpreted as a whole. This is not to say that individual PSHers (a convenient if rather oversimplified description of those investigators who propose a psycho-social dimension to the UFO phenomenon) will not attempt to explain the mechanism of individual cases. In doing so, however, they are just as likely to be at loggerheads with other PSHers and sceptics, as with ETHers (another convenient abbreviation); we have seen this when John Harney has taken Phil Klass to task for his sceptical explanation for the Travis Walton case.

In proposing that psychological and sociological factors are the main defining influence on the construction of the UFO phenomenon, the PSH is much less dependent on finding an 'explanation' for individual cases than the ETH proponent. Although is quite wrong to demand that any particular UFO report should be 'explained' by the PSH, the necessity to find an extraterrestrial explanation for at least one UFO report is a *sine qua non* for the ETH. Part of the fun of the Internet debate has been goading the ETHers to come up with the details of ten such cases. Only one correspondent came up with a 'Best 10' list, the others dismissing the request out of hand, no doubt recognising it for the trap it is. Chris Allen was quite right in his letter in *Magonia* 63 when he predicted that "your challenge to Jerry Clark... will be met either by silence or by the simple riposte that the mass of UFO evidence speaks for itself and that further elucidation is unnecessary". This is exactly what has happened.

What this argument ignores is that 'the mass of evidence' is comprised of individual cases, and the 'mass' can have no evidential value of its own unless each individual part of it can be shown to stand up on its own. Ironically though, the mass of evidence, regardless of the status of its individual pieces, is of more relevance to a psycho-social analysis than to a 'hard-evidence', ETH-oriented approach.

As I said earlier, it is not the role of the PSHer to 'explain' each puzzling case, but rather to demonstrate the psychological, social and cultural conditions which have led to the UFO phenomenon manifesting itself in a particular way at a particular time. In some ways the actual 'cause' of a UFO report is irrelevant to a PSH analysis: a particular experience may have been triggered by an astronomical object, a meteorological phenomenon or a psychological symptom. The PSHer is interested in why such an experience is reported at a particular time in terms which may be identical to experiences triggered by totally different stimuli.

A psycho-social analysis of UFO reports is still valid even if in some cases the original stimulus *is* extraterrestrial in origin. It is clear that ETH proponents cannot agree amongst themselves which particular reports unequivocally demonstrate other-worldy intervention, so it is difficult to create a sample of generally agreed cases in order to look for similarities between them. However, in those cases which do seem to turn up fairly regularly in ETH discussions - Coyne, Valensole, Trans, Levelland, and a few others - the differences between them are greater than the similarities with other cases that are widely accepted as not provide strong evidence of the ETH.

So the PSHer is not too worried by the ETH, but rather wonders why so many other ufologists, particularly in America, get so worked up about it. If a genuine extraterrestrial agency is producing UFO encounters which end up looking just the same as encounters with unusual but mundane natural and psychological phenomena, the only way we can scientifically examine it is by considering the psychology and sociological setting of the percipient and the way it was investigated.

THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SKY

Gareth J Medway

This article by Gareth Medway is the winning entry in the Roger Sandell memorial essay competition. With the agreement of the authors, we intend that some of the other entries will be published in future issued of *Magonia*.

In *Magonia* 57 I argued that belief in Ancient Astronauts is a species of religion, a substitute credo for those disaffected with Christianity. The corollary is: what do Christian believers think of extraterrestrial hypotheses?

A number of attacks on Erich von Däniken were published in the 1970s - exceeding in number his own publications - and the majority had a Christian stance. (1) (For some reason Australian Christians were the most vocal.) Though von Däniken described his own work as "a hypothesis made up of many speculations", (2) his critics appeared to take it a great deal more seriously than its author did.

Though Some Trust in Chariots!! (3) was not specifically presented as a Christian work, and the 17 contributors included "a member of the Jewish community, and at least one agnostic", there were also five (Australian) clergymen, the maverick theologian Barbara Thiering, and a schoolmaster who specified that he found von Däniken's views absurd "as a Christian". Even the title is a Bible quotation. (4) Collectively they professed to find *Chariots of the Gods?* "careless, ill-informed, gratuitously offensive to honest scholars, and ultimately likely to be unhealthy in its social effect"; its popularity, "amazing, distressing and saddening". The general suggestion was that the author and his publishers had unscrupulously "bamboozled" the public for financial gain. (5)

Co-editor Edgar Castle was particularly irked by the spin-off TV film, which he considered "dangerous", and its success "sinister". Now, the advance publicity for the film had stated that it was "nothing but an hypothesis. It does not pretend that is how it was, but says that is how it could have been." Castle asked indignantly how this could be, when the "business of the film is illusion and its aim is the total involvement of the audience"; and denied that "any kind of tentativeness is transmissible by film or television". Rather: "The film cannot by its very nature be speculative. What it shows must seem to be true, at least at the time."(6)

Like many True Disbelievers, Castle suffered from what one might term a "superiority complex". He was not taken in by the film; he saw through it as ludicrous nonsense; yet he expected that the general public, who did not (it must be supposed) possess his great intelligence and strength of character, were likely to be brainwashed into false belief, disclaimer or not.

1. The only secular anti-Däniken book was Ronald Story's *The Space-Gods Revealed* (New English Library, 1976), and even that had an appendix on UFOs and the Bible by a Professor of Religion.

2. *Chariots of the Gods?*, 77

3. Edited by E.W. Castle and Rev. B.B. Thiering, Westbooks, Perth and Sydney, 1972. I do not know if the Rev. Thiering and Barbara Thiering were related.

4. Psalm 20:7

5. Thiering and Castle, op. cit., Preface (unpaginated), and 3, 98

6. Ibid., 107-108

7. Ibid., 92

8. Ibid., 41, 115

9. Both these published by Inter-Varsity Press, 1980

10. *Shopping for a God: Fringe religions today*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1986, 12

11. Church Pastoral Aid Society, 1975. Allan's first book, *I Know Where I'm Going* (i.e. to heaven), Lutterworth Press, 1975, won a "United Society for Christian Literature and Lutterworth Young Writers Award".

12. *The Gospel According to Science Fiction*, 24

13. Ibid., 26-27

14. UCCF Booklets, Leicester, 1991

15. Dr Clifford Wilson, *UFOs and their Mission Impossible*, Signet, New York, 1974, 114

16. Ibid., 1

17. Quoted in Paul Davies, *Are We Alone?*, Penguin Books, 1995, 4

18. William Whewell, *Of the Plurality of Worlds*, 2nd edition, 1854, 100

19. John Grant, *A Directory of Discarded Ideas*, Corgi, 1983, 18

20. *Some Trust in Chariots!!*, 41

21. *Mysteries*, Lion Publishing, 1981, 51

22. Bantam, 1976 (1st Harvest House, 1975). Incidentally, the address of Bantam Books was then 666 Fifth Avenue!

23. *UFOs: What on Earth is Happening?*, 1

24. Ibid., 152

25. John Keel, *Our Haunted Planet*, Futura, 1975, 161.

Though they were quite legitimately able to show that, as a piece of historical reconstruction, *Chariots of the Gods?* is full of holes, underlying all of this was an awareness that the book had thrown out a challenge to their religion, though they mentioned this only in order to deny it: "Insofar as *Chariots of the Gods?* states, or suggests, doubts as to the validity of the main items of Christian doctrine, rebuttal is easy. Christian people will not be troubled by it. The Christian faith is anchored firmly in real history." (7) This does not quite ring true: people who were unconcerned by a theory would not bother to write a whole book attacking it.

Collectively, the authors represented a liberal Christian outlook. In consequence, they attacked von Däniken for treating the Bible as history! The Rev. Stephens complained that he "thinks that theologians really do believe that what the Bible says about the creation of the world, the history of the Jews and the visions of the prophets, is literally and truly historical. . ." In particular, von Däniken had suggested that the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6:2 might have been spacemen. The Rev. Alan Cole retorted that this passage "must be an old piece of symbolic mythology, not to be understood literally". (8)

This is highly ironic in its context, since it is a tacit admission that a work that sells far better than *Chariots of the Gods?* - more copies than anything except the *Guinness Book of Records* - is in large part untrue, and known to be untrue by those who peddle it. Were these learned clerics merely suffering from psychological projection? In any case, the authors of the early books of the Bible clearly did intend them to be understood as literally true (whether or not they really were), and would have been astonished at any suggestion they were only "symbolic mythology "- a concept that hardly existed at that time.

This attitude is also curiously dated, though the book appeared only a quarter of a century ago. The Protestant churches had long since become polarised between liberals and fundamentalists; and a few decades ago observers thought the liberals would win out, since archaeology and textual analysis had made the fundamentalist position logically untenable. This expectation was naive, of course: people want a religion to give them certainty, which fundamentalism offers but liberals do not; and in any case faith has nothing to do with reason. In fact, since 1970, fundamentalism has flourished, whilst the liberal churches have gone into decline.

(Though it is possible to draw distinctions between fundamentalists, evangelicals, charismatics, and so on, these categories overlap, and the blanket term 'fundamentalism' - meaning Protestants who believe in the literal truth of the Bible, and are committed to Evangelism - will suffice for the present purpose.)

Since the fundamentalists consider that they have all the right answers, beyond dispute, they find it irksome that there are people out there who do not agree. One consequence is that a large body of fundamentalist literature is devoted to attacking cults'. One of the more prolific British anti-cultists is John Allan, whose works include *TM: A cosmic confidence trick*, and *The Rising of the Moon* against the Unification Church. (9) Allan's basic position is: "Cults . . . are unlikely to go away. This makes it vital for those of us who are Christians to attempt to understand them; to trace the motivations which lead people to join them rather than respond to the invitations of Christian evangelists. . ." (10)

One of Allan's earliest publications was *The Gospel According to Science Fiction*. (11) The bulk of this pamphlet was a criticism of the theories of von Däniken et al. as being based on "slipshod reasoning and dubious facts", Allan's own source for facts being mainly *Some Trust in Chariots!!*

Though until the last chapter Allan tried to reason objectively, in several earlier places he gave away his viewpoint by bringing in arguments which assumed the truth of Christianity, indeed of Protestant Christianity. Thus, he criticised von Däniken for citing the Talmud, since: "The Talmud is a commentary on the Old Testament, and was never thought to carry the same authority". (12) It might not have the same religious authority (though it has as much for the Rabbis), but that does not mean that it cannot have as much weight for the historian. R.L. Dione, he complained, "treats the Fatima visions as equally important with the New Testament (when even those statements of the 'visitants' which he quotes contradict the New Testament)". (13) Why shouldn't he? Dione was trying to argue from first principles, not inherited tradition, and while there is witness testimony that the Fatima visions were miraculous events, there is no evidence (except tradition) that the New Testament was divinely inspired. (Fundamentalists try to prove it is by quoting 2 Tim. 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God"; not only is this argument circular, but in any case Paul must have been referring to the Old Testament: he could not have meant the Gospels, which were not then written.)

But Allan's final argument did not depend on reason at all: "By an act of incredible generosity, Jesus died willingly to pay the penalty which really we deserved to pay, for breaking God's laws. According to the Bible (and quite frankly I know it's true, from my own experience) this makes it possible for us to get to know God again, by simply inviting him to take command of our lives. Von Däniken believes that one day we will contact beings in another dimension. The Bible claims you can do it right now!"

He concluded from this: "I do not distrust von Däniken and the others because the details of their argument are mistaken. I distrust them because I can't do anything else. If I know that the God who created everything is not only alive but also at work in my life right now, it becomes pointless for me to speculate that he may have been a bunch of spacemen."

This is hard to understand. Why should a personal experience of God preclude the possibility of the existence of space 'Gods' ? After all, Barry Downing and some other von Dänikenites retained a conventional religious faith. However, it is clear that Allan recognised that belief in Astronauts was a religious creed, and by his own lights a false creed, hence in need of refutation just as much as those of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. When he wrote sarcastically of the believers: "How nice it is to know that you are one of the Privileged Few who understand the human situation!" the remark applied just as well to himself.

In general, Allan's writings demonstrate the futility of arguing about religion. In a later pamphlet, *Accept no substitute*, (14) he considered and then rejected Pluralism, the view that all religions are equally valid. If, he pointed out, members of only one particular religion will be saved - he meant his own religion, of course - then adherents have a moral duty to convert as many as they can. This is true, but it fails to eliminate other possibilities. If, as some Roman Catholics maintain, only Roman Catholics can go to heaven, then Protestant Evangelists are leading people to damnation. Or, if the Pluralists are correct, then all Evangelism is a mere waste of time.

Another Australian Christian, Dr Clifford Wilson, provided actual evidence concerning the dangerous and sinister consequences of people reading *Chariots of the Gods?* In an interview he asked the Rev. William Gill (of the fa-

mous New Guinea UFO sighting) what he thought of it, and was told "that he personally was pleased in some ways that this book had received the publicity it did, because it had provided a tremendous stimulus so that people were now very much more ready to take an interest in ancient history, archaeology, and religion. He stated he had found that young people were more stimulated through these writings than through any other writings spread over his own career as a teacher." (15)

The book's effect on Dr Wilson himself was more curious. Asked to do some radio talks in answer to it, he only agreed reluctantly, not being much interested in the subject. Yet eventually his material grew until it filled a book, *Crash Go the Chariots*, and he also gave many public talks. He then turned his attention to contemporary flying saucer reports, and jumped from scepticism to belief: "The days of doubt have ended. The fact is - whether we like it or not - the UFOs are here." (16) His evidence for this consisted of many of the usual anecdotes commonly found in popular UFO paperbacks.

His conclusion was set out in vague terms, but revolved around his belief that we may well be the last generation, during whose time Christ will return, to be followed by the final battle of Armageddon. "The Bible suggests that spiritual powers as well as mankind will be involved in that great conflict between the forces of good and evil." The UFO occupants, he said, had a "mission impossible" because their aims were opposed to those of Almighty God.

The following year a far more explicit statement of his views would be published, but before discussing it, the real implications of extraterrestrial life for Christian doctrine must be considered. Nearly four centuries ago Kepler asked: "if there are globes in the heaven similar to our earth. . . Then how can all things be for man's sake? How can we be masters of God's handiwork?" (17) Theologians have usually assumed that the cosmos was created for the benefit of the human race: but if our planet were to prove only one of many inhabited worlds, a big prop of their system would be knocked away.

In the mid-19th century William Whewell saw this very well: "Can the Earth be thus the center of the moral and religious universe, when it has been shewn to have no claim to be the center of the physical universe?" (18) His own response was to argue that there was in fact no other life out there: the nebulae are balls of gas which could not support life; there is no evidence that the stars have planets; and the planets of our solar system are too unlike ours to be habitable. This was (and still is for the most part) a valid scientific argument, but as he virtually admitted, he only espoused it because he was too disturbed by the implications of the existence of non-terrestrial intelligence to countenance it.

If there are globes in the heaven similar to our earth... Then how can all things be for man's sake? How can we be masters of God's handiwork?

Kepler

(Whewell also considered uneasily the geological evidence that the earth was far older than the six thousand years taught by Genesis; this raised similar issues: if the earth is billions of years old, then the human race is as the blinking of an eye in its history, hence we are temporally as well as spatially insignificant.)

Since extraterrestrials would thus pose a threat to fundamentalism, its adherents are not likely to be pleased by evidence for their existence. Now, while Ancient Astronauts can readily be dismissed to their satisfaction, UFOs may be a bigger headache. Ufology is not based merely on speculation about old texts and ambiguous artefacts, but (apparently) on the hard evidence of sightings, and even on actual contact with beings from other planets. A 1970s poll showed that 15 million Americans had seen unexplained things in the sky, and that figure must have included many fundamentalists. A 1979 UK poll "proved that more people believed that aliens were visiting, or had visited, us than believed in God." (19)

This possibility of aliens in our skies cannot but raise awkward questions. If man was made in the image of God, in whose image are the Greys? If salvation only comes through Jesus, what will happen to all the people on the billions of other planets out there, who cannot have heard of him?

A further problem concerns the end of the world. Two thousand years ago, when it was thought that the sky was a glass dome a few thousand miles high, it did not seem too odd that the world as it was known might soon be brought to an end by its creator. But this belief is now acquiring a parochial air. The observed universe is billions of light years across, and possibly crammed with life. Why should it all suddenly come to an end for the sake of one tiny speck of dust in the spiral arm of one galaxy not too different from millions of others?

Liberal Christians profess not to be at all disturbed by the issue. The Rev. Dr G.H. Stephens, "a modern theologian" who described *Chariots of the Gods?* as theologically naive, specifically mentioned von Däniken's claim that discovery of life on other planets would be devastating to conventional religion: ". . . such proof would not alter for one moment the Christian belief that life is abundant and various, and that quite probably other forms and shapes sing praise to God on other planets. It is not as if Christians claimed to have a monopoly on God." (20)

Fundamentalists do, however, claim to have a monopoly on God. Conceivably, it could be argued that spacemen are visiting the earth because this is the only planet where the true religion is known, but so far as I am aware no one has done this. Some, like John Allan, have simply dismissed UFOs on the usual grounds that the known planets are uninhabitable, while outside the solar system, "The distances are too great to allow extensive contacts". (21) He thus had no need to bother about the problem.

A more interesting solution was suggested by John Weldon (a research editor for the Christian Research Institute) and Zola Levitt (a Hebrew Christian "who met the Lord in 1971") in *UFOs: What on Earth is Happening?* (22) In contrast to Allan's sceptical approach to spacemen, the authors began by declaring that: "The UFOs are real!. . . Millions of people the world over have seen them. . ." (23) and unlike the liberals they recognised that the existence of extraterrestrials posed a threat to Christian doctrine: "If, as the UFO folks imply, there are billions of inhabited planets out there with their variety of craft and their interplanetary organizations, Jesus' sacrifice looks rather paltry. If He really were to die for all of God's creatures. . . He'd have to die billions of times, in billions of forms, and so on. It would make the Gospel look ridiculously inadequate." (24)

As the authors noted, ufological writings generally, and "contactee "stories in particular, have a strong metaphysical dimension. For example, in 1965 a Californian TV repairman, Sidney Padrick, was given a flight in a saucer that landed near his home. The craft proved to contain a room similar to a chapel, where he was asked to "pay your respects to the Supreme Deity". He said later: "I'm forty-five years old, and until that night I had never felt the presence of the Supreme Being, but I did feel Him that night." (25)

It might be thought that a personal experience of the Supreme Deity was a decisive event, but fundamentalists would not agree. John Allan, who as ever provides a fair epitome of their views, states that if one is born-again in the Lord (as Allan himself was) it is a genuine religious experience, but if something similar yet non-

26. John Allan, *Yoga: A Christian analysis*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1983, Chapter 6

27. The literature on this subject is too vast to give useful references in the space of a note.

28. Weldon and Levitt, UFOs, 17

29. Ibid., 24-25, 108, 125-126

30. Ibid., 84

31. Hal Lindsey, *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon*, Bantam Edition, New York, 1981, 33.

32. *Larson's New Book of Cults*, Tyndale House, Wheaton, Illinois, 1989, 346

33. Clifford Wilson and John Weldon, *Close Encounters: A Better Explanation*, Master Books, P.O. Box 15666 [!], San Diego, California, Chapter 14

34. Shawn Carlson and Gerald Larue, *Satanism in America*, Gaia Press, El Cerrito, California, 1989, 104-106

35. Rebecca Brown, *Prepare for War*, revised ed., Whitaker House, Springdale, Pennsylvania, 1992, 303-305

Christian occurs it is merely a delusion. (26) This is because God only manifests in order to spread the true religion.

So, if fundamentalists alone have a direct line to God, how come there are other religions, who likewise claim divine inspiration, visions, miracles and so on? The fundamentalist answer has always been that these religions are the work of devils and demons. The Gods of the Pagans, they said, were demons, which was why their worship had to be suppressed. With the modern improvement in global communications, they have come into contact with Hinduism, Buddhism, and other faiths, and unilaterally denounce them as "worship to demon gods". Nor did matters end here, as all Christian heresies were thought to be inspired by demons. When the Reformation started, the Pope was held to be the Antichrist; Counter-Reformation propagandists responded by depicting Martin Luther as a mouthpiece for Satan's opinions. Fortune-telling was done with the assistance of demons (unlike Biblical prophecy, of course). Lunatics were possessed by demons. Witches were "instruments of demons". Early Protestant theologians held that ghosts were not really spirits of the dead, but demons who took on their form. Spiritualists are likewise accused of contacting demons rather than the dear departed. In some modern churches every misfortune, from a bad back to a bad debtor, may be blamed on a demonic influence in the life of the afflicted person. (27)

It is not hard to guess from the foregoing what some fundamentalists think flying saucers are. Thus Weldon and Levitt: "UFOs and the other strange manifestations we are seeing represent demon activity. . . [as Christians] we are privileged to understand easily what is a befuddling mystery to the rest of the world." (28)

They were able to take all kinds of observations and facts as proof. The giants of Genesis, whom the liberal Rev. Alan Cole had dismissed as "symbolic mythology" were in fact real, they said, and the same as modern UFO entities; but, as they pointed out, according to "the generally accepted theological interpretation", those giants were fallen angels. UFOs are most often seen at night, the very time that black magic ceremonies are normally held. George King made contact with the space brethren after practising Yoga, which is considered by fundamentalists to be "demonic". (29)

One advantage of this approach is that it is easy. Those who consider that UFOs are all weather balloons or temperature inversions have a hard time fitting some of the data to their chosen interpretation. Those who say they come from Venus have to explain away the evidence that Venus is uninhabitable (and perhaps the rival claims of those who say they come from Mars). More generally, as John Keel liked to point out, believers in nuts-and-bolts spacecraft ignore or even suppress anything suggesting that they are non-physical. Even the worst UFO author is thus usually required to do some thinking.

No such effort is needed by UFOs-are-demons proponents. Since demons have almost unlimited occult power, no sighting story can be too absurd or unreal to be dismissed. How come, a believer in contactee stories could be asked, contactees all say different things about where saucers come from, who pilots them, and how they are propelled? The Fundamentalist can simply answer, Demons are liars! Villas Boas had sex with a space-woman? She was a succubus demon! Flying saucers are hostile? Demons are hostile! Space brothers preach cosmic awareness? Demons want to lead us into theological error! Do you doubt this all-embracing explanation? Then you are in the thrall of demons!

Best of all, they were able to turn the potential threat to their creed into support for it. Since practically everything written in the Bible about fallen angels could be applied to UFOs, this proved that the Bible is true, e.g.: "The demons seek to rest in human bodies (Luke 8:30; 11:24-26; Matt. 12:43-45), including children's bodies (Luke 9:39), and even those of animals (Matt. 8:30-32; Gen. 3:1-5). By way of comparison, possession occurs also in UFO contactee cases, and animals react with sheer terror when UFOs or UFO beings are in the area." (30) And, of course, the great number of flying saucer reports in recent years shows that the demons are stepping up their activities, as predicted would happen in the Last Times.

Since 1975 it has become a commonplace of fundamentalist literature that UFOs are demons, though nothing much new has been added to the theory. Hal Lindsey, well-known author of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, had this to say:

"I believe these demons will stage a spacecraft landing on Earth. They will claim to be from an advanced culture in another galaxy. They may even claim to have "planted " human life on this planet and tell us they have returned to check on our progress. . . If demons led by Satan, their chief, did pull off such a deception, then they could certainly lead the world into total

"UFOs and the other strange manifestations we are seeing represent demonic activity... We are privileged to understand easily what is a befuddling mystery to the rest of the world."

error regarding God and His revelation. They could even give a false explanation for the sudden disappearance of all the world's Christians - which will happen in the final days." (31) We are still awaiting the sudden disappearance of all the world's Christians.

Bob Larson, a leading American radio-evangelist, has given further reasons why UFOs cannot be spaceships:

"If God did choose to create intelligent beings on other planets, they too would be tainted by Adam's sin which affected the entire cosmos. They would be fallen creatures like mankind and thus have the same technological limitations that we do. If sin's retrogressive impact on man's advancement has prevented us from going to visit them, how could they possibly visit us? If for some reason sin has not invaded their race, would God permit such an unfallen civilization to contact us and thus be contaminated by our sin? The answer to both of these questions is decidedly negative." (32)

The most interesting development has been reports of close encounters that appear to confirm that those lights in the sky are fallen angels. Clifford Wilson and John Weldon later collaborated on *Close Encounters: A Better Explanation,* in which they cited three case histories of people who had seen UFOs regularly but later became convinced they were demonic manifestations. (33) It may be of significance that one of them, a Canadian woman, had believed she was in touch with God's messengers until Weldon's 1976 book convinced her otherwise.

Some fundamentalists are encouraged to listen to the word of the Lord - apparently with practice it is easy enough to talk with Him on a regular basis. One of the most celebrated of these direct-communication Christians is Rebecca Brown, who was once a doctor in Indiana. She used to ask the Lord to diagnose her patients' illnesses and prescribe treatment. Other doctors, who had a more conventional approach, did not agree with the Lord, and she lost her medical licence. Brown considered that this was because the medical profession was dominated by Satanists who had instructions to "get" her, but that in any case it was a good thing in the long run, as she was able to start on a more successful career of Evangelism instead. (34)

Among the many Christians Rebecca has since helped with demonic problems in their lives was a woman in her 60s named "Lydia", who complained that she was having trouble reading her Bible ("a pretty typical sign of demonic infestation"). "Every time I open up my Bible, I start to see whirling circles of light in my peripheral vision. As soon as I try to focus my eyes on the words, those lights come to block my vision so that I cannot see the words. I can read any other book without difficulty".

Lydia finally realised that these lights resembled a UFO she had once seen whilst living on the East Coast. Driving home one night she had seen a round object with whirling lights floating over the fields near the highway. She stopped to watch, and saw other cars stop too. "Just then the Holy Spirit spoke to me and told me, 'Don't stop, you'll be hurt'. But I was too fascinated to really listen to Him. I stopped anyway".

She started conversing with the UFO by mental telepathy. It told her they were visitors from another planet, come to look at the earth. They talked like this for some time, until she asked them if they worshipped Jesus. They replied, "Well, we have a choice who we serve".

This bothered her. "But how can you have a choice when Jesus is God, and created the entire universe including you?" Rather than answer, the UFO went off into the sky and disappeared. Rebecca Brown saw this as confirming her own supposition that "the UFOs were demonic phenomena", and that "Lydia didn't realize it at the time, but she was really testing the spirits by asking them about Jesus. They flunked the test!" (35)

What should we conclude from all this? Perhaps it comes down to the fact that faith overrides reason. Those who are "born-again in Jesus" read the Bible and see the perfect words of God. Atheists read the same book and conclude that there is not a word of truth in it. Those who are predisposed to believe in Ancient Astronauts find evidence for them in scripture. Much the same thing happens with today's UFO reports: you can use them to back up whatever world-view pleases you.

Following the success of this competition, with its high standard of entries, we hope that we may be able to establish the Roger Sandell Essay competition as an annual event. We hope to have more information in the next issue of Magonia.

Continued from page 14

nocturnal exercises, consisting of flares, searchlights and loud artillery-like booms in the distance. All of which was cannon-fodder for Greer's acolytes. Didn't this intense military monitoring only prove they were getting 'close' to the truth, that contact was imminent?

Certainly the *expectation* of contact was imminent. In the darkness, Noyes and I found ourselves in a circle of five or six sitters, mostly female, who oohed and aahed in unison each time a ghostly disc-shaped light routinely swept into view. Our pointing out that said disc was a military searchlight regularly illuminating the broken cloud cover over head was not well received (let alone believed).

But not to worry. the following evening Greer and his group achieved 'contact', albeit with what I suspect was a balloon launched by Robert Irving and others, although I could never prove it in court. On the other hand, Greer could never prove his case in court, either.

I can't even say the experience was instrumental in Noyes's own decision, shortly thereafter, to resign as Hon. Secretary of the CCCS. Maybe the confessions of Doug and Dave were equally to blame. Point is, just as we could see the searchlight beam on the clouds that night, we could also see the handwriting on the wall. Whatever the circles were first touted as being, it was becoming increasingly evident that what the supposed supernatural circlemakers could do, so could our equally inventive fellow humans.

I flew back to the USA and we continued to correspond. I thought I would see him again, here or there, maybe at an UnConvention or some other such conference (as I fully intended). But we all know how intentions go. We all live our lives learning, via different channels, that someone we were once in close connection with has lost theirs.

My mind nags me now. It seems like I just saw something, very recently, with the Noyes signature on it, but I can't remember what or where it was. There's so much to read and keep track of nowadays. I want to say that he didn't write enough, but that would be both churlish and judgmental of me. Maybe he said everything he wanted to say, and succinctly at that. After all, when I think of people who write too much in this field (and you know who you are), Noyes strikes me as a model of modicum and modesty.

As such, he will be sorely missed.

John Rimmer writes:

Ralph Noyes wrote a fascinating and informed assessment of the MJ12 controversy, drawing deeply on his experiences working with the MoD. He recalled as Private Secretary to the Vice Chief of the Air Staff receiving a signal about "a minor and not particularly dramatic sighting of what came to be know to ufologists as a daylight disc... I recall my own embarrassment, widely shared by the Operations Staff, that we had begun to fall for 'that saucer nonsense'". The full article, 'The Majestical Mystery Tour' appeared in *Magonia* 29, April 1988. It combined good-natured scepticism with humour and quiet authority, and thus reflected the character of its author.

With his tolerant and open-minded character and his willingness to suffer fools gladly (an underrated virtue, far more so than its much vaunted opposite) he was a good friend to ufologists and paranormalists of all persuasions. Although I think he did not agree with a great deal of what I was saying he was the first to come to my aid when I gave a presentation as part of an SPR open day on abductions, and came under fire from the Society's 'Great and Good'. The fact that he was the driving force behind the open day demonstrated his keenness to bring together researchers of differing views to work to a common goal.

A quotation from another, elegantly written, contribution to *Magonia* ('Reason and Superstition number 32, May 1988) gives something of his approach to scepticism and belief, with its gentle humour and ever-so-gentle reproach:

"It is endlessly enjoyable to read the eloquent and scholarly essays given us by Peter Rogerson, Roger Sandell and Michael Goss on the reasons for which we tend to give our credulity to haunted houses, to cast an uneasy glance at the prophecies of Nostradamus and to look behind us for the maniac on the platform, I never fail to learn something from them, my reason is always fortified. But I reserve the right to draw their attention to any case of haunting which seems authenticated beyond reasonable doubt and to sue for damages if pushed onto the railway line by anybody whatsoever. (I might even reserve on Nostradamus but find him - fortunately - beyond comprehension)".

As our small tribute to his memory we will be republishing these two articles on the *Magonia* website, and hope that more readers will enjoy these wise pieces.

THE AGE OF INFANTILISM

A RESPONSE TO PETER BROOKESMITH

By David Sivier

In issues of 54, 56 and 63 of this magazine, that stalwart of ufological scepticism and scourge of the wooly-minded, Peter Brookesmith, presented his thesis that the imagery and symbolism of the UFO, and particularly the abduction phenomenon, had their roots in the Semitic conception of God as mitigated by the 'American religion', defined by Professor Harold Bloom as "A severely internalized Quest romance whose goal is immortality". (1)

Brookesmith further adds that, "experience of that immortality is gained shamanistically - through direct revelation, without mediation, and in solitude. Immortality is already presumed or predicated in an underlying dualistic (Gnostic) belief that the individual harbours a remnant of divinity - the 'divine spark' within himself, which is older than creation; it is symbolized by the empty, post-Resurrection cross of American churches. Lying beyond this and informing it ... is the motif of America as Eden." (2)

Brookesmith is an elegant writer and possesses a singular, scathing wit which he has used to good effect against his opponents. His arguments are always pertinent and deserve attention, even if one does not accept them. In issue of 61 of this magazine I attempted to counter some of the more controversial of his statements in my essay, *Crashed Cups*. This was, however, before the last part of Brookesmith's original essay appeared, which in turn raised several issues which merit closer examination.

The first is his definition of the American religion. There is much that is true in the above definition - Mormonism, as the quintessential American religion, in particular being replete in Gnostic ideas such as pre-existent souls - but these features are not confined solely to American Christianity. Shamanism itself predates Christianity, and although mysticism and charismatic phenomena - the gifts of the Holy Spirit - have formed a part of the Christian experience since the age of the early church, these phenomena have become less frequent, and often discouraged, except in the case of revivalist sects. We shall return to this theme later as it applies particularly to the Abductionists. The most important thing to note here is that this shamanistic mystical faith which finds itself situated within a sacral landscape is not confined solely to American, but is also found thousands of miles away, at the eastern extremity of Europe in Russia. While America sees itself as an Eden, thanks to the frontier wilderness encountered by the first settlers, Russia views itself as the Third Rome, the successor to Byzantium through the marriage of Vladimir, the first Kievan Russian king, to Anna, the sister of the Byzantine emperor Basil II in the eleventh century, and the consequent conversion of Russia to Eastern Orthodoxy.

Although Russian Orthodoxy is strongly ritualistic, charismatic phenomena like those found in Mormonism and American Pentecostalism have their counterparts among indigenous Russian sects, such as the Old Believers and the Baptists. The glossalia of the Baptists in particular formed the basis of the 'transrational' language, *Zaum*, as invented by the Russian Futurist poet Alexei Kruchonykh. Similarly, Russian religious faith shows an intense discomfort with the physical body, especially sex. The celibacy of the Shakers has an even more extreme counterpart in the institutional castration of the Skoptzi. Even outside of this Christian milieu, 'scientific' cosmists such as the poet Aleksandr Gorsky could maintain that "death is not a law of life; it must be overcome. One must be chaste. Chastity is a precondition for the immortality of the flesh." (3) Gorsky himself remained chaste, even within his marriage, seeing the deaths of other people as an unworthy deed they had somehow committed. Paradoxically, this unease with reproduction can lead to libertinage. It's been alleged that the Gnostics of antiquity and the Albigensians of the Middle Ages held their orgies not to celebrate or indulge their sexuality, but to show their contempt for the flesh by giving it to the person next to them at the Sabbat, regardless of gender. Similarly, that quintessential epitome of Russian mysticism and sexual vice, Rasputin, whose very name means debauchee, came from a sect who believed their leader had a spark of the divinity within him,

which his followers could only share through sexual union, a doctrine which Rasputin seems also to have applied to himself.

This discomfort with sexuality is not confined to Christianity, nor is Christianity alone in the Virgin birth of its central figure. The Dowayos of Cameroon, although leading healthily adulterous lives, are deeply prudish. They are therefore extremely careful to keep their reproductive organs covered, and sex takes place in the dark. Sex must not be indulged in before important activities like the hunt, while the firewalkers of Fiji had to abstain for about three weeks before walking lest they burned themselves. In recent times the pressures of commercial tourism has reduced this period of abstinence to three days, but the principle remains. Even Buddhism has its ascetic cast, and Buddhist monks are as abstinent as their counterparts in the West.

Chinese religion too has its Virgin births. The great hero Monkey was born from a rock, as old as creation, though one fertilised by the elements. As for supernatural abductions, like our fairies the Japanese *oni* carry off attractive members of the opposite sex. The Japanese heroes Momotaro, Yoshitsune and Benkei rescued young women who had been abducted by these demons. More recently, the Polish anthropologist Dionysiusz Czubala, has collected a number of contemporary legends in Mongolia in which the tradition of abducting wildmen, like the Yeti, is still very much alive. One of the offspring of such a union between a human woman and these apes is allegedly one of the country's greatest actors at the national theatre. These countries did not, however, produce the UFO myth. Why not?

In the case of Africa, Polynesia and much of Asia, the answer is simple. The UFO is essentially a technological myth, and these parts of the planet are still largely traditional societies lacking the technological and industrial advances of the West. When anomalous flying objects are sighted, as Cynthia Hind in Zimbabwe has complained, they are likely to be subsumed into indigenous African beliefs concerning their gods or ancestors, and it can be assumed that this is, or has been, much the case with pre-industrial societies outside Africa as well. This does not explain why the UFO myth should not have appeared first in Europe, Russia or Japan besides America. All these areas were as developed scientifically as America, and shared the same scientistic preoccupations. Germany and Russia produced two of the first films dealing with spaceflight - *Aelita,* 1924, and *Die Frau im Mond* (The Woman in the Moon), 1929. Outside of America, Italy produced one of the very first SF comic strips, a Space Opera entitled *Saturno Contro La Terra* (Saturn Against Earth), which ran in the comic *L'Avventuroso* between 1937 and 1943.

Although Italy and Russia lagged behind the rest of Europe in industrialisation, the Futurist movements in both countries presented a vociferously and rabidly technophile artistic culture. Japan's tastes in SF seem less preoccupied with space travel and more oriented towards cybernetics, as shown in the long tradition of films and comics featuring robot heroes, beginning with Masaki Sakamoto's *Tanku Tankuro* strip of 1934. This seems as much the legacy of oriental fascination with the automata introduced to the East by European merchants as a continuation of Western literary exploration of such artificial creatures as Frankenstein's monster. It would appear that while Western technological yearnings sought an additional symbol in space travel, the Japanese primarily concentrated on robotics, at least until very recently when it, too, took up the international trends towards space adventure.

Brookesmith partially qualifies his statement of the essentially Semitic religious nature of the UFO religion by stating that its successful export "may, for instance, be a symptom and a sign that a deracinated and relativistic Western culture has had to generate a new religious perspective to accomodate and resolve its own disturbing and destructive characteristics and their consequences." (4) This is essentially true, especially when one takes notes of the powerful fascination many of the earliest contactees had with Eastern philosophy. Adamski and George King are two such examples, not to mention the essentially Theosophical religious views permeating the ideas of William Dudley Pelley and Elizabeth Clare Prophet's Church Universal and Triumphant. Western moral relativism, although widely perceived as a recent phenomenon, actually began in the 19th century and has its roots in the 18th, when Europeans became impressed with the religious traditions of their subject peoples.

It was this fascination with oriental religions which was successfully exported back to the West in the form of Theosophy. It was Theosophy in turn which seems to have permeated the Cosmist ideas promulgated by the Russian rocket pioneer Konstantin Tsiolkovskii in the 1920s. Tsiolkovskii spent much of his life in the Russian provincial town of Kaluga, then one of the major centres of Russian Theosophy, and his idea that matter is permeated with a "conscious energy ... striving for further development, perfection and happiness" represents "a peculiar synthesis of vitalism and monadology with Theosophical, Buddhist and pan-psychic thought". (5) This synthesis of visionary science and an occultism tinged with oriental beliefs first appeared in Tsiolkovsky's 1914 book, *Nirvana*, 33 years before Kenneth Arnold's sighting over the Rockies. Other rocket scientists with a pronounced interest in occultism included the German pioneers Hermann Ganswindt and Hermann Oberth, and Max Valier.

This term 'visionary' is important. In science it tends to be applied to the great pioneering theorists of space travel and the colonisation of the cosmos. The planetary scientist, John S. Lewis, uses it in his book *Mining the Sky* to describe such thinkers, especially the great scientists, philosophers and writers J.D. Bernal, Olaf Stapledon and Arthur C. Clarke. (6) The term, with its mystical overtones, encapsulates the almost religious fervour felt by the supporters of space exploration. Tsiolkovkii and the other cosmists, as we have seen, subscribed to a set of beliefs which saw the task of humanity as perfecting itself, conquering death, and resurrecting the dead as well as the colonization of the universe.

These ideas seem to have entered the speculation of other leading scientific prophets independently of Tsiolkovskii's influence. Thus, scientists and SF writers like David Langford and Brian Stableford in their book *The Third Millenium,* can forecast a genetically modified humanity with a vastly extended lifespan which expands out into the cosmos. Ian McDonald in his novel, *Necroville*, saw the route to immortality as submicroscopic nanorobots which restructured a person's cells to resurrect them after death, which has its parallels in the belief of many Russians that Lenin's body was preserved so that scientists could one day raise him from the dead. Even established reproductive technologies such as cloning have this mystical aspect, the religious desire to preserve and resurrect a lost loved one. Rael, remember, is trying to establish Clonaid, a charity which will offer parents the opportunity to clone their dead children. A Russian scientist has also

1. Brookesmith, P., 'Communion Cups and Crashed Saucers, Part Three, Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch', Magonia 63, p.3.

2. Brookesmith, P., *ibid*, p. 3.

3. Antsiferov, N., 'Iz Dum o Bylom: Vospominaniia', quoted in Hagemeister, M., *Russian Cosmism in the 1920s and Today*, in Rosenthal, B.G., ed., *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 193.

4. Brookesmith, P., op. cit., p. 3.

5. Hagemeister, M., *Russian Cosmism in the 1920s and Today*, in Rosenthal, B.G., ed., *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, p. 198.

6. Lewis, J.S., *Mining the Sky*, Addison-Wesley, 1997, p. 26.

declared that he now has the ability to raise Lenin from the grave using such techniques.

As for discomfort with the human body and its drives and limitations, this is also reflected in the hubristic theorizing of the Extropians and Downloaders, who wish to see human personalities transferred to computers and the human race eventually become a society of civilised machines. One of the leading theorists of the movement, Hans Moravec, sincerely wanted to be a machine at one point, and his predecessor in such strange ideas, Bob Truax, who was also active building his own, DIY passenger-carrying spacerocket, expressed his own dissatisfaction with the engineering limitations of the human body when he said, "What right-minded engineer would try to build any machine out of lime and jelly? Bone and protoplasm are extremely poor structural materials". (7) Truax himself was utterly convinced that "the core of the human personality was not matter, but mind: 'It has been called the 'soul', the 'id', or simply the 'self' or 'identity.' Certainly it is not the body." (8)

This technological yearning for a superior, cybernetic man eventually threw up the bush robot, Moravec's ultimate brain child, which looked like nothing so much as the offspring of a blighted union between a tree and a TV aerial. Nevertheless, its creator loved it, hailing it as a "marvel of surrealism to behold," (9) and declaring that it would be "an almost omnipotent being ...There'd be virtually no task, mental or physical, that it would be unable to accomplish ... the laws of physics will seem to melt in the face of intention and will. As with no magician that ever was, impossible things will simply happen around a robot bush. Imagine inhabiting such a body". (10) The ultimate modification of the human body would be an electron-positron plasma, created billions of years hence to survive the Heat Death of the Universe and the collapse of any surviving protons.

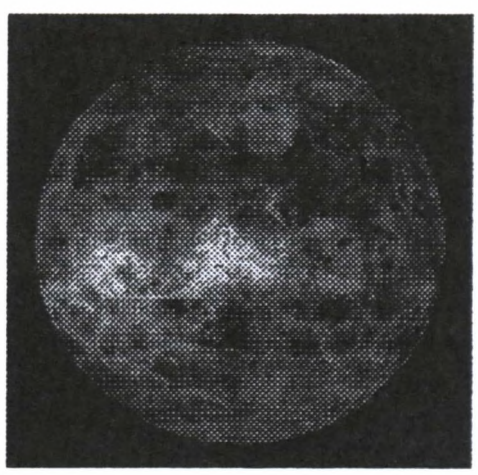
This proposal is strikingly reminiscent of Tsiolkovskii's proposal that the human body be adapted to life in space, and that the eventual, final form of the human species would be a kind of radiation, "immortal in time and infinite in space".(11) Stephen Baxter and Arthur C. Clarke have both suggested that advanced civilisations, including our own, may evolve into robotic beings. Baxter expressed this idea in an article for the popular magazine *Focus*, while the clearest exposition of it in Clarke's work is the novel of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. These writers diverge, however, in their extrapolation of the next evolutionary stage. To Clarke, this is disembodied minds embossed directly onto the fabric of space itself, such as the entity which transforms the hero of 2001 into the Starchild, while Baxter merely suggests that human beings would subsume into programmes run on vast, planet-sized computers.

The imagery of *2001* is replete with religious metaphors of fall, redemption and rebirth. The paintings in the hotel bedroom created by the extraterrestrial supermind in the final scenes of *2001* are all of the Madonna and Child, while the creature's remodelling of the hero into the superhuman Starchild could be seen very much as an alien god sending out his spirit on a favourite son, with whom he is well-pleased. Clarke himself was certainly not unaware of the religious symbolism in the movie, and went about sniggering that it was "the greatest religious film ever made", sentiments echoed in the Soviet film maker Tarkovsky's statement that "we don't have religious films any more. We have Science Fiction."

There are even angels in SF and hard scientific speculation too. Tsiolkovskii believed there existed a class of ethereal, incorporeal sentient beings more perfect than humans who imparted messages to humanity using atmospheric and heavenly phenomena. Carl Sagan's book, *Contact*, has an underlying subtext in which the universe is the product of intelligent design, and the aliens with whom humanity make contact hint at the hallmarks of this design contained in the structure of the universe itself. "Thus the aliens play the traditional role of angels, acting as intermediaries between mankind and God, cryptically indicating the way towards occult knowledge of the universe and human existence." (12)

Furthermore, that long-standing scientific controversialist, Fred Hoyle, has suggested in his book *The Intelligent Universe* that the special conditions found in our cosmic neighbourhood for the creation of life are the conscious product of advanced intelligent beings. Indeed, he goes further and suggests that the universe is itself the product of a much more powerful superintelligence from the timeless vantage point of the infinite future. Like the ultimate observer in Baxter's *Timelike Infinity*, this superintelligence is clearly fulfilling a role ascribed traditionally to God. Davies concludes from these and other examples that the search for alien beings can thus be seen as part of a long-standing religious quest as well as a scientific project. This should not surprise us. Science began as an outgrowth of theology, and all scientists, whether atheists or theists, and whether or not they believe in the existence of alien beings, accept an essentially theological worldview. . . It is only in this century that discussion of extraterrestrial beings has taken place in a context where a clear separation has been made between the scientific and religious aspects of the topic. But this separation is really only skin deep. (13)

"It is only in this century discussion of extraterrestrial beings has taken place in a context where a clear separation has been made beween the scientific and religious aspects of the topic. But this separation is really only skin deep"



Frank Tipler's *The Physics of Immortality*, attacked by CSICOP, among others, as pseudoscience, was merely only an attempt to unite science with its ideological parent. Possibly that's what angered Tipler's critics: at some level, at least, he'd given the game away. Sometimes this close connection between science and religion proved particularly uncomfortable for the former. The first scientist to propose the Big Bang theory was a Belgian priest, Joseph Lemaitre, who published it in a 1929 paper. This seemed too close to Judaeo-Christian ideas of creation *ex nihilo* for Fred Hoyle, who scathingly asked what kind of scientific theory it was, "that had been proposed by a priest and endorsed by the pope?" (14) Religion may stand dumb in the face of science, but science is itself rapidly taking on a religious, even mystical dimension. If religion is the opium of humanity, then Science Fiction, as C.S. Lewis once observed, is the only mind-expanding drug.

Does this mean that the ufological religion is based in the Semitic and American religions? Certainly, in some specific instances. Both Maxim Gorky and Nikolai Rozhkov, two of the Soviet state's most prominent cosmists, had been adherents of God-building, which was an attempt by some Marxists to draw the peasants and workers to their beliefs through their religious piety. It declared that the creation of a Communist world order, a worker's paradise, was the divine task of all true Christian people to build the body of Christ here on Earth. Tsiolkovsky himself published a positivistic exegesis of the canonical Gospels. Quazgaa introduced Betty Andreasson to the voice of God, who exhorted her to turn to His son, Jesus Christ, after, significantly, accepting a Bible from her. Bill Ellis has convincingly demonstrated the roots of the Heaven's Gate cult - some of whose members also castrated themselves - in peculiarly American forms of Christian evangeli-

calism. (15) This is really not surprising, considering that the sect's leader, Marshall Applewhite, was the son of a presbyterian minister. More recent ufological imports to America, such as Hon-Ming Chen's True Way, have a more Buddhist religious orientation, although the Christian element in their beliefs is still prominent. (16)

Apart from this, is the conception of an organising superintelligence permeating the works of certain visionary scientists and SF writers essentially Semitic in origin? Not necessarily. Davies draws a comparison between the aliens and superintelligence in Hoyle's book *The Intelligent Universe* with Plato's Demiurge and The Good, or God, and points out that Hoyle is "quick to concede the inspiration he has drawn from Greek, rather than Judaic, theology." (17)

That ufology draws upon popular SF for its symbolism seems to me to be well-established. Ufology, however, seems to be remarkable for what it leaves out of its conceptual building blocks, as well as what it includes. Brookesmith notes that although the UFOs and their occupants have acquired some of the aspects of gods, they do not seem to have completely taken over the godlike technology of some of the entities in science fiction. Douglas Adams' *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* contains an entire artificial cosmos constructed specifically for Zaphod Beeblebrox. Beverley Crusher, one of Star Trek's heroines, accidentally creates an entire personal universe for herself from a warp bubble created by her son during an experiment in the episode *Remember Me?* The Sidhe in Greg Bear's *Infinity Concerto* are able to create artificial universes, like Sidhedark, through their sorcery, but Bear states in the sequel, *The Serpent Mage*, that in two centuries' time humans will be capable of doing the same, though this time through natural science.

Clearly, ufology is lagging behind not only hard scientific speculation, but also its sources in SF. The human mind may conceive of the Visitors as angels and godlings, or at least as gnostic gods positioned halfway between humanity and the unknown God, but they shrink from portraying the aliens as full-scale creator gods themselves. The Greys may have created humanity, but they are not the cosmos' ultimate architects.

Scandinavia and Greece were the favoured locations of numerous reports of ghost rockets shortly after the War, and the first reported sexual encounter with an abducting alien was the Villas-Boas case in Brazil. Yet it's true that "the UFO phenomenon was, at birth, exclusively American". (18) Why, given that other European countries, including Russia, shared the same Semitic religious heritage, scientific and scientistic preoccupations with a occult subculture tinged with orientalism? The answer probably lies in the innately democratic nature of American society, and the peculiar complex of fears and neuroses surrounding it.

First of all, Germany and Russia were under the heel of totalitarian ideologies jealous of the grip other myths could exert on the minds of their citizens. Religion was severely repressed in Russia, and documents relating to pseudoscience or occultism were either suppressed or destroyed. The influence of pan-German occultism on Hitler was profound, yet he banned the neo-pagan sects when he came to power, fearing that they were sent by 'dark forces' to divide Germany. The V2 team at Peenemunde may have harboured secret hopes of space travel and a better use for their rockets, but these enthusiasms were not shared by their Nazi superiors. Von Braun himself was twice interrogated by the Gestapo because it was felt he was too interested in space travel, rather than his patriotic duty of destroying the Allies.

In Russia, many of the earlier rocket pioneers like Sergei Korolev found themselves in Stalin's gulags, until the necessity of the War years forced the authorities to release them in order to channel their skills into the task of fighting the Germans. Even in the freer climate after Stalin's death, those scientists in the Soviet Union interested in ufology had to tread extremely carefully, and official disfavour with its attendant penalties was always a major peril. In Italy and Russia the Futurists were effectively sidelined by the authorities, who sought an art with more obvious appeal to the masses. Marinetti did not shoot himself like Mayakovsky, but his influence was severely circumscribed. Besides, the Futurists' main enthusiasm in both countries seems to have been conventional aviation, rather than spaceflight. After the War, continental Europe was chiefly preoccupied with the task of reconstruction, rather than inventing new myths of its own.

The chief difference between Russia and America, though, seems to have been in the availability of Science Fiction and occult literature. Before the massive industrialization of the Stalin era, 95 per cent of the Russian population were peasants and the country had an extremely high rate of illiteracy. America was far more advanced industrially, and possessed a large reading public. The readership of the pulps ran into millions. Martin Gardner and John Keel have convincingly proved that the development of the ETH was heavily dependent on the support given to the new phenomenon by Ray Palmer, who bequeathed to it the manichean dualism of the Shaver mystery. Fate, when it appeared, was a national news stand magazine, of a type unknown and impossible in Russia. The American public were primed to accept the ETH because for over half a century previously mass-circulation magazines had carried tales of extra-terrestrial derring-do.

Only one problem remains in this examination of the American origins of the saucer myth. That is the question of why the myth, with its attendant fears and paranoia, occurred at precisely the time when American international influence was at its strongest this century, and when confidence in the government was at its highest? The FBI and other government organizations received many letters from ordinary citizens denouncing ufologists as 'communistic' because they were vociferously sceptical of the government. Again, the key seems to be the external threat posed by Communism to democracy and the American way of life. 1947 saw the Communists take power in eastern Europe, and subsequent years saw the transformation of those countries into Soviet satellites. Democracy, and by identification, America, was threatened. Faced with the sudden expansion of a competing ideology vying with America for global influence, 1947 "found many Americans questioning the meaning of their nation and of life itself". (19)

Sects are primarily protest movements, and the UFO myth has undoubtedly acted as a vehicle for the articulation of intense dissatisfaction with the government, first through a violent revolt against its perceived impotence in the face of the saucer threat, which was seen as deliberate disinformation, and then to its alleged conspiratorial nature as the myth darkened after the Kennedy assassination of and Watergate. Many of the SF movies of the 50s use alien invasion as a metaphor for Communist infiltration, an idea that certainly has its counterpart in ufology, especially in early fears that the saucers were some new Soviet craft. Arguably, anti-Communism has been as powerful a force shaping ufology as its origins in formal religion, though perhaps more in the form of a prevailing sense of threat rather than

7. Quoted in Regis, E., *Great Mambo Chicken and the Transhuman Condition*, Penguin, 1990, p. 153.

8. Regis, E., *ibid*, p. 154.

9. Regis, E., *ibid*, p. 170.

10. Regis, E., p. 172.

11. Chizhevsky, A.L., 'Stranitsy Vospominanii o K.E. Tsiolkovskom, in Khimia i Zhizn', 1977, quoted in Hagemeister, M., *op. cit.*, p. 198.

12. Davies, P., *Are we Alone? Implications of the Discovery of Extraterrestrial Life*, Penguin, 1995, p. 89.

13. Davies, P., *ibid*, pp. 90-91.

14. Boslough, J., *Masters of Time*, J.M. Dent, 1992, p. 88.

15. Ellis, B., 'American Gothic', in *Fortean Times*, no. 100, pp. 35-36.

16. For a discussion of the beliefs of this particular ufological new religion, see Perkins, R., and Jackson, F., 'Spirit in the Sky', in *Fortean Times* no. 109, pp. 24-26.

17. Davies, P., *op. cit.*, p. 90.

18. Spencer, J. and A., *Fifty Years of UFOs*, Boxtree, 1997, p. 14.

19. Saunders, D.R., and Harkins, R.R., *UFOs? Yes!*, quoted in Spencer, J. and A., *ibid.*, p. 16.

As for the similarities of Roswell to the quest for the Holy Grail, this seems much more like an exercise in literary criticism than a sociological analysis... though it is intriguing

in any express doctrines.

Then there is the problem of the alleged Gnosticism of the phenomenon. One of the first things that needs stating is that gnosticism was never an exclusively Christian movement. The ideological ingredients in Gnosticism were taken from Semitic, Platonic, and Zoroastrian and even Ancient Egyptian religious concepts. Although many of the sects were Christian, certain forms should be seen as separate religions in their own right, such as that of Mani of Babylon. Other non-Christian religions with a gnostic basis included the Druzes of Lebanon, whose origins in Shi'ah Islam have been extensively modified by the admixture of Gnostic ideas. Some sects were and are prechristian. These include the Mandaeans, the so-called 'Christians of St. John'. They, however, are nothing of the sort. The central salvefic figure in their religion is St. John the Baptist, and they revile Christ as a false prophet. Some Gnostic texts, like the *Poimandres* of Hermes Trismegistus, owe little or nothing to influences from the Semitic world. The Hermetic writings, which include gnostic material such as the above *Poimandres*, "not only are purely pagan but even lack polemical reference to either Judaism or Christianity". (20)

The rejection of the material world in Gnosticism is essentially a reaction to the suffering inherent in material existence, and represents a Hellenized monotheism struggling to develop an effective theodicy to deal with the problem of evil. Western, and a very large part of Islamic, philosophy has its origins in ancient Greek thought, and although modern technological civilisation has superceded ancient ideas, philosophy as an intellectual culture still remains saturated with their influence. Some of this may simply be that the ancients were the first to frame many of the perennial problems of philosophy. A number of modern texts on cosmology, for example, refer to St. Augustine, who wondered what God did before the Creation, a question raised still now when the universe's origins are under discussion. It is entirely likely that even if the Roman Empire had not converted to Christianity, and bequeathed its Semitic heritage to the West, Western thought would still have had a gnostic cast through the asceticism in Hellenic philosophy.

The striking similarity between ancient Christian Gnosticism and later Jewish cabbalism is an interesting question which has never been satisfactorily explained. Brookesmith cites Karen Armstrong, saying that the Safed cabbalism of Isaac Luria "can fairly be described as Gnosticism without Christ". (21) Earlier cabbalists also produced passages strikingly reminiscent of ancient esoteric Christian texts. Joseph Gikatila, a contemporary of the great 13th cabbalist and author of the Zohar, Moses de Leon, wrote an important text, *The Mystery of the Serpent*, which is strongly reminiscent of the beliefs of the Ophites, a Christian gnostic sect which venerated snakes. (22) The book Bahir which circulated in twelfth century Provence was strongly influenced by the vanished *Raza Rabba*, or Great Mystery, which itself held much gnostic speculation on the aeons or inferior demiurges. Much Gnostic speculation can, however, be reasonably traced to the same Jewish sources that inspired the cabbalah. The description of the divine throne in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* or the *Book of Norea* originated in Jewish speculation about the Merkaba or divine chariot, which was itself developed from the vision of Ezekiel.

It's possible to conclude from this that Jewish mysticism was developed from Christian gnostic teaching, though it's more likely that later Jewish mysticism was 'so much in accord with other features of authentically Jewish thought which the Gnostics did not know - thought which, for its own part, is almost totally ignorant of any dualistic conception of the universe - that one is tempted to believe that it was the Gnostic sects who received a great part of their theories from Judaism.' (23) This is interesting, for it states that essentially monistic Jewish ideas, taken by ideologues and theologians widely separated in space and time, were independently elaborated into dualistic religious systems.

Inherent in this is the idea of the transvaluation of values, of different value systems superseding each other as society changes. One example of the impact of societal change on religious thought is the shift in emphasis from the preparation for death and the afterlife to the quest for the meaning of life. In the ancient world and Middle Ages, life was indeed, to use Thomas Hobbs' phrase, 'poor, nasty, brutish and short'. Most people could expect to live only until the age of 30. The high rate of early mortality meant that death was an omnipresent companion, and so religion acquired a morbid cast, even producing manuals to enable the faithful to breath their last in a suitable manner. *The Art of Dying Well* was a real book widely read in the 17th century. In the present century the standard of health care in the West has improved immeasurably, and individuals can now look forward to a long life of at least the three score years and ten promised by the Bible. The result has been that religion has increasingly turned away from the rewards of the afterlife, to concentrate on the existential condition of humanity here on Earth.

This existential despair has been an important part of the post-war intellectual climate, largely because of the horrors of the Second World War, such as the Holocaust and bombing of Nagasaki, among others. The other major factor has been the retreat of humanity's place in the universe as modern science has revealed a vast cosmos of immense spaces and nearly infinite time, quite heedless of the mayfly lives of the intelligent beings thrown up by evolution on the surface of an insignificant world. This intense pessimism over humanity's now meaningless place in the cosmos has undoubtedly drawn certain Western scholars to Gnosticism.

Hans Jonas clearly states that he was drawn to the study of Gnosticism because of its parallels with modern existentialism. This existentialism can itself be broken down into two types - Christian existentialism, the intellectual product of Soren Kierkegaard, and the atheist existentialism of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's philosophical mentor, however, was Schopenhauer, and although he turned Schopenhauer on his head by stressing the joy in life, rather than despair, Schopenhauer's influence may still be discerned. Schopenhauer, however, was certainly no fan of the Semitic religions, and took his philosophical pessimism from Indian religious thought. The basis of Schopenhauer's philosophy of the Will was elaborated from his reading of Plato and Kant, to which he added Anquetil Duperron's Latin translation of a Persian version of the Upanishads and perhaps something from the great oriental scholar Friedrich Majer, the author of *Brahma, or the Religion of the Hindus*, whom he met in 1819. The effect of the Upanishads was to increase his pessimistic reading of Kant, so that it became "possible for him to employ the metaphysic of Kant in a sense remote from that in which Kant had employed it". (24) A good example of his promotion of a pessimistic orientalism over the Semitic religions can be found in Aphorism 9 in the above translation: "Brahma is supposed to have created the world by a kind of fall into sin, or by an error, and has to atone for this sin or error by remaining in it himself until he has re-

deeemed himself out of it. Very good! ... But that a god like Jehovah should create this world of want and misery *animi causa* and de *gaiete de coeur* and then go so far as to applaud himself for it, saying it is all very good: that is quite unacceptable." (25)

Schopenhauer's orientalism is important. Hollingdale considered that it was an important part of his eventual success, even though he met with a conspicuous lack of it in his own life time. While other German philosophers had used philosophy to justify Christianity's fundamental assumptions, Shopenhauer recast Christianity "in a pessimistic sense, and then assimilated it to the religions of the East". (26) It's also important that Schopenhauer's philosophy was fundamentally atheist. There's no God in Schopenhauer, and so the problem of evil does not have to be reconciled to the existence of benevolent deity. Most important, however, is Schopenhauer's intense pessimism. In an age which has thrown off the optimism of the 19th century, and become increasingly sceptical of the benefits of modern technological civilisation, Schopenhauer's pessimism is very attractive.

Modern ufological religions like the Aetherians, UNARIUS and the Church Universal and Triumphant are strongly permeated by Eastern religious conceptions, and it is by no means impossible that the antimaterial, ascetic, pessimistic streak in Buddhism and Hinduism has been exaggerated and more pronounced in the climate of Post-War existential despair. There are, of course, elements in Buddhism which undoubtedly have a gnostic cast, such as the belief that every being, or at least every human, has 'Buddha nature' - the capacity to gain enlightenment and enter nirvana like Gautama Buddha. There are a number of oriental religious festivals which celebrate this facet of human religious potential. In Nepal it is the festival of Mha Puja, when one greets one's fellows with 'I salute the god within you.' (26) Something like this entered Science Fiction with the 'grokking' ceremonies in Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Although all this certainly has links to the gnostic elements in the American religion, such as the pre-existent souls of Mormonism, within mainstream Christianity, at least, it remains an heretical doctrine.

There's also a class aspect to the ufological religion to which is paid scant attention. In the typical analysis of class-related forms of worship, middle-class piety stresses discipline, reading and the quiet, bourgeois values. Working-class religion is orgiastic, the worshippers compensating for the harshness of their lives with a form of religious expression which stresses excitement. This is used to explain the charismaticism of Black pentecostalism and various working-class White sects like the snake-handling cults of Alabama. At the top of the social ladder, aristocratic religious devotion emphasized mysticism, although this has largely vanished since the gentry have largely been absorbed into the upper middle-classes. Nevertheless, it is interesting how many leaders of ufological mysticism had pretensions to nobility. William Dudley Pelley tried to pass himself off as the Prince of Sumadjia, while George King enjoyed numerous chivalrous honours bestowed by the Venusians.

Many of these mystics came from background which, if not exactly bluecollar, were not glamorously middleclass either. Adamski, for all his pretensions of being an astronomer, ran a hamburger stall. George King was, before his sudden elevation to interplanetary parliament, a taxi driver. The popular joke that everyone in the American deep south is married to their sister and has seen a UFO, and that the most frequent victims of alien abduction are bored mid-Western housewives, take on a significance when one realises that the deep south is the most economically backward part of the USA. Clearly, working-class and upper-class spirituality are merging in the new ufological faith which compensates for frustrations and poverty in the here-and-now.

At the same time conventional society is being stripped of anything smacking of spontaneity - and remember, Weber believed that religion was one way society could try to recapture that spontaneity - religion itself is trying to strip itself of the mystical, or at least archaic, in order to appear relevant. The degradation of religious language, and Margaret Thatcher's omission of the heroic, or human element in praising the soldiers of the Falkland's War, is all part of the same process. The reaction to this new disenchantment could very well be the trance culture of the underground raves and burgeoning New Age mysticism.

In this analysis, therefore, the new religion of the UFO arises from the pressures and contradictions of modern scientific and industrial society acting on a primarily Semitic religious base, but one that is strongly alloyed with oriental esoterism as an integral part of it. The defining elements are, however, modern science, which is slowly taking over religious discourses of eschatology and language, and post-industrial society which will develop any monistic thought, regardless of origin, into a form of dualism.

As for the similarities of Roswell to the quest for the Holy Grail, this seems more like an exercise in literary criticism than a sociological analysis, though it is intriguing. The first thing to note is that many of the parallels with the Grail that Brookesmith cites are those taken from extra-Semitic sources, like the turning wheel of Buddha and Ixion. (28) Brookesmith doubts that there will ever be a real Sir Perceval to find the ufological Holy Grail. Perhaps so, but there are no end of pretenders. Bob Lazar is one such, and the similarity between him and Perceval is striking. Perceval was blighted by his guilty love for Guinevere, Arthur's wife, while good ol' Bob is similarly blighted with sexual misdeeds - like working at an illegal brothel in Nevada.

As for the location of the Grail in a desert or wasteland, that has parallels in a number of non-Western faiths. In the traditional tribal cultures of Africa, boys are sent into the bush before initiation (which often takes the form of circumcision, another form of genital mutilation) to isolate them from civilised society. Their liminal geographical location - a physical wilderness - is matched by their role in the social wilderness - neither child nor adult, boy nor man. Quite often this is done to protect society, especially women, from the potent mystical powers generated by this indeterminate state. That is why so many tribal cultures cover their boys in wickerwork 'spaceman' suits, of the type cited by Von Daniken. To this may be added that the Plains Indians also sent their young men out on vision quests, to seek their identity through a unique personal vision.

The aliens are dangerous beings, and so, like the gods and visions of pre-industrial cultures, are found only in the wilderness. If the abduction experience is a kind of cosmic initiation, a true coming of age in the Milky Way, then the pursuit of the Roswell Grail is not just a quest for a relic to prove the material existence of the entities, but a search of all ufological society for maturity and identity. Without this, and its 'true name', ufology will truly remain locked in its age of infantilism.

20. Jonas, H. The *Gnostic Religion*, Routledge, p. 147.

21. Brookesmith, P., *op. cit.*, p. 4.

22. See Doresse, J., *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*, Hollis and Carter, 1960, pp. 292-293.

23. Doresse, J., *ibid*, p. 295.

24. Hollingdale, R.J., introduction to his translation of Schopenhauer, A., *Essays and Aphorisms*, Penguin, 1970, p. 31.

25, Schopenhauer, A., and Hollingdale, R.J., trans., *Essays and Aphorisms*, p. 48.

26. Hollingdale, R.J., *op.cit.*, p. 34.

27. Chadwick, D.H., 'At the Crossroad of Kathmandu', in *National Geographic*, vol. 172, no. 1, July 1987, p. 64.

28. Brookesmith, P., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

LIKE BALL LIGHTNING

A Memory of Ralph Noyes

Dennis Stacy

I'm sure I've got a picture of Ralph Noyes around here somewhere, but he was so unprepossessing, you never know. Besides, he wasn't the kind to pose for pictures, and now there will be no more pictures of Mr Noyes at all. He died on May 24, 1998, as a result of a fall at his London home.

"Ralph Noyes was born in the tropics," according to the biographical note on the dust jacket of his 1985 novel, *A Secret Property*, "and spent most of his childhood in the West Indies. He served in the RAF from 1940 to 1946 and was commissioned as aircrew, engaged in active service in North Africa and the far East. He entered the civil service in 1949 and served in the Air Minitry and subsequently the unified Ministry of Defence. In 1977 he retired from the civil service to take up a writing career, leaving on the grade of Under Secretary of State. He has since published several pieces of shorter fiction, most of them on speculative themes.

"For nearly four years, until late 1972," the dust jacket note continues, "Ralph Noyes headed a division in the central staff of the Ministry of Defence which brought him in touch with the UFO problem. Since his retirement he has become increasingly interested in this subject, among others which lie on the fringes of present understanding. He sees speculative fiction as the ideal mode for grappling with these unusual areas of experience. But *A Secret Property* is not only fiction but also 'faction' - at least to the extent of drawing on Ralph Noyes's lengthy background in the Royal Air Force and the Ministry of Defence."

I first came into contact with Noyes during the late 1980s, when he submitted an article (if memory serves) about ball-lightning to the *MUFON UFO Journal*, of which I was then editor. I accepted it, a correspondence followed, and so did a handful of subsequent articles on the newest mystery of the time - crop circles. Already the Hon. Secretary to the Society for Psychical Research, Noyes was a founding member of the Centre for Crop Circle Studies, and then became that organisation's Hon. Secretary as well. He would go on to edit what is one of the best books on the subject, *The Crop Circle Enigma* (Gateway Books, 1990), with pictures by Busty Taylor, and numerous contributions by other members of the CCCS, as well as a civilian or two like Hilary Evans. Or let's say one of the best books on the subject, given our understanding at the time.

In July of 1990, I attended what I think was the first international conference on crop circles, Terence Meaden's Oxford conference, and then spent a day in the fields with Meaden and other atmospheric scientists, viewing a ringed quintuplet, numerous grapeshots, and several magnificent dumb-bells, although as soon became clear, the circle-makers had barely got started in terms of size and complexity. I don't think Noyes was at that conference, but I'm almost certain I visited him shortly afterwards in his London home, in one of those neighbourhoods made up of stuccoed terraced houses with the wrought-iron railings out front and the blue plaques that say William Hazlitt Lived Here. Noyes lived in a couple of long rooms off the ground floor hallway, dusty, stale rooms, what you would call a confirmed bachelor's pad. He was a good 20 - 25 years older than me, and presumably existing primarily off a fixed pension, like so many of his peers. He was of the opinion that the neighbourhood had declined of late, and that London was more expensive than ever, probably universal grumps (and truisms) of his generation. I don't know if these were the rooms he fell in, though I do know he'd had an earlier fall here a couple of years ago and was some time recovering from it. [In fact Ralph Noyes had moved to another Chelsea address a couple of years before his death - JR]

Among the ashtrays was a computer he was learning. His fingers never far from a cigarette and neither were mine in those days. As quickly became evident we both shared a love of the pulped grape as well, a dark burgundy, preferably. We puffed and sipped, puffed and sipped, and of course conversed. What were these miraculous new crop circles? Did they bear an intimate relation to ball-lightning and/or UFOs? Fine and well; now what would either of *those* be? It was during this conversation that I learned we shared something else: a fundamental feeling that all this wonderful stuff - crop circles, flying saucers, poltergeists, and so on - was certainly highly interesting if true, but how *true* was it? And could we please have the envelope with the evidence?

I wouldn't see Noyes in person again until the summer of 1992, when we both participated in Project Argus, and ambitious soil and crop-sampling exercise set up by Michael Chorost and funded with money supplied by Robert Bigelow, MUFON and others. I arrived at Gatwick on Thursday morning, July 16, and took the train to Swindon, where I was met by Noyes and a lady companion with a car, and thence on to Alton Barnes. I can't for the life of me remember whether this woman was Una Dawood, the liason between Argus and the local farmers, Noyes sister or niece, Lucy Pringle - or all or none of the above! I know he was with family members later that day, however and my otherwise detail-frayed account can be found in the September 1992 issue of the *MUFON UFO Journal.*

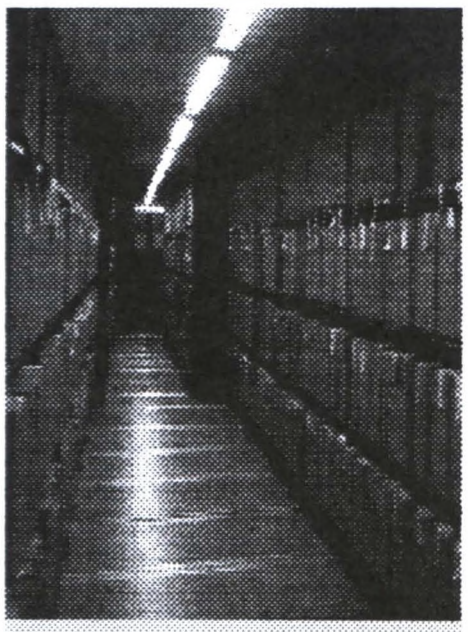
We were the first humans to enter the formation at Milk Hill that same afternoon - apart from whoever originally created it, of course. Interestingly, I'm looking at a clump of souvenir soil on my desk as I write this, a clump of soil I found *atop* the otherwise pristine and 'supernatural' floor of the Milk Hill formation. It was my first personal inkling that all was not as it seemed with the so-called crop circles.

The following day, Friday, we drove up to Winchester, where the CCCS was holding its own first international Conference, 'Crop Circles, the Enigma for the Nineties'. Anyone who was anyone in cereology at the time was there that weekend: John Michell, George Wingfield, Colin Andrews, pilot and photographer Busty Taylor, dowser Richard Andrews, Montague Keen, Chorost, Jurgen Kronig, Noyes and others. My most memorable memory, however, is of the Friday evening banquet held at the city's Guildhall, at which some soused and high-up Centre officer, or sponsor, went on at length about, well, about nothing much at all. But a good time was had by everyone present.

Sunday evening found us back in the Swindon and Alton Barnes area. Monday it mostly rained. Tuesday, Steven Greer and crew arrived. The following night we trooped up to the top of Woodborough Hill to see what Greer's group, CSETI - Center for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence - was all about. Best I could tell CSETI was much ado about nothing. There was some sitting in circles and meditating, and some shining of powerful flashlights (half-million to a million candle-power only please) skyward, and about that much candle-power of wishful thinking, from what I could determine.

Away to the east could be seen the flightpath - outlined by numerous blinking lights - for either Heathrow or Gatwick. Off to the south of our most excellent viewing position the military was holding various

Continued on page 7



Kevin McClure reviews "a brief, cold account of a difficult life"

BOOK REVIEWS

Reviews by Peter Rogerson except where stated

Ann Andrews and Jean Ritchie. *Abducted - The True Story of Alien Abduction in Rural England.* Headline, 1998. 16.99

Of all the sad pantheon of books about allegedly abducted individuals, this probably demonstrates the persuasiveness of the abduction mythos most clearly. A bleak, cold account of the difficult life of a child who was still only fourteen when the book was published, and his mother - co-author of the book - offered him up for media publicity, it was widely reported on, and was uncritically serialized over four days in the Sun. I understand that the mother wouldn't speak to any known sceptic in the course of the publicity. The *Mail on Sunday* suggested that the family might have received 60,000 for the book and serialization.

You'll expect me to summarize the story of this child and his experiences, and I can to the extent that it includes the typical elements of the abduction mythos. Mysterious disappearances, journeys through locked doors, strange powers, knowledge, and communications. Unexplainable, if short-lived, injuries to the child, and disease, mutilation, death, and unexplained disappearance for animals on the family smallholding. All that you could believe or disbelieve, depending on your attitude.

But it isn't as simple as that. There are two distinctly different, contradictory versions of this story, one published here, in 1998, the other written by Tony Dodd for the March/April 1996 issue of UFO Magazine. They differ in several vital respects, most importantly that in the earlier account the child had no strange experiences till he was eight, in the later they started - in a big way - when he was just four.

It's impossible for both versions to be true. I've written to Tony Dodd - who is much praised in the book as its primary investigator - and to the publishers, asking for answers to a set of very specific questions, but both have avoided any endeavour to resolve these contradictions. Consequently, although the accounts allegedly deal with the same events, and derive from the work of the same investigator, both are rendered useless for any serious reader. We cannot tell which, if either, is in any way true. And I wonder if the publishers actually know any more in that respect than me.

Both versions describe a child who had/has serious behavioural problems at home and school, problems which warranted psychological and psychiatric intervention. We are told little of any diagnosis that was made, but the professional view is generally dismissed: the story is that, three years or so ago, this child saw a TV programme featuring a man who had produced, under hypnosis, 'memories' of being abducted by aliens. The family decided that their child, too, was an abductee, read UFO books and magazines, and found a UFO investigator to assist them. While the family's active search for publicity and its material advantages may undermine any serious analysis of the development of this case, it seems that they were happy to find what appeared to be a plausible explanation - excuse, even - for the child's problems. Indeed, despite a strangely uninvolved account of the child's decision to end his own life at one stage, the family seem to have taken to their status. Tony Dodd, himself both an abductee and old-style contactee, said of the child that "Having been selected for multiple abductions, I feel the aliens will follow him for many years to come, probably all his life. But he will come to terms with it. He'll find a way of coping. I think he may, eventually, prove to be a very important abductee. Some of the experiences he has had make me think he is being groomed as a "teacher", a human who is entrusted by the aliens with messages for the whole of mankind."

Since Dodd's involvement, the child's experiences have continued, and his elder brother has recalled a range of anomalous experiences. The mother has found that she has been an abductee since childhood, and believes she may have found a reason for a lost pregnancy. One of the book's strong, but undiscussed, assertions is that "...she began to look again at the circumstances of her father's life, and to see a pattern there which suggests he, too, was an abductee. It is not a case of lightning striking three times in the same place... abductees pass on a devastating legacy to the next generation. Abduction runs in families."

If a professional, objective investigation of this case were possible, it could become the most important study of the development of an ET-based belief since When Prophecy Fails. There, it was a group of believers who chose each other in the context of the contactee movement of the Fifties, with strong overtones of Theosophy. Here, we have a case in the context of the X-Files mythos of the Nineties, actually involving just one family. Although the close involvement of other believers is certainly important, these are not just people brought together by their beliefs: instead, the family members have gradually emerged as experiencers, convinced, presumably, by the interpretations placed on their life experiences by outsiders. Hypnosis has not been necessary: the cultural and social context of this family's search for a solution to various of its problems, some perhaps more material than others, has been quite enough to produce this unsatisfactory account of unlikely events. Events which seem destined to remain hidden behind the kind of shroud of secrecy that abduction investigators - Tony Dodd included - generally purport to deplore.

Physical Evidence Related to UFO Reports

John Harney examines the 'Sturrock Report'

The recent report of a workshop on UFO reports, funded by Laurance S. Rockefeller and given administrative support by the Society for Scientific Exploration was, according to the New Scientist, '. . . funded by a little-known organisation which has published papers supporting such concepts as dowsing and reincarnation. What's more, the panel included a physicist who "designs" perpetual motion machines and an engineer who tries to move objects by concentrating hard.' (*New Scientist*, No. 2141, 4 July 1998) This gives the impression that the findings of the panel are fit only for the sort of tabloids which bear headlines such as 'World War II Aircraft Found on the Moon' and 'Space Aliens Turned My Son Into An Olive'. However, almost all of the ridicule which has appeared in the media consists of knee-jerk reactions from persons who have obviously not read the report and have no intention of doing so. The belief obviously subscribed to by such people is that those who waste their time studying UFO reports are, by definition, crazy.

This does not seem to be a very constructive or scientific approach, so let us have a look at the report itself. The purpose of the workshop was to consider physical evidence associated with UFO reports and it took the form of a number of UFO researchers presenting evidence to a panel of scientists. Considering that the panel was looking for good cases supported by physical evidence its members must have been disappointed with what was presented to them. It is admitted that The panel concluded that further analysis of the evidence presented at the workshop is unlikely to elucidate the cause or causes of the reports.

As I read the report I got two main impressions: nothing useful emerged from the presentations and discussions; and the ufologists presenting their data and findings seemed bent on blinding the panel with science, or pseudo-science (in this they appear to have succeeded).

Just because the panel members did not issue a report supporting the ETH or any other scientifically unorthodox explanation of UFO reports, it should not be thought that their deliberations were rigorously scientific. The ufologists obviously took advantage of the fact that the panel members had little time to examine their claims in depth.

One of the cases reviewed is the famous Coyne helicopter incident of 18 August 1973. Readers might wonder what the ufologists had to say about Philip Klass's assertion that the helicopter crew was fooled by an Orionid meteor. The answer is - nothing. Maybe Klass's explanation is incorrect, but it is so well known (to ufologists) that there seems to be little excuse for not mentioning it at all.

If you think I am being nit-picking about this, then you only have to look at the large amount of text devoted to the French government-sponsored organisation SEPRA (formerly GEPAN). The panel members were so impressed by what they were told of this organisation's work that they present them in their report as a shining example of what scientific UFO research ought to be. The notorious Trans-en-Provence case is presented, as interpreted by GEPAN/SEPRA. The reader is referred to three papers by investigators who apparently believe the testimony of the only witness and apparently prefer to link the markings found at the site of the alleged encounter to the possible landing of a UFO. There is no consideration of the theory proposed by Michel Monnerie that the affair was a hoax that got out of hand, or of or of Eric Maillot's detailed criticisms of the GEPAN/SEPRA investigation of the case. (Maillot, Eric and Scornaux, Jacques. Trans-en-Provence: 'Where science and belief go hand in hand', in Evans, Hilary and Stacy, Dennis (eds), *UFOs 1947-1997*, John Brown, London, 1997, 151-159)

The panel members, as physical scientists, obviously tended to take much of the evidence at face value, whereas experienced ufologists are aware that many UFO incidents just did not happen in the manner described by witnesses and investigators. They obviously underestimated the enormous bias caused by investigators' preconceived ideas as to what UFOs are or are not.

The panel's conclusions included such stunningly obvious ones as "The UFO problem is not a simple one, and it is unlikely that there is any simple universal answer" and "Studies should concentrate on cases which include as much independent physical evidence as possible and strong witness testimony". They also recommended that there should be formal regular contact between the UFO community and physical scientists. Many of the larger UFO organisations already have physical scientists, some of them very experienced and highly qualified, among their members. Formal contacts already exist between, for example, amateur and professional astronomers, and amateur and professional meteorologists. However, there are very few professional ufologists.

One of the main points picked up by the media was that the panel would like funds to be made available for UFO investigations, with the wonderful French SEPRA as the model of how to implement this suggestion. Whether it would be worth while to pay scientists to go around investigating UFO reports in the hope that data leading to the advancement of science might eventually be acquired, is a debatable question. (There is also the problem of the gullibility of many physical scientists when presented with evidence said to be connected with a UFO event.)

The panel members would have done better if they had heeded the advice given by Dr Condon, who wrote in his report to the US Air Force: Although we conclude after nearly two years of intensive study that we do not see any fruitful lines of advance from the study of UFO reports, we believe that any scientist with adequate training and credentials who does come up with a clearly defined, specific proposal for study should be supported. (Condon, Edward U. 'Conclusions and Recommendations', in Gillmor, Daniel S. (ed.), Scientific *Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*, Bantam, 1969)

Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe. *The world's greatest unsolved mysteries.* Hounslow Press, 1997. £10.99.

The plump vicar of *Fortean TV* fame introduces some classic unsolved mysteries, here you will find such old favourites as the moving coffins of Barbados, the Mary Celest the disappearance of Bejamin Bathhurst, the devils footprints, Kaspar Hauser etc, along with a series of tales of the historical mysteries and treasure of various kinds. In this latter category, the Fanthores indulge in the sort of crank archaeological speculation popularised by the likes of Graham Hancock and Graham Phillips. While the rest of the stories show some evidence of common sense and critical faculty, there is a tendency to present the over dramatised popular versions and emphasise possibly paranormal causes. The fact that some of these mysteries such as the Devil's Footprints and the Green Children of Woolpit have been effectively given rational explanations in the pages of Fortean Studies has not made much of an impact.

The dangers of inadequate research is illustrated by the chapter on the Wroxham time slip, a story that persons sailing on or walking around Wroxham Broad in Norfolk have had mysterious encounters with Romans or been transported back to Roman times. Alas the sole source for this story is Charles Sampson's *Ghosts of the Broads* (1931), which is, in fact, a series of fictional short stories, being gently humorous pastiches of the true ghost story genre. His sources which include the *Gentleman's Gazette*, clearly emanate from the same parallel reality as the *Necronomicon* and Sherlock Holmes' *Whole Art of Detection*. Nor is one impressed by an alleged Nostradmus prophecy giving the name of General De Gaulle, no provenance is given, and no doubt it comes from one of the many after the event editions.

Bill Yenne. *UFO evaluating the evidence.* Grange Books, 1997. £9.99

A thinish coffee table style illustrated book, written by an aviation journalist with no knowledge of the subject at all. The bulk of the material comes from old Project Blue Book files, only about twenty pages being devoted to events of the last three decades. There are no stories of landings, occupants, abductions or any of the other complexities of the field. Instead we get reports of lights in the sky, especially those seen by military personnel, and yet another attempt to make the Mantell story look mysterious.

In what might be the first report on Witchcraft and Satanism commisioned by a British Government for 400 years Jean La Fontaine demolishes a dangerous myth

Jean La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil: tales of satanic abuse in contemporary England.* Cambridge University Press, 1998.

This is the long awaited detailed study by Professor La Fountaine of her research into the satanic abuse scare, and it is an important contribution to the range of topics discussed in *Magonia*. Professor La Fountain traces the broad history of witchcraft panics both in early modern Europe and the contemporary third world, noting the important similarities as well as the differences with the modern outbreak. She provides close detail of the circumstances surrounding the accusations in contemporary England, and emphasizes the point made several years ago by Roger Sandell, the vast majority of those accused were not the sort of people who would have the funds or education to engage in genuine occultism, they were members of the bottom most layer of the underclass, whose children were brought up in a chaotic fashion. (One is tempted to argue that there abuse and neglect of the children was more likely to be caused by ignorance and stupidity than active malevolence)

La Fountain points out that these tended to be the sort of outsiders that were traditionally accused of witchcraft, if the poor are demonic and evil they are not entitled to the concern or charity of wider society (What we may be seeing in the labeling of this deep underclass as Satanists, is the merger of the myth of devil worshipping conspirators, with that of the cannibalistic, sexually indiscriminate feral people living in the wastes beyond organized society, as in the legend of Sawney Bean, if so they are seeing a processes by which culturally the sink estates are being relegated to the status of wilderness).

La Fountain argues that the stories of children being the victims of Satanism began, particularly in the Nottingham case, as a means of making sense of their extreme behaviour, their wildness and terror in their new location. The foster parents began to interpret themselves as being in a struggle with the forces of cosmic evil for the souls of the children (the influence of the media with films such as The Exorcist, Omen, Rosemary's Baby and The Innocents could have been commented on here). An aura of superstition prevailed in both the original families and the foster carers, one foster mother believed that the children's dog was a source of evil, and that their behaviour improved when it died, especially after its ghost appeared to her, and greeted her in a friendly fashion. (We are clearly very close to the idea of witches familiars here)

The processes by which narratives were generated is closely analyzed, La Fountain notes how the general inarticulateness of the children added to the difficulties in deciphering what they were saying, and allowed for misconceptions and misperceptions. She notes, a point which applies to all such fields, that broad similarities hid profound differences in what the children were saying, often about the same event. Children's folklore about ghosts, witches and vampires merged with images from the media, and the suggestions of interrogators, who often implicitly, and sometimes explicitly coerced the children into saying what they wanted to here.

The second great source of the legend was the survivors tales, but she notes that the tales told by young children were very different from the fantasies of satanic conspiracies told by teenagers and adults, who were much more clued up in social imagery. She notes the similarities between the survivors personality profiles and those of people with Munchhausen's syndrome, in particular the need for endless approval. Both adults and children could use escalating tales of terror to gain attention and divert attention from their own wrong doings. In the case of the adult survivors, La Fountain makes the very important point, similar to that made by Hansen et al about the Brooklyn Bridge abduction, that as these events were being reported as still happening, why did none of the investigators call the police, was it because at some level they knew the stories weren't true.

La Fountain notes the evolution of the panic, tales of horrific witchcraft began with adult survivors, often Christian converts, and their audience was largely religious, prior to Michelle Remembers and Lauren Stratford's *Satan's Underground*, survivors such as Doreen Irvine had described being involved in ordinary vice (this clearly echoed the survivors tales of the earlier British Satanism panic in the 1960's and early 1970's, when books such as Sellwood and Haining's *Devil Worship in Britain* (1964) Peters' *The Devil in the Suburbs* (1970) and June John's *Black Magic Today* (1971) presented Satanism (not distinguished much from Wicca) in terms of kinky adult sex, homosexuality, drug taking, and suburban wife swapping, with the now largely vanished phenomenon of the desecration of churches. As society became more permissive and secular this repertoire ceased to conjure up images of ultimate decadence and evil, and a new darkness was needed) This was provided by the image of the child abusing satanic cult.

At this point the evangelicals were joined by secular social workers and feminists. This, and the fact that a proportion of the social workers were themselves Christian, allowed for a merging of concerns (Furthermore the connection between social work and evangelical Christianity has a long history, and social work has a somewhat evangelical edge to it, the determined middle class respectable person bringing enlightenment and civilization to the internal wilderness, some early social work campaigns were not for nothing called domestic missions. Both social work and therapism recruit to some extent from the sort of people who in a less secular age may have been attracted to the religious life, and social workers and other professionals have succeeded the clergy as the main instruments of bourgeois control over working class life ways)

Following the collapse the child centered Satanic abuse scare (La Fountain doesn't seem to have noted that like some early modern witch scares, it collapsed when the 'wrong people', in this case middle class parents in the Orkney Islands, were accused), the belief system has returned to one largely promoted by adult survivors, with, as main carriers, evangelicals and social workers being replaced by therapists of one sort or another. These seem to fit into the mode noted by Eileen Showalter in the *Observer Review* for 14th June 1998, that female therapists in particular are adopting the role of the good parent, in contrast to the patients' evil parents, a 'good parent' who offers endless support and never contradicts.

Returning the children's stories, I was struck how they fit into a pattern one sees in ghost stories, alien abduction narratives etc., that the adult world, having lost its faith in the world of daylight reason and common sense, can no longer protect children against their nightmares, rather they become seduced by the nightmares, possessed of a curiosity for more information, because at some deep dark level, the worst thing there is has a hold on our imagination. Or perhaps in fighting for the souls of children against the boggarts and ghosties and grays and ghouls and demons in both goat-like and human shape we can win against the biggest baddie of them all, and gain immortality.

M Lamar Keene. *The Psychic Mafia*, as told to Allan Spraggett. Prometheus, new edn., 1998. £14.50.

A reissue of this classic autobiography of a fraudulent medium, originally published in 1976, with a new forward by Ray Hyman. Keene was one of the stars of the spiritualist camp circuits and the had a wide repertoire of the physical and mental mediumship tricks. What strikes the reader is the often sheer crudity of the tricks, which involved very little sophisticated equipment and no great conjuring expertise, coupled with the will to believe amongst the audience. Hyman, in his forward, warns readers not to imagine that Keene's dupes were some special species of the extra gullible, they were normal people in extraordinary situations, often grief stricken and desperate. I think that the extraordinary levels of self deception by ordinary people revealed here give us an insight into the genesis of a wide range of paranormal and other extraordinary claims. Perhaps the strangest chapter is the one discussing how mediums would provide their clients with sex from the other world.

However, one should approach this book with some degree of caution. It belongs clearly in the category of the 'confessions of a repentant sinner' so beloved of evangelicals, in which the past life is made as dark and sinful as possible to accentuate the light of the new revelation. Real cynics might suspect that Keene, on the verge of being found out, decided to make a virtue out of necessity and start a new career as a reformed sinner, and as the adopted son of one of his former clients.

That being said, there seems little doubt that in broad terms this is a fairly true picture of the world of fake mediumship, and should be required reading especially for those who are still taken in by the likes of Helen Duncan and her preposterous Peggy.

Ron Halliday. *UFO's, the Scottish Dimension.* Scottish Paranormal Press, 1997. £9.99.

This account of Scottish UFO experiences, contains bizarre and potentially interesting material demonstrating just how odd are the stories some people tell and, perhaps, how odd are their experiences. I said 'potentially' interesting because this book manages to make everything in it remarkably dull. It is a classic catalogue - case after case without clear separation, inadequate detail, often no information as to how, if at all, the cases were investigated. There are large chunks of ill-thought-out speculation, and invocation of - if not outright belief in - a wide range of current ufolore, including cattle mutilation, crop circles, ley lines etc.

What is perhaps disturbing is that some of the people whose stories are told here sound as if they might be suffering from some fairly severe psychiatric conditions, yet there is no evidence that the author or the other investigators are alert to this possibility, or that they have have made any attempt to suggest that these people should seek medical advice. If, by constructing belief systems and encouraging delusional ideas, ufologists are deterring people from obtaining specialist expertise and advice then they may be acting very irresponsibly, with potentially disastrous consequences.

Richard Webster. *The Great Children's Home Panic.* Orwell Press, 1998. £4.95.

In the last few years there have been massive police operations leading to the arrest of many, and the conviction of more than a few, care workers for alleged sexual abuse at residential homes. Richard Webster suggests that many of these people may be the innocent victims of a new witch hunt, closely related to the Satanic abuse scare so roundly denounced by the late Roger Sandell and others. He points out the dangers inherent in the very nature of the investigation: a trawl for evidence by police officers deeply committed to the belief in a vast organized paedophile conspiracy controlling children's homes.

In many ways this is a secularized version of the Satanic conspiracy fear, where investigators often give subtle hints to adults who have problems with the law, are often very poor, and are emotionally damaged from their general life history, that there is a way of making substantial sums of money in compensation and getting their own back on authority figures.

The fact that some care workers did abuse their charges, gives an air of plausibility to these stories which the Satanic abuse legend lacked, nevertheless they contain echoes of the old dark legend of the terrible child-slaughtering others. Fear of paedophiles has in some respects taken on many of the dimensions of the classical conspiracy theory - the idea of a vast, hidden conspiracy which is corrupting the children who are our future. These fears are often linked with worries about the power of the Internet, which is becoming the ultimate symbol of cosmopolitan modernity.

Jacobs, David M. *The Threat.* Simon & Schuster, 1998. 16.99

You may remember that I once pointed out the contrast between the uninhibited sexuality of the fairies, and the cold sexless Greys. That little difference has now been remedied. Jacobs aliens are sex mad and definitely rough trade; the modern equivalent of the shamans' spirit spouses and children or the fairy lovers of the past, even to the point of becoming jealous and breaking up terrestrial relationships. The Greys are breeding with us, seducing our women, turning themselves into us, for some ominous end.

When we are confronted by a myth of sexually rapacious strangers, who are corrupting our genetic inheritance, with a poisonous alien seed, and are seeking to infiltrate us and take away 'our way of life' we are clearly in the realm of racist mythology. They join the litany of American racist fears, and their threatened dystopia echoes the paranoid's fear of the new world order. The Greys are essence of other, all the ominous fearful alien threatening things which hem in on the nights imagination. There is a whiff of racist pornography about this book, a touch of Julius Striecher. And there is more, Jacobs brings the hybrids home, suggests that they are walking among us, unsuspected, just the sort of idea to provoke tragedy in a nation with a not insignificant proportion of gun-toting paranoids.

Daniel Pipes. *Conspiracy; how the paranoid style flourishes and where it comes from.* Free Press, 1997. £16.99

Jim Keith. *Black Helicopters II, the Endgame strategy.* Illuminet Press, 1997. £10.95

As conspiracy theories continue to flourish in popular culture, Daniel Pipes' study is a timely expose of their origins and power for evil in the world. He traces notions of conspiracy back to the time of the Crusaders, where the two great strands of modern conspiracism have their origins: the myth of the Jewish conspiracy (the heretic and Saracen within) and from Philip IV of France's campaign accusations against the Knights Templar, the omnipotent and omnipresent secret society. Both these belief systems emerged into the political mainstream in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Age of Revolutions. Here both the deist Freemasons and the newly emancipated Jews became symbols of the hated modernity.

It is in the 20th century and in the totalitarian ideologies and Hitler and Lenin-Stalin that mass conspiracy became dominant state ideologies, with genocidal consequences. He traces the development of the conspiracy theories within the American political fringe, and notes how there conspiracy theories have tended to accuse relatively benign and powerless groups of being the agents of conspiracy, while ignoring real, powerful, enemies. Even the Communists were seen as the tools of other groups such as Jews, Illuminati or international finance. Here I think Pipes overlooks the role of anti-Communist conspiracy theories within the near mainstream. Here there are mirror images perceptions of the other to those held in the Soviet Union. Why when our society is perfect, when our people are virtuous, do things go wrong? Because the terrible others, the dreadful capitalists and/or Communists, are subverting and corrupting the virtuous state.

Pipes summarizes conspiracism as containing several features. The chief motivation of human action is lust for power; benefit indicates control; conspiracies drive history; there is a purpose and a pattern behind everything, nothing happens by chance; the world we appear to see is an illusion, apparent friends are really enemies, apparent enemies friends.

There are some other features, which should be stressed: the idea that our society is perfect, that if things go wrong, then it must be because of THEM. The enemy is the incarnation of cosmic evil active through all history; omnipotent, omnipresent, and indestructible; visible enemies are but temporary manifestations or agents of the Great Enemy in the background. The Other is both profoundly different from us (wholly immoral, dirty, wily, scheming, sexually rapacious or foreign) but is also so like us that we can never be sure who the enemy is; he might be next door, he might be in our own family. The enemy is a contaminant, either physically or spiritually.

It is these latter features which have caused much distress to American conspiracy theories. For fifty years they had constructed an image of the Soviet Union not just as totalitarian dictatorship which did truly dreadful things to its population (indeed American anti-Communists rarely dealt with the gulags and the famines and other real crimes of the Soviet regime) but as a near supernatural, indestructible force

of cosmic evil, possessed of terrible secret weapons and a robotic population. Thus the sight of this mighty empire of evil being brought down, in effect, by Afghan rebels was incomprehensible. Therefore, as the work by Jim Keith demonstrates, they have constructed a world view in which the terrible enemy only seems to die, in order to infiltrate the West.

The other solution is to bring the enemy home, there is a stark either/or here. America is not an ordinary state led by ordinary fallible human beings, but either the Republic of Virtue, or Amerika the Terrible, eater of nations. Thus the Federal Government becomes to people like Keith, what it was to Khomeni: the Great Satan, empire of the secular future. Or rather the Republic of Virtue has been taken over and occupied by the terrible others in government. The US government now is credited with the same evil intents and supernatural powers of mind control that was once accorded to the Soviet Union. The fact that this government is elected by popular vote and allows an extraordinary degree of freedom of speech and action counts for little. No matter that in most democracies, let alone dictatorships, Keith would be in jail. The overzealous local officials are a Gestapo, and the Clinton administration is the devil. His instrument of power is the Black Helicopter, which aims to bring the horrors of One Worldism and feminism to the wilderness. The helicopters are ascribed the same sort of paranormal powers as flying saucers, projecting blinding beams, stopping cars with mysterious rays, mutilating cattle, etc. The government abducts people and puts microchips in them, and pretends it's all done by flying saucers. Behind it lies the United Nations (these days in reality more often an obedient servant of the US). Perhaps the ultimate in elevating the really harmless to the rank of cosmic conspirator, is to add the Fabians to the list of conspirators; a more harmless bunch of social democratic, do-gooding pamphleteers it would be hard to find.

Bill Fawcett (ed). *Making Contact: a serious handbook for locating and communicating with extraterrestrials.* William Morrow, 1997. £16.99.

A serious handbook? There were times when reading this book that I began to wonder if it weren't in part a huge put on, with its lists of equipment you need to have in order to meet aliens, including the string to make cats' cradles for communication. Overall it is a collection of pieces bringing ufologists and exobiologists together. There are naive pro-ETH summaries of well-known UFO cases by a William R Fortstchen Ph D, a useful summary of the history of the contact myth by Jerome Clark, the usual agonizing by exobiologists as to why the aliens haven't long ago landed and taken over (obviously they're not impressed by the evidence presented by the ufologists).

Perhaps the highlight of the book are a couple of anonymous contributions from Michael Swords (though anonymous their authorship is not in doubt, they clearly have his style and beliefs) in one of which he explains that the reason why Stephen J. Gould (and I would guess at least 90 per cent of other evolutionary biologists) believe that aliens would be very different from ourselves, and would be the product of their biosphere's unique history, is because "They believe in a Darwinian model of evolutionary change... (in which) evolution is a totally random process, with no guiding force... How could such dogma have found its way into science... Materialism is one of the fundamental tenants of Darwinian evolutionary science... there can be nmo design or purpose to the universe. A thinker who has already accepted such a statement... cannot even imagine that ETs would show any similarity to humans." (p 205)

So Jerome Clark's pet expert on exobiology turns out to be someone who rejects the central paradigm of evolutionary biology on religious grounds, and adopts the sort of 'everybody's out of step but me' attitude that one comes to associated with 'unconventional thinkers'. Ho hum.

Phyllis Siefker. *Santa Claus, Last of the Wild Men: the origins and evolution of Saint Nicholas, spanning 50,000 years.* McFarland, 1997. £25.65.

A book which prompts the thought is Santa Claus a distant relative of Bigfoot, the descendent of the ritual wild man, symbol of fertility and the untamed wilderness without and within? Siefker's thesis is that Santa is derived not from Saint Nicholas himself but from a devil-figure servant which used to accompany him in the Yuletide ceremonies in Holland, and chastise naughty children. This Dutch Black Peter was equivalent to the German-American Pelznichol or Furry Nicholas, the descendent of the medieval Wild Man. While dealing with the Wild Man Siefker says much of interest, but in trying to take the story back into the mists of antiquity she falls into the classic folklorists trap of uncritically quoting old and long superseded authorities rather than the latest research. Thus, on the authority of forty-year-old books by Joseph Campbell, themselves quoting old books, we get the Neanderthal bear cult dragged in, though paleoanthropologists have long since discounted the evidence on which the myth of that cult was built.

This book did set me thinking as to the possible role of various European Wild Man traditions might have played in the early genesis of the Bigfoot legend, which in the 1950's, under the then influential theories of the late Franz Weidenrreich who believed that humanity went through a giant ape man stage of evolution, as typified by gigantopithecus - now known to be a large relative of the orang-utang - became transformed into a giant apeman, as seen on the covers of books. etc.

Douglas M. Stokes. *The Nature of Mind: parapsychology and the role of consciousness in the physical world.* McFarland, 1997. 35.10.

A survey of the evidence of parapsychology and psychical research, which while written from a clearly pro position, does not evade criticisms of sceptics, or the evidence from neuroscience that the human personality is contingent on the physical brain. The evidence is assessed in an even handed way, and Stokes clearly has little time for some of the eccentricities that his colleges get involved in. For him, the evidence for psi lies in the metaanlysis of the numerous experiments. He is also cautiously intrigued by the work of Stevenson on reincarnation.

Though Stokes personal faith is that of a dualist, who believes that mind antedates the universe, he is honest as to the problems such views could lead to, and to the ambiguity of evidence. He is also forced to concede that if it occurs survival must be that of a pure ego, sans memories, thoughts, emotions and sensory experiences, in which case it is not clear what such a survival would mean.

His arguments against central state materialism are the weakest in the book, and involvement notions such as "if we were just bodies it is overwhelmingly improbable that we would be here just now" when the universe is so vast. This sort of argument just gives me a headache.

That scruple aside, I could certainly recommend this book as a fair and intelligent summary of the more reasonable case for parapsychology, it is a pity that the excessive price and severe academic format (no just jacket, no,illustrations) may put many potential buyers off.

Paul Chambers. *Paranormal People: the famous, the infamous and the supernatural.* Blandford, 1998. £16.99.

This book is in some sense in the tradition of Eric Dingwall's *Very Peculiar People* and *Some Human Oddities*, being concerned with a variety of people that were either at the centre of the alleged paranormal experiences, were connected with strange beliefs or who investigated them. The collection is eclectic. Gif the Talking Mongoose, sits alongside the Salem witchcraft case, Emilie Sagee the bilocating schoolmistress meets Arnold Paole the Vampire, the Enfield poltergeist girls encounter Alistair Crowley. In all there are 42 chapters under eight main headings: psychic phenomena, psychological phenomena, links between worlds, cult figures, mysterious people, religious people, frauds and misconceptions and the psychic investigators. This gives a good idea of the range of strange people and (ostensible) strange phenomena one can meet in this field.

While by no means wholly uncritical, this isn't Dingwall, and I would have to say that the coverage is uneven, and some of the chapters seem rather superficial. There is a two page bibliography, but to do justice to this range of topics you would need one ten times that size. For example the chapter on Gerard Croiset makes no reference to Joe Nickell's *Psychic Sleuths* or Lyons' and Truzzi's *Blue Sense*, that on vampirism to Barber's *Vampires, Death and Burial*, nor that on Spring Heel Jack to Mike Dash's detailed and authoritative study in *Fortean Studies III*.

HOLD THE BACK PAGE

Psychological Damage

In *Magonia* 63 we reported that former UFO abduction researcher Edith Fiore had been struck off her profesional register by the Caliomia State Board of Psychology, for 'gross negligence' following therapy sessions with clients which included regression to alleged UFO abductions.

The June 5, 1998 issue of *The Orgegonian* (a regular read here at Magonia Towers - you mean you're still stuckwith the *Sun*?) reports that two Portland-area psychologists, Sophia A. Carr and Chyril J. Walker will have their licences revoked after a court case involving a former patient.

Jennifer Fultz sued the two psychologists in 1996 when she realised after four years of therapy that she and her sons had not been abused. She settled with Walker for $1.15 million, and with Carr for an undisclosed amount. Neither therapist admitted that they had done anything wrong.

Fultz's nightmare started in 1991 when she went to the Clackamas Family Counselling Service, seeking treatment for depression. During her first therapy session Carr told Fultz that her psyche had split into multiple personailities, and that such problems always stemmed from sexual abuse.

In subsequent sessions Carr made Fultz search for memories of abuse and introduced her to a system of beliefs about Satanic abuse. At one point she convinced her patient that some stomach cramps she was suffering from were 'body memories' of having given birth at the age of twelve.

Acording to the Oregon Psychologist Board's statement Carr demanded that Fultz should get restraining orders against her husband and other members of her family, threatening that if she did not do so she would be commited to a mental hospital and her children would be taken into care.

After Carr and Walker were struck off, lawyer Michael Dwyer ommented: "The Fultz case represents a warning shot to that spectrum of the psychological community which believes in preposterous notions such as that their patients are repressing a decade or more of satanic ritual abuse".

We cannot help but wonder who is going to be the first UFO abductionist who is going to have their arse sued off by an abductee for the mental pain and anguish they have been caused by having 'memories' of hideous physical pain and humilitaion implanted into them.

25 Years Ago (Part Two)

We seem to have got a bit ahead of ourselves in the '25 Years Ago' column, in which we point out just how amazingly prescient MUFOB / *Magonia* was all that time ago and how we discussed every major contemporary issue in ufology years before today's ufological luminaries were even born. A shame because both the issues covered last time raised the issue of ufological 'respectibilty'. John Harney reviewed Hynek's *UFO Experence*, which was supposed to be heralding a *rapproachment* between ufology and science. Well that didn't really happen, and Hynek's book is now just another UFO paperback adorning the catalogues of second-hand booksellers like Aardvark Books. Would anybody like to bet that this *isn't* going to happen to the Sturrock Report?

In our attempts to pin down the American ETHers to come up with a couple of convincing cases, one that got thrown up was the Loch Raven Dam case from 1958 (amazing how many of the cases they came up with are from *long* ago - perhaps all the real ETs got fed up with Earth, and left in about 1962). By coincidence this was the case that Alan Sharp used as his farewell to MUFOB, with a typical Sharpean demolition job in the July 1973 issue. Still worth reading, so we'll put it on the web site.

Standing Invitation

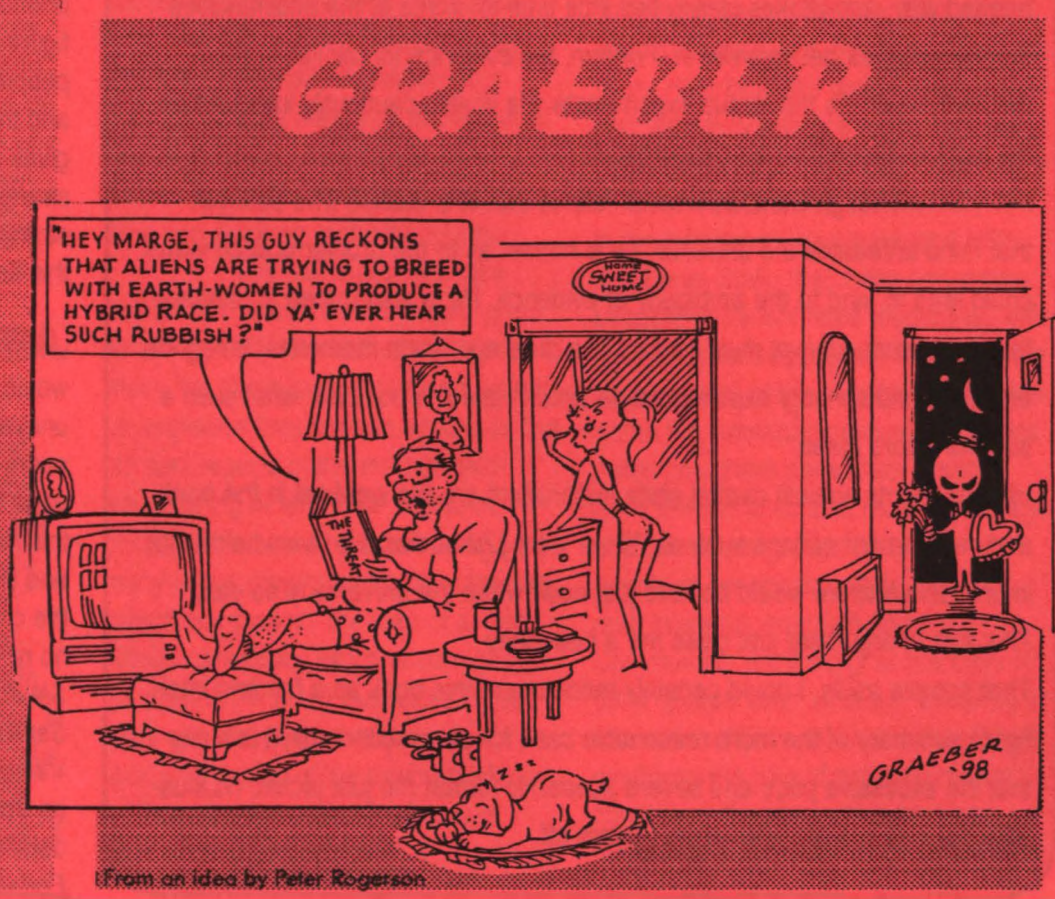
London-dwelling Magonians, or those passing through the Smoke, are reminded that the Readers' Group meetings are still taking place on the first Sunday of each month, at the Railway pub, Putney, just opposite Putney South-West Trains station (15 minutes or so from Waterloo), ten minutes walk from East Putney tube. The meetings start 7.00 pm (-ish) and meander on 'till chucking-out time, so you're welcome anytime through the evening. There's no special room booked, so just look out for the characters with the piles of odd magazines and books in the ground-floor bar. Decent food and drink - it's a Wetherspoon's pub so no blaring music - good conversation, with plenty of idle gossip as well as the more high-minded stuff. You can't afford not to be there!

BUFORA Bafflement

Some sort of prize for the strangest and most puzzling UFO magazine cover design of recent years must go to issue 4 of the new economy format *BUFORA Bulletin*.

Obviously derived from computer clip-art discs, it shows a silhouette of a couple romantically gazing into each other eyes, drinking champagne. A globe with a ship, plane and car circling it hovers behind the man's head while the woman sits beneath a small cloud. The caption reads: 'UFOs - Worthy of Scientific Study?' What on earth is going on here? Does it represent a romantic moment at Garfunkles, BUFORA's favourite after-lectures rendezvous in London's elegant Marylebone High Street?

The magazine's Editorial wins another prize for the most cliches forced into one paragraph: BUFORA is 'a smaller, leaner organisation' (how redolent of the Thatcher years that phrase is!) we learn. BUFORA is 'at a crossroads', and it 'falls between two stools'. Perhaps if it hadn't got so small and lean it could comfortably have rested a buttock on each!



From an idea by Peter Rogerson