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Author(s): Paul Brian Thomas

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Revisionism in ET-Inspired Religions

Paul Brian Thomas

ABSTRACT: By utilizing the textual products of extraterrestrial-inspired religious thinkers like George Van Tassel, Raël, and Patricia Cori, as well as related materials by Erich von Däniken and Zecharia Sitchin, this article explores the concept of revisionism in ET-inspired religions. The authors examined in this article reread ancient religious texts, especially the Bible, as containing evidence of extraterrestrial influence in the course of human history. The anatomy of this “drive to revise” human history is explored, including an examination of how an improvisational millenarianism combines with a cultic milieu suspicious of authority and hegemonic narratives, and the conspiratorial intellectual maverick willing to work with “stigmatized” knowledge to produce narratives that are highly critical and suspicious of established intellectual authorities and procedures.

Patricia Cori, author and channel for the inhabitants of the Sirian star system, writes in her 2009 text *The Starseed Dialogues: Soul Searching the Universe*, “Wherever humankind has faced prosecution [sic] for free thought, it was most often necessary to bury the profound revelations in code, contained within the hidden scriptures of the greatest written texts of your present awareness: the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, and all the books of ancient religions.”¹ As a proponent of what I will term an extraterrestrial-inspired religion (hereafter ETI religions),² Cori’s statement captures essential elements of the revisionist mindset evident in much of the written work that emerges from ETI religious communities. For Patricia Cori, and other authors of ETI religious materials, humanity has been held in ignorance. Enlightenment occurs through refashioning and revising human history so that the true nature of life on Earth may be illuminated, particularly through

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alternative readings of our most cherished religious texts. Examination of materials inspired by ETI religious perspectives demonstrates that the revision of human history molded from ETI religions has a structure—an anatomy of revision—that is contextualized by historical setting and includes an improvisational millennialism breeding a suspicion of authoritative narratives while glorifying the intellectual maverick who works with stigmatized knowledge in a pronounced conspiratorial framework.³

ACRONYM ACROBATICS

As they are commonly used, the terms UFO religion and UFO-related religion are misnomers. Taken quiet literally, the term implies religious perspectives related to unidentified flying objects. However, as the terminology is commonly evoked, UFO-related religions also include religious perspectives wherein there is no actual contact with a UFO, but instead channeled messages or some other form of contact with extraterrestrial entities. As the UFO is not common to all these religious perspectives, but the ET (in some form) is, then the term ETI religions is used here as the more inclusive term.

ETI religion is an umbrella term meant to include the widely recognized and formally structured religious organizations like Heaven's Gate and the International Raëlian Movement (hereafter Raëlians) as well as the lesser institutionalized religious perspectives represented by authors like Patricia Cori and Gene Andrade (author of *Star Wisdom: Principles of Pleiadian Spirituality*, 1997). Unlike Marshall Applewhite, founder of Heaven's Gate, or Raël, neither Cori nor Andrade head established religious communities. Rather, they share their spiritual insights with interested readers through the publication of books and websites. Though authors like Cori have no formal connection with organized ETI religious groups, their writing and spiritual insights, nonetheless, are similar to those found in more formalized ETI religions.

A dissection of the anatomy of revision in ETI religions is not, nor can it be, solely limited to groups and authors who are explicitly religious in nature. For example, there are many affinities between the ETI religions under scrutiny here and people sometimes called ancient astronaut theorists, like Zecharia Sitchin (b. 1922) who speculates that myths about ancient gods and goddesses contain hidden clues that these deities are mythologized ancient astronauts.⁴ There is a certain cross-pollination of ideas between many of these authors and, at its broadest level, the authors discussed below. Patricia Cori, Gene Andrade, George Van Tassel, Raël, Zecharia Sitchin and Erich von Däniken, among others, share a compulsion to reformulate human history, and more specifically, to reinterpret religious texts in light of a reformulated history. It is this desire to revise in which I am most interested.

REVISIONISM: WHAT'S IN A TERM?

The manner in which terminology is employed to describe the exegetical activities of religious groups like those described in this article is important because language can subtly introduce, mask, or reveal explicit or implied biases as it relates to the hermeneutical activities of these groups. The importance of this issue as it relates to the textual products of ETI religions is partly illustrated by statements such as the following, appearing on the Heaven's Gate website, but widely echoed by others writing in this genre. Concerning the Bible, the website claims, "A great percentage of the materials have been corrupted by mistranslations and councils of so-called scholars."⁵ Such sentiments suggest that one of the central issues concerning the interpretation of ancient texts like the Bible is the production of contested readings. Interpreters like Marshall Applewhite understand the controversial nature of their readings of religious texts and that they participate in an ongoing struggle concerning "truth" and "falsehood" as it relates to these texts. Thus, the language used to describe their own exegetical activities, and the terms employed by others with different readings, all participate in this struggle for meaning.

For instance, it would be easy to look at the manner in which Applewhite reads the Bible and conclude that he is "inventing" material. Many would agree that to invent something requires a great deal of ingenuity, and to argue that the Bible is actually a record of ET and human contact is certainly an ingenious assertion requiring inventive skill and imagination. However, there are other notions implied by the term *invent*, including the conception that to invent implies the creation of something new and useful that did not exist beforehand. Rarely do the ETI religions examined here engage in this type of wholesale invention. In addition, issues of perspective are raised by the concept of invention, for it is often thought that the person who invents something may be viewed as engaged in a process of fabrication, or "making things up." When dealing with novel interpretations of widely respected religious texts, this rather negative connotation is nearly unavoidable. Here, fabrication assumes an etic perspective, bringing the motives of the "fabricator" into question and subtly casting dispersions upon the legitimacy of his or her interpretations. In this respect, to fabricate is to produce something false and/or improbable. Nonetheless, there is another sense in which the term *fabrication* is applicable, if taken to imply the process of constructing something from diverse, but standardized parts. Applied to the interpretations of the Bible offered by ETI religions, the fabrication process would include the combining of already existing parts of sacred texts into readings that are new products.

As the following pages demonstrate, many ETI religious thinkers view themselves as "restoring" a lost or repressed history that is reflected

in ancient religious texts. However, just as the term *invention* implies a specific ideological position as it relates to these contested reading, the term *restoration* denotes an emic perspective. In many ways the authors of ETI-inspired religious materials understand their work in restorative terms by offering readings of ancient texts that, in their eyes, restores the initial experiences of the authors. Adopting such a perspective implies certain levels of partisan evaluation, contending that current readings of ancient texts like the Bible are corrupted and that what is offered is a reversion to a more pure, unimpaired, and original reading.

To describe the work of these interpreters as “revisionist” is potentially a more value-free description of how ETI religions produce their readings. *Revision* bridges the issues described above by implying a pre-existent something, in our case a text, that is amended and or altered, rather than being created *ex nihilo*. To revise implies something already in place upon which the revision is performed. In the case of many ETI religions, that role is filled by the Bible and other ancient religious texts. Moreover, unlike the terms *invention* and *fabrication*, *revision* is not as loaded with negative connotations. Nor is the concept of *revision* too accommodating to the works examined here whose authors view themselves as rescuing a hidden, but more legitimate, exegesis of ancient religious texts.

Nonetheless, the terms *revisionist* and *revisionism* are difficult to quantify because critical use of this terminology compels one to grapple with the concept of history and the thornier issue of what constitutes historical truth. As the historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet has written regarding Holocaust deniers, a particularly insidious form of revisionism, the modern use of the term *revisionist*, in its positive or negative sense, always implies a critique of orthodoxy.⁶ There is, therefore, nothing less than the truth at stake for any side. Without attempting a formulation of what constitutes historical truth within the space of a single journal article, I do, at least, examine the tension between orthodox and unorthodox interpretations of history as well as the dogmatic nature of truth. Indeed, it is against the notion of what Paul Ricoeur called the regulating nature of truth that the writers examined below are reacting, “In its most unrefined form, truth appears as a regulative idea, as the task of unifying knowledge. . . . It is the task of imposing unity on the diversity of our field of knowledge and of resolving differences of opinion. . . . Every claim to truth fosters a degree of dogmatism.”⁷

Many writers advocating an ETI religious perspective do not self-identify as historians, may not be trained in the methods of history, nor are they writing what an academically trained historian would consider legitimate historical analysis. It would, therefore, seem unfair to analyze their commentary in light of what constitutes modern historiography. Nonetheless, they do make historical claims about the world thus demonstrating a historical mindset at work, in the broadest

sense of proposing reconstructions of past events. It is therefore reasonable to analyze their understanding of history and how these thinkers position themselves in relation to more mainstream academic approaches to history.

In some ways there seems to be an incongruity between the respect for the past discernible in ETI religions and the manner in which such groups engage in revision of this past. As James R. Lewis and Olaf Hammer have recently demonstrated, respect for the past and tinkering with the past are not mutually exclusive practices. The New Age subcultures from which ETI religions have emerged not only exhibit a great deal of respect for tradition, they also place a high premium on innovation. It is from the tension between holding these two values simultaneously that invented traditions are forged.⁸ Though, as outlined above, the term *invention* has limited usefulness for the materials examined in this article, the broader points made by Lewis and Hammer are well taken. Among other things, maintaining a respect for the past provides groups like the Raëlians with a sense of continuity, stability, and group cohesion, while invented traditions confer a sense of legitimacy onto the group and the innovator.⁹ This is, however, a view from the outside. If one adopts the perspective of the insider, the invention of tradition is less about invention, especially in the materials examined here, and more about the restoration or recovery of something that has been lost or forgotten. This restoration, what David G. Bromley and Douglas E. Cowan call “discovery,” actually masks the process of invention from the inventor. By using the language of restoration and rediscovery, the inventor obscures his or her own role in inventing tradition thus “mystifying” these social constructs.¹⁰

Authors associated with ETI religions and ancient astronaut theories share a pronounced skepticism concerning “official” history. Some claim that history is intentionally distorted while others claim it is simply misunderstood. Both groups engage in a creative revision of the past and a reimagination of religious texts like the Christian and Hebrew Bibles. In addition, they share a fascination with origins and seek to reconstruct a mythology of origins. So, not only is this work one about the construction of religious worlds, it is equally about the revision of history in service of the creation of a modern mythology.

THE BRICOLAGE OF REVISION

ETI religions are millenarian in character and the millenarian characteristics of these groups impacts the manner in which they contemplate and relate to received historical traditions. Specifically, the perspective that those writing ETI religious materials take toward history and the construction of historical knowledge is a consequence of what Michael Barkun calls “improvisational millenarianism.” According

to Barkun, improvisational millenarianism tends toward the eclectic, and engages in “undisciplined borrowing” in order to create new and unusual belief systems.¹¹ Improvisational millenarianism is a bricolage wherein certain categories of knowledge govern the construction of extemporaneous narratives. The first is what Barkun titles “rejected knowledge.” Rejected knowledge is that which has been marginalized by the cultural hegemony. This rejection can occur through simple neglect, or outright rejection.¹²

A related category is “stigmatized knowledge,” knowledge that had not only been rejected but intentionally marginalized including, “claims to truth that the claimants regard as verified despite the marginalization of those claims by the institutions that conventionally distinguish between knowledge and error.”¹³ There are, according to Barkun, several types of stigmatized knowledge, the most important for revisionist narratives being: (1) forgotten knowledge that was once known, but has since been lost or forgotten through faulty memory or cataclysm; and (2) suppressed knowledge describing claims that are known to be true, but are intentionally suppressed by institutions that fear the results of widespread acceptance of the suppressed knowledge.¹⁴ The focus in improvisational millenarian groups upon stigmatized, rejected, and suppressed knowledge predisposes these groups to revisionist attitudes. Revisionism, as manifested in these groups, is about the very things Barkun identified as characteristics of improvisational millennialism—marginalization and cultural hegemony—because the revisionist’s newly reclaimed knowledge of the past has been stigmatized and suppressed according to the purposes of those in power. The objective is to appropriate stigmatized and repressed knowledge as recovered truths while, at the same time, exposing those structures, institutions, and individuals implicit in the repression of knowledge.

Literary critic Harold Bloom examined the concept of revisionism in a book entitled *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revision*. He considers how revisionism manifests itself in struggles for truth and maintains that revisionism is a contest for supremacy.¹⁵ In other words, the act of usurpation that is revisionism is a power play. It is a battle over contested readings and a struggle for control, not only over the facts of history, but concerning the very nature of truth itself. The genesis of these struggles stem from anxiety. Both ancient astronaut theorists and the founders of ETI religions were reared in contexts of epistemological crisis in which the very basis of authority and knowledge were questioned. For the revisionist, anxiety inspires preemptive moves toward refashioning knowledge, but it is also a defensive strategy.¹⁶ One of the terms that Bloom uses to describe revision is “misprision” or “strong misreading.”¹⁷ Revision is therefore about the use of reading, or rereading, in the service of usurpation, Bloom writes, “We read to usurp, just as the poet writes to usurp . . . a place, a stance, a fullness, and illusion

of identification or possession; something we can call our own or even ourselves.”¹⁸ If this is true, then revisionism is preemptive in that it strikes at the foundations of opposing “truth,” while remaining defensive in that revision is practiced in support of what are viewed as marginalized positions.

Revisionist material found in ETI religions commonly seeks to revise biblical accounts of the origin of humanity into a narrative that includes contact, observance by, or interference on the part of alien intelligences. One notable effort to revise biblical narrative was made by American contactee George Van Tassel (1910–1978), founder of the Ministry of Universal Wisdom. In 1952 Van Tassel claimed to have established a telepathic connection with an extraterrestrial known as Ashtar (from which many other groups focused upon the communications of Ashtar are ultimately derived). As Christopher Helland points out, this esoteric form of communication was a new form of contact (rooted in Theosophical traditions), the mystical nature of which George Van Tassel minimized. Rather than adopting the role of an innovator, Van Tassel viewed himself in revisionist terms, maintaining that the channeled messages from Ashtar were simply an expansion of already accepted ideas.¹⁹

Van Tassel’s unique form of biblical interpretation foreshadowed the efforts of authors like Erich von Däniken and Zecharia Sitchin.²⁰ Van Tassel argued that the Bible is a record of extraterrestrial activity on Earth and that the true history of humanity is hidden within its pages. In the work titled *Into This World and Out Again* (1956), Van Tassel shares his reinterpretation of human history based upon truths revealed in scripture. This text is Van Tassel’s revision of biblical narrative and is presented as a conversation between the extraterrestrial Bor and a young student named Abon. Van Tassel writes, “We live fractured lives, divided into countries, many languages and creeds, all subject to misinterpretation. There is a separation of science and religion that should be fixed.”²¹ The question then becomes, why is this the state of things? Why has humanity fallen from a more pure, or perfect, state of being? These are questions that a revised myth of origins seeks to answer for those in ETI religions.

To provide an answer Van Tassel revises the Genesis story of the origin of woman and the fallen state of humanity. In this revision, Van Tassel focuses on an entity named LORD God introduced into the storyline in Genesis 2.²² LORD God and God are different entities (a claim many biblical scholars would concur with as there is a documentary seam between Genesis 1 and 2 that is signified, in part, by an abrupt change in the name of God). Instead of being divine, LORD God is of the so-called Adamic race, the original extraterrestrial colonists of Shan (Earth).

The Adamic race brought no women to Earth, so, the Adamic LORD God created woman because the members of the colony were lonely.²³

The resulting creation, the race of Eve, is the highest animal form on Earth but is of a lesser stature than the Adamic race. Lacking reason to feel lonely any longer, the Adamic race crossbred with the race of Eve and produced the flawed human race. Van Tassel notes that according to Bor, this crossbreeding violated the injunction against mating outside one's own kind.²⁴

Here Van Tassel is playing with the violation of boundaries evident in Genesis 6:1–4 in which angels mate with human women, resulting in monstrous offspring (giants), creatures who also violate a number of categories (most especially categories related to size). Of the Genesis narratives, the sustained focus upon Genesis 6:1–4 demonstrates that this text is a lynchpin for ETI revision of the Bible. Genesis 6:1–4 lends itself to such speculation because of its unusual and threadbare story—making it rather mysterious and resistant to definitive interpretation, even by seasoned biblical scholars. According to these passages, the sons of God descend from the heavens to mate with the daughters of men, producing, as their offspring, “the fallen ones” (Hebrew *nephilim*), sometimes translated as giants. The offspring of this unholy union wreaked havoc upon the Earth, leaving God with no option but to wipe the slate clean with a worldwide flood and, in essence, start over.

The vagueness of the passage, as well as uncertainties regarding the proper translation of Hebrew terms like *nephilim*, has inspired myriad interpretations even among biblical scholars. In the hands of UFO revisionists, the descent of the sons of God is understood as a literal descent of superior beings from the skies that should be interpreted as extraterrestrial visitation. The employment of this type of *euhemerism*, derived from the Greek writer Euhemerus, who argued that the gods of Greek mythology are really just deified humans, is standard fare in the works examined here. Following a euhemeristic model, interpreters like George Van Tassel conclude that the myths of Genesis are not myths at all (derived from an unsophisticated understanding of myth as untrue stories set in a fictional past), but are loosely based upon real events in the real lives of people. Following Jung, many commentators have noted that such readings reflect an effort to create a modern, technological mythology. It is therefore ironic that, in the creation of this modern mythology, these commentators go to great lengths to demythologize the text by attempting to naturalize its most mythological elements by turning angels into ETs and divine-human sexual encounters into genetic experimentation.

In Van Tassel's revision of Genesis 6:1–4, the offspring of this illegitimate mating between the Adamic race and the race of Eve are flawed, in this case the monstrosity is the possession of the physical bodies of humankind, rather than the gigantism described in the Bible. “This is the reason,” Bor says, “the Earthlings have a physical . . . counterfeit body,” thus indicating the improper mixing of categories represented

by the union of the Adamic race and the race of Eve resulted in a state of existence that was less than desirable.²⁵ In describing the physical bodies of Earthlings as counterfeit, interpreters like Van Tassel are tapping into anxieties about authenticity. The events described in Genesis 6:1–4 naturally lend themselves to a discourse about what is authentically human, as the mixing of the human with the non-human in the narrative results in monsters (following a translation of *nephilim* as giants). Just as the mixing of the divine and the human violates the natural order in Genesis, so to, according to Van Tassel, does the mixing of the extraterrestrial with the human upset idealized categories. He wants the reader to understand that the reality we perceive is not the ideal reality, our existence is a fallen existence, and only the knowledge of our true extraterrestrial heritage can deliver us to a more authentic existence. We need rescuing, Van Tassel argues, for in the intervening millennia humanity has continued to decline to the point that we moderns now find ourselves on the brink of destruction. According to Van Tassel, Bor claims, “They [Earthlings] are on the verge of a war which could wipe out every living thing in their level.”²⁶

In his examination of the concept of origins, Mircea Eliade once discussed the constructed sense of disconnection and distance that modern civilized life has from the heavily idealized “origins” represented by the “good savage.” This idealization of origins is a modern condition that has inspired many in ETI religions to decry the fallen state of humanity and its need for purification and/or rescue. This is a feature of ETI mythology others have pointed out, and one that, in its many manifestations, relies upon Jung’s seminal work on UFOs and his description of extraterrestrials arriving on UFOs as “technological angels.”²⁷ Not only does this speak to the salvific role of these entities, as demonstrated by people like George Van Tassel and groups like the Raëlians and Heaven’s Gate, it also illustrates the syncretism between modern technology and, in the words of Andreas Grünschloß, this “neo-mythic activity.”²⁸ These technological angels, aliens, and extraterrestrials, are here with a message of hope lest we destroy ourselves through nuclear annihilation, or, in more recent updates, from environmental destruction.²⁹

Contemplation of humanity on the edge of destruction influences the deep-seated need for ETI religionists to reformulate and revise myths of origin. The recital of myths of origin has the “power to establish and ensure the continuity of human life”³⁰ and, in the words of Eliade, a return to origins provides hope for rebirth.³¹ In the telling of these myths, “the anxiety of man, perpetually in danger, leading a precarious life in a precarious world” finds expression.³² It is, therefore, instructive that many writing ETI religious materials begin with a retelling or recital of origins, the story often culminating in the hope that extraterrestrials are going to intervene before destruction or that

humanity is on the verge of an intellectual and spiritual breakthrough that will effectively end many of the problems of the current age.

Such is the millenarian vision of Raël (Claude Vorilhon b. 1946), who has also reinterpreted the Genesis narrative to include extraterrestrial contact. According to Raël, as related to him by Jahweh, an alien visitor he encountered in southern France, the Elohim of Genesis were actually visitors from another planet who came to Earth for experimental purposes. For the Elohim, the Earth was a giant laboratory wherein each of Earth's races was created by a team of creators. The most successful team was team Israel, who managed to create a paradise and the "most intelligent" of the races. Disregarding the racism implied by Raël's revision, it turns out that this intelligent race posed a threat to their creators. Raël relates that Genesis preserves this threat, and the response of the Elohim, in the metaphorical injunction placed upon Adam and Eve not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. In Raël's mythology, the Tree of Knowledge symbolizes scientific knowledge that had to be kept from early humans. However, the scientific team loved their creation to such a degree that they ignored earlier fears about the advancement of humanity and strove to teach early humans about science anyway. Thus enlightened, the young humans were angry with their creators regarding this period of forced ignorance.³³ In Raël's revision, the exiled creators of the Israelites, now stuck on Earth, fill the role of the sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4 by taking the most beautiful of the human women as wives.³⁴ Mirroring the biblical account, the offspring of these unions were threatening, "their evil was their will to progress," so the experiment in creation had to be destroyed.³⁵

AMASSING THE ACADEMIC APARATUS

Reading to usurp combined with the cultural context of the 1960s and 1970s created a serendipitous convergence that would prove influential for those informing and creating ETI religions. Extreme doubt and extensive revisionism are both features of Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* (1970). A full understanding of Von Däniken's skepticism must take into account the cultural context within which people like himself and later, Zecharia Sitchin (b. 1922), were writing. Von Däniken's landmark paleo-SETI work *Chariots of the Gods?* was published in 1968.³⁶ Sitchin published *The 12th Planet* in 1976. James R. Lewis suggests the importance the cultural context of the 1960s had upon these works. Taking, as Lewis does, ancient astronaut theorists as part of the New Age movement (an assertion many ancient astronaut theorists would strongly object to because they seek to distance their work from those with religious agendas),³⁷ then the epistemological foundation of ancient astronaut theories comes into sharper focus.

The cultural context of the 1960s and the emergence of the New Age is, in many ways, a result of the so-called “cultic milieu.” The cultic milieu describes an ever-present social environment from which alternative religious movements are likely to emerge—what Colin Campbell called the “cultural underground of society.”³⁸ It is a cultural underground that includes all “deviant” (from the perspective of what Campbell termed “orthodox culture”) belief systems and what Barkun describes as the “collectivities, institutions, individuals and media of communication associated with these beliefs” forming “a genuine subculture rather than a mere intellectual or religious phenomenon.”³⁹ Of particular importance for this analysis is that the cultic milieu is suspicious of authority and opposes dominant hegemonies.

The skepticism Von Däniken nurses toward hegemonic scholarship regarding ancient history is undisguised in the pages of *Chariots of the Gods?* For example, he states that “the classical method of research into antiquity has got bogged down and so cannot come to the right unassailable kind of conclusions. It is far too attached to its stereotyped pattern of thought and leaves no scope for the imaginative ideas and speculations which alone could produce a creative impulse.”⁴⁰ Stereotyped patterns of thought are precisely what many in the 1960s sought to reveal. The baby-boom generation, reared in the suspicions brewing in the cultic milieu of the 1950s and 1960s was one of the most suspicious and educated generations America has ever produced. Suspicion of authority, coupled with a high premium placed upon education, is a hallmark of ETI religious material.⁴¹ To become a spokesperson for a revised vision of history based upon alien contact, as Von Däniken clearly sought to accomplish, not only required a hermeneutics of suspicion, it also required, paradoxically, an application of the tools of the scholarship being undermined.

Books like Sitchin’s *The 12th Planet* and Andrew Collins’ *From the Ashes of Angels* (2001), among others, are written with a seemingly imposing scholarly apparatus, citing sources, footnoting, and accompanied by a bibliography and an index. The emphasis upon the academic apparatus is part of what Richard Hofstadter, writing about “the paranoid style,” called a heroic striving for evidence and is a direct result of the extraordinary nature of the claims made in the materials examined here.⁴² Such an apparatus serves the important function of dressing what many in “orthodox culture” would understand as irrational claims in rationalistic garb. The extensive citation system and the lengthy bibliographies themselves then become an integral element of the “overwhelming proof” marshaled by the author in support of his or her claims. This amassing of proof, evident itself in the academic apparatus, becomes part of the struggle for truth that is part and parcel of the power play that revisionism implies.

The necessity of working with stigmatized knowledge makes the use of the academic apparatus indispensable because it confers a level of

authority—though it is often a closed and self-referential type of authority.⁴³ If one looks closely at the bibliographies of textual ETI materials, it is evident that this system of knowledge is, in many ways, a closed system. These authors go to great lengths to cite the works of other like-minded authors. This creates, as Michael Barkun has pointed out, another source of pseudoconfirmation as the more times a source is cited, the more true it must be.⁴⁴

While the amassing of citations and bibliographic entries does much to shore up the author's authority in the eyes of the reader, this practice also serves important legitimizing functions from the perspective of the author as well. Playing the part of the maverick tirelessly fighting in the marginalized domain of stigmatized knowledge can create a warrior's mentality. These authors become the lonely voices in the wilderness who have, through tenacious study and timely insight, resisted a system that has duped the masses. By adopting this role, the authors in this genre of literature can play as saviors, fostering a sense of chosenness and personal empowerment.⁴⁵ This heroism is written into the genre, not only in the great striving for evidence, but also in the manner in which the prose is constructed. Books like *Chariot of the Gods?* or the collected works of Graham Hancock read like detective mysteries written in the first person.⁴⁶ Gone is the impersonal narrator, he or she is replaced with the dissident breathlessly telling the reader what travails have been braved, what journeys have been taken (both mental and physical), and what dangers have been endured to reach the troubling conclusions hereby presented to the reader.

In the case of ancient astronaut theorists this produces an interesting tension because, despite relying on the scholarly apparatus, they seek to subvert what they view as hegemonic academia, the very system that utilizes the scholarly apparatus. Von Däniken is very exuberant in his calls to reject the legitimacy of "academic procedures and critical falsification."⁴⁷ Von Däniken, ever the skeptic, infuses his work with a sense of historical relativism and stringently demands revision, "We are entitled, indeed we ought, to doubt every accepted pattern of thought or working hypothesis, for if existing ideas are not called into question, research is at an end. So our historical past is only relatively true."⁴⁸ This quote illustrates that an important aspect of revision, of any type, is the motivating factor of doubt. Nonetheless, there is a broad spectrum spanning the distance between the level of doubt acceptable in the academic discipline of history and the level of doubt that produces works like Von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* and Sitchen's *The 12th Planet*.

COMMUNICATING THE CONSPIRACY

Many would agree that doubt and skepticism are useful traits to foster. Indeed, each forms the foundation for a critical system of

intellectual checks and balances. However, in some written material emerging from ETI religious perspectives, doubt and skepticism have transformed into conspiratorial thinking. This tendency to engage in conspiratorial thinking is also related to the millenarian characteristics of ETI religions. Millennialist groups believe “that there will be an imminent transition to a collective salvation effected by superhuman means with varying degrees of human cooperation.”⁴⁹ Millennialist worldviews, according to Barkun, tend toward conspiratorial thinking because they operate within a dualistic framework wherein humanity is caught in a struggle between the forces of light and dark.⁵⁰ There are two important functions conspiracy serves for such groups. First, conspiracy helps explain the relative unpopularity of millennialist ideas by positing that evil forces actively work against them. Second, delay in the arrival of the Endtime can be blamed upon the influence of secret powers.⁵¹ In addition, there are three relevant elements of conspiratorial thought: (1) nothing is accidental or random; (2) appearances belie the truth, appearances are deceptive in order to deceive; and (3) everything is connected in an omnipresent pattern largely hidden from view. These characteristics inspire the drive to create a constant process of linkage and correlation.⁵²

A conspiratorial mindset is particularly evident in the work of Patricia Cori. Patricia Cori describes herself as a clairvoyant, spirit guide, and is the founder of the LightWorks Association of Rome. She also claims to be a healer and scribe for the Speakers of the Sirian High Council. As a prolific author, many of her books, including *The Starseed Dialogues: Soul Searching the Universe* (2009), *Atlantis Rising: The Struggle of Darkness and Light* (2008), and *The Cosmos of the Soul: A Wake-Up Call for Humanity* (2008) purport to be a series of channeled messages from ascendant beings of the Sirian star system delivered through Patricia Cori for the benefit of humanity.⁵³ The Sirian High Council is described as composed of “light body beings” who have experienced the ascension of the Sirian Star, Satais, known by our scientists as Sirius B.⁵⁴ Living now in the sixth dimension, the ascendant beings of the Sirian High Council are reaching out to the residents of Earth, through their scribe Cori (known to them as Trydjya), as Earth prepares to ascend from the third to the fourth dimension.⁵⁵

In the course of her channeled messages, Cori reveals that there has been a vast conspiracy afoot for much of human history. The actual history of the human race is far different than what most of us learn, though clues to the true course of human events are evident in our myths and sacred texts—provided they are read through a different lens. According to Cori, for much of human history the inhabitants of the planet Nebiru have worked behind the scenes to prevent us from “realizing our starseed legacy.”⁵⁶ It seems that the planet Nebiru, home of the dastardly Annunaki, squandered its opportunity to ascend into

the fourth dimension. Nebiru was flung from its Sirian orbit and was captured by our sun and remains stuck in a long elliptical orbit between the Sirian system and our sun that takes approximately 3,600 years to complete.⁵⁷ Whenever the long elliptical orbit brings Nebiru into contact with Earth, the Annunaki interfere in human affairs, seeking to slow the Earth's vibration to match that of Nebiru with the ultimate goal of eventually piggybacking the Earth's ascension in the fourth dimension.⁵⁸

There is a great deal of revisionism that supports this conspiratorial thinking. Cori includes the now familiar, and fantastic, revised interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4, where the angelic sons of God mate with the daughters of men and produce hybrid offspring, by asserting that the Annunaki are the “sons of God” who interbred with *Homo sapiens*.⁵⁹ This revision is, like others examined so far, about the undermining of hegemonic systems. It is, in the words of Howard Bloom, a misprision, a re-reading in order to usurp the narrative. Patricia Cori brings together a wide range of conspiracies in the construction of an eclectic millenarian narrative in order to cast doubt upon the legitimacy of traditional human history. Included in Cori's far reaching conspiracy are assertions that there is a secret government controlled by the Annunaki that has its roots in Atlantis, this government has run experiments on humanity utilizing the AIDS virus, and that the Annunaki have ties with influential religious bodies like the Vatican.⁶⁰ The inhabitants of Nebiru are responsible for our sense of powerlessness and for entrapping us in lower forms of consciousness, leading to survival fears which in turn lead to wars and conflicts.⁶¹ The whole system is designed to keep humanity in ignorance, demonstrating that the official narrative is not to be trusted.

At the heart of the issue is freedom and the fact that those in power collude to withhold from us our liberty. Thus, Cori claims, we delude ourselves if we think we are free when we are constantly manipulated through radio and television programming. “The Power looks upon you as a body of mindless sheep, to be led through the valley of possibilities to the safe lands of imposed thought, where you are guided to refuse and ridicule that which exists beyond the confines of convention, and to honor and defend all that falls under the umbrella of dogma.”⁶²

Examples can be multiplied that reflect Patricia Cori's sentiments. Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1939–2009), deceased leader of the The Summit Lighthouse and co-founder (with husband Mark L. Prophet) of The Church Universal and Triumphant, also found evidence of a conspiracy involving the mysterious *nephilim* of Genesis 6:4. According to Prophet, the world has been in the grips of the Watchers (of book of Enoch fame) and the *nephilim* for thousands of years. They are in places of power, are the forces behind war and finance, engage in population control, genetic engineering, and control energy, commodities, education, and the media.⁶³

Improvisational millennialism, with its revisionist and conspiratorial framework, is also evident in the various expressions of Pleideadian spirituality. The various iterations of Pleideadian spirituality have their origins in the experiences of Swiss contactee Eduard “Billy” Meier (b. 1937). According to Meier, contact with enlightened, humanoid Plejarans began at the age of five with a series of communications with a Plejaran named Sfath. From 1953 through 1964, Meier describes being in contact with a Plejaran named Asket, and then Semjase in 1975. Of these contacts, only those beginning in 1975 are considered “official” in that those contacts are supported by evidence (including his famous photographs of Plejaran “beamships”) and are the most significant of his communications. In these latter communications, the Plejarans discussed human history, spirituality, and organized religion in addition to delivering prophecies regarding the future of humankind.⁶⁴

Gene Andrade is a proponent of Pleiadian spirituality and has written a text containing his insights entitled *Star Wisdom: Principles of Pleiadian Spirituality* (1997). In *Star Wisdom* Andrade echoes many of the same sentiments examined thus far. Earning particular ire from both Meier and Andrade are the so-called Giza Intelligences (so-named after their hideout, they are also known as the Bafath). The Bafath actually share a common Lyrian/Vegan ancestry with the Pleideians, and have had various colonizing efforts on Earth over the past 22 million years. Their motives and intentions are far more malevolent than their distant Pleideian relatives. According to Andrade, the Bafath are responsible for dominating and controlling Adolf Hitler, perpetrating the “miracle” of Fatima (1917) hoax, and are even responsible for creating the Baha’i religion in an effort to facilitate world domination.⁶⁵ If enough discord and chaos are introduced into the world, then humanity will be more likely to welcome the Bafath as saviors.

The works of these authors suggest issues concerning dogma and the regulating nature of truth. What we find in ETI religions that seek to modify, and even deny, standard academic historical conclusions is a reaction against the disciplining effect history has upon memory. They seek, in other words, to uncover a memory not held in check by history. If history creates the standards about what ought to be remembered, and how, the authors of ETI religious materials seek to shake off the fetters of history in order to free, following Paul Ricoeur, the wilder nature of memory.⁶⁶

THE MASTERS OF REVISION

An area of congruity between ETI religions and ancient astronaut theorists is a shared perspective that humanity has been held in ignorance, according to various means, regarding the true history of humankind and the existence of extraterrestrial life among us and in the

universe. Thus, Van Tassel records Bor as saying in *Into This World and Out Again* that, “the only records available to their common people are misinterpreted, in most cases, by those who have not understood the laws of nature.”⁶⁷ This reflects a nearly constant refrain in Von Däniken’s *Chariot of the Gods?* as represented by Von Däniken’s assertion that the scientific establishment has been far too attached to stereotypical forms of thought.⁶⁸ Raël explains that the forced ignorance of humanity is a result of fear that those created by the Elohim would become superior to their creators and would thus become a threat. Therefore, advanced scientific knowledge was kept from human hands.⁶⁹

Revealing that which is hidden or teaching a hidden knowledge brings us to the Gnostic flavor of these works. Though simplified, those familiar with Gnosticism know that its central tenant is that revealed knowledge is salvific. Through revealed knowledge, escape from the falsehoods of this existence are possible. What are authors like Patricia Cori and Erich von Däniken offering, if it is not a type of salvation and an opening of the eyes through a revealing of suppressed knowledge? Through his revisionary works Von Däniken attempts to free the reader from the dogmatic and flawed structures of institutions. Groups like Heaven’s Gate and the Raëlians also offer salvation, though of a different degree, by revealing humanity’s hidden origins and how those origins predetermined our present situation. In the Heaven’s Gate group, this gnosis allowed for individual ascendancy beyond the confined and restricted life here on Earth. In the writings of Van Tassel, the extraterrestrial Bor also offers freedom, heretofore repressed through the forced ignorance of humanity.

Von Däniken works to set himself apart from dominant academics when he rails against a received scholarship that is too narrow in focus and too conservative in its questioning. By reversing his relationship to these authorities, whom we are led to assume are traditionally trained academic anthropologists and historians, he is attempting to subvert a dominant paradigm. In the struggle over the truth, claims and counterclaims of inaccuracy fly. Barry Downing, in *The Bible and Flying Saucers* (1997), is a critic of what he terms “honesty” in biblical scholarship. Downing entertains the possibility that the Bible is a record of alien contact. In doing so, he points a long gray finger at those demythologizers, like Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) and James Pike (1913–1969), who demanded intellectual honesty in accepting that the modern scientific worldview has little room for the mythical elements of Christian faith.⁷⁰ By relativizing the concepts of honesty and truth, Downing is able to carve a foothold for his revisionist theories and writes, “A blind man may with all honesty maintain that light does not exist; men who can see light will perhaps commend the honesty of the blind man, but they will wish that he were more concerned with the truth about the existence of light.”⁷¹ He continues to undermine the very credibility of

the idea and certainty of truth by pointing out that both science and theology are relatively true, that is, true within certain limits.⁷² This move, in light of the standards of the historical method, lessens Downing's burden of proof. A redefinition of evidential standards is also evident in the revisionist work of Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln. *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1983) which was constructed on a method the authors termed "synthesis." According to their method of synthesis, if the authors can imagine that a scenario is plausible or possible, then they proceed to build conclusions upon the plausible scenario as if it were established fact.⁷³ For both Downing and Baigent, et. al., dealing with probabilities opens the playing field and broadens the range of interpretation while offering some protection against critical falsification.

The relationship between historians and revisionists is often antagonistic. When revisionists gain the attention of historians, as Holocaust deniers have done in recent years, a frequent plan of attack is to question the methods and accuracy of the revisionist work.⁷⁴ As historians, we misunderstand this "drive to revise" if we critique it solely in terms of method and accuracy. The ultimate goal of revisionism is not one of accuracy. In fact, as Bloom points out, the goal of the revising mind is to avoid the habits of accuracy. The habits of accuracy are the paradigms of established academia, a model that, according to ancient astronaut theorists, has failed. It is only by viewing the world outside the established parameters of academia that the revisionist can read imaginatively, reveal what a narrative hides, find the holes in the narrative, and discern why the narrative excludes what it does.⁷⁵

Because this type of revisionism is an imaginative and creative enterprise that seeks to shake off institutionalized forms of thinking, it is filled with autonomy and novelty.⁷⁶ Of course, revisionists do not regard their work in such terms. Neither Von Däniken, nor Raël, would view themselves as engaging in a creative process; creative in the way that a writer of fiction invents a story. Nevertheless, revisionism is as much about destruction as it is about creation and invention. Bloom uses the words of Emerson, "that we had to see as though no one . . . ever had seen before us."⁷⁷ A certain sense of confidence is required, for the revisionist (following Bloom's example in poetry) never asks "am I getting this poem right? Strong reading knows that what it does to the poem is right."⁷⁸ This confidence allows for innovation and provides the courage to build a new revised narrative from the skeleton of the old.

The revisionist therefore adopts the role of maverick. Revisionism is dangerous work and the author who treads the ground of stigmatized knowledge sees him or herself as a figure of courage and bravery. To find examples of such bravado, one need look no further than the titles of some recent works in the genre. For example, Andrew Collin's recent work *From the Ashes of Angels: The Forbidden Legacy of a Fallen Race* (2001)

bristles with the language of danger. In this text Collins reveals a hidden legacy of a technologically advanced race, a group he calls a “celestial mafia,” evidence of whom survives in ancient texts like Genesis 6:4 and the book of Enoch.⁷⁹ Of a similar nature is the title of a recent edited collection, *Forbidden History: Prehistoric Technologies, Extraterrestrial Intervention, and the Suppressed Origins of Civilization* (2005).⁸⁰ Perhaps the most successful of the recent alt-history authors is Graham Hancock whose work is riddled with a sense of conspiracy, the mysterious, and the hidden.⁸¹ There is a vast conspiracy afoot, these masters of revision would argue, to monopolize truth. It is the job of the maverick revisionist to fight against overwhelming institutional and systemic odds to free that truth for regular readers like you and me.

LOOKING BEHIND THE CURTAIN

As we have seen, the revisionist materials produced in ETI religions have a structure, an anatomy, whose various components are linked together in such a way as to produce materials that are relatively consistent in outlook and purpose. The ambiguities found in ancient religious texts, when placed within the context of a cultic milieu suspicious of authority and institutions, and combined with voices eager to put the parts together, have created narratives that may vary in the details, but are consistent in their presentation of a world held in ignorance.

As Van Tassel writes in *Into this World and Out Again*, the great majority of people on Earth are held in ignorance by a minority, “Every tyrant that ever ruled on the planet led his people to believe they were free.”⁸² By fighting institutional methods for the production of knowledge, these masters of revision present themselves as liberators. The act of uncovering a hidden past is surely intended as eye opening and liberating for the reader. Erich von Däniken, Zecharia Sitchin, Patricia Cori, and Gene Andrade are looking behind the curtain and arguing that what passes for truth and knowledge is a façade. For the revisionist, pulling back the curtain reveals academics for what they are, stooges for the hegemonic system, and this revealing is a liberating process for both the revisionist author and the reader. Through their efforts they hope that the reader, no longer subject to false and institutionalized lies, is now free to throw the tyrants out.

ENDNOTES

¹ Patricia Cori, *The Starseed Dialogues: Soul Searching the Universe* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2009), 158.

² Special thanks to Rebecca Moore for her helpful suggestions regarding this term.

³ In this article I concern myself with a discourse produced for primarily Western, English-speaking audiences. I recognize that the ideas presented here may not be unique to the Anglophone West. See, for example, Andreas Grunschloß, "UFO Faith and Ufological Discourses in Germany," in *UFO Religions*, ed. Christopher Partridge (New York: Routledge, 2003), 179–93. An extension of the analysis presented herein into other than Anglophone, and perhaps non-Western, contexts will be a natural second step for this research.

⁴ Zecharia Sitchin's entire "Earth Chronicles" series is based upon this premise, the first volume of which is *The 12th Planet* (New York: Stein and Day, 1976).

⁵ "Bible Quotes Primarily from Previous Representatives to Earth from the Evolutionary Level Above Human," <<http://www.heavensgate.com/book/b-1.htm>>, accessed 10 October 2009.

⁶ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 79. Within the context of Holocaust denial the terms "denial" and "revisionism" are hotly contested terms and are used in the various debates to color the discourse. Some Holocaust deniers lay claim to the title "revisionist" because it confers an aura of legitimacy. Indeed, any historian will admit that revision is an integral and legitimate part of what academic historians do. Those who critique Holocaust deniers are far more likely to utilize the language of denial for precisely the opposite reason, it delegitimizes the work of deniers as being outside the accepted methodological boundaries of the academic historian. While it is true that there are deniers who flatly deny the Holocaust happened, those who term themselves as "revisionist" seek to restrict the scope of the Holocaust by dramatically revising the number of deaths down to such a level that the term Holocaust becomes difficult to justify, thereby becoming de facto deniers.

⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 42.

⁸ James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer, "Introduction," in *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*, eds. James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

⁹ Lewis and Hammer, "Introduction," 4.

¹⁰ David G. Bromley and Douglas E. Cowan, "The Invention of a Counter Tradition: The Case of the North American Anti-Cult Movement," in *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*, ed. James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 97–98.

¹¹ Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), xi.

¹² Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 23.

¹³ Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 26–27.

¹⁴ Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 27.

¹⁵ Harold Bloom, *Agon: Towards a Theory of Revision* (New York: Oxford, 1982), viii.

¹⁶ Bloom, *Agon*, vii, 16.

¹⁷ Bloom, *Agon*, 16.

¹⁸ Bloom, *Agon*, 17.

¹⁹ For a convenient summary of George Van Tassel's work with the Ministry of Universal Wisdom, see Christopher Helland, "From Extraterrestrials to Ultraterrestrials: The Evolution of the Concept of Ashtar," in *UFO Religions*, ed. Christopher Partridge (New York: Routledge, 2003), 162–68.

²⁰ Helland, "From Extraterrestrials to Ultraterrestrials," 166.

²¹ George Van Tassel, *Into This World and Out Again: A Modern Proof of the Origin of Humanity and Its Retrogression From the Original Creation of Man* (by the author, 1956), 12.

²² In some Gnostic cosmologies, the God of the Old Testament (sometimes called the Demiurge) is himself a created entity, but he does not realize this. He has the drive to create, but because he is an imperfect being, what he creates is imperfect. Thus, the creation of the cosmos and humanity by the Demiurge, described in Genesis 1 and 2, is an imperfect creation that may, in the Gnostic system, be escaped through knowledge of the divine spark (that was introduced when the Demiurge blew into the mouth of Adam) that dwells within each human.

²³ Van Tassel, *Into This World*, 16.

²⁴ Van Tassel, *Into This World*, 17.

²⁵ Van Tassel, *Into This World*, 17.

²⁶ Writing in the early 1950s, these statements reveal anxiety about nuclear proliferation and the Cold War, the context against which many ETI religions formulated their theologies. Van Tassel, *Into This World*, 9.

²⁷ Carl Jung, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 16.

²⁸ Andreas Grünschloß, "Waiting for the 'Big Beam': UFO Religions and 'Ufological' Themes in New Religious Movements," in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, ed. James R. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 432.

²⁹ Such is the case with the Ashtar Command, a group that arose from Van Tassel's Ministry of Universal Wisdom, whose early works focused upon nuclear annihilation, but has recently shifted to environmental dangers. An eco-friendly consciousness is also maintained by groups like Fiat Lux and the Planetary Activation Organization.

³⁰ Raffaele Pettazzoni, *Essays on the History of Religions*, trans. H. J. Rose (Leiden, Brill: 1967), 26.

³¹ Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 30.

³² Pettazzoni, *Essays*, 29.

³³ Raël [Claude Vorilhon], *The Message Given to Me by Extra-Terrestrials; They Took Me to Their Planet* (Tokyo: AOM Corporation, 1986), 31.

³⁴ Raël, *The Message Given to Me*, 24–25.

³⁵ Raël, *The Message Given to Me*, 24–25.

³⁶ SETI is an acronym for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. Paleo-SETI, therefore, is the search for extraterrestrial influence in Earth's ancient history. Paleo-SETI researchers like Erich von Däniken think of themselves as scientists and present their works as scientific in nature. Understanding

paleo-SETI researchers in this manner partly explains their efforts to disassociate themselves from what they consider New Age religious speculation on extra-terrestrial visitation, as represented, for example, by the work of Raël.

³⁷James R. Lewis, "Legitimizing Suicide: Heaven's Gate and New Age Ideology," in *UFO Religions*, ed. Christopher Partridge (London: Routledge, 2003), 180.

³⁸Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization*, eds. Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2002), 14.

³⁹Campbell, "The Cult," 19; Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 24–25. It is important to note that both the work of Campbell and Barkun (whose work relies upon Campbell) is riddled with the language of deviance. In this article the language of deviance is employed in the manner that Campbell used it in his work on the cultic milieu, as a term describing the perspective adopted by "orthodox culture" toward the cultic milieu and the ideas that arise therein, rather than as an disparaging term employed on the part of the scholar to describe alternative religious groups.

⁴⁰Erich von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved Mysteries of the Past* (New York: Berkley Books, 1980), 50.

⁴¹Lewis, "Legitimizing Suicide," 120–21.

⁴²Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966). *The Paranoid Style* is Hofstadter's attempt to explain the relationship between conspiratorial mindsets, McCarthyism, and JFK assassination conspiracy theories.

⁴³Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 28.

⁴⁴Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 28.

⁴⁵Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 35.

⁴⁶Though perhaps not as well known in UFOlogical circles, Graham Hancock is one of the masters of lost civilization speculation. In many of his works, including *The Sign and the Seal* (New York: Crown, 1992) and *Fingerprints of the Gods* (New York: Crown, 1995), he presents himself as a maverick, battling against what he calls "the orthodox theory of human prehistory." For more see Graham Hancock, "Introduction to Graham Hancock," <<http://www.grahamhancock.com/library/default.htm>>, accessed 26 September, 2009.

⁴⁷Grünschloß, "UFO Faith and UFOlogical Discourses in Germany," 184.

⁴⁸Von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods*, 13.

⁴⁹Catherine Wessinger, "New Religious Movements and Violence," in *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*, vol. 1, *History and Controversies*, eds. Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcraft (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 165–66.

⁵⁰Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 2.

⁵¹Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 3.

⁵²Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 3.

⁵³Patricia Cori, *The Starseed Dialogues: Soul Searching the Universe* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2009); *Atlantis Rising: The Struggle of Darkness and Light* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2001); *The Cosmos of the Soul: A Wake-Up Call for Humanity* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2000).

⁵⁴ Cori, *The Starseed Dialogues*, 1.

⁵⁵ Cori, *The Starseed Dialogues*, 7.

⁵⁶ Patricia Cori, "The Sirian Revelations: Channeled Teachings for the Awakening of Earth," <<http://www.sirianrevelations.net>>, accessed 12 March 2010.

⁵⁷ Patricia Cori, "The Sirius Star System," <<http://www.sirianrevelations.net/the-source/the-sirius-ra-connection>> accessed 17 June 2010.

⁵⁸ Cori, *The Starseed Dialogues*, 23.

⁵⁹ Cori, *The Starseed Dialogues*, 14–15.

⁶⁰ Cori, *Atlantis Rising*, 18.

⁶¹ Cori, *The Starseed Dialogues*, 14–15. Readers familiar with this literature will no doubt recognize the influence of Zecharia Sitchin in Patricia Cori's formulation of the Earth's hidden history. In his six volume series collectively known as "The Earth Chronicles," Sitchin describes the early history of humankind as resulting from the influence and interference of the Annunaki, residents of the planet Nibiru. This is not insignificant because, within the context of conspiratorial thinking, a self-referential dialog plays an important part.

⁶² Cori, *The Cosmos of the Soul*, 144–45.

⁶³ Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Fallen Angels and the Origin of Evil* (Corwin Springs, Mont.: Summit University Press, 2000), 5.

⁶⁴ Billy Meier is the founder of the Swiss FIGU (Free Community of Interests in Fringe and Spiritual Sciences and Ufological Studies) which offers a convenient introduction to Billy Meier and his experiences. See FIGU Society USA, "Who Is Billy Meier?" <<http://us.figu.org/portal/BillyMeier/AboutBillyMeier/tabid/56/Default.aspx>>, accessed 15 March 2010.

⁶⁵ Gene Andrade, *Star Wisdom: Principles of Pleiadian Spirituality* (Rancho Mirage, Calif.: The Pleiades Project, 1997), 101–02.

⁶⁶ Hayden White, "Guilty of History? The *Longue Durée* of Paul Ricoeur," *History and Truth* 46 (May 2007), 235.

⁶⁷ Van Tassel, *Into This World*, 20.

⁶⁸ Von Däniken, *Chariots of the Gods?*, 50.

⁶⁹ Raël, *The Message Given to Me*, 19.

⁷⁰ Barry H. Downing, *The Bible and Flying Saucers* (New York, Marlowe and Company, 1997), 36–37.

⁷¹ Downing, *The Bible and Flying Saucers*, 37.

⁷² Downing, *The Bible and Flying Saucers*, 37.

⁷³ Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Dell, 1983), 309–313.

⁷⁴ For Holocaust denial, see Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993); Deborah E. Lipstadt, *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006). For a refutation of *Chariots of the Gods?* see Clifford Wilson, *Crash Go the Chariots: An Alternative to Chariots of the Gods?* (New York: Lancer Books, 1972). The popularity of *The DaVinci Code* (Dan Brown, 2003) spawned numerous refutations of its revisionist claims. See Bart D. Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code: A Historian Reveals What We Really Know About Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Constantine* (New York: Oxford, 2004).

⁷⁵ Bloom, *Agon*, 18.

⁷⁶ Bloom, *Agon*, 38.

⁷⁷ Bloom, *Agon*, 19.

⁷⁸ Bloom, *Agon*, 19.

⁷⁹ Andrew Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels: The Forbidden Legacy of a Fallen Race* (Rochester, VT: Bear and Company, 2001), 6–7.

⁸⁰ J. Douglas Kenyon, ed. *Forbidden History: Prehistoric Technologies, Extraterrestrial Intervention, and the Suppressed Origins of Civilization* (Rochester, Vt.: Bear and Company, 2005).

⁸¹ Hancock is prolific, for a few representative examples see Graham Hancock, *Supernatural: Meetings with the Ancient Teachers of Mankind* (New York: Disinformation Company, 2007); *Underworld: The Mysterious Origins of Civilization* (New York: Crown, 2002); *The Message of the Sphinx: A Quest for the Hidden Legacy of Mankind* (New York: Crown, 1996).

⁸² Van Tassel, *Into This World*, 13.