

Review

Author(s): Bill Ellis

Review by: Bill Ellis

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is the tremendous attention given to the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Medjugorje, Yugoslavia. Within the decade of the 1980s, interest in this apparition has blossomed to the point where it has become a major international pilgrimage site and the focus of a creative outpouring of devotional expression. All of this activity has occurred in the face of either no ecclesiastical support or basic hierarchical apathy. This book makes for provocative, even titillating reading, but its analysis, unfortunately, told me more about Freudian interpretations of sexuality and religion than it did about the Roman Catholic devotionism at the heart of the study.

**New Age Encyclopedia.** Edited by J. Gordon Melton with Aidan A. Kelly and Jerome Clark. (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1990. Pp. xxxviii + 586, introduction, overview of the New Age movement, chronology, list of educational institutions offering degrees and programs on New Age topics, index. \$59.50 cloth)

**UFOs in the 1980s: The UFO Encyclopedia, Volume 1.** Edited by Jerome Clark. (Detroit: Apogee Books, 1990. Pp. xv + 234, introduction, history of the UFO phenomenon before 1980, index, \$65.00 cloth)

BILL ELLIS

*Penn State University, Hazleton*

Why should folklorists be interested in these books? First of all, they abstract and organize vast amounts of popular literature about mystical experiences, unorthodox healing practices, puzzling phenomena, and contacts with superhuman entities, all of which are cognate with traditional forms of folklore. Although most studies have examined marginal societies and "primitive" subcultures, folklorists in the tradition of Andrew Lang have long advocated studying the unconventional beliefs of politically dominant groups like educated Anglo-Americans. Such study has often proved worthwhile, as

shown in Leon Festinger's *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), a detailed case study of a Chicago apocalyptic UFO group headed by channeler Dorothy Martin (Marian Keech).

Second, these works point the reader to active networks of believers and investigators that constitute folk groups, groups whose dynamics remain, for the most part, little documented by folklorists. Some of the beliefs discussed within these networks reach the general public (often in distorted or unsympathetic form). But the larger intellectual and historical trends remain known to only a few within these groups. And because holding these beliefs often exposes believers to ridicule, students have had to document such traditions through patient fieldwork or else make do with journalistic or unsympathetic popular accounts. More useful discussions reach print, if at all, only in newsletters or specialized publications that are themselves difficult to locate. Hence volumes like these, thoroughly researched and sympathetically presented, are essential to any student of religious and supernatural folklore in contemporary America.

One of the strong points of J. Gordon Melton's outstanding *New Age Encyclopedia* is that it shows how venerable the "New Age" actually is in the United States. In a concise introductory overview, Melton points out that although the term dates from the early 1970s, the movement itself draws from alternative religious movements that have attracted Americans since the early 19th century. Several historical articles point out key links between earlier movements and allegedly "new" phenomena, particularly Americans' interest in occult links with otherworldly entities through mediums and channelers. Credit for starting the earlier movement is given early channelers such as Andrew Jackson Davis (1826–1910) and John Ballou Newbrough (1828–91), who produced *Oahspe, A New Age Bible* through automatic writing in 1881–82. The editors also document the beginning of Americans' flirtation with gurus from the mysterious East

during the Theosophical movement of the late 1800s.

But the bulk of the volume isolates and provides basic information on the bewildering number of latter-day prophets and movements. The book covers highly visible New Age figures such as Ken Keyes and Shirley MacLaine, but the entries also link them to their less prominent mentors and influences and so direct the reader to more private manifestations of the movement. Much of the information will thus mesh with folklorists' research on alternative religions and medicine. Melton also has observed and chronicled the growth of alternative religions in the United States, and this book is a welcome addition to his other reference works, which include the *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (1978, 1987, 1989), *Magic, Witchcraft and Paganism in America* (1982), and the *Biographical Dictionary of American Cult and Sect Leaders* (1986).

The *New Age Encyclopedia* is especially strong on "holistic healing," nonstandard medical practices opposed to orthodox therapy. Encompassed are herbal medicine, dietary restrictions like macrobiotics, bodywork ranging from chiropractic medicine to Rolfing, and more spiritual forms of healing including Wilhelm Reich's orgone therapy. As Thomas Graves has noted, such alternative methods have much in common with older forms of folk medicine, especially Pennsylvania Dutch "pow-wow-ing." One useful entry groups holistic treatments for cancer, which, as David Hufford and other researchers have shown, particularly appeal not to "the ignorant" but to highly educated Americans.

The growth of the Wiccan or Neo-Pagan movement is handled clearly by coauthor Aidan A. Kelly, a prominent Neo-Pagan and founder of modern witchcraft organizations. Information on the 1000–5000 real-life "covens" active in the United States is thus especially authoritative and helps balance assertions about underground "satanists" (themselves part of contemporary folklore) circu-

lated by the Roman Catholic Church. Because much of the contemporary witchcraft movement is noninstitutionalized, the encyclopedia gives basic data on the most prominent authors of the movement, such as Gerald Gardner, Raymond Buckland, and Selena Fox. Folklorists will also be interested in "networking," the role of specialized mailing lists, newsletters, and directories in forming and maintaining many of these highly specialized groups. Coauthor Jerome Clark provides objective entries on New Age interest in the paranormal—intelligent dolphins, UFO abductions, and "past-life therapy" (regressive hypnosis to discover hidden cases of reincarnation).

The book does have some drawbacks: the index, although comprehensive, does not direct the reader to a page number but rather to the number of the entry, and because many of these are long and data-filled, it is sometimes difficult to track down a specific reference. Running heads on the pages include only the number, not the name of the entry, making browsing annoyingly difficult. Still, most entries are kept short, and cross-referencing is clearly and efficiently done. Bibliographies list both easily found scholarly studies (when they exist) and more specialized ones, and Melton helpfully directs the reader to the New Age Movement special collection at the University of California at Santa Barbara for more help. The *New Age Encyclopedia* provides basic cultural and historical information necessary to show that apparently bizarre belief systems are in fact part of long-standing, coherent American trends.

Less satisfactory as an encyclopedia, although still worth consulting, is Jerome Clark's *UFOs in the 1980s*, the first of four proposed volumes in *The UFO Encyclopedia*. (Two more by Clark will cover UFO and UFO-related matters from the 19th century up to 1979; another, by Melton, will focus on individuals and groups claiming to have regular contacts with aliens.) Working with a staff far smaller than Melton's, Clark actually

wrote the bulk of entries, and so the volume reflects a more personal view of UFO research. As a reference work, then, Clark's work is not nearly as efficient as Margaret Sachs's *The UFO Encyclopedia* (1980). Where she provides hundreds of entries on individuals, organizations, notorious incidents, TV and movie documentaries, concepts, and consequences of UFO encounters, Clark provides 26 biographies, 22 entries on organizations, and only 8 entries on specific cases. Many more important individuals and cases are discussed under omnibus headings, but because these are not separately listed, the interested reader must turn directly to the index rather than to the entry—a nuisance. Although a brief introduction gives some basic background, the volume also assumes some knowledge of UFO terminology and concepts.

Clark's criteria for inclusion are also at times arbitrary: Thomas Bullard merits a biography for his folklore work on abductions, but David Hufford, who pioneered serious folkloristic study of UFOs and other paranormal phenomena, gets only a passing notice. And, unaccountably, Peter Rojcewicz, whose serious work on "Men in Black" experiences has appeared in both the *Journal of American Folklore* and the *Journal of UFO Studies*, is ignored altogether. Another odd omission is the "crop circle" question, which is currently generating considerable debate in Great Britain, even attracting the attention of the House of Commons in July 1989. In short, this volume is less an encyclopedia than a series of essays that might better have been reorganized into Clark's narrative critique of current ufology.

That said, one still will not find a better summary of the matters covered. Clark, a vocal "agnostic" on UFO origins, has labored to develop a tougher, more reflexive approach to paranormal research. Responding to the sensational and sloppy nature of most popular research, Clark has encouraged skeptical reexaminations of cases. At the same time, however, he remains convinced

that mundane explanations are not adequate for some phenomena. As editor of *International UFO Reporter*, the journal of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, Clark has maintained a running battle on two fronts: against the "hard skeptics" who see no value in such research, and against enthusiasts emotionally committed to unprovable supernatural hypotheses. He acknowledges that "the stereotype of the ufologist as dingbat is not *entirely* unfounded," but he also stresses that the true nature of the phenomenon is neither occult nor mundane (p. xiv).

Not surprisingly, *UFOs in the 1980s* often has a combative tone, but Clark, to his credit, quotes his opponents' assertions fairly, even when he clearly is appalled by them. Especially useful is his summary of the bizarre and messy "MJ-12" affair, in which USAF officers apparently introduced forged "secret government documents" proving that the United States was cooperating with extraterrestrials. The affair drew motifs from a wide spectrum of rumors and legends about cattle mutilations, satanic cults, government conspiracy scenarios, and even the secret Fatima prophecy. It has sparked a complex debate in newsletters, at meetings, among networks in oral communications, and even on late-night call-in radio talk shows.

Another useful essay summarizes psychological explanations set forth to explain UFO encounters as products of culture or the abnormal mind. Admitting that his own book *The Unidentified* (1975, coauthored with Loren Coleman) was an early statement of this position, Clark now argues that such explanations fail to pay attention to empirical evidence and often are unverifiable; hence, they are matters of *faith* rather than science. He does not deny that a psychological cause for UFO experiences may yet be proposed and validated, but he concludes that existing theories suffer "from an affection for grand pronouncement and a concomitant inattention to empirical evidence . . . if the psychosocial hypothesis has yet to become a scien-

tific theory, it has become by now a belief system all its own" (p. 184).

This analysis is matched by Linda Oxley Milligan's unpublished doctoral work at Ohio State University: among networks of UFO believers and skeptics, she found "faith" in some ultimate definition of "reality" to be a constant for both skeptics and believers. Empirical fieldwork by David Hufford, Gillian Bennett (*Traditions of Belief*, 1987), and now Leea Virtanan (*It Must Have Been ESP*, 1990) has brought these researchers to the conclusion that some paranormal events may indeed be empirical events described honestly by informants, and efforts to explain them away as products of culture-based wishful thinking are often themselves reductionist and unscientific. Indeed, "traditions of disbelief," in spite of its frequent use of pseudo-scientific jargon, may be no more than a form of folklore mirroring popular belief.

Creating a neutral ground between two highly polarized factions is a difficult task, and one does not envy Clark's role as one of a small but growing number of academics willing to become involved in this debate. Yet folklorists interested in the continuing place of the paranormal in contemporary society can learn much from him. One wishes that he had had the staff or editorial skills to turn this volume into a working encyclopedia, for his reading of current literature in the field *is* encyclopedic.

Both Melton's *New Age Encyclopedia* and Clark's *UFOs in the 1980s* give the reader fair introductions to many of the beliefs, practices, and genuinely puzzling phenomena at the heart of mainstream American contemporary folklore. By making information previously distributed among specialized networks readily available, these works will direct researchers to new topics of research and, more important, suggest more sympathetic and productive approaches.

**Les Productions symboliques du pouvoir.** Sous la direction de Laurier Turgeon. (Les Nouveaux Cahiers du CÉLAT; Quebec: Septentrion, 1990. Pp. 211, Présentation. Price not given)

**Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts.** By James C. Scott. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990. Pp. 251, Preface. Price not given)

TRACY M. LORD

*University of California, Berkeley*

These two volumes, which conveniently view the interface between classes from opposing directions, share an inquiry into power in relation to folklore as well as a functional disciplinary ambiguity. The growing importance of issues of power and powerlessness in all the social studies continues to dispute traditionally aestheticized, ideologically "neutral" categories, not to mention assumptions that inform the "objective" aims of cataloging and describing. Although there is no question of the value of maintaining and expanding the archives of culture, at least it no longer need be envisioned as a self-sufficient goal alongside considerations of how the science of folk life and lore situates itself within the broader social and institutional frameworks and of how the category of folk life and lore structures our perspectives on social realities.

Folklore seems to have been spared, for example, the degree of auto-critique raising questions about epistemological grounding and subject-object relations carried out in recent years in the field of anthropology. Could this have something to do with the concept of "folk" that, denied the sublime and urgent gravity of "anthropos," produces its own protective marginalization? On the other hand, folklore already serves as an enviable space from which to "skip" the self-consciousness of disciplinary obsessions and move right into promised lands of multi-plicitous discourse. These two recent volumes join that trend in their studies that refigure