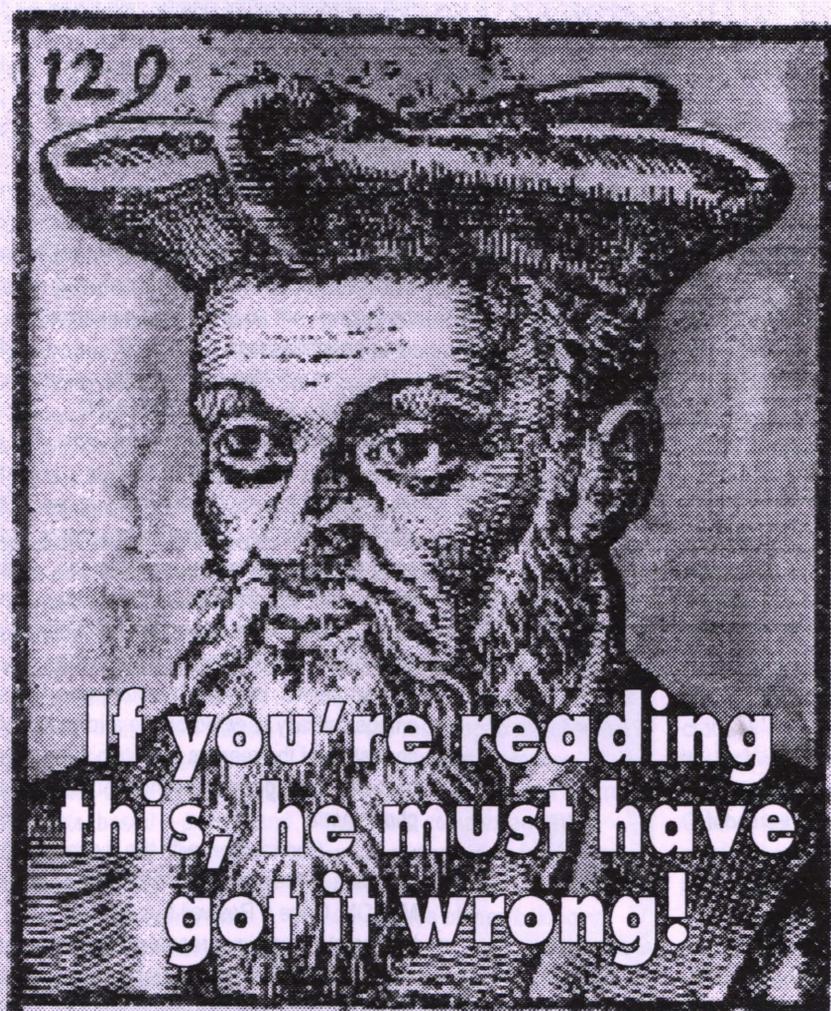


MAGONIA

INTERPRETING CONTEMPORARY VISION AND BELIEF

JUNE 1999 / £1.25

Steven Woodbridge reviews the dark history of contemporary conspiracy theories, and **Rory Lushman** recounts a close encounter with a curious contactee!



How do Nostradamus's prophecies check out when it really matters?

Gareth Medway investigates

SECOND ROGER SANDELL ESSAY COMPETITION - SEE PAGE 19



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EDITORIAL

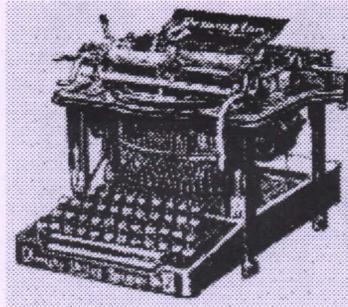
On the weekend of 24th-25th May I attended the Fortean Times UnConvention at the Commonwealth Institute in London. Apart from the dreadful location (no general meeting space, appalling catering facilities with

Old Speckled Hen at £2.20 a bottle at the sad substitute for a bar, and the only decent pub in the neighbourhood closed for renovation) it was an enjoyable and fascinating event. I don't want to give an account of the talks and speakers, no doubt *Fortean Times* itself will do that.

Fortean Times is a magazine with a predominantly young readership, and this was represented in the attendees at the UnConvention: most of whom were under thirty. But this was not the crowd of eager-believers that some media coverage of the event might lead those unfamiliar with *FT* to expect. Most of the presentations I hear were, in the truest sense of the word, sceptical. But it was a scepticism born of knowledge of the subject, not an unthinking debunking of an unfamiliar topic.

Andy Roberts' definitive explanation of the Berwyn Mountain 'UFO Crash' was the very antithesis of 'arm-chair ufology'. Andy actually got out there, talked to people, undertook an exemplary search of contemporary records and came up with an unassailable account of the events which actually took place. This account denied any possibility of extraterrestrial involvement in the Berwyn events, yet Andy's lecture was enthusiastically cheered by the audience consisting of the readers of Britain's best-selling magazine of controversial phenomena.

Contrast this with the reception that Kent Jeffrey received at the hands of MUFOB. Once a Roswell true believer, he was also a serious researcher who was prepared to look at the evidence open-mindedly. Unfortunately, when he did this the cracks in the Roswell myth began to show and he found himself unable to take the crashed saucer story at face value. When he published his doubts in *MUFON UFO Journal*, unfortunately much of the readership were unable to accept an honest change of mind in the face of overwhelming evidence. He



was accused of being "an agent for the Government", which had obviously "got to him".

I doubt very much that anyone in Britain is even going to attempt to claim that Andy

Roberts is an agent of the government - although someone seeming as little like a government agent as Andy, is clearly the best person to have as a government agent.

There seems to yet another divide between British (or European) ufology, and the American variety, although doubt Jerome Clark will regard this comment as yet more anti-Americanism by uninformed British librarians. But it seems to me that European sceptics by and large come to their position *through* the medium of UFO research. People like Andy Roberts, David Clark, Thierry Pinvidic, Bertrand Meheurst, Hilary Evans and Peter Brooksmith have only adopted a sceptical position after years of firsthand investigation.

Although American sceptics like Phil Klass, Robert Schaeffer and James Oberg produce well-researched and logical demolitions of ufological sacred cows, they are never accepted into the mainstream of American ufology in the same way. Often coming from a technical or military-industrial milieu rather than developing their scepticism within ufology, they are more open to unjust targeting as 'government agents'.

Those American who do develop a sceptical position as a result of their involvement in the UFO world are rapidly marginalised. An interesting example is the way that Dennis Stacy was given the bum's rush from *MUFON UFO Journal* after publishing Jeffrey's about-turn on Roswell.

The reasons for this interesting divergence would form the basis of a longer article, but it is just one of the many fascinating differences between British and US ufology. Another one is why do so many American ufologists (judging from their pictures in *MUFON UFO Journal*) look like members of the local Rotary Club, while most British ufologists look like the audience at rock reunion tours?

Plots against the World

Alleged secret plots have dominated ufology since the 1940s, but conspiracy mongering has a longer and darker history.

Steven Woodbridge throws some light on the disturbing historical background to modern conspiracy theories.

God did not appear on television on 25 March 1998, much to the disappointment of a Dallas-based UFO cult and to the glee of newspaper and media commentators. Throughout that month Chen Hongming, prophet and leader of the 150-strong 'God's Salvation Church' (also known as the 'True Way') gained massive media publicity by predicting that the Heavenly Father would appear on TV to announce the date of his descent to earth. Mr Chen also claimed that the world has been corrupted by evil, and would suffer a 'Great Tribulation' of economic crisis, floods, and the onset of nuclear war. He also argued that members of his group would be saved from these events by being taken to another planet in flying saucers.

THE CASE OF THE 'TRUE WAY' is yet another example of the tremendous growth in pseudo-religious cults and other 'conspiracy' groups that are accompanying us as we move into the 21st century. Some of these, such as the 'True Way', are merely very eccentric and have tapped into the latest burst of Millennial / New Age thought and ufology. Other groups are more sinister and fanatical. Not only are they able to persuade their members that the end of the century heralds Armageddon, but that their way to salvation is through mass suicide. In the 1990's alone we have witnessed already the tragic activities of the Order of the Solar Temple, based in Switzerland and Canada, and the California-based Heaven's Gate. Some cult ideologies go even further than self-sacrifice and advocate terrorist tactics against 'decadent' non-believers. The Japanese Aum sect demonstrated the horrific consequences of such ideas with their gas attack on the Tokyo Metro rail system.

There is also another disturbing trend that has arisen out of millenarianism and the calls for 'salvation' and 'survival' in the face of impending doom. This is the revival of extreme Right-wing con-

spiracy theory. It is feeding off the idea that present-day society can no longer offer solutions to our problems and that all democratic politics is corrupt and decadent. The massive bomb that destroyed the Federal Building in Oklahoma City on 19 April 1995, claimed 168 lives and shocked American public opinion to the core. Not only did it overturn the illusion that the world's most powerful nation was immune to domestic terrorism, it also made Americans realise that they no longer afford to ignore the increasing number of their fellow citizens who are resorting to membership of extreme right-wing groups. (1)

In the face of a seemingly more complex age such groups are providing fearful and dislocated individuals in America with a sense of firm 'belonging' once again. But there is also refuge in simplistic conspiracy theories about the world as it struggles to cope with the problems that abound at the end of the twentieth century. In fact there is the growing conviction in extreme right-wing circles, and moreover in wider American and European culture (expressed in TV series such as *Dark Skies* and *X-Files*) that the world is being controlled by 'secret' forces, shadowy networks of powerful groups who

dictate to governments, manipulate populations and cause 'spiritual' decline. A variety of methods of control by these anonymous forces are pointed to: governments are supposedly employing mass brainwashing techniques through the media and education, and claims that subliminal messages are being beamed into homes through television sets to control unsuspecting viewers. New secret technologies, which may be extraterrestrial in origin, are sometimes cited. Surveillance by satellites and alteration to human behaviour by drugs or microchips are also mentioned. Timothy McVeigh, who was sentenced to death for his involvement in the Oklahoma bombing, claimed at one point that a microchip had been implanted in his left buttock. (2)

McVeigh's supporters on the extreme right and the numerous militia groups also voiced their belief that the US government, through the FBI has deliberately blown up the Federal Building in order to justify a nationwide clampdown on any groups who might oppose a takeover of the nation by agents of a new World Government. Such material was disseminated widely by the Internet and was lapped up eagerly by the extreme right in many other coun-

1. On the growth of such groups see Martin Durham: 'Preparing for Armageddon: Citizen Militias, the Patriotic Movement and the Oklahoma Bombing', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol.8, no.1, 1996.
2. Robert S Robins and Jerrold M Post. *Political Paranoia: Psychopolitics of Hatred*. London, Yale University Press, 1997. p.209.
3. *US News and World report*, 21 December 1997.
4. Roger Sandell, 'The World of Conspiracy Theories', *Magonia* 5, 1980.
5. Norman Cohn. *Warrant for Genocide: the myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1996. p.66.
6. *Ibid.* p.171
7. On Webster's career, see Richard Gilman: *Behind World Revolution; the Strange Career of Nesta H. Webster*. Michigan, Insight Books, 1982.
8. Nesta Webster. 'Communism or Fascism', *Fascist Bulletin*, 1 May 1926, p.1.
9. Arnold Leese. *Freemasonry*, (1935) (Sons of Liberty edition, n.d.) p.5.
10. Arnold Leese. *The Jewish War of Survival* (1945) (Sons of Liberty edition, n.d.) p.92.
11. A. H. M. Ramsay, *The Nameless War*. (1952) p.26.
12. See, for instance, 'Neo-Nazis Rally to "Son of Godhead"', *Sunday Times*, 9 July 1995.

tries. In many ways the Oklahoma bombing was a watershed in the development of a new wave of conspiracy theories in the 1990s and in the growth of the groups which advocate such ideas. The FBI reported in December 1997, for example, that it was now involved with more than nine hundred investigations into home-grown activist groups, compared to a hundred before Oklahoma. (3)

The extreme right itself probably perpetrated the bombing partly out of revenge for the FBI's mishandling of the Branch Davidian siege at Waco in 1993. Although this sect was a religious cult group rather than a right-wing extremist organisation, it did blur some of the differences between pseudo-religious ideas and some extreme right-wing attitudes. It was led by a charismatic leader who had convinced his group of the need for collective armed resistance in the face of a hostile central government. The FBI's mishandling of the infamous siege at Waco brought sympathy and gave ammunition to other groups that sought for 'freedom' from the state. In particular American neo-Nazis argued that it was an example of how the US Government was prepared to trample over the freedoms of any groups who disagreed with the allegedly totalitarian values of mainstream liberal society. At the same time they carefully avoided the evident contradiction contained in their own fascist ideologies, which envision the construction of a strong 'alternative' state based on a mixture of Nazism and 'Christian' white supremacy. As far as they are concerned the key 'fact' is that Waco exemplified a conspiracy by 'ZOG' - the Zionist Occupation Government. To frighten and lie to the general public in preparation for an oppressive New World Order. Significantly, Timothy McVeigh had been influenced by a video called *Waco - the Big Lie*. Although it would be a distortion to lump together all the neo-Nazi, militia and cult groups (many militia groups disassociate themselves from the neo-Nazis) certain common beliefs have emerged.

In general Waco and

Oklahoma have taken on mythical proportions among the many US groups who believe that governments cannot be trusted. Outside the USA there has also been a notable growth in 'cultist' and New Age groups which, while not always adhering to extreme right-wing viewpoints, often tend to view democratic and materialist society as decadent and corrupt and governments as nothing more than huge lie machines. Furthermore they argue in their propaganda to potential recruits that the only way to escape the slide into societal breakdown is to set up pure elites of selected individuals who must prepare for the supposedly inevitable collapse of 'the system'. In the meantime secret organisational strategies must be pursued in order to outwit the insidious arms of the State or the outside world, promoting a them-and-us mentality.

Indeed, as the century draws to a close there are now many examples of cross-fertilisation between a wide variety of cults and groups who all hold in common esoteric beliefs and conspiracy views about the nature of the modern world. In 1980 Roger Sandell reflected on 'The World of Conspiracy Theories' and pointed out that the conspiracy tradition has a long political history. (4) He located the origins of modern conspiracy theory in the 1790s when the fear of revolution, ignited by the French Revolution of 1789-92, had gripped ruling circles in Europe. Simplistic explanations arose about the forces behind revolutions: certain writers blamed the Freemasons or the Illuminati, or their paid agents, who were plotting the overthrow of Europe's monarchies and of Christianity itself. Sandell records that by the mid-19th century it was the Jews - non-Christian, urban and recently liberated from civic restrictions - who came to be seen as the main enemy by the forces of reaction and clericalism.

New forms of antisemitism were combined with older, more traditional anti-Jewish ideas in order to show that Jews were part of an evil secret society out to manipulate world events. One book, *World Conquest by the*

Jews, published in 1875, argued that the most eminent leaders of the 'Chosen Few' deliberated on the most suitable means to ensure that Judaism spread from the North Pole to the South. (5) By the early 20th century these antisemitic themes found their strongest expression in works such as the notorious forgery *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (1905), which had originated from Czarist Russia and was taken up by numerous antisemitic groups in Europe. In Britain a group called 'The Britons', publishers of a journal called *The Hidden Hand*, cited the *Protocols* as evidence that Jews were out to undermine the nation. This was a period of anxiety about national identity and the supposed decline of society. Some people wanted easy explanations for these perceptions and the Jews were traditional scapegoats.

The English translation of the *Protocols* had been published in 1920, under the title *The Jewish Peril* and it received wide coverage through articles in *The Times* and the *Spectator*. During the summer of 1920 the *Morning Post* published a series of eighteen articles supporting the Judeo-Masonic theory and used the *Protocols* as evidence. Nesta Webster, one of the most infamous conspiracy theorists of the interwar period and whose books are still regularly reprinted by right-wing publishing houses today, remained noncommittal on the *Protocols*. (6) Nevertheless Webster still put forward a comprehensive conspiracy theory about world history. The Freemasons and Illuminati were supposedly still behind world events, often in alliance with Jews and 'Reds'.

Although certain elements on the political left were also guilty of antisemitism (conflating it with anti-capitalism), it was the right who found most comfort in the conspiratorial outlook. Moreover it was the extreme right which subscribed particularly to the simplicities of viewing the events and problems of the world as mere products of manipulation by secret forces. Nesta Webster, for example, was a member of the 'British Fascisti' (BF) during the 1920s, a party founded

in 1923 by Rotha Lintorn-Orman, the granddaughter of a Field-Marshal and an admirer of Mussolini's fascist 'revolution' in Italy. Webster also briefly sat on the 'Grand Council' of the BF. As well as writing her own books for public consumption, which have since become classics of conspiracy theory, (7) she used her position on the BF to push her all-encompassing theories to other British fascists, reinforcing their siege-mentality about their position in society and future prospects of the nation.

In May 1926 she argued that in the event of a crisis, "or the continuance of slow disintegration", Britain needed a group who would react against "the forces of destruction". (8) She clearly had in mind the BF for this task. Its leadership consisted mainly of ex-military personnel who spent many hours training paramilitary street squads for the 'inevitable' clash between the forces of darkness and light which they were convinced would come one day. The constitutional government of the day was viewed as weak and corrupt, the democratic system being a front for lies and deception on a mass scale. The real centres of power in the world were Moscow and Wall Street.

There are a number of other examples of conspiracy thought on the extreme Right in Britain during the interwar years. Arnold Leese, leader of the Imperial Fascist League, held a highly detailed conviction that the world was under the control of Jews and Masons. He gave his outlook a pseudo-religious justification rooted in mysticism, irrationality and the racial pseudo-science of German Nazi anthropologists such as Hans F. K. Gunther. At one point Leese argued, "Freemasonry is simply the latest phase of organisation of the forces of Darkness against those of Light, of Evil against Good, in a fight which has been going on since the Jews first conceived of the idea of organising for world control". (9)

Even as the Nazi death camps were being opened up in 1945, Leese was still convinced that the war had been a "Jewish war for survival". He argued that the

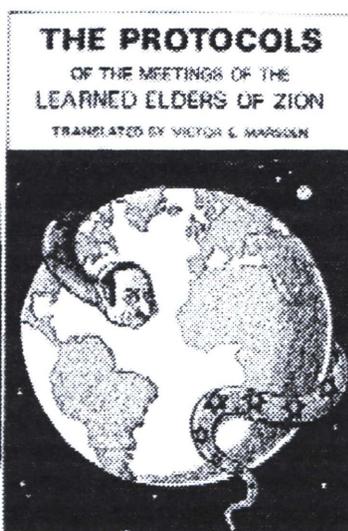


Editions of the Protocols are still being produced: an English language version from 1978, and a Russian edition of 1992.

result was the "sheer destruction of the best part of Europe and its domination by Bolshevism", whilst the British Empire, "nearly ruined and rotten to the core with Jews and Freemasonry" was sinking back into a "second-class power". (10)

Conspiracy theory did not go away in the post-1945 period. The former Conservative MO Captain Archibald Ramsay, who had been imprisoned by the British Government in 1940, still very much subscribed to the theory that the world was subject to manipulation by shadowy forces. In *The Nameless War* (1952), Ramsay echoed Nesta Webster's theories on history by pointing to the machinations of the Illuminati, Grand Orient Masons, and 'Cabalistic Jews' (11). He hinted strongly that the conspiracy was 'international' in nature and consisted of an 'unholy united front' between Jews and certain misguided Gentiles.

Webster, Leese and Ramsay are especially notable because their books and pamphlets have been 'rediscovered' in recent years and reprinted. Material by Leese and Ramsay, for example, has been widely distributed by the American 'Sons of Liberty' publications group in the 1980s and 90s. This group has also been instrumental in distributing conspiracy literature by more recent right wing and militia writers. In fact, in the light of the mushrooming interest in wider popular culture in the belief



that governments and secret groups are denying people 'the truth', the extreme right has done its utmost to cash in on this and infiltrate its own ideas into the maze of esoteric and conspiracy material that now exists. A short visit to the many SF shops that have appeared in Britain and America invariably finds such books in sections devoted to ufology and general conspiracy material. Many newsagents display SF, esoteric and UFO-related monthly titles which wittingly or unwittingly recycle and promote extreme right themes. An example is the Australian-based magazine *Nexus* which regularly contains articles on the secret networks that supposedly operate in the world and influence governments.

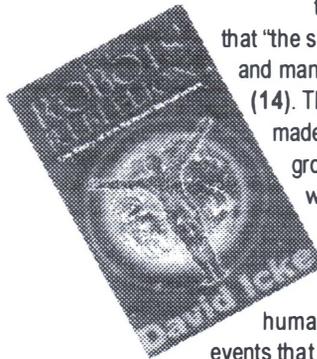
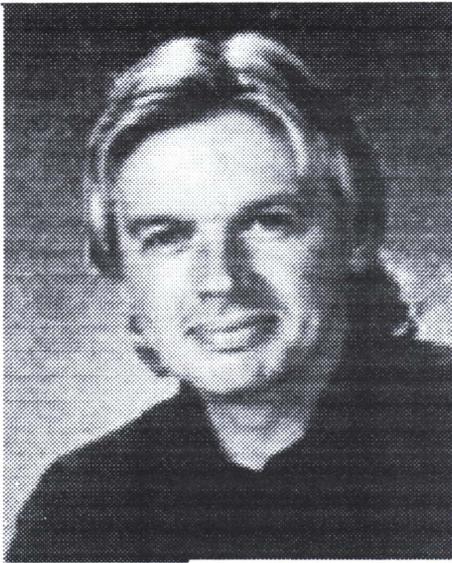
The high demand for such magazines is encouraged by the public's appetite for historical mystery and fascination with anything 'Nazi' or esoteric. A highly competitive market in these magazines means the need of publishers for such material has become acute. The market has expanded with the development of cheap desktop technology, and almost inevitably one can find in this material examples of articles and ideas that have roots in the right-wing, conspiratorial outlook on the world briefly explored above, even though their authors would deny this. A good example is the work of David Icke. He has published articles in the *New Age/UFO* magazines and distributed his own books, which

have appeared in a number of SF and 'alternative' bookshops in Britain and the USA. He has also spoken at conferences, including the 1994 *Nexus* magazine conference in Amsterdam.

When this controversial ex sports commentator and former Green activist conducted his own lecture tour of Britain, the media took a great deal of interest in the number of neo-fascists and other Right-wing individuals who attended his lectures (12). This was not mere sensationalism on the part of journalists and Icke's squeals of protest at these revelations showed great naivety. Some of the dubious characters who attended the lectures obviously found much in Icke's ideas that they could relate to. A short survey of his work can give strong clues as to why the extreme Right find it so attractive.

Icke is very much in the Nesta Webster tradition of conspiratorial thought when it comes to explaining world events and, whether deliberate or not, he makes use of a number of ideas which have a long pedigree in the history of Right-wing conspiracy theory. To this he adds 'technological' material to give his work a pseudoscientific feel. The basis of his philosophy is that our thought-processes are ultimately controlled by an international network of Freemasons, Jesuits and secretive bankers. He points to subliminal messages transmitted by TV which create 'mind controlled' robots, and also to the influence of tiny microchips inserted into people. In *The Robots' Rebellion* (1994) Icke presented a vision of the world where 'the brotherhood Elite' are employing 'The System' and the New World Order to manipulate education and the media in order to crush individual liberty and free thought. Not only was there mention of the 'Illuminati Protocols' and the influence of Masons, but also claims that secret technologies were deliberately being kept from the public by faceless companies and groups.

More disturbingly, there was uncritical use in the book of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. Icke claimed, "Almost everything these documents proposed to



do has happened in this century" (13). Similarly in his later book, *And the Truth Shall Set You Free* (1995), Icke continued and developed his conspiratorial outlook further by identifying the 'Secret Government' at work in the world. There was a chapter on 'The Hidden Hand', and in a classic piece of historical revisionism lumped the World War II Allies together with the Nazis and argued

that "the same forces funded and manipulated them both" (14). The same book also made use of the ever-growing material on the world-wide UFO 'cover-up', arguing that "extraterrestrials are at the heart of human history and the events that have shaped that history" (15).

Another example of a body of work which has gone down well with the extreme Right and echoes a number of their ideas is that of the American writer Jim Keith. His material is distributed by the Illuminet Press, which has specialised in bringing a variety of fringe material into the mainstream, including work by the US militias. His work has also been on sale through *Nexus* magazine. The best and most influential example of Keith's work is *Black Helicopters Over America* (1994) which is on sale in large SF bookshops in London. Although more codified in its language, the basic theme behind the book is that there is a conspiracy theory being perpetrated by a plutocratic elite, backed by the Illuminati and operating through secret networks. The aim of this conspiracy is world domination through a New World Order and the domination of the United Nations. The 'black helicopters' are but one sign of this plan, which also involves the creation of a network of detention camps for any groups who might oppose this.

Keith delves back into history to describe the roots of this plan. At one point he argues, "In actual fact, the New World Order is simply the long term game plan of the Fabians and other communists, plans which were most clearly elucidated in Fabian H. G. Wells' non-fiction books..." (16) The plan would also involve the creation of a 'World Constitution' with a world federation, "which would control everything, everywhere, anyhow, period." (17) In the last chapter of the book all these strands are brought together for Keith to argue that it is evidence that a war will be initiated within the borders of the United States "against the American people by the power-hungry internationalists" (18). By the year 2000 the USA will be merged into a totalitarian and Socialist New World Order (19). In sum, Keith's work claims that crisis is imminent and only organised resistance will suffice. The ghost of Nesta Webster lives on.

Finally it might be worth analysing *Nexus* magazine itself. In many ways *Nexus* has come to exemplify the strange conjunction of New Age, conspiracy and extreme Right thought. As well as promoting the ideas of the US Militia movement, giving space to Linda Thompson a key Militia spokesperson, *Nexus* has carried a variety of conspiratorial articles ranging from material on UFOs and secret technology through to investigations of the secret elites who operate in the world. Particular interest is shown in the banking elites, in 'forbidden' knowledge and in 'Big Brother' theories. Indeed, David Icke in *Robots' Rebellion* called *Nexus* 'excellent' and the magazine has sought to provide a platform for a number of people with rather conspiratorial views of the world.

A good example came in January 1996. In an article on the Bilderberg Group, Armen Victorian speculated on whether the membership of this, selected from the 'power elite' of Europe and North America, are conspiring to establish a New World Order (20). A similar theme occurred in another issue from 1966. David G. Guyatt analysed the 'Pinay Circle' and noted

its links to intelligence, the military, politics and banking. He argued that the group was perhaps "more sinister and certainly more shadowy than the Bilderbergers" (21). Interestingly Guyatt noted that his theories might be called 'Conspiracy Theory', but argued that this "rarely takes into account the underlying evidence" (22). In other words, he implied, critics of such material are not opening their eyes sufficiently. This kind of attitude runs right through *Nexus*, and the contributions it prints.

A typical issue of the magazine contains a column entitled 'Global News' which is often billed as news from 'behind the news', the clear implication being that the public will not find this kind of material anywhere else. All is all *Nexus* functions as a forum for a variety of theories, including highly conspiratorial and dubious material, and makes use of right-wing material which would normally be dismissed by mainstream publications. In one sense this is admirable and can probably be justified in the name of free speech. On the other hand we should be very aware that the authors of articles in *Nexus* have hidden agendas which are often rooted in the attempt to legitimise right-wing conspiratorial material and make it more acceptable in the wider culture. We should be constantly vigilant.

In conclusion this brief discussion has tried to demonstrate two things. Firstly that right-wing conspiracy ideas have a long historical tradition and are still present in popular culture today, seeking to capitalise on the current fascination with ufology and the esoteric. Secondly, that there has been a cross-fertilisation between more recent New Age obsessions and the idea held by the extreme right that the present world order is a place of hostility and threat for 'freethinking' individuals.

This article was submitted as an entry for the first Roger Sandell Memorial Essay Competition. For details of the second competition see page 19.

13. David Icke. *Robots' Rebellion*. Bath, Gateway Books, 1994. p.138.

14. David Icke. *And the Truth Shall Set You Free*. London, Bridge of Love, 1995. p.147.

15. *Ibid.* p.7

16. Jim Keith. *Black Helicopters over America; Strikeforce for the New World Order*. Georgia, Illuminet Press, 1994. p.123.

17. *Ibid.* p.124.

18. *Ibid.* p.145.

19. *Ibid.* p.148.

20. Armen Victorian. 'The Bilderberg Group; an Invisible Power House', *Nexus*, vol.3, no.1, December 1995 - January 1996.

21. David G. Guyatt. 'The Pinay Circle; and Invisible Power Network'. *Nexus*, vol.3, no.5, August - September 1996.

22. *Ibid.* p.14.

By the time that you read this the world as we know it may have come to an end, says **Gareth Medway** as he reviews the record of the world's most famous prophet and asks



Is this it, then?

"IN THE YEAR 1999 AND SEVEN months", wrote Nostradamus, "a great king of terror will descend from the skies, to resuscitate the great king of Angolmois. Before and after Mars will reign for a good while."

Few prophets, other than those of the Old Testament, have had such a high reputation for so long. The British Library's pre-1975 catalogue has 101 Nostradamus items, with a further 25 post-1975. These figures should be at least doubled to get the world-wide total. A gauge of his current popularity is shown by the fact that of 15 April 1999, Kensington and Chelsea Libraries listed 39 Nostradamus books on their computer, of which fourteen were out on loan and at least nine had been stolen.

In 1501 Louis XII ordered that all the Jews of France must be baptised or banished. The Notre-dame family joined the church, but continued to practice Judaism in private. Such insincere conversion was common, but unsafe - Torquemada had recently set up the Spanish inquisition to root out 'apostates' (as he termed those who went on practising their old religion when no-one was looking), in his own country. Perhaps in consequence Michel de Notredam, born 1503, better known as Nostradamus, was a Protestant sympathiser in later life. When young, he studied medicine, and took up the

risky career of a plague doctor. He was quite successful, but his own wife and children were killed by a plague in Agen. Then he was accused of heresy, simply because he had described a workman casting a statue of the Virgin as making devils (he said he had merely been referring to the image's artistic merits). To avoid the Inquisition (who, it seems, despite their fearsome reputation were not too efficient at catching suspected heretics) he led a wandering life for several years.

From about 1550 he began publishing annual almanacs. Not too much is known of these, since almanacs are ephemera which tend to be thrown away after, or even during, the period they cover, and those of Nostradamus have survived in one copy or not at all. Yet they were remarkably successful, being translated into several languages. The British Library has just one of the English translations, *The prognostications of maister Michael Nostradamus... for the yeare of our Lorde, 1559, Antwerp* [118.] (1) It predicts everything from politics to the state of the weather and mysterious items such as "that which shall come into the worlde not out of the belly of a woman, but out of the belly of the earth, shalbe vvonderful". (January 1559)

William Fulke was quickly moved to write a book, *ANTI-PROGNOSTICON that is to saye, an Inuective agaynst the vayne and*

vnpofitable predictions of the Astrologians as Nostradame &c., (1560), in which he complained that "in the last yeare" people were slow to worship God as they had been "seduced by the foolish propheseye of Nostradamus". He went on: "Yea thys Nostradamus reigned here so lyk a tyrant wyth hys south [sooth] sayings, that wythout the good lucke of hys prophesies it was thought that nothyng could be broughte to effect. What shal I speake of the common peoples voyce? Thys daye the Bishoppe of Rome must be driuen out of the parliment. To morow the Queene shal take vpon her the name of supream head. After xx dayes all thing shall waxe worse. Such a day shall be the day of the last iudgement, that except the true prechers of Goddes holye woorde hadde sharpelye rebuked the people for creditynge suche vayne prophesies, there shoulde haue bene none ende of feare and expectation."

But the seer's reputation rests on his *Centuries*, sets of one hundred quatrains. The first four appeared in 1555. Once again the earliest edition(s) are lost. The earliest known to be extant is a single copy of the 1557 edition, of the first seven centuries, in the Lenin Library (is it still called that?) in Moscow. The first complete edition of all ten centuries was published in 1568, two years after the seer's death.

Obscure oracles were already popular. The Prophecies of Merlin, published (written?) by Geoffrey of Monmouth, circa 1136, in his *Histories of the Kings of Britain*, circulated on the continent as well as in Britain, and aroused enough interest for it to be printed at Frankfurt in 1603. They began: "Alas for the Red Dragon, for its end is near. Its cavernous dens shall be occupied by the White Dragon". The Red Dragon refers to the heraldic beast of the Welsh Celts, who were driven from England by the Saxons. Probably many other of these strange utterances referred to events which would have been in the future to Merlin, but were in the past to Geoffrey of Monmouth. Yet most of them are so elliptical that even knowing this it would be hard to work out what they might mean: "A hedgehog loaded with apples shal re-build the town and, attracted by the smell of these apples, birds will flock there from many different forests. The Hedgehog shall add a huge palace and then wall it round with six hundred towers." Any guesses? Another says: "In the days of the Fox a Snake shall be born and this will bring death to human beings. It will encircle London with its long tail and devour those who pass by." I have heard it suggested that this prophesied the M25. (2)

One method of predicting the future was based on the belief

that the different ages of a person's life, or of the world, were governed by the seven (astrological) planets in turn. This system probably derived from the East and something similar is still done in Hindu astrology. According to Johann Trithem, the cabalistic Abbot of Spanheim, seven Angels, associated with the planets, presided for 354 years and four months each. The first age of the world - he dated the creation to 15 March 5201 BC - was governed by Orifel, the Angel of Saturn. The third age of Mars ended in 1525, and was followed by the third age of the Moon, which, he wrote, would be the last: the world would end in 1879. (3)

Nostradamus evidently knew of this theory, for he mentions it in the letter to his son which prefaces the *Centuries*: "Man makes an end of his course... Now we are governed by the Moon..." However unlike Trithem, he insists that there are other ages to follow: "...the Sun shall come and the Saturn." (strangely enough no-one seems to have worked out what Nostradamus was talking about here. Even the most sophisticated commentator, Edgar Leoni, was content to describe this paragraph as "astrological gibberish".) He goes on to refer to some other system: "We are now in the seventh millenary, which ends all and brings us near the eighth, where the firmament of the eighth sphere is..." (If he had heard of the novel cosmology of Copernicus, evidently he did not agree with it.)

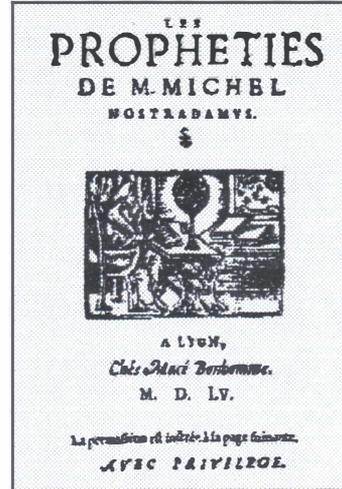
However the biggest influence seems to have been his reading of *The Egyptian Mysteries* of Iamblichus. This describes the Oracles of the ancients, the Sybil of Delphi who sat on a brazen vessel, and the prophetess of Branchus, who "holds in her hand a rod given by some deity, and moistens her feet or hem with water, or inhales some vapour from the water, and by this means is filled with divine illumination, and by the God she prophesies." (4) The first two quatrains are a verse translation of this passage.

By some such means, Nostradamus claimed, "the Divine Essence hath revealed to me by

astronomical revolutions" what was to come. However "if I should relate what shall happen hereafter, those of the present Reign, Sect, Religion and Faith, would find it so disagreeing with their fancies, that they would condemn that which future ages shall find and know to be true." So he chose to write "in dark and abstruse sentences". The majority of his verses are sufficiently vague or obscure that they could be taken to mean all kind of things.

This of course has made life easier for his admirers. To make a quatrain fit an event one can interpret mythological allusions and veiled references in a variety of ways. In places he uses anagrams, *Chyren* for Henry, *Rapis* for Paris, *noir* for roy (king); so that when he explicitly says something that did not happen, one can always suppose that he meant something else. Some have taken the whole quatrains to be anagrams for messages totally unrelated to the surface meanings, such as the man who by this means found the names 'Margaret Thatcher' and 'Ronald Reagan', and foretold Armageddon in 1986. There has even been apocryphal citation: in 1975 someone told me that Nostradamus had predicted that the world would end in 1975. How he got this idea I don't know, but it is one of those assertions that could have been passed around endlessly in casual conversation (until 1976).

Whether Nostradamus really could see the future to any extent is one of those questions effectively unanswerable. believers will say he did, others will deny it, and the two sides will never come



to a consensus. However I see no reason to accept James Randi's assertion that Nostradamus was a deliberate fraud. (5) Conjurors make a living by deceiving people and tend to see their own image wherever they look. It is true that there are men cynical enough to base whole careers on untruths, but such a one would hardly have worked as a plague doctor for so many years, when there would be much safer and more profitable ways on making a dishonest living. (For comparison, historians have often denounced the Elizabethan astrologer Simon Forman as a vulgar fraud. Yet as A. L. Rowse pointed out, Forman often calculated his own horoscope, something no conscious charlatan would ever do.)

There is hardly room in one article to do more than outline the saga of Nostradamus's popularity, mainly in England. Little or nothing was printed on Nostradamus in the decades leading up to the Civil War, probably because the licensing of the presses made it difficult to get that kind of work into print. But then certain quatrains suddenly came true:

Brusles and Gand 'gainst Antwerp forces bring

And London's Senate put to death their King

(century 9: quatrain 49) Moreover: *The Blood o' th' Just burnt London rues full sore,*
When to thrice twenty, you shall add six more.

The Ancient Dame shall fall from her high place

And the like mischief of others shall

deface.

(2:51) London was indeed burnt in 1666. The 'Ancient Dame' was taken to mean the old wooden St Paul's Cathedral, the largest building destroyed in the calamity. 2.53 added:

From the Sea-Town the plague shall not retire

Until the vengeance of that blood by fire

This appears to refer to the plague that preceded the Great Fire, if you can allow that being on the tidal Thames makes London a 'sea-town'.

Theophilus de Garenquieres made the first full English translation of the *Centuries* in 1672. He used the 1649 French edition, which had two quatrains referring to 'Nizaram':

When Innocent shall fold the place of Peter,

The Sicilian Nizaram shall see himself

In great honours, but after that he shall fall

Into the dirt of a Civil war.

Garenquieres identified Nizaram as Cardinal Mazarin, who is well described by this quatrain: "...can anything be more plain, and yet when I read this forty years ago, I took it to be ridiculous." (6) Evidently he was suffering from false memory: he could not have read the 'Nizaram' verses much more than twenty years previously, as they were forgeries concocted for the 1649 edition by opponents of Mazarin.

A number of other books followed, focusing on particular prophecies. In 1715 a book appeared by "D.D." (Daniel Defoe?), which said that the quatrains proved that the Hanoverian dynasty would endure "to the Last Day of the World" (not yet proved wrong). In order to show that earlier predictions had been fulfilled he tended to force things. He rendered 4.15 as: *The Eldest of both Sisters in the British Island*
Shall be born Fifteen Years before her Brother:
Because of the fulfilling of her conditional Vow
Shall she mount the Throne of the Kingdom which holds the Ballance. He thought this referred to the children of Henry VIII, even though

they were already born when the quatrain was written. Of course Mary was not 15 but 22 years older than Edward. D.D. suggested the seer had slightly misheard his genius: "The *Lingua Daemonia* uses *Septenarios in numerando* as we do *Denarios*." In modern terms, daimons (in the classical sense of spirits, not necessarily evil spirits) count in base 7 whereas we use base 10. So, Nostradamus was told the sister was 31 (base 7) years older, but heard it as 21 (base 7), that is 15.

Though no edition of the quatrains seems to have appeared for a couple of centuries after this, that Nostradamus still had a reputation is shown by two books which offered to teach you Nostradamus's methods of seeing the future, though of course they did no such thing. *The Wizard* (1816), is a guide to dream interpretation padded out with various unrelated occult items, such as an essay on the 'Difference between Natural and Diabolical Magic'. It does contain the interesting assertion that "his Mighty book called the *Centuries ... was iron clasped and iron bound*, and was so full of spells that no one dared look into it, and indeed if any attempted to do so, some invisible agent immediately struck them a violent blow, and the clasps shut themselves as fast as they were opened...", a claim which was presumably believed by someone. *The Complete Fortune teller* (1899), is subtitled 'The Magic Mirror of Nostradamus', a book of lots (i.e. with a set of 20 stock answers to each of 140 stock questions); the querent is told to say the invocation 'Eludor Marpan Gulith Harcon Dibo', and the 'Fateful Number' (selecting the answer) will appear in the 'magic mirror'.

It is said that when bombs are dropping no-one is an atheist. Certainly World War I produced a wave of interest in old prophecies, and other occult matters, in industrial nations which had prided themselves on their rejection of superstition. Nostradamus pamphlets appeared in French and German, the latter reproducing engravings of the execution of Charles I and the Great fire of London.

In Britain, Catholic apologist Herbert Thurston wrote *The War and the Prophets: Notes on Certain Popular Predictions Current in this Latter Age*, in which he felt the need to denounce you-know-who as a humbug: "Nostradamus provides an ingenious system of divination in which the misses can never be recorded and only the hits come to the surface. For the reputation of the would-be prophet such conditions are naturally ideal." (7)

In October 1939 Frau Goebbels was sitting up in bed reading a popular occult book with a chapter on Nostradamus, which mentioned a German interpretation which had predicted upheavals in Great Britain and Poland in 1939. She promptly woke her husband, who realised at once that such material could have propaganda value for the Nazis. So he summoned the author, who nervously said that he did not have any Nostradamus material relating to contemporary affairs, but suggested that he try the Swiss born astrologer Carl Ernst Krafft, who enthusiastically took on the job. Whilst Goebbels no doubt regarded the prophecies in a wholly cynical way, Krafft did believe they had forecast Germany's glorious destiny, in which he believed. These were circulated in various ways, including a fake edition of the *Evening Standard* dropped on London in 1940.

Meanwhile Louis de Wohl had convinced British intelligence that Hitler was employing Krafft as his personal astrologer. The British establishment did not believe in astrology, but recognised that Hitler might, so they employed de Wohl to tell them what astrological advice Krafft could be giving Hitler, which if correct might enable them to guess what Nazi offensives would be launched. In fact, since then no evidence has emerged that Hitler consulted Krafft or any other astrologer. Moreover the interpretation of horoscopes is quite a personal thing, and it is doubtful if one astrologer could predict what another would be saying.

So British intelligence created their own counter-interpretations of Nostradamus. The references to 'Hister' were

taken to mean Hitler (though more likely they meant the river Ister, better known as the Danube. 3:30 says:

He who is wrestling and martial deeds

Had carried thee prize before his better

By night six shall abuse him in his bed

Being naked and without harness he shall suddenly be surprised

They changed 'He' (Celly) to 'Hister' making it look as if Hitler was going to be assassinated in his bed. James Laver's *Nostradamus or the Future Foretold*, published in London in 1942, was seemingly an independent work, but he mentions that Louis de Wohl had worked out his horoscope "in order that I might understand the method of procedure", suggesting that the work had at least government approval.

There was also a spontaneous interest over in America: Leoni lists half a dozen books which appeared in the U.S. during the war, of which the least prophetic was Hugh Allen's *Window in Provence* (1943), which claimed that all the predictions actually referred to the period 1933 to 1945, and mostly to the United States. "Accordingly, Allan specified the exact timing and manner in which England would again become Catholic and the United States would be invaded and devastated (twice) by various German and Italian forces. the siege of New York by the 'Nazi-Fascist-Communist' force was to begin 'before sunrise on October 29 or 30, 1942'. Alas, this and other dates had already gone by before the book was published!" (8)

The most recent wave of interest in Nostradamus had its beginning in the Taylorian Library, Oxford, when an original edition of the quatrains was delivered by mistake to the desk of the inauspiciously sumamed mediaeval scholar Erika Cheetham. In due course she produced a large study which was helped to succeed by its date, 1973: it was just then that a mass market for esoteric literature had sprung up. *The Prophecies of Nos-*

Continued on Page 12

1. Edgar Leoni lists two other American libraries, *An almanacke for... 1559* (different from the *Prognostications* for that year?), in the Huntington Library, and *An Almanacke For... M.D.LXII*, Folger Shakespear Library. Edgar Leoni, *Nostradamus and his Prophecies*, Bell Publishing, New York, 1982 (1st 1961), p.54.

2. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the kings of Britain*, translated by Lewis Thorpe, Penguin Classics, 1966, pp.171, 178, 180.

3. Johann Tritheim, *De Sptum Secundeis*, (2nd? ed.), Frankfurt, 1545.

4. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, Lyons, 1549, p.67

5. James Randi, *The Mask of Nostradamus*, Prometheus, 1993, p.154.

6. *The True Prophecies or Prognostications of Michael Nostradamus*, p.294

7. Thurston, *The War & The Prophets*, Burns & Oates, 1915, p.165.

8. Leoni, p.74

9. J. H. Brennan, *Nostradamus; Visions of the Future*, Thorsons, 1992, p.211



The Manchester Air Myth

North of England researcher **Rory Lushman** encounters one of the curious characters who creep out of the woodwork after famous UFO cases - and wishes they'd go back in again!

Many of you will no doubt remember the famous 'Manchester Air Miss' case, when British Airways pilots Roger Wills and Mark Stuart reported a UFO shooting past their Boeing 737 in the opposite direction. Their flight which was inbound from Milan, was on the final approach to Manchester International Airport, runway 24. The date was January 6th, 1995.

WILLIS AND STUART reported their sighting as being on the approach to Manchester, not over the city as many mistakenly believe, and they reported their sighting to the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority), which took over a year to investigate this case. The time for the sighting was logged at 1848 hrs, so therefore it was dark. Much has been discussed about this case but I do not want to go over old ground in this article. Instead I want to focus on a witness who reported seeing something of a similar shape but not the same size, on the same night.

Mark Lloyd, a resident of Gatley, near Stockport, claims to have seen a large triangular craft on the exact date as the pilots, although he reports his sighting as being at between 1530 hrs and 1600 hrs. This is indeed a fascinating case. Why? He claims the object he saw was at 4000 feet, exactly the same height that the pilots reported. He claimed he watched this object performing forward and reverse movements and claimed it dropped occasionally like a falling leaf. He watched it fly over or near Manchester Airport, where he saw

it through a gap in the clouds

This is the case of the ever increasing UFO. Memories fade as we get older but in Mark's case, they grow much better. At this time of day, it would be starting to go dark, yet Mark manages to recall and draw his sighting with so much detail. I have spoken to Mark on many occasions and he is still coming into the cinema where I work to show me pictures of his sighting. Firstly, we need to go back to the beginning to show how this case has developed into a fairy-tale of epic proportions.

Back in August of 1996, I organised a UFO Conference to coincide with the release of the film *Independence Day*. Basically the day consisted of four films, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Communion* and finishing with *Independence Day*. We also had three guest speakers: Jenny Randles, Peter Hough and Steven Mera. The event was a success, with over 300 hundred people attending.

A couple of weeks before the event, I was approached by Mark Lloyd. He showed me a rough drawing of what he claimed to have

seen back in January 1995. He went on to tell me how he had not reported this sighting to anyone until after the CAA report, a year later because he was threatened not to. He only came clean because the CAA report was published and so he felt he could not be threatened, as this was now common knowledge.

This is where the story gets bizarre. I asked him who had threatened him. He told me that he woke up one night and a man in a black trench coat was standing next to his bed. He says his girl friend did not wake up. He got out of bed. I asked him what this man wanted. Mark reported that the man did not utter a word. He opened his coat and showed Mark a pump action shotgun tucked by his waist. Mark stated to me that the man was American. I asked as to whether it was the accent that made Mark think this. He stated it was not as the man in black did not speak at any time during this meeting.

So how did he know the man was American? Mark replied, "He was wearing a baseball cap." Instantly alarm bells rang. What was this logic Mark was trying to

pass onto me? The man then just disappeared out of Mark's house.

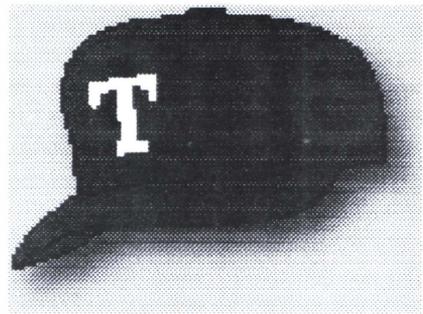
Mark came back a few days later and said he had something to tell me, which was a secret, although he told a work colleague the details, along with everybody he came across. It was another night, he was woken up by a Grey alien at the end of his bed. This alien had red eyes but no legs and seemed to be hovering above the ground. The alien did not do anything and once again his girlfriend slept throughout the whole thing. Mark asked me if I would let him speak at the conference. I told him that we were fully booked and on a tight schedule, which was absolutely true.

The conference date came and it was a success. Mark managed to talk to Jenny Randles and Peter Hough, although what they made of his case, I do not know. He had brought in a computerised image to show people at the conference.

I did not hear much from Mark after that for a good few months. He then kept calling into the cinema where I work. His drawing had been updated. He stated the object he had seen was the size of an aircraft carrier - he had previously told me it was the size of Wembley Stadium. We held a Men In Black Conference to coincide with the release of the film *MIB*, this time we had Jenny Randles, Pauline DelCour-Min, Tim Matthews and Eric Morris. Mark did not show up at this conference.

However shortly after, he came into the cinema and asked to speak to Eric Morris and myself. Now he claimed that he was being followed and that people were watching him, and invited Eric and myself to his home to show us the proof. Just before we went, he explained how BT (British Telecom) vans were watching his house. Just at that moment a van pulled up outside a Chinese take-away restaurant opposite the cinema and Mark stated that this was watching him. In reality it was someone who was just nipping into collect their meal. They drove off again without even looking at us.

When we got to Mark's



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house, he pointed to a tree opposite and said that was where the red light from a camera that was watching him was installed. We could see no light and he told us it had probably been removed. He then pointed to a house opposite his and said someone was watching him at that very moment. We looked through binoculars and it turned out to be a plant in the window. He then said that there were men in the trees watching us. Eric and myself looked but could not see anything - not that we expected to. The three of us went to the end of the garden and had a closer look at the trees, which were situated in a neighbour's garden. Mark told us he could "see the whites of their eyes". In reality this was just daylight shining through the dark undergrowth. He told us he was no longer interested in UFO's as it had ruined his life yet on his bedside locker there was a pile of UFO magazines.

We left his house and told Mark to keep in touch with us. There are some details I cannot print here but some drastic event occurred after this in relation to Mark. I did not see him for a long period after that. He called into the cinema and said he was feeling a lot better. He left and I never saw him again until about three months ago. He came into the cinema and told me he had been to New York. He reported that he had been on an aircraft carrier and had told the Captain that the object he had seen

back in 1995 was ten times bigger than his ship - this thing certainly grows!

I asked Mark, why no one else had reported this giant craft in the sky. He remembered that there was one witness standing behind him on the night, a man wearing a trilby hat - was this Arthur Daley doing a bit of ducking and diving? (Arthur Daley is a shifty TV character from a famous eighties comedy series.) Mark could not understand what I was getting at when I suggested to him that thousands at the airport would have seen this object.

He told me that in the Terminal One lounge there was only a limited view of the runway. He had noticed this when he was waiting for the American Airlines flight to New York: he could see his plane parked at the pier. The view from Terminal One Lounge is limited but then so must Mark's memory must have been. American Airlines fly from Terminal Two and have done since March 1993, when it opened.

However, I pressed on. What about all the people on the top level car-park where a handful of plane spotters can always be found; what about the people in the control tower; the people in the planes; the people working at the Airport, in fact any damn person within a 15 mile vicinity? All irrelevant according to Mark. We are talking the mother of all conspiracies: all Cheshire and Greater Man-

chester were in on this one.

Mark was standing on Styal Road, Gatley, when he saw the huge craft. He jumped out of his car and watched this object for over twenty minutes, manoeuvring in the sky. Styal Road, although in the village of Gatley, is very busy, yet no one else reported anything. Mark stood on the pavement looking towards the corner of Lomond Road, which leads to Wythenshawe. From his view point, it is nearly two miles to the centre of the runway at Manchester Airport, and it is easy to see planes heading towards runway 24 when they are landing at this end.

From Mark's ever increasing detailed image, I plotted a line from this via the A-Z of Manchester. Originally he claimed the object was over the centre of Manchester Airport. Then he changed it to being over the end of Runway 06. His final version is that it was actually over Knutsford, nearly eight miles away. If this object was over Knutsford and looked huge when he saw it, this would have made it nearly three miles across. The UFO's from the *Independence Day* film are back.

I asked him how could no one else have seen the object. He tried to explain that no one walks around looking at the sky. I reminded him that the whole of Knutsford would have been in the shadow of this object, even though it would have been getting dark. Potentially millions would have seen it, yet not one other person reported it.

Mark got agitated when I asked him questions. I said if he wanted people to listen to him, then he had to be prepared for questions. I gave him a sighting form, which he never filled out. He told me he had been in the Control Tower at the airport and spoke to the Chief Air Traffic Controller. He had just walked in, no security stopped him. Would you fly from Manchester knowing this? He asked me not to contact the Tower, as they may send people to question him - they must have forgotten to do that on the day.

Mark has now produced a new image, complete with pyra-

mid and thousands of lights. The colour has changed from black to the bluish grey featured in the "Russian UFO Crash." This colour was to help it blend when it went invisible. He said that no one could make a model like the object he had seen. I told him to look at *Star Wars*, *ID4* and many other science fiction films. He is now trying to get a model - that no one can make - into the Millennium Dome! I challenged him as to why his original report was so different from his latest epic. I wanted to know why after all this time had he chosen to reveal that this object could become invisible. He claimed he did say this. I'm sure I would have remembered this if he had told me.

Mark has been trying to get as much publicity for this case as possible and unfortunately one thing keeps cropping up - money. He wants to sell his pictures to people across the land. He told me he'd sold one to a woman who appeared in his picture of the area. Basically he had taken a picture of where he allegedly saw the object and had someone put a computerised image of the UFO he saw onto it. The woman was so impressed that she bought a picture. He tells me he hopes to return to America this year to lecture about his case as many people are interested. America, be warned.

This case is so obviously a farce. Mark cannot offer one tiny shred of evidence to support his alleged sighting. I hoped that this case had died a death but now that Mark is on another publicity drive I fear we will hear more from him,

The last word on Nostradamus

From *Design Week*, 21 May 1999; 'A Japanese underwear manufacturer claims to have designed a bra that will "save the earth from annihilation at the end of the century". The Armageddon bra has been developed by Triumph International to counter the "great king of terror coming from the sky" in July. It is made from NASA space suit material. The bra should be worn without outer garments, and includes a feature that signals impending danger. But there are no plans to market the bra, so it looks like we're all going to die anyway!'

not less. I know he has spoken to other researchers who may not be aware of the details. I warn you all, take a very wide berth from this case, do not let him use you to promote this totally imagined case.

He has had his story featured in a number of local papers and also some now defunct UFO magazines. *The Stockport Express* pictured him dressed in a Hawaiian flowered shirt and sunglasses. The sighting was January - hardly the weather for sunglasses - a poor reconstruction indeed. I recently managed to find Mark's original drawings. On his drawings, he lists the colours of the 'object', which are totally different to what he is now saying. Mark is now looking for conferences to reveal his case to.

Many people accuse British ufologists of being over-sceptical. I think you can see from the above account that there are some 'characters' who report over-the-top accounts. I have followed this case for more three years and I have been very patient towards Mark, yet he never produced many of the things he said he would. This is why we are sceptical of many cases - not all.

Whilst many people are very sincere about what they have seen, there are those who choose to change the details of their case, when they realise that they are not getting the publicity they seek. The problem with this, is the TV stations lap up people like this and this makes a joke of serious research. Alien's sell - planes and everyday objects don't.



Nostradamus: From page 9
tradamus rode on the wave of popularity of such titles as were advertised at the back of the Corgi paperback edition - *Chariots of the Gods* and *The Ancient Magic of the Pyramids*.

Cheetham modernised interpretations by suggesting that Nostradamus had foreseen the rise of technology: "When weapons and documents are enclosed in a fish, out of it will come a man who will then make war" (2:5) - a military submarine, she said. "There will be let loose living fire and hidden death, fearful inside dreadful globes" (5:8), which sounds like an attack by (nuclear?) bombs.

However, one must be cautious here, since whilst people in the sixteenth century didn't know much about science, they certainly believed in miracles. 1:64 refers to "battles seen and fought in the skies", which Cheetham calls a "remarkable" account of aeroplane battles. Yet in Nostradamus's time there were frequent reports of people seeing, or thinking they saw, aerial men fighting (with contemporary weapons) in the sky. These were regarded as prodigies, sent by providence. Another common alleged prodigy was of animals that spoke, and this was referred to in the next line of the same quatrain: "The brute beasts will be heard to speak".

As the seventh month of 1999 draws near (but bear in mind that in some old calendars the year began in March), some people are going to get nervous. Erika Cheetham thought that the enigmatic Angolmois meant the Mongolian Antichrist, and said it was a "gloomy prediction" of the end of the world. J. H. Brennan is more positive: "...it is possible we are back to the extra-terrestrial hypothesis, with national and international differences abruptly dwarfed by the appearance of a terrifying, but technically advanced, alien life force capable of cloning the cells of our ancient dead to produce a spurious resurrection?" (9)

Anyone tempted to do away with themselves to avoid the coming terror should consider this: apart from the 'London burning'

quatrain (which didn't specify the century), there are only seven quatrains, out of more than 900, which give an actual date, and for six of them it has passed. 6:2 says that 1580, more or less one, "will await a very strange century", which means little, and that in 1703 "the skies as witness that several kingdoms, one to five, will make a change" - which *might* refer to the War of the Spanish Succession. (D.D. wrote: "It is very well known that it was not in the Year 1703, but at the End of the Year 1700 that the king of France has broken the Partition Treaty and exchanged Five Kingdoms for one. Thence it is very likely that the Verse, *En l'an sept cents & trois, cieux en tesmoins*, Might have formerly run thus: *En l'an sept cents je crois cieux tesmoins*") 5:64 predicts for 1607 "the Arabs captured by the King of Morocco" (or vice-versa?), which Erika Cheetham concedes to be "one of Nostradamus's total failures". According to 8:71, that same year astrologers would be "drive out, banned and their books censored" by a church council. Believers have said this was fulfilled when the 1607 Council of Malines forbade astrology - a curious conclusion, since the nearest Catholic reference book will tell you that the Council of Malines was held in 1570, but not one mention that astrology was on its agenda. 10:91 said a wicked man from Campania would be elected Pope in 1609, but in the event Paul V held the papal seat from 1606 to 1621. People of the East would almost subdue the North in 1700, said 1:49, but they didn't. 3:77 foretold, in October 1727, "the king of Persia captured by those of Egypt" - that month a peace was made between Persia and the Turks, whose empire included Egypt - so this was not totally wrong, but not totally right either.

We are living in unsettled times. All the same I don't see a need to sell your home and move to the South Pole on the basis of Nostradamus alone. Still, without any clairvoyance at all, one can prophesy a coming panic.



READERS' LETTERS

Hi John,
I wanted to write to let you know of my own "virtual banality" experience, the only time (I'm aware of) that I've ever had any type of hallucination, and I've never had any "paranormal" experience.

I was in junior high school, walking down a crowded hallway between classes, and a particularly obnoxious guy I'd had run-ins with before made some remark to me, and I immediately turned around, punched him and knocked him down, and continued to my next class.

When I got there, the only person in the room was one of my friends. I threw my books down on a table and turned to face the door, figuring the guy I punched was going to be right behind me. I told my friend "there's going to be a fight" and explained what happened... and I waited... and the guy never came.

I sat down, and began to calm down (I'd been tensed-up and furious) and said to my friend "...or maybe I didn't" (punch the guy). I had a strange sensation that I can only compare to what Jenny Randles calls the "Oz Factor", a strange calm sensation where everything seemed out of whack.

I realised then that I must not have actually hit anybody, although it still felt completely real. If I had, the guy would have come after me, or if I'd hit him hard enough that he couldn't come after me, a teacher or principal would have (there were plenty of witnesses). Nothing ever happened after school or the next day or the rest of the school year, even though I saw the guy every day and the animosity continued. Plus, my hand wasn't hurt or sore.

I can still remember the incident clearly, and except for the "coming down" part where I realised I must've imagined it, and the fact that there was never any further mention of it, I'd still swear it happened. And if it had been a flying

saucer or alien or ghost, I'm sure I'd be a true believer today

Brian Miller
<rockheads@rockheads.com>

Dear John,
I read with interest Issue 66 of Magonia; as always I was impressed with the considerable intellectual depth of its contents. I was equally interested to note an item in your "Hold the Back Page" section relating to both BUFORA and myself, to which I am replying in this instance.

In this piece I read - with considerable alarm - that BUFORA's lectures are currently being organised by a person called "Malcolm Campbell"! Who is this, I ask myself? A ufologist-hybrid, created by a (very!) sinister genetic engineering project?? A victim of illicit gene-splicing??? Mind you, it should save TV companies no end of money, as they now only have to pay for one speaker to represent both sides of the UFO question! Seriously, through, this was a typo, right? [*We are happy to confirm that this was a careless error on our part: we were not implying that Britain's late great speed-king and world water speed record holder had returned from Lake Windermere to haunt BUFORA!*]

Thank you for your kind words regarding the BUFORA Bulletin. However, I take issue with you on a few points. Although BUFORA went through some hard financial times recently, things have improved somewhat in regards to the magazine, and the association is now on a reasonably sound financial footing. This is largely down to prudent running of BUFORA's publications. Thus, there are no problems with the Bulletin's finances; BUFORA has ample money to print our allotted yearly quota of journals! During a conversation with you last year I touched on the reasons why BUFORA was unable to move to an A4-format publication. Although there is insufficient finances for

BUFORA to produce an A4-format magazine (at present), there is, however, ample finances for us to continue producing the A5-format Bulletin! Obviously, some element of misunderstanding crept into our conversation last year...

While on the subject, you stated in a recent e-mail to me that UFO Times "cost no more to produce than Magonia". If only! Although Magonia is an excellently-produced magazine, UFO Times had a colour cover, a glossy, A4-format and a high quality print-reproduction. It also employed a design company for some stages of its production. Thus, as you can see, UFO Times had somewhat more "elaborate" publishing values than Magonia! However, all this also meant that UFO Times was extremely expensive to produce!

At the of writing I have just finished issue ten. Given the current very sad state of affairs in BUFORA I am unsure how much longer I will remain as editor. However, to correct one point, I was actually busy editing the Bulletin as you were penning that "Hold the Back Page" item, and I still remain as editor, at least for the time being! It is true I did (very) seriously consider stepping down in December 1998, for a variety of reasons. However, I had second thoughts and decided to stay on. Regards, Robert Moore. East Huntspill, Devon Editor, BUFORA Bulletin

With more than 30 years experience working in and as a client of the printing industry, I am puzzled that BUFORA finds an A5 magazine cheaper to produce than an A4-size publication with the same content. One of the reasons I moved Magonia to A4 size was to cut costs. If you want to throw your money away I suppose you could employ a design company, but for an organisation the size of BUFORA I see little point. JR.



BOOK REVIEWS

Pajman's book, even if it fails to make the case for Keely as a free energy pioneer, certainly defends him against the worst accusations of fraud and hucksterism



Theo Pajmans. *Free Energy Pioneer: John Worrell Keely*. Illuminet Press, 1998. p/b 472pp \$19.95

The story of John Keely and his mysterious free energy devices has now hovered at the fringes of science for a century, with little in the way of consensus as to who he was, and what (if anything) he contributed to the theory or technology of physics. This persistent liminal status is the result of the two entirely opposed versions of his life and work, which have, if anything, diverged even further in the intervening years since his death. In one version he was a huckster who raised millions of dollars from Wall Street investors with ever taller tales of the alternative energy devices which he was constantly in the final stages of perfecting; in the other version, he was a misunderstood genius who discovered a previously hidden force in nature and offered it to the world through a series of radical technologies which were repeatedly suppressed by obscure and sinister forces.

Although both these versions of the Keely story probably have their kernels of truth, both are also glaringly implausible. The huckster version asks us to ignore the fact that Wall Street was fooled, not once, but over a period of twenty years; that many of the wisest and wealthiest industrialists of the day, such as Lord Astor, continued to invest in Keely after thorough demonstrations of his prototype devices; and that the Keely Engine remained a consistently plausible investment for hundreds of industrialists, bankers and scientists. The genius version, by contrast, asks us to believe that Keely's endless stream of arcane prototypes - Compound Disintegrators,

Hydro-Pneumatic-Pulsating-Vacuo Engines and Vibratory Planetary Globes - represent not the sci-fi movie props they most closely resemble but a unique success in harnessing a form of power which no-one else has yet measured, let alone produced or controlled.

The other awkward fact for the proponents of the genius hypothesis is that, when the basement which Keely used for his demonstrations was demolished after his death, it was found to contain all manner of hidden pipes and passages which, it was assumed, were engineered to allow the introduction of compressed air and other forms of less-than-mysterious mechanical assistance into his experiments. It is this post-mortem exposure which, more than anything else, has tipped history's judgement on Keely towards the huckster version - although, as Theo Pajmans points out in this new biography, the compressed-air-hoax-theory has more than its share of problems too.

It would be almost impossible to write a book on Keely to this exhaustive level of detail without clearly favouring one version over the other, and Pajmans, while maintaining objectivity wherever possible, is clearly a believer in the misunderstood genius version. To his credit, however, he walks the razor edge of impartiality for the greater part of the book, dissecting Keely's life, work and increasingly esoteric milieu with impeccable detail, before giving in to some speculation (clearly labelled as such) in the final chapter - speculation which may make the reader grateful beyond measure that his personal views are absent from the rest of the book.

In fact, though, Pajmans' dissection of Keely and his world is so conscientious and thorough that he ends up building a far more credible case for the prosecution than he does for his own view. The science of Keely's work - harmonics, aetheric vibration, anti-gravity and the rest - seems on closer examination to have the shifting, protean quality of pseudo-scientific band-aids attempting to hold together ever-vaguer ideas; far more convincing is Pajmans' exposition of how these ideas, increasingly marginalised and ignored by the scientific mainstream, came to find a natural home in the burgeoning occult traditions of Theosophy and its New Age spawn.

Occultism and electrical physics seem such odd bedfellows today that it's fascinating to discover how close they must have seemed to each other a century ago, when new forms of energy - Röntgen, gamma and X-rays - or the technologies of robotics and teleautomation being pioneered by Nikola Tesla, were discussed in tones almost indistinguishable from Reichenbach's odic force, or the variants of Mesmer's animal magnetism which were commonly proposed as explanations for spiritualist phenomena. One of Pajmans' most impressive achievements in this book is to construct a history of occult technology - from classical precedents such as Apollonius of Tyana to the clockwork automata of the Renaissance and the spirit gadgets of John Dee and Athanasius Kircher - a tradition into which Keely's extraordinary devices fit far more neatly than the traditional history of electro-magnetic turbines, dynamos and engines within which his apologists attempt to shoehorn them.

It is this occult context, on which Pajmans spends the greater part of the book, which offers such ironically convincing evidence for the version of the Keely story where he was, perhaps not a huckster, but a monomaniac inventor who spent his life attempting without success to harness forces of which his own understanding seems to have become ever vaguer as he progressed. In the context of the new forces which were being developed around him - alternating current, hydro-electric power, not to mention the secrets of the atom which were simultaneously being unveiled - it would have been a hard-headed industrialist indeed who, in the 1880s, would have rejected Keely's bizarre and spectacular designs outright. More likely - as indeed was the case - many leading investors would have hedged or side-bet with low levels of finance, on the back of which the energetic entrepreneurs of the Keely Motor Company managed to inflate a series of investment bubbles among an excitable public.

But Pajmans book, even if it fails to make the case for Keely as the free energy pioneer of the title, certainly defends him against the worst accusations of fraud and hucksterism. These have, in truth, always been implausible: if Keely was only in it for the money, it's hard to see why he would have continued to spend eighteen hours a day in a dank basement for over twenty years, living frugally and spending exorbitantly on ever more arcanelly-tooled machine parts. Perhaps, thanks to the context which this book has assembled around Keely for the first time, we can find a Third Way between huckster and genius: perhaps Keely is best understood as neither scientist nor fraud but a tortured and misunderstood artist, and his true legacy to the world is his eloquent, if useless, sculptures of brass, pig-iron, mirror and filament which are so tantalisingly reproduced throughout this volume. *Mike Jay*

Except where stated all book reviews are by Peter Rogerson



Barbara Goldsmith. *Other Powers: the age of suffrage, spiritualism, and the scandalous Victoria Woodhull.* Granta, 1998. £12.99

An account of the life of Victoria Claflin Woodhull (above) - fortune teller, spiritualist, part time prostitute, one time stockbroker, feminist candidate for US president in 1872 (the few votes cast for her were never counted), and finally, English lady of the manor - set against the background of the world of the abolitionist, feminist Left in America. Woodhull herself, along with her sister Tennessee, seems well within the tradition of the charismatic fantasy-prone personalities which we are so familiar. Like her mother, she was a seer of visions. Like many fantasy prone personalities her Caraboo syndrome and fantastheisa seem to have been an escape from the poverty, neglect, exploitation and abuse of her childhood. Today no doubt she would have been reduced to being a flaky 'victim' in perpetual 'therapy'

Her first spiritual vision (at least according to her later ac-

count) included a vision of the spiritualist other-world, with busy spirits, including her spirit guides Napoleon, Josephine and Demosthenes, but also an apocalyptic vision of the world turned upside down, with cities sinking into the sea, and a new world in which the dead and living mingled. Virtually identical apocalyptic visions crop in the NDE literature today.

Woodhull's career provides an example of how traditional folk beliefs became assimilated into spiritualism, and her later decline into respectability mirrored the growing embougeoisification of spiritualism. Her fortune appears to have been left to the SPR. How very piquant that perhaps some of the rent of that august body is being paid for by the inheritance of a former hooker.

The background of political idealists with chaotic private lives, cannot but remind one of the current problems in the US, you feel that Bill Clinton would really have been at home there, and in Victoria's nemesis, Anthony Comstock, do we not have a spiritual ancestor of Ken Starr!

Jodi Dean. *Aliens in America: conspiracy cultures from outer-space to cyberspace.* Cornell University Press, 1998. £11.95.

Despite the title, Jodi Dean's socio-cultural study of ufology is centred not on the conspiracy culture of 'Area 51', but on the abductionist subculture, as studied by her and her research assistants in 1995-7. If I understand it correctly her central thesis is that in the age of the Internet there is no final, public, authoritative truth or reality. It is as if as in so many other spheres, reality itself has become privatised and fragmented, with various competing realities in the market place of ideas. The abduction narratives subvert the established consensual reality, and can act as metaphors for other challenges to hegemonic reality. The ambivalence of the abduction narrative, what is real, dream or an illusion implanted by the aliens, reflects this like of an agreed reality and shared truth.

It is difficult to work out exactly what other meanings Dean ascribes to the abduction narratives. There are times when she seems to be on the brink of some meaningful insight: abduction narratives deal with our ambivalent relationship with technology, she notes how in the story of Collings and Jameson, the presence of the 'other' is signalled by the failure of equipment, much of which is a kind of parody of the equipment (electronic alarms and the like) used to maintain our secure boundaries.

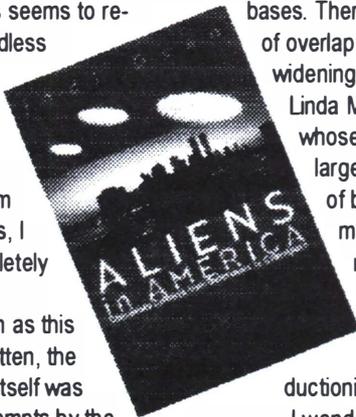
The TV audience is conscripted into the astronaut programme, the space race is validated by the fact that it is watched by millions of viewers, thus bringing together the home and outer space. The death of Christa McAuliffe in the *Challenger* disaster marks out space as a place of danger for women; the abduction narratives point to total lack of security, there is no safe haven; they act as metaphors for fears about nationhood, citizenship and identity; (the connections with notions of defining the boundaries of the state against illegal immigration are noted, and she has some very pertinent points to make about Betty and Barney Hill as an interracial couple).

The problem I found was that before any of these arguments could be developed they all too often disappeared into an impenetrable fog of 'cultural studies' jargon, which at times seems to repeat in a sort of endless circle. The use of this jargon is presumably a signal to the academic community 'Hey I'm still one of you guys, I haven't gone completely native' What does emerge is that even as this book was being written, the 'abduction reality' itself was falling apart, all attempts by the likes of Hopkins, Jacobs and Mack to impose a metanarrative by which abduction stories could be made at least partially comprehensible were failing. No version of reality, however broadly construed can accommodate stories such as that of the abductee who claimed to have been eaten up by dinosaurs and then regurgitated.

Dean may have overlooked the possibility that we are seeing the beginnings of the gendering of ufology, with the development of a women's ufology, centred upon the first person abductee narratives, primarily by women, set

in the home, and couched in the language of therapy, and a male ufology centred on tales of government conspiracies, back engineer technologies and secret bases. There is still a degree of overlap, but the gap is widening (interestingly Linda Moulton Howe whose earlier works largely featured tales of bases and cattle mutilations has now moved into the new age territory and postsecular abductionism).

I wonder if Dean would have been quite so sanguine about the growth of a universal scepticism and the relativising of truth if she looked more closely into the some the more extreme 'dark side' web sites, there are other non consensual voices out there, such as holocaust revisionists and supporters of slavery, or paedophilia. Are their voices valid voices to be heard as well? (And indeed why should Dean's students take any notice of what she tells them, they might argue that they reject her hegemonic authority. If there is no public truth, what can be taught in the classroom or the lecture theatre)



Robert E. Bartholomew, and George S. Howard. *UFOs and Alien Contact: two centuries of mystery.* Prometheus Books, 1998. £20.50

In their introduction to this important and fascinating book, Bartholomew and Howard make a provocative and important point, if UFO reports are literal descriptions of extraterrestrial hardware, then they are of much less interest, at least for psychologists and sociologists, than if they are not. It is when people start reporting things which aren't there, that things start to get *really* interesting. For the psychosocial ufologist straight forward accurate reports of alien spaceships wouldn't be all that much more interesting than accounts of sightings of trams. OK, if like the editors of this journal you are into tram spotting, but rather boring for the rest of us, and telling us nothing of the human condition. But reports of flying trams, with pretty wings and piloted by leprechauns and we are into the much more interesting realm of psycho-social ufology.

This study in psychosocial ufology is divided into two parts. The first, and most successful is a study of the history of waves of sightings in the sky of objects interpreted as being representative of the avant guard technology of the period; placed in the cultural context of the time. The examples given are the American airship of 1896/7, the related claims to have witnessed a telecommunications balloon, lighted by a powerful electric light, sent up by Thomas Edison, and sightings in Canada of what was taken to be a balloon piloted by the Swedish explorer Andree; the airship sightings in New Zealand and America in 1909, in Britain in 1912/13; war and spy plane scares in South Africa, Canada and the United States during the first world war; the 1946 ghost rockets, with a mention of the 1930's ghost plane panics; and finally the early years of the modern UFO legend.

While some of these panics have been written about before, much of this material, based on the

researches of Eddie Bullard, Nigel Watson and co-workers, Svahn and Liljegren, and others, is presented in a commercially published book for the first time. Importantly they show that what was often previously presented as isolated anomalies or misunderstood examples of the modern UFO phenomena, were autonomous social panics, which can only be understood in the social context in which they occurred; the published claims to have invented an airship which preceded the 1896/7 'panic', the looming fear of attack by Germany which generated most of the airship waves; the Swedish fear of the Soviet Union which generated the ghost rocket sightings, and the similar fears which dominated the first year or two of the flying saucer age.

In each of these cases, ambiguous lights in the sky, ranging from bright stars and planets to a variety of meteorological phenomena which would normally be overlooked, are as it were seen through new eyes. The authors perhaps do not bring out clearly enough the unifying factor behind all of these 'panics', the simultaneous threat and promise of the future. In each case the ambiguous stimuli are seen as the products of the coming years technology, the futuristic airships, the missiles and eventually the spaceships. It is as if the future were being glimpsed out of the corner of the eye. This future may be seen as exiting promise as in many of the American airship stories, or as dangerous threats from the technological advanced other, whether pre world war one Germany, the Soviet Union, or the Martians (who appeared playing, very much the second fiddle to the home-grown inventors, as early as 1896/7). Today we have the grays and other 'alien nations' whose technological signs and wonders simultaneously excite with notions of scientific power beyond measure, and evoke the dread that 'they' are about to take over our lives for ever. This ambiguity was captured in the hoax/short story by Alexander Hamilton and his friends. The airship, symbol of America's technological, urban future, rustles a cow, symbol of the agrarian past. In

Alan Baker. *The Encyclopaedia of Alien Encounters.* Virgin, 1999. £20.00

Yet another attempt at a UFO encyclopaedia, which you know is a doomed enterprise from the start. This one at least is not as bad as John Spencer's efforts of a few years ago, in that it devotes a bit more space to the cases it discusses, has cross references, and tries to be rather even handed. It is also another example of 1970's New Ufological revival.

It is however, hopelessly uneven, and for a British publication seems to be curiously Americocentric: there are biographies of Hopkins, Hynek, Jacobs, Keyhoe and some other well known American writers, but none for any British ufologist. There is no sense that the author knows the history of the subject in any depth for example there is no entry for Warminster, or for many well known older cases, though to his credit has brought in some lesser known earlier occupant cases. Of course the truth is that a contentious subject like ufology is just not suitable for encyclopaedia treatment, there are no agreed 'facts' to present, so for balance one would have to have several viewpoints for each entry at least.

the glare of the airships light he sees 'two men, a woman and three children' and cannot decide whether these people of the future are angels or devils.

Even today obscure lights in the sky may not always be interpreted in terms of alien spacecrafts, 25 years ago Magonia's predecessor the Merseyside UFO Bulletin feature reports of the 'phantom helicopter' which was variously interpreted in the contexts of the fears of the period, including rumours of drug or immigrant smuggling, IRA terrorists and the deepening industrial crisis. Similar phantom black helicopters have folklores all of their own in the States, where they are seen as harbingers of the UN invasion.

Of course ambiguous lights in the sky are not always interpreted in technological terms, and it would have been interesting to see Bartholomew and Howard's analysis of the 1905 Welsh revival 'sightings'. This absence is perhaps tied in with the main failure of this section of the book, the poor historical grasp of longer periods of time, which enables them to come up with ridiculous statements such as there was 10,000's of documented fairy sightings in the nineteenth century, and that lots of scientists in that century believed in fairies and witches. This blinds them to the clearest parallel of the nineteenth century, and one that has not been studied as a mass

craze, the growth of spiritualism. Starting with ambiguous stimuli (in this case sounds such as rapping) interpreted as harbingers of a hybrid technological (the telegraph) and supernatural future (the after-life), the new movement became a mass craze, gaining millions of adherents. As with today's ufology there were demands for Congressional enquiries, there were respectable witnesses and scientific investigators, an escalation of the strangeness of the claims, the messages from the supernaturals describing futuristic utopias etc.

The mediums of the nineteenth century would have made a good lead into the second half of the book, which discusses fantasy proneness, for many of them exhibited the same features. This half of the book is, I think rather less successful, mainly because the authors have not really developed their ideas much since they first introduced them about a decade ago. Looking at their own list and catalogue of contactee and abduction cases, there are some that come within the relatively benign definition of fantasy proneness they use, which emphasises the normality of those involved, in the case of other abductees and many contactees we seem to be seeing something with some similar fea-

tures but much less under control; where fantasy perceptions and narratives are not controlled and recreational but are intrusive, dominate the experiential life, and seriously affect their well-being.

Probably just as LITS reports are generated by a wide variety of external stimuli, abduction and contactee narratives are generated by a wide variety of neurological events and psychological states ranging from the benign to the highly pathological.

Though Bartholomew and Howard may not always have got it right, they should be congratulated for the attempt to add a brick or two to the psychosocial scaffolding, and providing cogent evidence for the most general psycho-social 'hypothesis', that rumours of strange things in the sky can exist in the absence of extraordinary things, other than what is already there and normally unnoticed. That there were no airships in 1897 or 1909, no rockets in 1946 and no spacecrafts now. Of course going beyond this to properly testable hypothesis may be a long, excruciatingly slow task, with many false starts and blind alleys. Human psychology and society may in the end be just too complex for any kind of easy 'testable hypothesis', and the content of rumours and visions will always be largely, in the province of cultural analysis or art rather than science (though I wouldn't be surprised if some evolutionary psychologist didn't have a stab); but this would be no excuse for giving up and invoking grays or boggarts.

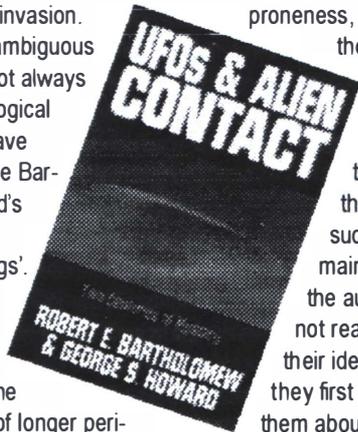
Michael Kurland. *The Complete Idiots Guide to Extraterrestrial Intelligence*. Alpha Books, 1999. £10.99.

Yes, this book comes from one of those producers of computer software package guides, and, despite the gushing introduction from Marcello Truzzi, if this book is anything to go by, they should stick at what they are good at, and leave general books well alone.

It is a kind of quick guide to everything to do with extraterrestrials ranging over ancient astronauts, UFOs, the SETI project, to aliens in books, films and TV. Even if it wasn't trying to be a self-conscious 'idiots' guide', such a wide coverage would invite superficiality, and to a large extent that's what you get, along with over simplifications and a number of factual errors.

The section on UFOs aims to be even minded, but will please no-one. Though Kurland is clearly largely sceptical of ufological claims too many exploded errors, such as the Oliver Larch story and the Palanque astronaut get through to make this a useful sceptical study; while ufologists will rightfully complain that the coverage of the subject is altogether superficial, with pieces on Roswell, abductions and crop circles, and a brief mention of the early years of ufology, but no coverage of the more puzzling UFO cases.

That being said there a few good points, Kurland notes that abduction stories follow literary traditions, in the same sense that westerns and detective novels do, they may not be like real life, but they are a lot like each other. He also seems to grasp that alien life, if it exists, will be *totally* different from anything we've experienced, though that insight does not stop him, just a few pages later, from having aliens progressing towards 'intelligence' as if all on the same escalator.



Hartwig Hausdorf. *The Chinese Roswell: UFO encounters in the far east from ancient times to the present*. New Paradigm Books, 1998. £12.99.

With the notable exception of Alexander Keul, German ufology gives the impression of being the exclusive preserve of cranks, charlatans and antigravity flying saucer propulsion theorists, and this is a typical product, a 70's style ancient astronaut, gor blimey how amazing guv! farrago of alleged eastern secrets. The small bodied, big headed Dropa and their amazing extraterrestrial gramophone discs ride again. Utter rubbish.

Jenny Randles. *The Paranormal Source Book: the comprehensive guide to strange phenomena world wide*. 2nd ed. Piatkus, 1999. £9.99.

For this new edition of the paranormal sourcebook, Jenny has ditched chapters on dreams and synchronicity and replaced them with one on questing, the earth mysteries chapter is now entitled environmental mysteries and pride of place in it goes to Albert Budden, the section on ice bombs is made a more general one on things falling from the sky, and that on precognition becomes one on time slips. Most of the other chapters have some updating material in them. The section on ball lightning has some interesting material, which may throw some doubt on as to whether there is a single 'ball lightning' phenomenon, as opposed to a label given to a variety of events and experiences, which may not be particularly closely related to each other.

**Steve Moore (editor).
Fortean Studies, Volume 5
John Brown Publishing,
1998. £19.99**

In this issue of, the always excellent, *Fortean Studies* there are several pieces which should be of particular interest to *Magonia* readers. Andy Roberts's study of the Big Grey Man of Ben Macdhui was of particular interest to me, because Affleck Gray's account of the BGM was an inspiration at the time of my own first journey into 'new ufology'. Andy ably summarises the evidence, and suggests that the core of the BGM experience is the sudden, inexplicable panic, a mountain panic experienced elsewhere.

Andy sees this as an encounter with 'Pan', not of course, in any literalistic sense, for he suggests that all explanations whether in terms of occult beliefs in elementals and genius loci, or in quasi-scientific terms, as earth energies or the sort are metaphors for the encounter with the 'raw force of nature'. Not the Disneyfied, tamed always loving and beautiful nature of the townie green, but nature as is, the utterly wild force of creation and destruction, against which isolated human beings are utterly helpless, or as Andy puts it 'the direct experience of the overpowering force of nature and existence, to be fled from, to be personified as the BGM, a giant, the devil, genius loci or whatever' Andy notes there is also a positive, ecstatic transcendent response to wilderness. Are these panics not then 'anti-ecstasies', or ecstasies of terror and despair, what, I believe it was William James, called 'vastations'. These vastations, experiences of transcendent terror don't just occur in the wild mountains however, James recounts one case (probably that of his own father), where it occurred in his living room. The wildness from which he shrink in horror is not just the wildness out there, but the wildness within.

It is not just the BGM either that is a symbol of the otherness of the external and internal wildernesses, many Fortean phenomena seem to be metaphors for this encounter, whether it is strange lights in the Peak District, 'saurian'

monsters in Loch Ness, beasts in Bodmin, or wild flying UFOs.

The journey into the mountains to encounter Pan might be seen as a pilgrimage, but so too is any road journey, the subject of Alby Stone's paper 'The road that makes things disappear', a study in the mythology of the road to the afterlife. Here the journey to the otherworld is seen not as an ascension or descent but as a horizontal journey, to the world beyond the rainbow or the other side of the sunset. Such imagery of course was related by the German shaman whose story I reviewed in a recent *Magonia*, and occurs even in an Italian abduction narrative from 1954.

Stone relates this motif to the modern legends of the phantom hitchhiker. Another modern motif which he could have added is what I call 'the journey into the badlands', the strange hallucinatory experiences of distorted landscapes and frightening figures experienced by some night drivers. These bizarre experiences have some similarities to those encountered in that fair-ground domestication of the shaman's journey, the ghost train.

Lovers of historical and textual detective work (yes the dreaded cult of librarianship) will enjoy the contributions of Ulrich Magin as he tracks down the origins of a tale of a ship being found in a Swiss mine (a remote ancestor of the crashed flying saucer stories?), Gareth Medway and Mark McCann as they uncover several cases of plagiarism in the occult literature (I am sure they could easily write a full book on that one), and Michel Meurger as he shows how Albert Ostman's tale of being kidnapped by bigfoot folk has close similarities with a folk story from Brazil, and an even closer one from the French Alps (though as the latter appeared in a book written in

1977 it may have been plagiarised from Ostman's story, rather than the other way round). Meurger suggests that all these tales may be personalisations of pre existing folk traditions, in Ostman's case derived from his native Sweden)

Of the other papers, the longest is Colin Bennett's; a further piece of literary criticism of Fort, it

clearly shows great erudition, but his argument concerning the absence of science from the Anglo-American literary world view, gets muddled with many other claims, and the usual rants against science, which some of us would take a little more seriously if we

didn't have the sneaking suspicion they were composed on word processors in a centrally heated domicile, complete with fridge, TV, WC and running water, all products of the dreaded science technology and modernity

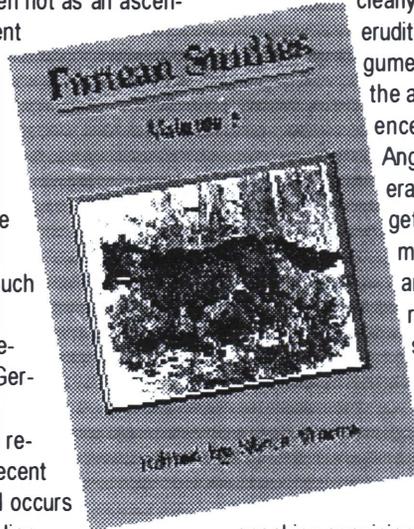
Neil Nixon continues with his study of ufology in the media, interesting and informative in parts, but at times reading rather too much like lecture notes, and eyebrows are raised by his comparison of Messes Devereux and Budden with Galileo, and his characterisation of Nigel Kerner's farrago of pseudoscientific ravings as 'one of the most innovative UFO books of

the entire decade'

Such was the high standard of most of the papers in this volume, that when there is included a piece of more traditional Fortean writing, Jonathan Downes and Richard Freeman's piece on the dogman and werewolves, it looks rather down marker in comparison. The material they present would be great as examples of modern folklore, but these guys actually believe in werewolves, or nasty old boggarts disguised as werewolves, and even take the tales told by Montague Summers and Elliot O'Donnell as factual accounts. Time to go hunting for the Brentford Griffin again!

A sad reflection on what is happening at the edges (and not always at the edges) of our field is that Steve Moore has to apologise to Nigel Watson and Granville Oldroyd in his editorial for giving permission for a French journal to reproduce their piece about the Russians with snow on their boots. The academic sounding journal which requested this turns out to be a holocaust revisionist propaganda sheet. Warning to editors, if a magazine you don't know asks to reprint one of your articles, always get a couple of sample issues first.

The only general quibble I have is whether with space being limited, so much should be devoted to the index to the previous years *FT*, I think that would be better as a separate publication, allowing more space in *FS* for excellent articles, and avoiding delays in publishing the latest research.

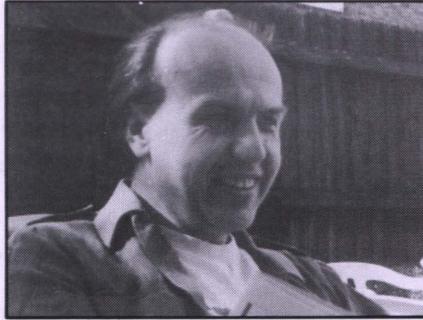


Magonia readers in London, and visitors, are welcome to come along to the monthly *Magonia* Readers' Group meetings. These are held on the first Sunday of each month at the Railway pub, Putney. This is situated just across the road from Putney SWT station (about 10 - 15 minutes from Waterloo) on the corner of Upper Richmond Road and Putney High Street.

We meet from about 7.15 p.m. onwards as an informal group chatting about anything to do with the topics we discuss in *Magonia*. Look out for the table with copies of the magazine and other weird literature scattered about! If you want further details, ring us on 0181 876 7246 before setting out.

The Railway is a Weatherspoon's pub, so there's a music-free atmosphere with a good range of food and drink at reasonable prices.

Interpreting Contemporary Vision and Belief



THE SECOND ROGER SANDELL MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION

£100 PRIZE

Entries are invited for the second essay competition in memory of Roger Sandell. This competition will have a broad theme, reflecting one of Roger's interests;

The Media, Vision and Belief

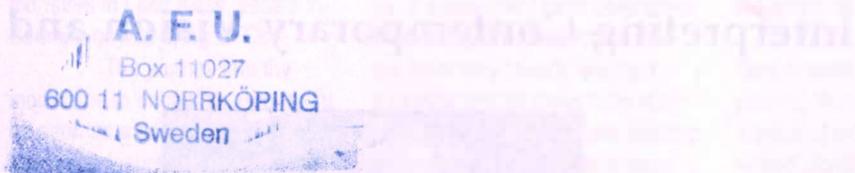
This can be interpreted in the widest sense, and could include media coverage of specific phenomena or beliefs; how the media shapes contemporary beliefs; how the media contributes to public understanding (or misunderstanding) of anomalous events and beliefs, or any other aspect of media interaction with the topics covered in this magazine. 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 31st October 1999.
3. Entries must be between 4,000 and 5,000 words, not including notes and references, but entrants must avoid lengthy footnotes. Entries must be typed, double spaced on one side of A4 paper, with a separate sheet giving the title and the entrant's name and address. Entries must be posted to John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, London, SW14 8HB, United Kingdom, in time to be received by 31st September 1999. Entries sent on disk, by fax or e-mail are not acceptable.
4. Entries will be judged by John Rimmer, John Harney and Peter Rogerson, and the winner will receive a prize of £100 (\$160). 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 Magonia. The Editors may wish to publish other entries by agreement with the authors.



HOLD THE BACK PAGE



Animal Madness I

We really felt we had to share this with you, posted on a fortnight news group by Terry Colvin:

On February 25th, fourteen witnesses observed an elk being abducted by a UFO. Robert A. Fairfax WA MUFON Director of Investigation reports an official at the Washington Department of Game told him that more than 100 dead elk were reported in the St. Helen's region.

Because of the long winter and dearth of new spring growth and nutrient providing new growth in general, many animals have used up their energy reserves. The elk have migrated to lower elevations in search of food; many animals have met new energy depleting situations such as being run by dogpacks or avoiding people on horseback outings. What this all boils down to, is that the elk we found without any obvious mutilation markings is not likely to have been actually abducted by a UFO. Apparently, some of these elk can appear to be well fed because they are eating large quantities of bulk food, but the problem is with the nutrient value of that forage...

I suggested to Bob that these craft may not be manned and are sent to pick up food and elks for experimentation. The meat, blood and other fluids in a large animal's body could be used as food. Fairfax said: "Certainly one would like to think that animals were at least not being wasted, however, as in all the animal abductions that I am aware of, the meat is not harvested. Perhaps the blood is used for substance but there would be better methods of procurement - (like the vampire bat), there would be seemingly little problem of the high tech draining of some blood from several critters such that no permanent damage ensued. If they are using the animals for nutritional needs, they are not very high-minded in their con-

cern for animal welfare. Add to that the taking of pets such as dogs and cats and horses, along with many other species and you have to wonder about this scenario."

The remarkable thing about this story is that MUFON seems to be taking it seriously. With their recent endorsement of a fossilised extraterrestrial skeleton (see the attractive picture of Walt Andrus exposing both his knees and his gullibility on the *MUFON UFO Journal* April cover) the organisation seems to be descending to even deeper levels of lunacy than we have come to expect.

Animal Madness II

Once again *Magonia* has been caught out and has to apologise for not being sceptical enough. After several *Back Page* features on alleged catnapping incidents, we really felt that there must have been something in a series of horrific pet mutilations in different parts of Britain, particularly in the suburban area north of London. We were sure this was something more than rumour-mongering, the reports seemed too precise.

But *The Times* for March 25 1999 carried this story by Robin Young: A hunt for a sadistic cat killer blamed last year for the deaths of more than 40 animals has been called off after a 13-month investigation when post-mortem examinations showed that, in almost all cases, the cats had perished in road accidents.

The RSPCA and the Metropolitan Police joined forces in an inquiry costing tens of thousands of pounds because they received what seemed to be a suspicious number of reports of mutilated cat carcasses being found around London, Surrey and Essex. One London property company offered a £1,000 reward for information that would lead to an arrest and conviction.

An RSPCA spokesman

called the attacks "acts of barbaric cruelty" and described how the animals' heads and tails had been removed by "a sharp instrument".

The RSPCA confirmed yesterday that it was now believed that the cats had never been deliberately mutilated and said that new evidence showed the majority of them had been involved in "fatal road traffic accidents". She said that the post-mortem examinations showed that the cats had not been hacked to death. Their bodies had been pulled apart by scavengers such as crows, dogs and foxes.

What seems to be increasingly clear in reports of unusual animal deaths - anything from pet cats to wild toads - is that there is always someone, apparently qualified to comment, who is prepared to say that the creatures' injuries are made with 'surgical precision' or some such phrase. From now on we will have to regard such a diagnosis as almost total confirmation of an unfortunate accident or predator attack.

Latest News

RSPCA responds to pet killings scare:

