

Indian wanna-bes will eat this up and wallow happily in the drainage ditch of antisience, but unfortunately, Deloria's reputation will also attract less biased readers who deserve an honest account of American prehistory. Contrary to Deloria's complaint that he cannot find any coherent or believable explanations of current theories of the peopling of the new world, Brian Fagan's *Ancient North America* (Thames and Hudson 1995) and *The Great Journey* (Thames and Hudson 1987) are two of several read-

able and well-documented books.

Both the great achievements of Native Americans and the sorry record of United States dealings with them should be widely and honestly taught. I would like to think that eventually enough justice will be done that modern Native Americans will no longer feel themselves a victimized minority, and an articulate leader like Deloria will not feel the need to put his best foot forward into a cow pie of politically motivated, false prehistory. □

UFOlogical community that the world's governments and military powers are all too aware of the reality of extraterrestrial visitors, and that they are engaged in a vast coverup to keep this knowledge from the public. UFOlogist Timothy Good is the main proponent of such a conspiracy theory in the United Kingdom, and he has written the foreword for Pope's book. A natural choice, it would appear.

There is only one snag. Pope, the man billed as "the real Fox Mulder," is convinced that the British government is not engaged in any kind of coverup. Far from it being the case that the government has vast amounts of detailed information on UFO technology, Pope is worried that the Ministry of Defence is so ignorant about "a phenomenon which is as real as toast." Good's foreword, therefore, argues that although Pope may be being honest about his lack of knowledge of a coverup, there is one anyway. If Good is right, then Pope is merely a pawn being controlled by unseen forces within the Ministry of Defence. If that is the case, why should we be expected to treat his revelations as any kind of a reliable guide to the UFO phenomenon?

Personally, I suspect that Pope is giving us an accurate account of just how seriously the British government takes the UFO threat. Contrary to the views of the conspiracy theorists, vast resources are not put into a sophisticated coverup operation. The job of dealing with UFO claims is allocated to a single person—and even that person has other unrelated duties! One part-time civil servant who has subsequently published a book on his activities and yet is still working for the Ministry of Defence is not really the stuff of elaborate conspiracy theories.

Interestingly, Pope seems to imply that the American government is engaged in a coverup. Many of the cases that he finds

Christopher C. French is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Goldsmiths' College, University of London, where he teaches a course on psychology, parapsychology, and pseudoscience.

An Encounter with the Man from the Ministry

CHRISTOPHER C. FRENCH

Open Skies, Closed Minds: For the First Time a Government UFO Expert Speaks Out. By Nick Pope. Simon & Schuster, London, 1996. 270 pp. Cloth £14.99

Recently, in the United Kingdom, another book was published on UFOs. However, according to the media hype, this was not just another book about UFOs. According to an official press release, this book "blows the lid off the British Government's UFO secrets by exposing for the first time what they really know." And who should be in a better position to write such a book than Nick Pope, the man who from 1991 to 1994 was responsible for investigating and analyzing claims of UFO sightings for the British Ministry of Defence?

During this period, Pope worked for Secretariat (Air Staff) Department 2A—"The UFO Desk." Apparently, although he started out as a skeptic, he was forced by the sheer weight of evidence to acknowledge that extraterrestrial spacecraft really are routinely breaching the United Kingdom's air defences and that they represent a major potential threat to national security. In his new book, *Open Skies, Closed Minds*, he presents the apparently "irrefutable evidence" that has led him to this conclusion. It was therefore with great anticipation that I opened Pope's book a few days ago and began to

read. My hands trembled as I turned the pages. The truth was about to be revealed. At last, a glimpse into the real *X-Files* . . .

Okay, so I am exaggerating slightly. I had already been told by a friend who had read the serialization in a British daily newspaper that it was "just the same old stuff" as all the other books on UFOs. However, I had been approached by the producer of a TV talk show to provide a skeptical perspective on UFO claims for a program they were doing focusing on Pope's book, so I felt duty-bound to read it. As it turned out, my friend's description was totally accurate. I searched in vain for the "irrefutable evidence" that had been promised. What I found instead was a presentation of some of the classic UFO cases, plus some of Pope's own rather less impressive cases.

The book does actually give some real insight into the British government's approach to UFOs but not quite in the way that the book's publicity might lead one to expect. In the TV series *The X-Files*, the fictional Fox Mulder is often prevented from getting too close to the truth regarding UFOs by sinister government agents. It is widely believed by the

so impressive, in particular the notorious Roswell crashed-saucer claim, rely upon such a clandestine operation for them to be taken seriously at all. It is claimed that in 1947 a flying saucer crashed in Roswell, New Mexico, and that the debris, including alien bodies, was recovered by the military. The United States Air Force denies such claims, saying that the debris found was from a balloon being used in a then-top-secret military project known as Mogul and that no alien bodies were whisked away for autopsy. It follows that if a saucer really did crash, the United States government must be engaged in a coverup. What Pope never explains is why the Americans would feel it necessary to engage in a sophisticated, large-scale coverup while the British government is quite happy to virtually ignore the UFO phenomenon altogether. As with many of Pope's claims, his argument here just does not hold up. Skeptics feel that the reason conspiracy theories are so popular among UFOlogists is that they provide an excellent means of explaining the fact that no really convincing evidence exists.

Pope's three immediate superiors at the Ministry of Defence were not as impressed as Pope with the evidence he collected for the reality of UFOs. Their attitudes ranged "from complete scepticism to a more open-minded position." Note that for Pope, being open-minded equals believing that UFOs are of extraterrestrial origin, and being closed-minded equals doubting this opinion. For example, we are told that those involved in Project Blue Book, a major investigation into UFO claims set up by the United States Air Force in 1952, became less and less "open-minded" as their investigations progressed. It seems very odd, to say the least, that an initially open-minded project team would become more closed-minded the more information they gathered. Needless to say, Project Blue Book concluded by stating that no evidence had been found to support the extraterrestrial origin of UFOs.

Project Blue Book, along with other

similar investigations, found that well over 90 percent of UFO sightings can be explained in fairly prosaic terms. Pope accepts that the vast majority of sightings can be accounted for in terms of astronomical events (especially the bright planet Venus), aircraft, satellites, weather balloons, and so on. Like other UFOlogists, however, he is tremendously excited about the few cases that cannot be accounted for. With respect to several cases he presents, he argues that although no one could prove that the sighting was a real extraterrestrial, no one could prove that it was not one either. This is a bogus argument. It would be unreasonable to expect the police to be able to solve every single crime. In many instances, incriminating evidence is simply no longer available at the scene of the crime. Why then should skeptics be expected to explain every single claimed sighting? Many such sightings will always remain as literally *unidentified*. It is a great and unwarranted inferential leap to assume that "unidentified" equals "extraterrestrial." The burden of proof clearly lies with the claimant.

Another common theme in the UFO literature is that certain groups of people cannot be fooled into misperceptions that might plague ordinary folk because they are "trained observers." Great credence is therefore given to the testimony of pilots, military personnel, and police officers. In fact, a vast amount of psychological evidence shows that we are all notoriously unreliable when it comes to eyewitness testimony, especially in less-than-perfect viewing conditions and when we are not sure what we are looking at. These are exactly the conditions that usually characterize UFO sightings. What often happens in these circumstances is that witnesses are influenced by their own expectations and will unintentionally add in details that fit those expectations. Thus, while investigations often reveal that what claimants saw in a particular case must have been a known astronomical event, such as a meteor, given its position in the sky and the time of the sighting, this does not prevent the

witness from sincerely reporting details that are more consistent with a flying saucer than a meteor (e.g., seeing ETs in silver suits through windows on the craft). Furthermore, many such cases exist involving experienced pilots, astronomers, and even American presidents. Indeed, the late J. Allen Hynek, described in Pope's book as "perhaps the single most significant figure in the study of UFOs over the past forty-odd years," was of the opinion that, "Surprisingly, commercial and military pilots appear to make relatively poor witnesses."

There are, of course, UFO claims for which we have apparently stronger evidence than the reports of potentially unreliable, if sincere, witnesses. Many photographs and videos are presented as evidence. Cases involving some kind of physical evidence are known as "close encounters of the second kind," in contrast to close encounters of the first kind—that is, mere sightings. Once again, Pope's presentation of this evidence seems to be somewhat biased, making it appear stronger than it actually is. For example, he quotes the opinion of the generally skeptical Condon Committee—a group of independent scientists asked to investigate the UFO phenomenon by the United States Air Force in the 1960s—regarding two famous photographs taken in 1950 by a Mr. and Mrs. Trent on a farm near McMinville, Oregon. They appear to show a large, metallic disk flying over the farm. Regarding this case, the Condon Committee wrote:

This is one of the few UFO reports in which all factors investigated, geometric, psychological and physical, appear to be consistent with the assertion that an extraordinary flying object, silvery, metallic, disc-shaped, tens of metres in diameter and evidently artificial, flew within sight of two witnesses.

Pope presents the above quotation, giving the impression that the Trent photographs present very convincing evidence. In fact, however, analysis by leading skeptic Robert Sheaffer has cast great doubt upon the authenticity of the claim.

For example, his analysis of the patterns of light and shade in the photographs suggests that the pictures could not possibly have been taken at the time the Trents claimed. William K. Hartmann, chief photograph analyst for the Condon Committee and author of the above quotation, was so impressed by Sheaffer's analysis that he publicly reversed his earlier positive opinion and declared that he believed the photographs to be a hoax. You will not find that information in Pope's book.

Similarly, Pope describes the spectacular UFO photographs taken by Ed Walters of Gulf Breeze, Pensacola, Florida. Walters claims that the photographs show a UFO that emitted a blue shaft of light which lifted him off the ground. What Pope does not tell his readers is that a model of a UFO that looked just like the UFO in the photographs was found under the insulation of a garage by the new owners of a house previously occupied by Walters. It was made, in part, out of a house plan that Walters himself had drawn. Additional evidence points strongly to a hoax. (Incidentally, in one episode of *The X-Files*, "the other Fox Mulder" commented that he had realized at once that the Gulf Breeze photographs were fakes.) None of the evidence of a hoax is presented by Pope. Is that really a fair and open-minded approach?

Perhaps the evidence relating to close encounters of the third and fourth kinds, alien contact and abduction, respectively, will prove to be more convincing? Much of the early evidence relating to alien-contact claims was not taken very seriously even by UFOlogists at the time. In 1952, George Adamski claimed to have met and communicated with an alien from Venus. Subsequent space probes have shown that the planets described by Adamski as being inhabited are barren wastelands, not at all as he described them. Even Pope accepts that Adamski was probably a fraud. Careful reading of his book reveals that he is also cautious with respect to alien-abduction claims. While he is happy to speculate wildly

concerning the possibility that such claims are true, he stops well short of actually endorsing them. He discusses the possibility that they represent nothing more than hypnotically induced false memories or malfunctioning of the temporal lobes.

On other occasions, too, Pope is skeptical regarding particular claims that other UFOlogists take seriously. He seems to accept that the notorious "MJ-12" documents are forgeries. The documents were alleged to show that President Truman had set up a top-secret committee named Majestic-12 to report to him personally on the Roswell incident. But the evidence that they are forgeries is very strong, thanks to the investigative efforts of Philip J. Klass, the world's leading UFO skeptic. For example, Truman's signature appears to have been photocopied from another document. Pope is also skeptical regarding the recent footage claiming to show an autopsy of one of the aliens recovered from Roswell. Like most other commentators, he thinks it is a hoax.

In contrast, Pope is often guilty of the most amazing credulity. He seems to take seriously Erich Von Däniken's ludicrous ancient astronaut theory, despite the fact that it has been totally discredited by Ronald Story and others. The same applies to Charles Berlitz's outrageous claims regarding the Bermuda Triangle. In one of the most comprehensive debunkings ever, Larry Kusche has shown that there is simply no mystery to be solved with respect to the Triangle. Pope also gives a totally uncritical summary of Wilhelm Reich's bizarre orgone energy theory without any awareness, it would seem, that the theory has no support whatsoever among scientists. Pope is quite happy to engage in wild and unfounded speculation himself. He argues that the so-called Beast of Bodmin might actually be a shape-shifting extraterrestrial.

Pope devotes complete chapters to cattle mutilations and crop circles, arguing in each case that alien visitors may be responsible. Naturally, Pope rejects the official explanation for cattle mutilations,

which is that when cattle die naturally and are subsequently eaten by scavengers, soft body parts such as the genitals are eaten first, giving the impression of some kind of strange surgical procedure.

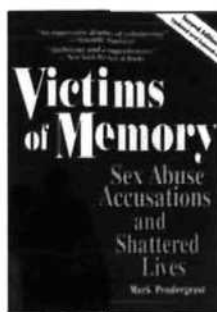
Regarding crop circles, Pope believes that so-called "cerealogists" can generally tell a hoax from the "real thing." This, of course, assumes that there is such a thing as the "real thing." Pope believes that there are important differences between hoax circles and "genuine" ones, including the fact that the latter will be detectable by dowsing. However, he readily admits that two self-appointed experts, Pat Delgado and Terence Meaden, publicly endorsed as genuine two circles known to have been produced by hoaxers. Pope acknowledges that hoaxers such as Doug Bower and Dave Chorley, and groups like the Wessex Sceptics, have produced many of the circles but then goes on to argue that hoaxers could not possibly be responsible for all of the circles or else they would have been caught in the act. But if they can get away with it some of the time, why not all of the time? Pope's argument here is particularly puzzling given that he describes how, during one organized cropwatch, hoaxers were able to produce a hoax circle under the very noses of the assembled cropwatchers, despite a sophisticated array of cameras, including infrared equipment.

The appeal of UFOs and the paranormal is tremendous and seems to be on the increase if media coverage is anything to go by. We are all attracted to mysteries, and skeptics are not usually welcome to pour cold water upon such claims. That was certainly the case when I appeared on *The Time, The Place*, the program that had asked me to take part in my usual role as token skeptic. A show of hands before the program went on the air revealed that only about three other people in the audience were skeptical—quite representative of this type of program. As usual, I was lucky to avoid a lynching.

Pope says somewhere in his book that a mind is like a parachute—it has to be open to work properly. Skeptics might

reply that if you leave your mind too open, you will find that there are always plenty of people around to fill it with rubbish. Pope consistently fails to present the skeptical case in anything but a weak caricature. At the end of the TV program I was able to quickly ask him, before he was rushed off for his next media appointment, whether he had actually read the books of leading skeptics, such as

Philip Klass and Robert Sheaffer, given that no reference is made to these people in his book. "Well, not actually cover to cover . . ." he candidly replied. There are probably less than a half a dozen classic skeptical books on UFOs. Nick Pope was in his post at the Ministry of Defence for over three years. Would not someone with a truly open mind have found the time to read these books? □



Victims of Therapy or Victims of Memory?

PETER HUSTON

Victims of Memory: Sex Abuse Accusations and Shattered Lives. By Mark Pendergrast. Upper Access Books, Hinesburg, VT, 1996, second edition. ISBN 0-942679-18-0. 635 pp. Paperback, \$24.95. Orders 1-800-356-9315.

Ever since Freud, many educated people have believed that the mind sometimes represses memories of unpleasant or unacceptable events, and that a skilled psychotherapist can dramatically facilitate the "recovery" of these hidden memories, thus producing therapeutic results. Unfortunately, there are problems with this concept. First, there is little scientific evidence that memories can be repressed. Second, if memories are truly forgotten, they probably can't be recovered. They are, like Clementine, lost and gone forever. Third, it is highly questionable whether these procedures do produce therapeutic effects. Finally, if the "memories" are of childhood sexual abuse, as they frequently have been over the last few years, then somebody is likely to get accused, falsely, as the perpetrator of one of the most horrible crimes that exists. All in all, "repressed memory therapy" is not a pretty thing.

Victims of Memory: Sex Abuse Accusations and Shattered Lives, by Mark Pendergrast, is the most comprehensive book currently available on this timely and important subject. Pendergrast, an investigative journalist, knows firsthand what it feels like to lose children to this form of therapy. He has lost all contact

with his two daughters. This book is all the more remarkable, then, since it provides such a well-researched, evenhanded look at this phenomenon.

In this, the second, updated edition of this critically acclaimed book, Pendergrast begins with a chapter that chronicles how the "survivor movement" began in the early 1980s and provides horrifying quotations from books, such as *The Courage to Heal*, that helped promote the concept of repressed memories of sexual abuse. Then, in a chapter on human memory, he looks at the controversy from all angles and concludes that there is no evidence for the repression of long-term, continuous abuse—what he terms "massive repression." Next, he explains how people can come to "believe the unbelievable," through hypnosis, misinterpretation of panic attacks and sleep paralysis, dream analysis, group pressure, and other means. Another chapter debunks multiple-personality-disorder and satanic-cult claims. These sections are, like all of the book, thoroughly documented and footnoted.

At the heart of the book are unique, valuable interviews with persons on all sides of the issue—therapists, "survivors," the accused (generally parents), and "retractors," those who once believed

themselves to be victims but have concluded that their "recovered memories" were in fact false. Through these voices, we get a very real, human picture of the issue from all sides. We learn of the social value that "victimhood" has for some persons. We also get to see the trauma resulting from real sexual abuse, as well as inappropriate therapy.

This issue tends to polarize people. True sexual abuse is horrible, and assistance, support, and aid must be provided for victims, as Pendergrast repeatedly stresses. Yet one reason the abuse is horrible is simply because people do not forget it. Memories of the abuse intrude at inappropriate times, interfering with day-to-day living, causing further problems and continuous emotional suffering to the victims. To some extent, "therapies" that falsely induce such memories inflict similar emotional suffering on people who have never been sexually abused. Such therapy is inhuman and cruel. All concerned with the state of mental health care should examine this issue intellectually, instead of accusing critics as somehow "uncompassionate" or "anti-victim."

Through these interviews, Pendergrast provides insights into how such memories are induced by well-meaning therapists in unsuspecting patients. Several pseudoscientific forms of therapy are represented in the interviews or discussed elsewhere in the book, including "past life therapy," recovery of "body memories" through massage, and recall of "repressed UFO abduction memories."

The rest of this massive book covers related matters. Chapter nine reveals how false accusations of child sexual abuse occur and develop, including bizarre, multivictim day-care-center cases of alleged satanic ritual abuse, as well as smaller, more confusing reports involving individual parents and children. Chapter ten provides historical context, briefly

Peter Huston writes from Schenectady, New York. He is the author of two books, including Scams from the Great Beyond, due out in January 1997 from Paladin Press.