**Book Reviews**


Reviewed by Armando Simon

If there is one field that should have had first dealings with UFOs it is psychology. And if there is one area in psychology that is of paramount relevance to the subject in question, it is that of perception.

Richard Haines is a perceptual psychologist. Because of his training, the book he has written, *Observing UFOs*, is one that at long last fills in the glaring gap that has existed in the field of flying saucers for over 30 years.

The purpose of the handbook is fourfold. First, it attempts to upgrade the quality of training by field investigators. As such, the book supplements the already existing training manuals of private organizations.

Most field investigators need more specialized training. They need to be shown the critical importance of not biasing the witness, of establishing a clear and concise terminology, of gaining the confidence and trust of the witness, of obtaining enough verbal and non-verbal information from the witness and others who are involved, but not so much that the privacy of the witness is invaded, and of preparing a final written report that is fully documented and understandable to others. (p. 45)

Second, Haines suggests that it is a mistake to think UFOs cannot be tested with the scientific method. The problem with UFOs is that it is much harder to do so. Therefore, if all parties concerned keep in mind various principles and limitations, it is definitely possible to obtain quantifiable data that is amenable to statistical analysis and that may just reveal the "core" of the phenomenon. We need not wait for breakthroughs in the various scientific disciplines to analyze UFO reports. Third, since we are all potential observers of future UFOs, we should maximize our opportunity by making as accurate an observation as possible. For example, in a nighttime sighting, writing down how long we were away from bright lights in order to ascertain the UFO's brightness (several tables containing potentially useful

*Armando Simon is a psychologist.*
information are in the book) or the names and brightness of stars against which to match illuminance and trajectory. Last, Haines presents the reader with established principles of perception that help to determine what is and is not possible. These principles fall into the areas of memory, honesty, and perception itself. As the Condon Report does, Haines reviews basic principles of visual perception that are generally unknown among both the public and UFOlogists (e.g., autokinesis, the Bezold-Brücke phenomenon, Charpentier's illusion, the irradiation phenomenon, time passage estimation, and so on). Several instruments are presented as potentially useful and purchasable. "Perhaps the main point is that, through the proper application of research data, one may reconstruct an approximate idea about the true nature of the visual phenomenon . . ." (p. 248, italics in original).

There are two minor shortcomings: (1) Like most technical handbooks, it makes dry reading. Haines purposely omits cases. After a steady dosage of sensational cases elsewhere, this is quite a switch. (2) Haines from the very beginning states that he will deal only with visual perception, not with other psychological topics like hypnotic regression. That is legitimate. However, the topic of "mental set" (how anticipation and previous exposure to stimuli affect perception) does belong in the book, and I was sorry it was not included. Observing UFOs should be read in conjunction with another book, which Haines edited, UFO Phenomena and the Behavioral Scientist. The latter, the work of eleven social scientists, deals with many of the other psychological facets of UFO observation besides perception.

It is revealed throughout the book that, although Haines is open-minded to the possibility that UFOs may be something highly unusual, his feet are planted firmly on the ground, and he refuses to confuse speculation and wishful thinking with facts.


Reviewed by John Kenny

If the blues have got you down, I highly recommend you read UFO Sightings. Mr. Bondarchuk has produced a work of unparalleled amusement and drollery. Unfortunately, one suspects this was not his intent.

The "documented evidence" is organized into 13 chapters—"The Photographic Evidence," "UFO Landings and Physical Traces," and "UFO Abductions," to name a few. The book is well illustrated with pictures of unusual phenomena and personalities. There are also cute little sketches by the author of ominous looking beings with bulbous heads and mysterious craft zapping people and hovering over nuclear installations.

This book does have its good points. First of all it examines the phenomena from a Canadian point of view, bringing together most of the major reports from across the nation. Second, it points out the need for the government to relax some

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of the security restrictions on its UFO files. This secretiveness merely fuels the controversy and, as Mr. Bondarchuk demonstrates by his own writing, in the absence of hard data the UFO buffs invent their own.

The "documented evidence" includes references to hyperoptic travel, parallel universes, and visitors from not only other star systems but distant galaxies. Aside from these excursions into fantasy, the book is replete with self-contradictions, alternately stating that the UFOs are concerned over our deteriorating environment and accusing them of dumping their waste in our lakes; blaming the rising cost of electricity on UFOs' tapping high tension lines and postulating the great '65 blackout was caused by a beneficent UFO supplying a huge surge of power to the Adam Beck generator outputs. The book moves from the ridiculous to the ludicrous with gems such as UFO dwarfs stealing potted flowers from a little old lady. Even well-explained sightings, such as President Carter's spotting of Venus and the flap over the Japanese shrimp-boats off the coast of New Zealand, are not safe from being once more produced as proof positive of an alien presence.

Throughout there is an air of anthropomorphism. UFO occupants are described as being humanoid in form and come in male and female. Those that are not humanoid are described as being subservient to the humanoids. The items of concern to the UFOs also reflect the current concerns of society at large: the environment, the possibility of a nuclear holocaust, and the energy crisis.

Bondarchuk ends with his personal prognosis for the future of UFO phenomena: either we will see less, things will stay the same, or we will see more. Now who can argue with logic like that?


Reviewed by James Randi

There are literally hundreds of books offered today that can serve as horrible examples of misinformation, but this volume is the Rosemary's Baby of them all. I can recommend it as a classic.

To list all the errors, examples of naiveté, and outright misrepresentations would take a book in itself. Leafing through it I came upon mention of two scientists, "D. Bohn" and "David Bohm." They are referred to as different persons in the text and listed separately in the index. But they are the same person. Jack Sarfatti (formerly "Sarfatt") is called repeatedly by the name "Safritti"—but correctly as one person.

The old chestnut about some ancient pharaoh's body tissues being revitalized "by scientists" is repeated to prove the preservative power of the pyramids of Egypt, despite the fact that no ruler was ever found in such a structure, and the claim about viable cells is pure nonsense.

Of course, Uri Geller is dragged in proudly, and reference is made to experiments with him that never took place, such as the "dematerialization" that was done under "carefully controlled conditions"—actually referring to another set of silly tests done with another psychic claimant. The name of Isaac Asimov is invoked, and quotations are given from his works, taken to prove totally unsupportable ideas concerning "pyramid power." As we might suspect, the now-
embarrassing story of the Berlitz pyramid that scholars discovered beneath the Atlantic off Bimini is swallowed whole and used to bolster the case.

Perhaps the most convincing event in the book concerns a young girl who was cured of bedwetting when a pyramid was placed beneath her bed. If I saw Schul and Pettit placing the dumb thing under my bed, I don’t know what I’d do.

Some Recent Books

Listing here does not preclude a detailed review in a future issue.


—K.F.

Articles of Note

Following is a sampling of some recent articles that critique or report on paranormal or fringe-science claims.

Anderson, Duncan M. “The #1 Skeptic and His Debunking Brigade.” *Science Digest* (Special Edition), Spring 1980, pp. 80-83, 118. Profile of Paul Kurtz and CSICOP.


"The Conversion of Kübler-Ross." *Time*, Nov. 12, 1979, p. 81. Discussion of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s links to Jay Barham’s Church of the Facet of Divinity and its sessions of sexual intercourse with people’s "entities," in at least one case said to be Barham.


Feder, Kenneth L. "Foolsgold of the Gods." *Humanist*, Jan.-Feb. 1980, pp. 20-23. Anthropologist supplies data from *Chariots of the Gods?* indicating that von Däniken’s arguments are strongly motivated by racism: Europeans largely escape von Däniken’s our-ancestors-were-dummies argument; 96 percent of the examples he uses to “prove” ancient peoples were too unsophisticated to accomplish technological tasks without outside help are drawn from Africa, Asia, and North and South America.


Helmers, Carl. "Is Pseudoscience Done by Computer Pseudo-Computer-Science?" *BYTE*, November 1979, pp. 6-9. Editorial criticizing the flood of interest by computer fans in birthdate-based biorhythms and the notion that “if it is represented in a programmed calculation, it must be true.”

Jacobs, Paul. "Iridology Fails in Tests by UC San Diego Experts." *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 9, 1979, p. 1. Report by medical writer gives additional information on the controlled tests by Simon, Worthen, and Mitas (see below) of claims of iridology (the idea that the eye’s iris is a map of body disorders). The experiment, termed by one eye-specialist “the first genuine piece of scientific research on the subject,” found no support for the claims of iridology.


Leff, David N. "Four Wondrous Weeks of Science and Medicine in the Amazing, Incredible Supermarket Press." *Newsletter, National Association of Science Writers*, Jan. 1980, pp. 3-7. Entertaining review of the ways the supermarket
tabloids pitch titillation and new hope in the guise of science. What factual reporting there is "is cocooned in adjectives and interlarded with so much modern mythology that its information titer is diluted to the pico-range." Includes a lexicon of checkout-counter-press hyperbole.

Morris, Scot. "Interview with James Randi." Omni, April 1980. A no-punches-pulled interview with one of the best-informed and most outspoken critics of paranormal claims. Touches on Geller, the SRI experiments, dowsing, "psychic" photography—the whole litany of psychic claims. Randi's honesty and clear perception of sham and self-delusion shine forth throughout.


Simon, Allie, David M. Worthen, MD, and John A. Mitas II. "An Evaluation of Iridology." Journal of the American Medical Association 242:1385-1389, Sept. 28, 1979. Results of a controlled study by researchers at the University of California Medical Center and the VA Medical Center, both in San Diego. This first scientific study of the claims of iridology (that the iris of the eye reveals body ailments) found that iridology had no clinical or statistically significant ability to detect the presence of kidney disease. The likelihood of correct detection was statistically no better than chance.

Walton, Susan. "Holistic Medicine." Science News, Dec. 15, 1979, pp. 410-412. Well-balanced analysis of the mixed bag of treatments and procedures lumped together as holistic medicine. Attempts to make necessary distinctions between those aspects that involve medical fads of questionable efficacy or occultic derivation and those that involve merely a return to a conservative philosophy of patient care that emphasizes the whole person rather than the disease.

Wilcox, Laird M. "Astrology, Mysticism and the Occult: A Critical Bibliography." Kansas City, Mo.: Editorial Research Service (P.O. Box 1832, Kansas City, Mo. 64141), 1980, 29 pp., $4.95. Bibliography, briefly annotated, of 420 articles and books that present critical and factual information and analysis of occult and pseudoscience claims. Most are from past five years. Includes an introduction and brief bibliographies of books on logic and rational thinking and on propaganda technique. Updated and much expanded version of first (1978) edition.


—K.F.