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MARCH

# COMMUNICATIONS

## READERS' WRITES:

Of celestial reasoning, sacred groves,  
 and queens of the Nile

### Look Up in the Sky! It's a...

On behalf of like-minded readers I congratulate your December 1990 issue. You are the first credible general-interest magazine to present the issue of UFOs without condescension. In the late Seventies I interviewed Allen Hynek, the first scientist to publicly take UFOs seriously. As a result, he faced the ridicule of the scientific community for the rest of his life—a heavy price indeed. In 1600 Giordano Bruno, a Dominican monk, was burned at the stake for suggesting that life may exist elsewhere in the universe. In 1978 Hynek was merely dismissed as a fool. Now, at last, as we approach the twenty-first century we reluctantly realize that we may not be alone in this vast universe. What blockheads we are.

Larry Pont  
 Ogden Dunes, IN

Let me get this straight. A highly intelligent race of beings sends an unimaginably advanced spacecraft across light-years of space. Through pilot error or catastrophic equipment failure, the darn thing crashes. You listed five convincing cases of crashed landings ("Alien Almanac"). You'd think that after the first one, the extraterrestrials would issue a memo: "Watch out for Earth; it's a tricky one." Or do we live on the galactic triangle?

Eric Bickernicks  
 Norwood, MA

Writer Patrick Huyghe explains part of the government cover-up of UFO reports by revealing how our government cracks foreign codes. But he seems reluctant to report on secret aircraft testing that we can assume resulted in crashes. The willingness of any government to credit such occurrences to UFOs is quite normal. Their covering up may be military secrets, not UFOs.

Frank G. Pollard  
 Farmington Hills, MI

Thomas R. McDonough [Stars, December 1990] should have been more thorough in his analysis as to why E.T. has not yet phoned Earth. He offers two very plausible hypotheses, but his notion of

"induced permanent ecstasy" is a bit out of this world. I'm not a skeptic. The odds against our tiny planet being alone in this immense galaxy are astronomical. McDonough should have taken more time in the conceptualization of his ideas and perhaps he would have thought of a few more that are more believable. For those aliens living in their sheltered ecstasies, stay home and don't call us. We'll call you.

Jeffrey A. Rhind  
 Situate, MA

### From the Redwood Forest...

In the article about Northern California's coastal redwoods [Continuum, December 1990] you printed a picture of a sequoia—and the caption even calls it a sequoia. Although coastal redwoods are technically *Sequoia sempervirens*, they are commonly called redwoods or coastal redwoods. We have an identity crisis already because many people think our trees are the same as the redwoods. All the residents of Sequoia National Park would be grateful if you could clear up the misunderstanding.

Theresa Walters  
 Sequoia National Park, CA

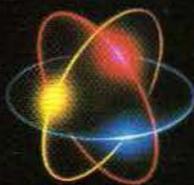
Relying on clones to repopulate Northern California's diminishing redwood forests is suicide. All it takes is a single virus or bug to defeat one clone, and it will defeat all clones! With the environmental mistakes we've already made, it's stupid to add another bullet to this game of Russian roulette.

Scott Tokar  
 Tustin, CA

### Here's to You, Mrs. Ramses

An incorrect statement was credited to Farouk el-Baz [Interview, December 1990]. Ramses II was not married to Nefertiti. Although they were both from the New Kingdom Period, Ramses ruled in the nineteenth dynasty; Nefertiti was the wife of Amenophis IV (Akhenaton) in the eighteenth dynasty. The first wife of Ramses II was Nefertari, for whom he built the minor temple next to his great temple at Abu Simbel.

Sylvia McDonald Bowman  
 Henderson, NV



# ANTIMATTER

## UFO UPDATE:

The near-death experience and alien abduction may both be tied to childhood abuse

Are altered-state experiences in adulthood tied to childhood trauma and stress? Yes, says psychologist Ken Ring of the University of Connecticut in Storrs. Ring's latest study shows that people who report a UFO experience or claim a near-death experience (NDE) as adults are especially likely to have suffered abuse when young.

Ring's study profiled 170 people reporting UFOs and NDEs. Subjects filled out a detailed questionnaire, dredging up information on childhood homes, religious beliefs, and other factors. Ring then compared their answers with those of a control

group not subject to altered states. Some results from the study were not that surprising. The survey revealed, for instance, that people reporting UFO abductions were psychologically similar to those reporting merely UFO sightings or NDEs. Ring also found that no matter what the nature of the altered state, those prone to such heightened experiences often became more spiritually oriented and sometimes even embraced a cosmic interpretation of events on Earth.

But the most controversial aspect of Ring's survey is the high incidence of disturbed childhoods—including physical mistreatment, sexual abuse, and neglect—among those reporting UFOs and NDEs. It turns out that these people were also more likely than others to recall psychic episodes from their childhood. Ring has proposed a daring interpretation of these findings.

It's well-known, he says, that children exposed to physical violence, sexual abuse, or a negative home atmosphere are strongly motivated to "tune out" those aspects of their world, to dissociate themselves from the source of their troubles. "By doing so," Ring says, "they are



more likely to tune in to other realities where they can feel safe regardless of what is happening to them." So this sensitivity to "alternate realities," brought on by childhood difficulties, might actually attune people to UFOs and NDEs as adults. If so, Ring says, their "extended range of perception" could be regarded as a "compensatory gift" for the physical and psychological "wounds" they suffered in childhood.

Ring's interpretation does not sit well with some child abuse experts. "Is it a hyper-perception of reality or a distortion of reality?" asks a recognized authority on child abuse

who does not wish to be quoted on "outrageous science" topics. "I'm more inclined to see these people as more susceptible to fantasy creation as a strategy of coping with pain, rather than a hypersensitivity to things that are really out there in an objective sense."

Byron Egeland, a professor of child development at the University of Minnesota who has done a lot of research on the causes and consequences of child abuse, concedes only that "it might be the case that somebody who had experienced a lot of hurt as a child is more sensitive as an adult." But the reason these people experience these bizarre phenomena, he says, "is not because they are more sensitive to them, but because they are very confused about what's real and what's fantasy. I can guarantee you that the majority of individuals who have those kinds of experiences are fairly disturbed individuals. I think their experiences are the result of the abuse."

Ring objects. "I do *not* want to pathologize these people," he says. "Survey participants reporting UFOs or NDEs are no more fantasy prone as a group than grocery store clerks or anyone else."—PATRICK HUYGHE