

### I Feel the Earth Move

Michael A. Persinger has recently published another article in *Perceptual and Motor Skills* (V. 50, 1980, pp. 791-7), dealing with the predicted relationship of earthquakes and the number of UFO's reported in a given area. He is to be applauded for his efforts to correlate the two phenomena, despite the fact that he could not find a statistically valid correlation between the two, in the total area he examined, although he did see some relationship between them in smaller sample areas.

Despite his analysis, I feel that a relationship between just UFO's and earthquakes is not a meaningful association. If we are to theorize that UFO's and earthquakes are both manifestations of a single "kind" of force or particle/energy field, then we must also add the data variables of psychic events and other fortean phenomena. I believe, however, that the idea raised was to determine if earthquake lights are responsible for most UFO reports. Obviously, if the correlation was between earthquake lights and earthquakes, the results would be strongly positive. But how does one distinguish earthquake lights from UFO's, if both are poorly-understood luminous phenomena which display very similar characteristics? It should be obvious that earthquake lights are, in fact, much rarer phenomena than UFO's, and represent only a small fraction of unidentifieds. This is also a problem; did Persinger use all UFO reports for the area, or only the unknowns? Either way, it is not at all surprising that Persinger did not find strong correlations in his study.

### The Green Moon

In a recent issue of the *Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada* (V. 74, no. 3, pp. 168-72), is a report of a UFO by Philip A. Stahl. Two individuals witnessed what was described as a green ball of light the size of the Moon, which flew amongst some clouds over Barbados. The author of the article proceeds to eliminate hypotheses, including the ETH, until he arrives at the explanation of ball lightning. While the object seen may very well have been ball lightning, Stahl's quick dismissal of the ETH is a bit disturbing, and shows no serious consideration of the matter. However, this is not an uncommon attitude that one can meet with in such discussions. His dismissal is based on three pieces of information:

1. That only two people saw the light.  
(Not unusual, since it was visible for only two seconds.)
2. One witness said: "It did not seem metallic."  
(So?)

3. The author "is inclined to agree with....Sagan against" UFO's as extraterrestrial spacecraft.

My own calculations, based on the data given by Stahl, indicate that the ball lightning was perhaps as close as 20 metres to the witnesses. Even if Stahl's figure of 50 metres was correct, as he says, "the ball lightning only appeared to move between two distant clouds" because they were in the line of sight. Stahl admits, however, that there is "room for significant uncertainty" in the report. Yet, he can conclude that the object seen was a rare, chance occurrence of ball lightning. Though his reasoning and methods leave much to be desired, and since the object was seen for such a short period of time, I would tend to retain some level of uncertainty of the object's true nature. There is no doubt that the object could indeed have been ball lightning, since its mechanism and form are still poorly understood.

Another annoying thing was that Stahl decided to create his own acronym instead of UFO, proposing the term "TOPA" for "Transient Optical Phenomena of the Atmosphere", in order to facilitate "objective assessment". Since "UFO" conjures up images of little green men, then TOPA should make the whole thing more respectable for the scientific community to deal with.

#### Bearden and the Mutes

No sooner do I mail off the last issue of the SGJ, than I find that Thomas Bearden is pictured and quoted in Macleans Magazine (21 July, 1980) in an article on cattle mutilation. Trust the media to make the whole affair seem as ludicrous as possible.

#### The Madonna and the UFO

Though I have seen several paintings of UFO's by contactees, space artists and witnesses, I must say I wasn't prepared for V. 1, #3 of the CUFOS Associate Newsletter. It reprints a photo from the November, 1978, issue of Notiziario UFO, which features a 15th Century Florentine painting, titled, "The Madonna and St. Giovannino", clearly showing a disc-shaped object hovering in the background, getting due notice by a shepherd and his dog. While Timmerman credits the painting to Filippo Lippi, the original Notiziario article credits it to the school of Filippo Lippi. Despite some amount of effort, I could not locate a print of the painting in any book about Lippi, but since it was from his school of art, it may not be reprinted anywhere. Lippi had an interesting style, depicting halos around most individuals, showing the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, flying here and there, emanating rays, and using various interesting symbols for religious connotations. However, there is no doubt that the object does not resemble a dove or a cloud. The painting, in fact, appears in some ways to resemble the style of Filippino rather than a Filippo Lippi, since former's style more closely resembles the photo. Until we see another print, we'll take their word for it. Could it be the fabled "key" to the UFO mystery?

Two 1980 'Unknowns' from the UFOROM Files

Teulon, Manitoba

CEI Case 800399.1

Late March, 1980

0030 hrs

A single witness was laying in his bed in a hospital ward, several days after an illness and surgery, when he looked out his window to see a "football-shaped" object silently gliding over a building across from his room. The object was an estimated 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet in height, with many multicolored "Christmas lights" along its upper edge. It was in the south, and appeared to be travelling toward the southeast.

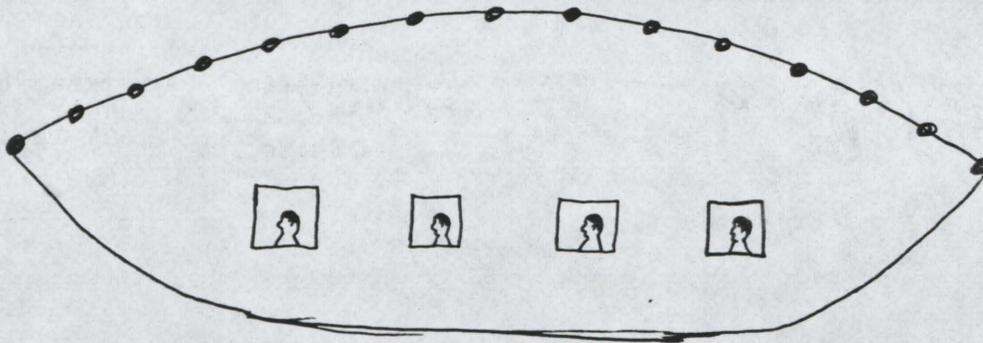
As it passed the witness, it seemed to briefly turn its "cabin lights" on, and the witness suddenly saw four white "windows" appear along the middle of the object. After a few seconds, the "cabin" lights were extinguished, and nothing further was seen except for the upper colored lights, which apparently provided illumination for the rest of the object.

In the "windows" were observed four "people", or rather, four heads which were each facing in the object's direction of travel. The witness recalls seeing hair ("cut fairly short") and other "normal" features, including a nose, ears and lips.

When observed, the object was an estimated 150 feet away from the witness. It travelled out of view (about 60 degrees of vision) in 2-3 minutes.

In fifteen minutes, the same object travelled back, westward, without turning on the cabin lights. Fifteen minutes later still, the object returned eastward along the same path. The witness at this point decided to call a nurse to watch it return a fourth time. Unfortunately, it did not, and the sighting ended.

Sketch:



Tilston, Manitoba

NL Case 800718.1  
18 July, 1980  
0100 hrs

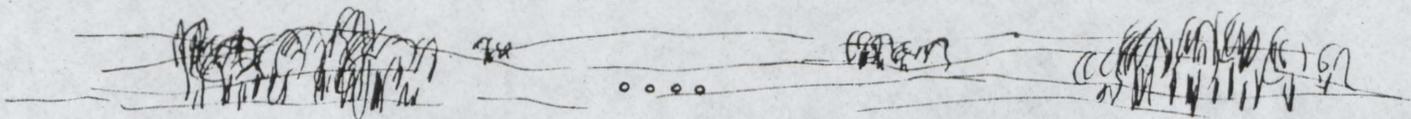
The primary witness was awakened by a loud noise, like a "slam" of two "sheets of metal". A minute later, the sound repeated itself, and the witness looked south out his bedroom window. In a sunflower field, an estimated  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile or closer to the house, were four round, white lights, like "two cars side by side". The lights subtended an estimated 10 degrees on the ground. As he watched, the lights moved as a group, from left to right across the ground, occasionally passing behind trees. After 15-20 minutes of movement towards the left, then back towards the right, the lights abruptly went out.

After 5-10 minutes, the lights reappeared in the same location, and began rising slowly, together, into the sky. At this point, the primary witness woke up a second witness, who arrived at the window in time to see the lights once again in the field after they had descended during this interval. The lights had been approximately 45 degrees in elevation. After about 10 minutes, the lights went out, and no further lights were seen.

The next morning, a third individual reported that she had heard a "whirring" that had woke her up during the night..

There is no road in that area of the field, and, later, when the field was examined, no marks or tracks of any kind could be found.

Sketch:





Wheatley, Dennis Star of Ill-Omen Arrow, 1975 PB  
 Williams, T. Owen A Month for Mankind Lennox Hill, 1971 HC  
 Wilson, Colin The Philosopher's Stone Granada, 1974 PB  
 Wyndham, John The Kraken Wakes Penguin, 1966 PB  
 Wyndham, John The Midwich Cuckoos Penguin, 1973 PB

I am on the lookout for many more. There are others, of course, which were published as fact, but are either too far out for fact or were shown to be hoaxes (e.g. Scully's Behind the Flying Saucers).

Story's Encyclopedia of UFO's (reviewed last issue) omitted a section on science fiction, even though sf plays an important role in the history of ufology. Ray Palmer was an sf pulp publisher before getting heavily into flying saucers and Kenneth Arnold's experience. Amazing Stories carried many an article on saucers, and its letters column contained many classic comments. And, if UFO's turn out to really be only mundane objects, that makes most UFO literature only speculative fiction.

The UFO phenomenon, above and beyond the physical aspects, has a very substantial sociological aspect, and in this regard, the UFO as portrayed in science fiction literature plays an important role in developing the public's awareness of the subject. The flying saucer as a space vehicle has been proposed by several authors, and is responsible for the notion of UFO's being extraterrestrial spacecraft in the minds of most people.

And there's another interesting line of thought, too. Close Encounters of the Third Kind, in movie and book form, not only depicts the future as it might be, but as some individuals claim, it may depict the present or past as it may be or might have been. But that's just science fiction, isn't it?

Once again, it's time to close this issue. Special thanks are due to Guy Westcott for printing assistance.

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