

Magonia 37

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On a summer's day in the steel city of Sheffield, two cultures clashed, two visions were displayed. Bud Hopkins confronted his British critics

PETER ROGERSON

In this issue:

**Peter Rogerson
on allegations of
the death of
ufology;**

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ufology;**

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on the drama of
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**and extended
reviews of major
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BUD Hopkins is a persuasive speaker, with a kindly manner. If he had followed his friend Ted Bloecher into the acting profession, he would be well-cast as the wise, empathic school principal with infinite faith in the possibilities of his problem class. Yet this gentle, slightly greying, gentleman was recounting material out of the worst of horror stories.

In two one-hour presentations he told of aliens who could enter our houses through closed doors, steal us away through solid walls, take children for unspecified purposes including playing strange games with 'grey' children. These aliens abuse us, mark and scar our bodies and souls, they place implants in our noses (1), and turn us into laboratory animals. A vast variety of fears and phobias are generated by our contacts with them. Narratives of abuse by the grey aliens fade into stories of sexual abuse, like the woman who had a phobia about sleeping in her bed, or into ghost stories like that of the teenage abductee whose parents heard a typical poltergeist racket in their house.

Hopkins offers no meaning or explanation of this, only a belief in their utterly alien 'otherness'. Because it is absurd, it is true. There is no point in arguing about the claims which, taken to their natural limit,

would imply that 'they' could enchant the whole world. Indeed, for just one person to be taken from a city in broad daylight, as Hopkins has claimed, would virtually *require* the enchantment of the whole world. Nor does he offer any explanation as to why supertechnological aliens still leave bleeding wounds on their victims, because his answer is always the same and echoes the medieval theologians: "Strange indeed are the ways of the Greys"

If one consults Hopkins books (2) very little narrative in these stories, rather there are flashes of shattering images. These images come across in the slides Hopkins shows depicting the Greys. The skinny figures with huge staring eyes raise memories of the starving children from Oxfam posters, or even of scrawny, oily birds taken from a dying Alaskan sea.

As we hear Hopkins ascribe all the phobias in the world to the Greys, we begin to understand a little of what is going on: he is giving a name and a face to all our nameless, faceless fears. This surely is the point, for the great abduction fear is part and parcel of a set of fears. It just cannot be separated from other fears which emerged at the same time, especially the ritual abuse fears. They

1. Apparently two implants have been recovered already. One came out when the abductee sneezed. The other worked its way out through the skin - they are like little metal coils.

2. HOPKINS, Budd. *Intruders*. Sphere, 1988. (in U.K.)

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3. WALTERS, Ed and Frances. *UFOs; the Gulf Breeze Sightings*. Bantam, 1990.

both derive their power from the central fear of the absolute collapse of order and habitat, and the abuse of the helpless, secret victim.

Hopkins compares the 'Secret of the Abductions' to the 'Secret of the Holocaust as that which is too bad to be comprehended. Some writers see this as a glib statement and thus a blasphemy. maybe, but perhaps we can see it as the only means of struggling to explain the sense of 'the worst thing there is'. Likewise the prophets of the child-abuse legends also see themselves as the prophets of 'Bad News', the limits of human depravity.

So Hopkins proclaims himself as the prophet of the 'Bad News', of human helplessness before a terrible transcendence. Prophet of a world in which the sacred can only be experienced as rape: encounter with the numinous is never seen as a transformation but as a trauma.

If we ask ourselves what it is that can snatch us from the midst of our friends, at any time, through the most solid walls, while others stand

some of the audience at his presentations suggests otherwise. It is the possibility that the Greys are part of *us* that we do not want to hear. If all our troubles are caused by 'them', then we are not responsible. Many people *want* to be helpless victims, for thus they are not the authors of their savage fate (how long before abuse by aliens becomes a standard defence in criminal trials?). Greys thus substitute for less omnipotent scapegoats such as bad parents or 'society'.

British examples of abductions as featured in this conference were not very impressive. Elsie Oakenden's story seemed to me to be a fairly straightforward account of a very severe migraine attack, rather distorted by her absorption of many of the attitudes and beliefs of the ufologists who investigated her story. But there is no drama, no medical examination, no Greys, but a transformation of energies, albeit into highly stereotyped forms.

The other alleged British abduction discussed at the conference was that of the percipient in the Ilkley 'alien photograph' case, who has now resolved contradictions in his original account by becoming an abductee. In a sense, Peter Hough's problems over this case parallel John Spencer's over Gulf Breeze. How does one reconcile a charismatic, apparently believable witness who produces hopelessly unsatisfactory physical evidence. The Ilkley entity is clearly modelled on the Hopkinsville goblins, and all commonsense tells us that UFO entities aren't photographable. The Gulf Breeze photographs (now endorsed by Hopkins, Mr Ed being an abductee) strike me as being in the running for the least convincing UFO photographs of all time prize. I simply cannot imagine how any intelligent adult can be taken in by them - but then I also fail to understand how intelligent adults can be impressed by Eva C's 'Le Miroir' ectoplasmic photographs. My New Age awareness is seriously impaired. In any case, Gulf Breeze has become a tourist resort on a scale which Warminster would envy, with convoys of Greyhound buses conveying eager sightseers to local UFO haunts. (3)

Though Hopkins claims to believe in the literal authenticity of his stories, and denounces those unwilling to accept the physical reality of the Greys and their medical examinations, one curious comment throws a different light on the matter. He claimed that investigators in one case were stalled because the abductees family could not come up with the \$750 required for the brain-scan needed to detect an implant. Several people talking afterwards thought this very strange. Surely an organisation capable of throwing away (oops, I'm sorry, sagaciously and wisely investing) \$16,000 on Stanton Friedman's MJ12 nonsense (sorry, important contribution to investigative journalism) could invest \$750 for what might be the ultimate physical evidence of UFO reality! Or does the wallet inhabit a more down-to-earth reality where we all know people don't have alien implants? Perhaps cash encourages the recognition that the reality behind alien abductions may not be traceable by microscopes and cat-scans.

helplessly by, the answer is most surely, Death. That the fairies were equivalent to the dead was an important strand in the old tradition. See the clues in the new fairy faith: the starved, skeletal entities, with their grey, putty-like skin, their aversion to light and day. They are often described as curiously weak and vulnerable, as being light, hollow, unreal. their home is a barren wasteland. These are the ghostly, drifting dead of Hades or Sheol, who must snatch the living to steal their blood and sex and life. We can see also that their glacial indifference is a reflection of the soulless character of the fairies as creatures of 'wilderness' beyond the human domain.

Though Hopkins proclaims that people do not want to believe in his Bad News, the reactions of

Round Two - The Earth Strikes Back

From Sheffield one could detect the emerging consensus of British ufology. The UFOs are, in this Green decade, going to be ozone-friendly children of Mother Earth. This approach is perhaps best summed up by Paul Devereux (4), whose lecture consisted of a travelogue slide-show of the natural and man-made beauties of the countryside. Devereux offers, at times, the most radical alternative to Hopkins. A world where the human psyche has a symbiotic relationship with wild nature. The 'earthlight', though superficially a geophysical phenomenon, also signals from a depth where psyche and nature are not clearly separable, and which emerges through fault-lines which are not purely geological. Against Hopkins image of Victim, we have Devereux's of the potential Magus - bender of the elements. It was interesting to see what proportion of the audience found Devereux more threatening than Hopkins!

One can perhaps appreciate why Americans, inhabitants of a vast continent covering the ice wastes of Alaska, the heat of Death Valley, tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes and Mt. St. Helens, and heirs to an ideology grounded in the taming transformation of the hellish, primaeval wilderness into the paradisaical new World garden, might find earth mysteries ufology a little bit to twee, too *English*. They may find Jenny Randles alternative version of the earth phenomena more to their taste.

Jenny Randles has paralleled Devereux with the development of ideas about unidentified atmospheric phenomena which may resonate with the human psyche, but her UAPs have a distinctly wilder, more savage tone. They are nature in the raw, capable of bringing death and destruction in their wake. Devereux evokes gentler earth lights, Randles, wild fire.

In her lecture Randles predicted the 'death of ufology', by its absorption into meteorology. Based on the book *Crop Circles* (5) co-authored with Paul Fuller, she has followed Terence Meaden and his vortex theory to a general synthesis which explains almost all outstanding unexplained UFO reports. While the evidence that some of these cases are caused by a previously undescribed natural phenomenon is pretty persuasive, the attempt to link everything to one answer is less successful. Both talk and book procede in a traditional ufological manner: eye-witness cases, history, rubbishing the opposition, all in an anecdotal fashion. The trouble is that there is no limit being proposed to what a Meaden Vortex could or could not explain. What is lacking from Meaden is a clear mathematical model, with testable predictions.

If the editors of *Magonia* were the desperate cynics and destructive critics we are accused of being, then we would enthusiastically endorse all this as the death-blow to extraterrestrialism. *Crop Circles* is superficially convincing, especially in the event that Jacques Vallee unknowingly described vortex events in his *Confrontations* (6). Yet both John Rimmer and myself in the last few weeks have come up with what strikes us as the fatal flaw in Meaden's hypothesis. Rimmer covers this in his review of the Randles-Fuller book elsewhere in this *Magonia* but I also am convinced by the non-appearance of crop-circles around Warminster in the

period between 1965 and 1977. Shuttlewood was still writing in the late seventies. Why aren't his books full of stories, photographs and strange speculations on crop circles? And again, why didn't they come to light in 1963 when, in the wake of the Charlton Crater, and old hole in the ground or mark in a field was being dragged into the UFO myth? If Meaden is to be the undertaker, obituary notices for ufology are premature! Today Randles' vision is one in which psyche is withdrawn from nature, but earlier there were hints of the perils of such a lack of withdrawal. If psyche is not distinguished from a nature which is wild and capricious then we may have real 'Mind Monsters' (7).

As perhaps befits the topsy-turvy nature of ufological reality the grand summing up paper at Sheffield was delivered first. This was the talk based on the book *Phantoms of the Skies* (8) delivered by co-author Andy Roberts. This received a mixed response, as will the book when readers realise that

4. DEVEREUX, Paul. *Earthlights*. Tunstone, 1982. *Earth Lights Revelation*. Blandford, 1989.

5. RANGLES, Jenny and FULLER, Paul. *Crop Circles, a Mystery Solved*. Hale, 1990.

6. VALLEE, Jacques. *Confrontations*. Souvenir Press,



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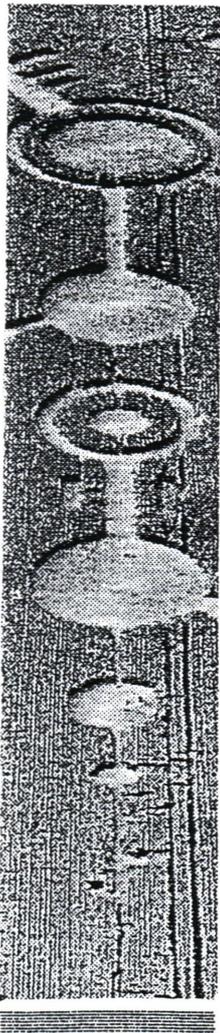
this is the book *Magonia* might have written a while ago. One veteran ufologist, a true ufological coelacanth, later overheard in a Manchester bookshop, spluttered "Arrogant young buggers, they're saying it's all in the mind!"

Not quite right. For Clarke and Roberts the numinous is located in both psyche and nature though perhaps in a slightly different way than posited by either Randles or Devereux, though Clarke can be as rhapsodical as Devereux in his evocation of the mystery of the countryside. However his greater emphasis lies in the mysteries of human perception, the unguessable depths of psyche and alternate states of consciousness. This is no more 'knocking copy' than *Magonia's* own enterprise; it is the statement that in looking to extraterrestrials as

7. RANGLES, Jenny. *Mind Monsters*. Aquarian, 1990.

8. CLARKE, Davis and ROBERTS, Andy. *Phantoms of the Sky*. Hale, 1990

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your source for awe and wonder, you are looking in quite the wrong direction.

Clarke and Roberts point out that abductions are part of a continuum of altered states of consciousness, that narratives of abduction, out of the body experiences, near death experience, and other such interior journeys, merge. Rather more controversially they suggest that such experiences are natural events that one should be allowed to have. The experience of many of Hopkins' subjects suggest that this could be like arguing that sexual abuse is a road to personal growth. It might well be that certain forms of altered states of consciousness should only be entered after careful training and much cultural and individual support. Our culture, as Bertrand Meheust has pointed out, has no training courses for shamans. Those who have shamanic experiences are likely at worse to develop severely psychotic responses and at best into non-consensual belief systems. These will appear to the outside community as slightly silly, with a stereotyped, information-free vocabulary.

The fairy realm which Clarke and Roberts remind us of is not the gentle place where Tinkerbell and the Cottingley Fairies live, but a zone of terror. Earlier I said that one could view fairies, both traditional and the contemporary Grey variety, as the dead. But the Greys are not quite the equivalent of traditional fairies. Indeed they can be polar opposites - coldly efficient, over cultured, over controlled, over adult. A sharp contrast with the uncultured, capricious, childish fairies of former times. Whereas in traditional society "loss of soul" was equal to a reversion to the animal, in our world "soullessness" means loss of any emotional response. In traditional iconography the most prominent features of a demon were the mouth and phallus. Not with the Greys, they have slits for mouths and no external sexual organs. They are perhaps not so much Death as a force of Anti-Life.



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But gentler, more tradition fairy motifs can be found, even in Hopkins' accounts. Take Virginia Horton, who encounters a deer which may be a fairy in disguise in an enchanted forest, and under hypnosis recalls an imperfectly modernised fairy-revel. 'In reality' we might suggest that the blood which covered her came from the deer, which was wounded: that she held and comforted a dying deer, that the fairy quality was either a denial of the brute facts of death and blood or a vision of transcendence - depending on one's own beliefs. Anyway, the story of Virginia and her deer is profoundly moving, and Hopkins' reduction of it to 'nothing but' a cover story for medical examination by Greys is a sign of the loss of soul in American ufology.

Remember, you read it here first . . . !

Clarke and Roberts speculate about the future directions of ufology. Could it develop an exorcistic cult, what are the limits of paranoia. John Spencer also speculates on a future religion. Some of my own suggestions are:

- ➔ A female abductee will sue the US government for the release of her hybrid baby held at a top secret establishment.
- ➔ A book will be published describing hypnotic regressions to abductions in past lives.
- ➔ A horrific crime will be committed inspired by the

abduction scenario - child murder, with or without suicide or political assassination.

- ➔ An abductee will form a cult on the Atherius/Raelian model.
- ➔ The crop circles will fade away without any conclusions being reached.
- ➔ A famous astronaut will announce he is a contactee.
- ➔ There will be a much more elaborate hoax, uniting physical evidence, photographic evidence and documents in a very sophisticated way, which will

take in a very wide range of opinion.

- ➔ Shirley Maclean will write a book about her abduction and sexual adventures on an alien planet.
- ➔ A major UFO wave with developments creating entirely new features will emerge in Eastern Europe. As an outcome a political movement with real strength will develop.
- ➔ Ufology, even though dead and buried, will come out of its grave at midnight and suck some blood!

AMERICA STRIKES BACK

Further Rumblings from Across the Atlantic

Thomas E. Bullard

LITTLE DID I IMAGINE that my 'American Way' article in *Magonia* 34 would provoke such an uprising of criticism as I find in *Magonia* 35. Peter Rogerson, Martin Kottmeyer, Hilary Evans and Dennis Stillings take aim at my article or other writings with lethal intent and often deadly effect. Surrounded from every side, like any good American I must circle the waggon and defend my scalp.

The apparent stability of abduction reports poses a genuine puzzle from my perspective as a folklorist. A fixed sequence and similar content recurred far more than chance would allow among 300 cases I examined in my comparative study of published reports. (1) Growing evidence suggests that abduction reports vary more than the received literature would suggest, and how far this trend will go is an important indicator to watch. Even allowing for as much increase in variety as I have seen, the stability of these narratives still exceeds all expectations for folklore obeying the familiar dynamics of oral literature. If these narratives are folklore in any usual sense, they manifest unique properties and stand apart as remarkably uncharacteristic.

The capacity of forms and contents to persist in tradition through time and distance is a defining characteristic of folklore. Similar jokes and legends turn up thousands of miles apart after passing among dozens of narrators along the way. Folktales like Cinderella recur in recognisable form all over Europe, and even the Zuni Indians tell a story about a poor but beautiful girl who acquires rich clothing through supernatural help, then loses her finery by violating a time limit. The cultural players change so that a friendly herd of turkeys replaces the fairy godmother, but the plot similarities are unmistakable. (2)

Larger patterns like the life of the hero shape the biographies of Moses and Jesus, the 'epic of defeat' pattern lends its form to accounts of such recent historical events as Custer's Last Stand. (3) A recognised collection of motifs drifts in and out of

folk narratives of all sorts: fictitious, told for true, even personal-experience stories. The types, themes, patterns and motifs of folk tradition become old friends to the folklorist. They peep out in different guises, adapted to their circumstances and times but always familiar; a timeless link uniting past and present in one unbroken tradition.

Stability is one hallmark of folklore, but variation is another. The mercurial alterations of folk narratives as told by the folk often slip out of mind even amongst folklorists who have often centred more on a dead, literary text than on living, functioning cultural products. (4) In scholars' schemes of classification folktales exist as ideal types, but in reality each tale is a unique creation, drawing on recurrent plots and motifs, but arranged in an idiosyncratic and creative way by each narrator. (5) Legend characteristics are looseness of form and content unified only by a core of belief. (6) Living folklore is always fluid, and few narrators serve as mere relay stations. Each teller adds, leaves out, or modifies some part of everything he tells. Every narrative we hear reflects a more or less lengthy history of the improvements, alterations, rearrangements and embellishments of many narrators. Stability does not mean that a complex narrative endures as a monolithic whole. The stability of living oral tradition is a far more modest concept, and amounts to two or more narratives sharing some elements of form and content. These shared elements may loom large in the sight of whoever recognises them, but differences often far outweigh similarities.

Too much emphasis on stability and too little on variation is a common misconception fostered by the traditions of folklore scholarship. Rogerson speaks of a set pattern for stories and songs enforced by a critical audience. This 'Law of Self-Correction' he alludes to is respectable folkloric theory, but limited in application. Self-correction depends on an unchanging society where everyone knows the tradition and prizes it for its aesthetic

1 BULLARD, Thomas E. *UFO Abductions: the measure of a mystery*. Fund for UFO Research, 1987.

2 THOMPSON, Stith. *Tales of the North American Indians*. Indiana University Press, 1968: 225-231.

3 DUNDES, Alan. 'The hero Pattern in the Life of Jesus' in DUNDES, *Interpreting Folklore*. Indiana University Press, 1980; ROSENBERG, Bruce A. *Custer and the Epic of Defeat*, Penna. State Univ. Press, 1974.

4 DORSON, Richard M. 'Folklore in the Modern World' in DORSON, ed., *Folklore in the Modern World*, Mouton, 1978; HUFFORD, David J. 'Traditions of disbelief', *New York Folklore* 8 (1982) 47-55.

5 DEGH, Linda. *Folklore and Society*. Indiana University Press, 1969.

6 DEGH, Linda. 'Processes of Legend Formation', *Laographia* 22 (1965):78

7 THOMPSON, Stith. *The Folktale*. Univ. of California Press, 1977.

8 DEGH, Linda, and Andrew VAZSONYI. 'The Crack on the Reg Goble: or Truth and the Modern Legend', in DORSON, Richard M. (ed.) *Folklore in the Modern World*.

9 DEGH, Linda, and Andrew VAZSONYI. 'The Memorata and the proto-Memorata'. *Journal of American Folklore*, (1974) 225-239.

10 For example: MULLEN, Patrick B. 'Modern Legend and Rumor Theory', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 9 (1972):95-109; KLINTBERG, Bengt. 'Modern Migratory Legends in Oral Tradition and Daily Papers' *Arv*, 37 (1981): 153-160; GRIDER, Sylvia. 'The Razor Blades in the Apple Syndrome', in SMITH, Paul (ed.) *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend*, Univ. of Sheffield, 1984.

11 BRUNVAND, Jan Harold. *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, Norton, 1981.

12 BENNETT, Gillian. *Traditions of Belief*, Penguin (NY), 1987.

value. Then the audience may correct deviations and guard the stability of the tradition, but such suppression of variation could work only locally, among groups that meet face to face. Each locality and group would differ slightly, with variation the outcome. (7)

Genres like the legend actually encourage disagreement (8). Studies of live legend-telling sessions have found that the lifeblood of these narratives is dispute, where people argue over facts and their interpretation. Consensus is foredoomed in such a situation, but the climate is ideal for variation in form and content to flourish. As a general principle in folklore it is safe to say that whatever can vary, will vary. It is even safe to say that what should not vary, probably will vary. Jokes have an exacting structure of set-up and punch line. They allow for little tampering if the humour is to succeed, yet we all know how often jokes fail. The variation may be accidental or deliberate, but it is a constant process in the narration of folklore.

Rogerson points out a false analogy when I compare long-traditional folklore with narratives spread for 20 years and largely via electronic or printed media. Folklorists have long treated the history of any tradition as a settling-down process. (9) The longer a narrative type has been around, the more it will demonstrate such classic properties of oral tradition as variation, widespread distribution and refinement of form and content so that the idiosyncratic disappears and general patterns come to the fore. Now we know that time is not the vital element. We have watched folklore in formation, seen it pass from oral tradition into the media and back out; followed the lightning spread of narratives and their equally rapid evolution from raw idea or vague rumour to polished joke or urban legend. (10) Good narrators may serve up a well-structured story from the start. 20 years may be 19 years and 12 months longer than a narrative needs to become fully 'folklorized'. The dynamics of folklore apply to the new and the vintage alike. Media involvement has proved only another 'voice' in the process of oral transmission, a way to speed up folk processes (including variation) rather than an agent of homogenization.

Another 'tradition of scholarship', to use David Hufford's term, can explain the apparent information poverty of abduction reports noted by Stillings. He finds ordinary conversation to be information-rich whereas myth and folklore say little about contemporary human life. The folklore he is most likely referring to is the folklore presented by folklorists. They have traditionally denatured their texts, rewritten them to purge the unique or topical and emphasise those universal but faceless elements the folklorist thinks should be there. This correction process has drained the cultural life out

of countless published collections. Living folklore pulses with the currents of contemporary existence. Urban legends of poodles that explode when placed in a microwave to dry, express fear of technology, accounts of earthworms in hamburgers express uncertainties about the trustworthiness of business and the safety of food. (11) Jokes are immediately topical, drawing on politics, fads and mores for humour. The hopes, fears, values of narrators are embodied in their folklore. So sensitive is folklore to its cultural milieu that collectors usually meet with disappointment when they return to an area after a period of years. (12) If abductions lack a personal touch, this condition is atypical of folklore, and the reason must be sought in abductees, their experiences or the presentation of their narratives.

Scholarly tradition emphasises stability over variation in folklore when in fact variation constantly revolves the order of any narrative type. The same should be true of abductions if they are folklore. These narratives are long and complex, fantastic in context, controversial in nature, and the personal claims of individual abductees. If any kind of story should generate a luxuriant profusion of variants, this is it. What we find instead is a surprisingly unchanging narrative type. Folklore should not behave this way. My critics propose two reasons to account for this stability.

Both Rogerson and Stillings raise an important question of how selective the published sample of abduction reports may be. If the authors

have selected, rewritten and homogenised these themes, we readers may read a story much less varied than the abductees actually told. I confess that the same question bothered me. I also admit that I am in a poor position to give a judicious answer. My comparative study treats published sources, so its reliability depends on their representativeness and accuracy. The only response I can offer comes from an account of the investigators of 103 high-information, high reliability cases. I found that 17 cases included Leo Sprinkle in the investigation, 10 Budd Hopkins, 9 Ray Fowler, 5 James Harder and 5 Ann Druffel. Two teams or individual investigators dealt with 3 entries each, another seven with 2 each, and the remaining 37 cases came from individuals or groups independent of investigators in any other entry. Six investigators are associated with 46 cases, nearly half the total, though few cases represent solo effort.

Looking at the numbers another way, the investigators differ in 51 cases. That's quite a few hands to dabble in the pot and still serve up a consistent story. Critics may argue that investigators, hypnotists, writers, editors, and anyone else in the chain from report to publication



Thomas E. Bullard

have helped impose conformity on these texts, and they may be right. The fact is that no investigator records slavish duplicate abductions. Sprinkle finds 'nice guy' aliens and also the torturers of the Casey County case: Hopkins has cruel aliens but also the friendly beings who met Virginia Horton. And so it goes - the skeleton remains the same but the flesh differs somewhat from case to case. My bottom line of doubt remains that that any group of even fifty or so individuals could maintain the coherence of such a complex narrative as the abduction story without careful and deliberate collusion.

The mystery of abductions from a folklorist's standpoint is still the dozens of reports, alike in sequence and details. Rogerson counters that contactee yarns from the 1950's had similarities and accounts of witches sabbats included a wealth of similar details. True up to a point, but contactee stories were highly individualistic despite some efforts by the principles to support one another's tales. Witches sabbats scatter considerably in events and details, despite investigators' manuals and singularly persuasive ways of leading the witness! No, the stability of abduction reports has a qualitative peculiarity. If they are fictions or fantasies the glue holding them together is an unusual one. No matter how unrepresentative the sample of reports called abductions proves to be relative to all UFO close encounters, this subgroup stands by itself as large enough and self-coherent enough to challenge conventional interpretation.

The second explanation for stability in abduction reports appears in Kottmeyer's article, certainly one of the most effective and devastating critiques ever offered against the abduction phenomenon. He says that the reports assume the sequence they do because this sequence is the right way to tell a story. The episodes in abduction reports and narratives from many other cultural contexts align according to a dramatic structure because this order best realises the emotional potential of the story elements. When the episodes are properly played against one another for contrast and suspense, the arrangement optimizes the impact of the whole.

Kottmeyer's insights converge on folklorists' thinking about form in urban legends (13), which manifest a cunning organisation based on dramatic structure and the withholding of key information to build suspense and spring a surprise at the end. These tales circulate in sloppy and well-structured versions, with some narrators able to pick up the bare elements and recast them into a good form, with an unconscious intuition for what makes a 'good story'. But the same research that confirms Kottmeyer's general principle also underscores the

peculiarity of abduction reports. Just because people know how to tell a good story does not mean that they exercise their skills often or well. An examination of the variants of urban legends shows that these narratives are highly volatile, subject to frequent change and likely to fall short of their aesthetic potentials. Narrators scramble the parts, ruin the form, and settle for inartistic presentations as a matter of course. Drama remains a goal only sometimes achieved in everyday practice. In this light the stability of abductions once again rises to anomaly status, since we should expect more stories told the wrong way than we actually see.

He also assumes, and rashly I think, that everyone assigns the same emotional values to the various episodes. Even given the same elements, two story-tellers may focus on different parts as

the most important or emotion packed. One narrators climax becomes another's footnote. The idea that there is only one good way to tell a story harks back to the perception of tradition as a prison, whereas folklorists have come to regard tradition as a framework conducive to creativity. Not every creative choice is as easy or necessarily as effective as another, but good narrators make the differences work. If abductions are fictitious, narrators have different options to explore, arrangements to try and ways to dramatize them all.

Kottmeyer limits his explanations to the overall sequence of episodes, when in fact the sequencing of events within episodes complicates the abduction story even more. the 'capture' episode and especially

the actual procurement of a captive by the beings, follows a lengthy itinerary. So does the examination episode. here too we find remarkable stability, despite so many added opportunities for variation. With so much variety among much shorter urban legends, the relative invariance of long, loose abduction narratives comes as all the greater surprise.

The bulk of Kottmeyer's article goes to uncovering parallels between science fiction and abductions. Legitimate extraterrestrials should be independent of culture and mark a discontinuity with the past. Culturally derived stories of aliens should have cultural antecedents. In support of this principle he demonstrates with ample evidence that abduction ideas are nothing new under the sun, but are represented with considerable fidelity in the SF movies and literature to which many people have been exposed. Themes of reproductive concern and dying planets, practices like though removal and medical examination, descriptive details such as large crania and short stature have ready examples in the movies. The comparison requires no

Witches sabbats scatter considerably in events and details, despite investigators' manuals and singularly persuasive ways of leading the witness!

13 BARNES, Daniel R. 'Interpreting Urban Legends', *Arv* 40 (1984):67-78; NICOLAISEN, W F H, 'The Linguistic Structure of Legends, in BENNETT, Gillian, *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend*, v.2. Sheffield Academic Press, 1987.

14 HONKO, Lauri, 'Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1965): 5-19.

15 HUFFORD, David J. *The Terror that Comes in the Night*, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.

gymnastics of the imagination. Some of the ideas are quite literally interchangeable from one medium to the other.

He details possible influences on the Hill case a greatest length, partially motivated by my claim that the Hill's underwent their abduction 'entirely unpredisposed'. What I intended to say was that their abduction story was new to the UFO literature, but Kottmeyer notes that Donald Keyhoe discussed short beings with kidnap on their minds in the very book Betty read shortly after the 'interrupted journey'. Moreover Keyhoe's assumption that aliens would



“The derivation of the needle in the navel incident strikes me as clever but unpersuasive”

visit on a scientific mission lent credibility to ideas like medical examination. While the synthesis of the abduction story may rest with the Hills, Kottmeyer makes clear beyond doubt that the pieces were already there for taking off the cultural shelf.

Not all of Kottmeyer's identifications are equally convincing. The derivation of the needle-in-the-navel incident from an image in *Invaders from Mars* strikes me as clever but unpersuasive. The *Invasion of the Saucer Men* aliens are short and big-headed, but the eyes, ears, mouth, veined cranium and general expression are all wrong. Such differences of opinion in no way detract from the overall case that abductions owe much to cultural influences.

One of the most powerful arguments involves the Kenneth Arnold sighting. Arnold described an odd form, half wedge, half disc, but it was the term 'flying saucer' that captivated the public imagination. People reported saucers - nice regular shapes which have so dominated reports that a concept of cultural origin seems certain to have determined the 1947 sightings. I do not intend to refute the cultural-influence explanation, since I

quite agree that this force is hard at work in the UFO phenomenon: Rogerson allows that abductions may have an experiential basis, though the experience is a consequence of cultural influences. This is the way folklorists have explained extra-normal encounters: traditional beliefs raise expectations, and expectation shapes ambiguous stimuli in its own image. (14) Certainly most UFO reports fall into this category.

My intention is rather to show that cultural influence may not be the whole story, whereas primary experience or a combination of experience and influence may provide a better explanation. Folklorists have begun to bend their rigid stance of the supposedly one-way relationship of cause and effect. David Hufford's research with 'Old Hag' traditions has established that sometimes experience comes first and tradition develops later as a human response to an experiential fact. This possibility is reasonable enough, but acceptance has come slowly. (15)

The prospect of facing an unusual and unfamiliar experience raises some interesting problems. How do you describe it? How do you understand it? The terms of description and conceptual structure of understanding are themselves traditions. We rely on past experiences to deal with the present, but old acquaintances break down before novelty. When nothing quite fits, we must turn to approximations and metaphors as ways to get a handle on the puzzle, however partial and slippery our grasp. Familiar terminology and classifications may not do the job, but rather than leave a phenomenon uncomprehended and ineffable, most of us opt for positive categories and communication with others even if our choices require a compromise of observational integrity.

Applying this principle to the 1947 saucers, Arnold believed that he saw experimental military aircraft and could describe what he thought they looked like without firm cultural obligations. Those who followed were not so lucky. For them the 'flying saucer' image set a powerful precedent. A desire to conform, eagerness to join the excitement, and the pressure of expectation influenced many people to convert vague stimuli into flying discs. What if someone saw something that was not a disc? The same pressure would come to bear on him, driving him to simplify his observation towards the 'norm', perhaps even to recast his memories in the orthodox mould. Where a stubborn individual might resist, the media would soon round off the edges of his report for him, and he would go on record as seeing a saucer in spite of himself. The fact is, we do not know for certain the proportion of saucer shapes to Arnoldesque shapes amongst 1947 reports. Ted Bloecher's admirable study lists shapes only according to general category, so the finer points get lost. Newspaper writers mediated in most of the reports he cites, and the noise-to-signal ratio necessarily runs high among these accounts, even if a real signal exists. Given these handicaps and the consequent shortcomings of evidence, and firm conclusion that the 1947 wave is all cultural noise amounts to a leap of faith instead of a logical step.

Abductions pose a far more formidable challenge to the witness. The event is more complex,

far stranger, personally threatening and viewed in a state of mental impairment according to most reports. An abductee would hardly return fluent in the language of the unknown. He would stumble to describe it and lean on every verbal or visual crutch. Even Barney Hill's alien with wraparound eyes need not wholly be a product of influence. If John Fuller conveys a faithful summary of the Hill's conscious memories, then we know that the eyes troubled Barney before hypnosis and before the *Outer Limits* episode was aired. Is it so strange that he would grope for a handy visual simile, and grasp one from a recent TV show? I doubt it. Most of us do the same all the time, enriching our stock of expressions and humour with borrowings from the media. Even if his description bent towards the image of the television alien, this fact does not negate the reality of his basic observation. Television seems not to have planted a preoccupation with strange eyes in his mind. Experience seems to have taken the lead in that.

An argument along these lines may explain why no paediatrician known to Stillings has reported abductions, a puzzling situation if they are as common as ufologists claim. A child could not identify an abduction by name or describe unfamiliar sights in precise terms, and a paediatrician might not be familiar with the abduction phenomenon, or sensitive enough to connect it with a child's clumsy approximations even if aware. A paediatrician used to hearing the whimsical yarns of children might dismiss abduction evidence without ever recognising it. Paediatricians conform to their professional traditions as well as anyone else.

If proponents of cultural influence accept that it equips the imagination to counterfeit an entire experience, they can also allow it a more limited role as modifier of real experience. An overlay of terminology or conceptual filter based on prior knowledge would channel the report to the realm of the familiar. The influence argument cuts both ways, influence based fantasy or influence-modified experience could both account for abduction reports, and such an argument loses its edge.

Kottmeyer attempts to resolve the issue with an appeal to simplicity: is there anything in the abduction story without an antecedent in science-fiction? I would have to give a negative answer. Even if modified reality could account for the culturally derived patterns and content in reports, simplicity throws the decision to a subjective origin.

This line of reasoning is formally correct, but I distrust it because the critics have a vast reservoir of parallels from which to draw. Science fiction has generated so many images that some of them are bound to match up with abductions. In fact why limit

the search to science fiction? the pool of influence grows into an ocean if we include every possible cultural source, since we can find strange, penetrating eyes among fairies, or demons that torture with sharp pointed objects in the popular vision of hell. The hunt for parallels is a search that never fails. Folklorists have overindulged from time to time, especially in the heyday of solar mythology. One caution against setting too much store in parallels came when a folklorist applied the hero pattern to the life of Abraham Lincoln, and found that Lincoln promptly dissolved into myth. (The American educational system has since achieved similar results using ignorance as the solvent.) The moral (in both cases) is that too much laxity of application may look proper enough, but still leads to false results.

Stillings denounces me for such concretist

statements as "fairies do not fly in spaceships or use eye-like scanning devices." Even valid parallels do not duplicate one another exactly, so he rightly notes that I overstate the case. the point I wished to make nevertheless deserves repeating - with the terms of comparison abstracted enough, anything can look like something else. Abstraction only exacerbates a situation where many analogues are available. For comparisons to be truly persuasive they must relate homologues rather than analogues. Homologues are likenesses based on deep genetic relationships and not mere surface appearances. Establishing homologies represents no easy task but for a start the confidence in a comparison rises when the terms are specific, complex

The power of science-fiction ideas should destabilise abduction reports, or else cultural influences are not so influential after all.

patterns match, and near-parity of elements prevails (that is, most elements correspond and few are left over). A genuine case of cultural influence may not fulfil these stringent criteria, but they set a worth standard for evidence. It should be clear that an argument founded on stray resemblances and abstracted patterns falls well short of this goal.

The wonder then is not that every element of the abductions story has its antecedents, but that the story-tellers use so few of the available possibilities. Science fiction aliens come in all shapes and sizes, science fiction storylines diversify well beyond any single plot. Even if the Hill report has become the guiding light for abductees, they have gone through life exposed to other ideas that would play well within an abduction framework. If the Hill's vivid fantasy was born out of science fiction influences and little else, surely these same images have power enough to break the stranglehold of this story and stimulate other narrators to a little creative adventurousness now and then. The power of science-fiction ideas should destabilise abduction reports, or else cultural influences are not

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not so influential after all.

Stillings claims that Americans start with ETH beliefs and dismiss without due consideration all explanations based on psychology, cultural influence or hypnotic confabulation. This statement stings my pride, since I thought I had given some consideration to just these issues. My comparative study of reports explored the folkloric affinities of abductions and my investigation of hypnosis inquired into its potential as a solution. (16) In both cases I examined a great deal of evidence, and in both cases I found the subjective answers wanting. Nor do I mean to hog all the credit. Elizabeth Slater's evaluation of abductees, June Parnell's tests of close-encounter experiencers, and Rima Laibow's studies of post-traumatic stress disorder have set the psychological study of abductees on a sound evidential footing. At the heart of the matter, American investigators have worked closely with abductees, a great many abductees, probing their stories in depth and following up on life changes and consequences.

Rogerson raises the psychological issue by citing Charles Hickson's emergence as a contactee, and sees here an example of reality at odds with the image of normalcy promoted by ufologists. What we can say about abductee psychology is the Keul and Phillips have found evidence for mental disturbance and social dissatisfaction among close-encounter claimants. Slater found no psychopathology among the nine abductees she studied, rather a set of characteristics that could mean either fantasy-prone personalities or traumatic victimisation. Parnell found no evidence for psychopathology or above-average capacity for imagination among close-encounter witnesses, while abductees proved to be among the least imaginative subjects in her sample. (17) The picture remains vague and inconclusive. With such evidence, is American reluctance to jump upon a psychological bandwagon surprising?

The Hickson example resurrects the problem of what is cause, what is effect in the abduction phenomenon. The possibilities that certain psychological manifestations are consequences of an experience deserves more serious consideration than my critics appear to have given. An individual with the right psychological predispositions might report contact with aliens and later undergo profound life changes akin to religious conversion, all as part of his psychological makeup. Yet it is no less reasonable to believe that an unprejudiced individual might change in drastic ways as a result of a real and deeply disturbing experience. John Rimmer's editorial mentions Laibow's finding that abductees report a high incidence of childhood sexual abuse. Before jumping to any conclusion that abductions serve as screen memories for actual abuse, another clue should be noted: Abduction memories do not relate to abuse memories in the right way for a screen, since the abuse memories screen the abduction. (18) So which is cause and which is effect? Such evidence by no means proves aliens, but it means that the problem is more convoluted than psychological proponents have acknowledged.

One criticism levelled by Stillings is

undeniable: ETH supporters can rationalise anything with their theory. It is flexible enough to accommodate all sorts of phenomena, and difficult to falsify. Anyone who has taken abductions seriously and found psycho-social reductions unsatisfying must trouble over this difficulty in the ETH position.

At the same time psycho-social advocates set their house in little better order. I agree with Evans that European ufological investigations have been both extensive in effort and excellent in quality. I apologise for giving the inadvertent impression that I considered them anything less. However I still find the present psycho-social theories as much a Procrustean Bed as Stillings regards the efforts as American ufologists.

We can thank the psycho-social school for a surfeit of explanations, few of them developed beyond the stage of vague suggestiveness. I found that reports obtained by hypnosis similar to reports remembered spontaneously and concluded that hypnosis played little part in shaping the abduction story. Stillings questions this conclusion on the grounds that hypnotic and other altered states can occur without formal induction. He is right, but sceptics (and Stillings himself in the same article) usually advocate a facilitative and not a causal role for hypnosis in abduction making. Hypnosis enhances susceptibility to influence so a subject readily follows the lead of the hypnotist. When a hypnotist is a believer he may confabulate and abduction with the subject. Consistencies in the reports then trace to hypnotists who want to hear the same abduction story and pass their expectations along to a receptive subject. This argument suffers if people tell a similar story without benefit of leadership, which happens in the case of spontaneous recall.

If Stillings wishes highway hypnosis or some other altered-consciousness condition to account for abductions, he has an established natural phenomenon on his side, but he must still explain how natural hypnosis produces a story like other abduction stories. If a hypnotist who leads a witness is all important in one explanation, where is the leader in the other? Though one solution goes down in flames, plenty more wait in the wings. Perhaps the witness is a fantasy-prone or boundary-deficit type? If I point out that these people should tell the most varied stories instead of the most stable my opponents have fresh arguments: perhaps an over-zealous, Svengali-like investigator or a well-intentioned but fatal bias in establishing the sample of cases. Perhaps the answer lies not with research errors but with life conditions or mental states that predispose the witnesses, or the blame may lie with TV, movies, SF images; when hard pressed electro-magnetic fields from seismic events may come to the rescue.

This leaves an impression of ad hoc arguments addressed to one or another aspect of the phenomenon rather than to the whole problem. Each explanation may succeed in one area but fail in another. Too many explanations undercut the credibility of any one, and only Kottmeyer states his case in depth. Psycho-social proponents seem to take their answers too much for granted and with

few exceptions fail to nurture an embryonic case to full term.

In the end abductions present a sort of orthoteny in reverse. This time we have the straight-line of consistent story given to us, and seek the points on which it rests. The field is crowded with possible alternatives; explanations pile layers deep. Somehow the line stays true. What makes the situation so striking is itself a psycho-social argument. The knowledge that comes from folklore research and demonstrates the likelihood of variation. Whether folklore sprouts from the deep psyche or takes root in cultural influences, the resulting narratives blossom with creativity and individuality within traditional frames. Personal experience accounts bear a richness of personal idiosyncrasies. Abduction reports simply mismatch other folklore in these significant respects.

I sympathise with Evans when he says that an ETH explanation for abductions is riddled with contradictions and simply does not work. Michael Swords makes a thoroughly compelling case against hybridisation, and no-one has yet solved the problem of how aliens in vast numbers can cross light years of space to reach earth then find nothing better to

do than repeat the same old lab exercises. (19) If I truly believed that aliens could seize me I would spend my life in the company of a hundred other people, all armed to the teeth and ready to demonstrate to any short grey house-guests that happiness is a warm AK-47. I do not, therefore deep down I do not believe. A literal reading of abductions clashes with common-sense and learned good sense alike, but that reason in itself gives me licence to question but not to close my eyes. The evidence as I see it shows me a puzzle that I cannot solve with reference to conventional phenomena known to me, nor have the alternatives offered by psycho-social advocates proved adequate to the task. On the other hand a literal reading best fits the story line. I may not believe that abductions are real experiences, but we have no better answer for now.

After all, I was under the impression that proper young Victorians discovered ladies' legs by experience, perhaps for a monetary consideration or otherwise, but without the need for an intermediary. In Europe as in America, experience is the best teacher.

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A Note on the Dramatic Structure of Fantastical Productions

Dennis Stillings

IF UFOLOGY WERE a mainstream discipline, Martin Kottmeyer's devastating criticism of certain claims made by Budd Hopkins and Eddie Bullard would mean that erroneous assertions would die and rise no more. ('Entirely Unprepared', *Magonia* 35, January, 1990) Unfortunately experience tells us that almost any ufological claim will find its adherents, and like the Undead of the horror films, these claims will periodically emerge from their mouldy tombs and walk the earth again. The proper stake to be driven through the heart of the deathless abduction nonsense has yet to be found.

But I digress ... What I would like to draw attention to are the claims made by Bullard about the structure of abduction narratives. Martin Kottmeyer has discussed the dramatic elements in ufological accounts at

length in an earlier *Magonia* essay (1) and now draws critical attention to these elements again in 'Entirely Unprepared'. Kottmeyer presents Bullard's structure of the abduction narrative as (1) capture, (2) examination, (3) conference, (4) tour, (5) otherworldly journey, (6) theophany, (7) return, and (8) aftermath. (2) As Bullard and Kottmeyer point out, all these elements do not necessarily appear in every narrative nor do they always appear in just this order. In fact a narrative containing the complete sequence of events is relatively rare, departures from this order, however, are also scarce. I will not quibble with Bullard's structural analysis. It seems accurate.

But Bullard's claim that the consistency of the structure is indicative of real experience (3) is - as Kottmeyer illustrates - unfounded. By way of the 1930 comic strip story 'Tiger

Men of Mars', Kottmeyer shows that such structure can appear spontaneously, and more or less completely, in an imaginative work. He emphasises the story's structural impressiveness by claiming that "only one abduction in the UFO literature has a greater number of these elements in the correct order". He also points out that these elements are the constituents of basic dramatic structure and demonstrates this by substituting for Bullard's sequence the more conventional terms: (1) character introduced, (2) peril and conflict, (3) examination and insight, (4) good will and attempt to impress, (5) excitement, (6) climax, (7) closure, and (8) sequel. (4) Readers will recognise in this the substance of soap operas and other popular dramas - -tThe sort of plot-and-action sequence that is ingrained in our minds. The nature of the structure may

not be only an artifact of our culture, but also archetypal. In the Jungian literature on dream analysis, emphasis is placed on the storylike structure of the narratives: (1) the *exposition*, which includes a statement of place, the presentation of the dramatis personae, the initial situation, and, often, a statement of time; (2) the *development*, which contains the basic action sequence; (3) the *peripeteia*, in which a decisive change occurs, either positive or negative; and (4) the *lysis*, the solution or outcome. (5) The dream, according to Jung "is like a short drama" (6) and its dramatic structure is comparable to that of the classical Greek play, (7) Greek mystery dramas, dramatic presentations of primitives, the structure of religious ritual (8) and of the oracular method of reading the I Ching (9) and - I suspect - of the form of fairytales and folklore. The dream, again according to Jung, "is a drama

taking place on one's own interior stage, where the dreamer is the actors, the libretto, the theatre and the public rolled into one. (10) As with the structure of abduction narratives devised by Bullard and translated into more familiar terms by Kottmeyer, the dream elements are not always in the same order, nor are all the elements always present - but in the vast majority of cases they are. Perhaps the elements of the Bullard and Kottmeyer schemas make it appear that the abduction narratives are less consistent than in fact they are; the apparent missing elements and changes in order are, rather, artifacts of the complexity of these schemas, that obscure the essentially archetypal structure underneath.

Let us set these three shemata side by side (below): as can be seen, the structure outlined in dream analysis is much more basic and subsumes several

of the 'stages' outlined by Bullard and Kottmeyer. Since this is intended to be a note I will not elaborate further. At the very minimum, the ubiquity of these collective dramatic elements undermines any assertion that mere structural consistency can be taken as evidence of the occurrence of a real event. Beyond that, one may suspect that consistency of structure, in conjunction with the clearly mythological content of the abduction narratives, indicates that we are dealing with the emergence of imaginative dramatisations of those collective and individual stresses and conflicts we experience. This raises a whole new set of questions, questions that can be addressed in a meaningful way with the tools at our disposal. It is past time that we move on to sensible and traditional methods, rightly applied, for understanding how and why these fantastical narratives are produced.

DREAM STRUCTURE	BULLARD	KOTTMAYER
Exposition	(exposition sketchy at best in Bullard's scheme, perhaps 'capture' could be included here)	Character introduced
Development	Capture Examination Conference Tour	Peril and conflict Explanation and insight Goodwill and attempt to impress
Peripetia	Otherworldly journey Theophany	Excitement Climax
Lysis (denouement)	Return Aftermath	Closure Sequel

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BOOK REVIEWS

RANDES, Jenny, and FULLER, Paul. *Crop Circles; a mystery solved*. Hale, 1990. £13.95.

The Cereologist; the Journal for crop Circle Studies. Editor John Michell. £7.50 p.a. (3 issues) from 11 Powis Gardens, London, W11 1JG.

'A mystery solved', now there's a hostage to fortune! The mystery in Randles and Fuller's book is explained, as readers of their earlier BUFORA booklet will anticipate, in terms of the 'Meaden Vortex'. For a full explanation of this it is best to read Meaden's own book (see review in *Magnia* no. XX), and the authors do not go into the science of the vortex in great detail. Instead they concentrate on the investigation of the corn circles, and spend some time examining alternative theories, and are often scathing about other investigators who they believe have made sensational claims about the phenomenon. They also spend a great deal of time relating the Vortex Theory to ufology - the reverse attitude to some other circle researchers, and more particularly the media, who have attempted to explain the circles in terms of UFO landing traces or similar. Randles and Fuller also examine the geographical and temporal spread of the circle phenomena in an attempt to challenge what they see as the myth that it has suddenly appeared in a small area of Britain just over the past ten years or so.

In brief they conclude that it's all over but the shouting. The Meaden Vortex explains most of the circle phenomenon, although the picture has been made more complicated in recent years by the increasing number of hoax

circles - often artistic 'improvements' to naturally produced circles. But not only has the circle phenomenon been solved, so has most of the UFO mystery, for it seems that the versatile Meaden Vortex has also been the *fons et origina* of most UFO reports, from LITs, up to and including abductions.

Now I'm not one who's going to knock any reasonably scientific theory that explains UFO reports in terms of terrestrial phenomena, but this sort of approach is going to cut no ice at all with *The Cereologist*, a handsomely produced periodical which seems dedicated to maintaining the mystery of the circles. In fact an article by Patrick Harpur puts forward a convincing case that the whole point of the circles is to be mysterious - how they may be produced is probably irrelevant: "Crop circles are not problems to be solved but mysteries to be entered... the language appropriate to them is the language of myth..." Just like Magonian UFOs in fact!

Harpur sees the circles as an expression of the 'Soul of the World' manifested through the trickster Mercurius. He comments: "It may not matter if the hoax is perpetrated directly by Mercurius or through the agency of human hoaxers".

So what is the evidence that Mercurius may have been given a little help along the way by one or two more

solid trickster figures?

Corn circles are probably the first significant anomalous phenomena which exists solely as physical evidence; whereas UFOs exist primarily as verbal reports and the physical evidence is sparse and vague. Randles and Fuller do indeed examine witness reports, but I fear that they do not subject them to the same degree of critical analysis that they would give to UFO reports. Many of the reports of pre-1979 circles are so vague it is impossible to determine whether they are the 'classic' clear-cut circle, or the roughly circular 'saucer-ness' type of phenomenon that actually looks as though it could be caused by some weather anomaly. They give us reports of whirlwinds, possibly with ionisation effects, lifting straw and small objects, but without leaving the distinctive marks. Some of these accounts, particularly those which attempt to place early corn circles outside of southern England, are second hand, and would not be accepted by the authors as evidence of, say, a UFO landing.

There is however one important lacunae in the circle reports, and it is curious that the authors have not commented on it, since at one point they quote Arthur Shuttlewood's description of a grass-flattening phenomenon.. Put simply: if corn circles were being created in anything like their present number and appearance for more than ten years we would know of it because of Warminster. From the mid-sixties to the late seventies Warminster was crawling

with ufologists of every hue (including members of your editorial team), everything unusual that happened in that area was immediately incorporated into the Warminster canon. Not a sparrow could fall from the sky (literally!) without it being written up by Arthur Shuttlewood or one of the many other writers and magazine editors devoted to recording the mysteries of this small town. Yet in the many books about Warminster, the dozens of magazines, the

hundreds of articles, the thousands of eyewitnesses, how many corn circles do we get? One. And a pretty vague one at that. In *Crop Circles*, the authors claim that Cley Hill, just outside Warminster, is a centre for circle phenomena, and



they suggest that it is because the geographical layout makes it a suitable site for the formation of Meaden Vortices. Not in the sixties it wasn't. At the height of the Warminster flap, Cley Hill, and most other hills in the neighbourhood, hosted skywatches practically every day and night throughout the peak summer circle-season. We had lights in the sky, lights on the ground, lights in every bizarre formation you could imagine, strange noises, mysterious smells, Men in Black, Men in Telephone Boxes... you name it, Warminster had it. But not crop circles!

I think Patrick Harpur gets to the heart of the mystery. What we have here is the work of Mercurius, but Mercurius is working through the agency of a host

of human hoaxers. I'm not talking about a carefully planned and executed hoax. I think we have a hundred different hoaxers who have become possessed by the spirit of the circles, and are performing the work of Mercurius unknown to each other and unknown to us. There must be an immense satisfaction in creating a circle, looking secretly upon their handiwork and leaving it for the rest of us to discover. I would certainly like to create one. For one thing is obvious about the circles: they are beautiful; they are Art.

I suggested a while ago that they might be the work of a group of art students creating pieces of conceptual landscape art. I think this could still be the case for many of the earlier circles, they could even be, as Randles and Fuller

suggest, artistic 'improvements' of naturally created circles, although I feel that the Warminster Non-Effect argues against even less-regular 'natural' circles.

There is, as I have suggested before, a spectrum in the creation of mysterious events, from clear fiction to unequivocal fact. Between those two there is a vague land where fact becomes hoax, hoax becomes art, art becomes fiction. The circles I feel, move uncertainly between hoax and art. They are the latest manifestation of the great English love of landscape art. The circle makers are the Capability Browns of our time!

John Rimmer

Victims without a crime?

COLLINS, Tony. *Open Verdict*. Sphere, 1990. £4.99

In 1986 several newspapers devoted space to the curious but apparently unconnected suicides of Asian scientists working on government research projects for Marconi A third Asian whose name was mentioned in these stories turned up alive a few months later). The story grew from there to reports of a whole series of strange deaths connected with the defence industry which, like the 1920's 'Curse of the Pharaoh' and the apparent mysterious deaths of persons connected with the Kennedy assassination, caught the public imagination. In FSR Gordon Creighton made these events the theme of one of his many bursts of unspecific paranoia directed against either demonic elementals or Soviet agents (as usual it was not clear which from the context). *Quest*, the YUFOS magazine, maintaining its curious balancing act between belief in dark official wrongdoing, and a belief that any UFO sighting by a member of the police or armed forces is unassailable, also weighed in with an article.

This book performs a useful task in setting out what is known about twenty-five alleged mysterious defence industry deaths, although the information is presented in a disorganised way and the book is poorly indexed. Even so, the affair ultimately defies analysis, since for every claim made a counter-claim can be presented. In view of the number of people involved in the same type of work as the deceased, are the percentage of

suicides above the average rate for the population as a whole? No they are not, but a high proportion of suicides are unemployed or suffering from incurable diseases, which is not the case with the suicides discussed here. On the other hand, might not work on secret contracts that one cannot discuss with friends or family and mean ones private life may be under surveillance, bring its own pressures (some of which may be glimpsed in the accounts contained in this book)? Some people concerned seem to have committed suicide in very bizarre ways, but would not a sinister group faking suicides try to make them as mundane as possible? Or perhaps the unusual nature of these deaths might be conveying a warning to those in the know?

Ultimately one must fall back on whether individual cases, however many or few, seem to offer proof of sinister activity. A large number of cases in this book involving suicides who left notes or killed themselves in locked rooms can rationally be ruled out immediately. Some cases remain which seem curious but the evidence is extremely inconclusive, and in various cases the author seems to be determined to find sinister explanations. Even in the case of Avtar Singh Gita who turned up in Paris after a mysterious disappearance Collins is suspicious of the fact that the police knew where he was some time before the information became public. The fact is that in Britain it is not a criminal offence to go off somewhere without telling anyone, and it is not the job of the police to broadcast the whereabouts of anybody who does so.

Roger Sandell

In several cases it is stated that friends or relatives knew of no reason why those concerned would have committed suicide, but surely problems that drive people to suicide are often precisely those they feel unable to share with others. In some cases the authorities seem to have been grudging with information but this is hardly surprising in any matter relating to people with security jobs. In some cases apparently curious remarks attributed to the police may simply have been the result of the fact that police representatives, when confronted with unlikely hypotheses by journalists frequently give non-committal replies which are then taken as endorsements of these hypotheses. A phenomenon not unknown in the UFO world as well!

In spite of all this, the book takes a generally reasonable approach until the final chapter which is devoted to the claims of one Joe Vallis, described as an engineer, involving highly unlikely claims of secret mind-control technology, whereby victims can be induced to commit suicide. One wonders if this chapter was included as a result of a demand from the publishers to come up with some definite conclusion.

There is plenty of scope for investigative journalism in contemporary Britain and plenty of pressure on those few engaging in it to keep quiet. However investigative journalists should (like UFO researchers) remember that the sum of many zeroes is still zero; and as Auberon Waugh has observed, know the difference between cans of worms, mares nests, and loads of old cobblers.

WALTERS, Ed and Frances. *The Gulf Breeze Sightings*. William Morrow, 1990. \$21.95

COOPER, Joe. *The Case of the Cottingley Fairies*. Hale, 1990. £11.95

I suppose just putting these two titles together in one review will already have some of our American readers foaming at the mouth, but the comparisons are obvious. In each case a pair of witnesses, both closely linked (husband and wife; cousins and close friends) report a series of strange encounters and back up their stories with a collection of remarkable photographs. Both sets of photographs are, in the view of critics, 'too good to be true' and have the 'look' of obvious fakes. If asked to define this 'look', your critical observer would say that the photographs look just a little too much like what we think fairies or UFOs *should* look like according to contemporary cultural predispositions. Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths's fairies look like well-brought-up young ladies of 1917 off to a fancy-dress party in Kensington Gardens, rather than the rougher, more rustic type of entity of folklore. The Walters's UFOs conform to the elaborate, light-bedecked chandelier format established by Spielberg, rather than the vague light-form of less fashionable close encounter cases.

Now this doesn't necessarily mean that either set is a hoax. Indeed, in the present climate of ufological terrorism we'd better not say that *anything* looks like a hoax unless, as in the case of the two Yorkshire ladies, our percipients are safely dead. But perhaps a close study of the events in Cottingley in 1917, and the way they were subsequently treated, might shed some light on present day happenings in Gulf Breeze (and perhaps elsewhere in the ufological firmament). There are many curious parallels

After their initial promotion by specialist groups - be it MUFON or the Theosophical Society - both sets of photographs received immediate derision from those not directly connected with them. Equally, they both found distinguished champions, Walt Andrus for Gulf Breeze and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for Cottingley, who have produced much the same arguments in defence of the photos they promoted. The witnesses are honest and sincere people who have nothing to gain (and much to lose) from such a hoax, we are told, and the photographs are of such a nature that they could not be faked by the witnesses with the means at their disposal.

Well, we can see now from Joe Cooper's admirably honest book what one might make of the first argument. Elsie and Frances were delightful children and



"LIKE WELL BROUGHT UP YOUNG LADIES ON THEIR WAY TO A FANCY DRESS PARTY AT KENSINGTON GARDENS"

charming and intelligent elderly ladies who lived fulfilling lives and held responsible jobs. They certainly gained nothing financially from their plot. There is nothing to suggest that in any other aspect of their life, other than the production of a series of fake photographs in their teen years, they ever did anything in any way reprehensible. So do we have to assume that a hoaxer has to *gain* anything from their trickery? Well there is one important gain - the gaining of power over those who take their hoax seriously, and indeed power over those who dismiss it seriously enough to get very hot under the collar about it.

Some critical commentators on the Cottingley affair have tended to over-emphasise the supposed isolation and naivety of the two children. In fact Cooper's book demonstrates that far from being an isolated community, Cottingley was, and is, virtually a suburb of the City of Bradford. At the time of the fairies it held the distinction of being the largest village in England, boasting its own imposing Town Hall, and was just a tram-ride away from the centre of Bradford. Nevertheless, it must have been quite exciting for the two children to receive such visitors as the creator of the world's most famous fictional detective, and luminaries of the Theosophical Society (of which, incidentally, Elsie's mother was already a member!). As well as being almost an

integral part of Theosophical belief, Cooper shows that the idea of fairies was taken far more seriously at the time of Cottingley than we might now realise.

I suppose a wealthy Florida property developer would be less interested in receiving illustrious visitors if, and I repeat *if*, he chose to hoax a series of UFO photographs. Certainly people who have met Ed Walters, including the hard to impress Jim Moseley of *Saucer Smear*, have been impressed by his down-to-earth, non-nonsense attitudes (attitudes which in England are supposed to be very characteristic of Yorkshire-folk). It's perhaps rather harder to claim that Ed 'had nothing to gain' from such a putative hoax, as this book has just netted him a sum not unadjacent to \$300,000 in advances, and there is the inevitable talk of a TV mini-series. Defenders of the Gulf Breeze photos tend at this point to move on to the technicalities of their production, claiming that they demonstrate characteristics which indicate they could not have been faked by the means Ed has at his disposal.

I have no idea what technical resources may be at the disposal of a wealthy Florida property developer, but we do know what our resourceful Yorkshire lasses had at their disposal: a pair of scissors, a hatpin, a copy of *The Princess Mary Gift Book* and a Midg glass-plate camera. With these they produced a series of photographs which led

investigators, including photographic experts, to pronounce confidently their genuineness. Certainly, the photographic technology which captured the Gulf Breeze UFO on film does not seem to be very advanced, a system for taking 'stereo' pictures seems to consist of a couple of cameras lashed to a Heath Robinson (Rube Goldberg for our American readers) construction of wooden laths. It is also worthy of note that the highly structured craft of the early photos suddenly switch to far vaguer images once a system is introduced which would allow accurate determination of their distance from the camera - a point which seemed to baffle Walt Andrus on his visit to the BUFORA International Conference a year or so back.

An interesting red-herring seems to have been introduced to Gulf Breeze after publication of this book. Apparently a cardboard model similar to the images on Ed Walter's photographs has been found hidden in the loft of his former house (he has moved since the sightings) and I have heard a number of



ED AND FRANCES WALTERS

explanations to account for this: 1, It is the model Ed used to fake his photos; 2, It is a model hidden in the loft by sceptics after Ed moved to discredit his photos; 3, It is a model which Ed himself hid in the loft so that it would be found later than shown to be subtly different from the photos, so as to discredit the sceptics. Clearly we are going to get nowhere fast like this, so lets forget the model!

Joe Cooper's book is a fascinating account of a very simple hoax which fooled a great many people (including, he is honest enough to admit, himself) for a long time, and which appears to have been done for no other reason than for fun. Mr Ed's book is a comprehensive account of a series of UFO sightings (culminating in an abduction) written, first hand, by the percipients. This in itself makes it unusual and worth reading. The books have many points in common. I can only recommend that you read both of them - Walters first, then Cooper - and, as they say in all the best non-committal book reviews, you must make up your own mind.
John Rimmer

STILLINGS, Dennis (Editor). *Cyberbiological Studies of the Imaginal Component in the UFO Contact Experience*. Archaeus, 1989.

Anthologies are a reviewers nightmare; one is so tempted to run through the contents item by item and take up a massive amount of space, or sweep them up in a few sentences. This anthology, containing material dating over the best part of a decade is no easier to sum up.

Despite the horrendous title there is much of interest here. However the 'new age' physics which some of the authors resort to, and which once seemed so significant, now just seems very dated, the scientific equivalent of flared loons.

None of this in Hilary Evans's opening piece which seeks to explain how intelligent people can take such - to outsiders - absurdities as Bien Boa or Gulf Breeze, as genuine paranormal phenomena. He describes an escalation of suspension of disbelief, a process not unknown in politics and religion. This may well be related to the escalation of paranoid thought described by Martin Kottmeyer. This does not mean that we should accept his psychoanalytical interpretation of paranoia, which more neurologically biased psychologists have related to partial failure of the brain's information processing and ranking system. The paranoid tends to find the

trivial of equal significance to the ordinary. This theory holds that the delusional system which results is an attempt to rationalise this sense of universal significance. This interpretation gels nicely with the radical misperception involved in many UFO experiences. Explaining the stimulus (a distant aircraft or star, for instance) as a 'UFO' also explains its increased personal significance. Paranoid thought processes involving conspiracy may also have a reassurance value, in that they suggest *something* is in control, and ordering the chaos of our existence.

Also in sceptical/psychological vein are pieces by Alvin Lawson on the birth trauma, and Michael Persinger on temporal lobe epilepsy. Lawson's study probably does not advance us much beyond the position in *Magonia* 10, though providing ammunition for anti-abortionists. Persinger's findings, if replicated, may be significant, as they correspond nicely with some remarks by Jenny Randles on the abductees she has studied, and which I commented on in my last *Magonia* article. Editor Stillings' papers are always interesting and in his review of reactions to Jung's *Flying saucers* he neatly shows how Jung's subtleties were lost on nuts-and-bolts ufologists, who were desperate to have a Big Name on their side!

No doubt it is Stillings' comments

on the Cash-Landrum case or Tony Nugent's comments on Pascagoula which evoke the horrified cries of 'literary criticism' from those who fail to perceive that so-called UFO cases are just that - narratives, as subject to literary conventions as *The Tempest* or *The Wasteland*. Nugent's perception that the Pascagoula object is seen as a great fish rather than a spaceship has been missed by other, more engineering-minded, ufologists. Both Nugent and Stillings would love the story of the British abductees who was on TV with Hilary Evans and Tim Good a while back, who saw a fiery object like a phantom ship all ablaze, and whose chief sequela were, by her own narration, barrenness ("all my eggs were taken away"), and a series of episodes in which her workplace name-badge became red hot and her name disappeared from it. The connections between barrenness, heat and fire do not have to be spelled out.

The contributions of Carl Raschke, Peter Rojcewicz and Michael Grosso are the ones where the shadow of 'New Age' and Big Sur hang heavy. Rojcewicz starts with a nice folkloric account of the UFO experience, which seem to indicate someone with a realisation that modern ufology is part of the old fairylore and who appreciates the concept of experiential folklore. But he just has to make the old ritual obeisance towards new age and alternate realities.

HYMAN, Ray. *The Elusive Quarry*; a scientific appraisal of psychical research. Prometheus, 1989. £18.50.
BLACKMORE, Susan. *The Adventures of a Parapsychologist*. Prometheus, 1986. £16.00

The Elusive Quarry is not a specially written book, but an anthology of Hyman's articles and book reviews over the past thirty years. These illustrate his basically sceptical approach to parapsychology, and the topics discussed include the Ganzfeld experiments, dowsing, remote viewing, cold reading, the general history of experimental parapsychology, and the nature of pathological science.

He concludes that while he still has no idea whether psi phenomena exist or not, he has become even more sceptical since his study of the Ganzfeld experiments. Until then he had defended the experimental rigor of the best parapsychological experiments; now he feels that they are much more flawed than most parapsychologists realise.

It is a great pity that this volume has been so poorly edited, with no index, and no attempt to edit out the large number of repetitions, often of the same anecdotes or even the same phrases. A real book by the author would be most welcome.

Susan Blackmore's book will be of interest to *Allegria* readers as it chronicles the author's involvement and gradual disillusionment with parapsychology, in many ways paralleling the intellectual odyssey of European ufology, though one suspects with rather more excitement! Blackmore can never track down the elusive psi: her experiments always give chance results, and other people's experiments turn out to have flaws in them. This results in her being deemed a "negative personality" and being banned from a couple of well publicised parapsychological laboratories for asking too many awkward questions - something which will be familiar to ufologists.

There is a nice little spontaneous case. Ian Mrzyglod

(whatever happened to him, by the way?) asked her to check on a family who experienced poltergeist effects after a UFO experience. their TV kept changing channels and a clock jumped about on the mantelpiece. She discovered that the TV effects were caused by the dog's collar reacting with the remote control, and the clock's problems were caused by a faulty spring, leading our heroine to be lectured by the clocksmith on how all good Christians should avoid poltergeists and keep their clocks clean! In other hands, how easily this would have become a spectacular UFO/psychic interaction. How many other of our favorite tales have similar prosaic explanations?

There are some nice pen-portraits, too, of psychic researchers. Dr Dingwall still abusing the SPR and neighbours alike at nearly 100, while the tale of an SPR grand-dame and a certain parapsychological establishment is worthy of being in a sitcom.

Peter Rogerson

➡➡ Michael Grosso writes like an abductee himself, for he echoes the sense of powerlessness and desperate hope against hope of the revivalist through the ages. In the closing words of his chapter he almost collapses into terminal apocalypticophobia. He is wrong of course. While conditions are bad now, they are *much* better than say 150 years ago when there was a huge infant mortality rate, cholera and syphilis ravaged the towns, chimneys poured out lethal mixtures and famine ravaged Africa, but without TV to cover it. It is irrational belief in the unique dreadfulness of our age which helps generate the helplessness of the abduction experience.

A word should be given to the illustrations in this book, which show UFO style imagery in a variety of paintings. I was struck by Ciurlionis's *The Thought* (1904) which shows a hemisphere with two powerful beams of light coming from beneath it.

I can recommend this collection to all who like Jungian and literary approaches to the subject, and advise believers in Gulf Breeze and MJ12 to stay well away.

Peter Rogerson

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ASHPOLE, Edward. *The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence*. London, Blandford Press, 1990. £6.95

Before committing resources to searching for evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence, many scientists would ask: Is it worth searching for? It seems fashionable to argue these days that life on Earth is a special case, a result of a unique set of circumstances, unlikely to be repeated elsewhere in the universe. Ashpole repeats the assertion that if the Earth were just a little nearer the sun it would have suffered a runaway greenhouse effect, like Venus, where the surface is hot enough to melt lead, or be a frozen desert, like Mars. However, the question is not a simple one of solar energy and planetary orbits. Astronomers generally agree that the sun was considerably cooler a few billion years ago, when life first evolved on Earth. Yet the Earth was obviously not frozen then. Pictures from Mars indicate that at some time in the distant past (when the sun was cooler) water flowed on its surface. Yet it has obviously got colder, rather than warmer. Also, Venus actually absorbs less energy from the sun than does the Earth, as the

Venusian clouds reflect most of it back into space. Ashpole does discuss the models on which modern theories of the evolution of the terrestrial planets are based, but the problem is that they tend to say what presumably happened in the past, based on very little direct evidence of actual conditions. The available evidence does indicate, though, as Ashpole states, that planets on which advanced life-forms can evolve must be rather rare, and thus likely to be located at very great distances from us, in time as well as in space.

There is an interesting discussion of the techniques used to detect possible intelligent radio signals, which would be improved if more details had been given. Searching for such signals is obviously very tedious, but the process is becoming increasingly automated, so that observers are alerted only when unusual signals are received and recorded by the apparatus.

In discussing 'ancient astronaut' theories, Ashpole points to the unlikelihood that aliens would have visited Earth only in the last few thousand years when they could have done so at any time in the past few billion.

This sort of argument does not impress me. Either we have or have not been visited. The main argument against such visitations is the lack of any reliable evidence of them.

In order to evaluate the possibility of extraterrestrials travelling to Earth, we have to consider the possibilities in terms of what seems plausible in the light of our present scientific and technological achievements. In order to do this, Ashpole postulates that there may be 'ceiling' on our possible progress, so that we now know nearly all there is to know about such matters. This may seem like the attitude held by many 19th century scientists, who were quickly proved to have been mistaken, but if we assume there are no limits to progress in this sphere, then we must assume that extraterrestrials would employ methods completely beyond our powers of imagination. Even when discussions of interstellar travel are based on known technological possibilities, discussions of their practicality cause much heated argument.

Recommended for those unfamiliar with this topic.

John Harney

ROGO, D Scott. *Beyond Reality: The role unseen dimensions play in our lives*. Wellingborough, The Aquarian Press, 1990. £6.99

An impressive title at first glance, but what does it mean? I think it should be considered for the Most Meaningless Book Title Award, together with one published some years ago (not by Scott Rogo) entitled *The Unknown - is it nearer?*

The first chapter is devoted to the problem of those personal or household objects which suddenly dematerialise just when you need them. Scott Rogo suffered the problem of disappearing sheets, among other things. I can easily believe him. Some time ago I threw away a large bagful of socks, because they were all odd ones. What happened to the other ones I have no idea. Perhaps I could write an article for *Magnum* about it. (No - Ed.)

A section of the book is devoted to discussion of alleged religious miracles, in particular the apparitions of the Virgin Mary reported from Medjugorje in Yugoslavia. The religious approach to such events is to regard them as potential sources of spiritual benefits; the actual mechanisms - physical or psychological - involved in the production of the phenomena are not considered to be relevant. The scientific approach does not concern itself with the validity or otherwise of the theological or moral doctrines involved, but seeks to study the

phenomena in their social and political context. The purely scientific approach is not suitable for a popular book on the paranormal; the phenomena must be made to seem mysterious, but not mysterious in the religious sense of the word. Thus one of Rogo's comments on Medjugorje is: "The community's constant religious preoccupations probably produce some sort of interface between our world and this spiritual realm, the result being 'projections' into our world from this parallel dimension. While real in the sense that they physically exist to a limited degree, these projections, such as Marian figures, might best be pictured as cosmic puppets—puppets with strings pulled by the human race."

The main confusion here seems to be between physical reality and social reality. Rogo gives a good summary of the social background and how the events at Medjugorje fit into it. However, there is the problem that only the privileged few can actually see and hear the Virgin. This is presumably what he means by "...they physically exist to a limited degree." It is, so far as I am aware, a concept unknown to science and philosophy, probably because it doesn't actually mean anything. Note that Rogo also describes the "spiritual realm" as a "parallel dimension". He attempts to discuss this at the end of the book by reference to 'many worlds'

interpretations of quantum theory. However, none of these interpretations allow one world to interfere with another, and the others would be no more or less spiritual than this one.

John Harney

HARARY, Keith and WEINTRAB, Pamela. *Have an out-of-the-body experience in 30 days: The free flight program*. Wellingborough, The Aquarian Press, 1990. £3.99

Most books on out-of-the-body experiences (OBEs) advise readers who wish to try it for themselves to lie on a bed (alone) and clear their minds of all worldly distractions. This one details a series of 30 exercises which seem to get progressively more worldly and physical. You will need a jacuzzi and also a "partner", especially when you get to Day 21 "Erotic Variations", which will involve you in making the difficult choice between "chocolate sauce or warm orange marmalade or steak juice". If you don't already know what you are expected to do with these ingredients then you probably won't want to. Anyway you can skip some of the exercises, or adapt them to suit your tastes, especially if you are physically disabled, i.e. not having a jacuzzi or suitable "partner".

John Harney

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Nigel Watson, 52A Lascotts Road, Wood Green, London, N22 4JN, England.

HOLD THE BACK PAGE

Miscellaneous ramblings from the ufological fringe

Even stranger things are happening in Gulf Breeze than Mr Ed's photographs and the mysterious affair of the cardboard UFOs. In July many newspapers carried a story about a group of six soldiers working at a US Army Intelligence Post in Germany, who left their post to travel to Gulf Breeze. According to the man who sold them the van they were travelling in, they were going to Pensacola Beach to be ready for the Rapture - the belief of many fundamentalists that born-again Christians will be bodily removed from Earth to heaven seven years before the end of the world. The soldiers, four men and a woman, were arrested by Gulf Breeze police after a routine road check because the van's tail-lights were'n't working. The initial newspaper reports said that the four men were arrested at the home of a friend of one of the soldiers in Gulf Breeze.

An Army statement at first claimed that the soldiers were members of a group known as 'The End of the World', basing the statement on notes and doodles found in the room of one of the soldiers in Augsburg. However, this statement was later withdrawn, the army spokesman claiming "There is no group as far as we can tell".

Apart from the location, the ufological connection to this story seemed thin until the arrival of the latest issue of Jim Moseley's *Saucer Smear*. The 'friend of one of the soldiers' referred to in the newspaper stories is a certain Anna Foster, a psychic who worked in a New Age shop in Gulf Breeze, and according to Moseley is known to have attended the recent MUFON conference in neighbouring Pensacola. Moseley also notes a rumour that Foster was once a baby-sitter for UFO photographer Ed Walters' children, but he denies this.

Something called the 'Cooper Papers' was apparently mentioned in police question of the soldiers, which is another of the many odd documents circulating in the States alleging Government involvement with secret alien bases, etc., etc.

The story is getting very complex, involving channelled messages, hunts for the Anti-Christ in Northern

Florida (Walters has expressed his fears that some nuts might think this means him. In gun-toting Florida this is something to be worried about). There are also rumours of Government cover-ups (of course) and allegations of someone blackmailing the US Government to release the soldiers, by threatening to release top-secret UFO photos. Strangely, the soldiers were released and all charges dropped, whereupon three of them returned to Gulf Breeze rather than their homes. They deny all interest in the Rapture and the Anti-Christ, saying they were just visiting a friend, presumably the Anna Foster, who, Moseley reports, is saying nothing about the matter on instructions from her lawyer.

Clearly, this one will run and run!

Because our lead article forms an extended Northern Echoes piece, we've not been able to use one of our famous candid photos of Peter Rogerson, the Man of a Thousand Faces. However, make sure you have a complete set of the published photos, and cut out'n'keep future pics for our exciting "Win an Abduction" competition. Watch this space.

It looks like other people are coming to the same conclusion as your Editor, that corn circles are part of some vast artistic project. This cartoon comes from *Design Week*, 3rd August, 1990.

As Mike Wooton comments in *BUFORA's UFO Times*, the corn circles are a magnificent piece of marketing, and there are some great graphics there too. I think I'm beginning to see a Neville Brody influence!

