

# MAGONIA<sup>161A</sup>



INTERPRETING CONTEMPORARY VISION AND BELIEF

£1.25 / NOVEMBER 1997

**MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
(AIR)**

THIS IS A PROHIBITED PLACE WITHIN  
THE MEANING OF THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACTS  
UNAUTHORISED PERSONS ENTERING THE  
AREA MAY BE ARRESTED AND PROSECUTED

**JENNY RANGLES REVISITS RENDLESHAM  
DAVID SIVIER STIRS UP A STORM IN A CRASHED CUP  
SPYS AND MYSTICS IN THE EARLY DAYS OF UFOLOGY**

**REMEMBERING ROGER: MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION**



**MAGONIA 61**  
**(Incorporating MUFOB 110)**

**NOVEMBER 1997**

**EDITOR**  
**JOHN RIMMER**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
John Harney

REVIEWS EDITOR  
Peter Rogerson

CORRESPONDING EDITORS  
Nigel Watson  
Michael Goss

WWW EDITOR  
Mark Pilkington  
e-mail: [markp@syzygy.co.uk](mailto:markp@syzygy.co.uk)

SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS  
*Magonia is available by exchange with other magazines or by subscription at the following rates:*  
UK, £5.00  
Europe, £6.00  
USA, \$13.00  
Elsewhere: £6.75

*US subscriptions must be paid in dollar bills. We are unable to accept cheques drawn on American banks. We accept French banknotes at the rate of FF10 to £1.00*

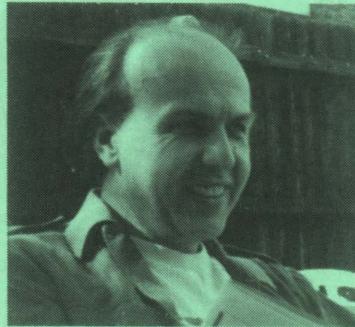
*Cheques and money orders should be made payable to 'John Rimmer' NOT 'Magonia'*

*All correspondence, subscriptions and exchange magazines should be sent to the Editor:*

John Rimmer  
John Dee Cottage  
5 James Terrace  
Mortlake Churchyard  
London, SW14 8HB  
United Kingdom  
e-mail: [johnr@magonia.demon.co.uk](mailto:johnr@magonia.demon.co.uk)  
<http://www.magonia.demon.co.uk>

*c Magonia 1997  
Copyright in signed articles remains with the author*

## Interpreting contemporary vision and belief



# THE ROGER SANDELL MEMORIAL COMPETITION

**£ 100 prize**

Entries are invited for an essay competition in memory of Roger Sandell on a theme which can be seen as "interpreting contemporary vision and belief", and which reflects the contributions Roger Sandell has made to this magazine. Some suggested topics are: contemporary beliefs about Satanism and their social effects, fringe political influences in ufology, moral panics and the news media, the historical context of contemporary beliefs, and the treatment of anomalous experiences or phenomena by researchers. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, and entrants are invited to contact the Editor to discuss if a proposed topic would be suitable.

### **RULES:**

1. Entry is open to any reader, except those listed as editors of Magonia in this issue. There is no entrance fee.
2. Each entry must be the original and unpublished work of the entrant and must not be submitted elsewhere for award or publication before 30st April 1998.
3. Entries must be between 4,000 and 5,000 words, not including notes and references, but entrant's must avoid lengthy footnotes. Entries must be typed, double-spaced on one side of A4 paper, with a sheet giving the title, and the entrant's name and address. Entries must be posted to John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB, United Kingdom, in time to be received by the closing date of 31st March 1998. Entries sent on disk, by fax or e-mail are not acceptable.
4. Entries will be judged by John Rimmer, John Harney and Kevin McClure, and the winner will receive a prize of £100. No correspondence will be entered into. The judges reserve the right to withhold the prize if they consider that no entry reaches a sufficiently high standard.
5. The winning entry will be published in a forthcoming issue of Magonia. The Editors may wish to publish other entries by agreement with the authors.

First came across a young American called Larry Warren in the spring of 1983. He was 21 going on 22, living in New England and had just given a statement to authors Larry Fawcett and Barry Greenwood for their forthcoming book about American government UFO documents. This was to be published in 1984 as *Clear Intent*.

Warren was alleging that he was an eyewitness to what are now the infamous Rendlesham Forest encounters from December 1980. He was ex-USAF then based in the UK and had chosen to speak out once back home. In 1983 this was major news, because he was the first military witness to publicly do so. Indeed the case was not yet widely known to the British public and virtually unknown in the USA.

The only published references had come from my stories in *Flying Saucer Review* and a more detailed summer 1982 set of articles in the part-work *The Unexplained*. This was based on little more than a set of anecdotes collected from villagers in Suffolk by local paranormal researcher Brenda Butler and her friend (and BUFORA member) Dot Street.

Pretty well all we knew for certain was that in the few days immediately after Christmas 1980 something strange had been seen in the East Anglian sky, cutting the coast near Lowestoft. Civilians had witnessed it. Watton had tracked it disappearing off screen into Rendlesham Forest as it went below radar coverage. Several locals had stories to tell of unusual military activity in the woods and of damage to the trees. However, the British government had constantly rejected all my efforts to get them to admit anything in writing between early 1981 and 1983. As a result much of the British UFO community thought Brenda, Dot and I were mad to keep pressing this case.

However, Brenda did have one USAF witness from the twin NATO air bases (Bentwaters and Woodbridge). He had befriended her and knew of her interest in the paranormal. On 6 January 1981 - only ten days or so after the events - he had confided in her about his alleged involvement in the amazing series of events that hid behind those tales of lights in the sky and holes in the forest.

This witness has always been a huge problem for me. To this day I have never met "Steve Roberts" -

# Getting it Right at East Gate

## Jenny Randles sets the record straight about the latest Rendlesham claims

as Brenda insisted we call him in our writings. He talked to Brenda but was reluctant to come forward afterwards, even though he was in Britain for several years. But there are some very interesting things about this mystery man's story. Roberts told Brenda what he did a full week before Charles Halt penned the now-famous memo to the British MoD about this case. He also gave the date of the first set of events in that conversation as the early hours of 26 December. This conflicted with all later testimony and I only myself became sure that the true date for the first sighting was indeed 26 December years later. One of the key witnesses (John Burroughs) assured me when we met in Arizona that this was the correct night and Halt simply got his report wrong because he filed it from memory some weeks later. So Steve Roberts initially fed Brenda the correct date - even though (intriguingly) he altered it to 27 December in later conversations.

According to Roberts he was one of a security patrol that went out into the forest in response to a UFO that had "crashed" there. Once in the woods he saw a landed craft

with strange little child-like beings suspended in beams of light. The overall wing commander - Brigadier General Gordon Williams - was out there in the woods and communicated with these beings using sign language as the USAF guarded the damaged craft. This was eventually repaired by the aliens and took off again.

Frankly absurd as this story sounds, it struck a chord with me. When Brenda told it to me she could not have known that it matched precisely the story told to the staff at RAF Watton on Monday 29 December 1980. This was when USAF intelligence officers had visited them. That visit was to take away for study the film of all their radar trackings for the preceding weekend. I still have my notes penned from my first conversation in late January 1981 with that operator at Watton.

The radar operator explained how the intelligence officers had described the UFO coming into the forest, the aliens, the contact with the base commander and other details that mirrored the story told to Brenda 8 days later and independently by Steve Roberts. But the American intel-

ligence guys also added various other things when talking to Watton. For instance, they told how a commanding officer was taken from a party on base and went into the woods to investigate. His equipment suffered electrical interference but he tape recorded live the encounter with UFOs. All of this evidence was only established as fact years later when Charles Halt became publicly associated with the case. In January 1981 it was as dubious as the aliens talking to Gordon Williams by sign language.

When Barry Greenwood first wrote to me in the spring of 1983 he sent me a copy of Larry Warren's statement. It was obvious that what Warren had to say was a close match to the stories fed to Brenda (via Steve Roberts) and to me (via Watton radar and USAF intelligence). Warren - to whom Greenwood and Fawcett were ascribing the pseudonym "Art Wallace" because of fears for his safety - had a more graphic account to relate and mentioned no aliens at first. But in essence his tale of the landed craft and the high number of military personnel was consistent. Indeed, not long afterwards Warren added the involvement of little aliens and of the presence of Gordon Williams standing by them. These further enhanced the strangeness of his tale, which included interrogation in some vast underground complex, sighting an "alien" behind some screen, being shown film of the USAF links with aliens and much more that turned his story into possibly the most incredible UFO tale ever placed on record.

From the late eighties onward there were stories that Warren was planning a book, but its publication kept getting postponed. It finally appeared in June 1997.

Since its publication I have been swamped by requests to comment on this 490-page epic - not only because of my long first-hand association with this case, but because it is generally less than favourably disposed towards my own involvement on the few occasions that it is discussed.

The only "rival" book that seems to exist in so far as Warren and Robbins are concerned is *Sky Crash* - which Brenda Butler, Dot Street and I published in 1984. That has been out of print for a decade so is hardly a threat. Although they express several derogatory remarks bordering on the libellous (even calling it Sky Trash at

one point!) there is a remarkable omission. In almost 500 pages there is not one reference by these authors to my own more recent book about this case - *From out of the Blue*. This is very odd. They certainly know about it, for it is listed by them in the bibliography (under an incorrect title!). This book was never published in the UK but is hardly unknown in the USA. It was reviewed in depth by the US UFO community and had two editions (a 1991 softback and a 1992 mass market paperback).

Whilst biased, of course, I have to say that I find it incredible that anybody could write such a huge text about this case and yet totally ignore the content of one of only two previous books penned about the matter. The total omission of any discussion of the second book (which I regard as far more accurate than *Sky Crash* for many reasons) is a serious indication of the shortcomings and bias of *Left at East Gate*.

Here I should add that I do have a third book about Rendlesham coming myself. This was written before I ever saw *Left at East Gate* (although I have added a few notes at page proof stage). My submitted title is *Friend or Foe?* - although I fear the publishers (Blandford) intend to give it a more zippy appellation (the rather dire *UFO Crash Landing*). This is due to appear in early 1998 and is an expression of all that I can offer on this case from my 17 years of study.

I was asked to write this new book. At first I said no, because I was aware of the coming of *Left at East Gate*. But I was persuaded that a book reviewing the wider range of evidence was needed and for a tiny sum spent a year putting it together. Having now read the book by Warren and Robbins I am very glad that I was talked into this. Whilst there are some things I may have said slightly differently if I had read that book first, there is much that needed to be reported about this case that simply is not in *Left at East Gate*.

Now that I have a very clear view of the case I can look back at *Sky Crash* in a new light. It is obvious to me that some of it went astray, but we did have quite a bit that was right in there as well. Unfortunately, I suspect we simply did not have the evidence from the key witnesses at that time because they were still in the military.

In fact it is a fascinating

exercise re-reading *Sky Crash* in the light of what we now know. One of the key witnesses - John Burroughs (the only man involved on both main nights) - told me in 1989 he had not read the book until then because another witness (I can guess who) told him it was "trash". When he did so he stayed up all night to finish it. He told me he was very surprised to find that the truth was in there mixed with bogus yarns that we had been told by "wannabees" off base who were not involved in the case but wished that they had been. Later Charles Halt told me something similar.

Placing Larry Warren's story into the right slot is far from easy. Is he a genuine witness to a peripheral event, one of these "wannabees" or someone exaggerating the truth or even making it up?

*From out of the Blue* is more accurate than *Sky Crash* because it was written later with the evidence of more witnesses. I have the chronology more correct in there (although I now know not exactly correct) and the general outline of the two main events is fairly set. But there is much that I now have in more detail and that is why *Friend or Foe?* puts the case into what I believe to be the true perspective. I leave open precisely how we should slot Warren's account into the story - largely because his tale does not well match the bulk of the evidence from all the other witnesses with whom I have spoken.

Whilst it would be impossible to briefly describe this huge case, here is a summary of what I believe to be the key features. These can then be compared with the story in Larry Warren's book and its readers can try (as I have had to try) to figure out where he fits in. The scenarios that follow are based on my conversations with about half a dozen key military and a similar number of key civilian witnesses. There were more people involved that I have not talked with, but my sources include two of the four USAF personnel who saw the UFO on night one, for example, and are, I believe, sufficient to be reasonably certain that I now have a picture very close to what took place.

From 9.08 p.m. on 25 December to 3 a.m. on 26 December 1980 numerous light phenomena appeared over East Anglia. All of these events are related in my view. There were various civilian witnesses. Between 2 and 3 a.m. the main military

encounter occurred outside Woodbridge. There were four military witnesses and I know the names of them all. Two of these four went into the forest and encountered a UFO just above the ground. I have spoken with them both. The UFO was tracked on radar by several sites and seen on departure. The men were disoriented and a search was mounted after radio contact was lost on base. There is a possibility of a time lapse. NO aliens were seen, but the UFO was extraordinary and distorted space and time as well as swamping the forest with an electrical field.

Early on 26 December the British police visited the traces found in the forest. Infra-red radiation was detected by an A-10 sent on an overflight. The official investigation began. There may have been sightings that night, but I have not talked to any witnesses (unless Warren is one).

On Saturday 27 December an officers' party at Woody's was interrupted by the return of the UFOs, as reported by night security chief Lt Bruce Englund. Colonel Halt was charged with the responsibility to go into the forest and sort things out because the commander (Ted Conrad) ordered him to do so. He took Englund, Greg Nevells (from the disaster preparedness team) and several others. John Burroughs - one of the two key witnesses from the first sighting - went out there too. He had haunted the woods all weekend convinced the UFO would return. Halt took light-alls and a tape recorder to gather notes more easily because it was windy. They took samples and photographs of the traces but the lights seen that night had now gone. UFOs returned at 1.48 a.m. and 90 minutes followed during which Halt and his team chased them through the forest. These included "laser beams" beamed towards the ground - including into the secured area on the base. Again no aliens were seen and no solid craft - just amazing light phenomena.

Where Warren was (along with the witnesses that he cites in his support) is not clear from any statements given to me by the witnesses that I have encountered. They all say he was not with them and some are doubtful he was out there at all. Halt, for instance, notes that Warren could not have been on duty after only three weeks on base because it was a NATO regulation that a six-week

training course be followed before this status was approved. Halt told me he has seen the records that confirm this, but Warren publishes contrary reports in his book which appear to refute Halt's claim. This is a huge impasse.

In *Left at East Gate* Warren quotes Halt as expressing doubts about his story. Halt has had similar things to say to me. He told me that before reading the book he knew Warren was not involved with him on the night of 27/28 December, nor on duty. But he gave him the benefit of the doubt and thought he might have been there on the less well known third night. However, after reading the book the Colonel says it is clear that Warren is alleging that he was there on the same night as Halt. This he struggles to accommodate.

I have preferred to build my outline of what occurred around the testimony of those witnesses who all tell me a consistent story. Halt says that this is his primary concern as well. He and these men know they saw fantastic things. It is hard enough living with that in the military and trying to be believed. Halt, Burroughs, Penniston (in my view the three crucial witnesses to this case) are all adamant that there were no aliens, that the craft was less solid than some media yarns profess and that Brigadier General Gordon Williams was definitely not there. "If he had been it would have changed everything," John Burroughs told me. Halt adds that he talked to Williams afterwards and he was as keen as anyone to discover what happened. He acted in no way like a witness. Halt knows this man was not anywhere near the base at the time, he argues.

*Left at East Gate* is a strange book. I can understand why people unfamiliar with the case will be awed by it, because Warren and Robbins tell a fantastic tale that is just what people want to hear. It is exactly what you would expect to be turned into a movie. But will this benefit ufology?

The big question is why the three initial sources of information - Steve Roberts, Watton radar and Larry Warren all provide the more fantastic version of events. My guess has always been that Roberts fed his line to a paranormal enthusiast hoping that a wild version of the truth would kill off any immediate serious attention from people who mattered. Ufologists are

## The real key to this story does indeed lie on Orford Ness, but not at the lighthouse

not people who matter since they are generally only listened to by other ufologists and tabloid newspapers. The staff at Watton would - in my estimation - never have been told about aliens communicating with a wing commander whilst repairing their craft if this had really happened. They had absolutely no need to know and the radar film could have been taken from them on any pretext. To be told this was to me a dead giveaway that this story was disinformation.

Of course, when Warren came forward the only military versions of the case on record (thanks to me!) were those from Roberts and Watton. Warren says he had not read them, but Barry Greenwood had. That's how he recognised Warren's story and why he wrote to me. You could - I guess - suggest that Warren saw the tales from Roberts and Watton and decided that his version would have to match them to be believed. He utterly refutes that and we must accept his word. But his account did match Roberts's account - an account that I now consider discredited. All the other versions I have heard since follow a different - less "extraterrestrial" - path. This leaves me with a real problem evaluating Warren's story today.

Whilst I must judge the conflicting claims of Warren and the others without knowing who is right and who is wrong, that is not the case with some other aspects of *Left at East Gate*. For there are things in there which I can definitely refute from my first-hand perspective.

For example, he makes the fantastic allegation (p. 128) that "two of the Sky Crash authors were affiliated with Britain's anti-nuclear movement". This ties in with his disbelief at our idea that the story about aliens might be disinformation to hide an accident with a nuclear weapon. Later the authors add (p. 217) "Randles chose to state and reiterate this theory and I could only speculate as to why".

The clear impression gained from passages such as these is that I was in league with CND to use the Rendlesham case for some obscure purpose. That is outright rubbish. I can state assuredly that I am not - and have never been - associated with the anti-nuclear movement in even the most minor of ways. I cannot say whether this is true of Brenda or Dot, but in all the years I have known them it has never once come

up in conversation and certainly had no role to play in the writing of *Sky Crash*. I wrote that book - turning my own knowledge and reams of handwritten notes from my colleagues - into some sort of sense. If what they had written was influenced by anti-nuclear views I would have seen it and reported it. But there was never any trace of that.

Besides which, as Warren notes in his second quote above, the nuclear mishap theory was mine - nobody else's - and was referenced by me on several occasions between 1981 and 1984 (e.g. a comment in OMNI magazine which is also discussed in *Left at East Gate*). This is firmly attributed to me personally.

My reasons for theorising along these lines were simple, yet at no time has Warren or Robbins ever asked me about them (as they have not asked me to confirm their ridiculous CND story).

Firstly, we had been told by numerous sources come 1983 that there were nuclear weapons on the base. This was emphatically denied by the USAF. That denial was a lie. More than ten years later (after the cessation of the cold war and the closure of Bentwaters-Woodbridge) the truth emerged. This had indeed been one of the biggest nuclear stores in the UK. This amply demonstrates my feeling at the time that - with the huge public outcry over bringing Cruise missiles into Europe - it might have seemed appropriate to cover up an accident by creating a diversionary story so ludicrous nobody would believe it.

There had in fact been a near disaster in 1956 at a USAF base nearby when a store of weapons caught fire after a plane crash. The fact that nuclear weapons were at risk was denied for decades but finally admitted years later on retirement of one of the key players in the cover up. Nuclear bombs at risk are less likely to explode than to have their casings crack and leak radiation. This fitted the scenario in the forest as well.

When I developed this theory there were no public revelations from any of the military eyewitnesses - just the dubious saga fed out to Watton and Brenda Butler that smelled to me exactly like disinformation. But if UFOs were disinformation then what was this story trying to hide?

Moreover, forestry workers

told me that they had heard about a "plane crash" from staff on the base and local man Ron Gladwell had told us about finding a crater in the forest indicating that something had fallen from the sky and hit the ground with a thump. Base staff were evidently filling this in. In *Left at East Gate* (p. 216) Warren and Robbins use the fact that nobody supposedly saw a crater in the forest to denounce our silly theory of a plane dropping a bomb. Evidently they missed Gladwell's story even though it is in both *Sky Crash* and *From out of the Blue*.

I submit that - right or wrong - this idea about a nuclear accident was a wholly legitimate speculation to make in 1983 based on these incidents (plus the various signs of mild radiation being present in the forest). It is not a theory that I adhere to today, having now had the chance to hear the detailed stories of witnesses like John Burroughs and Jim Penniston. They got within a few feet of the UFO on the first night and it was no discarded bomb. But it was wholly appropriate to bring this idea into the debate at the time to show the problems with the evidence fed out to the UFO community.

There is also a series of claims about how Barry Greenwood sent me the Halt memo secured by CAUS in the USA. This was obtained wholly thanks to Warren, he says. Yet wicked Brenda and Dot (I don't feature in this one - ironically - as you will see in a moment) - "sold the Halt document to the *News of the World* for £2000 - nearly five grand here... After that we broke off all contact with them". (p. 102).

Well, here are the facts. Barry Greenwood sent me the Halt memo and in exchange I sent him my letter from the MoD received a few weeks earlier and dated 13 April 1983. This was some weeks before the USAF admitted there was a case and it was used by CAUS to help in their quest for documents. The MoD document admitted for the first time anywhere that there was an incident in Rendlesham Forest and that "no explanation" had been found for it. Far from one-way traffic we exchanged data. I have maintained a correspondence with Barry ever since and we had dinner together when I was in Boston a year or two ago.

Brenda, Dot and I were given permission to use the document as we saw fit to press for the truth and

I also was happy for them to use my MoD letter in whatever way they wished. What we did was to take it to the MoD in London and confront them directly with a file they had been denying to me (despite at least three written requests). I also set up a seminar at the next BUFORA conference to present the evidence to the UFO community (including Allen Hynek and many others). This basically let Brenda and Dot have their day after two years of ridicule from the UFO community chasing "the case that never was".

As a result of that seminar - attended it seems by a journalist incognito - the media discovered the existence of the memo and decided to go public. Harry Harris, a well-known figure in UFO circles, persuaded Brenda and Dot that the best option was to negotiate a deal with the paper keeping control of the story as otherwise they would print a garbled version of the truth picked up from the UFO community rumour mill. I agreed to go with Harry to the *News of the World* and "brief" them on the case. That is how the story on the front page of the *News of the World* in October 1983 came about.

Nor was this story sold for £2000. It was a lot more than that. But this money went to many people who were paid for their information on many subjects given to the paper. To my knowledge the document itself was not sold, since it was obviously not anyone's to sell. I do know that the money Brenda and Dot received (a fraction of the overall sum the paper paid) was used by them to fund further research into this case. Over the years they - and I - have spent far more than any of us have ever got back. In this instance I see nothing wrong in what we did. It was the only way to keep control of the story.

In any case, the Halt memo was released by the MoD once they realised the document was in the public domain. That occurred when I showed it to them in Whitehall two months before the *News of the World* story ever ran. Consequently, many ufologists wrote to the MoD and were sent their own copies quite freely. It is disgraceful that these authors have painted a picture of Brenda and Dot cheating American ufologists. I was just as "guilty" and so was Harry Harris. But I bet they would not dare challenge him! The truth is this was an inexcusable misreport as to what really took place.

Something similar is seen on page 133 where Warren infers he gave the Halt audio tape to the American UFO community after getting it from a Japanese man who had been sold it by the British researchers for a large sum of money. I do not know if the tape was ever "sold to Japan" but I do know that I got a copy many months before this date that Warren here cites. Almost the first thing I did was to freely send a copy to Ray Boeche and MUFON in the USA - who will confirm that to anyone.

An even more absurd yarn appears on page 203. Here we see the claim that all attempts to talk to me were scuppered when I ran from Warren in fear at a UFO conference because I had discovered he called our book *Sky Trash*!

Any reader of *Magonia* will no doubt see the flaw in that little fairy tale. From the number of letters I have blitzed upon the magazine after critical comments on one of my books my desire to defend my writings is very obvious. The very last thing I would do is flee from a critic. [I can vouch for this, Ed.]

Interestingly, the reader of *Left at East Gate* is left with the idea hanging that I could not answer the challenge so I simply ran away and that was the end of the matter. The conference involved was in June 1987 in Washington, I believe. It is never clear because Warren's chronology in the book can be out by months or years. I did find myself wondering how accurate were his records or his checks into the past if he cannot date MUFON conferences when these must presumably be well documented.

What I do recall of Washington is being briefly introduced to Warren as I was rushing off to do a lecture and saying "hello" and promising to speak later. Which we did. In fact, I have had several meetings with Warren and have some on video tape. At none of them has he ever asked the questions I evidently ran from being asked at this conference nor has he sought to clarify any of the points he got so fundamentally wrong about my role in this case. Warren never makes clear to his readers that after I "fled" in terror we have had such productive conversations. Why?

Whatever his reasons it is not justifiable that he should lead his readers into a false impression of this situation.

There is much else I could

say - for example, his claim that Dot Street's interviews with him were grossly misreported in the book. What he may not know is that Dot taped these interviews and so his words from those early 1983 conversations are - it would seem - not the invention of *Sky Crash* as he alleges. If he believes otherwise he must presumably now charge Dot with faking these tapes. But why would she do it, since she was on very friendly terms with Warren at the time, as he admits in the book?

Other things that bothered me include the dating of Warren's encounter. I am as certain as I can be that the second night - when Halt was out there with a tape recorder - was the Saturday-Sunday 27-28 December. Warren has it here as the following night but says that he spent the prior afternoon in an Ipswich music store. I did find myself wondering whether Sunday opening of a small store would have been the practice - although the post-Christmas sales might have been a factor. Shops in 1980 were certainly open much less often on a Sunday than they are today.

There is also a curious attempt in the book to suggest that parts of Rendlesham Forest were flattened in 1987 as a result of not a hurricane (as most of us recall) but some sort of Orgone energy experiment. This seems to be building on Andy Collins's fantastic scenario as to the true origin of that fabled storm which he perceived as being due to a black magician (although curiously Collins followed that book with an attempt to link Orgone energy to UFOs and crop circles). All I will note is that to my recall the hurricane devastated large parts of southern England - not just Rendlesham Forest.

There are also several worrying errors in the text. Some of these (Major Dury several times instead of Drury) might be typographical. Others seem not - e.g. Oxford lighthouse (not Orford) - or even more hilariously - RAF Bodzy (when it is in fact RAF Bawdsey - as a glance at any map of the area would show). These to me represent both sloppiness and the real failing of this book. If the lighthouse explanation for this case were discussed (it is merely dismissed in passing) errors such as this would be unlikely. If the strange goings on at Orford Ness and at RAF Bawdsey were debated (as they ought to be since they are relevant to the case) the

background to these places would presumably have been researched.

This is the problem; key theories tied to the case are not refuted by evidence. As with my nuclear weapons idea they are merely sneered at or ignored altogether. I assume that we are meant to believe that this was a bona fide alien contact - although with mind warping by the NSA, the Orgone energy excursion and one or two rambling diversions on the way I am not as clear on that as I should be. What exactly does Larry Warren believe happened on that night? After almost 500 pages I am not certain that I understand.

Larry Warren's story is either truth or fiction or - possibly - something in between the two. He even speculates himself about his memory being altered by secret service interrogations. The sad thing is that *Left at East Gate* does not really help us to make an easy decision as to which is the most likely of these possibilities. Each option is also fraught with serious ramifications for the rest of the case.

I remain convinced that there is a significant close encounter at the heart of the Rendlesham Forest case. But I am far from convinced that any aliens were floating in light beams beneath a starship. And I am as sure as I can be that other - non-UFO - factors enter deeply into the equation as part of a remarkable set of events. The real key to this story does indeed lie on Orford Ness but not in the lighthouse.

I was mostly saddened by this book because it promised much and delivered little. I ended up more confused than when I read the first page. If I only ever had the chance to read this book on the incident I would probably agree with most people that this case is a load of nonsense.

I can see why people would jump to that conclusion. Unfortunately, they would be very wrong to do so.

### Bibliography:

Larry Warren and Peter Roberts, *Left at East Gate*, Michael O'Mara, 1997. £15.99.

Jenny Randles, Dot Street and Brenda Butler, *Sky Crash, a cosmic conspiracy*. Neville Spearman, 1984.

Randles, Jenny, *From out of the Blue; the incredible UFO cover-up at Bentwaters NATO air base*. Global Communications, 1991

In issues 54-6 of this magazine, the erudite Peter Brookesmith ran the first two of a three-part article entitled *Communion Cups and Crashed Saucers*. Therein, he attempted to locate the origin of the saucer mythos squarely within Western religious experience, particularly that of the 'American Religion'. It was an impressive piece. Brookesmith is an elegant writer with a deep understanding of the scientific and religious issues. He applies Occam's razor with almost surgical skill. Moreover, he is not afraid of courting controversy. In this case he savagely attacked the Semitic religions supposed psychological evils, using Hyam Maccoby's *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* to castigate Christianity in particular with its antisemitic past. It was heady, pungent, hard-hitting material.

It's also deeply flawed. Religion is a notoriously difficult thing to define. Not all cultures have gods or a concept of an immortal soul as articulated in the Semitic religions, though they may have a concept of supernatural powers or ceremonies or rituals which are central to their culture. A truly alien civilisation, such as the Mechs in Gregory Benford's *Galactic Centre* novels may well only be able to understand it as 'a form of art' (11). Political and social movements such as Fascism, Communism and Humanism may also be classed as religions. The above movements all have an inward, moral dimension as well as an outward corporate structure and their own set of rituals, even if the first two consisted mostly of watching the great dictator rant on his balcony. They also offer a form of transcendence - the individual gains purpose and the reward of being part of the greater struggle of the race, or the working class, or simply a sense of communal solidarity against the great mysteries of human experience.

Question of morality are, of a necessity, couched in the language of transcendence. Although utilitarianism - the philosophy that good is whatever gives the greatest happiness to the greatest number - remains popular with Vulcans, most discussions of morality are founded, albeit unconsciously, in transcendentalism. This states that moral values, goals and duties are transcendent, fundamentally true and eternally fixed things, not subject to vagaries of time and fashion. A comparison is made between moral values and mathematics. Murder is a evil for the same rea-

# Crashed Cups; an interim response to Peter Brookesmith by David Sivier

son that  $1+1=2$ . Neither fact changes, regardless of whoever and whenever the deed or calculation is performed. People, including atheists, can and will martyr themselves for their beliefs, or castigate themselves for their own perceived unworthiness. As a social force, religion is best defined by its origin in the Latin 'religio' - binding together. Religion binds man to man to form society, and human beings to the cosmos and the divine.

If religion is notoriously difficult to define, how much harder is it to define 'the American religion'. Brookesmith is clearly impressed with the book of the title, and quotes it several times in his article. By this he presumably means the forms of Chris-

tianity and Reform Judaism which externally have massed choirs, an anglophone ritual and where the sexes are not segregated in the congregation. Internally, these religions preach individualism, self-reliance, democracy and progress. This marks off Protestant America from the Roman Catholic, Hispanic countries to its south. One Latin American writer spoke of the railway journey between Mexico and the United States as 'moving from the melancholy 'We' to the triumphant 'I.' National characteristics are abstractions, however. Within any society there are individuals who perceive their culture differently from the rest, and may hold views that the rest consider deviant.

America is not, and has never been, a monoculture. It was settled by a patchwork of competing immigrant European communities who interacted with the native peoples. Although this interaction largely took the form of genocidal warfare, the First Nations did leave their mark on the American political system, which was partly modelled on that of the Iroquois League.

A sizable proportion of the American population has always been Roman Catholic, with a slightly different ethic from their Reformed and Evangelical coreligionists. In addition to this there are extra-European cults brought by those poor souls hauled over there during the slave trade. Vaudon, Santia and Rastafarianism all have the American devotees, and can all be called American religions with at least as much accuracy as mainstream Protestant Christianity. Rather more recently, Buddhism, Islam and the Baha'i faith have all made inroads into the American soul. There's also a strong occult tradition from Pennsylvania Dutch pow-wowing to the more recent imports of Druidism, Wicca and Crowleyanism.

Of course, the dominant religious tradition was Christianity, but in recent years this has broken down. The religion of progress is now being supplanted by cults that reject technology as a source of evil. Ecopaganism and the revival of interest in First Nation and tribal spirituality are the most obvious examples of this. Ritual magick, Crowleyanism, Wicca, Druidism and Odinism are cultural imports from Europe, especially Britain, but they've settled down nicely in

their new homeland. so nicely in fact, that they've assimilated themselves to the local population and then been re-exported back to Europe. It comes as no surprise that Russia's Chief Shaman, Alina Slobodova, got her diploma in shamanism from Professor Harner in California. **(2)** These religious movements may be intensely antiscientific, harking back to a simpler, richer and holistic society which many of their members may seek to recreate, such as the Tipi people in Vancouver. These cults frequently invoke alien activity as an article of their faith. Many explicitly see the saucers as leading us into the New Age of peace, harmony and sensitivity to nature. Brookemith discusses the impact of Christian millennialism on Darkside Ufology, **(3)** yet any discussion of the influence of new religious movements, especially those which have their origins in tribal spirituality, on ufology is curiously absent.

In the late 40s and 50s when ufology emerged, many Americans certainly did have a naive faith in the benefits of technology. Society and ufology have changed since then, however. At least one cultural commentator, an Australian architectural student, has remarked that much of the dissatisfaction in American society and rejection of progress has come from the realisation that America is no longer a new country, but is now actually quite old. Yet despite his awareness of the changing, fluid nature of the subject, Brookemith seems to locate ufology's ethnographic present firmly in 1947. The world and America have come a long way since then. The most obvious change is that the moral consensus is breaking down. Politics and social life is no longer the preserve of middle class white males, no matter how much the Republicans may huff and puff. This invalidates, at least partially, the concept of an 'American religion'.

Another point that needs mentioning is that some of Brookesmith's sources are themselves highly dubious. He makes extensive use of Hyam Maccoby's *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* which is, by the author's own admission, a controversial work. Maccoby is librarian at a Leo Beck college, a Jewish institution, so his work is hardly that of a disinterested observer. His book's central tenet is that Christianity is an intrinsically racist, antisemitic religion and he goes to great lengths to prove it. This

is a reversal of the usual racist polemics, where Gentile Fascists attempted to prove Jewry's hostility to the Gentile world through a selective use of those parts of the Talmud written against the amme ha-aretz - common people or goyim. While it's true that the passion narratives in the Gospels present an extremely unflattering portrait of Jewish society in its hostility and cruelty to Christ, the New Testament as whole has a much more complex attitude to the Jews. 'Give no offence to the Jews or Greeks' preached Paul. **(4)** To Paul the Jews were always God's chosen people, even after his conversion to Christianity: 'For I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek'. **(5)** It's also worth mentioning here that the Greek word usually translated as 'Jews' in the New Testament, *ioudaioi*, can also mean simply Judeans, inhabitants of Judea. Modern theologians are keen to point out that the New Testament is anti-Judaic rather than antisemitic. Judaism as a religion is attacked, but not the Jews as a race. Although Christianity does have a shameful record of antisemitic prejudice and hatred, this has not always been the case. In the 11th century abbot Stephen Harding while seeking accurate Hebrew texts for the Old Testament collected them from French Jewry. The Fifth Monarchy Men of the Cromwellian interregnum were zealously pro-Jewish, an attitude still quite common among the Evangelicals today. Chick Publications may spit hate at Catholicism, but in its respect for Judaism it is almost embarrassingly effusive. Maccoby's theory that Judas Iscariot was an invention of the Christian church after its leadership passed to Gentile bishops seems unnecessary from an historical point of view. With the hostility of the Jewish mob and Sanhedrin already clearly detailed in the passion narratives, why should it be necessary to invent another villain for the drama, especially as the two leading religious opponents of Christ within the Sanhedrin are explicitly named in non-canonical sources like the Gospel of Nicodemus? It seems far more likely that Maccoby's theory arose to justify his own psychological conviction that all Christians are violent antisemites.

Brookesmith's use of Maccoby is actually quite elegant. It allows him to avoid accusations that he himself is antisemitic, while seeming to

confirm his own prejudices against Christianity. Most arguments for the brutal nature of the Semitic religions largely draw on the Old Testament. The doctrine that the Jews are God's chosen people has also been drawn into the debate. The attitude among certain neopagans and members of the antichristian left is that this doctrine is a prefiguration of Fascism and Hitler's doctrine of the master race. Needless to say, this leaves the proponents of this theory open to charges of antisemitism. By including a book that violently attacks Christianity for its supposed antisemitism, Brookesmith has effectively dodged any potential accusations that he could be included in the roll call of the racists. When accusations of this nature are thrown around, the ethnic origin of the writers attacked becomes immaterial. Several Jewish anti-Zionist writers have been accused of antisemitism, an accusation which may, unfortunately, carry verisimilitude as some Jews such as Dan Burros, have for their own perverse reasons joined neo-Nazi organizations. Brookesmith certainly isn't a Nazi. His writings reveal not only a breadth of knowledge of the Talmud but also the occasional joy in its texts. His writings as a whole betray a sincere antiracism and opposition to antisemitism. He obviously includes Maccoby from a deep disgust at Christianity, rather than as a cynical maneuver in the argument. Not everyone may see that, however, and it does not necessarily stop the accusation being made. This does not, however, mean that either Maccoby or Brookesmith is correct.

Brookesmith also has a fashionably feminist assault on the Semitic conception of God. He follows the traditional Semitic view of God as a masculine deity because he 'cannot believe that anything with feminine qualities - anything other than a being saturated in a massive overdose of cosmic testosterone would be as barbarous as the Semitic God is reported to be (in all derived religions)'. **(6)** This point was made two decades ago by some of the more violently antichristian of the neopagan polemicists, and it's quite a difficult one to answer. Certainly the vengeful Old Testament God who struck down Gideon for touching the ark of the Covenant in a mere attempt to steady it hardly shows Himself to be a compassionate being. Yet this type of savage behaviour is hardly confined to Yahweh. The

*A cultural commentator has remarked that much of the dissatisfaction in American society comes from the realisation that America is no longer a new country*

Greeks' Zeus and Vikings' Odin were both known as martial gods who couldn't be trusted. They were capable of violent and duplicitous behaviour which certainly exceeded that of the Lord of Hosts.

Nor is boorishness and brutality a trait confined to the male sex. Mars had his female counterpart in Bellona, the Roman goddess of war. Athena sprang fully armed and equipped for battle from her father's head when he was suffering from a headache. These goddesses were especially brutal when spurned or crossed in love. Ishtar of the Sumerians is reproached by Gilgamesh for using and destroying her lovers. Cybele sent her lover mad so that he castrated himself. In honour of their hero, her priests in Rome castrated themselves and dressed as women. Within Hinduism the goddess Kali is still revered and held in terror. The goddess of death and destruction, her skin is a menacing black, her necklace a string of skulls. She is the consort of Shiva, the destroyer, dancing on his corpse to give him life. As the dark side of the maternal goddess Durga, there is precious little of the 'large, warm, comforting Earth Mothers' about her.

Regardless of the particular sex of the deities, they are symbols and attempts of the human mind to grasp the problem of evil. Theodicy is one of the trickiest parts of theology, as no explanation of evil and human suffering will ever be truly satisfactory. Monotheism lends itself to the accusation that its God is evil because it does not have an ultimately coeternal 'other' on whom evil qualities may be projected. Explanations that God created Satan and evil to give humanity a choice now sound trite, almost as trite as the neopagan doctrine that evil does not exist, and that evil acts and conditions are merely the results of disharmony within individuals and institutions.

Brookesmith is pleased to call religion and, by extension, the abduction phenomenon, as the cult of despair. It's 'subjugation to incomprehensible and uncompromising savages, who like wanton schoolboys kill us for their sport (7). The aliens, like God, always 'hold the final way of escape'. (8) I felt the same existential depression reading Games People Play and the writings of the sociobiologists. If altruism and morality is merely the case of the selfish gene

protecting its progeny, then where is the hope for humanity? From whence can spontaneity and goodness proceed, if even our better motives are mired in greed and self-interest? Can humanity ever improve, ever become greater than the sorry flesh it now inhabits? The prognosis is doubtful, at best. Religion offers some hope of transcendence, a slim chance of leaping into the infinite, even if that chance is hedged with theological pitfalls and constraints. The only alternative is the pessimism and denial of the world of the Buddhist.

This, however, is going off the track a bit. Brookesmith makes great play of the asexual, cerebrally advanced nature of the Greys, comparing them with the neuter portrayal of the angels. For this he draws upon William Blake. Now, Blake was a brilliant poet, artist and visionary. He was also deeply heterodox in his thought, and is hardly a representative of conventional Christian thinking. The Bible makes it abundantly clear in Genesis that the angels were quite fully functional in that department, for how else could they have mated with the daughters of men to spawn the Nefilim? And when you answer that question, please don't try my patience with any nonsense about genetic engineering, cloning or ancient astronauts. Some of the Christian antipathy to sexuality comes not so much from its Judaic roots, though these are the strongest influence, but from certain strands in Platonic thought. No culture is entirely comfortable with sexuality; they are aware both of sexuality's importance in creating society through the binding of individuals and families together in marriage, and of its potentially antisocial nature through adultery and marital strife.

Aside from this, the Greys in their habitation of a liminal fairyland are far closer to our old friends the Elves and the Pixies, even if we take on board Quazgaa and the voice of God. These creatures certainly weren't celebrate. Victorian fairy pictures are replete with evanescent pubescent nymphs wearing only the flimsiest of diaphanous gauze engaging in all kinds of erotic play with their male gallants. The paintings may well have served as a release for the pent up sexuality repressed by the Victorians, but they also serve as a reminder of a perennial human obsession: sexuality as a link to the divine, or at least superhuman.

The Greys are only one form of ET. There are also the Nordics, the reptoids, mummies, dwarves and hairy sasquatch creatures. In recent years they've been overshadowed by their small insectoid colleagues, but they're still out and about there. Brookesmith links the Nordics quite convincingly to northern European representations of angels, the mummies can be identified strongly with Andean custom of revering the embalmed dead and the dwarves' folkloric antecedents don't really need an explanation. But what are we to make of sasquatch and his mates aboard the aliens' craft? Hirsutism is linked, both in Europe and Asia, with animal qualities. You think of all the grind show acts featuring the wolf-boy. Hairy barbarian is another favourite image linking facial and body hair to low intelligence, savagery and cruelty. Sasquatch is supposed to be a denser relative of modern man, or perhaps his neanderthal cousin, eking out a living in backwoods America, Russia and China. He's not even supposed to be alive, let alone zipping about in a flying saucer collecting plant samples from Latin America. The only psychological explanation for him in this situation I can think of is that he represents some kind of untainted primal man, like the hairy Enkidu in the Epic of Gilgamesh.

There's a similar problem with the aliens' location in space. Brookesmith links it to the traditional conception of the heavens as the abode of God. This is only one of the origins of the Outsiders in the Saucer mythos, however. There's also the chthonic aspect. The deros and teros are under our feet, even as we speak, manipulating us with their engines. They fly out from the holes in the poles to spread terror over the globe, which is covered with ley lines to act as energy points to power their craft. And deep down under Area 51 there are the laboratories and vats, fruits of their collaboration with the US government.

This is not Heaven. This is *sheol*, the abode of the dead. The personnel down there are truly 'those who sit in darkness', the river Lethe of which they drink sapping their ethics as well as their identities. It is the abode of Pluto, the dark and forbidding god of wealth, from whom the military wins its technological gold for which they must pay with human souls. It might be stretching the point a bit,

but you could even say it was the domaine of Vulcan. The divine smith is in his lair, under the volcano, forging his wonders such as the mechanical handmaids who serve him. He is ugly, lame and jealous, intensely distrustful of his wife's affairs with other men, particularly his arch rival Mars. Now there's a metaphor for the abduction mythos if ever there was one. Technology (Vulcan, or the Greys) wedded to beauty and sensuality (Venus, and by extension the erotic and sexual elements of the abduction mythos), who flirts and betrays him to the military (Mars). As an archetype, it fits the abduction mythos very well. We are now a long way from a simple identification of the saucer mythos with the Judeo-Christian tradition.

This brings me to my next point. The saucer mythology is a global one, not confined to America. There are reports from Europe, Australia, Latin America, China, Japan, India and Africa - just about everywhere except Antarctica. European, Australian and Latin American culture has the same Christian roots as America, and Turkey, Iran and the Arab countries still have cultural links with the West through their worship of Allah, Yahweh under a different name, and the permeation of their scientific and religious thought with Greco-Roman philosophy. Hindu India and the Buddhist nations are completely different cultural entities, however. Yet these seem to have taken up the ufological gauntlet in recent years with a relish. If ufology has its roots so deeply embedded in the American religion, then how is it that this plant has been successfully transplanted onto such foreign soil? It's true that this century has seen the successful export of American culture in the form of Coca-Cola, movies, rock music, art, fashion and capitalism.

This cultural penetration is by no means universal or unchallenged. The Communist bloc bitterly resisted any cultural penetration of the decadent West into its cultural sphere and rock music was singled out for especial attention. Merely playing it could get you twenty years in a gulag. Now that Communism has gone the way of the Berlin Wall, rock's been taken up with alacrity. It has, however, taken particularly Russian and Eastern European forms, marrying itself to a strident and unpleasant nationalism. Islam too is waging its own kind of kulturkampf with the West. This may

take the form of a complete rejection and hostility to Western cultural forms such as democracy and feminism, as in Iran, or to a limited acceptance as in Egypt and a positive espousal of secularism as in Turkey. Everyone may now wear jeans and T-shirt the world over, but by and large the world's nations still retain their own popular music traditions. Sometimes these westernised appearances are just cosmetic.

The most powerful symbol of the new technological age was the moon landings. Just about everyone on the Earth who had access to a television watched them. It brought the reality of space travel home to the world's population in the most dramatic way possible, making credible theories regarding interplanetary and interstellar travel, and generating an intense interest in SF. This should cause problems for ufological investigators in the Third World. *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *ET* and *Close Encounters* have been shown the world over. Even in Iran, where Western entertainment is strongly discouraged, an underground exists where cultural forms from outside the Islamic world are indulged. In Isfahan during the Revolution the faithful were watching Arnie as *The Terminator*. The governing clergy have, in recent years, expressed horror at the growth of satellite television. It's now illegal to own a satellite dish. This may not present a problem, as with the aids of a few judicious bribes, a little ideological freedom may be bought along with a subscription to Rupert Murdoch's burgeoning global stranglehold.

This does not, however, mean that Western values or views are purchased along with their entertainment forms. No audience passively absorbs everything they read, hear or see. Rather, a dialogue occurs whereby they take on board what appeals to them, and reject what does not. Identification is far too simple a theory to explain adequately what goes on within the audience's psychology when enjoying a drama. (9) At the international level, nonwestern peoples negotiate First World cultural imports within the context of their own cultural forms. Thus, a South American lawyer can encounter alien beings whose lineage lies in the huacas of the Incas. Cynthia Hind of *UFO Afrinews* has complained of the difficulty in getting Africans to report encounters with UFOs. They may interpret bizarre

lightforms and otherworldly beings not as alien visitors but as returning gods or ancestors from their tribal belief systems. 'Thus, when I approach witnesses of supposed sightings or contacts, I can be 99 per cent certain that their interpretation will be representative only of their culture.' (10)

This should disturb everyone genuinely interested in collecting the original narratives of Fortean phenomena. Hind appears here trying to foist her ideological framework on reports which the percipients have framed according to quite a different set of beliefs. If ufology is nothing more than a Western postsecular mythology, then it is no more true or valid than the African beliefs Hind believes it supplants. I don't wish to be seen as accusing Ms Hind of deliberately disparaging or undervaluing African culture. I merely wish to point out the dangers inherent in reading unusual narratives which may embody two deep and conflicting world views.

The world's debate is not one-sided either. It's simply not a case of the rest of the world passively absorbing at different levels the cultural effusions of America and the West. A dialogue goes on, in which Western cultural forms may merge with noneuropean ideologies and arts, and then be re-exported back to the West. In the case of Science Fiction, the most obvious example is the Japanese Manga movies which have gained a cult following in recent years. Although they show the universal SF concern with technology and machines, the stories are framed within Japanese Confucian, Buddhist and Shinto roots. If you need an example, watch *Fists of the North Star*. The first 20 minutes of that epic is a narrative interpreting a future nuclear holocaust within the context of Taoist theories concerning harmony and disharmony. This actually makes the film sound far more interesting than it actually is. *Plan 9* is far better.

The Wiccan and ritual magick movements which are now growing also absorbed much Eastern philosophy. One Wiccan prayer allegedly written down by Sanders or Gardner was lifted almost verbatim from Hinduism, but with the names of the deities changed to reflect the sexual dualism within modern Wicca. Wicca and related forms of occultism have played a major part in the mystical fringe element surrounding the Green movement. We are now told,

for example, that Gaia, the living Earth, has *chakras* just like the human body. This seems to be following in the tradition of Arthur Shuttlewood *et al*, who advanced the theory that the Earth was covered with energy lines along which the saucers flew. This was in itself an appropriation of Alfred Watkins' ley lines, though in a new, post-hippie form. Watkins had conceived of his old straight tracks as being nothing more than neolithic and bronze age roads. It was left to the Hippies to turn them into the ley lines of the cosmic power grid now so beloved of the ancient technology lobby. They did this through a more than healthy injection of *feng shui*, Chinese geomancy, in the form of Dragon Lines. The ultimate ancestor of the crop circle may have been the Mowing Devil, but he's now been replaced by the suburban shamans. It's to the Far East the ufologists now look, not the Near East.

Brookesmith is on even shakier ground when he tries to explore the psychology of the religions which he assaults. The 'Christian myth' is 'sado-masochistic'. (11) Well, you can't accuse him of mincing his words! The trouble is, nearly every corporate ritual society has can be accused of the same thing. The Bible is replete with stories of the sufferings of Israel at the hands of the Gentiles, and their liberation by a divinely inspired hero or heroine such as Esther. The reader of these stories is immersed in their sufferings, as the Christian is in the passion of Christ, gaining a sense of his own identity as part of the amma Israel or Christendom, and share in Israel's or/and Christ's triumph as Esther brings down Haman and Christ rises from the dead to reign in glory forever. If you want a secular version of this motif of vicarious suffering and redemption, try the Remembrance Day service at the Cenotaph. Every year the British people are invited to remember the great debt they owe those who sacrificed their lives in the Wars, and share in their appreciation of the triumph they gained in the form of a free Europe.

Brookesmith may be right in stating that 'one of the subtexts of the Christian Eucharist is cannibalism' (12), possibly following such works as William Meyer's *Vampires or Gods*, published by Ill Press. There is a pronounced difference, however. Within the pagan religions which preceded Christianity, the sacrifices were to the

*Non-Western peoples negotiate First World cultural imports within the context of their own cultural forms*



Looking back over 50 years of the UFO phenomenon, it is easy to forget just how few books were written on the subject in the early years, compared with their almost daily publication now. The early flying saucer story unravelled almost entirely in the pages of newspapers and magazines in the USA and the UFO scholar has to search hard to find anything on library bookshelves that comes from the first 5 years of the 1947 era. UFO material from this period published outside the USA is even more elusive.

One of the best known early UFO books was published in Britain in 1953: *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, the first and most famous book by the contactee George Adamski, co-authored with British writer Desmond Leslie. For many people this will have been the first British UFO book they were aware of - but in fact two previous books had been published in Britain in the previous five years, both very different books by very different authors. Both authors were once famous in areas quite unrelated to UFOs but, strangely, both men seem to have been largely forgotten in recent years: their lives and contribution to the early history of UFOs deserves to be remembered.

### 1. *The Flying Saucer*, by Bernard Newman (1948)

This fictional book, published in the UK by Gollanz in June 1948, was possibly the first in the world to deal with the topic of flying saucers. Although said to have been 'well-received in the American press' on its publication there in 1950, it seems to have rapidly fallen into complete obscurity. The book never seems to have been referred to in subsequent UFO books, nor have I seen it listed in any published UFO bibliography.

The book was obviously not intended to be factual, nor a particularly substantial one: it appears to have been another in the long series of thrillers written by the prolific and versatile British author and lecturer Bernard Newman (1897-1968). Newman published over 100 books, at his peak publishing four or five every year. Many were non-fiction, with travel, current affairs, global politics and real-life espionage books featuring heavily. On the fiction side he concentrated on spy and detective stories, sometimes writing under the pseudonym Don Betteridge. ■ New-

# The Mystic and the Spy: two early British UFO writers

by Philip Taylor

man's book *The Flying Saucer* is a tale of how a group of scientists, taking on the mantle of world peace-makers, stage a series of crashes of 'flying saucers' with the aim of uniting the world's leaders. The idea that saucer crashes themselves have been staged or that stories have been deliberately manufactured as part of a Military 'Disinformation' campaign is one that has been around at least as long as the modern saucer retrievals stories have been current. The theme of an alien threat leading to world peace and unity is one that has cropped up on many occasions, a recent example being the often-quoted remark of Reagan to Gorbachev in 1985. Newman's inspiration was a speech by Sir Anthony Eden, who in 1947 said: "It seems to be an unfortunate fact that the nations of the world were only really united when they were facing a common menace. What we really needed was an attack from Mars" The

idea of a fake saucer crash serving this purpose is probably original to Newman's book, but is one which may have been absorbed almost unknowingly into the popular folklore of UFOs. Despite the more recent amnesia regarding this book, it was once described as being one of three books for which 'Newman is possibly best known in the United States'. Newman dismisses the book briefly in his autobiography but mentions that Anthony Eden was 'very amused by the book'.

Newman's book begins with an initial series of mysterious saucer crashes occurring first in England, then (where else but) New Mexico, and thirdly Russia. The crash sites are chosen carefully to involve all the three major powers of the post-WWII world. Then, as their grand finale, the scientists decide to include an alien occupant in the next crash. In modern tales of crashed saucers, the alien occupants seem to remain surprisingly

unscathed, apparently sustaining nothing more than a grazed grey knee in the course of a high-speed crash. By contrast, Newman is gruesomely realistic with his staged crash: the alien 'victim' is apparently pulverised by the impact and this enables the scientists behind the scenes to confuse investigating pathologists by presenting them with a 'body' consisting of a grotesque melange of exotic animal remains.

An international league of scientists springs into action and with remarkable speed the differences between the world's governments dissolve under the 'Martian' threat. The final chapter sees every international political problem speedily resolved, from the Middle East to Northern Ireland. This 1948 fantasy is very much of its time: it was published in the very month of the Russian blockade of Berlin. Newman's heroes find a way around the frustrating limitations of the new United Nations, with, in the background, the emergence of the super-power blocs and the omniscience of the atomic scientists all playing their part.

Newman's book, now nearly 50 years old, presents familiar themes to us today: a saucer crash in New Mexico, an alien autopsy (albeit a particularly messy one). In the background, an ultra-secret military disinformation campaign designed to create a New World Order hidden from the general population. In 1948 the New Order that Newman envisaged was that of brotherhood and peace to all men and is plotted by pipe-smoking, back-room boffins, fresh from their successes in the War.

With his fondness for writing books, both fiction and non-fiction, on espionage themes it is reasonable to assume that Newman had first-hand experience of the secret intelligence world. Several writers have alluded to Newman's probable connections with the British Intelligence service, including Peter Rogerson who has speculated in *Magonia* on a possible intelligence connection with the Roswell incident of 1947. As one might expect, Newman's intelligence career remains shrouded in obscurity and deceit. In his unrevealing autobiography *Speaking From Memory* he describes how from 1919 onwards he was apparently employed in an undemanding Civil Service job in the Ministry of Works. Somehow he seemed able to take extremely long and, for

those days, exceedingly adventurous holidays, including lengthy stays in Eastern Europe and Russia. His destinations invariably seemed to include areas of particular political interest: for example several extended holidays to Germany in the 1930's.

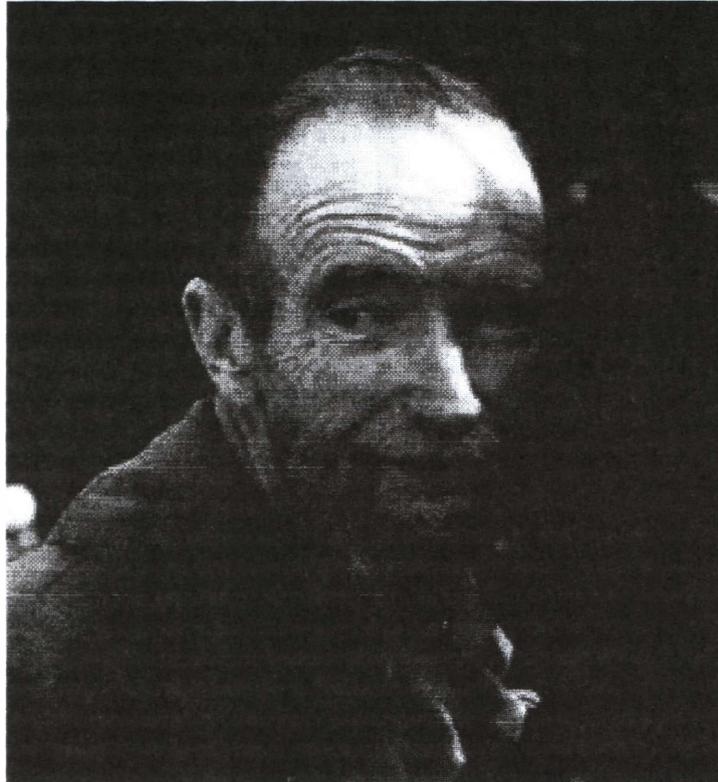
However, one of his more remarkable claims remains a puzzle. He claims to have made a report on the secret Peenemunde rocket site in 1938, which he sent to the Foreign Office, but the report 'was ignored'. This clearly contradicts Dr R.V. Jones' description of the legendary 'Oslo Letter', received from an anonymous informant in 1940, which was said to be the first information that British Intelligence had of the significance of the rocket development site. **3**

To add to the mystery, an article in the *New York Times* in 1945 described Newman as having spent the three years from 1915 operating as a double agent in the German Intelligence Service. **4** Newman was indeed fluent in German, his mother having come from Alsace and he grew up speaking English, French and German. But the idea of an 18-year old boy spy operating within the German forces and influencing senior officers is stretching credulity and an addendum to Newman's obituary in the *Times* contains a reference to the alleged episode that relegates it to the realm of fiction. **5**

Whether true or not, his history of any such exploit is mentioned in Newman's autobiography. The resemblance between incidents described in *The Flying Saucer* and the Roswell crash remains intriguing: we are left to speculate and can perhaps, one day, hope to learn some of the real facts about this enigmatic author.

## 2. *The Riddle of the Flying Saucers*, by Gerald Heard (1950)

By contrast to the Establishment figure that Bernard Newman presents, Gerald Heard (1889-1971) was a determinedly individualistic Anglo-Irishman who began his career as an academic at Cambridge and then Oxford. He first became well known in the 1930's as an author of books on philosophy and as a BBC broadcaster on popular science and was acquainted with many of the leading intellectual and literary figures of the day. Having become a committed pacifist, Heard, along with Aldous Huxley, emigrated to Los Angeles in 1937 and became a devotee of a Hindu religious order



Gerald Heard

there. The writer Christopher Isherwood was attracted to follow Heard to California and soon he also joined the Hindu order, led by Swami Prabhavananda. Due to his avowed pacifism, he never became a US citizen, despite living in California until his death 34 years later. **6**

Unlike Isherwood, Heard never produced any well-known literary works and all his books are now out of print. Heard was a polymath who wrote about whatever interested him: about 30 books in all, on a wide-range of subjects, ranging from esoteric philosophy to an early book entitled *Narcissus: An Anatomy of Clothes*.

Heard never flinched from dealing with subjects that bordered on the taboo including nonconsensus reality, psychic research, mysticism, pacifism, synchronicity, homosexuality, madness and criminality. He resorted to a pseudonym for many of his works, for example the "Mr. Mycroft" detective thriller series published under the name H.F. Heard and a utopian science-fiction novel by "Auctor Ignotus", which has only recently been attributed to him. A particular theme, which he explored in a number of books, was that of the evolution of human consciousness, which was developed most fully in the 1963 book *The Five Ages of Man*. After 1947 he

became fascinated by the new flying saucer phenomenon. On the one hand he saw the reports as presaging a New Age of increased cosmic and spiritual awareness and on the other he developed an original, but quirky, nuts-and-bolts hypothesis as to who was piloting the flying vehicles.

Heard's book *The Riddle of the Flying Saucers* was published in the UK in 1950, and in the US the same year under the title *Is Another World Watching?* The book follows a now-familiar pattern that was to be repeated in endless books during the next 30 years. The book begins with a series of chapters presenting the USA flying saucer reports of 1947-1949, presented at face value, with little or no context or critical analysis. The reports are a familiar litany: Arnold, Maury Island, Mantell, the New Mexico green fireballs. As was usual for those days, there is no suggestion of the Saucers ever descending from their lofty paths, whether to land deliberately or in a crash. This story was yet to come: Frank Scully's book *Behind the Flying Saucers*, with its story of alien bodies recovered from a crashed saucer, was published in the same year, as well as Keyhoe's first book *The Flying Saucers are Real*.

Heard reviews many of the then current theories about the Saucer's origins: various countries, not only

the USSR, are considered and discarded, as the builders of the craft. Inevitably, each solar system planet is considered in turn, until the planet Mars is selected. After a lengthy rhetorical argument, Heard concludes that giant bees from Mars pilot the craft! This remarkable theory, seldom promoted by any subsequent author, seemed to have been based on Heard's belief that only bees could both survive on Mars and also withstand the immense G-forces sustained by the Saucers' flight manoeuvres.

Heard as a flying saucer writer is a lot less interesting than Heard as a philosopher, and his book can be viewed as the result of just one of the many enthusiasms of a free-thinking and enquiring mind. Heard did not return to the subject in print and enthusiastically welcomed Jung's contribution to the subject a few years later. Heard has only recently begun to be recognised as a Californian New Age pioneer, not only inspiring major developments in the human potential movement but also as a user and evangelist of psychedelic drugs for spiritual enlightenment. Along with Huxley, Heard experimented with both mescaline and LSD in the early 50's, years before Kesey and Leary began their crusades in the 60's. An evaluation of Heard's contribution to modern thought and culture awaits the publication of his biography; meanwhile we can ponder on Isherwood's remarkable epitaph: "Gerald Heard is one of the very few who can properly be called philosophers, a man of brilliantly daring theory and devoted practice. I believe he has influenced the thought of our time, directly and indirectly, to an extent which will hardly be appreciated for another fifty years. Gerald was a rare creature altogether; he breathed another air, in a way." **7**

## References:

- 1** Current Biography 1959, p319.
- 2** Bernard Newman, *Speaking From Memory* (1960).
- 3** R.V. Jones, *Most Secret War*.
- 4** *New York Times*, January 9 1945.
- 5** *The Times*, 27 February 1968.
- 6** Gerald Heard, by J.V. Cody: Article in *Gnosis* magazine no. 26, Winter.1993.
- 7** Christopher Isherwood *Diaries*, Volume One 1939-1960 (1996).

# 25 years ago

The autumn of 1972 was still a thin time for MUFOB, with only 10 pages in issue 4 of volume 5. The most significant piece in it was Peter Rogerson's introduction to his INTCAT catalogue of "Type I" reports, based on the listing started by Vallee in *Passport to Magonia*. He augmented this listing by scouring hundreds of books and obscure magazines looking for accounts, which he checked with each other, meticulously recorded, noting sources and where possible giving 'chains' of references so one could see how a particular story spread or was changed in the telling. This was a marathon task for Peter who had little outside help, and even less encouragement from the ufological establishment. His encyclopaedic listings continued to appear in each issue of MUFOB, for a number of years, gradually getting more up to date. The changes which were taking place in the nature of ufology in the seventies and early eighties conspired against this type of data-gathering endeavour, and led to is suspension then abandonment.

The growth of the abduction scenario coupled with a slackening of interest in the 'hard-sciences' approach to the subject - using statistics, astronomy, geology etc. as research tools - as investigators moved to a psychosocial and 'witness led' form of investigation, meant there was less interest in the type of cataloguing effort represented by INTCAT. Eventually Peter decided to call it a day. The last instalment appeared in MUFOB 15, although this was by no means the complete listing. The catalogue still exists in manuscript form, and is probably the most comprehensive listing of close encounter and contact narratives in existence. Anybody with a year or to spare to computerise it? Now that would be an achievement worth of a Nobel Prize for Ufology!

The exchanges between

Alan Sharp and John Keel continued, with Keel responding to Alan's critique of the 'New Ufology' in a letter headed "Department of Health Education and Welfare, Office of the Secretary, Washington DC" - what was he doing there, I wonder? Keel lays into Sharp: "Poor Alan has denuded himself [a phrase which, as you may imagine, caused a great deal of amusement in MUFOB's adopted pub *The Grapes*, Matthew Street, just opposite the old Cavern Club and one of the Beatles' early hangouts] exposing his astonishing ignorance of ufology and his apparent inability to use the English language." In three A4 pages Keel went on to tell us how we *should* have read *Operation Trojan Horse*. In the same issue Sharp responded, denouncing Keel's "literary legerdemain" - a phrase almost Shuttlewoodian in its artful alliterativeness! He counters Keel's claims of inadequate literacy by quoting from *OTH*: "But I am now *inclined* to accept the conclusion that the phenomenon is *mainly* concerned with *undefined* (and *undefinable*) *cosmic patterns* and that mankind plays only a small part in these patterns". Typically Keelian, I think, and Sharp concludes with the devastating riposte: "If this is a 'clearly stated position' from our 'professional lexicographer' then my understanding of the English language is indeed sadly lacking... To make the vagueness even more insubstantial note that Keel is only 'inclined' to accept this ephemeral 'conclusion' after nearly 300 pages of tedious text."

At the end of this Keel-Sharp dialogue Alan had obviously felt his work was almost done, and he made few further contributions to MUFOB, apart from a couple of articles dissecting individual cases. Britain's answer to Donald Menzel was to quietly hang up his scalping hatchet (copyright Arthur Shuttlewood) and head for a UFO-free retirement.

## MAGONIA BACK ISSUES

These are selling fast and some are in very short supply. We have copies in stock of the following numbers, which are available at £1.50 each, including postage (Overseas £2.00 or \$4.00). Highlights of each issue include:

- 25 Strange helicopters linked with UFOs; Earthlights debate - Devereux, Evans, Campbell; Ufology and statistics.
- 26 Dismantling the Cracoe case; Witches, polts and BOLs; Magnetism and humans.
- 27 The UFO experience as theatre; Mirage Hypothesis; Unofficial history of the haunted house.
- 28 Abductions special: Stillings on Hopkins, Stacy on Good, Rimmer on Streiber, and Cassirer on a forerunner of abductions.
- 29 Social history of ley-hunting; Earthlights debate; Man from the Ministry spills the beans on MJ12
- 30 UK Government files; UFOs on TV; Rogerson explores the fringes of ufology
- 31 Nightmares, sex and abductions; the urban legendary Elvis; Paul Fuller on mystery circles.
- 32 Temporarily out of print.
- 33 Pennine weirdness from David Clarke.
- 34 Moore and Bennewitz; Bullard on American abductions
- 35 Kottmeyer looks at precursors on abduction stories; Stillings analyses the American abduction myth.
- 36 Spontaneous combustions; Abductions, who's being taken for a ride?; Delusions of witchcraft
- 37 Death of ufology?; Bullard defends the American way; Dennis Stillings on the drama of fantasy.
- 38 This is the important issue which first discussed Satanic abuse stories - articles by Roger Sandell, Mick Goss and Peter Rogerson.
- 39 Eyes from space, paranoid visions; Seeing things, UFO prototypes in fiction; Satanism update.
- 40 Flying saucers from Hell - abductions and Satanism; Eyes from Space, part 2.
- 41 John Harney on Roswell; Abduction variations, Eyes part 3; Corn circle criticism.
- 42 Hilary Evans challenges Bullard's view of abductions; More on the Satanism panic.
- 43 Victorian era UFO crashes; the start of the Cat Flap
- 44 Bullard responds to critics; Abductions and abortions; UFO hypochondria
- 45 UFO paranoia - the sixties revisited; Linda Napolitano case; 'Secret Life'; Crashed saucers
- 46 Rogerson revises abduction history; Satanism panic; UFO paranoia, part 3.
- 47 Living laboratories; UMMO revisited; Fairyland's hunters.
- 48 Re-examining Mattoon - was the phantom real?; Virtual banality; Did the USAF encourage belief in flying saucers?
- 49 In search of real UFOs; Sex, science and salvation; Alienating fantasies.
- 50 Alienating fantasies, part 2; Brookesmith slams sloppy research; Rogerson recovers 'lost' abductions.
- 51 Still seeking Satan; Urban legends - trams and cats.
- 52 Godships; Abduction absurdities; Investigation standards controversy - Randles replies.
- 53 Temporarily out of print.
- 54 Communion cups and crashed saucers, ufology as religion, part 1; Kottmeyer re-examines the Gill case; Abduction update.
- 55 Critical look at how researchers are treating child 'abductees'; Strange suicide legends.
- 56 Organ-snatching rumours dissected; Part 2 of Communion Cups...; Remembering Roger Sandell
- 57 Origins of the ancient astronaut myth; More on the Gill case; Abduction update.
- 58 Mind control stories; Varghina and other crash retrievals; Poltergeist machine and other strange devices
- 59 Abduction fantasies; Return of the Satan-hunters.
- 60 Rogerson and Brookesmith on conspiracy theories; Sussing out the Raelians.

Order from the address on Page Two. Cheques etc. payable to "JOHN RIMMER". US customers please pay in dollar bills. French banknotes accepted at FF10.00 = £1.00.

We have an ongoing programme of reprinting out-of-print issues. Check on our regular back numbers update in the magazine and on our web-site.

**Roy, Archie E** *The Archives of the Mind. Spiritualist National Union Publications, (Redwoods, Stansted Hall, Stansted Mount Fitchet, Essex, CM24 8UD) 1996. £12.50, pbk.*

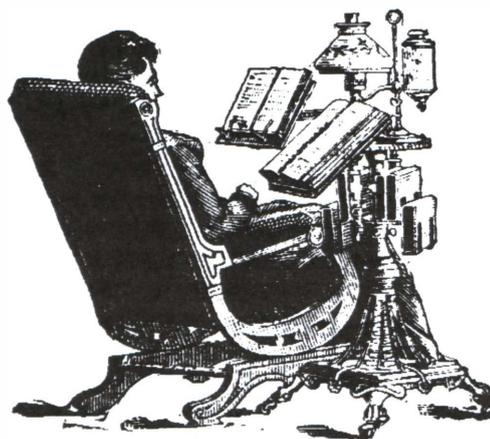
A leading member of the SPR presents a range of cases from the literature of psychical research which he feels are indicative of post-mortem survival. Both Roy and Colin Wilson, who writes the forward, clearly believe they should convince the sceptic of the cogency of the evidence. Unfortunately Roy falls into the classic psychical researchers trap of parading the same list of long dead great and good who supported their caused as if this proved something. Can't they understand that one could produce lists many times longer in support of many other causes and beliefs, from Marxist-Leninism to Roman Catholicism. Perhaps a slightly more apposite comparison would be with eugenics, supported by dozens of leading intellectuals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but now a good deal more discredited than psychical research.

The cases presented come generally from good sources, the files of the SPR and its American counterpart, and the researches of Ian Stevenson. This does tend to mean that many of the cases are remote in either time or place, and would be very difficult, if not impossible to cross check. As they stand some of the better cases certainly fall into the category of being very puzzling, *if the events happened exactly as related here*. That's the rub, there is no way of knowing if that is the case.

Others look dodgy enough on the evidence presented such as an hypnotic regression case evoking sublimely unconvincing bodice ripping historical romance. Roy presents a long argument as to how difficult it would be for information on the secondary characters and historical scene to be known, but writers of historical romances do go to considerable trouble to get their background right. This case is almost certainly a case of cryptomnesic recall or straight plagiarism of some long forgotten historical novel.

Also greatly overrated is the case of Patience Worth, the spirit of the restoration Quaker girl said to manifest when a Mrs Pearl Curran used the ouija board. Strangely Patience didn't write in the language of *Pilgrim's Progress*, but in an ahistorical

# BOOK Reviews



*All reviews by Peter Rogerson except where stated*

mock-antique olde worlde dialect surely never spoken in life by anyone, but very fashionable among a genre of romantic novelists in the period 1880-1930. Everything about Patience belongs to the early 20th century, not the late 17th. My guess is that Patience was the *real* Pearl Curran, and the rather dim Pearl Curran personality was a social mask she adopted to survive in the company of her dull husband and his duller friends. I find clear parallels with Mrs Frances Elizabeth McFall, the dull wife of a dull army surgeon in late-Victorian Warrington, and her daring new woman alter ego Sarah Grand. One shouldn't be too unkind to Pearl-Patience, anyone with the chutzpah to create a line such as "He pointed to the tall tree that stood over the grave of Willie Pimm Passwater".

Of course not all the cases are as weak as this, but even in the strongest there are large elements of doubt, the cross-correspondences are so vague that they could be made to refer to anything. Is it significant that a high proportion of Stevenson's reincarnation cases involve both rather wealthier previous incarnation fami-

lies, and the kinds of death (and in some cases life) which lead to gossip?

Perhaps the classic case reported here, which highlights all the problems, is the Watseka wonder: a girl named Lurancy Venum, who appeared to be possessed by the spirit of a dead neighbour. Both Lurancy and Mary appear to have been grand hysterics, just the sort of people who today manifest as multiple personality Satan abuse or alien abduction survivors, and one should note Sherrill Mulhern's comment to the effect that these people soak up information from their environment like blotting paper. At one point Lurancy-Mary prophesied that Mary's brother Frank would shortly fall ill. ESP or Munchausen's syndrome by proxy? There is something of a contradiction in Roy's claims: he seems to be saying that the artist Gifford could so possess the goldsmith Thompson that he could produce good pastiches, yet getting the simplest idea across suddenly becomes a difficulty.

I'm not quite sure what Roy's final opinion is, he evokes the archives of the mind, our old friend the psychic ether or information field,

yet again; but then digresses into survival. I think he is saying that we survive as gestalts in the information field, but I'm not sure. If I am not impressed by this sort of evidence, what would be really impressive? I suggest a mathematical or scientific cross correspondence, in which instead of Myers, Gurney *et al*; an alleged Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg *et al* were collaborating on a working, mathematically coherent theory of quantum gravity, and transmitting it through a group of mathematically and scientifically illiterate mediums, who would each be asked to send their portions to one or more physicists. If the results were genuine science and not psychic babble then the evidence for something paranormal would be very strong.

**Shawcross, Tim.** *The Roswell File, Bloomsbury 1997. £16.99.*  
**Kortf, Kal K.** *The Roswell UFO Crash: what they don't want you to know. Prometheus, 1997. £23.00.*  
**Hessoman, Michael and Mantle, Phillip.** *Beyond Roswell: the alien autopsy film, Area 51 and the US government cover-up of UFOs. Michael O'Mara, 1997. £15.99.*

A veritable crop of Roswell books seems to be being generated by the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, of the current yield, Shawcross is the book of the TV documentary *The Roswell Incident* shown on Channel 4 TV last year, and reshowed this July. The cover blurb hypes it as the most thorough investigation yet of the biggest alien story ever, which it wasn't. A better subtitle might have been an innocent in Roswell-land, for though, indeed, Shawcross and his colleagues interviewed a large number of witnesses, he too frequently acts on the adage they look like honest good old boys or kindly little old ladies and therefore can't be lying, or simply be confused with age - and they have good libel lawyers.

One reason for this is Shawcross's lack of any detailed knowledge of the past literature on the case, and in the absence of that kind of investigation, does not perceive the many contradictions between the stories the same people give to different researchers, or the convoluted background of claim and counterclaim among bickering investigators. At times he seems to be persuaded of the genuineness of the autopsy film,

though gradually a more sceptical approach appears to surface, and after examining various options, suggests that the affair may have been caused by some experiment at Los Alamos.

Shawcross's speculations are rendered redundant and his book is wholly superceded by what probably is the most thorough reinvestigation, that of Kal Korff. When I reviewed his book on Billy Meir I said that I hoped he would tackle something more meaty next time, and he has definitely done that. Drawing on his own researches and those of Robert Todd, Korff re-examines the various claims, and dissects them with far more professional skill than that shown by the actors in the autopsy film. Readers of *Magonia* will probably be aware of Robert Todd's demolition of Jesse Marcel, which was noted by Peter Brookesmith in *Government Files*, Korff goes into painstaking detail, leaving the reader in no doubt that Marcel was a fantasist of the first order. Other witnesses such as Frank Kauffman, Loretta Procter and Glen Davies also go down in a mass of contradictions, impossible claims and unverifiable statements. Todd and Korff find witnesses like Irving Newton who were convinced that the debris were from a weather balloon all along.

Korff leads us to the inescapable conclusion that the Roswell debris were from a Project Mogul balloon, and that the great Roswell case which has taken so much of the time, energy, money and reputation of American ufology and ufologists was after all pretty much what the Air Force said it was in the first place. As Korff points out, even through the exaggerations of time, what the witnesses to the debris described was far more compatible with a balloon than with a high tech ET spaceship.

Korff, puts the boot in hard, only Friedman emerges with any credit, as a naive but essentially honest researcher. Of Moore, Randle and Schmitt the less said the better.

Needless to say Korff gives very short shrift to the ludicrous autopsy film, which is the subject of the book by Hesseman and Mantle, and which is by far the wildest Roswell book so far, Korff describing the original manuscript as reaching an all time low. In the published work the fictionalised dialogue has been omitted, but just about the whole of

**Taithe, Bernard and Thornton, Tim. *Prophecy: the power of inspired language in history 1300-2000*. Sutton Publishing, 1997 (Themes in History Series) £40.00, £12.99 pbk.**

A wide range of papers produced as part of a project undertaken by the University of Huddersfield tracing various aspects of prophecy from the middle ages to the present day. Likely to be of particular interest to *Magonia* readers is Rhodi Hayward's study of the 1904/5 Welsh Revival. This provides important background to the story of Mary Jones and the Egryn lights. Mary Jones and Evan Roberts were only two of the charismatic figures produced by this revival. Another, Sarah Jones claimed she could fly to heaven receiving her instruction direct from Christ These messages came in both words and secret patterns of stigmata which were examined and interpreted by her followers. Her disciples engaged in a series of psychic battles against a growing demonic horde which they believed had already invaded parliament. The revival allowed women and young people to criticise the patriarchy, something noted in many possession cults. The revival seems to well fit into Elaine Showater's concept of 'hystory'.

Other papers I would draw attention to are J. A. C. Roberts' study of the Taiping Rebellion, Peter Davies study of the use of millennial imagery by the French National Front, and of particular interest to me, Tim Thornton's examination of the literature of the prophecies Robert Nixon the Cheshire Prophet and Mother Shipton. This shows that while the former were used by Oldmixton as Hanoverian propaganda, they were not actually invented by, it seems likely that the Nixon prophecies emerged from the earlier Prophecies of Thomas the Rhymer some time in the late 16th century.

ufological folklore is endorsed: Area 51, the lies told by Richard Doty, John Lear and Bob Lazar, ancient astronauts, the Cydonia face, MJ12, rumours that Marilyn Monroe was killed by the CIA because JFK had spilled the beans to her about the aliens in pillow talk.

In many ways it is significant that Jesse Marcel Jnr. produces a foreword to this book above all, for it suggests that this farrago, and not the cleaned up versions flogged to and by the ufological establishment, is what is really circulating at grass roots level. Roswell is inseparable from the whole background of general conspiracism, and beliefs in back-engineering alien technology and bodies in vats.

If as seems likely, Roswell has gone the way of the Bermuda Triangle, then the implications go far beyond ufology and the paranormal; they call into question whole genres of investigative journalism and oral history. Supporters of Roswell were no doubt right in arguing that in more normal fields, the Roswell stories would not have subject to the same scepticism. Yet the sceptics were right on Roswell. How many other more mainstream tales of secret experiments or hidden scandals, taken at face value by investigative journalists like Shawcross, who like peoples open, honest faces, are equally dubious?

**Schnabel, Jim. *Remote Viewers: the secret history of America's psychics spies*. Dell, 1997. £5.25, pbk.**

The point I just made about investigative journalism and oral history having to viewed with caution applies with spades here, another book based on a documentary. Jim Schnabel traces, largely through the memories of those who participated, the story of what must surely be the strangest episode in the US's military history; the use by the military and intelligence services in the 70s and 80s of remote viewers. This work arose out the experiments conducted by Targ and Puthoff and the Stanford Research Institute with the likes of Ingo Swann and Pat Price. The main purpose of the remote viewers was to home in on, using what used to be called travelling clairvoyance, enemy military targets.

Schnabel appears less sceptical in this book than in *Round in Circles* and *Dark White*, and seems rather impressed with what he is told. Sceptics will point out that he has had no way of independently checking what his informants told him, they may themselves have genuinely believed they were capable of remote viewing, but that doesn't mean that it was so. An immediate thought is that many of the impressions received could, with a bit of stretching, apply to a great many places.

Toward the end of the projects, the participants clearly got bored with visiting the same old weapons factories etc., and decided that investigating ETs and their hidden bases on Mars and Earth, their powers, reasons for being here etc. The result obviously owes everything to collective imagination and nothing to psychic powers. Not for nothing did these techniques used to be known as active imagination.

Schnabel tried his hand at remote viewing and seems rather convinced by the results, yet he to comes up with stereotyped imagery of ET vehicles, just what his supervisor wanted to hear. Subtle cueing telepathy?, Schnabel isn't sure, but it gives us a clue as to what is going on in all these imagination work activities.

In the course of their work, the remote viewers at times seemed to entered very much into alternate states and virtual realities, where all sorts of spooky stuff happened, including a vision of a severed arm, followed by a visit from an MIB: "He was nondescript and unthreatening somewhere in middle age. He walked... very slowly, with a stiff gait to the middle of the room... He turned around and said in an oddly stilted voice, Oh I guess... I must... be... in... the wrong... room And with that he walked out slowly, stiffly, giving all of them time to see that one sleeve of his grey suit pinned to his side, was empty..."

Though not perhaps as sceptical as it might have been, this book nonetheless provides an illuminating portrait of the strange characters involved, and the extent to which the military shared the popular paranormal folklore. A world of characters like General Stubblebine, alias General Spoonbender and his spoon bending parties. Wouldn't Sergeant Bilko have loved it.

**Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer (editor). *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*. Cornell University Press, 1997. £19.50, pbk.**

This collection of essays traces in chronological fashion the influence of broadly occult and paranormal beliefs on Russian culture. The main emphasis is on elite culture, most especially literature, from the mid nineteenth-century onwards, but wider topics are also addressed. In some respects these essays parallel the studies of the influence of western occultism from the mid nineteenth century onwards undertaken by historians such as

James Webb, and one can certainly see how much Imperial Russia shared in many of the cultural trends of the period.

A theme of several of the writers is not quite 'the occult roots of Bolshevism', but certainly the extent to which occult and pseudoscientific ideas were given a scientific gloss in the early Bolshevik era. Of particular interest are discussions of Cosmicism a sort of scientific, or science fictional quasi-religion, derived in part from the ideas of Nikolai Fedorov (1828-1903). Central to this movement's manic technicism, reminiscent of H. G. Wells at his most grandiose, was a belief in space exploration, both for the purpose of collecting the dispersed atoms of the dead so they could be scientifically resurrected, and for providing homes for said resurrected. This idea of a central, quasi-totalitarian cosmic task for humankind, finds echoes in the techno-process theology of such Western science writers as Frank Tipler and David Darling.

Home for many fringe thinkers in both Imperial and early Soviet Russia was the town of Kaluga. Among its residents was the astronautics pioneer Konstantin Tsiolkovsky who, according to Michael Hegenmeister, writing in this volume, "believed in the existence of conscious intelligent beings, more perfect than humans but nearly incorporeal, ethereal and therefore incomprehensible to us... [who]... send messages to humans using atmospheric or heavenly sym-

bols, and averred that he himself was twice witness to such events." Tsiolkovsky appears to have believed that humanity would eventually transmute into a form of immortal radiant energy. When one notes the spiritualistic and occult beliefs of the German rocket pioneer (and incidentally supporter to the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party) Herman Oberth, who received messages of cosmic wisdom channelled from an entity called Rho Sigma, the possibility of a radically revisionist history of the space race opens up. Another person involved in this tradition was the psychological researcher Leonid Vasiliev, while Maxim Gorky had a strong interest in telepathy as a possible means of propagandising the masses.

Holly Stephens examines the numerous strands of occult beliefs in Russia today, many of which will eventually come over to the west no doubt, while in her conclusion Dr Rosenthal traces the political implications of occult beliefs in Russia from the turn of the century to today. Some of these have clear radical-right overtones, and show similarities to the ideas of the French radical right occultist Jacques Bergier, including admiration for Rene Gueron. Dr Rosenthal concludes that as the year 2000 looms ever closer the occult threats to fuse with apocalyptic fears in extremist political ideologies. Politically the occult is dangerous. Fusion paranoia is as alive and well in Russia as in the States.

**Gilbert, James. *Redeeming Culture: American religion in an age of science*. University of Chicago Press, 1997. \$28.95.**

Traces the relationship between religion and science in the period from 1945 to circa 1965. The emphasis here is on how religious bodies sought to work with science, present their own versions of it, the relationship of the two with the mass media. Of main interest to *Magonia* readers is likely to be the discussion of the Velikovsky affair, concentrating on Velikovsky's adversarial relationship with the astronomer Harlow Shapely, and his supportive relationship with the philosopher Horace Kallen. Gilbert sees religious concerns at the heart of Velikovsky's project, the need to authenticate the history of the newly independent state of Israel. Also of interest is a discussion of the UFO controversy based on research in the papers of Donald Menzel. No great surprises there. Gilbert also discusses Menzel's general involvement in the problems of religion and science, including his collaboration with Frank Capra as an adviser to the cartoon *Our Mr Sun* and his role as an advisor to the space exhibit at the Seattle World Science Fair of 1962. What stuck me was how foreign the past of the 1950;s now looks. Can one imagine the US government promoting scientific sermons by the Moody Institute of Science now? Though the topics discussed here are of great relevance to our interests, I can't say this treatment sparkles, it has a curiously old-fashioned air to it; and I never got a sense of real insight as opposed to reportage.

**Bevan, Richard and Shoohan, Willem. *In search of planet Vulcan: the ghost in Newton's dockwork universe*. Plethora Trade, 1997 \$28.95.**

This excellent piece of science history writing tells the story of the search for the phantom planet, Vulcan which was thought to lie inside the orbit of Mercury, and to explain anomalies in the orbit of that planet; similar anomalies in the orbit of Uranus having led to the discovery of Neptune. One of the principals in that discovery, the leading French astronomer J. J. Le Verrier was the main protagonist in the search for the mystery planet or planets which were thought to be perturbing Mercury's orbit. Soon evidence for the mystery planet began to emerge, most importantly a sighting by the obscure country doctor, Lescarbault. Despite many searches no real confirmation was ever found, though occasional sightings were recorded, most notably those by the American astronomers James C. Watson and his disciple Lewis Swift. The development of the general theory of relativity by Einstein explained the anomalies of Mercury's orbit without reference to Vulcan and the episode vanished into history.

This book is, of course, primarily aimed at a readership interested in a history of astronomy and covers a much wider ground than the search for Vulcan itself. It does mean that, though the authors make a passing reference to the similarity with the claimed discovery of the canals of Mars, they do not really place the supposed discovery of Vulcan in the full context of pathological science. Vulcan however fits in there perfectly; the charismatic promoter, the ambiguous observations made in difficult circumstances, the bandwagon jumpers, the failure of concerted searches but just enough titbits of anecdotal evidence to whet the appetites of a small coterie of true believers.

**Brown, Courtney. *Cosmic voyage: a scientific discovery of extraterrestrials visiting Earth*. Dutton, 1996 £20.99.**

The story of Courtney Brown, and his claim that the comet Hale-Bopp was being shadowed by an alien space ship which he had visited by remote viewing has recently figured in FT and elsewhere. This book tells the whole

sad story of this obscure and apparently rational college professor became convinced by using techniques he calls remote viewing, but others would

call active imagination, that he was in telepathic communication with Martians who were shortly going to seek economic asylum on earth. Indeed there is a colony of them in Nevada right now, to say nothing of the Greys, and just for a change Jesus, God etc. This is someone who actually thinks in Startreckese, and the book never rises above the banal. It would perhaps be over-charitable to conclude that it is a simple fraud as I fear that the author probably believes it all. As such it is sad demonstration of the depths of near imbecile credulity and self delusion that formerly rational and intelligent people can plunge when they take a belief in the paranormal and a literal interpretation of the fantasies generated by active imagination techniques to their illogical limits. One reason that Brown might have got like this is his involvement with Transcendental Meditation. Warning TM can seriously damage your sense of the absurd!

## AARDVARK BOOKS

UFOs,  
Cryptozoology  
Psychic Research  
Ghosts  
Conspiracies  
Urban Legends  
Fortean  
Fringe Science

A wide range of books on these topics and more is always available. send large SAE for booklists. Let me know your interests.

**Peter Rogerson,  
8 Braddon Avenue,  
Urmston, Manchester,**

**Cassirer, Manfred. *Medium on trial: the story of Helen Duncan and the Witchcraft Act*. P. N. Publications, 1996. £12.50 pbk.**

In this somewhat confusingly arranged book, which plunges into its subject without as it were setting the scene fully, Manfred Cassirer tries a piece of heroic historical revisionism, the rehabilitation of Helen Duncan, a medium generally regarded as pretty much the epitome of fraudulent mediums, and telling the story of her brushes with the law. Alas, the photographs reproduced in this book suggest that his task is going to be about as fruitful as that of those wishing to argue that Hitler and Stalin were kindly, much maligned, old coves. They shriek fake, and Cassirer has to concede as much, indeed I think one would be hard pressed to find any five year old children who would think that the materialised Peggy is a crudely put together doll, indeed its face looks like it once belonged to a Mr Punch who had seen better days. With this as the only evidence that we can examine for ourselves Cassirer's arguments which boil down to the fact that people who were not obviously unbalanced, and had had a reasonable education had testified to her genuineness just don't cut any ice.

Indeed he himself related an episode which may give a clue as to what is really going on in these cases. A group of people in a psychologist's role playing game came to believe that the people playing a certain role, say their mother, had taken on the mannerisms and features of their mother. This suggests how inadequate naive realist views of perception are, and points to the very strong role that memory, imagination and the brain's pattern building abilities can play in our building up models and narratives of the world. Normally these models are indeed a close replica of the world out there, but there are conditions when they are not, and this can lead to situations in which someone looking at the medium or even a crude doll may indeed see a very clear mental image of Aunt Bertha or whatever.

**Clarke, C. J. S. *Reality Through the Looking Glass: science and awareness in the post modern***

**world. Floris Books, 1996. £11.99, pbk.**

More post modernist correctness, with ritual obsequies to Carlos Castaneda, even though Clarke reluctantly has to admit that he was probably a fake, though doesn't seem to think that matters much. There are the oh, so, politically correct denunciations of the patriarchy, references to the nine million victims of the witch burnings (actually latest estimates 40,000-100,000), and so on. I get the feeling that people like this actually do believe that if you accept that the earth goes around the sun you are part of the forces of oppression

**Storr, Anthony. *Feet of Clay: a study of Gurus*. HarperCollins, 1997. £6.99, pbk.**

The Jungian psychologist, Anthony Storr, studies the personalities of the charismatic religious and philosophical leaders he terms Gurus; those who dispense spiritual advice to us lesser mortals. Among those that Storr discusses are Jim Jones, David Koresh Gurdjieff, Rayneesh, Steiner, Jung, Paul Brutton, and perhaps more controversially Loyola and Jesus. Storr sees these spiritual leaders as essentially narcissistic, self absorbed individuals who can attract disciples but not friends. Many appear to have had at least one major psychological breakdown in their lives from which they have emerged with a sense of certainty and mission.

Much of what Storr writes about these figures can be applied with equal force to a wide range of charismatic figures ranging from L Ron Hubbard to Alistair Crowley, political cult leaders such as Lyndon La Rouche and Gerry Healey, from micro-tyrants such as Fred West or the tyrannical care workers recently in the news, to the real McCoy such as Saddam Hussein and Pol Pot. All these figures can inspire obedience and devotion despite actions ranging from the mildly absurd to the terrifying.

There is a problem with such psychological approaches, in they can be used to pathologise or medicalise any religious or political views one happens to find unattractive, and to some extent Storr falls into that trap. He does not seem to be aware of the wide body of sociology of religion literature on new religious

movements; and in the case of Koresh relies on wildly sensational press reports of the sacrifice of babies etc.

**Jenny Randles. *Investigating the Truth Behind MIB the Men in Black Phenomenon*, Piatkus, 1997. £8.99.**

It is tempting to attribute the MIB motif in ufology to writers such as Gray Barker, James Moseley or John Keel, but UFO witnesses really do receive visits from journalists, ufologists and, occasionally, police officers and government officials. In this book Jenny Randles valiantly attempts to make some kind of sense out of the often bizarre MIB stories, and she does it in a manner which is both entertaining and informative.

One of Jenny's main theories is that many of the MIB are real and are government agents investigating UFO reports and witnesses. Their eccentric behaviour is deliberate in order to make reports about them seem incredible and thus to discourage serious enquiries into their activities.

There are some cases, though, where this explanation somehow doesn't seem to fit. For example, there was the case which began with the witness seeing merely "a white light moving slowly across the sky". He said that he was visited by two men claiming to be from the Ministry of Defence, who told him that the object was only a Russian satellite. Later the witness complained to investigators that two men in a black Jaguar car were parking outside his house at nights. Eventually the police were persuaded to investigate.

Now, ufologists are familiar with mysterious cars which stalk UFO witnesses. (Students of modern folklore will also be aware of the cars used by bogus social workers and suchlike.) In these cases witnesses hardly ever note the car registration number. On those rare occasions when they do, things can get complicated.

**Devers, Edie. *Goodbye Again: experiences with departed loved ones*. Andrews and McMeel (Universal Press Syndicate 4520 Main Street, Kansas City, Missouri, 64111) 1997, \$18.95, £11.99.**

Probably the first book length treatment of experiences of the bereaved which they interpret as encounters with their deceased loved ones. These range from both solid looking, classical SPR type apparitions, through wispy folkloric ghosts to omens, noises, smells and vague senses of presence. The memorates collected here seem to reflect the coexistence of very traditional motifs and beliefs

Well, the police staked out the area and at this point you will be thinking that the car failed to appear, leaving witness and ufologists grinning sheepishly, having wasted the valuable time of busy coppers with better things to do. But the car did appear, so we are told, and the police took its number, which they quickly found not to be registered. Now they were really interested and were instructed to bring in the occupants for questioning the following night. So the car failed to appear the following night, then? No, it was there all right and two policemen walked up to it, one on each side and (pause for fit of giggles) what happened next? Yes, you've got it! The car "just melted away into nothingness".

Jenny admits that this means the men in the car were unlikely to be government agents, and that the police made no official record of this unlikely incident, which "makes the case hard for anyone to verify".

This is obviously one of the numerous MIB cases where the problem is to discover who is kidding whom. Or do we need to look for more subtle psychological explanations? These would include confabulation, hallucinations, delusions and false memories. It's very easy for people involved in MIB and other strange goings on to get confused, as in a case efficiently investigated and explained by the Northern Anomalies Research Organisation. Unfortunately, the strict dress code imposed on ufologists in north-west England (which we have previously mentioned in *Magonia*) led some people to believe that witnesses had been visited by MIB, who were really only NARO members wearing their regulation dark suits.

There are many other weird stories in this book, and Jenny considers all reasonable explanations, and a few unreasonable ones. I enjoyed reading it and consider it a valuable contribution to the literature on this subject. **JH**

**Showalter, Elaine. *Hysterics: historical epidemics and modern culture*. Picador, 1997. £16.99.**

Elaine Showalter traces the development of the concept of hysteria and asks the question what has happened to hysteria today. She finds it alive and well and living in the social panics and rumours of our age.

In the first part of her book, Showalter chronicles the changing concepts of hysteria and provides definitions. The one that seems to fit most is that of a socially constructed mimetic illness, the symptoms of which can vary from culture to culture. She notes the profound difficulties which arise in just providing an acceptable and coherent definition of the what this illness; really is. She quotes one expert Richard Webster as suggesting the term spectral symptoms, could we perhaps suggest the terms virtual symptoms and or virtual illness, and thus link up with other kinds of virtual experience

From the beginning hysteria was usually associated with women, and there is a troubled relationship between the notions of hysteria and feminism; a circumstance not helped by the use of the term hysteria as a general term of abuse, particularly in England, where it is seen as something belonging to the lesser breeds without. Male hysteria was seen as even more problematical and new terms had to be invented to allow discussion to take place.

Showalter documents the role of charismatic figures like Charcot and Freud in the study of hysteria; and traces the development of Freud's views on repressed memory and sexual abuse, originally proposing that hysteria was the result of repressed memories of sexual abuse; later changing his mind and suggesting that they were the result of suppressed incestuous desires on the part of the child. Showalter suggests neither is correct, and that the memories of abuse Freud uncovered were the result of suggestion. She provides examples of previous psychogenic outbreaks, and suggests that there is strong element of psychogenic infection in the spread of anorexia and bulimia.

The second part, the image of the hysteric in literature and film is something which I will pass over for the third part of this book, the study of

## "Showalter's book is not the ultimate solution, but it is one you should all read"

six modern examples of hysterical epidemics. These are Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; Gulf War Syndrome, recovered memories of abuse, multiple personality disorder, Satanic abuse memories and memories of alien abductions. The four latter cases have of course all been the subject of intense discussion in *Magonia*. Much of Showalter's arguments will be familiar to our readers, and in the case of the alien abduction narratives her discussion is limited to a handful of texts. She does make the important point that all these movement link in to the pervasive paranoid mood of the times. One might also add that they contain one core common motif, the idea that between the interstices of our normal lives, we lead another, secret life, and in the majority of these cases that life is a sinister one. If our overt life cannot explain our present discontents then maybe the covert life of the gaps in the narratives of our memories can.

Multiple personality provides the ultimate excuse, like the child blaming the spilt milk and broken window on the imaginary companion, it is not the 'real me' that is responsible for bad behaviour, failure to act according to socially sanctioned roles, and or general foul mood, it is the 'other, the stranger within'. Though Showalter does not refer to it, the alters have taken on a more sinister role, that of the betrayer within. Satanic abuse victims will complain that treacherous alters have revealed their whereabouts to the cults and have taken them to the meetings. We have gone beyond the ultimate betrayer being the traitor in the house, now it is the traitor in the head. This must be the ultimate paranoia, you're not only persecuted by and cannot trust everyone else, you cannot trust yourself, and you are persecuting you.

Newer to *Magonia* readers, and it would appear by far the most controversial of the ideas in this

book is the discussion of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Gulf War Syndrome in terms of hysterical outbreaks. While many people would accept that people who claim to have been the victims or perpetrators of mass cannibalism, or to have been transported through solid walls by invisible aliens are probably not relating events taking place in the space of physics and geography, and that their full biographies often reveal they have very strange troubled lives not like most peoples, the victims of CFS and GWS are often, on the surface at least, the epitome of normality. Surely their very real symptoms cannot be all in the mind?

*Magonia* readers will have realised by now the falsity of such arguments, and Showalter makes a very good case indeed. She points out that CFS/ME is in fact a new label for a syndrome which has been known for a long time under a variety of labels; neurasthenia, nervous exhaustion etc. (I could add that what were the same symptoms were often labelled in the 1920s -1950s as anaemia. In adolescents they were often referred to as growing pains). These were all syndromes with multiple, free floating protean symptoms which leave few physical traces. As Showalter points out, if someone says they are tired how can you prove it otherwise. The descriptions that Showalter includes including hypersensitivity to sound and light read like the characters in *Just William* books who were 'martyrs to their nerves'.

It also sounds like the mysterious electromagnetic allergies and other varieties of Total Allergy Syndromes, whose alleged sufferers never seem to have the classic symptoms of swelling and shock displayed by sufferers from real allergies. These are surely mimetic, virtual allergies. Showalter wonders what has happened to classic Charcotian grand

hysteria That is alive and well and living in the allergy clinics. Albert Budden's claim that there is a link between abduction type experiences and these allergies may well be true, but what that link signifies is a common psychogenic origin linking two apparently quite separate histories.

From TAS with its evocation of ideas of contamination and pollution, indeed one might call it the ideologisation of obsessive compulsive rituals of cleanliness, it is a short step to Gulf War Syndrome, a modern myth of contamination. Some of the accounts related by Showalter brings this out clearly. One woman experienced a burning sensation when he husbands semen touches her skin, another that her husbands semen is a toxic substance that causes sores, blisters which actually open and bleed. To these women their husbands semen is a transmitter of the pollution of war. Is this a medicalised version of the traditional belief that the returning warrior must undergo some ceremony of ritual purification to wash the blood and hate of battle away before re-entering domestic life. Without it semen is not a carrier of life, but a bringer of death.

To what extent a purely psychological explanation suffices for these rumours is problematic, my own guess is that there is no separate psychological space that is not also inhabited on the one side by society and on the other by biology. The psychogenic conflicts discussed by the Freudian psychologists seem to involve a constant struggle between the demands and biology and the demands of society. Our myths reflect not just personal fears but those of a whole society. Hysteria is born out of absence of power, the need to affirm some control in an uncontrolled world. The narratives of abduction and abuse reflect the powerlessness, still felt most acutely by women, but as down-sizing continues will appear more and more in the male population. The syndromes and virtual diseases, one might call them somatic rumours, may be escape roots. CFS/ME offers a socially acceptable parachute out of the rat race. In a radically medicalised society disease becomes the only mechanism of political protest.

Showalter's book is not the ultimate solution, but it is another brick in the wall, and one you should all read.

## H O L D   T H E   B A C K   P A G E



### Cat and Mousehole Game

Well we finally found some genuine catnapping, and, guess what? It's not wicked German Ukrainian Jewish fur-traders, Chinese restaurateurs or evil Satanists who are doing it, but good old British cat-lovers. The little Cornish fishing village of Mousehole (yes!) has been plagued by holiday-makers trying to make of with the local kitties after reading the best-selling children's book *The Mousehole Cat*, which tells the story of Old Tom and his cat Mowzer, who risk their lives to bring back fish for the famished villagers at Christmas.

Local cat owner Sue Bartley, seen in our winsome picture with her cat Dennis, heard a visitor's child ask of her own cat "Is it

Mowzer's baby?" She says: "Next thing I knew they had picked it up and were down the street." When she accused the visitor of stealing her cat the man said he though Dennis was a stray, and "the child went crazy and accused me of stealing Mowzer. I had to tell him there was no such cat..."

David Redhead, the local newsagent, said it was common to see visitors looking for black and white cats: "They all want to touch Mowzer - even adults. If you said anything you would be destroying a dream." *Sunday Telegraph*, 24 August 1997.

### The Cult of Diana

The outpouring of public grief after the tragic death of Princess Diana seems to be taking on some of the aspects of a potential cult. Besides the

vast number of offerings that were left at the Royal Palaces, we have seen the modern equivalent of small wayside shrines being set up: even a poster pinned to some railings in Mortlake High Street attracted bunches of flowers. Elsewhere visions of Diana have been seen. People queuing to sign books of condolence at Kensington Palace reported that her face appeared in a portrait hanging in a corridor. There has been an account of a medieval-sounding miraculous birth: the *Daily Mail* reported that a baby born while the funeral was taking place did not cry until the two-minute silence period was over.

The death of Mother Teresa at almost the same time contributed to a sort of aura of saintliness over both women and there have been suggestions that the two should be canonised, although those making these calls seem to have little idea of what this process involves. It would seem that the next stage in this process might be 'miraculous' healings attributed to the Princess. We await developments.

### He Spelt Our Name Right

Quote of the Quarter comes from *Spacemen, Demons and Conspiracies*, by Jerome Clark (FUFOR, 1997): "The psychosocial hypothesis proved to be a theory more suited to counter-culturalists, Jungians, English majors [what's the army got to do with it? Ed.], and librarians..." - ooooh, those librarians, they are awful - "By the end of the 1980s, psychosocial ufology had run out of intellectual energy, but its still-walking corpse wanders

through the pages of England's *Magonia*, edited by John Rimmer, with regular contributions from such keepers of the flame as Peter Rogerson, Hilary Evans, Martin S. Kottmeyer [never knew about the 'S'; what does that stand for? Ed.] and Nigel Watson, and continues to make its presence felt in *Fortean Times*..."

Thanks for the mention Jerry, we look forward to reviewing your monograph in the next issue if you care to send us a copy. Now I must go and adjust my shroud.



### Stamping Ground

After its 'ufology' stamp (BackPage, *Magonia* 60) San Marino has produced another remarkably Magonian postage stamp. Reproducing some obscure comic strip called *Dylan Dog* (*sic.*), the stamp shows a Magonia-like ship sailing through the clouds strongly reminiscent of this magazine's logo. The post office's publicity blurb says that the hero of the strip, his face inspired by Rupert Everett: "is reserved but fascinating... he confronts demons and zombies, monsters, vampires and those horrors that are within us all..." Much like you average *Magonia* editor really.

