

The Wild Places

No.3

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# The Wild Places



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Please make all payments out to the Editor, Kevin McClure. Thanks!

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### The Wild Places

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## Talking to Strangers



Much as this column seems to have developed into an editorial, so this issue seems to have developed a theme, quite without any plan on my part. I'll call it the Myth of Intervention, a term you'll probably catch me using again.

I don't suppose it really started with the Resurrection. There's probably similar themes in Egyptian and Mithraic traditions, but my knowledge of pre-Christian religion is pretty sketchy. What I'm getting at is the accretion of an 'involving mystery' on to an intriguing and attractive set of circumstances. In Christianity, you have a thoroughly nice chap, a marvellous philosophy, reports of miraculous healing, other person-to-person wonders. Then on top of it all come the strictures of the Resurrection. Someone dies for you, then they come back to life. Unless you commit yourself, body and soul, to that individual, you will not come back to life. Indeed, you will be condemned to a hitherto unadvertised hell. All this based on such minimal evidence that you really have to want to believe it to make it seem credible.

But we keep on doing this kind of thing to ourselves. Just look at Crop Circles. Fascinating, beautiful, mysterious physical phenomena. A visual delight: the best new unknown in years. And what do we do with these beautiful things? We surround them with the barbed wire of belief: warnings and gloom, furious entities and an angry Earth. Every pendulum owner in the South of England trots along to discover some message or other. Researchers turn into channellers. All because we want a plan, an order, an intervention in our affairs to which we must, helpless and afraid, do obedience.

The matter of UFOs reveals numerous forms of the same obsequious pattern. All sorts of control are revealed. It isn't enough that there are unexplained lights, and shapes, and craft. Even that the odd figure is occasionally confronted - usually saying nothing, and meaning less. The world of inner meanings is feverishly explored, and researchers find all the interferences and intrusions and unpleasantnesses that sell so many books and magazines. And when the aliens aren't engaged in manipulating our genitalia, they're supposedly doing the same to our governments. There's no evidence - real evidence - for a smidgeon of this, but there's a heck of a will to believe.

I've made my feelings about the drives of the New Age movement apparent elsewhere, but it isn't only in our field that the need to submit, to become engaged in a system of judging and retribution is apparent. The Fundamentalist Christians are particularly keen on it. Islam doesn't do so badly either. The 'Will of God' comes in many guises, and it's time to detach phenomena, events, and abilities from the belief systems that we are not only allowing to develop around them, but are actually cultivating, encouraging a cancerous and killing growth around reason, and the simple independence of the self.

Science Fiction and fantasy writing has long interacted with the reports of extraordinary experiences that we find ourselves trying to investigate from time to time. I think this is widely accepted now, and excellent research has shown the influence of specific items of fiction on specific reports of UFO experiences.

Consequently, I thought it would be interesting to ask two popular, professional and successful science fiction writers to review for us three recent books dealing - as reality - with what they deal with as fantasy. David Langford and John Grant were in at the genesis of An Account of a Meeting with Denizens of Another World, a book that Whitley Streiber himself thought sufficiently important in the history of ufology to refer to at some length.

It is, of course, always a delight to see our old friend Alternative Three coming round again . . . .

## Sleeping with the Enemy

Reviews by David Langford  
and John Grant

Abduction: the UFO Conspiracy by David Bischoff  
Warner (U.S.) paperback 1990. 328pp \$4.95

Reviewed by Dave Langford

You would probably think you know more or less what to expect on the evidence of a title like that. This, however, is fiction. No, no, bite back your horrible, prejudiced and sceptical remarks: I mean it's actually advertised as such. Not as SF, but as a thriller, with the sort of "this astonishing story can only be told as fiction" overtones which have never carried much conviction since it proved possible to tell the story of Watergate as fact.

Bischoff has done his research, not very difficult in this over-documented field. Names are dropped furiously, some seeming to have got damaged in the process. Thus Hynek is always referred to as "J.Allen Hyenk", possibly for fear that the original (or rather, his estate) would sue over a fictional claim that the Project Blue Book report was faked. But then we have "Jasque Valle" (spelt thus twice) and mentions of both the Weekly World News and World Weekly News, and one can suspect mere carelessness. Stanton Friedman and Whitley Streiber both come through in clear. Mentioning the first is a wise precaution, as otherwise his lawyers might speculate no end about the fictional "Dr Fenton Lieberman", who by a strange coincidence is "a Ufologist with a scientific degree who self-published his work, and made a living touring and speaking about UFOs and the government cover-up." The featured sceptic naturally expresses very rude opinions of Lieberman.

Since this is labelled as fiction, there's no point in quibbling about its 'factual' content or even its viewpoint - there's a sort of ghastly fairness in the way that everyone here who takes a stance is an unlovable caricature. We should judge Abduction on its merits as fiction, and then throw it violently across the room.

Routine bestseller trappings abound. There is much padding and deployment of brand names - our author even takes time out to tell you about

the word processor he uses, and which function key you press to save a document. The characters are all solid, triple-ply cardboard.

Thus we encounter a venal, coke-snorting National Intruder reporter with a fondness for nymphets, a vaguely Sagan-like sceptic with a drink problem and a mind as flexible as a steel trap, an unwashed UFO nut of extreme dippiness ("The key," he said, tapping the aluminium foil, "is the solarnarium. You have to convolute it just so to obtain proper magnetic harmonics," etc.), the sceptic's beautiful daughter who inevitably has a Close Encounter (with the genuine dramatic possibilities of such a father/daughter clash thrown away in soap-operatic shouting) . . .

In particular I enjoyed the coddled, psychopathic CIA killer, just barely reminiscent of the Executioner in *From Russia With Love*. "Termination with extreme prejudice," he croons to himself with "a delicious shiver". They have to keep him doped to stop him running amok, and he gets in the mood for work by dropping a hamster into his kitchen-sink disposal unit, turning the switch, and listening to tiny screams.

Naturally there's plenty of mayhem, all ludicrously overdone. Victims are tortured or knocked off to the accompaniment of corny remarks intended not for them but for readers: as in a grade Z movie, the heavies are playing to the audience. So before being shot, a ham-radio broadcaster who has stumbled on the Secret is gloatingly told: "It's time for the big sign-off . . . Your ratings were just terrible." Thickets of exclamation marks impede the narrative flow at supposedly exciting moments.

The plot itself concerns another tiresome conspiracy theory. Everything you know is wrong. Stop me if you've heard this one, but it's that desperately villainous organisation the U.S. Government which is behind flying saucers - using drugs, painful medical examinations and cute robot aliens to establish the story of UFO abductions which it's simultaneously denying, refusing to believe, and struggling to cover up. Conspirators, who can figure 'em? Meanwhile, what about these two enigmatic chaps who walk on occasionally and act enigmatic: could they be real aliens, as the author nudgingly hints? In the other corner, who are the sinister "Publishers" who control everything (including most especially the CIA) and arrange routine murders through their diabolical hitmen, the "Editors"?

Abduction is so awful that I'd have no hesitation in revealing all the answers, but unfortunately Bischoff neglects to provide them. After a false climax which leaves one villain deceased and one beautiful daughter abducted, the book stops. The hideous revelation is thus that there's more to come; meanwhile, you're cheated of the one slender reason for finishing such dross, the catharsis of learning whodunnit, and what it was all about. If volume two shows itself on my doormat, I promise it will follow the hamster into oblivion.

The Alien Tide by Tom Dongo  
Hummingbird Publishing Co., 1990, 128pp, \$7.95

The Ultimate Deception by Commander X  
Abelard Productions, 1990, 127pp, unpriced paperback.

An Account of a Meeting with Denizens of Another World, 1871 by William Robert Loosley, ed. David Langford  
David & Charles, 1979, 96pp, out of print.

Sex Secrets of Ancient Atlantis by John Grant  
Granada, 1985, 220pp, out of print.

Reviewed by John Grant

Before your editor asked me to review these four books, he warned me that two of them were definitely hoaxes, works of deliberate disinformation disseminated by - who knows? (My suspicions turned instantly in the direction of the CIA, who I have long known use skullduggery to stop WH Smith stocking my books.) However, he failed to tell me which two were the cuckoos in the nest, and it is only by dint of sophisticated textual analysis that I've been able to identify them. Here I take the opportunity to expose them - purely as a public service, you understand.

Despite its exclamation mark, The Alien Tide! purports not to be an alarmist book. Indeed, Dongo states this explicitly: "This is not a fear issue!" My first clue that the book wasn't all it was supposed to be came in Dongo's first chapter, in which he discusses the work's *raison d'etre*. With remarkable forthrightness he tells us: "I wanted to do another book. But on what subject? After a lot of deliberation, I settled on a book about UFOs . . . in part because UFO books have attained increased marketability." Sort of like Matthew, Mark, Luke or John wandering around the Holy Land telling potential publishers that gospels were really big that year. (And later you could put them all together as an omnibus called something like *The All New IMPROVED Testament*.)

In large part the book concerns itself with the famous Sedona region of Arizona, where Dongo lives; the other part comprises readable meanderings through a number of alien contact experiences drawn from elsewhere. The aim of this rather uneasy melange is to try to establish possible reasons why the aliens should be among us and in such large numbers, their influence extending right up into the higher reaches of the U.S. government. (Oh. You knew that last bit already.) That the ETs are here is taken for granted - and it is this assumption that destroys the credibility of the book, for some of the case histories of Sedona residents contain stuff that would be extremely interesting were it not rendered valueless by Dongo's (and their own) immediate supposition that the only possible explanation for their various experiences must have been the intervention of aliens.

For example, we learn of a man whose flat was subject to odd noises for a few weeks. One night he fell asleep in front of the TV and, when he awoke, found that his moustache and shirt-front were covered in dried blood. The source, he soon discovered, was a tiny puncture on the tip of his nose; there was no discolouration around the wound, so an insect sting or bite seemed unlikely. "Obviously" ETs must have been invading his personal space, as Dongo puts it. To this reader, at least, the chain of reasoning isn't quite so "obvious"; instead, I found it irritating that so little further information was given about

this intriguingly rum event, whose bizarre details accord well with those of the more convincing examples of supposedly paranormal dreams.

Still, when Dongo concentrates on people from the Sedona region whom he has interviewed or corresponded with personally, the book has a certain amount of appeal. He is on far less sure ground when he ventures further afield. For example, his penultimate chapter treats at length the famous Alternative Three.

Under Eisenhower, a think tank was set up to discuss how the human race might be saved from the imminent (c.2000 AD) destruction of the Earth through pollution, overpopulation etc. Putting humanity's creme de la creme in vast underground silos was rejected after some experiment; the idea of using vast nuclear explosions to punch holes in the atmosphere, so that heat and toxic gases could escape into space, was given rather shorter shrift. The think tank resorted to Alternative Three: with the help of the Soviets and the ETs, the best young people - particularly scientists - could be exported to Mars, via a secret base on the Moon. That the Moon would provide a friendly climate for such a base is proven by the appearance of clouds, lakes, giant tractors etc., in photographs of the lunar surface taken by Apollo orbiters during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Leslie Watkins, co-author of the book Alternative Three (based on his own TV documentary of the same name), first cottoned on to what was afoot when he discovered a remarkable brain drain of top-flight young scientists that affected every country in the world. Dongo points out that it is extremely hard these days to get hold of a copy of the book, because "it seems that pressure on publishers past, present and future to cease and desist is coming from some government source". This explains neatly why the two more sober books listed at the head of this review are now so hard to obtain.

I recall the first broadcasting of the TV programme Alternative Three. It had been a lovely Spring day. Very early in April, if my memory serves me aright . . . .

Commander X (any relation to the more famous Malcolm?), a retired military officer, is much more up-front than Dongo. If only he'd thought to splash on the cover of his The Ultimate Deception that "This is a fear issue!"; instead, we have somewhat more restrained enticers like "A Shocking Disclosure". I concur. Both Soviet and U.S. militaries have done a deal with one of the species of aliens that are infesting our planet. The mob who've linked up with the generals are, to paraphrase, kind of grey and shiftless, and not the sort you want to meet up a dark alley; their aim is global domination. These EBEs (Extraterrestrial Biological Entities) are in contrast to humanity's one hope of salvation, a different and benevolent ET species who can be told by their Nordic good looks - blonde hair, blue eyes, tall stature etc (1). If all of this serves to remind you of, say, Central Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, I'm sure it's merely a coincidence.

It would be impossible to summarise X's revelations in this quaint book. I was particularly engrossed by an account of a meeting with a "Nordic" species denizen of another world right in the heart of the Pentagon. The human involved was Dr Frank E. Stranges; the alien had adopted the name Val Thor (pretty good Nordic name, huh?). Before plunging into his account, X announces frankly:

There are those who would go out of their way to try and discredit Dr Stranges' claims . . . These critics point to the fact that he was once arrested and thrown in jail for supposedly conspiring to smuggle marijuana into this country from Mexico. These same

critics fail to point out that Frank has been absolved of all charges . . . They also heap suspicion on him by inferring (sic) that the various degrees he holds were obtained from "mail order mills" and that he did not attend a legitimate divinity college. This despite the fact that Dr Stranges has for several decades dedicated his life to God, heading up the International Evangelism Crusades, preaching to millions in this country and abroad.

That's a relief. I'd been thinking that the "Dr" implied he was a physicist, or something, and we all know what lying swine physicists can be. But who could doubt the integrity of an American evangelist preacher?

It was easy enough for Stranges, on turning up for his appointment at the Pentagon, to tell which person there was Val Thor. When the alien first looked at Stranges, "It was as if he looked straight through me". Thor's one-piece outfit resembled "liquid sunlight" in appearance, but had snapped diamond drills and responded not at all to being heated to temperatures above the melting point of steel, while concentrated acid "rolled off it like water from the back of a duck". Thor himself, as Stranges immediately noticed, "Had no fingerprints". (2)

The meeting itself seems to have been less than informative. For example, on being asked where he came from Thor replied only "I am from another planet", which was the bit we'd already guessed. However, we can be reassured that the 'Nordics' are a courteous bunch, if a trifle formal:

As I turned to leave the room, he said simply, "Please keep your faith and leave the same way that you came in."

I strongly recommend you put The Ultimate Deception on your stocking-filler list: it's fun for all the family. Where else could you discover that Eisenhower, as President, once encountered not only aliens but the "world famous language expert" Charles Berlitz (about whose auctorial career X is suddenly cagy)? Did you know that the way to conduct an electric current through a wire is "by resistance"? And aren't you glad to be reassured that "reincarnation is just as simple as grade school"?

Against that, though, you'll find yourself lying awake at nights worrying about the fact that the military-industrial complex is "working in cahoots to enslave society". This is doubtless why Commander X handed in his commission.

And now let's turn away from these clever pastiches to look at two books of spellbinding scientific plausibility . . . .

#### Footnotes

(1) In my mind, while reading, they became labelled Jolly Extraterrestrial Biological Entities, so that a collection of representatives of both species could be described acronymically as . . . but I digress.

(2) "Fingerprints," Thor explained, "Are a sign of fallen man."

A fairly narrow look at a couple of extreme religious publications this issue: I think I'll broaden my sources a little next time, to have a dip into the more conventional papers as well, just to be fair. However, there's some fascinating stuff here . . .

## Cross Talk

'He who is not with me is against me', appears to be one of the key tenets of the public relations arm of Christian Fundamentalism. It draws the believers together in small, defensive - sometimes offensive groups. And it justifies a wide range of responses, from a desire to convert to, it would seem, straight, undiluted hatred, and a revelling in the suffering of others.

Having been named by a number of newspapers in connection with the Satanic Child Abuse mythos - and picked up by that defender of human rights, the SUN for a representative associating Paul Daniels with being a gateway for Satan - The Reachout Trust is now moving on. Pretending that Maureen Davies never existed, the Spring 1991 edition of its Newsletter continues the New Age Seminar.

Reachout's really serious worry is that people may seek self-knowledge and self-development, rather than remaining in subjugation to their strange, bitter concept of God. A total confusion is apparent in their understanding of the considerable differences between paganism and the New Age, and with reference to attempts to give women equal opportunities in the mainstream churches, a twisted interpretation of even a mild form of feminism: -

"When equality is forced on the world and the church, God's true order is reversed. Satan tries to get chaos from God's order."

Other matters are just as simple:-

"Channelling is when you are taken over completely by the spirit. A familiar spirit speaks through the person in a trance like state. Both these are Satanic gifts of mediumship."

It seems that these people believe everything they hear - even a smidgeon of scepticism, of trying to establish whether channelling actually involves contact with anything at all - might afford them some small degree of credibility. But in their black and white world there is no time for analysis or balance. They charge on with a set of numbered instructions on how to confront and convert New Agers. Its tenor is set by number one -

"Remember that we are at war with Satan who is behind the New Age, not the people themselves."

The Summer 1991 Newsletter - apart from a wonderfully over-the-top attack on T'ai Chi - is notable for the testimony of a named individual, under the title, 'From Occult to Christ'. The giving of testimony - a useful technique in group therapy for addictions like alcohol, gambling and drugs - is a staple of Fundamentalism, but it is unusual for a full name - Tony Sarjant - and address to be given. (Some years ago, asked to review an 'escape from the occult' type of book, I found it impossible to obtain any verification at all that the reported events had occurred, or even that the author existed. The Christian publisher seemed to have made no effort to verify any aspect of what he had published!).

This testimony is particularly interesting. The author passes through all the usual stages of descent into the occult; having his tea leaves read at the age of 10; trying ouija at 18; predicting the time and date of the death of his grandmother; reading his horoscope; reading palms; crystal ball gazing; having his tarot cards read 3 times! Phew! Then,

"Finally, in 1978, the church performed an exorcism. I do not remember much about that night, but the next day the bedroom looked like a battle field. I was told after that I had torn up a headboard which was made from solid wood."

Usually, this would be the point in the testimony when the church takes over, but Mr Sarjant went back to the occult, as in 1985 he became involved with Doris Stokes and her family, "becoming a counsellor for her", and helping, "to arrange three sell-out shows in the Odeon, Birmingham." Mr Sarjant comments, "I knew that at one show she knew a lot of the facts beforehand" . . . "I have seen both sides of Doris Stokes' work. Yes, she could contact the other side, I have no doubt of this, but I do also know that other methods were used."

Clearly, he has a higher opinion of her abilities than do some people I know!

He goes on to say that just after the end of the shows in Birmingham,

"I had a mental breakdown and ended up in hospital. A year later in 1986 we lost our house, car, and I was facing a court case."

From there on, the pattern of receiving help and support from Christians continues as usual, blaming "the occults" (sic) for everything that had gone wrong - "illness, destruction of one's self, nervous and mental breakdowns and prison." I am pleased that for Mr Sarjant all this misfortune has had a happy ending: it would be intriguing to know if anyone associated with Doris Stokes in 1985 can remember him?

Otherwise, there has been little outstanding in the fringe religious press - I really must make contact with the Antichrist Information Service, and treat you to some of their opinions of Catholicism! All I would mention now is the anti-Islamic bigotry - in the wake of the Gulf War - in the Sep-Oct. issue of Prophecy Today. Consecutive articles lead in with, "The relative lack of allied casualties, and the shortness of the ground war in the Gulf surely demonstrated the Lord's provision in response to prayer," and, "The resurgence of Islam is being accompanied by such a spate of disasters that even secular observers are taking notice. Is Allah really in control?" The second piece lists various natural disasters (acts of God?) - in Iraq, Kuwait, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Angola, Egypt, Nigeria and more - and concludes that, "Islam and the powers of Babylon are being disturbed and shaken in order that many Muslims will be saved." So that explains the starving kids and the desolate adults and the hundreds of thousands of dead. Who - to paraphrase Monty Python - says that nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition?

There are few names that turn up across the spectrum of publications in the paranormal field - Phil Hine's is one of them. His trilogy of short works on modern shamanism is fascinating, and Pagan News - sadly no longer being published - has been a fine example of how to build bridges between people and factions known only for their inability to communicate.

This piece of Phil's just fits my kind of scepticism - I'm happy to accept that people can do things, but am much less keen on aliers and deities. Don't be put off by the word 'magick' in the title - this is just about real life.

## Belief: A Key to Magick by Phil Hine

The review of Starry Wisdom (see Issue 2 - Ed.) presenting the Esoteric Order of Dagon's ideas about using the Cthulhu Mythos of H.P. Lovecraft as a lever for serious magical work probably raised one or two eyebrows. Isn't, after all, the Lovecraft stuff fiction? What about linking in with 'inner planes contacts', 'traditions' etc - surely you can't do magick with something that doesn't bear any relation to history or mythology? In the past, such criticisms have been raised over the subject of magicians working with 'fictional' entities. In this short essay, I hope to argue the case against these objections.

The first point to make is that magick requires a belief system within which to work. The belief system is the symbolic and linguistic construct through which the magician learns to interpret her experiences, and can range from anything between good old traditional Qabalah to all this New Age "I-heard-it-off-a-Red-Indian-Shaman-honest" stuff that seems so popular nowadays. It doesn't matter which belief system you use, so long as it turns you on. Read that again, it's important. Eventually most magicians seem to develop their own magical systems which work fine for them but are a bit mind boggling for others to use, with Austin Osman Spare's Alphabet of Desire being a good example.

A key to magical success is veracity of belief. If you want to try something out, and can come up with a plausible explanation as to how/why it should work, then it most likely will. Pseudoscience or Qabballistic gibber (or both) - it matters not so long as the rationale you devise buffers the strength of your belief in the idea working. I find that this happens a lot when I try and push the limits of how I try to do some magical action that I haven't tried before. Once I come up with a plausible explanation of how it could work in theory, then of course, I am much more confident about doing it, and can often transmit this confidence to others. If I'm 110% certain that this ritual's going to 'bloody well work' then it's all the more likely that it will.

You can experiment with this, using the technique of belief-shifting (Robert Anton Wilson calls it Metaprogramming), a good example being the chakras. The popular view of the chakras is that we have seven. Okay, so meditate on your chakras, hammer the symbolism into your head and hey presto! you'll start having 7-chakra experiences. Now switch to using the 5 Sephiroth of the Middle Pillar (Qabalah) as the psychic centres in your body, and sure enough, you'll get accordant results. Get the idea?

This of course raises all sorts of questions about the 'reality' of chakra systems, but I'll go on about that another time, editor permitting.

Any belief system can be used as a basis for magick, so long as you can invest belief into it. Looking back at my earlier magick experiments, I guess that what used to be important for me was the strong belief that the system I was using was ancient, based on traditional formulae etc. A belief system can be seen as a matrix of information into which we can pour emotional energy - we do as much, when we become so engrossed in watching a play, film or TV programme that for a moment, it becomes real for us, and invokes appropriate emotions. Much of what we see served up on the silver screen is powerful mythic images and situations, repackaged for modern tastes. Which is a cue to start going on about Star Trek.

More people are familiar with the universe of Star Trek than any of the mystery religions. It's a fairly safe bet that more people are going to know who Dr Spock is, than who know who Lugh is. The Star Trek universe has a high fantasy content, and seemingly few points of contact with our 'everyday' worlds of experience. Yet Star Trek is a modern, mythic reflection of our psychology. The characters embody specific qualities - Spock is logical, Sulu is often portrayed as a martial figure, Scotty is a 'master builder', and Kirk is an arbitrator, forever seeking resolution of conflict through peaceful means. As we 'get into' the Star Trek universe, we find greater depth and subtlety. We find that the universe has its own rules to which the characters are subject, and is internally consistent. Each episode, we may find that we are being given insights into the Personal world of a key character. Like our everyday worlds, the universe of Star Trek has a boundary beyond which is the unknown - the future, unexplored space, the consequences of our actions - whatever wild cards we may be dealt. So we watch TV and enter, as an observer, the unfolding of a Mythic event. We can increase this sense of participation through a role-playing game, where group belief allows us to generate, for a few hours at least, the semblance of the Star Trek universe, in the comfort of your sitting-room. It's relatively easy to generate the Star Trek world, due to the plethora of books, comics, videos and role-playing supplements which are available to support that universe.

The final proof of all that being that one of my colleagues had to sit a computer exam, and was wracking his brains trying to think of an appropriate god-form to invoke upon himself to concentrate his mind on programming. Mercury? Hermes? And then he hit on it - the most powerful mythic figure that he knew could deal with computers was Mr Spock! So he proceeded to invoke Mr Spock, by learning all he could about Spock, and going round saying "I will never understand humans" until he was thoroughly Spock-ified. And he got an 'A', so there!

And so, back to the Cthulhu Mythos. Lovecraft himself was of the opinion that fear, particularly fear of the unknown, was the strongest emotion attached to the Great Old Ones. The reason why I like to work with that Mythos occasionally is that the Great Old Ones are 'outside' most human mythologies, reflecting the shadows of the Giants in Norse Myths, the pre-Olympian Titans in Greek Myths, and other groups of Universe-builders who are thought to be too chaotic for the polite company of the gods of the ordered universe. For me too, the nature of the Great Old Ones as shadowy beings who can only be partially glimpsed is attractive - they can't be assimilated and bound into any orthodox systems of magick, and I get much fun from working out suitable approaches for working with them. The Great Old Ones have a very primal nature, which for me provides the

emotional buffer for magical exploration. Having said all that, and no doubt left you thinking "uurgh, weird person, he likes messing round with tentacled slimies", I might also mention that I've had some interesting results from working with a Mythic system based on (blush) C.S.Lewis's 'Narnia' books.

The interesting thing about metaprogramming is that you can adopt a belief for a relatively short time, and then drop it again. When practising ritual magick it's generally a good idea to, whatever you think about gods being archetypes or reflections of bits of yourself or whatever, behave as if they were real. So in a Cthulhu Mythos ritual, nothing will help build the necessary tension better than the adopted belief that if you get it wrong, Cthulhu will slime you! Of course, outside the ritual you don't have to believe in Cthulhu and that even now a slimy paw appears at my window . . . no! No! . . . ahem, sorry about that. Related to this approach is the idea that 'Suspension of Disbelief' can also be useful. To do this, take a book which expounds an idea that you find totally crap (every magician has their favourite 'crap' author) and try to see the writer's message without your inner voice hurling abuse at the page. One of the most difficult 'suspensions' for fledgling magicians is overcoming the nagging doubt that "all this stuff doesn't work". Despite hours of talk and reading vast tomes by Crowley and his cohorts, that nagging disbelief can still be heard, and can only really be dispelled by experience - one act that shows you that **MAGICK WORKS** is worth a thousand arguments.

So my conclusion is that intensity of belief is the key which allows magical systems to work, whether they be related to historical traditions (which are, let's face it, very often rewritten anyway), esoteric traditions (which have evolved down the centuries as well) or based on fiction or TV. It's your ability to be emotively moved or use them as vehicles for the expression of your will that counts. If it works for you - do it.

## From Light magazine, August 1947

Mediums are sometimes charged under the Witchcraft Act, but it is very unusual in these days to hear of anyone actually accused of witchcraft practices. This happened recently, however, at Frowbridge, Wilts., when a man and his wife were accused by the N.S.P.C.C. of injuring their child by witchcraft. "It was alleged," said a report in The Star, "that the mother said that when the child woke at night they heard clinking noises and loud banging behind the chimney. When the husband burned salt the child calmed down and the noises stopped." Dr Jean Murray said the parents believed that external influences were operating against the child, so they counteracted it by burning salt. The defence stated that the Society must prove its case on facts and not on ethics. The child was well cared for and well clothed. The parents were acquitted and the child is to be restored to them. The case is a reminder of how deep-seated still, in country districts, is the belief in witchcraft and sorcery. On the few facts given, this may well have been a case of poltergeist phenomena centering round the child, whose age and sex, incidentally, are not stated. A wider knowledge of psychic matters would perhaps remove a good deal of superstition, where orthodox science has failed to do so. Instead, we often find the belief in psychic phenomena itself denounced as 'superstition'.

## NEWS FROM THE FRONT

Firstly, two fond farewells. The excellent Pagan News, edited by Phil Hine, has ceased publication. Certainly the best in its field, and often containing some marvellous humour, it will be missed. The other absentee is the fine American UFO/New thought journal, Caveat Emptor. I gather that it has run into some financial problems, perhaps not surprising for a magazine with such high production qualities. I hope we'll see it again in due course.

As it would happen, I have the advantage of preparing these reviews after the major event in this subject in the past five years - the Crop Circle revelations in the TODAY newspaper. I understand that the media has carried these the world round, and though the physical evidence for their manufacture remains a bit skimpy - the news only breaking just as harvest was finishing - the circumstances all point towards the claims of extensive hoaxing, particularly of the most exotic structures, being broadly true.

I don't have access to any secret sources of information on crop circles, but then I never believed in any paranormal origin or involvement in the first place. Personally, I'm neither surprised nor disappointed by what has emerged. There never was any prima facie evidence for the wild speculation of non-human origins - just the traditional wishing and hoping. I know that some believers will continue to believe, and the conspiracy theorists will be reinforced in their theorising. Whatever happens now, I expect no further serious media interest in crop circles.

What intrigues me is how many more of our established mysteries, the problem cases and areas of the paranormal, could be so easily resolved if the Dougs and Daves involved - say at Roswell - were still alive and kicking. They might have saved us all a great deal of time!

Anyway, a great many excellent magazines - and some rotters - have come our way since our last issue. Here's a selection . . .

Annals of the Enquiring Vol.2.3. Somewhere in this muddle of typefaces, there's a worthwhile and entertaining magazine trying to burst out. Balancing lightly between Fort and von Daniken, this has ancient knowledge, UFO detectors, stone circles, children abducted by eagles, and many other short and succinct items.

The Cerealoquist Issues 3 & 4 - Spring & Summer 1991. Well, what can I say? This is certainly one of the best-produced, best-written and best-illustrated magazines in the field for years. It has quickly become the flagship of the mystical approach to crop circles and has, I gather, a circulation of 1,500. Yet it would seem, at the time of writing, that its subject-matter is merely the work of a handful of hoaxers. While there is balancing material, some nearly rational, in both these issues, most of what is presented is belief-oriented, eschewing scepticism in favour of the hope - so often encountered - that someone or something, non-human and in the earth or sky, cares about us and what we do.

Thus we have, apart from the undeniably great beauty of the patterns themselves, an ongoing network of guesses as to what it all means. How can the pictograms/insectograms be interpreted? Who is communicating? Why? And what news can the talents of the New Agers - and dowsing in particular - bring us about all these mysteries? Issue 4 features an interview with a medium who has sensed all sorts of

energies in the circles. And in assessing the work of various dowzers John Michell concludes that, "In traditional terms, the earth's subtle body, its ch'i, as recognised by acupuncturists in the human body, has somehow been stimulated, and is now powerfully charged. The charge has spilt over from the ancient centres, leaping to nearby spots to produce corn circles. This process is not automatic or random but is directed by an unknown mind." Good grief! (ed).

The Christian Parapsychologist Sep.1991. Delighted to see a balanced, intelligent ("concentrate on Jesus, and let the children have their parties!") editorial here about Hallowe'en. It always baffles me that the Evangelicals, believing in an omnipotent risen Christ, and washed oh-so-clean in His blood, are so utterly paranoid about an omnipresent Satan. Wasn't that victory what the resurrection was meant to be all about? Maybe it's the Myth of Intervention again, in yet another guise. Actually, this is a fine issue of CP. Apart from a rather dense lecture on evil spirits by a leading Swedenborgian (what a respectable cult that is!), there's a fine poltergeist case by Max Magee, and a well-written, reflective, but relevant piece by Michael Paternoster, Timeless Moments.

Challenge No.5. Years ago, a now-very-serious mystic ran a marvellous para-Qabbalistic magazine called Azoth, which was both magical and satirical. I loved it. Challenge reminds me a little of those heady days, especially with 'Shibboleth', its pull-out, around the Tree of Life boardgame. Informed disrespect - we need more of it. Otherwise, the good writing here seems to be the Editor's, with some bright comments on the New Age, related to portions of Philip Heselton's world picture. With more editorial input, and a touch more accessibility in language and thought, this could become unmissable.

The Circular - The Quarterly Journal of the Centre for Crop Studies June 1991. Produced and edited to a high standard by Bob Kingsley, there's no shortage of good writing here. There's Rupert Sheldrake with The Rebirth of Nature - a sort of cosmic "hello flowers, hello trees", reprinted from Kindred Spirit. Simon Burton deals with the nature of energies "allegedly discernible to dowzers". "Are the dragons still spiralling about their constraining omphali, or are some of them already running free?" And, unmissably, there's Bigfoot expert Jon Erik Beckjord, going clear off the rails decoding "crop-glyphs". "The language chosen is called TIFINAG, and was used by the ancient Norsemen and Berber tribesmen of North Africa." Amazing stuff - apparently nonsense. I really hope that, with the demise of crop circles, all these able editors will find some more worthwhile outlet for their talents.

The Crop Watcher No.6. If Doug and Dave, TODAY's circle makers, really happened, then Paul Fuller, the Editor here, has least cause for embarrassment among his (erstwhile?) colleagues. Concentrating on hoaxes, reports of circle formation, and the vitally important contextual, historical material (for me, the key factor in the assessment of all reports of the paranormal), The Crop Watcher does a balanced job in a difficult field. Yes it has hoped for too much from meteorology, and stretched vortex theories further than they'll happily go, but when the dust settles, you'll want a set of these to appreciate the true nature of the crop circle phenomenon.

Dark Lily 13 Recently, DL has been explaining the philosophical and mental attitudes behind neo-Satanism, the non-deific belief that puts the power and priorities of the individual above the betterment of the group. These emerge in Magda Graham's intelligent commen-

taries on events and convictions. With extensive advertising of other off-beat publications, this is a more than worthwhile buy.

Earth March 1991. Anything produced by Paul Bennett is bound to be lively and provoking, and this is no exception. Particularly impressive is a long piece on the state of "quasi-consciousness" Jenny Randles has named the 'Oz Factor', linked to various forms of ASC and distorted perception, from meditation to psychedelics. This is applied, with great vigour, to the UFO experience. It's a bit heavy on the earthlights for me, but an important contribution to the subject, without doubt.

Foaf tale News No.22. The Newsletter of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. A vital issue, with the first part of a checklist of newspaper reports of Satanic Ritual Abuse in the U.K. - almost certainly bound to be the folklore event of this decade. Sandy Hobbs and Bill Ellis set out useful background material as well. There's other intelligent items, including Topical Narrative Research in Germany, Hitchhiking Angels in Holland, Californian Ritual Abuse material, conference reports, informative journal reviews, and much more. Quite indispensable.

Folklore Frontiers No.13. It says something for the growing application of intellect in our field that what used to come under the 'strange but true' heading, is now assessed and analysed as folklore. No major theme this time, but a charming mix of legend-lore by Michael Goss, all the usual bits and pieces, and a welcome mention for the excellent John Otway!

Fortean Times 57, 58 & 59. Well, they've made the breakthrough at last - with the backing of the publisher of Viz magazine, FT has gone news-stand, and it looks like being a success.

57 was the last conventional issue, featuring invaluable source material and commentary on Satanic/ritual child abuse rumours, and the Phantom Social Worker scare. 58 was the first 'new' issue. A mite simpler, perhaps, a little less of the feeling that being an FT reader made you something special. The content was well up to scratch, except for a cover and long feature about the stupid - and immensely rare - practise of trepanning: drilling a hole in the cranium. This is not an event, any more than is tattooing one's genitalia, or painting the cat green. All that is Fortean may be odd, but not all that is odd is Fortean.

59 - just received - gets it dead right. It has a good cover and great content, and if you can persuade your newsagent to carry it, you'll be doing us all a favour! Still the best Fortean magazine in the world, and better presented and illustrated than ever. Well done chaps!

Lifetimes May 1991 I think this was the only issue - down here in the sticks you can't be sure. I certainly hope it was the only issue. From the pathetically sexist cover with its 'caveat emptor' subtitle onwards, this has all the hallmarks of failure. Unknown and uninformed writers deal with stone circles, COBE's, dowsing, crop circles, astrology, aromatherapy and crystals add nothing to the sum of human knowledge or understanding, and the pretty pictures - handsome as they are - have little to support them. I guess this was meant to appeal to the 'pop' end of the New Age market. Luckily, it looks as if even new agers aren't that easily fooled!

Magonia 39 & 40. The house journal of the Psycho-Social Mafia and, it seems, getting better all the time! No.39 has Nigel Watson on UFO mythologies, and the prolific Martin Kottmeyer's A Universe of Spies,

dealing with the conviction that UFOs are observing/studying the human race. There is also a Satanism Update. In No.40, Kottmeyer continues with Eye In The Sky, Michael Goss looks at Mesmerism and early Spiritualism in their guises as the Great Unexplained Phenomenon, and Bill Ellis - of Foafale News - assesses the parallels between claims of abduction by UFOs, and of abuse by Satanic cults. To these, I think we can add the trend in 'my father abused me' recollections of U.S. celebrities like Roseanne Barr and La Toya Jackson. Ellis reasonably points up different psychological processes in blaming humans, as opposed to non-humans. Personally, I tend to disagree: there is so little evidence for the aliens in these cases that I suspect very few victims genuinely believe in that explanation: I suspect these phenomena are more or less continuous. Anyway, both these issues are essential reading.

Northern Earth Mysteries Autumn 1991. The feature article here is Mysterious Wharfedale, complete with detailed map, history, background, alignments, and plenty of specific information. This typifies the sane, balanced, but consistently interesting magazine this is.

Northern UFO News No.150. Aug.1991. Jenny Randles really earns her place at the centre of British ufology, despite the carping of various crackpots. Here, the editorial tackles the difficult question of the market at which UFO books should be targeted - in the context of John Spencer's recent output, which has aimed fairly low. I guess it's down to market forces in the end, and I'd sooner see John Spencer's work succeed than the wild speculation and unfounded rumour that seems to sell best at present. Jenny has also continued to inform - rather than speculate - in her Circles Update column.

Pendragon Summer 1991. Proceeding with its own pleasing quest into the 'Matter of Britain', this issue has the first part of a feature on Camelot, the most likely candidate for Arthur's Camelot. Pendragon avoids the sort of pagan neo-fascism into which EM researchers sometimes fall, and the pleasure its readers derive from their researches comes over clearly.

There is also mention of the peaceful death of Ivor WJ Snook, aged 80. A frequent correspondent when I was publishing Common Ground, his writing and his enthusiasm were equally welcome. He will by now have answers to many of the questions that fascinated him.

The Skeptic July/August 1991. Fronting a lengthy interview, the cover of this magazine has a picture of James Randi with a pile of dollar bills. The caption says, 'James Randi:Charlatan'. Now, that may not be fair, but after that wretched TV series, 'bore' or 'timewaster' may well be appropriate epithets. Inviting dull people to appear for a couple of minutes on an appallingly organised programme littered with daft props like an underfunded Generation Game proved nothing, and failed totally to entertain or inform. In that, it seems pretty consistent with CSIQP's overall approach; targetting the petty and vulnerable, and leaving the major and important issues well alone. How about the writing of the Book of Mormon, for instance? That could keep their legal staff busy for a while!

Other than that, this is a sound issue, with Hilary Evans raising important questions about Medjugorje.

SPI (Strange Phenomena Investigations) May/June 1991. Some good stuff here. Particularly intriguing for those who latterly know Rita Gould as a serious crop circle researcher is a detailed account of her work as a 'direct voice' medium, complete with rattling cymbals, sounding trumpets, and apparitions: flowers that apparently appeared from nowhere. Malcolm

Robinson, the Editor, contributes some worthwhile material on the Livingston UFO case, and there are other features by Jenny Randles, Anthony North and Peter Hough.

UFO Brigantia May 1991 Now quarterly, but none the worse for that. This is another cracking issue: the sceptical end of mainstream ufology, but willing to publish relatively 'belief-oriented' material as well. The legendary John Keel tells us about 'The Sorry State of UFO Research', Rick Hale continues the account of his abduction, and Ralph Noyes, a former senior civil servant in the M.O.D., considers government conspiracy theories - especially concerning Rendlesham. Also, Donald Schmitt and Kevin Randle, leading U.S. ufologists, perform an act of faith at the Roswell shrine, the while having a go at Keel's 'Japanese balloon' theory.

The UFO Debate June 1991. This issue is really rather rude about Wild Places: I don't mind - I'm rude about all sorts of things! Trouble is, I reckon that as editor David Barclay gets deeper into the 'alien intervention' mythos he is so ready to print, the more unwilling he is to accept scepticism in any form. A smart, literate journal, still, but the 'Debate' is looking a tad one-sided at present!

## Late Arrivals

International UFO Reporter March/April 1991 (\$6 for single issue from IUR, 2457, West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, IL 60659, U.S.A.) Very much the top end of the UFO periodical market - like FSR sans crackpots. Keith Basterfield on a recent (very subjective) Australian abduction case, Jennie Zeidman on Blue Book, with some good documents, Reports - and efforts at Debunking - from the Soviet Union, and a good Crop Circle piece and questionnaire. Jerome Clark contributes the second part of his Airships feature, and another fiery editorial, castigating those not converted to the Roswell cause. Despite the complexity of the case, and the tremendous, laudable efforts of IUR-linked researchers, as I understand it, there is no shred of proof, either for the wreckage being from an extra-terrestrial source, or for any alien body - alive or dead - being discovered in it. Clark calls for "factual accuracy and logical coherence", but the sad fact is that almost any explanation for Roswell is more probable than the one he wants to believe in.

UFO - A Forum on Extraordinary Theories and Phenomena. Vol.6 No.3. (From California UFO, 1800 S.Robertson Boulevard, Box 355, Los Angeles, CA 90035, U.S.A. Single issue \$5.)

A very accessible, news-stand magazine from the USA, that hasn't fallen into the trap of publishing only what sells - as I thought it might. Each issue has a special subject, and while this one is alternative energy - Tesla, Reich etc (not my personal favourite) there's plenty of interest, with lots of news and reports, a long feature on a 'mandala' pictogram in the Oregon Desert, the reality of UFOs, Keel's Fugo Balloons popped again, and some great and zany advertising!

# MIXED MESSAGES

Two excerpts from letters from the prolific - and perceptive - Martin Kottmeyer.

. . . The problem of the unpleasantness of some abduction fantasies that Hilary Evans ran into is one that has bothered me for some while. As he notes, it is part of the wider problem of the nightmare. It is also part of the wider problems of the purpose of dreams, and why we are entertained by drama. If humans are driven to seek pleasure, why does Kim Newman's survey of horror films Nightmare Movies have an index stretching over 700 titles in length?

The purpose of drama is unknown so far as I have been able to find out. No comprehensive theory exists. A handful of observations exist such as that dreams are loosely associated with recent memories most of the time, and tend to deal with ongoing events in a metaphorical relationship. There is some evidence that nightmares have something to do with conflict resolution. When a person faces a trauma the event is faithfully relived over and over until the person finds a way to deal with it emotionally. Then the nightmares alter the elements of the memory residue of the trauma, and the intensity lessens with danger averted.

Writers are routinely taught that the essence of all drama is conflict. So the human proclivity to seek dramatic fantasy probably has an analogous or identical basis in conflict resolution. It is known, for example, from William Sargent's work with battlefield neuroses that many people abreact better when they act out conflicts analogous to their trauma but not identical with it. Often the real life trauma has moral ambiguities which can't be resolved. In fantasy the guilt-producing elements can be edited out and the grief of a friend's death or the full sense of one's powerlessness to have acted differently can be experienced in a way that can't be done with real memories.

It is my understanding that Aristotle suggested drama and theatre have an abreactive function. More than one movie commentator has pointed out how horror movies are caricatures of social injustices set in alternate realities where moral codes and politically-correct sentiments are pared away to achieve a desired emotional affect/effect.

There are hints that UFO experiences have an abreactive function. Nigel Watson's Portraits of Alien Encounters provides some examples of how the emotional conflicts of an individual can be reflected in his experiences with aliens. Laibow has reported better therapeutic results with alien regressions than regressions to real-life traumas. Convincing proof however will be difficult to come by in the absence of a comprehensive theory of dreams, and we may be waiting quite some time for that field's Darwin to turn up. Fortunately, ignorance of the teleology doesn't doom one to belief in such experiences. It is enough to know that abduction nightmares are filled with elements of known cultural origin such as the Bequette-begun flying saucer stereotype, or images from bad films like Invasion of the Star Creatures, Mars Needs Women, or the TV series The Outer Limits. The big questions don't always have ready-made answers.

. . . By the way, I remember your issue of Common Ground devoted to Why 1947? I think I've stumbled on the best answer yet. Eddie Bullard chided me for not noticing a resemblance between Kenneth Arnold's drawing of his 'saucers' and the Rhodes photo. The comment baffled me for over a year. Recently I stumbled across the Blue Book file on the Rhodes case and learned that he called attention to the agent that the object in his photo resembled a plane called the Flying Flapjack. He knew about it because a drawing of the plane appeared on the cover of Mechanix Illustrated. Date: May 1947 issue! Just about a month before the Arnold sightings. As a pilot, Arnold probably would be aware of such things going on in the aeronautics field. Such an awareness could have shaped Arnold's acceptance of tail-less craft, and moulded his perceptions to create the bilaterally symmetrical image in his drawing to the AF. It was only a short stumble from there to Bequette's error that created the expectation that "flying saucers" were whizzing around the skies!

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## Psychic News

The last few months have seen quite a transformation in the only weekly in the paranormal field - the newspaper Psychic News. Not long ago there was a reported risk of financial problems forcing an end to publication. Since then, PN has obtained new DTP equipment, and set about a marked broadening of content. The DTP has been well-used - the overall appearance is much sharper. And as for the content, well . . . I was really chuffed to have my offer of writing a monthly column accepted, to be one of a roster of writers providing viewpoints very different from those traditionally carried by PN.

There's plenty of reports of contact, and psychic events in every issue. One that caught my eye recently (14.9.91) concerned a sequence of displays of physical mediumship - materialisations, ectoplasm and so on - occurring since 1978. I'd like to know more about that.

Even more surprising was the announcement on 5.10.91 that Tony Ortzen - Editor for the last 19 years since the death of the legendary Maurice Barbanell - is to resign the post in a year or so, once his successor has a firm hold of the reins. Tony intends to return to mainstream journalism, but I'm sure his deft, light, but informative touch with such a wide and difficult subject will be remembered for many years to come.

I really would recommend anyone with any interest in clairvoyance, mediumship or survival either to order PN (price 24p!) from their newsagent, or to write to Psychic News at 2, Tavistock Chambers, Bloomsbury Way, London, WC1A 2SE.

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# REVIEWS

Fire from Heaven by Michael Harrison  
Skooob Books 1990 Price £7.99 (PB)

Reviewed by Gordon Keast

This title, originally published in 1976 and now offered in a revised version (the fourth, the author states), deals with spontaneous human combustion (SHC). Revision is haphazard, consisting mainly of a few examples tacked on the end, bringing in material up to early 1989. Elsewhere revision is patchy. There is some reorganisation of text, but the opportunity has not been taken, for instance, to incorporate corrections suggested by Robert Rickard after the second (Pan) edition in 1977. (See Fortean Times 23). This is a pity because that reviewer in two reviews (the other in FT 16) made some excellent points Harrison would have done well to have taken on board. I recommend these reviews to readers for their listing of still uncorrected factual errors.

The book does however bring together a number of key cases and facts, and there is a useful bibliography. Harrison has an unfortunate tendency to quote from secondary sources, and this has led to some of the errors. Whilst the book is quite readable, the style is diffuse, with details scattered randomly as the author explores a number of aspects of the paranormal - Kirlian photography, poltergeists, disappearances, ufology, telekinesis and dowsing are just a few - in an attempt to prove links between them. He claims that he achieves this proof, but I was less than persuaded. I find his attempts to explain the SHC phenomenon by referral to the unexplained in other fields, well, excuse the word - unscientific. Yet early in the text (p.8) I had high hopes when Harrison referred to SHC as 'unexplained' but not 'inexplicable'.

It soon becomes clear that he has more than a slight bias against 'experts' and the "scientifically trained". (His quotes, not mine). Inconsistently he bewails at one point his own lack of scientific training; and he depends heavily on scientific sources, too - 25 out of 41 listed journals or newspaper articles are culled from medical or other technical publications. He also finds a conspiracy by coroners to cover up the truth of SHC, becoming a bit mysterious himself here, as he admits he doesn't know what is being concealed. I did wonder if a friend's explanation (on page 358) that the CIA are microwaving undesirables, might not in fact be the core of the story.

Harrison himself produces no final hypothesis. He rightly debunks the Dickensian alcohol-sodden body theory, substituting for it the notion that victims are no-hopers, lonely, depressed etc, the unfortunate recipients of the fire from heaven, inviting its fury through their despair. Harrison's most lyrical prose comes in relating the case of a clergyman igniting in his pulpit before his congregation.

The evidence for the author's belief derives only from a handful of cases, and sometimes flies in the face of testimony. Harrison also claims to establish a link between SHC and water - the sea, estuaries, rivers - which after quoting cases in Birmingham is a bit like saying money is sometimes found in banks (most houses do have running water). His other contention, a probable significance in initial letters - particularly 's' (as in SHC?) - reminded me of laboured attempts to prove Jesus Christ was a fungus, or Gladstone a solar myth.

If you want to know about SHC, you must read this book. If you just enjoy reading about the odd, the occult or whatever, you'll love it. If you want to use it as a basis for further study, check every fact carefully, and don't get bogged down in the more disastrous areas of verbiage.

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FRAGMENTS - Dreams from R'lyeh. The Official Publication of the Esoteric Order of Dagon. Available from The E.O.D., Box 175, 52, Call Lane, Leeds, LS1 6DT. Please send for details.

I'm sure that Phil Hine (see Belief: A Key to Magick in this issue) plays some part in the E.O.D., but whether it's as High Priest, or the man who sweeps up the shoggoth droppings after a particularly messy ritual, I know not.

I'd guess that he's also played a part in compiling this chunky, professionally-produced, A4 format collation of Lovecraftian ritual, literature and art. Here are critical reviews of versions of the Necronomicon, there's poetry, dreams, gematria, a Mythos Tarot, and much more. A little numinous, perhaps - individual opinions and attitudes, rather than solid, original Mythos material. Nonetheless, a smart and intriguing read.

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Circles of Note: A Reader's Guide to the Crop Circle Phenomenon  
A Listing of over 100 books, newsletters, articles and miscellanea, compiled, edited and commented upon by Michael Chorost. Produced and published by Dennis Stacy, Box 12434, San Antonio, Texas 78212.

It isn't difficult to tell who is really committed to research and investigation, and who is in it for the money and the fame. There are always those who are saving 'the truth' for their next book, and the others who share knowledge around as well and widely as possible. Editor of the MUFON UFO Journal, Dennis Stacy, definitely falls in the latter category.

Here, he publishes an excellent 'continuing bibliography' of the more significant writing on the Crop Circle Phenomenon, put together most ably by Michael Chorost. At this stage, this runs to 9 A4 pages of references, and at the time it was sent to me, it was planned that it should appear "on a more or less regular basis". Doug & Dave permitting, I guess it still will. Dennis will send a copy for a pound sterling (two dollars), or 5 relevant clippings. Excellent value.

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The Roswell Report - A Historical Perspective. Ed. George M. Eberhart. \$12 + postage from CUFOS, 2457 W. Peterson Ave, Chicago, IL 60659, USA. Pub. July 1991.

This is first-rate value. A large format, 164-page soft cover, on good paper, collating a wide selection of Roswell/crashed UFO material from the pages of the International UFO Reporter, with an introduction and an invaluable 'timeline' of the incidents and their investigation, by Mark Rodeghier. With names like Swords, Schmitt, Randle, Clark, Hall, Maccabee, Friedman & Nickell involved, this looks like an essential work of reference.

The New Age Movement - and its publications - seem to deserve a column of their own. There is so much belief, and involvement, and commerce related to the New Age, that I now introduce: -

## Love & Money - the New Age column

It'll come as no surprise if I declare myself as a generally hostile witness on this subject - but why do I find it all increasingly annoying?

Leaving aside - for now - the absurd amounts of money changing hands for small natural objects of no discernible value, I think that it's the arrogance of many of the participants. Let's look at the New Age proposition. It seems, simply, to amount to now - this moment in history - and me - the New Age Believer - being special.

The concept of being 'chosen' relates to both elements of the proposition, the time element framing the other. The New Age Believer is special in the skills he (she) can develop, in the communications he can receive, in the artefacts he can obtain, use, and gain advantage from. And he is living in a special time, not experienced before save in some mythical version of a part of the past.

I can't trust any 'transformation'-based belief that says that now is special. People don't change much. The world doesn't change much. There's nothing at all special about now, except what we make of it. Our internal potential is no more or less, as individuals, than 5, 50 or 500 years ago. No matter if we meditate, dance, vibrate, entrance or chant the fugue from Pachelbel's Canon at the tops of our voices, we're no more gods than we were before we started. There's more to transforming the self than hyperventilating in company, and playing at the primitive.

It's a long time since Martin Luther tackled the scandal of the granting of indulgences in the Roman Catholic Church. Then, it was possible to purchase the forgiveness of sins, to avoid hell and purgatory, and to go more or less straight to heaven. If you could afford it. You could walk around knowing that in the sight of God, you were better than others. More favoured. More holy. If you could afford it.

I think that's why I tend to choke on the New Age Movement. It's closed, it's precious, and you can't be part of it without money to spare. It's a leisure activity for those who have the time and cash to indulge. A Divine Light Mission for the Yuppie generation. If you can't afford it, you can't belong.

Working at the sharp end of the social security system, I do get to see something of how life can be in this great now. The poverty, the boredom, the hopelessness, and the consequent inhumanity that takes all the forms you see in the media. Readers in the U.S. will have some awareness of the problems, and all these are nothing compared to the misery of life in many third world countries. This is the context in which to put the New Age fantasy. This is no special time. There are no special opportunities, no favours, and no transformation of humanity into some higher being. In every bad time, there are escapes. Sand is found in which to bury heads. Bring on the crystals, the retreats, flotation tanks, and aromas, the dancers and the channellers, the posers and profiteers. They are signs of the times: I hope that both will pass soon.

Having nailed my colours firmly to the mast, it may seem a bit disingenuous to start reviewing New Age publications. However, I'm not one to duck a difficult task! These seem to be the leading publications available in this country, but as I only picked them up in a couple of hours on a recent trip to London, I may have missed something! Please let me know of any others you think I should have mentioned.

The one we've looked at before is Kindred Spirit - price £2.40. The Autumn 1991 issue is beautifully presented, with a lovely dolphin cover. This time there are 68 pages, of which 35½ are pure advertising. This is a slightly better proportion than previously, but there is a lot of book and course-plugging content in the rest of the magazine. The editorial material is mostly 'green', with some cerealogy, and a bit about Avebury. There's a cute letter about crop circles, that mentions, "the open-minded, scientific approach adopted by scientist Colin Andrews and his lay group of researchers"(!), and another from Muz Murray - late of Gandalf's Garden? Elsewhere, there's a sensible interview with sensible Jonathon Porritt, a long publicity feature for a book compiled by Eddie & Debbie Shapiro, a long piece about the virtues of Dartington Hall (where Kindred Spirit just happens to be based), and an interview with Denise Linn, "One of the world's foremost reincarnationalists (presumably, reincarnationalists have a league table). She also runs workshops; now there's a surprise.

Human Potential - Psychology for Today, price £2.00, is another large format glossy, with a colour cover. Of 36 pages, close on half is the usual turgid advertising. However, despite the almost obligatory dance/masks/ritual/mentioning Gabrielle Roth article, its outlook is broader than many. There's an interview with medium Stephen O'Brien, plus plugs for his book and cassette, part of a Fritjof Capra lecture, and an interesting piece about Radical Affective Education. At least it has some challenge and originality about it

The Rainbow Ark - featuring The Networker's Diary - costs only 50p. Apart from outlining the immense variety of New Age activities going on in London, it features an interview with 'Visionary Paul Solomon', an odd apocalyptic item, advising us to be "thinking in terms of creating suitable shelters and ships for survival", and some old-fashioned socic-economic material. The Fabian Society meets Nostrodamus.

Magical Blend - A Transformative Journey (Issue 30) is American, and is physically the most impressive New Age magazine I've come across, with high production qualities, and excellent colour. It runs to over 100 pages, and is very much committed to the concept of 'transformation'. The advertising is wonderfully off-the-wall, and the content is lucid and well-written. As an exercise in believing countless impossible things before breakfast, this one takes some beating!

# End Times Bulletin

One thing unites every human, alien, divine and invisible being that has so far predicted the end of the world. To date, they are all utterly, totally, grovellingly wrong!

## Ego Freakout and The Saucerers of Doom

by Martin S. Kottmeyer

The record on that great  
phonograph in the sky cracked  
and stuck in a single groove . .  
single groove . . single  
groove . . single . . . .

John Keel  
The Mothman Prophecies

The mythology of flying saucers has long played host to fantasies of world destruction. They have a history that extends back to the earliest puzzlings of Kenneth Arnold, comes forward through George Adamski and his merry mystics, running nonstop up to the latest horrors of Whitley Streiber. Whatever differences may exist between contactees and abductees in their pick of alien partners, they all dance to the same phatic beat of cataclysmic crescendos phrased in the future tense. It is a dance worthy of appreciation in part as a modern variant of the ages old obsession with the idea of apocalypse. It also rewards study, however, for the light it shines on the psychology of doomsaying.

A survey of the flying saucer literature at hand quickly netted 85 examples of world destruction fantasies. The range of cataclysmic violence begins on the low end with modest spectacles of cities destroyed in nuclear blasts (Cecil Michael, Sprinkle's conference). The scale runs through wars (John Hodges, Ted Owens, Brian Scott, Linda Taylor), the destruction of civilisation (George Hunt Williamson, Buck Nelson), the sinking of California (PLW, Helen Hoag, Filiberto Cardenas), the inundation of continents (Robin McPherson), the cracking open of the planet (Pedro Ramirez, Francie Steiger), the complete ignition of the planet (Ralph Lael, Arthur Shuttlewood), destabilisation of the solar system (Frank Stranges, John Sands, A.N. Tasca), the blowing up of the solar system (Necoma), destabilisation of the galaxy (George Adamski, and up to the endangerment of the universe (C.A.V., Jerry Gross). John Keel points out that concern over "the balance of the universe" is peculiarly common. In this collection it appears as early as the August 17, 1952 ouija board contact with Zo of Neptune by George Hunt Williamson. It also appears in connection with Dorothy Martin, Sr. Helio Aguiar, Stuart Whitman and Arthur Shuttlewood. The origin is elusive though it wasn't unique to ufology. It appears in a 1956 work on the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas for example. The suggestion that its

roots extend to Job 37:16's "balancings of the clouds" seems fanciful to say the least, but an origin in theosophy or comic-book science fiction, while more plausible, remains to be demonstrated. The concern that man could have any tangible effect on the universe is of course a grandiose conceit, and points directly towards mental derangement. Such grand sweeps of imagination beyond plausibility are representative of the expansive and totalistic concepts generated by projective emotional defences.

The mode of destruction varies across a repertoire of creative options that is notably smaller than that seen in science fiction, yet still much too wide and contradictory to point to a common source of information. They can't all be right. Some say the world will end in fire (Stephen Pulaski, William J. Herrmann, Arthur Shuttlewood). Some say in ice (Elgar Brom's Noel). For others, floods and tidal waves will suffice (Dorothy Martin, Rolf Telano, Barbara Hudson, Lynn Volpe). Continents will rise or fall and the axis of the earth will tilt for at least a dozen of our prophets. If this sounds like Atlantis replayed - well, it is! The Mitchell Sisters and Helen Hoag explicitly credit the legend's priority. Mona Stafford and Francis Swan see the end coming in the manner laid out by the Bible and Revelation. Eduard Meier and Robert Short see problems connected with a loss of the ionosphere. Professor R.N. Hernandez casts his doomsday in a virtually unreadable form of scientific bafflelegab, but it seems to have something to do with a lethal belt of mineral solids surrounding our planet, and alien attempts to sway us into annihilating ourselves so they can colonise our world. Richard Miller said aliens had a ring of ten million ships around our world trying to protect us from the effects of a cloud of cosmic debris through which we were passing. Some radiation effects on the core structure of the planet couldn't be prevented however, and some earthquakes, tidal waves and bad weather would occur. Dino Kraspedon warned the use of hydrogen bombs would create elements then unknown which would poison the seas, vegetation, animals and man. It would also change the atmosphere in peculiar ways which would lead to earthquakes, enormous waves, strange diseases, maniacs in the streets, and the upset of cosmic laws. Orfeo Angelucci saw the earth as expanding like a balloon by 20% and then settling back. Betty Andreasson's recent revelation that mankind will soon die off from sterility has a sublime air compared to these other notions, but gets demerits for following Kurt Vonnegut's best-seller Galapagos too soon and thus cliché.

Yuri Rubinsky and Ian Wiseman in their History of the End of the World lament that late twentieth century prophets couch their predictions in more perhappes, or in more distant times than their less decadent ancestors. I am delighted to say I see no such trend in my sample. Fully 25 cases are set in time frames with firm endpoints that are both falsifiable and falsified by being passed through without confirmation (see Table 1). Another nine used phrases like "the end is coming soon" (Harry Joe Turner) or "Earth time is desperately short (Arthur Shuttlewood) and are implicitly falsified by the comfortable space of decades. More will be failed by the arrival of the twenty-first century. (eg PLW and Gaynor Sunderland). One has to give a nod of respect to these people for being stand up people in an era of weasels if Rubinsky and Wiseman are more generally right. It is true that others in the sample give no information on when they feel we can breath easier. Sometimes that is probably because the reporting lacks depth or the research is too quick. Others do show reticence in being willing to be proven wrong, but I doubt they number more now than in earlier ages. History forgets the cautious people.

The record of error represented in Table 1 calls for some explanation. Ufologists of the Lorenzen strain will say it only means the aliens are liars and disseminators of disinformation. It is, however, a curious type of campaign. Why wouldn't the aliens choose more credible-sounding lies than poleshifts and unbalanced universes? Why wouldn't they stick to one scenario filtered through different sources to give it more bite? If it is all done to make claimants of UFO encounters look nuts, then they have succeeded admirably, for it looks exactly like the world destruction fantasies seen in the delusions of psychotics.

We see in paranoids and schizophrenics the same range of fears starting at cities being destroyed, to nations, to the extermination of mankind. The same general repertoire is seen with scenarios often of a creatively idiosyncratic nature found mixed in with culturally-derived fears. I suppose it could be argued that some vast external agency exists which feeds these fantasies through sensitive people to drive them mad or make them look suspect, but psychologists would regard that as an obvious idea of reference, another sign of madness, or at least emotional defensiveness against the simpler or more parsimonious probability that it is a product of the human mind.

To psychologists, world destruction fantasies are projections of an internal catastrophe. The mind faced with crisis disintegrates, and expresses its sense of cataclysm through the metaphor of the fate of the world. Collapses can be triggered by organic factors such as illnesses. Carl Jung, for example, had visions of the destruction of the world while suffering from arteriosclerosis from which he shortly thereafter died. The complex of paranoid delusions found in ufology, however, implicates the involvement of personality factors as a likelier source of origin. Paranoids are more susceptible to disintegration of the ego through loss of self-esteem than the general population. Events that prompt shame or humiliation will tend to, as someone put it, send people either into "a deep funk or freak 'em out bad." The paranoid style is to freak out. The psychologist will suspect that these people had their world destruction fantasies shortly after they had an ego-bashing.

Yes, the UFO literature does provide support that this is exactly what is going on in some cases: -

1/. In a letter dated July 12, 1947 to the Commanding General of Wright Field (Dayton, Ohio) Kenneth Arnold wrote,

" . . . It is with considerable disappointment you cannot give the explanation of these aircraft as I felt certain they belonged to our government. They have apparently meant no harm, but used as an instrument of destruction in combination with our atomic bomb the effects could destroy life on our planet."

In the agent's notes on the Arnold case available in the Blue Book files, it is mentioned, "He has been ridiculed by the press to such an extent that he is practically a moron in the eyes of the majority of the United States." In a UP dispatch dated June 27, Arnold complains, "Half the people I see look at me as a combination Einstein, Flash Gordon and Screwball."

2/. On July 28, 1954 Affa of Uranus passed a message along through the contactee Francis Swan which warned, "This earth is really going to end as stated in the Holy Bible around 1956." Swan is known primarily to UFO historians as the one that was investigated by people

connected with the CIA. The month before this pronouncement of doom, Swan had been pressed hard by Naval Intelligence to come up with proof of her connection with aliens. They asked her to pass along a request to make radio contact or use light signals on a given date. Affa got angry, but said he'd try. This test, needless to say, failed and higher-ups lost interest.

3/. When Prophecy Fails by Leon Festinger et al is a much cited psycho-sociological classic which just happens to double for us as the most detailed study of a saucerer of doom on record. The investigators ran across an item in the paper that Dorothy Martin was predicting Chicago would be destroyed by a flood just before dawn on December 21, 1954. The cataclysm would spread and the West Coast from Washington state to Chile would be submerged. Festinger and his friends thought this was a golden opportunity to study the curious phenomenon noted about other doomsayers in history, that they increase their proselytizing when the prediction of apocalypse falls apart. Festinger's research is wonderfully detailed, and he was able to pin down the first explicit reference to the impending disaster as appearing in a message from Sananda dated August 2, 1954. The authors don't ask the question why it appeared when it did, but their data provides the answer. The day before, on August 1st, Martin was joined by a group of people at an airfield to await the landing of a space ship that her contacts promised would come. The subsequent disappointment would lead some to drop her as a false prophet. The appearance of the world destruction fantasy so soon after such a public humiliation is strong evidence that the psychological interpretation is on target.

4/. William Herrmann, an abductee whose doings have been chronicled in two books, penned an anti-nuclear jeremiad entitled Inevitable Destruction on November 14, 1981. In it he warns "the entire earth could be engulfed in an Eternal Firestorm", and we are on a collision course with this thermonuclear holocaust because of then-current geopolitical events. "The Time to avoid this Physical Nightmare is fleeting. Soon, unless the People act, it will be too late." The author of UFO Contact from Reticulum Update emphasises that Herrmann was never an activist before, and wondered if aliens inculcated this idea in his mind, and why? Four days earlier, on November 10th, Herrmann was terminated as a Children's Church Teacher in the parish school. The church decided he was dabbling in satanic things, and turned hostile when he went on TV to talk about UFOs.

5/. In Whitley Streiber's Transformation a vision of giant boulders sailing off the edge of the moon comes to him along with the realisation that the moon's exploding means, "Oh, this is the end of the world." The dream also contained images of the destruction of a nuclear plant mere weeks before Chernobyl. This gave the dream the status of pre-cognitive vision in Streiber's view, and made him wonder if the moon part could possibly come true as well. Possibly, he concludes, but he has the insight that this might be an inner apocalypse related to a collective social change in mind associated with the visitor experience. His account, however, points to a more personal locus of origin. On April 6, 1986 Streiber went to the World Affairs Conference. Though he wasn't about to speak about his alien experiences publicly, he decided to experiment and see how these intellectuals would respond. The results were awful. An astronaut - he doesn't say if it was one of those who walked on the moon - says he wouldn't dare voice support. Mark Kramer politely suggests his experiences are psychologically based. Margot Adler, author of Drawing Down the Moon, finds his story disturbing and the alien influences evil. The notion upsets Streiber,

and it strains his relationship with Adler. During the evening of April 9, with a thunderstorm rumbling in the background, Streiber has his dream of the exploding moon.

Streiber's exegesis of his vision brings up the issue that apocalyptic visions are sometimes interpreted as internalisations of societal crises. I confess to being divided on the point. Anthropologists are clearly proper in linking the apocalyptic visions of crisis cults to the destruction of native cultures. The loss of identity prompted by the destruction of one's culture will obviously be reflected in cataclysmic fears about the future. But can run-of-the-mill crises of our rolling civilisation be pointed to as causal agent as some social commentators do? Are they really comparable? Consider, too, that even if we lived in a Utopia, there would still be people who by constitution or the buffetings of circumstance would generate world destruction fantasies. In a culture of millions, there are more than enough paranoids and borderline personalities to account for our sample of world destruction fantasies.

If you expected an increase of these fantasies in the riot-filled, tumultuous Sixties, you would be wrong - at least with the collection at hand (Selection effects are quite possible). I can't see them obviously tracking UFO flaps or their trigger events like Sputnik. On the opposite side, one has Streiber's exploding earth vision which arose in a hypnosis session dated March 1, 1986. A probe into the Challenger disaster had just indicated the culpability of officials in charge of the launch. One is struck by the horns of smoke trailing from the earth described by Streiber - a feature notable in the many reshowings of the disaster. One also can't dismiss the fact that the contactee messages of the Fifties had obvious features pointing to the fear that The Bomb meant there really was no future to count on. I present these points only to keep the possibility open and indicate that more research will be needed.

This should not obscure the more important point that there is a personal dimension to the forces that create prophets of doom. When the details around the prophecy are known, the psychological origin can sometimes be seen. Not that I want to be a prophet of doom myself, but this also suggests a prediction of the most banal variety. The needle on Keel's phonograph in the sky is just gonna keep on skipping. On and on, till the end of the world.

Table 1 - Datesetting Saucer Prophets. Names, dates, and modus operandi.

MFS Hehr	1960	Atlantean
Orfeo Angelucci	1986	comet
George van Tassel	1952	H-bomb
C.H. Williamson	12.1.52	cataclysm
Albert Bender	1953	poleshift
Frances Swan	1956	Biblical
Richard Miller	1956	quakes
Dorothy Martin	21.12.54	floods
G. White Eagle	10/19:4	quake
Wayne Aho	1980	earth changes
Ralph Lael	1964	earth blows up
Knud Weiking	24.12.67	nuclear holocaust
Robin McPherson	22.11.69	poleshift
John Hughes	1984	war
Ted Owens	1974	war
Stephen Pulaski	1975	world burns
Helen Hoag	1978	earth changes
Sprinkle conference	1980	U.S. city nuked
German Navarrete	1968	poleshift
Robert Short	1975	poleshift
Creta Woodrow	1984	earth changes
Francie Steiger	1990	crust floods
Starved poll	1984	poleshift
Charles Hickson	1964	total destruction
Jamie Sams	late '80's	world cleansing

## JOURNAL LISTINGS

This issue's list relates only to the publications we've covered in News From The Front. We're committed to publicising as many - and varied - publications as we can, so if you'd be interested in a full list of publications known to TWP being made available, please write and say so!

Annals of the Enquiring From Gerry Lovell, 8, St John Street, Wells, Somerset, BA5 1SW. Bi-monthly. Annual sub. £7.50.

The Cerealogist From Specialist Knowledge Services, Saint Aldhelm, 20, Paul Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DX. Single issue £2.50.

The Christian Parapsychologist From CFPSS, The Priory, 44, High St New Romney, Kent, TN28 8BZ. Single issue £1.25. Annual sub. £5.

The Circular From Bob Kingsley, 58, Kings Road, West End, Woking, Surrey, GU24 9LW. Single issue £1.75. Annual sub. £6.30.

Dark Lily From BCM/Box 3406, London, WC1N 3XX. Single issue £1.50. 4-issue sub. £4.00.

Earth From Paul Bennett, 20, Stonegate Road, Thorpe Edge, Bradford, BD10 0HF, West Yorkshire. Single issue £1. 6-issue sub. £5.

The Crop Watcher From 3, Selbourne Court, Tavistock Close, Romsey, Hants, SO51 7TY. Single issue £1.50. 6-issue sub. £9.00.

Foaf tale News An invaluable benefit of membership of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. To join, send £10.00 to Sandy Hobbs, Applied Social Studies, Paisley College, High Street, Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland, PA1 2BE.

Folklore Frontiers From Paul Screenshot, 5, Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS25 2AT. 4-issue sub. £4.00.

Fortean Times From SKS, 20, Paul Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DX. 6-issue sub. £12.00.

Magonia From John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5, James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB. 4-issue sub. £4.00.

Northern Earth Mysteries From 40b, Welby Place, Meersbrook Park, Sheffield, S8 9DB. Single issue £1.15p. 4-issue sub. £3.95.

Northern UFO News From Jenny Randles, 37, Heathbank Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 0UP. 6-issue sub. £6.00.

Pendragon From Eddie Tooke, Chincock, Paxhill Lane, Twynning, Glos. GL20 6DU. 4-issue sub. £6.00.

The Skeptic From P.O.Box 475, Manchester, M60 2TH. 6 issues for £12.

Strange Phenomena Investigations From Malcolm Robinson, 14, McKinlay Crescent, Alloa, Clackmannanshire, Scotland, FK10 3RX. 5-issue sub. for £7.50.

UFO Brigantia From Andy Roberts, 84, Elland Road, Brighouse, West Yorks, HD6 2QR. 4-issue sub. £8.00.

The UFO Debate From D.Barclay, 40, Stubbin; Way, Shipley, West Yorks, BD18 2EZ. Single issue £1.40. 6-issue sub. £8.00.

# SAINTS & ANGELS

by Kevin McClure

Historical research is one of the great pleasures of life. I've spent a fair part of the last ten years or so collecting material about the Angels - or Bowmen - of Mons. One of these days, if I can't find a publisher interested in the finest tale of paranormal events ever told in this country, I'll just have to publish it myself!

On this occasion, I'll move away a little from the heart of the story, the figures said to have aided the British at the critical point of the tactical retreat from Mons in 1914, to some of the other visions, interventions and events reported during World War 1, by both the British and other nationalities. If you'd like a further piece about the Angels and Bowmen, I'll be happy to oblige.

These wartime visions are, of course, right in the mainstream of our theme of intervention. In wartime of all times, strength and comfort are most needed, and reports of confirmation and approval from external, non-human agencies can be reasonably anticipated. It is interesting to note that these are all traditional figures of one kind or another. Nobody from the Pleiades or Zeta Reticuli here. No mysterious circles in the poppies, though there seems to be no good reason why they shouldn't have arrived in 1915, rather than 70 years later. Of course, all these reports are now well beyond fresh investigation, but they're none the less fascinating for that.

Firstly, a Russian vision, supposedly recounted by an army colonel, and relating to the Germans' first defeat of the war:

"While our troops were in the region of Suwalki, the captain of one of my regiments witnessed a marvellous revelation. It was eleven o'clock at night, and the troops were in bivouac. Suddenly a soldier from one of our outposts, wearing a startled look, rushed in and called the captain. The latter went with the soldier to the outskirts of the camp and witnessed an amazing apparition in the sky. It was that of the Virgin Mary, with the Infant Christ on one hand, the other hand pointing to the West.

Our soldiers knelt on the ground and gazed fervently at the vision. After a time the apparition faded, and in its place came a great image of the Cross, shining against the dark night sky. Slowly it faded away. On the following day our army advanced westward to the victorious Battle of Augustovo.

Secondly, a brief version of one of the stories of another archetypal figure, sometimes also referred to as the 'White Helper' or the 'One in White':

"A letter from a Miss Stoughton, whose sister was a nurse in the hospital at Tekleton. 'There is a wonderful story', she writes, 'of the man called by the soldiers, "A Comrade in White", who is going about at the front, helping the wounded. A man told my

sister that, though he had not seen Him himself, he knew many soldiers who had. He was supposed to be, "The Angel of the Covenant" - our Lord Himself. He has been seen at different places."

Not exactly first-hand testimony - the writer is the sister of a nurse who spoke to a soldier who knew some others who said they had seen the vision. It's intriguing to note that there are much more modern cases where similar figures have guided or rescued lost travellers in times of severe danger.

Here's another version of the same figure appearing:

"Now and again a wounded man on the field is conscious of a comrade in white coming with help and even delivering him. One of our men who had heard of this story again and again, and had put it down to hysterical excitement, had an experience. His division had advanced and was not adequately protected by the artillery. It was cut to pieces and he himself fell. He tried to hide in a hollow of the ground, and as he lay helpless, not daring to lift his head under the hail of fire, he saw One in White coming to him. For the moment he thought it must be a hospital attendant or a stretcher-bearer, but no, it could not be; the bullets were flying all round. The White-robed came near and bent over him. The man lost consciousness for a moment, and when he came round he seemed to be out of danger.

The White-robed still stood by him, and the man, looking at his hand, said, 'You are wounded in your hand.' There was a wound in the palm. He answered, 'Yes, that is an old wound that has opened again lately.' The soldier says that in spite of the peril and his wounds he felt a joy he had never experienced in his life before."

If the 'Comrade in White' was generally accepted as being Jesus Christ, then other religious figures made prominent appearances, too. Among these were St. Therese, Joan of Arc, St Michael, and various representations of the Virgin Mary. German cavalry soldiers were said to have reported incidents where their horses were on the charge, but suddenly pulled up and shied away from an unseen barrier. There is a matching report of British horses refusing to turn down a road where there was later found to be a German ambush in place. Thousands of miles away, General Botha's South African troops, returning from German West Africa, were said to have seen angels. The crew of a transport ship in the Dardanelles felt they had, by the power of prayer, prevented bombs dropping from a German airship from destroying their craft.

Quite moving is the story of the dramatic rescue of a young boy during battle, supposedly told by a nurse who had served in France:

"How did you manage to pick up the child under the German guns?" I asked. He shifted a little uncomfortably, then looked bravely into my eyes.

"It's a bit of a queer thing I'm going to say - but it's true," he said. "It was a kind of golden cloud between us and the Germans, and a man in it on a big horse - and then I saw the child in the dust on the roadside, and I picked it up." "Yes, Sister", he added, "Lots of other chaps saw it too." There was a murmur of confirmation. "The minute I saw it," he continued, "I knew we were going to win. It fair lucked me up."

Finally, a little-known report from 1917, of 'angels on the Home Front': actually, at Grays Thurrock, a place not famed for romance, drama or mystery, situated on the Thames, in Essex. Here, at a relatively optimistic stage of the war, were seen the 'Peace Angels'.

"All Argent Street was out after them", said one speaker. "They appeared over the Exmouth, two of them sitting on two rainbows with 'Peace' in between. Then they faded away, leaving only the rainbow." Another observer said that the angels had, "roses wreathed in their hair." It seems that children, in particular, were taken with this attractive story.

Of course, these are only fractional elements of a much larger picture. I have recently come across reports of psychics dealing on their level with 'The Black Host' - all very Dennis Wheatley, or even Bedknobs and Broomsticks! If I find out any more, I'll pass it on. But broadly, the sort of events I've briefly mentioned above are the exact historical context of the reports of the paranormal that we deal with now. The aliens, the abductors, the ghosts, spirits, demons and guides. Write off one, and you write off the rest.

World War 1 is, for me, a marvellous microcosm of the stress situations that lead to so many accounts of extraordinary experience. It saw the zenith of Spiritualist activity, and of crisis apparitions, as well as producing extensive reports of archetypal visionary experience. It will probably keep me busy for many years yet!

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## Back Issues

We now have two back issues - I seem to be reprinting short runs every few weeks, and they seem to be popular. Hopefully, they're good enough not to become too anachronistic! The price for each back issue is £1.65 - plus the appropriate postage if you're ordering from outside the U.K.

Briefly, the contents of the first two issues have included: -

Issue 1 Kevin McClure on Possession and Exorcism - Michael Goss on Spirit Guides - Hilary Evans on the causes of the UFO experience - Satanic Child Abuse - End Times Bulletin - The Kansas City Prophets - UFO Abductions - Extensive Journal Abstracts and Contact Information.

Issue 2 The State of Modern Spiritualism - Andy Roberts with Subterranean Homesick Greys - are aliens alive and well, and living in the U.S.A.? - Jenny Randles on the power, and politics, behind Crop Circles - the extreme religious press considered in Cross Talk - When I'm Calling Cthulhu - End Times Bulletin: Alien Contact or Armageddon? - Extensive Journal Abstracts and Contact Information.

I also have just a dozen or so copies of the account that Sue and I wrote in 1980 of the Egryn Lights - the extraordinary paranormal phenomena that occurred during the Welsh religious revival of 1904-05. Centred round the area between Barmouth and Harlech, and including some remarkable, moving, apparently responsive lights for which there is no readily credible explanation (earthlights included), Stars and Rumours of Stars has been widely used and praised since it was first published. Only £2 a copy, plus foreign postage as appropriate.