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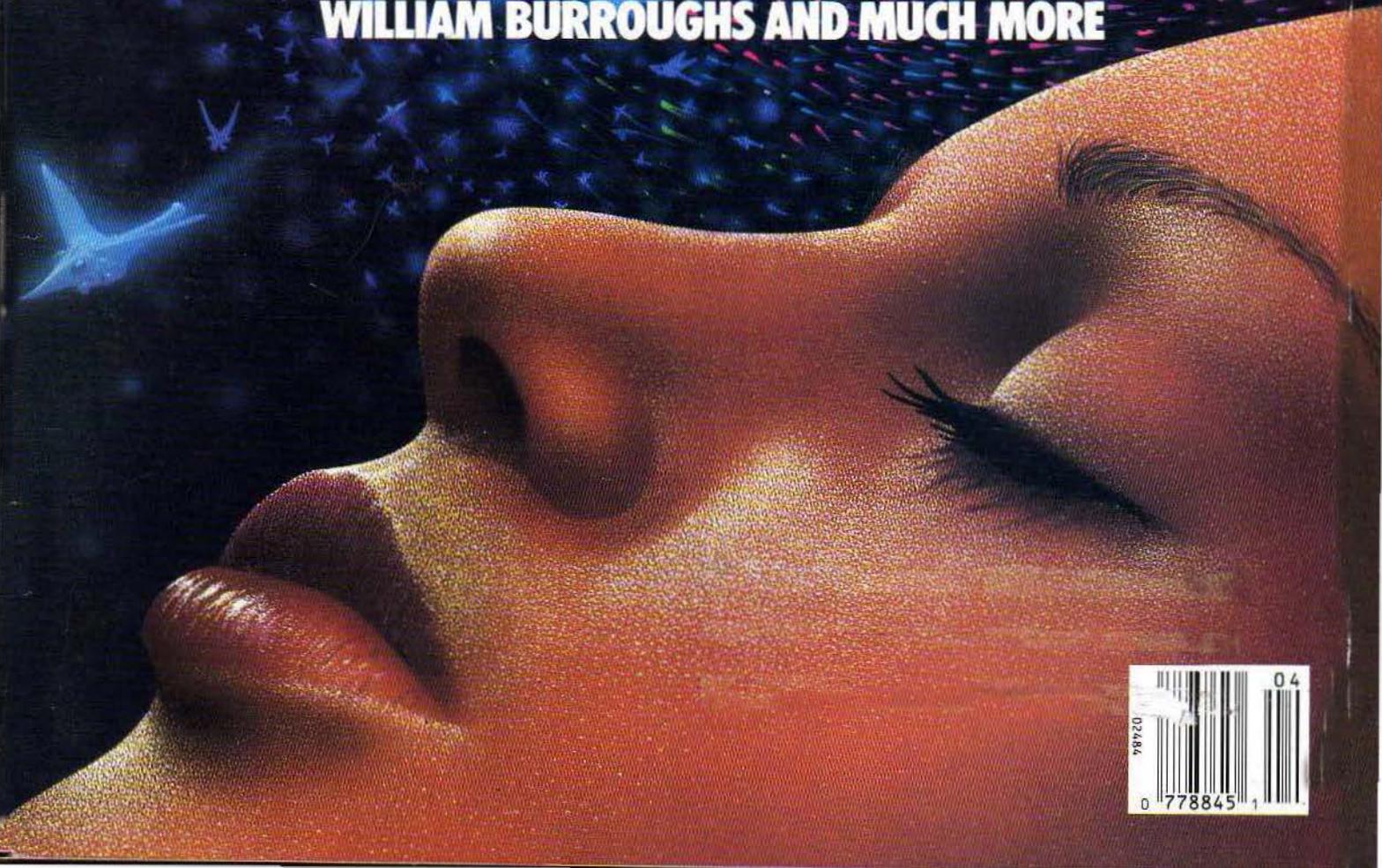
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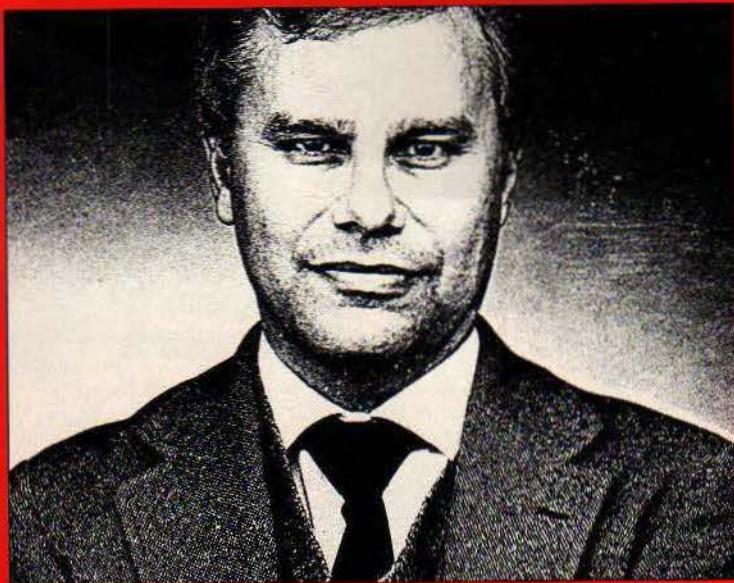
ANTI MATTER

Communion: A True Story, by Whitley Strieber, is not the first book to claim that nonhuman beings are visiting the earth. It is not even the first book whose author claims to have met the visitors personally. Yet while other such efforts have been written by individuals of sometimes dubious backgrounds, *Communion* is the work of a highly regarded novelist of impeccable personal reputation. Strieber’s previous books include such best-selling novels as *The Hunger*, *The Wolfen*, and *Warday*.

Strieber claims that he first became aware of his relationship with “the visitors” late on the night of December 26, 1985, in a cabin he owns in a remote area of upstate New York. Strieber says he was awakened from sleep by a strange noise, followed by the appearance of an eerie, humanoid figure. He was taken out of his cabin and into a wooded area, and from there into what he thinks was the interior of a UFO, where humanoids gave him a physical exam.

This traumatic event—which Strieber insists was not a dream—triggered a series of apparent memories of other, similar encounters. For instance, he says, in 1957, when he was twelve, he and family members were abducted by aliens. And in 1968, while traveling through Europe, he experienced a period of “missing time.” Two to six weeks vanished, though odd fragments of memory made sense to him when compared with his other abduction experiences.

“I’m sure something extremely strange happened to me,” Strieber says, “and I am positive it has no conventional psychological explanation. But it is too early to assert opinions”



UFO UPDATE

about the precise nature of the experiences. In his view the least “outlandish” explanation is that the visitors were extraterrestrial. “Even if they were creatures of my unconscious, they had a physical reality in the outside world—and that’s even more fantastic. That flies in the face of all scientific knowledge.”

Indeed, in an effort to prove his sanity and sincerity, Strieber has undergone a series of psychological tests, neurological tests, and even a polygraph examination. Psychiatrist Donald Klein, director of research for the New York State Psychiatric Institute,

declares that Strieber “is not hallucinating in a manner characteristic of psychosis. I also see no evidence of an anxiety state, mind disorder, or personality disorder.”

Science-fiction writer Orson Scott Card, who notes that Strieber’s book drew a million-dollar advance, says, “There’s too much money in it for me to believe in his sincerity.” But author Peter Straub, who calls Strieber “reliable,” admits he is “very curious” about the affair. “Whitley is a very imaginative man, as novelists have to be,” says Straub. “He got a big kick in the bottom from his unconsciousness, which provoked his imagination in this way. I have no doubt that he believes he is telling the truth.”

Strieber himself is calm about the controversy his book will ignite. “My friends in the media know me to be honest,” he explains. “Of course I’ll be kicked around, but I will have to live with it.” Anyway, “the public knows this is happening. Only the followers of the religion of scientism consider the idea of extraterrestrial visitation a heresy.” —JEROME CLARK