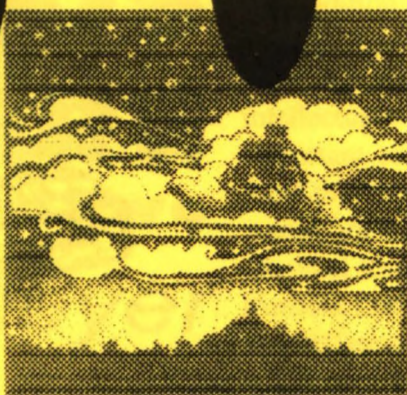


M A G O N I 68A



INTERPRETING CONTEMPORARY VISION AND BELIEF

SEPTEMBER 1999 / £1.25

HEADING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Part Two of Varicose Brains
By Martin Kottmeyer



plus: Jenny meets Joe - a cautious look at ufology's would-be saviour



MAGONIA 68
(incorporating MUFOB 117)

SEPTEMBER 1999

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SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS
Magonia is available by exchange with other magazines, or by subscription at the following rates for four issues:

UK	£5.00
Europe	£6.00 (e10.00)
USA	\$13.00
Elsewhere	£7.00

US subscribers must pay in dollar bills. We are unable to accept checks drawn on American banks.

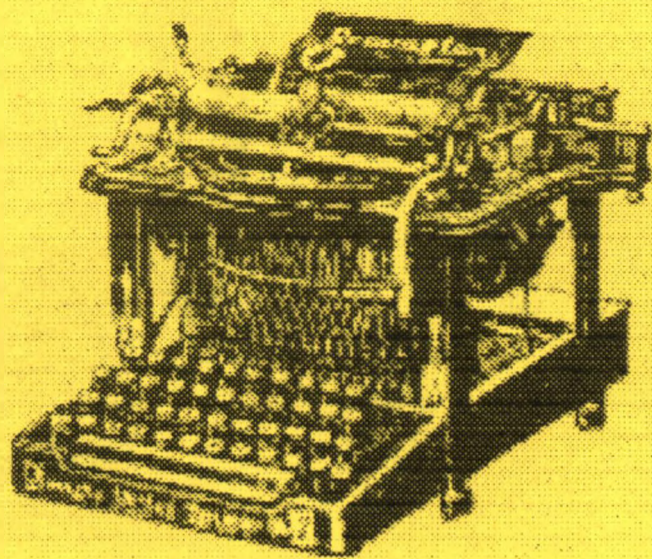
We accept French banknotes at the rate of FF10 to £1.00

Cheques and money orders must be made payable to JOHN RIMMER, not 'Magonia'.

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Northern Echoes

THE RECENT FURORE OVER THE 'memoirs' of an 'Auschwitz survivor' who turned out to be a Swiss citizen who had never been a concentration camp inmate, as well as the various scandals surrounding fake guests on a variety of TV chat shows and documentaries, highlights once again the difficulties in assessing the 'truth' or otherwise of any narrative. They reinforce us in our suspicion that a very high proportion of the narratives in UFO, Fortean and paranormal literature are fictions. Short of hiring teams of private detectives to investigate the lives of the narrators in intimate detail, there is no way that the objective truth of any of these stories can be assessed. Any 'physical evidence' is at best ambiguous, or at worst totally absurd and counterproductive, and never has independent status apart from the narrative. The only valid approach to such stories is to treat them as folklore and to bracket any question as to their objective truth: one certainly cannot base grand conclusions such as extraterrestrial visitors or life after death on this 'evidence'.

'Investigators', few of whom actually investigate, as opposed to record stories, have a number of stock answers, these include "when you actually listen to these people as opposed to reading them in cold print you can assess their truth" or "I have seen the pain in X you couldn't fake this". Rubbish. The various TV hoaxers fooled tough cynical journalists, the Swiss Auschwitz 'survivor' almost convinced one investigator who knew the story was false, because his pain seemed so real and difficult to fake. The pain and terror may indeed be real, and I suspect a good part of the power of narratives such as the abduction and satanic abuse myths is that they give shape, face and structure, to nameless, faceless pains and terrors, which are perhaps the worst pains and terrors of all. Remember that Budd Hopkins line

- we only fantasise about nice things, who would fantasise about being abducted to aliens? Well, who would want to fantasise about being a concentration camp survivor, or a traumatised Vietnam vet, or the reincarnation of the victim of a medieval pogrom or a Cathar burned at the stake, or being a cancer sufferer, or a rape victim, or a murderer. Yet people have indeed fantasised about all of these things, and more.

And of course these narratives grip the hearer, and there is a great pressure to suspend critical judgement, because they speak to a universal human fear, that of being the disbelieved victim of some terrible outrage, and an admirable desire to assist the afflicted (and perhaps to the investigators own fantasies of being knights on white chargers rescuing the afflicted from distress).

There is beyond this an extraordinary naiveté mixed with arrogance in many of the people in this field, the assumption that 'no one can get one over on the great me'. Few would be as open about this as the anthropologist Grover Kranz, who on a TV documentary on the Bigfoot, uttered words to the effect that anyone who could fool him had to be a greater genius than Leonardo de Vinci (or Grover Kranz?), but the idea that the Great I-am can always detect 'fakes and nutters' is often present. Of course they can't, people who spend their lives looking out fraud can be taken in. There is also that strange, specious claim, that X is physically, psychologically, temperamentally, morally... blaa... blaa... incapable of lying. Of course, with the probable exception of people suffering from certain forms of learning difficulties, or perhaps after suffering types of brain damage, there is simply no human being to whom those words apply, and a good job too. As the carers of those who, as a result of neurological damage are constitutionally inca-

HEADING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Varicose Brains: Part Two

Martin Kottmeyer



CAMILLE FLAMMARION (1842-1925) is largely remembered as an important French astronomer whose textbooks were standard references for the profession. He is an important figure in the tradition of the plurality of worlds. He believed that intelligent life filled the universe like many intellectuals did, but he was an important advocate of the growing view that those other worlds would not be inhabited by beings identical to man. Astronomy was learning that those other worlds had different properties that would create environments that would force different adaptations by life evolving on them.

He is less well remembered as the author of a few works that are now considered part of the science fiction tradition. Lumen (1873) provides illustration of his view by describing aliens on distant worlds like planets around Gamma Virgo, Delta Andromeda, a minor star in Cygnus, and Theta Orion. On the first the inhabitants are vaguely humanoid, but have different sense organs and reproduce asexually in a manner that is too mysterious to explain to those limited to earthly senses. The next has seal-like intelligences that draw their nutrition from a gas-liquid ocean. The next has peaceful trees that are bisexual and preach an anarchistic political philosophy. The other has beings possessing such weak molecular bonds they collapse to dust but reassemble again. (1) A later work, Urania (1890) includes aliens with eyes that emit a magnetic influence capable of killing who or whatever receives its glance. The main focus though is on our neighbours, the Martians. They are six-limbed and have a heightened sensitivity, intellectuality, and a superior morality. (2)

The work that demands our attention for the history of the idea of the Grays is Omega: The Last Days of the World (1893). The book is an attempt to sketch out the future history of mankind in a fictional framework and seemingly the first such that presupposes the reality of deep time in the forward direction. Geologists, astronomers, and evolutionary philosophers had proposed the idea in a general way and tried to speculate about it, but novelists had not found a way to wrap their words around it. Flammarion's effort is weighed down with exposi-

tions on the history of predictions about the end of the world and the opinions of scientists. Any contemporary editor would slash the book's length by two-thirds and end up with a lyrically utopian short story with moments of beautiful melancholy. As is, it is more a work of science popularisation and has more than a measure of interest in how the opinions of the era date it. The age of the world has fewer zeros in it with the significance of radioactivity as yet unrecognised. As the world cools, the seas sink into the core and the earth eventually dies from desertification. Without water vapour, weather ceases. The bigger the world, the slower the cooling. Mars and the Moon went first; Earth and Venus are going next; eventually Jupiter will follow. Percival Lowell's Mars, a decade later would also foretell our eventual desertification though he premises it on the shrinking of the solar nebula, with Mars cooling first because it was farther away.

Omega becomes relevant to us when it describes humanity in the thirtieth century. The nervous system began to grow more sensitive. Women's heads were smaller than men's were because "her exquisite sensibility respond(ed) to sentimental considerations before reason could act in the lower cells." The neck had a greater supple grace. The mouth had a penetrating sweetness and beauty. The hair was luxuriant with light curls. Her head had increased with the exercise of intellectual faculties. Both sexes had cerebral circonvolutions that were more numerous and more pronounced. "In short, the head had grown, the body had diminished in size. Giants were no longer to be seen." (3)

He elaborates, "Four permanent causes had modified insensibly the human form; the intellectual faculties and of the brain, the decrease in manual labour and bodily exercise, the transformation of food, and the marriage system. The first had increased the size of the cranium as compared with the rest of the body; the second had decreased the strength of the limbs; the third had diminished the size of the abdomen and made the teeth finer and smaller; the tendency of the fourth had been rather to perpetuate the classic forms of human beauty: masculine beauty, the no-

bility of an uplifted countenance, and the graceful outlines of womanhood." By the 200th century, a single race existed. It was small in stature, light-coloured, and suggested Anglo-Saxon and Chinese descent. Differences converged towards one race, one language, one general government, and one religion. Flammarion laments that humanity did not grow wings as poets had prophesied. Electric apparatus, airships, allowed him to soar in the sky instead. (4)

By the 100th century, man had acquired new delicacy in all the senses and had added new ones; an electric sense to attract and repel matter and a psychic one that allowed communication at a distance like a transcendental magnetism. Interstellar communication with Mars and Venus was discovered. Space travel, so obvious a development to us, never crossed Flammarion's mind even towards the finale when it is known Jupiter has life and oversees the death of the last couple, Omega and Eva, amid the remaining cities of glass. The human body becomes transfigured with still further time. Women achieve perfect beauty. She has slender, translucent white skin, eyes "illuminated by the light of dreams," smaller mouth and idealised jaw, and soft rose lips so dazzling one dared not kiss them. The new race was "infinitely superior." (5) Eventually, it achieves intellectual greatness and well being. Humanity is increasingly released from the empire of matter and gross appetites. A new system of alimentation is formed. The metamorphosis becomes so absolute, fossil specimens of men in geological museums seemed too gross to be true ancestors. (6) This state of affairs lasts at length until desertification at last forces the population to shrink. Decadence and degeneration sets in and barbarism returns. (7)

We see the occasional echo of Flammarion's prior works in the enhanced nervous sensitivities and new senses. The bigger heads and smaller bodies reflect the evolutionary ideas of Spencer at minimum. It is an open question if Flammarion was exposed to H.G. Wells' ideas. His ideas were not in wide distribution at the probable time of the writing of Omega, but Flammarion was blatantly fluent in all the science of the era. One feature that argues

against it is that Flammarion did not see future humanity as bald. Perfect woman still had "long and silky hair, in whose deep chestnut were blended all the ruddy tints of the setting sun." (8) He blended the evolutionary pressures differently with sexual dimorphism an important part of the mix and degeneracy less emphasised. He also took his final product more seriously than Wells did his. Whether the similar elements bespeak independent constructions working out a similar logic or exposure to Wells' argument, the variations show evolutionary logic did not force an immutable conclusion in all elements of form. There was room to play around with the idea.

Louis Bousenard, a French writer of adventures, provides our next example. In *Ten Thousand Years in a Block of Ice* (1898), a polar adventurer freezes to death in an iceberg and awakens to a group of small men with large globular heads who float about in the air. They flee in pained dismay when he makes a noise. Future men are a racial blend of Chinese and blacks. It is their advanced psychic development that allows them to levitate themselves along with other objects. They are abnormally sensitive to sensory stimuli. The explorer was bearded and that leads to his being thought to be a possible slave until a show of intellect gains him their respect. The future men are involved in a project to communicate with Mars using fields covered in black and white cloth to portray symbols. This echo of the Mars mania of the late 1880s, distinctly reminiscent of similar landscape symbol schemes, strikes the explorer as ridiculously inefficient. They also display ludicrous misunderstandings of artefacts of his era displayed in a museum. Combined with a cultural smugness thought to be of Chinese provenance and their enslavement of the more primitive, the explorer becomes disenchanted. A confusing ending has the explorer fear his life work of a complete theory of evolution might be destroyed in a volcanic eruption. It might all be a dream, but maybe not. (9) The Chinese element recalls Flammarion's work, but the blend with blacks creatively differentiates the two. Flammarion was basically utopian in his thoughts. Bousenard is not. The element of levitation is a variant on Flammarion's predic-

tion of psychic and electric powers and nicely presages the occurrence of gliding levitation that recurrently appears in later UFO lore, sometimes in conjunction with Grays, but sometimes other forms. (10)

George Griffith populates his Mars with scientifically advanced macrocephalic humanoids in *A Honeymoon in Space* (1901) They diverge from the Martians of *War of the Worlds* in being giants, but they are decadent, warlike, and have few emotions. (11) They are further along the evolutionary path and have given themselves over to a ruthless and extreme rationalism. They try to eliminate all physical differences and emotions. The honeymooners also visit a dead moon, a sinless Venus, a Ganymede of opulent crystal cities, and a Saturn with an ecology adapted to a semi-gaseous ocean. They portray phases of a quasi-Spencerian evolutionary scheme. Though infantile and derivative, the book is said to have an undeniable panache. (12)

A short story by Eden Philpotts, "A Story Without an End," (1901) concerns various creatures speculating about higher forms of life. Trilobites, dinosaurs, modern man, and a man of the year million take turns in this game. Future man turns out to be coneheads. The cone-like head extends three-feet above the face. His is pink, pliable, has gills, wings, is telepathic and subsists on odours. (13)

H.G. Wells offers a twist on his own creation in *First Men in the Moon* (1901). The moon is honeycombed within by a society of large insects. Division of labour has led to a portion of the society specialising in matters of intellect and they form a sort of aristocracy. For a Selenite destined to be a mathematician, the talent is nurtured with perfect psychological skill. "His brain grows, or at least the mathematical faculties of his brain grows, and the rest of him only so much as is necessary to sustain this essential part of him - they bulge ever larger and seem to suck all life and vigour from the rest of the frame. His limbs shrivel, his heart and digestive organs diminish, his insect face hidden under its bulging contours - his deepest emotion is the evolution of a novel computation." Ruling all was the Grand Lunar. Resembling a small cloud, it had a

brain case measuring many yards in diameter and was tended by a number of body servants who sustained him. It has intense staring eyes. He eventually saw the dwarfed little body, white, with shrivelled limbs and ineffectual tentacles. "It was great. It was pitiful." (14)

George Raffalowitz's *Planetary Journeys and Earthly Sketches* (1908) includes a short story "Trip to a Planet" which opens with a close encounter. A pair of hairless, macrocephalic entities in billowing robes are floating above a field and communicating to each other by telepathy.



H G Wells offers a twist on his own creation in *First Men on the Moon*.

The narrator learns they had just stopped off before a visit to Mars and he prevails upon them to take him along. We eventually learn their unidentified home world is 7 times larger than ours is. Their culture is utterly without emotion and they don't understand concepts like beauty, rage, good, and evil. There are few females and few children. Most of the population consists of neuters. Death is voluntary and usually chosen when there is a sense of failure. Other stories in the collection describe worlds with entities like windmill people genetically altered to resemble sails and a hyperanthrope planning to take over the universe. Bleiler suggests the book is half-

eccentric and devoid of talent. "It is astonishing it was published." Yet how easy it would be argue the similarities to modern lore are sufficient to argue it was a veiled "true" encounter. (15)

James Alexander's *The Lunarian Professor* (1909) has the narrator on a fishing trip when he encounters a lunarian working a handcar down a railroad track. It is humanoid with a large, globular head and huge eyes. It also has six wings of various sizes. He got here by manipulation of gravitation, though he won't explain further to prevent our invading space. Lunarians live within the moon



The great adventure writer Edgar Rice Burroughs enters our history in 1922 with the story *Chessmen of Mars*

thanks to their science. They are entrepreneurial and ultimately altruistic. They know the Earth's future mathematically and unroll a map of our history to come. Alexander gets some of the near term things right like the spread of cities, women's rights, loosening of marriage, synthetics, and photoelectricity. Some of it is wrong like the end of war. Around the time we develop the ability to choose the sex of children, the Lunarians plan to intervene and enforce the creation of a third sex that is neuter. It will be more intelligent and less passionate. The resemblance to modern ufology's Hybrid Program is hard to miss. What degree of similarity exists probably re-

flects a dramatic and definitional sensibility that aliens are smarter and more powerful than we are and should thus engage in grandiose projects like meddling in the fate of our species. (16)

The Lunarian reveals that by the tenth millennium mankind will be short, large-headed, toothless, and nearly bald. By the hundredth millennium, he shrinks even more and will have no digestive system. The umbilical cord stays after birth and machines infuse nutrition into the creature. It has long arms, but no ears, teeth, or toes.

James Beresford's *The Hampdenshire Wonder* (1911) describes the childhood of a future man born to normal parents by apparently spontaneous mutation. The child has a large, bald head and seems otherwise physically normal. He forgets nothing and by the age of 4 has consumed the knowledge of a large private library. "He is too many thousands of years ahead of us." (17) The child has a disconcerting stare, a powerful glance, and is somewhat taciturn and unburdened by emotions. He also finds faith unnecessary and there is some suggestion a fanatical rector is the child's murderer. It is among the great early scientific romances. (18)

William Greene, in "The Savage Strain" (1911), envisions North Americans as shorter and weaker in the year 2410, but with a more developed mental ability. They are mild and peace loving. Science has removed all effort and peril with perfect weather control and anti-gravity leading to degeneracy. The Yellow Peril returns and the professor hero invents an elixir of courage which saves the day by making these future men aggressive. There is a side-effect of warring tribalism afterwards, but at least America is free. (19) "John Jones's Dollar" (1915) by Harry Keeler accepts the notion of larger heads and punier bodies for the year 3221 with apparently little fuss. (20)

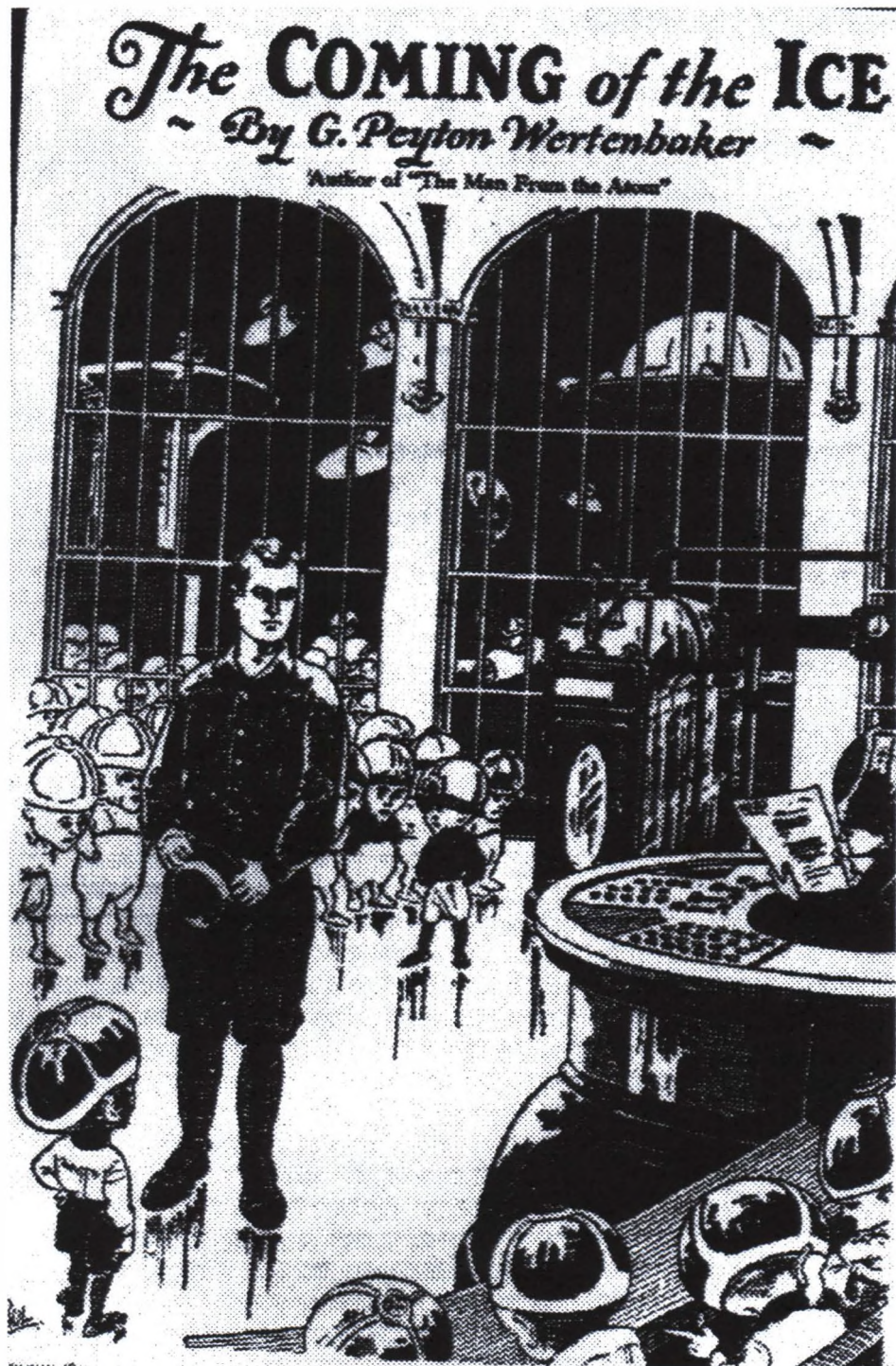
The Russian author Aleksandre Romanovich Beliaev worked in the tradition of *The Time Machine* when making *The Struggle in Space: Red Dream, Soviet-American War* (1918). Corrupt, capitalistic America has its workers live in Moorlockian tunnels where they have reverted to savagery. In both cultures, future man is bald, myopic, physically

weaker and disease-ridden. Americans have degenerated to pot-bellied, spindle-legged, bulb-heads and use genetic engineering to create monstrous man-machine combinations. Eurasian man is altruistic and servile to a telepathic master. A battle for world rule leads to a threat to destroy the world with atomic energy by a degenerate banker who drains blood from victims for his consumption. The narrator sacrifices himself by destroying the headquarters of the American villain. Call this cartoon adventure from the other side of the mirror. (21) The great adventure writer Edgar Rice Burroughs enters our history in 1922 with the story "The Chessmen of Mars." A race called the kaldanes exists that is 90% brain by volume with only the simplest of vital organs forming the remainder. They do not even have lungs. This is in ultimate preparation for a time when the atmosphere has thinned to nothing. The eyes were hideously inhuman, set far apart, protruding and lidless. They have enormous hypnotic powers and can control the will of humans. A girl abducted by the kaldanes experienced him fastening "his terrible eyes upon her. He did not speak, but his eyes seemed to be boring straight to the centre of her brain... They seemed but to burn deeper and deeper, gathering up every vestige of control of her entire nervous system." (22) One can hardly miss how very like this is to David Jacobs in his latest descriptions of how modern Grays are able to stare into eyes, travel down the optic neural pathway, and fire "neurons at whatever sites he wants." (23) The nose was "scarce more than two small parallel slits set vertically" above a round mouth. Most had a skin that was bluish-gray. They "have no sex, except the king who is bisexual" and lays thousands of eggs. To move about they domesticated a local animal and interbred it with captive red Martians to create a rykor, a muscular but headless humanoid slave into which the chelae can be inserted to manipulate the spinal cord. When kaldanes show emotion, it is atypical and condemned by others of their race.

They explain themselves as a natural development of nature. First, life existed with no brains, then rudimentary nervous systems formed, and then small

1. Bleiler, Everett F. *Science Fiction: The Early Years*. Kent State University, 1990, entry #775p. 248.
2. Flammarion, Camille *Urania* Estes and Lauriat, 1890, p. 37.
3. Flammarion, Camille *Omega* University of Nebraska Press, 1999 reprint, pp. 198-9.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-201
5. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 231, 241.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
9. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #246, p. 77.
10. Fowler, Raymond *The Andreasson Affair* Prentice-Hall, 1979, pp. 174-5.
11. Locke, George *Voyages in Space: A Bibliography of Interplanetary Fiction Ferret Fantasy*, 1975, entry #92, and Bleiler, op. cit., entry #938, p. 306.
12. Stabledon, Brian *Scientific Romance in Britain: 1890-1950* St. Martin's, 1985, pp. 52-3.
13. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #1776b, p. 596.
14. Wells, H.G. *The First Men in the Moon* Donning Company, 1989, pp. 144, 152.
15. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #1823, p. 610. and Locke, op. cit., entry #168.
16. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #31, p. 8.
17. Morgan, Chris *Future Man?* Irvington, 1980, p. 37.
18. Stableford, op. cit., pp. 103-4 and Bleiler, entry #182, p. 58.
19. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #922, p. 299
20. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #1211, p. 401.
21. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #156, pp. 478.

brains. "Evolution proceeded. The brains became larger and more powerful. In us you see the highest development, but there are those of us who believe that there is yet another step - that some time in the far future our race shall develop into a super-thing -- just



brain. The incubus of legs and chelae and vital organs will be removed. The future kaldane will be nothing but a great brain. Deaf, dumb, and blind it will be sealed in its buried vault far beneath the surface of Mars - just a great, wonderful, beautiful brain with nothing to distract it from eternal thoughts." The kaldane swoons at the thought asking could anything be more wonderful? The abductee disputes this, "Yes, I can think of a number of things that would be infinitely more wonderful." (24)

There has been a suggestion that *Ras Thavas, The Mastermind of Mars* (1928), fits our notion of a Gray, physically and unemotionally, but there are ambiguities in the situation. His race,

the people of Toonol, has a fetish of science that strikes the narrator as "unintelligent because unbalanced," and had an atrophied "heart and soul" from generations of inhibition. However suggestive, it is not evident that this is mirrored in their general physical form as was true of the kaldanes. (25)

A movie called *Radio-mania* appears in 1923 that deserves at least passing mention. It is said to contain a dream sequence in which Martians are depicted as having oversized heads. They wear vaguely Egyptian looking cloths. Little more is known and there does not seem to be any video copies of it available. (26)

John Lionel Tayler's *The Last of my Race* (1924) is set in 302,930 A.D. where we learn man has been superseded by a new species, *Sapiens minimus*. It has a huge head with tremendous brainpower, big chest, long thin legs, light weight, and a superior sense of touch. This species is however dying out. A still higher form of life is replacing it, but the visitor to the future must not see it. The psychological impact would kill him. (27)

The Dr. Hackensaw series includes "A Journey to the Year 3000" where the doc and Pep learn people there have bigger heads and slighter bodies. Teeth are extracted and the gums hardened at any early age. Pep accidentally runs over a future man in a driving accident and is sentenced to become an experimental subject and earning her great pain. The conjunction of the gray form with a painful experimental procedure is another interesting precursor to contemporary abduction horrors. The appearance of the form in such pulp hackwork is a nice indication that it has full rights to being called a stereotype already in 1925. (28)

The June 1926 *Amazing Stories* features a story by G. Peyton Wertenbaker titled "The Coming of the Ice" and describes the strange men of the hundredth century as "men with huge brains and tiny, shrivelled bodies, atrophied limbs, and slow ponderous movements." The illustration by Frank R. Paul is an interesting sight. A couple of the diminutive figures could almost pass for Grays but for the fact that they are clothed in pants, shirts, socks, and wear helmets that to the eyes of someone

in the Nineties look rather like bicycle headgear. (29)

The short story by Donald Wandrei of "The Red Brain" (1927) involves the last days of the universe when all that remains are some giant brains with godlike powers living beneath a glassy shell on the cooled star of Antares. They had evolved from inhabitants on a nearby planet. Everything is becoming cosmic dust and the brains turn to The Red Brain for hope since his thoughts are so profound they have trouble understanding them. He finds a solution and the brains enter into telepathic bond to hear it. His mental energy kills them all. It turns out he was mad. Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" inspired this. (30)

In Ray Cummings' story "Beyond the Stars" (1928) an airship voyages into the macrocosm where our world is but an atom. They come into a world that is being invaded by another. The invaders are a dual life form. Small huge-headed beings sit atop gigantic bodies that are imbecilic. As Bleiler notes, this is an obvious echo of Burroughs' kaldanes (31)

"Evolution Island" appears in the March 1928 pulp *Weird Tales* and features the discovery that evolution can be accelerated or reversed by means of an earthly radiation. A mad doctor enters the evolution ray and is transformed into a big-domed superman with four tentacles with plans to conquer the world. Our heroes try to stop him, but are captured and bound. They helplessly watch as an armada of plants in globular air vessels takes off for an attack. Well, not too helplessly actually, for they burst free and turn the evolution ray on in devolving mode and turn everything, the fleet included, into primordial slime. (32)

The idea that radiation could manipulate evolution is an offshoot of the doctrine of orthogenesis that still had adherents in the Twenties. Chemical processes in the germplasm were thought to force generations along trend lines that led to overdevelopment. Sir Arthur Smith Woodward, a leading palaeontologist of the era, accepted orthogenesis and offered a theory of racial senility that applied the notion to the growth of the human brain and primate evolution generally. You will likely recall the name from his involvement in the Piltdown hoax.

(33) The theory of mutation had been introduced by DeVries in 1910 and the notion of "mutation-pressure" driving evolution followed in due course. (34) Herman Muller bombarded flies with increasing doses of X-rays and found a proportional increase in mutations. Thus in 1927, he announced the "Artificial Transmutation of the Gene" and suggested his discovery could guide the evolution of plants, animals, and even humans. (35)

G.O. Olinik's gimmick of the evolution ray is taken up later by pulp master Edmond Hamilton for his long praised and often reprinted short story "The Man Who Evolved" (1931). In it a mad biologist learns he can speed up evolution by means of concentrated cosmic rays and decides to submit himself to its effects. The first dose makes him taller, more muscular, a veritable physical Adonis. The face conveyed immense intellectual power shining through clear dark eyes. Stopping there would have made him the greatest man of the age, but the experiment must go forward. The next dose reduces the body by half. It is thin and shrivelled. "The head supported by this weak body was an immense, bulging balloon that measured fully 18 inches from brow to back! It was almost entirely hairless, its great mass balanced precariously upon his slender shoulders and neck. And his face too was changed greatly, the eyes larger and the mouth smaller, the ears seeming smaller, also." The change appeals to him, preferring more brain to the still animal body of the first stage. A witness fears he says this because he is losing all human emotions and sentiment.

He takes another dose and the witness observes the worsening spectacle, "He had become simply a great head! A huge hairless head fully a yard in diameter, supported on tiny legs, the arms having dwindled to mere hands that projected just below the head! The eyes were enormous, saucer-like, but the ears were mere pinholes at either side of the head, the nose and mouth being similar holes below the eyes." The Brain Monster expresses pride and boasts that with this colossal brain he would be master of the planet free to pursue any experiment he wishes, even the destruction of all life. His mental powers now in-

clude telepathy.

Another dose follows. It is now a "gray head-thing," wrinkled and folded, two eyes, and only two muscular tentacles. The body is entirely atrophied. It boasts of soaring vista of power beyond imagination. One more dose and he will reach the end of the road. That turns out to be gray limp mass four feet across whose only sign of life is twitching. Only a great brain remained, running on pure energy and devoid of all emotion and desire save a burning curiosity and desire for truth. He thinks one more dose will generate a still higher form - the last mutation. The switch is thrown. It turns out evolution is not orthogenetic; it is circular. The being is now a quivering jelly of protoplasm. The implications sink in and an insanely laughing witness destroys the lab. (36)

Hamilton, like Wells, populated deep space with the form just as he did deep time. In "Crashing Suns" (August 1928), an intelligent alien race intends to crash their dying sun into ours to reinvigorate it. They are globes of pink, unhealthy-looking flesh a yard across and upheld by slender, insect-like legs. They have short thin limbs for arms. (37) Similarly, he creates intelligent Martians with bulbous heads and stilt-like legs and arms for "A Conquest of Two Worlds" (1932). It also has a large chest to get oxygen from the thinner air. (38) "Fessenden's World" (1937) includes a short description of a world ruled by an oligarchy of living brains. Their race of servants is destroyed by a plague of growing rot. Some of the brains survive to create a race of servant machines, but they revolt and destroy the brains. Without the brains to direct them, they come to wreck and that world dies. (39)

E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" (1928) is another revered scientific romance, a classic morality play warning of the dangers of over-reliance on technology and civilisation. People live within the bowels of a great Machine that takes care of the necessities of survival. There is a sensibility among the inhabitants that "there will come a generation that has got beyond facts, beyond impressions, a generation absolutely colourless, a generation seraphically free from the taint of personality." The limbs

of the body were becoming so atrophied it could not pick up a book for its only uses were eating, sleeping, and producing ideas. One woman is described as a swaddled lump of flesh with a face as white as a fungus. A few had lived outside the machine and one such visitor had a moustache. The inhabitants looked on him as reverting to a savage and the Machine would have no mercy on him. The problems start when the master brain perishes, quietly and complacently, and all starts to sink into decadence. They had sinned. "The sin against the body - it was for that they wept in chief; the centuries of wrong against the muscles and the nerves, and those 5 portals by which we apprehend - glossing it over with talk of evolution, until the body was white pap, the home of ideas as colourless, the last slushy stirrings of a spirit that had grasped the stars." It is time to start over in the external world. (40)

Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1931) offered a pair of important variations on the Big Brain concept. Ten million years in the future, the environment acted upon a few human species surviving a disaster to create Second Man. They had a roomier cranium, but this needed a more massive neck, stouter legs, and greater bones. Their eyes were large and jade green. Teeth were smaller and fewer and some organs like the appendix and tonsils had gone away. This is basically sounder architecture and has a good logic about it. Sexual interest was more sublimated. They had an innate cosmopolitanism. They acted less impulsively. They enjoyed a long age of idyllic peace. (41) Initially, that is. Then, "Just as the fangs of the sabre-toothed tiger had finally grown so large it could not eat, so the brain of the second human species threatened to outgrow the rest of the body. In a cranium that was initially roomy enough, this rare product of nature was now increasingly cramped; while a circulatory system that was formerly quite adequate, was becoming more and more liable to fail in pumping blood through so cramped a structure." Congenital imbecility and various mental diseases took over. Before complete doom a stabler variation appeared and interbred with the remnants. (42)

Third Man superseded

24. <http://www.literature.org/authors/burroughs-edgar-rice/the-chessmen-of-mars/chapter-05.html>

25. Burroughs, Edgar Rice. *The Mastermind of Mars*. Ace Science Fiction F-181, pp. 8, 93

26. Hardy, Phil. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction Movies*. Woodbury, 1984, p. 69.

27. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #2157, pp.731-2.

28. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #749, p. 243.

29. Kyle, David. *A Pictorial History of Science Fiction*. Hamlyn, 1976, pp. 76-7.

30. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #2299, p. 788.

31. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #531, p. 176.

32. Bleiler, op. cit., entry #1006, pp. 333-4.

33. Bowler, Peter. *Theories of Human Evolution: A Century of Debate, 1844-1944*. Johns Hopkins, 1986, pp. 198-209.

34. Bowler, Peter. *The Non-Darwinian Revolution*. Johns Hopkins, 1988, p. 122.

35. Weart, Spencer R. *Nuclear Fear: A History*. Harvard U., 1988, pp. 48-9.

36. Brackett, Leigh. *The Best of Edmond Hamilton*. Del Rey, 1977, pp. 17-36.

37. Panshin, Alexi and Cori. *The World Beyond the Hill*. Jeremy Tarcher, 1989, p. 218.

38. Brackett, op. cit., pp. 36-69.

39. Brackett, op. cit., pp. 207-8

40. Bova, Ben, ed., *Science Fiction Hall of Fame, volume II*, Avon, 1974, pp. 248-79.

41. Stapledon, Olaf. *Last and First Men and Star-Maker*. Dover, 1968, pp. 100-4

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

Second Man and this race embarked on a project to create the next race, envisioned as a super-brain. We would call it a genetic engineering scheme with elements of embryo growth acceleration. The brain grew to 12 feet across with "a body reduced to a mere vestige upon the undersurface of the brain." It was kept alive mechanically and chemically in a factory of a house called a brain room. It knew no emotions except curiosity and constructiveness. It had an artificial telepathy. Eventually ten thousand such super-brains were constructed and they constituted the Fourth Men. The Great Brains enslaved Third Man then eventually destroyed him save for some held for experimental purposes in cages. Unfortunately the life of the intellect was barren and they realised the necessity for a body and lower brain tissue to form values. They reworked the remnants of Third Man to construct their successors, the



Fifth Men. (43) There seems to be little doubt the Stapledon was consciously playing with the ideas of Wells as he did regularly in most of his work. (44) Some also allege the influence of Flammarion due to the fact that both were indulging in deep time histories, but in the issues of Gray history the Wellsian influence is more recognisable, particularly since dimorphism between the sexes is not much in evidence in Stapledon's descriptions.

The year 1931 gave us a veritable wave of these creatures. Besides Stapledon and Hamilton, there was Clifford Simak's "The World of the Red Sun" in which a Big Brain named Golan-Kirt comes out of the cosmos and rules the Earth 5 million years hence. (45) Then there were the bald, big-brained humanoids from Alpha Centaurus who abduct Buck

Rogers and his cohorts as part of a sampling expedition designed to take specimens of life for interstellar transport. (46) Stanton Coblentz's "Into Plutonian Depths" had a Frank Paul illustration that nicely prefigures the Gray form in having a bulbous head, large eyes, no evident nose or ears, a scrawny frame and boney limbs. (47)

Era" is particularly notable. (48) An alien race started to become dependent on machines. Some saw the dangers associated with machines and split away, but those who became the Eternal Ones continued the path of degeneration. "Their limbs atrophied, perished from lack of use. Even their brains were injured, for they lived an easy life, facing no new problems - Generation upon generation their bodies wasted away. Until they were no longer natural animals. They became mere brains, with eyes and feeble tentacles. In place of bodies, they use machines. Living brains, with bodies of metal."

They became too weak to reproduce and turned to their science to give them immortality. But the brains rot and they now seek those who split away to acquire Mothers "to change their

offspring with their hideous arts and make of them new brains for the machines." (49) Seen up close, the Eternal ones are a horror: "A soft helpless gray thing, with huge black staring eyes." Closer: "And their eyes roughened my skin with dread. Huge black, and cold. There was nothing warm in them, nothing human, nothing kind. They were as emotionless as polished lenses." In one battle, a Mother is able to paralyse an Eternal One by staring into its eyes. (50) Her mental energy is greater. The foreshadowing of the Hybrid program and the evil eye powers of modern Grays is not perfect, but yet looks hauntingly suggestive.

Amelia Reynolds Long, in 1932, offered a twist on Hamilton's *Man-Who-Evolved* in a short story called "Omega." A man is hypnotically future-regressed to the last days of the earth, but his talent is so excellent he experiences an actual physical alteration. "He had shrunken several inches in stature, while his head had appeared to have grown larger, with the forehead almost bulbous in aspect. His fingers were extremely long and sensitive, but suggestive of great strength. His frame was thin to emaciation... He has become a man of the future physically as well as mentally." The hypnotist is unable to bring him back, but they continue to hear him report the course of future deep time. Dinosaurs return, as does tropical life generally. Then they are gone with plant life withering. The Moon grows larger and gravity lightens. Volcanoes erupt and lightning crackles. The Earth dissolves. "Creation is returning to its original atoms!" Nothing of the man remains but a dancing myriad of infinitesimal atoms. Geologic time, not just evolution, turns out to be circular. (51)

John W. Campbell's "Twilight" (1934) is a somewhat significant entry in our chronology due to the importance of the author. It was popular enough to have been reprinted at least twice. A modern man accidentally time travels seven million years forward. He finds there a machine city with no life in it. It is a perfect technology constantly repairs itself and is in persistent readiness to serve. He finds an airship and travels around till he discovers there is a remnant of humans. "They were little men - bewildered - dwarfed, with heads dispropor-

tionately large. But not extremely large. Their eyes impressed me most. They were huge, and when they looked at me there was a power in them that seemed sleeping, but too deeply to be roused." There were few young among them and they were respected and cared for intently. Humanity was becoming sterile. The machines killed off bacteria and purified all water so well they killed the seas. The food chain was destroyed. The machines did thinking better than man did and afterwards the big heads were merely vestigial artefacts of a wondrous evolution. They did not know how to turn the machines off and so they would run forever even though everyone would eventually be dead. One can imagine this might have been an answer to E.M. Forster. The Machine will not stop. (52)

In Nat Schachner's "Past, Present, and Future" (1937) men wake ten thousand years in the future after preservation in a cavern filled with an inert gas. The first figure encountered is a little man with a bald bulging forehead. He had a delicate body, spindly limbs, and brain case that could be easily disrupted. The nose was vestigial. He is a member of the Technician class and fear had been bred out of them. Soon, he sees members of the Worker class and they are muscular, husky men who tower over the intellectualised Technicians. The sense is that division of labour is again the cause of the divergent forms. (53) Henry Kuttner brings men of the future to the present in a unique way in "No Man's World" (1940). A movie called "Men of Tomorrow" is playing and they portray the stereotype with Hollywood unoriginality. The Titans are bulbous-headed and spindly-limbed. They walk off the screen when radiation from a comet interacts with a new film projection technique to create a rift in the dimensional planes. It opens Earth to a war between the Titans and an alien race of crystal spheres called the Silicates. (54)

"Evolution's End" (1941) by Robert Arthur has future humanity enslaved by The Masters. "Their great, thin-skulled heads and mighty brains" prove vulnerable to sunlight and they retreat to underground chambers. They are "nothing but brain - Great machines for thought which

know nothing of joy or sorrow or hunger for another." Actually it is admitted later the head is set upon a small neckless body, the neck being lost so the weight could be handled by shoulder and back muscles. They made selector machines to insure large brained male slaves do not mate with large brained females to maintain their superiority. A lecture about sabre-tooth tigers and dinosaurs tells us the familiar lessons of orthogenetic overdevelopment. The Masters have evolved to only think and all feelings, even enjoyment, now is lost. Some of them are going mad and experiments with a new evolution ray indicate the entire race of Masters is doomed go mad. One of the Masters decides it is wisest to end it all now. He sets an Adam and Eve free and gives them the means to destroy the caverns of the Masters. (55) It is a nice mood piece fleshing out an episode in Stapledon's future history with a brief homage to Hamilton. tells us the familiar lessons of orthogenetic overdevelopment. The Masters have evolved to only think and all feelings, even enjoyment, now is lost. Some of them are going mad and experiments with a new evolution ray indicate the entire race of Masters is doomed go mad. One of the Masters decides it is wisest to end it all now. He sets an Adam and Eve free and gives them the means to destroy the caverns of the Masters. (55) It is a nice mood piece fleshing out an episode in Stapledon's future history with a brief homage to Hamilton.

Robert Heinlein's "Waldo" (1942) is regarded by the Panshins as an afterwhiff of the Big Brain tradition. A man with a cool, unsympathetic intellect is also physically helpless, but due to rotundity instead of emaciation. This may reflect knowledge of the growing evidence that technological civilisation resulted in a sedentary life and obesity, rather than a scrawny physique. (56)

Neil Bell's *Life Comes to Seathorpe* (1946) seemingly follows in the Stapledon tradition by having present man create his evolutionary successor. The scientist plans on calling him *Home Splendicus*. The head is large and magnificent. The brain is more complex. The respiratory, digestive, and excretory systems are simpler, but on purpose. He also

plans another thing he thinks is an improvement. The "sex life of man as evolved by Nature dooms him forever to remain among the beasts... It tortures him, humiliates him, degrades him, nullifies the possibilities of his brain, saps his vitality, infests him with the grossest superstitions, and compels him to actions from which in recollection he recoils in disgust and revulsion. These things must pass away if man is to fulfil his destiny." (57) We are getting closer to the Fifties.

This history of the idea behind the Grays deserves a break about here due to a transition in the history of science fiction. In 1939, John Campbell takes over *Astounding* magazine and inaugurates what has become known as The Golden Age. As the Panshins tell it, Campbell preferred stories about the intermediate range future when we would be exploring the stars. He no longer had interest in deep time and man's eventual fall before the march of time and nature. "No more Big Brains, domestic or foreign after 1939 in Campbell's *Astounding*. It was part of the pre-Atomic Age, the Age of Technology." (58) He also rejected stories of bug-eyed monsters invading Earth to eat us or breed with Earth's fair maidens. "And obviously those interstellar harem-agents aren't interested in offspring anyway; there couldn't possibly be any." (59)

It should be apparent enough that ideas associated with the Grays were a recurrent motif in the scientific romances of the early half of the Twentieth century. The Panshins said as much in their history of the development of science fiction. They state the violent rejection of Big Brain was a typical theme around the 1930s. "In one alien exploration story after another, Big Brain alien and Big Brain humans were shot, bludgeoned, or even stomped to death." (60) Paul Carter could be cited to corroborate this in his observation that Frank R. Paul regularly did cover paintings of spindly, big-domed men of the future for issues of *Wonder Stories* in the early 1930s. (61) While one could have saved some effort by just trusting them, there is something to be said for demonstration over mere opinion. No doubts remain that a tradition of big-brained, small-bodied fictional characters did exist subsequent to Wells and prior to the

emergence of the flying saucer culture. Many of those stories are lost except to collectors of the pulps. What appears here comes down through reprints, anthologies, and speciality scholars.

The theme of Big Brain figures being sterile or otherwise unable to procreate has been demonstrated to be a repetitive feature of these stories. It is conceivable this is merely a straightforward corollary of the degeneration of the rest of the body. Yet there is a legitimate doubt here. Parasites as a class are the prime exemplars of general bodily degeneration, but they do not show signs of dying off from sterility. Too, if the ease of technological civilisation were modifying the body, wouldn't the leisure lead to more sex and a selection of characteristics favourable to arousal? To borrow a thought from Dr. Strangelove, there would be much time and little to do - they would breed prodigiously.

The underlying logic may reflect a rather interesting piece of medical folklore. As was noted in part one, Herbert Spencer expressed a concern that greater intelligence was associated with decreased fertility and this seemed supported from anecdotal knowledge of the lives of intellectuals. This was probably a case of confirmation bias. It was in support of a long-standing belief that the brain, spinal cord, and seminal fluid are all interrelated and grows from superstitions believed to date all the way back to the Stone Age. (64) In the 1800s the dominant form of this myth was the idea that expending the seed through masturbation led to insanity. Even mere promiscuity carried the hazard of starving the nerves. The inverse corollary was that abstinence was good for mental functioning.

In the early 1900s, the myth took the form of the theory of seminal economy. It was believed there was a finite amount of seminal matter that could be formed out of the blood. When the brain hoarded the seminal matter, little was left for procreation. "Superior human specimens are nearly always sterile or capable of only mediocre progeny." Bram Dijkstra notes that by 1915 this article of faith had attained the status of folk wisdom and few questioned its universal truth. (65) It is easy enough to see how such

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-66.

44. Shelton, Robert, "The Mars-Begotten Men of Olaf Stapledon and H.G. Wells" *Science Fiction Studies* #32 (volume 11, #1) pp. 1-14.

45. Panshins, *op. cit.*, p. 228-9.

46. Williams, Lorraine Dille. *Buck Rogers: The First 60 Years in the 25th Century*. TSR, 1988, pp. 93-4.

47. Kyle, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

48. Asimov, Isaac. *Before the Golden Age: Book 1*. Fawcett Crest, 1974, pp. 323-80.

49. *Ibid.*, p.355.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 369, 370.

51. Ackerman, Forest J. *Gosh! Wow! (Sense of Wonder) Science Fiction*. Bantam, 1981, p. 542.

52. Del Rey, Lester. *The Best of John W. Campbell* Ballantine, 1976, pp. 22-45.

53. Asimov, Isaac. *Before the Golden Age: Book 3* Fawcett Crest, 1975, pp. 333-58.

54. Rovin, Jeff. *Encyclopedia of Monsters*. Facts on File, 1989, pp. 314-5.

55. Crossen, Kendall Foster. *Adventures in Tomorrow*. Belmont, 1951, pp. 193-207.

56. Panshins, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

57. Stableford, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

58. Panshins, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

59. Aldiss, Brian. *Trillion Year Spree*. Avon, 1988, p. 217.

60. Panshins, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

61. Carter, Paul. *The Creation of Tomorrow*, Columbia U. Press, 1977, p. 162.

62. Kottmeyer, Martin. "Ishtar Descendant" *The Skeptic*, 9, #3 (1995) p. 13.

63. Bleiler, *op. cit.*, entry #104, p. 32.

64. La Barre, Weston. *Muelos: A Stone Age Superstition about Sexuality*, Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 122-7.

65. Dijkstra, Bram. *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood*. Alfred Knopf, 1996, p. 76.

66. Howells, William. "The Shape of Men to Come", *Science Digest*, 21, #1, January 1947.

(There are a few notable items excluded from this history due to matters of ambiguity. The floating disembodied, bald Big Brain who is the Wizard of Oz (1939) is an illusory creation and more symbolic of cleverness than futurity. Aleister Crowley's portrait of the bald extraterrestrial Lam (1919) seems relevant to some people, but the match is far from exact. (62) Crowlean literature is too dreary to track down the full details needed to understand it, so any role of devolutionary thought would be speculative and, my bet, doubtful. Ming the Merciless is bald and ruthless and in early strips he seems to be a somewhat emaciated figure, but he is oriental in aspect and Chinese rulers for some reason often seem bald. *Weird Tales'* Elwyn Backus did a story "Behind the Moon" (1930) where little gray humanoid creatures capture a fair maiden astronaut and plan to use her as breeding material to improve their race. There are not enough details to know if this race of mushroom beings fits a devolutionary profile. (63)

a notion would lead to an orthogenetic logic of future brain over-development forcing infertility. This must be termed speculative for none of the stories actually spell out such a reason for the sterility of Big Brains.

Though the gray idea-complex began to disappear from science fiction in the Forties, it continued on in the general culture in other ways like comics and, quite interestingly, science popularisation. Roy Chapman Andrews, in 1945, offered a description of "How We Are Going to Look" in what was perhaps the most read magazine of the period, *Readers Digest*. "Human beings, half a million years from now would be caricatures in our eyes -

something out of a bad dream. Big round heads, almost globular, hairless as a billiard ball; even the women! Very clever these future people will be -- much more intelligent than we are -- but, alas at the expense of hearing, tasting, seeing, and smelling. Their faces will be smaller. But they will be taller, probably several inches, with longer and only four toes. We might hesitate to invite one of those future humans for dinner, were he to appear now in advance of his time, except for his conversational brilliance. But he would have some have some physical advantages over us: no appendicitis; no sinus trouble; no fallen arches; neither hernia in man nor the falling of the uterus in

women." Chapman's reasoning is mainly extrapolation from past trends and a sensibility that nature does not allow defects in architecture to go on indefinitely. It does not sound particularly Darwinian. An especially nice feature of the article is a pair of illustrations showing future man and woman. Thanks to a lack of scale, they happen to evoke the look of the Grays, particularly the one of the Moody abduction, thirty years later.

William Howell, author of an anthropological tome *Mankind So Far*, provided a similar popularisation for the budding scientists of the Forties in *Science Digest*. "The horoscopes for mankind are principally purveyed by the funny papers. According to one school of thought, the beast in us will continue to recede and the brain to advance, until we have huge bald heads together with spindly legs and wormy little bodies. We shall all wear glasses, talk algebra, and live on food pills. This apparently is to be the triumph of science, and a prospect at which we well may shudder." Luckily we are not really faced with it. He accepts some of Henry Shapiro's ideas and feels the heads will be rounder to economise bone with the face smaller and chin more pointed. He notes baldness is hereditary and common in Whites,

but rare in other races. Whether it will become universal is anybody's guess. "I doubt whether science will be able to do the slightest thing about it." If you favour extrapolation of trends, plug in the news that brains today are actually slightly smaller than in the Upper Palaeolithic and the final result makes you look small-minded. (66) Though Howell disputes the funny papers' horoscope, all those kids whose schools purchased *Science Digest* were insured an awareness of the stereotypical image of future man.

The ideas and images of the Wellsian devolutionary man of deep time and space had something that made it a survivor. That something might be usefulness, value as a moral signifier of the dangers of civilisation, emotional power, an interesting colour of villainy, or mythic horror. Whatever you decide it is, it was something that put it apart from the giant lobsters, lion men, talking trees, mechanical beetles, and myriad other creative attempts to envision the alien that had sporadic life in the pages of the pulps. The class of entities that would eventually be called Grays were walking and floating through the nightmares of humanity for the better part of a half-century.

And the flying saucers had not even landed yet.

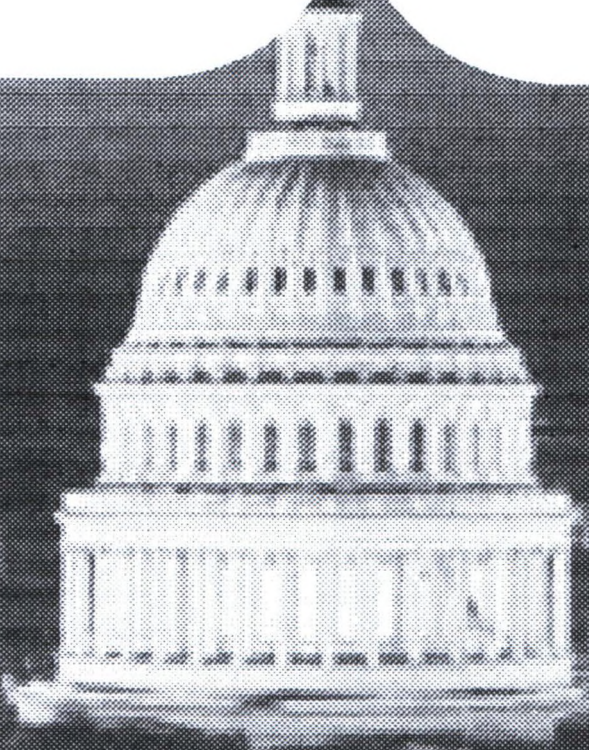


"Human beings half a million years from now would be caricatures in our eyes - something out of a bad dream. Big round heads, almost globular, hairless as a billiard ball; even the women"

Roy Chapman,
Readers' Digest, 1945.



AAC in DDC



JENNY RANDLES
finds American ufology going
in two directions, and meets
the new rich kid on the block

MUFON'S LAST CONFERENCE of the millennium (as Walt Andrus introduced it) was staged in Washington in July. Appropriately it was a remarkable reflection of the AC/DC nature of modern ufology, where the subject has become so polarised that we now have two warring factions. This is not ufologists versus the sceptics, but fringe ufologists against the last bastions of rationality.

MUFON, for example, put on some lectures that can only be termed bizarre - for instance the saga of what was effectively an alien dating agency that can set up female abductees with male abductees even if they are already married. As one audience member/would be abductee said to me, beaming with joy when the lecturer announced a book on the theme - it will be a bestseller. And of course it will.

Contrast that with the remarkable about face by former Roswell defender Kevin Randle, whose current writings (including a new book devastatingly assessing abduction beliefs) seems so British he probably ought to emigrate. Some of the dispirited old guard in the US fought back too with rationality. Bruce Maccabee, for example, gave a splendid hard headed talk in which he patiently explained why a couple of photo cases were not really UFOs whilst uncovering an intriguing Phoenix, Arizona photo case that may conceivably be the first solid evidence of a time lapse.

So there were, in effect, two conferences going on at the same time. No prizes for guessing which one the majority of the audience crammed to see, or the media (what few of them showed up amidst evident apathy) chose to report. Those who said, serious, sober ufology go stand in the corner.

However, for the media, thronging audience and MUFON (who even gave Budd Hopkins second billing behind the new rising star) one man dominated the event. The reporters and delegates swarmed about him like flies on a cowpat. There was an enraptured, zealous look about the 400 or so who watched his undeniably slick presentation and his name was pretty well all anyone was talking about afterwards.

Who was this man? He is Joe Firmage, a 28 year old computer whiz kid who, outside

the US, is a virtual unknown. Even in the US his prominence is very recent and until now largely based upon his 'book', published so far just on the internet (but watch out for what must be the near inevitable mass market edition, TV specials and movie of the week). It has the immodest title 'theword is truth'.

Frankly, I had no idea who this man was or what to expect of him. But most who attended had formed some opinion and, whether they be ordinary UFO enthusiasts or leaders of the community this quickly transformed into adulation. Why did this man get a standing ovation and achieve cult status so speedily? I saw a very similar thing with John Mack at the MIT symposium in 1992. Then it was because Mack was perceived as a hero riding in to save the abductees. He had so much to lose, they told me. Yet he was willing to stand up and support them. What a brave thing to do, I heard them croon. As a professor and Pulitzer prize winner many ufologists had other expectations of him. Mack would salvage their credibility and legitimise the field. As for his obvious great knowledge leading to anticipated breakthroughs - a little thought should have suggested what has proven to be true. Mack was up against all the same hurdles the rest of us face - confusing, conflicting evidence and virtual no solid proof for alien reality. Even a genius cannot be expected to do much with that.

There has been much the same sort of mood about Firmage. He has gone from zero to hero rapidly via the late 20th equivalent of the Hollywood film set - the internet. His web company employs 2000 people and was worth three billion dollars. His own fortune makes the annual budget of most UFO groups look like a generous tip to the waiter after a good night out.

Yet, heres the rub. Firmage had chosen to leave all that behind. He quit his company (apparently to spare it embarrassment through his new found beliefs) and has announced that the reason is his assertion of the alien presence on earth. They have been here for millennia in fact. How does he know? Three key reasons, it seems - as in fact only those at the pre-symposium press conference really got to hear.

Reason one, the evidence of ufology has convinced him. He thanked the many great folk at the conference, as he put it, who had been 'doing this job longer than I have been alive' (audible groans all round). They had done a great job but too few were listening. Unspoken (but I could hear it in my head) was the undercurrent, that it was maybe time to move on.

Reason two is worryingly familiar. Nameless, faceless 'sources' he has been contacted by during his business success - implied to be bigwig military or government types that his career allowed him to mix with - had admitted to Joe the aliens were here and all the UFO stuff was true. Who were they? When they are ready to own up then they'll say. Right now he cannot breach their confidence.

Reason three, was the one he seemed less keen to discuss. But it appears to boil down to a 'conversation' with an alien image that he saw over his bed one night as he lay half asleep/half awake mulling over problems. It is interesting that many ufologists would seek altered states of consciousness solutions for such a visionary episode, but it clearly has more meaning than that to Joe.

So he is now here in ufology, its new cult hero and public mouthpiece and, the mutterings behind the scenes at the conference hinted to me, he has already staged meetings with some of the leaders of ufology (translation, I assume, the ETH supporters at the helm of US ufology). With what result? This is something we were told we should not have too long to wait and see.

However, I was struck by a curious lack of foresight by those doing the hero worship. Firmage's well presented lecture was an entertaining and clever blend of expertly delivered future technology, fringe science and neo-mysticism. UFOs per se hardly got a mention except as a stepping stone to new science. Instead he reflected on how because of them we now had to reassess our entire future - and he went through topics such as chemistry, physics, cosmology, etc showing how we will have new perceptions in a few decades time.

His interest is to create a kind of super think tank of high flying technocrats and specialist



What first attracted ufology to the millionaire Joe Firmage?

nerds (eg recruited from NASA) who can think laterally, take account of secret UFO data and strive to break the rules. He spoke about fantastic new propulsion systems and how he aimed to let everyone have their own UFO before too long. No doubt in any colour so long as its invisible to cameras.

Now this is fascinating, almost laudable and he has the money to at least give it a shot. But it isn't ufology. I cannot really see this new force he is creating inviting the chairman of the Piddletown UFO Society to its board meetings. Nor does the recording of the 7.45 Adamski spaceship from Zeta Reticuli seen passing over Clapham Common hold much interest to Firmage. Although few delegates were asking themselves this question, one perceptive reporter asked him at the press conference and Firmage's answer should have sent a chill down the spine of the UFO leaders he has courted.

Will you fund UFO groups, he was asked? Well, said Joe, I don't regard it as important to try to prove the existence or nature of UFOs. Its been done. I personally don't need convincing.

In other words, what he was really suggesting was (to loosely paraphrase and apologies for anything I misunderstood) - good work chaps, you've kept the UFO pot boiling whilst I grew up, made my zillions and discovered the science and technology potential of ufology. You can now take it easy because the day of the UFO spotter is over and the day of the UFO technocrat is here.

Some of this he did say, some he did not and is inference on my part. But the problem is that many ufologists may not realise that their hero is really speaking a different language and heading in a direction that for now is parallel to their own but fairly soon might not be. Once scientists he works with tire of the weirdos hanging on his coat tails and the madcap fulfilled world of UFO ideology that wants a bite of his cherry pie will it be a case of - them or us, Joe? And if so who will he choose?

Once Joe realises that much of ufology is a desert of tiny shoots with specks of hard evidence and good theory swamped by the endless sands of inanity will he really need to be attached?

Perhaps so. Maybe he has genuine affection and will support the folk who got him where he is. Possibly he will fund some good research and bankroll UFO projects. If so, good on him. But I do not really see that as his priority. The hunt has already started. I left Richard Hall looking glum that Joe had been a 'no show', as Richard put it, at a planned discussion about funding his giant casebook venture. Hall's book ('The UFO Evidence Part 2' - a sequel to his NICAP epic 36 years ago - that's even pre-Magonia and myself!) is worthy and should be released. Conventional publishers have (shamefully but unsurprisingly) forsaken it to print the sea of bilge that gets onto the bookshelves these days instead.

If Firmage has an eye for good PR he may see the value of funding this project, but to be honest I don't perceive that as being his *raison d'être*. I think he has a rather different agenda in mind. On the internet, in a discussion posting, I likened the hero worship to turkeys voting for Christmas, which to a degree it is. If Firmage does what he wants to do ufology will stagnate. He'll get his military chums to reveal all and there won't be any need for groups to fight government secrecy. Or he'll prove his case by using back engineering to build amazing technology that could only have come from the stars. He'll attract so much media attention that the UFO writers and leaders won't get as much of a look in and will have to retire or find another job. And if his technology think tank builds a UFO for your garage who the heck is going to care about the latest pink light seen over the local park as recorded by the neighbourhood spacewatch group?

Of course, chances are that not very much - if any - of this will happen as Firmage no doubt quite sincerely expects that it will. To him it's all new. Many of us have been there, bought the T shirt and long since torn it up for use as a cheap duster. His sources will probably never tell all. His support for ufology may by necessity prove short term. His think tank could make a few interesting discoveries or small scale breakthroughs but will not change the world and might figure out it stands a better chance of real funding and being taken seriously if it doesn't saddle up to the silly

sausages that believe reptile aliens are lurking in the woods waiting to kidnap nubile young women.

Or, of course, we may just have witnessed the beginning of the end of the old world and the start of the birth of a new one. Perhaps dear old Nostradamus was right about the seventh month of 1999 and for ufologists a 'great king of frightfulness has come down from the sky' (or soon will do when Sky TV devote their inevitable one hour special to his ideas). But I doubt many of you will be breathless in anticipation of the old order fading forever. Which is not to say it will not be fun watching as the show unfolds.

Whats that I hear? Faint murmurs starting about how Joe Firmage is a government plant? Utter tosh, of course. But then don't the UFO big wigs have to think of some reason why 'The Unexplained World of Strange Things' doesn't call quite so often to set up that TV interview because you are 'the world's greatest UFO expert' and why your latest book about 'Alien Clones I have Met' didn't earn its £100,000 advance and your agent is now talking to some scientist who makes the tea in the Firmage think tank because he has seen the plans for the Mark One All American Flying Saucer.

What else can the reason be for your ousting from the limelight but some dastardly plot. It cannot possibly be because Joe Firmage is (for now) an interesting, new story and you are a tired old media has been. And even if so that realisation would never cloud your judgement enough to think nasty things about a serious rival just because of jealousy.

In ufology? Nah. Course not.

Meet Magonia at our monthly Readers' Group meetings.

First Sunday of the month at the Railway pub, Putney (corner of Putney High Street and Upper Richmond Road, just opposite Putney Station) from 7.30 onwards. Everyone welcome, just drop in and look for the table with the collection of Magonias and other weird magazines!

Northern Echoes from page 2

pable of lying, would tell you life with such a person is all too often a long round of social gaffes and apologies, and ultimately isolating

One reason that some many people in this field are so naive, is that they live sheltered lives, and do not, unlike the dreaded librarians, work with the general public. For some reason librarianship has become a dirty word in certain circles. Of course we couldn't guess why this might be so. Perhaps for those living in rural fastnesses libraries are indeed repositories of mouldering tomes by dead white males, presided over by stern lady English literature majors of a certain age, with buns, horn rimmed specks, and fearsome knitting needles, with perhaps a cat with a touch of Surrey puma blood in its veins, guarding the counter. Such sights were to be seen in England, I am told, even in Liverpool in times gone by. A far cry from these Internet days

There may however be another, and somewhat more sinister reason, why libraries as guardians of the collective knowledge pool and cultural heritage are viewed with disfavour, and that is for the reasons explored 30 years ago by John Rimmer in his groundbreaking article 'UFO's as an Anti-Scientific Symbol'. This is the profound rejection of the contemporary scientific world view, and of modernity in general in the whole fortean, ufological and paranormal field. The last thirty years have only reinforced that perception over and over again.

These people are not the heroic pioneers of a new paradigm, but the last ditch defenders of the day before yesterdays orthodoxies, standing at the barricades against Copernicus, Galileo, Einstein, and above all, Darwin, and against modern neuroscience. Against technology too. Who moaned most about the Apollo flights (it can't be done, the radiation will eat them up); who has been trying to evade and avoid Darwin, even if it means licking the anatomy of the worst kind of creationist reactionaries, all these years? Is it not significant that even the most nuts and bolts and apparently scientific ufologist, James MacDonald, was a pioneering environmentalist, whose work (for good or ill) was in the fore-

front of the reaction against the ideologies of technological progress; a pioneer in the cult of fear which looks only at the risks of modernity and progress (In MacDonald's case the personal was indeed the political, as the interior darkness and despair that was to swallow him up was projected outwards, objectified as environmental threats).

Or perhaps it was the other way round, and MacDonald was an early victim of the collective depressive breakdown of Western Civilisation; the current sense of fear of everything including the warm beautiful sunshine, the sense of imminent doom, the dark shadows behind every corner, the sense of vulnerability so deep that not even the stoutest walls and doors can protect one, the permeating unease, the guilt, the lack of conviction in western societies own values, the overriding sense of helplessness, are all symptoms of a major depressive illness. Will future generations see the Apollo flights 30 years ago as the high water mark of western civilisation.

In this context the attack on librarianship becomes sinister, it is partnership with this anti-scientific reaction but goes further in its irrationalism, it rejects the idea of collective human knowledge, as symbolised by libraries, in favour of subjective personal experience, 'this is my truth, and you can't tell me otherwise or this is 'our reality' which you couldn't possibly understand. (This bizarre post modernism thus reduces what was once assumed to be objective knowledge, to nothing but texts, while elevating what are indeed nothing but texts into revelatory truths) Often the attack on librarianship has been phased in terms of the ur-text, only the ur-text, whether the Bible, The Koran, the Little Red, Green, or Black, Book contains the truth, all other texts either agree with it, in which case they are superfluous and should be destroyed, or disagree with it, in which case they should be destroyed, along with their owners and readers. Perhaps now even the ur-text will go. My dreams are the truth, if books agree with they are superfluous, and if they disagree with them, not only are they heretical, blasphemous, but damage my self-esteem in, and should be banned as harmful!



Readers' Letters

Dear Magonia,
In response to Stephen Woodbridge's interesting essay, 'Plots Against the World', there are a few observations I would like to make. Most importantly, it is a gross oversimplification to assert, as does Woodbridge, that it is only supporters of the 'extreme right' who have serious doubts about the malign intervention of the FBI in US politics. Indeed, one of the (sad) reasons for far right forces gaining support by peddling such ideas is that sections of the left (in the US as elsewhere) have forgotten a healthy distrust of state agencies.

Perhaps Woodbridge himself residually remembers this by his concession about Oklahoma that the "extreme right itself *probably* perpetrated the bombing" (my italics). *Probably* is not the same as with certainty, and it is in that space that there is scope for serious investigation.

I also think it rather an understatement to describe the FBI's incineration of people at Waco as a 'mishandling'; there are many in the US and elsewhere who see it as deliberate and punitive murder by the US state. Speaking of whether the US government is to be trusted, even leaving aside the pertinent point that the US health-care system excludes at least 20% of the populace without health insurance, there are enough questions about Whitewater, and the murders of Martin Luther King and the various Kennedys to provide a negative answer to the question of trust. Woodbridge's piece would have been better if he had kept in mind the elementary distinction made a few years ago by *Lobster* editor Robin Ramsey, between all-encompassing 'conspiracies' (largely fantasy) and the actual covert activities of state and para-state activities (often not).

Woodbridge's reference to the use of the *protocols of the Elders of Zion* is perfectly satisfactory on the pre-war period, although might I suggest if he looks at two articles I wrote a few years

ago ('Our Spiritual Malaise' and 'British Fascism, the persistence of anti-Semitism') he will have found chapter and verse on the actual use of the *Protocols* by post-war fascists.

Concerning David Icke, as someone involved in efforts to sideline him from the Green Party, might I suggest it would have been useful to refer to this campaign, or indeed David Black's writing on the subject, wise before, rather than after, the event. Perhaps reference to this would have blurred Woodbridge's simplistic conclusion that "there has been a cross-fertilisation between more recent New Age obsessions and the idea held by the extreme right that the present world order is a place of hostility for 'freethinking' individuals". Again, I have to point out that there are many Greens/leftists who have grave doubts about some of the social trends at present affecting the planet. To pigeonhole such sentiments as 'extreme right' is inappropriate.

In conclusion may I suggest a theme for Woodbridge's next essay (or your next memorial competition): "Why is it that the anti-authoritarian sentiments expressed by many on the New Left in the 1960s, on both sides of the Atlantic, degenerated by the late 1990s into often unthinking support for the benign effects of the exercise of state power?"
Yours Sincerely, Larry O'Hara,
Editor, *Notes From the Borderland*
London.

Dear John
Further to Rory Lushman's article, 'The Manchester Air myth' (Magonia 67) my views on the Gatley witness to this case are no secret. I have written extensively on the sighting - see, for example *Something in the Air*, Robert Hale, 1998. In these reports I have made clear why I believe the sighting to be a myth that has grown around the basic sighting of a bolide, as was its precursor and virtual duplicate, the Chiles-Whitted sighting in 1948.

As for the civilian wit-

ness. I have diplomatically noted in my articles, and the book, that I do not regard his testimony as adding to the evidence for this case. Nor can it in any way be considered directly relevant, since at the time of the sighting by the aircrew (over Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire) there was total darkness and thick overcast and nobody on the ground could possibly have seen the UFO that the pilot and co-pilot did. The Gatley Witness did indeed relate to me a series of colourful anecdotes about the various strange things he had experienced, only some of which were ufological or connected to this case. These did not, in my evaluation, establish that his story was proof of a supporting witness on the ground to this aerial encounter. I would have been delighted if he had shown this to be so.

Frankly his story is an aside of interest in its own right, but one that distracts attention from the facts of the over-inflated British Airways sighting. This has become a modern UFO myth despite the hard facts behind it being in my view totally persuasive of a misperception. *Magonia* readers need to understand this rather than judge this man's story in isolation of the facts of the British Airways episode.

Jenny Randles
Buxton, Derbyshire.

Dear John,
Are you still confused about the Campbells in your reply to Robert Moor (*Magonia* 67)? It was Donald Campbell, son of Sir Malcolm, who met his demise in the Lake District. Also it was on Coniston Water, not Lake Windermere! (I had thought it was Ullswater but checked again). As far as I know Sir Malcolm died a natural death.

Question: If Malcolm Campbell, sorry I mean Malcolm Robinson, continues in his present capacity, will BUFORA die a natural death?

Regards, Chris Allan
Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent

BOOK REVIEWS



Richard Haines. *CE-5: Close encounters of the 5th kind. 242 case files exposing alien contact.* Sourcebooks Inc, 1999. \$18.99.

I must admit I was rather disappointed in this catalogue and study of alleged human interaction with UFOs and their occupants. Even though I knew that Haines tended to support the ETH, I had hoped for more scientific rigor than is shown here. The text is peppered with comments which just assume the ETH or one of its more exotic variants, and though Haines does sporadically appear to show some degree of critical faculty, this is indeed sporadic.

The range of material presented here ranges from cases which just cry out IFO, such as the car chase incidents in which UFOs are reported pacing vehicles, stopping and starting with them, the notorious rainbow effect, which indicates a very distant light source, which always seems more or less the same distance away, astronomical IFOs in 90% + cases, through cases where psychological explanations are most probable, e.g. light sources alleged responding to human thought or flashing back at torch signals (Hendry notes several astronomical IFOs in which witnesses reported this effect, so did my *Magonia* colleagues in Warminster). Other cases, if taken at face value, would be equally difficult to explain by the ETH. In some cases mind-reading boggarts or telekinesis would seem to be implied, needless to say such extraordinary claims would require extraordinary evidence.

This is not forthcoming, many of the cases recounted here come from a variety of tertiary sources, and it has to be said that there some fairly startling lacuna in Haines grasp of or access to the literature. Thus the well known Premanon case is abstracted from a review, contains wrong details, and the incorrect note that "noth-

ing more is known about this case". Actually, as French ufologists found, the story was made up by one of the child witnesses for a school essay, inspired by press reports of other stories. There are other examples of well known cases being abstracted from tertiary sources. What we should call the 'Hamey Effect' is also in evidence: the more alleged witnesses the less the detail.

What is really undermining of Haines's credibility is his at least provisional endorsement of Dr Steven Greer's Centre for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence, which is controversial, to say the least, even among ETH proponents. Its members go out looking for UFOs and beaming co-ordinated thoughts at them. This is not a new idea, it was first suggested by AI Bender back in 1953, and various contactee groups ever since. Greer and his associated adventures among the British crop circles are amusing if not persuasive reading. Needless to say there are also the mandatory quotes from hypnotic regression abduction stories.

When one adds to this, the several occasions in which Haines goes into the new age/evangelist speak, and the sense that he is plugging some occultist and/or religious semi-hidden agenda, far from inspiring open minded members of the scientific community to examine the evidence he presents, this work is much more likely to act as a deterrent.



John Schuessler. *The Cash-Landrum UFO Incident.* Geo-Graphics Printing Company, 1998.

This privately printed book gives a detailed account of one of the most puzzling of all UFO incidents: the encounter by two middle aged women and the grandchild of one of them, with a diamond shaped object and a fleet of helicopters, and their subsequent illnesses. It is a pity then that Schuessler starts this book with a science fiction scenario, followed by a reconstruction using presumably invented dialogue. The witnesses illnesses, which included sickness, diarrhoea, sickness, burns and hair loss have been attributed to radiation poisoning by Ufologists and some doctors, but it is not clear whether the symptoms were compatible with other explanations such as psychosomatic reactions or chemical contamination. Not all the medical jargon reproduced is explained, and would need to be evaluated by people with a medical training.

The case illustrates the need for the very rapid investigation of such cases, because of the several weeks delay in reporting this case, there does not appear to have been any search for physical evidence at the site, evidence which might rule in or out chemical contamination, a suggestion made rather plausible by the witnesses recollection of the smell like lighter fluid during the incident.

In looking for explanations of this case there seem to be three possible lines of enquiry:

The incident might just have been some form of radical misperception, with the physical reactions being caused by stress.

The experiences might be radical misperceptions or something largely hallucinatory caused by, rather than causing, the illness. We should look to some kind of food poisoning or other chemical contamination as the cause.

The witnesses were injured by some action of the United States government. In which case we might suggest that the diamond shaped light and *fire* were powerful lights slung from yet another helicopter or helicopters, hidden in the glare. Once again some kind of contamination looks most likely - the test of a chemical weapon or defoliant perhaps. If the witnesses did actually suffer from radiation poisoning then what could the helicopters have been carrying, a damaged nuclear reactor? Any guesses?

If the latter set of alternatives is the correct one, and the witnesses themselves attribute the object to the United States Government and not to aliens, then the Ufologists involvement would have been a godsend, with no real investigative reporters sniffing around, and no one taking the story seriously.

There is another way of looking at this story rather than trying to find out what 'really' happened. That is to see it simply as a narrative, a cultural fact requiring a cultural explanation. Then perhaps what we are seeing here is a modern high tech version of the celestial army of the dead, with Odin replaced by a fearsome light, opening up the heavens like the second coming, and the hell hounds replaced by hell-icopters, flying death machines, riding to the tune of the Ride of the Valkyries. Then the injuries are stig-mata, the scars of a violation of taboo, an encounter with that which no eye should see, a new form of elf shot. Radiation becomes the techno symbol of pollution and contamination.

Anthony McCarten. *Spinners*. Picador, 1999. £7.99.

This novel, by New Zealander Anthony McCarten, in which a small town girl announces she has been abducted, though rather voluntarily, by spacemen, and finds herself pregnant without remembering sleeping with anyone, to be joined in the club by two workmates, gives much amusing background into the small town world of the abductee. With a psychopathic dad, a bored cop with a motor-mouth wife, a pompous mayor, a cynical journalist and even more cynical editor the sights are firmly fixed. And the hero is a librarian! I won't give away the plot.

Dyan Elliott. *Fallen Bodies; pollution, sexuality and demonology in the Middle Ages*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999. £15.50.

This book deals with the medieval church's struggles with sexuality, and the notion of fallen bodies, polluted by original sin. The arguments over the nature of the bodies of demons, and how they were able to impregnate women find echoes in the modern abduction literature. If in the Middle Ages it was suggested that demons could build up their bodies from semen produced by nocturnal emissions, today we have 'hybrid' babies concocted from stolen eggs and semen. We should also not forget the late nineteenth and early twentieth spiritualist belief that spirits could materialise using 'tissue' stolen from the medium and sitters at seances and converted into ectoplasm. These beliefs are part of a tradition of unnatural generation, and thus part of a much larger set of beliefs concerning sexuality and pollution. One of the main causes of uncleanness was a mixed origin or having attributes which appeared to cut across categories. We can certainly put 'hybrid' babies into that category.

In such a study of medieval beliefs about demonic sexuality, we can see how much they are reproduced in modern abduction lore, despite a faint pseudoscientific gloss. Medieval demons were sometimes said to be hollow or have no backs, modern greys are curiously light and insubstantial. Aquinas argued that angels and devils were pure disembodied intellect, without human emotions, an idea echoed in the emotionless 'glacial indifference' of the Grays. Perhaps the most piquant expression of the merging of traditional demonology and modern technology is the recent case from Australia in which an alleged pubic hair of a succubus was subjected to DNA testing. If our intrepid 'scientific ufologists' had consulted the Church Fathers they would have learned that the said hair had come from a mortal woman seduced by the same demon in the form of an incubus! The more sceptically minded would tend to cut out the middle demon from the equation.

This should remind us that the medieval world is not as removed from our own as we think. Much of its intellectual structure has survived in folk religion in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions to this day, from whence it has been imperfectly secularised into wider culture.

Keith Basterfield. *UFOs: a report on Australian encounters*. Reed, 1997. £8.90.

This book, which has only just become available in Britain, is a much expanded and updated edition of his earlier book, *Close Encounters of the Australian Kind*, and the earlier chapters reproduce much of the text, which follow Basterfield's adventures in UFOlogy, and the process by which he constructed his image theory - that many otherwise inexplicable UFO reports are caused by hypnogogic imagery. This material is still of interest, not least because the earlier book is now quite unobtainable.

In the later chapters, which deal with the events of the 1980's and 1990's, he backs away from the image idea, partially as a result of his study of a physical traces case at Rosedale, and his study of abduction cases. Several of these complex cases are presented, though in at least one the claim by the witness that she was also the victim of sexual abuse has been omitted. He concludes that 'psychological processes' cannot account for abduction narratives, a conclusion partly prompted by

what he believes to be the negation of the fantasy prone personality theory. How secure that negation is I am not sure, because I am not aware of the exact criterion for rejection. If the assessment of FPP was based, as it was in Ring's study, on self-assessment questionnaires, then the answers depend on the percipients insight into the imaginative nature of their experiences. Even if the FPP hypothesis grows, the current psycho-social front runner is much more closely bound in with his original image hypothesis. In this, abduction-type experiences

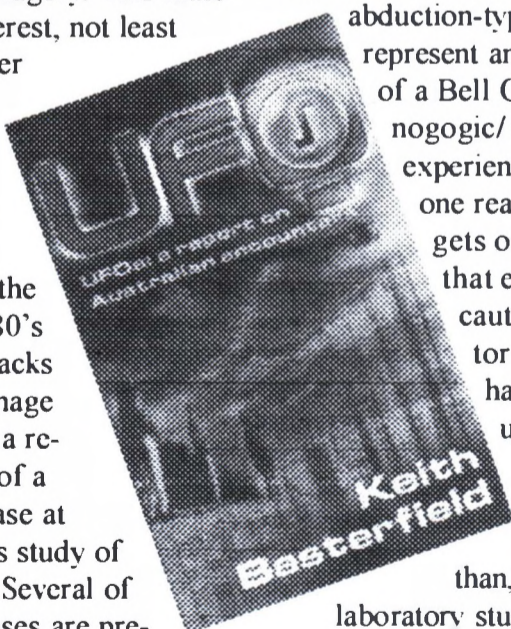
represent an extreme edge of a Bell Curve of hypnogogic/ sleep disorder experiences. Perhaps one reason why this gets overlooked is that even such a cautious investigator as Basterfield has become led up the garden path of hypnotic regression, rather than, say, sleep laboratory studies.

There is a tendency here to take narrative at face value, thus it is not clear whether independent witnesses (such as the investigators themselves) have observed any of the psychic powers claimed by some abductees, or whether

these are just the percipients' own claims, perhaps sometimes backed up by loyal family and friends. Much the same goes for the physical trace case at Rosedale, not actually investigated till a couple of months later, and in spades for the alleged multi witness abduction at Belgrave. To actually 'investigate' such a complex story would, I suspect, involve using private detectives to examine in detail the lives of the witnesses to prove they had never met before and could not have concocted a hoax. This does not seem to have been done. Of course, we must accept that for both logistical and ethical reasons private UFO groups are unlikely to be able to do this, but that being the case, such stories can never finally be anything other than impenetrable narratives.

It is I think, very significant, that Basterfield concludes that all the photographs submitted to him showing structured objects are fakes. There is never any unambiguous evidence that stands apart from the narratives.

The appendix to this book gives a wide range of such narratives, in bare outline, again interesting if true, but chiefly as folklore, for example, how strange marks on the ground are interpreted as marking a manifestation of the supernatural.



Jerome Clark. *Unexplained: strange sightings, incredible experiences and puzzling physical phenomena*. 2nd ed. Visible Ink, 1999. \$19.95.

The first edition of *Unexplained* was an abridgement of a hard back entitled *Encyclopedia of Unexplained Physical Phenomena*, and in this revised edition some of the biographical and organisational entries from the hardback have been included. Two new articles, on Chupacabras and on the Irish water dog have been added, the article on Area 51 has been substantially rewritten, and several other articles have been updated, in others new references have been added. There is a new bibliography, organisation list and a new feature, a list of web sites. The straight alphabetical sequence of the earlier edition has been replaced by a theme based arrangement. As at least 90% of the main text is unchanged, it probably would not be worth anyone who has the earlier edition to purchase this one, but I can definitely recommend it to anyone who hasn't got the earlier edition.

This book gives us much of Jerry at his best; the historian digging up all sorts of morsels of obscure accounts and stories, dare on say almost practising the notorious 'cult of librarianship'. Jerry approaches much of the material with a kind of baffled agnosticism, facing the problem of how apparently sane and reasonable people can report what in many cases are totally impossible events.

Despite his strictures against the psycho-social approach to such subjects, he is in many cases forced to almost the same position himself. Indeed the gap between Jerry and his psycho-

social critics, on most topics is not as great as he would sometimes have us believe. For example he refers to David Hufford's critiques of folklorists who regard all memorates of anomalous experiences as being nothing more than stories, insisting to the contrary that people actually experience these events. But our own John Rimmer made exactly this point ten years before Hufford in his MUF0B article 'The UFO is alive and well and living in Fairyland' in MUF0B, December 1970. (Also in the Magonia website archive). Psychosocial approaches do not dispute that people have anomalous experiences, what they do dispute are literalistic interpretations, particularly those which invoke non-human intelligences of unknown powers and provenance.

In his introduction Jerry suggests that sooner or later science will have to accept some of these phenomena, but the trouble is people have been saying this for decades, but the decisive evidence never arrives. 60 years and no body of a Nessie, 50 years and no bigfoot, 50 years and no proof of aliens, 150 years and no further forward in psychical research. There has to be a limit after which we accept that the chase is over, and for UFOs we must be close to that point.

The absence of decisive evidence, and the sheer multiplicity of outrageously bizarre experiences and claims, suggests that few if any of the phenomena discussed in this book exist as discreet entities in the universe of physics and geography. They inhabit what F. W. Holliday called the 'goblin universe', and that by far the most likely locale for that universe, is, in some form or another, the human imagination.

Savitri Devi represents an intersection of various currents in the modern world that few people would automatically connect together

Nicholas Goodrick-Clark. *Hitler's Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan myth and Neo-Nazism*. New York University Press, 1998. £18.00.

In this book, the author of the acclaimed *Occult Roots of Nazism*, charts the life and career of one of the strangest Nazis of them all, the sort of life and career that were it to be the plot of a novel would be dismissed as too absurd. Savitri Devi, was born Maximiani Portas, in Lyons daughter of Italian-Greek, naturalised French father and English mother. Goodrick-Clark traces her career from her involvement with Hellenism, her reaction against the Allies after their refusal to support Greek irredentism in 1922, her journey into the orbit of Hitler, her journey to India, her marriage, largely of convenience, to a Hindu nationalist and pro-Hitler publisher, A. K. Mukherji, her construction of an occult world view based largely on a synthesis of Hinduism and Nazism, with a mix of vegetarianism animal rights and proto-ecology, up to her post-war friendships with old German and new British Nazis.

It is not so much Portas/Devi herself who is of interest, but the way she represents an intersection of various currents in the modern world that few people would automatically connect to-

gether. For example the Hindu nationalist movement with which she was associated was the spiritual ancestor the current BJP (Party of the Indian-People), the dominant force in the present Indian government (and a party whose slogan One People, One Nation, One Culture, evokes, shall we say, a certain *deja vu*). Her own mythology, her rejection of humanism and general misanthropy, has more than echoes in the deep green movement, leaving such movements open to infiltration by the radical right. (Already the radical right in Switzerland has taken up ecology in a big way, the Democratic Ecology Party in West Germany mixes deep green and nationalist themes, and of course we have David Icke's linking of ecology, new ageism and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, derived from Nazism and proto facisism) The new age movement, particularly its apocalyptic wing, has the same anti-humanism, the welcome of a catastrophe which will wipe out most of human kind (who just, by pure coincidence of course, happen to be poor and black/brown) leaving just nice bronzed, Californians alive.

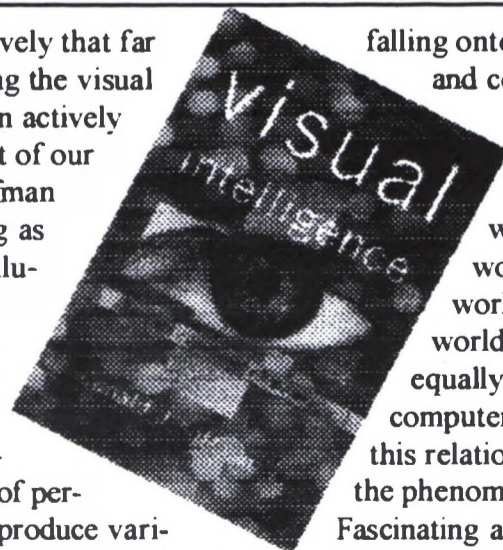
I am sure that an excellent *Secret History*-type study on the Nazi New Age could be accomplished and Dr Goodrick-Clark seems to have just the right qualifications for doing this.

Donald D. Hoffman. *Visual Intelligence: how we create what we see*. W. W. Norton, 1998 \$19.95.

When sceptical writers in the fields covered by Magonia suggest that some ostensible anomalous personal experiences are generated by radical misperceptions, the response is often hostile, with the implication that the sceptics are making vicious personal attacks on the witnesses. One of the main reasons for this attitude is that many investigators have a naive view of perception as a sort of passive video recording of the external world.

They would be well advised to read this book, in which Hoffman, a professor of cognitive science, philosophy and computer

science argues persuasively that far from passively recording the visual world, the eye and brain actively construct every element of our visual experience. Hoffman builds up his case using as evidence both optical illusions and the often strange distortions introduced by brain damage. He suggests various rules which underlie the construction of perception and how these produce various optical illusions. These rules allow the brain the order the patterns of light and shade



falling onto the retina into discrete objects, and compose them into a real world.

As a philosopher Hoffman doesn't stop there, more controversially he argues we do not know if the 'real' world, which he calls the relational world, is at all like the phenomenal world. It may well be so, but it is equally possible, he argues, using computer generated virtual reality, that this relational world is very different from the phenomenal world of our perceptions. Fascinating and not too technical, recommended to all field investigators.



In Internet discussion forums Greg Sandow (left) has been one of the most vocal critics of psycho-social approaches to the abduction experience. Peter Rogerson reviews Sandow's critique and finds it flawed

Highlight of the latest issue of the *Anomalist* (No. 7, Winter 1998-9, \$9.95) is Greg Sandow's essay 'The Abduction Conundrum'. This has been hailed in some quarters as the definitive answer to the psycho-social hypothesis. It most certainly isn't that at all. It is the usual mountain of special pleading, misstatements of fact, and cult of pseudo-open-mindedness taken to the point of lunacy that we have been hearing from abductionists for years.

I say pseudo-open mindedness, because the open mindedness is distinctly one sided, there is no open mindedness towards sceptical views of abductions at all, there may be problems in cultural interpretations of abduction stories, yet Sandow's dismissal of Martin Kottmeyer's essay 'Entirely Unprejudiced' as "one of the zaniest essays ever written on UFOlogy", with the usual angry wave of the hand, scarcely betokens of open mindedness towards that quarter. Indeed, though Sandow pays lip service towards impartiality, and makes a few mild, token criticisms of Hopkins and Jacobs, in reality the essay is just another extended defence of abduction literalism.

Thus we get the defence of hypnosis, the critics of the idea that hypnosis aids memory recall are dismissed as 'experimental psychologists' "who sit alone and think", (oh dear I thought that experimental psychologists conducted, erm, experiments, something that elsewhere Sandow concedes, but only to say that they create artificial situations, or do nasty things like make children think they were lost in the mall), not like the nice empathic therapists, who deal with real people, and whose anecdotes one should therefore take on trust, and not both about nasty things like trying to verify them by carefully conducted experiments. The work of Spanos and colleagues is also

dismissed (they commit the ultimate sins in not believing hypnosis at all, and shock horror, "quote from Phil Klass") (Bit off message here Greg, your friends have been quoting this same article against the fantasy proneness hypothesis - wrongly as it turns out - for years now).

Sandow asks why do only some science fiction motifs feature in abduction lore, why not tales of visits to other planets, or possessing special powers? The answer is that there are, as there are tales, and a growing number of people who claim to be aliens themselves, but they don't feature in the approved Hopkins/Jacobs canon, because these authors *know* what the "true abduction story" is, and dismiss anything that deviates from it as fantasy or screen memory. (Come to think of it, can anyone recall encountering the idea of screen memories in a non UFOlogical context? The only example I can think of was an episode of MASH, in which Hawkeye had a screen memory of being saved by or saving his brother from drowning - I can't remember which. That turned out to be a screen for one of them trying to drown the other. The idea seems iffy and rather dangerous; what happens when Inspector Plod tells you, "I'm sorry sir, your memory of sitting quietly in front of the TV with your family, was a screen memory for you raping and pillaging the neighbourhood, no sir I don't have any evidence for this assertion, but then absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Mind coming down to the station with me Mr Sandow, we have a hypnotist to hand".

Most abduction narratives, which people construct, often to account for actual anomalous personal experiences, many associated with aware sleep paralysis and other hypnogogic and hypnopompic experiences, are

based on the the abduction narratives of others. At first these were transmitted through supermarket tabloids, this was the source that Patty Price, the first of the really modern abductees, used in (unconsciously) constructing her abduction narrative. When narratives are placed in order of investigation and/or publication, the building process, in which elements from one narrative are carried forward into the next, with a new motif added from time to time.

Sandow has some fun at various psycho-social explanations, but if some broad psycho-social approach is correct, we should not expect there to be just one overarching cause. Abduction narratives mean different things, and serve different purposes for different people. Fears of science, love-hate feelings towards high-tech medicine, guilt feelings about animal experiments, the sense of loss of autonomy, feelings about abortion, other sexual problems, abductors as parental and other authority figures, the abductor as faceless, grey bureaucrat, and more besides may play parts. The meanings change over times. Remember that when Bullard wrote his huge two-volume thesis on abductions in 1987 the hybrid fairy child featured nowhere in it., Within a couple of years it had become the main motif.

What parts of Sandow's essay bring out, is the divide between what C. P. Snow called the Two Cultures, the mutual incomprehension between people with liberal arts and science backgrounds. Thus even a highly educated liberal arts graduate like Sandow, has only a vague notion of science, with a concept of the future largely derived from *Star Trek*. Thus teleportation, alien human hybrids, people being sucked through solid walls, all are assumed in some vague sense to be possible, because of past scien-

tific advance. Science, unless *everything* we think we know about the world is wrong, actually puts limits on what is possible, but this is not a notion that Sandow takes on board. Thus, if not actually endorsing the idea, he calls on us to be open minded about alien human hybrids, and people being sucked through solid windows. Two comments. First after his strictures on the lack of rigour in psycho-social UFOlogy (Kottmeyer's theories are too vague to testable), the double standard is breath taking: if aliens can suck people through solid walls they can do anything, the ETH can never be refuted. I have been hammering at this point for ages now and will go on doing so till someone deigns to answer (I suspect hell will freeze over first). Second, that if nothing is ruled out, we get total anarchy, nothing can ever be decided.

The correct response is to accept that if we actually listened to what the abductees are saying, it is quite incompatible with a literalistic interpretation. If you don't want to deal in certainties, then at least it is overwhelmingly more probable that we are dealing with some kind of 'virtual experience'. If you want to make absolutely certain, and perhaps set the abductees own minds at rest, then at least in the case of frequent repeater abductees the solution is to get them into properly monitored sleep laboratories, and find out just what is happening in abduction experiences, if anything. If the experiences, however real and frightening they are to the abductee, are in some sense or other a product of their imagination, then they can be told that this is the case, that they are in charge and can change the scenario of the dreams or visions. They can be helped, which is something that Jacobs in particular cannot do, with his doomsday scenario of despair.

Coleman clearly intends that we should interpret at least some of these stories as encounters with flesh-and-blood primates



Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe. *The field guide to Bigfoot, Yeti, and other mystery primates worldwide*. Avon Books, 1999. \$12.50

Following on from the successful *Field Guide to Extraterrestrials*, this book gives excellent drawings based on eyewitness descriptions of a wide variety of hairy humanoids from all continents. These range from such well known favourites as the big-foot and yeti, to a variety of lesser known breeds, including chupacabras and other mer-beings. As a work of a folklore there is very good, but the trouble is that unlike the *Field Guide to Extraterrestrials*, and the *Field Guide to the Little People* which inspired it, co-author Coleman clearly intends that we should interpret at least some of these stories at face value, as encounter with flesh and blood primates. He constructs a classification of them, with features such as Neo-Giant, True Giant, Neanderthaloid, Proto-Pygmy etc. Even Coleman has to concede that the True Giants, which included Grendel and the Big Grey Man of Ben Macdhui, are essentially folkloric beings. Others such as the Mayan *aluxs* or the Hawaiian *menehune* clearly belong in the global tradition of little people and fairy lore, perhaps based on Lilliputian hallucinations. In many other cases the separate categories are more likely to represent individual images of the sub-human rather than separate real species.

Even in the those categories which can be more plausibly argued to be real creatures, such as bigfoot, there are two main problems, the lack of physical evidence, no skins or pelts

from which genetic material could be extracted, which as time goes on makes their real existence increasingly unlikely; and their lack of real resemblance to fossil hominids as currently interpreted. Rather than any real proto-human, they resemble folk images of 'hairy ape' men (there is no reason to believe that Neanderthals or *Homo Erectus* were particularly hairy, that idea comes from the very popular paintings of Burian, which is how generations of school children were presented with 'ape men'). Furthermore the anthropology to which cryptozoologists subscribe is not some startling new theory, but the discarded theories and beliefs of half a century ago. In this field cryptozoology is a living fossil of yesterday's anthropology.

The authors seem to think that there is some kind of conspiracy against cryptozoologists by professional anthropologists, I would like to think that, in a sense, there was and that any anthropologists who came across a community of living Neanderthals would examine their conscience very deeply before releasing the information. In the real world the lure of the Nobel Prize and the award-winning documentary would be far too great. The discovery of a relict group of hominids would be the anthropological discovery of the millennium, and very soon they would become the most inspected, prodded, poked about and tested creatures/people in the world, with a huge army of anthropologists, zoologists, teachers, missionaries, conservationists, development officers, government officials, tour operators, lawyers and politicians would be making their living from them.

Armen Victorian. *Mind Controllers*. Vision, 1999. £9.99

Tim Swartz. *Evil Agenda of the Secret Government: exposing Project Paper Clip and underground UFO bases of Hitler's elite scientific corps*. Global Communications, 1999. £ 11.99.

Conspiracy literature now seems to be settling into a nice routine, the mixing of genuine historic events with mixtures of speculation and outright fantasy. The fantasy starts with the name of the author of *Mind Controllers*, for 'Dr Armen Victorian' does not actually exist. He is the pen-name of Habib, aka Henry, Azadehdel, a Nottingham shop assistant and former insurance salesman, who clearly possesses many of the features of Caraboo syndrome, to the extent that it is doubtful whether any statements about his life and background can be assumed to be accurate. As Victorian, Henry originally set himself up as a UFO researcher, before going on to the more hopefully lucrative line as spy buster, which actually doesn't appear to have got him any closer into mainstream journalism, though he is taken seriously by some intelligence people who should know better.

As such things go *Mind Controllers* is on the more reasonable end of conspiracy theories. So we get, as I said, some real history, the CIA MKULTRA, and other real or alleged unethical experiments, which certainly suggest that the 'free world' had a fair number of psychopaths who would have operated the concentration camps quite effectively if history had turned out differently. But this is never enough; the enemy must not only be wicked, they must be enormously powerful and possessed of near supernatural secret technologies. Thus we get the tale of the Verney's and the dreadful noise which plagued them in their cottage. This, if not a figment of their imagination, and one can never be sure about such things, sounds like our old friend the humaduzz, but is interpreted as some hideous experiment by *them*. When Verney gets the run around from all sorts of local authorities, this is not because, rightly or wrongly, they have written him off as tiresome nutcase, but because

they are in the plot.

We also get the tales of the CIA mind control experiments, the researches into psychotronics and remote viewing, the dastardly aviary and many other dark deeds. To the cynic all this suggests that the CIA and other intelligence organisations are staffed by people living every bit as much in a fantasy world of their own making as dear old Henry himself, expect that their craziness costs lots of money and in some cases suffering and lives.

And if you are really paranoid, you could ask yourself who really benefits from such a portrayal of power and mystique. If you were a CIA recruiter, what would you think would appeal to likely members; an image of a vast powerful organisation able to control people minds at a distance, engaged in remote viewing, anti gravity research and hiding the secrets of crashed flying saucers, or a bunch of assholes who couldn't locate the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, because *The Rough Guide to Belgrade* in the office (..whoops I'm sorry secret intelligence in Yugoslavia) was a few years out of date.

If *Mind Controllers* is the moderate end of this spectrum. *Evil Agenda* is the real crazy stuff. Here too real historical facts about the Nazis and Project Paperclip is interwoven with mad stuff the about the Bavarian Illuminati (apparently now official representatives of the Bavarian *land* government it would seem) trying to run the world. Anti fascist and fascist conspiracy theories become fused together. (No matter that the ideas of the real eighteenth century Illuminati, every bit as dangerous as Tom Paine, and the Nazis were diametrically opposed). This again is linked to essentially Nazi nostalgia myths of the survival of Adolf Hitler in his Antarctic Avalon, where he is surrounded by would be world conquering legions, and the proud possessors of flying saucers which landed on the moon in 1942!

Except where stated all reviews are by Peter Rogerson

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Lies, damned lies, and UFO crashes

Nicholas Redfern. *Cosmic Crashes: The Incredible Story of the UFOs that Fell to Earth*, Simon & Schuster, 1999. 16.99

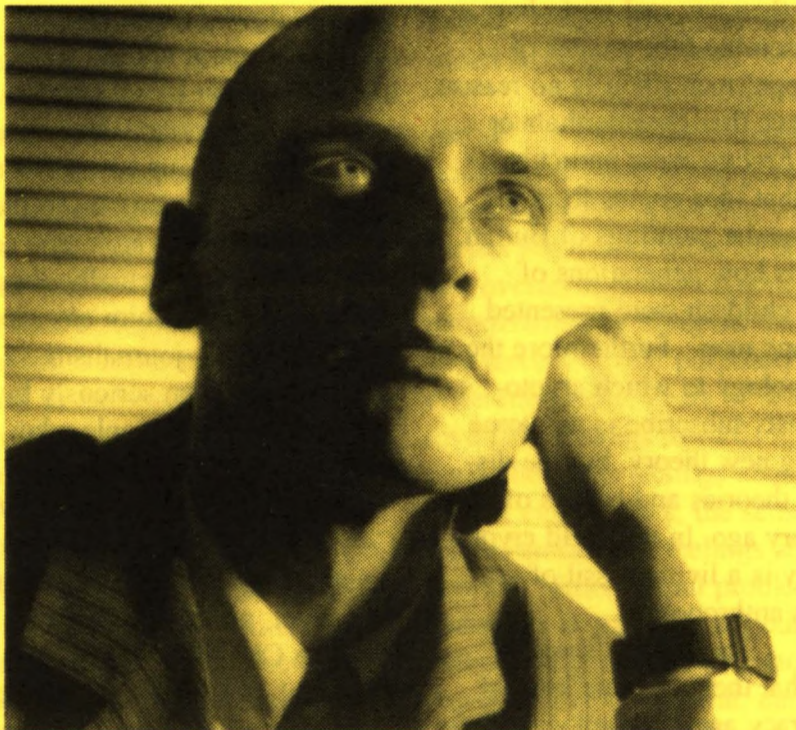
In this, his third book, Redfern sets out to try to convince us that some UFOs have crashed in Britain. This seems an unpromising project to saner ufologists (and there are a few), but he employs a number of tricks in an attempt to help his readers to attain a suspension of disbelief. It is more readable than his previous efforts and quite entertaining if read uncritically. However, if you take a more sceptical attitude you will either be amused or dismayed by the efforts of the author to twist the most unlikely reports into evidence of space visitors, and by the rumours and downright lies which he appears to take so seriously.

Many of the cases he deals with have already been explained to the satisfaction of all but the barmiest of ufologists, so he finds it necessary to question, reject, or even ignore these explanations. Redfern is obviously well aware by now that his readers don't want explanations, they want the space aliens and their saucers, so that is what he tries to deliver.

Fellow ufologists told Redfern that tales of crashed saucers in Britain could not be true as it would be impossible to keep such things secret almost indefinitely. Nick Pope, hardly a sceptic, told him: "I do not believe there is any evidence to support the crash of any extraterrestrial craft in Britain." Redfern replies to his critics by saying that they haven't bothered to study the relevant official documents. The reality, of course, is that they do not agree with his interpretations of such documents.

Perhaps the most interesting story in the book because, if true, it would be one of the most sensational UFO incidents to date, is an account of an alleged incident on Cannock Chase in January

1974. The tale was told to him by a man who had seen him on a television programme. This man claimed that he was a member of a television outside broadcast team working for ATV. He said that when they arrived at the site of the incident the Army and the police were there in force. Two men in a car had seen what looked like a fireball coming down and they thought it was an aircraft crashing.



One of the men went into the nearby field to investigate and when he returned he said it was not an aircraft. He allegedly told the TV crew it was a flying saucer.

While the TV crew were interviewing the man it was obvious that he was ill. He was eventually taken in an Army ambulance to a hospital near Wolverhampton, where he died the next morning from radiation burns.

One of the cameramen managed to obtain film of a large burn mark in the field, but it was confiscated by government agents, who allegedly make a habit of hanging around TV studios and censoring material before it can be broadcast.

Although the man gave Redfern the names of the TV peo-

ple involved in the incident, as well as the name of the hospital where the witness allegedly died, he makes no mention of checking the story. In 1974 ATV was quite a small organisation, where everybody knew one another. However, when John Rimmer gave the names to a man who worked for ATV at the time, he said he had never heard of any of them. Probably Redfern is not using their

real names, but he omits to say so. Anyway, had such an incident really occurred the story would have spread like wildfire throughout ATV and other broadcasting organisations, but our man at ATV had never heard of any such incident. He also said that stories about government agents interfering in the editing of TV programmes were nonsense.

In the book Redfern makes no mention of checking with the hospital about the man dying of radiation burns, but in an interview published in *UFO Magazine* (July/August 1999) he said that he had checked but that "everyone I have tracked down has really clamped up, almost to a level of fear being expressed". Note the weasel word "almost". Is it not much more likely that those

he questioned had never heard of such an incident, for the simple reason that it never happened? With no independent evidence or testimony to support this unlikely tale we must conclude that Redfern has been told a pack of lies.

Many other liars and fantasists feature in this book, including certain notorious ufologists, but we will not name them here, if only to avoid the unwelcome and expensive attentions of m'learned friends.

A good example of solved UFO cases which are presented as evidence of UFO landings or crashes is the great "crater" flap of the 1960s. A chapter is devoted to these incidents, despite the fact that convincing explanations were provided within a few years of their occurrence.

The most notorious incident was the Charlton crater of July 1963. This gained enormous publicity and questions about it were asked in the House of Commons. Many cranky theories circulated, but the mystery was solved by Alan Sharp who explained it in a review of Leonard Cramp's book *Piece for a Jig-Saw* (*MUFORG Bulletin*, February 1967). It was a classic example of a crater caused by a lightning strike on open ground, and its formation was preceded by a violent thunderstorm. (Further information about these craters is available in the archives section of the *Magonia* web site.) If Redfern were a little less dismissive of the opinions and information offered to him by sceptics he might have been made aware of the true and natural explanations for the craters. But that would have been a bit of a let-down for his credulous readers.

What can I say to sum up then? I think it demonstrates that in nuts-and-bolts ufology there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and UFO crashes.

John Harney