

The REALL News

The official newsletter of the Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land

"It's a very dangerous thing to believe in nonsense." — James Randi

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Reptoid Fever

by Martin S. Kottmeyer

Not that anybody is complaining, but the reptoid invasion of Earth appears to be a bit late. In 1993, a source called Cosmic Awareness said reptoid armies were supposed to arrive in full force in the last half of the Nineties, most particularly by 1999.¹ Other lore connected this with an asteroid called 1991VG that was a mothership filled with Reptoids. Everybody not enslaved by implant devices would be eaten up.² Some Draco-reptoids were already here in the Dulce Base, engaged in Level 7 - Nightmare Hall.³ The Lear statement of 1987 also spoke of reptile-skinned aliens discovered in crashed ufos, highlighting a piece of retrieval esoterica previously known mainly to readers of Leonard Stringfield's works.⁴ The more respectable ufologists held this material as obviously beyond the fringe, the work of channelers and hoaxers.⁵

We start with this stuff to emphasize the point that the existence of reptoids was accepted and spread first, not among the upper echelons of ufology, but the lowbrow and mythomaniacs. Even now, reptoids are associated in many folks' minds with the work of conspiracy theorists like David Icke and "Branton" or Sheldon Nidle, a New Age revisionist whose history incorporates Atlantis, Lemuria, Hyperborea, and space-faring Cetaceans.⁶ Respected ufologists are rumored to be warily beginning to accept reptoids might be a real species of alien; the sheer mass of testimony overwhelming their initial rejection.

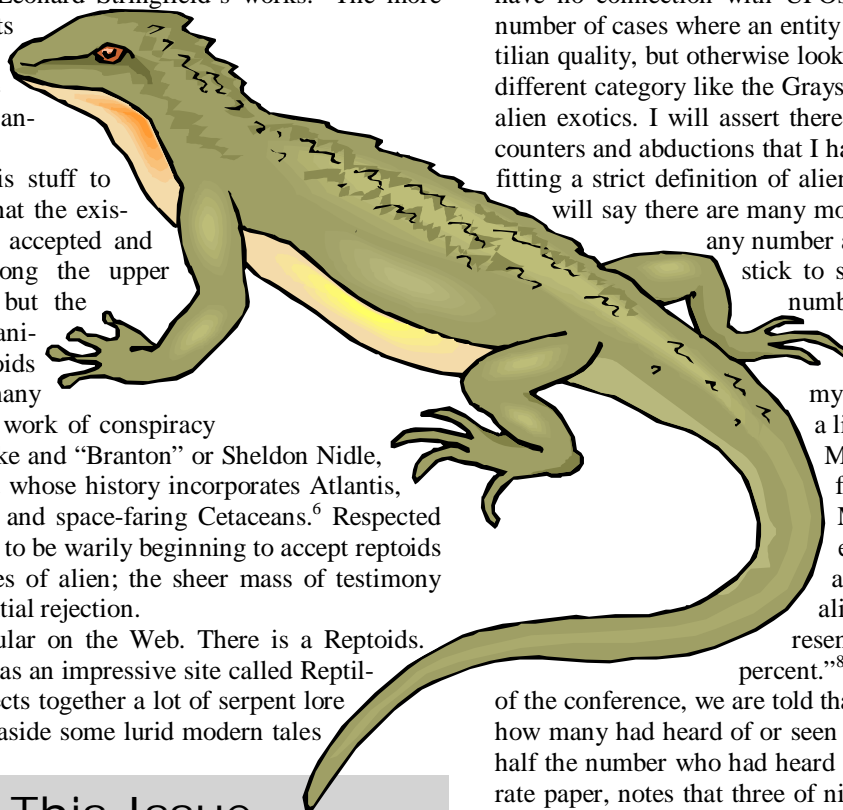
Reptoids are popular on the Web. There is a Reptoids.com site. David Icke has an impressive site called Reptilian Research that collects together a lot of serpent lore from antiquity placed aside some lurid modern tales

of reptoid rape. Another site called "The Reptilians: Who are They Really?" collects pieces about Pamela Stonebrook, a jazz singer whose claims of sexual encounters with reptoids are colored with dense New Age metaphysics. This site has a large number of links, which, if you bother to follow them all, immerses one in channels and New Age babble.

It is curious to realize that, to date, Mantis aliens have not generated a fraction of the interest we see here. There is no Mantis.com, compilations of Mantis links, nor much commentary about them. Compiling a census of reptoid encounters is fraught with ambiguities. There have been a fair number of lizard-men encounters in Fortean literature over the years that have no connection with UFOs. There have also been a fair number of cases where an entity has a single trait that has a reptilian quality, but otherwise looks like something belonging to a different category like the Grays, mongoloids, or miscellaneous alien exotics. I will assert there is a minimum of 30 UFO encounters and abductions that I have seen and could reference as fitting a strict definition of alien reptoids. I don't doubt others will say there are many more, and my sole reason to offer any number at all is merely as a crude yardstick to state they seem much fewer in number than Grays - minimally, about 250 reports known to me - but roughly similar to my count of Mantis aliens, maybe a little more.⁷

More interesting statistics can be found floating around at 1992's MIT abduction study conference. John Carpenter was asked, "What percentage of aliens does the reptilian type represent?" His answer: "About ten percent."⁸ In the C.D.B. Bryan account of the conference, we are told that Carpenter asked the audience how many had heard of or seen the Reptilians and it is roughly half the number who had heard of Nordics.⁹ Bullard, in a separate paper, notes that three of nine investigators never had reptilian or insectoid beings in their files. Five had 1-10%, and one had 11-25%. No separate statistics for reptoids were attempted by him. In his study of 270 pre-1985 abductions, Bullard mentioned only one reptoid — the 1978 Italian case of Fortunato

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Purpose

The Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) educational and scientific organization. It is dedicated to the development of rational thinking and the application of the scientific method toward claims of the paranormal and fringe-science phenomena.

REALL shall conduct research, convene meetings, publish a newsletter, and disseminate information to its members and the general public. Its primary geographic region of coverage is central Illinois.

REALL subscribes to the premise that the scientific method is the most reliable and self-correcting system for obtaining knowledge about the world and universe. REALL does not reject paranormal claims on *a priori* grounds, but rather is committed to objective, though critical, inquiry.

The REALL News is its official newsletter.

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From the Chairman

David Bloomberg

Almost at Our Tenth Anniversary – and We'd Like to Hear from YOU!

February's Newsletter marks REALL's 10th Anniversary! We'd like to hear from you about what the past ten years (or however long you've been a member) have been like. What topics have you seen come and go? What have you seen come and stay? How has REALL helped? Or just any general thoughts on the state of fringe beliefs. Send in your thoughts, whether just a few lines or a full article, to chairman@reall.org!

January Meeting

At our Tuesday, January 7, meeting, we will be showing an hour-long *Dateline NBC* investigative documentary examining the popularity of faith healer Benny Hinn, who reportedly rakes in \$100 million a year in donations from people seeking medical miracles. Yeesh. The video includes interviews with former Hinn Ministries employees who are critical of Hinn and his group. The showing will be followed by discussion of faith healing. Yes, folks, it's still with us. Some things just never go away. (One reason for the 10-year retrospective mentioned above.) I hope to see you there! ♡

A Nod to Our Patrons

REALL would like to thank our patron members. Through their extra generosity, REALL is able to continue to grow as a force for critical thinking in Central Illinois. To become a patron member of REALL, please use the membership form insert. Patron members are:

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(“Reptoid Fever” continued from page 1)

Zanfretta and then only to dismiss it for its similarity to the *Creature of the Black Lagoon* (1954). One can state with no fear of argument their presence has been increasing.

One can also add that the reptoids of the '90s do not resemble Zanfretta's creature. Drawings of reptoids do not show consistency even excluding that first case. This seems clearly conceded by Reptoids.com by the fact that they offer a three-fold taxonomy of reptilian aliens: reptoids, Draco, and Reptilian-Gray Crossbreeds. The last is a junk category collecting the inevitable variations on the theme, the most important being the increasingly notorious chupacabras.

It has been noted by some researchers that a number of reptoids bear good resemblance to a 1982 museum model of what a certain species of dinosaur would have looked like if they had continued to evolve, instead of going extinct. It was the creation of a paleontologist named Dale Russell who was impressed by the trend of cranial evolution in *Stenonychosaur*. Carl Sagan first gave Russell's ideas some prominence in his award-winning *The Dragons of Eden* (1977). Joe Lewels indicates his abductees cannot bear to look at photos of the Russell creation because the resemblance is so close to the terrifying beings.¹⁰ Though Lewels seems to regard this similarity as a vote for the plausibility of such beings, this overlooks the fact that Russell's creation is highly speculative. Certain features like the absence of ears and yellow eyes with vertical slit pupil are pure guesswork since fossils obviously do not preserve such things. Russell specifically admits the ears were omitted strictly as an artistic choice to avoid a more human appearance.¹¹

At the M.I.T. abduction study conference, Carpenter noted that Reptilians could arguably be psychodynamic in origin, but vaguely denies it, saying, “the slowly emerging pattern of data does not support this interpretation as yet.” What that pattern is, he did not say. But let me be more indiscrete and offer a robust pattern worth considering in counterpoint.

Anthropologists have commonly observed that myths and visions involve therioanthropes. This is a fancy term for man/animal combinations. Typically, the animal half involves one of particular importance to the society of the visionary. Thus the San people, who depend upon herds of elands, have visions involving an amalgamation of eland and man. Thus, in the region ruled by antiquity's great bull cult, one sees the Minotaur and other bull-men analogues.¹²

Modern American culture, for whatever reason, clearly has a huge fascination with dinosaurs. The late Stephen Jay Gould has waxed eloquent of how dino-mania has grown from being a symptom of nerds and misfits in the '40s and '50s to, “during the past 20 years... a steady level of culturally pervasive popularity.”¹³ Donald Glut's *The Dinosaur Scrapbook* (Citadel, 1980) can also be offered in evidence for its collection of hundreds of images and items that have saturated the modern imagination. When Russell first released information about his sculpture of the evolved dinosauroid, he got more than 1000 letters from people wanting pictures and more information. This was an unprecedented response at his museum. He also got so many calls from reporters that he decided to stop answering his phone.¹⁴ The image in due course appeared in major network news shows and was featured in various popular science magazines like *Omni* and *Science Digest*.

Let us also add to this an observation that reptilians are second only to humanoids in frequency among the form of alien in comic books. A file of alien races from *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe* has 19 reptilian races. Though far less than the 91 humanoid and semi-humanoid races listed, it is well more than the eight examples of insectoid races and three examples of amoeboid races. Still farther down in frequency are forms based on fish, plants, cats, dogs, snails, horses, hippos, pigs, and sentient energy. There were additionally some rather prominent reptoids in popular culture in the period preceding their spread through UFO lore: *V* (1983); *Dreamscape's Snake-man* (1984); *Buckaroo Banzai's* lectroid Emilio Lizardo (1984); and the Draks of *Enemy Mine* (1985).

Obviously, one can also offer a huge genealogy of predecessors of lizard men not only from science fiction (from Lovecraft to the Black Lagoon to *Star Trek's* Gorn) but ancient myth (Egyptian crocodile god Sebek, the Hindu Nagas, the Toltec Quetzalcoatl, the Greek Typhon, and the Biblical Serpent of Eden). It's been said, “There is probably no creature which is found more widely distributed in the mythologies of the world than the serpent.”¹⁵ If there is any psychodynamic mystery in this, it is only why reptoids were so rare in UFO literature in the period 1947-1985. There was a culture about dinosaurs extant and even a large reservoir of lizardmen imagery in that period. But, we have Gould's testimony that dinomania belongs mainly to the past 20 years. One can probably add that abduction accounts become more deeply horrific in the '80s and, thus, provided a better environment for malevolent symbols such as the analogous Big Bug mantis. So, even this is objection looks answerable.

There is probably a skeptical obligation to insert here that Russell's dinosauroid has been given a vote of no confidence by one of the grand masters of biology, Ernst Mayr. Reports Joel Achenbach, “Dinosaurs, he said, were almost certainly cold-blooded, contrary to some fashionable latter-day reports. There are no intelligent cold-blooded creatures. Hot blood is necessary to operate a big, intelligent brain.”¹⁶ Anthropologists seem to agree that large brains are metabolically expensive and, so to speak, might be beyond the energy budgets of any lizard. Granting there is some wiggle-room in analytic methods, it is roughly evident that mammals tend to be ten times brainier than their reptilian analogues.¹⁷

One can afford to be generous here and allow that evolution creates such amazingly unpredictable combinations of traits here on earth that the evolutionary pathways on other worlds may not forbid a reptilian headed human torso arising. For me, at least, it seems less unthinkable than giant mantis gods¹⁸ or perfect Nordic blondes.¹⁹

The more telling objection remains that reptoids are just too perfectly explicable. They fit American cultural obsessions like a glove. They make ideal aliens, great bad guys, cool evolutionary demons. Unless one descends to argue all therioanthropes are psychodynamically opaque, the fever that American culture has for reptoids is another symptom that ufology is not going to fare well if science ever sinks its teeth into the subject.

1. Steve Wingate “An Alien Update: How Close are the Reptoids” IUFO Mailing List webarchive, 14 January 1999.

2. George Andrews *Extra-Terrestrial Friends and Foes*
 (“Reptoid Fever continued on page 5)

Breeding a Satanic Panic

by Rob Hardy

It was a great show while it lasted, the subject of fervent newspaper reports, television specials, and an expose' by Geraldo Rivera in the 1980s. Satanism was rampant across America, nay, the world, with protean manifestations, if people would just pay attention. Twenty years before, there had been Satanism, but it was not very well publicized and not very interesting. But somehow it became the fashionable scare. How did this happen, and what should we do about it?

Bill Ellis is a folklorist, and an academic specializing in English and American studies. His book, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions, and the Media* (University Press of Kentucky) attempts a sympathetic understanding of how the Devil made one of his cyclic emergences and how folklore can affect society and politics. Scares about Satan and witchcraft have been present for centuries, and seem to give a safety valve for social aggression, scapegoating deviant individuals. At the individual level of, say, someone who thinks he is possessed by a demon and someone who thinks he can cast that demon out, there is a social agreement on a folkloric belief that may be beneficial for both concerned (if not for the demon).

If, however, social groups take the folkloric belief over and attempt to use it to push a religious or governmental agenda, then aberrations such as the Satanic Panic can occur, and this is what Ellis demonstrates happened. The Pentecostal-type churches started making inroads into both Protestant and Catholic faiths around 1960. Such believers relied on immediate contact with the divine world, such as going into ecstatic trances or speaking in tongues. They also believed in the complimentary and opposite process of demon possession, which could also produce trances and magical language ability, and which could be countered by the deliverance of casting out of demons. Possession by the Holy Spirit and possession by demons turn out to be two sides of the same coin. When the deliverance movement was criticized by skeptics or liberal Christians, it could easily explain such attacks as satanically inspired; but there was eventual criticism of the movement from fundamentalist Christians, who claimed that both exorcism and speaking in tongues were forms of devil worship, or giving the devil too much of his due. One of the more popular members of the deliverance movement was surprised when even glossolalia-believing Pentecostals said his work was demon-possessed and glorified Satan. This sort of infighting seems to be par for the course as different belief groups jockey for attention.

Those who attempted to demythologize such ideas would

simply wind up in Hell, the story went. There seemed to be confirmation from Satan on this matter. A Catholic team authorized to exorcise a 24-year-old college student in 1975 found that the demons in her had much to say about the liberalizing Second Vatican Council. One of fifty demons expelled from a student, reported in 1971, explained that demons were bringing modernists and liberalists into the schools because they are demons' companions. It would seem that demons have a particular political agenda.

Ellis explains how in response for the need for direct involvement in myth, the Charismatic movement encouraged rituals that enabled a person to feel overcome by divine spirits. The movement actively campaigned against the use of the Ouija board, but Ellis finds that the use of the Ouija exactly parallels exorcism: an evil spirit is invoked, questioned, confronted, and sent away. The teenagers

who customarily use the Ouija, however, play with it for a while and then go on to something else; those who participate in the deliverance ministry have signed up for a long process of finding and countering demons of various kinds.

The deliverance ministry began to define the kinds of demons and what activities they participated in. Demonic oppression seemed to Pentecostals and to other fundamentalist Christians, starting in the seventies, to be inspired by a huge network of Satanists who were in a concerted way taking over families, communities, and nations. "Evidence" of such a network often came from memories of children who recalled being forced to take part in bizarre, murderous, blood-drinking, or sexual rituals. What was eventually learned was that such memories could be induced by well-meaning therapists or ministers, and had no connection with real events in the past. The McMartin Preschool trial was the longest and most expensive (\$15 million) trial in U.S. history, and ended in no convictions; the ritual abuse allegations stemmed from a mother who had a weak hold of reality, and they grew and grew as people worried about them.

Ellis demonstrates that worries over the blood rituals of Satanism have the same characteristics as the grosser forms of anti-Semitism, and indeed those warning about one are often warning about the other. Beliefs in conspiracies are so broad and so impossible to disprove that those who insisted that Satanists were taking over the world often bought into the ancient idea that the Illuminati were controlling things, even stage-managing Jesus's crucifixion. From there, it is a short step to insisting that vampires are rising from the graves, and that Satanists / extraterrestrials / government agents are mutilating cattle on the great open plains. Such folklore sounds daffy to me,



but some people's daffiness is other people's bedrock of belief.

Ellis is particularly good at describing the careers of two main players in the Satanic Panic. John Todd began giving his testimony to eager anti-Satanists in 1968. He told the history of his participation in the Satanic and neo-Pagan scene, impressing especially young listeners with gory details of frightening ceremonies. Of course, he received Jesus and that all changed; he not only was sponsored to testify all around the country about his being saved, but he warned listeners about the Illuminati and Jews. He was an advisor to Jack Chick, who makes the ubiquitous salvation-inducing comic books, and it was Chick who hired lawyers when Todd got in trouble for organizing a coven of teens and raping one of them. Todd's downfall was welcomed by Mike Warnke, who insisted that Todd "could possibly turn into another Jim Jones." Todd had previously accused Warnke of stealing his material, as Warnke was on the same circuit with the same sort of grisly "I was a Satanist" stories. Warnke's stories turned out to be as fraudulent as Todd's, and he was exposed by a couple of fundamentalist reporters. The Christians who exposed Todd and Warnke, however, took pains to say that Satanism was an active and real threat.

Raising the Devil is an academic work, well documented and organized. Ellis tries to illuminate the role of the folklorist in examining these sorts of belief, and realizes that he and his fellows have the difficult road to follow of accepting folklore (even if it is patently untrue) as a force between small numbers of individuals, while they also have to confront institutions that would harness folklore for political or religious change. His academic prose is leavened by the strange subject matter. For instance, the Governor of Colorado is quoted as saying that cattle mutilations were "one of the greatest outrages in the history of the western cattle industry," and a leader of a coven in England warned about bogus cult groups, as he had heard about one in which members "started getting in prostitutes dressed in rubber gear and there was wife swapping, too. It gives Satanism a bad name."

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(*"Reptoid Fever"* continued from page 3)

Illuminet, 1993, pp. 293-4, 303-6.

3. Jason Bishop III, "The Dulce Base" *UFO*, 4, #3, pp. 15-16

4. Leonard Stringfield, *UFO Crash-Retrievals: Amassing the Evidence: Status Report III* Stringfield, 1982, pp. 20, 47.

5. Don Ecker "Stray Asteroid Story Stings UFO Groupies" *UFO*, 7, #1, p. 21

6. Sheldon Nidle & Virginia Essene's *You Are Becoming a Galactic Human* (SEE, 1994)

7. "Graying Mantis," *The REALL News*, 7, #5 May 1999 pp. 1, 5-8.

8. Pritcahrd, Andrea, et.al. *Alien Discussions* North Cambridge, 1994, pp. 91-5, 579.

9. C.D.B. *Close Encounters of the 4th Kind*, Arkana, 1996, p. 30

10. Joe Lewels, *The God Hypothesis* Wild Flower, 1997, pp. 182-3, 221

11. Jeff Hecht and Gurney Williams III "Smart Dinosaurs" *Omni*, May 1982.

12. Michael Rice *The Power of the Bull* Routledge, 1998, pp. 38-40.

13. Stephen Jay Gould, "Dinomania" in *Dinosaur in a Haystack* Crown Trade, 1996, p. 222.

14. Jeff Hecht and Gurney Williams III "Smart Dinosaurs" *Omni*, May 1982.

15. Richard Cavendish, *Man, Myth, Magic* Marshall Cavendish, 1985, pp. 2528-32.

16. Joel Achenbach, *Captured by Aliens*, Simon & Schuster, 1999, pp. 310-1.

17. Roger Lewin, *Human Evolution: A Core Textbook* Blackwell Science, 1998, pp. 445-7

18. "Graying Mantis," *The REALL News*, 7, #5 May 1999 pp. 1, 5-8.

19. Richard Fortey, *Life: A Natural History of the First Four Billion Years of Life on Earth* Vintage, 1997, p. 281. ♡

Call for Articles: Tenth Anniversary Retrospectives

February's Newsletter marks REALL's 10th Anniversary! We'd like to hear from you about what the past ten years (or however long you've been a member) have been like. Send in your thoughts, whether just a few lines or a full article, to chairman@reall.org. Submissions must be received by January 23.



From Evil Crones to Goddess Worship

by Rob Hardy

When, as a little girl, the author Candace Savage dressed up as a nurse for Halloween, she flopped. She didn't feel the part. She was embarrassed. The next year she went as a witch, and felt just fine: "I was attracted by the icy power... the power of angry cursing and ill-tempered laughter, of forbidden knowledge, of fear. Bad-girl power." She is still attracted. Her succinct history of witches, *Witch: The Wild Ride from Wicked to Wicca* (Greystone Books) shows a real enthusiasm for her subject. It is also a fine history of how curiously people have behaved when confronting the supposed supernatural, and how fashions can change our view of history.

Savage points out that the law has always taken a dim view of black magic; an Egyptian man was executed for using a stolen magic book to cast harmful spells 3,300 years ago. Roman law, and later Charlemagne's law, would prescribe death for those who conjured the devil, dried up the milk of cows, inflicted sores or diseases, and the other crimes that would later be ascribed to witches. Surprisingly, the medieval church wasn't particularly worried about black magic or the women who supposedly practiced it. Priests hearing reports from women who said they had flown during the night and taken part in satanic rituals were encouraged to maintain disbelief. Reasonable men were not to take such things seriously. One priest of the time wrote of such dreams, "Who is imbecile enough to imagine that such things, seen only in the mind, have a bodily reality?"

Well, quite a few people, actually. The church itself lapsed in its wise toleration when it opposed a couple of dissident sects in France around 1400. The sects allowed women to administer baptisms and so on, so in prosecution, the church tortured them until it got confessions of copulating with the devil, riding broomsticks, and eating infants. Empowered by the imprimatur of the Catholic Church that such things really happened, in 1486 two prominent German clergymen produced the famous *Malleus Maleficarum* or "Witch's Hammer," a guidebook against witches and women. Women were stupid and impulsive, and they had insatiable lusts from which proceeded all witchcraft and submissions to Satan. The

reformation changed little; Luther himself declared, "I should have no compassion on these witches. I would burn all of them." Plenty, indeed, were burned, singly and in groups. Witches were seen everywhere if something bad happened; they sowed disease and discord; they were the Devil in female shapes; they were Public Enemy Number One.

Savage describes a number of cases in detail, such as that of the Lancashire Witches. In 1633, ten-year-old Edmond Robinson came home late because, he said, he had encountered some greyhounds that had turned themselves into human crones and took him to see a black Sabbath and a spectacle of witches producing meat and butter by pulling on ropes. A witch craze took Lancashire, and some of the old ladies even confessed to witchcraft and murder, and a Lancashire court found them guilty. The more urbane London court, however, enlisted the investigative aid of the great William Harvey, the discoverer of the body's circulatory system, and he was unable to find that these were anything but little old ladies. Eventually little Edmond confessed to making it all up because he wanted to avoid being in trouble for arriving late. The women were found to be free of guilt, but they continued to languish away in a Lancashire prison. Witchcraft remained a punishable offense in England until 1736.

The image of the witch was then changed from a vicious devil-worshiper to a foolish little old lady. Thousands of witches had died torturous deaths, but it was eventually recognized that real witches and real witchcraft didn't exist. This offended many; John Wesley himself said in 1768, "The giving up of witchcraft is, in effect, giving up on the Bible." The scholars who had produced *Malleus Maleficarum*, the court system, and the rules about torture were to be forgotten. There was no room in the Enlightenment for toothless old women flying on brooms except to understand them as ignorant crones who were the subject of the rumors of bumpkins.

Witches were too influential just to let them go, however. They became subjects of children's literature. The Brothers Grimm, for instance, took the view that old folktales were full of ancient truths. Savage shows some of the changes the Grimms made to their stories in order to make them more palatable; but the witch who figures in such tales as "Hansel and Gretel" was the same one that had haunted nightmares for five centuries. Fairy tale witches were ugly, murderous, and cunning figures of maternal hostility. The image fit in with the Victorian teaching that the proper woman had the sole wish of motherhood, and her world was her home.

But also in the nineteenth century was born a woman who did a complete rewrite of witches. Margaret Murray took the view that the witches of old really were witches, practicing an age-old pagan cult and proudly defying the Christian church. Her 1921 anthropological treatise, built on thousands of snip-

("From Evil Crones to Goddess Worship" continued on page 7)



UFO Group Claims First Human Clone

by David Bloomberg

The breaking news of last week was that a woman claimed to have had a baby that was a clone of herself. This was announced by Brigitte Boisselier, a “bishop” in the Raelians, a group that worships aliens and believes these extraterrestrials developed cloning as a path to eternal life — among other fairly bizarre things. Mind you, at this point there is no actual evidence that the baby is a clone, but then we’re dealing with a group that thinks the aliens created life on Earth and that the process was explained to Rael, a former race car driver, on a visit to their home planet, so evidence may not be their strong point.

The group has been around for a while. Founded in 1973, it supposedly has 55,000 members worldwide (the cloning was not done in the U.S., since there are laws against it here). It began when Rael — then Claude Vorilhon, says he was visiting a volcano when aliens scooped him up and told him that he was one of the “Elohim” — the alien race that created life on Earth by genetic engineering. Incidentally, the Raelians believe that this “scientific creation” (a term quoted in a *State Journal-Register* article) represents our real origins — not evolution or religious creationism. Many times we have pointed out to creationists that even if they were to somehow knock down evolution, that still wouldn’t make their brand of creation automatically correct. Here is another group that I bet would love to have their brand of creation taught. I wonder how creationists would feel about that one...

Anyway, like so many other alien stories (see Martin Kottmeyer’s article about the Reptoids in this issue), the Elohim were supposed to be coming soon to share their technology. Indeed, the Raelians have gathered over seven million dollars to build an embassy for the Elohim in Jerusalem. Alas, the Israelis have not let them build it yet. I’m sure that’s what’s keeping us from getting that advanced technology. But even without the embassy, they have a theme park called UFO-land near Montreal. Jeez, sometimes the jokes just write themselves.

In any event, the Raelians formed a group, Clonaid, to create the first human clone. According to them, the baby was created using the mother’s egg and DNA taken from one of her skin cells. This would be close to the method described by Rael that the Elohim supposedly used to clone him. In *Yes to Human Cloning*, a 2001 book he authored, he said the Elohim took a cell from his forehead, put it into an aquarium-like machine, and then a perfect copy of himself grew in just a few seconds. OK, that last part isn’t similar to anything resembling reality, but at least the skin cell is the same (though there have not been reports of if the skin cell in this particular case came from the forehead).

On the evidence front, an independent lab is supposed to test the DNA from the mother and child sometime soon (perhaps even by the time you read this, though results are not likely quite that soon). More importantly, even if the baby is a clone, the question remains of how it will do. Even cloning animals has had unexpected side effects, and cloning a human is sure to spur all sorts of backlash.

If the baby truly is a clone, expect the government to pass more laws against any sort of cloning (even the type that does not form a viable embryo, but is just used for medical purposes). Even if it is not, the additional attention — especially in association with a group like the Raelians — will still likely cause a negative impact for true scientific endeavors. Indeed, the *Chicago Tribune* reports that last year the Bush administration delayed a UN vote on a global ban of reproductive cloning because it didn’t include a similar ban on cloning for research.

And even if the baby is not a clone, Rael has managed to once again get his UFO movement onto the front pages of newspapers all over the world. He even gloated about it in his 2001 book, saying that a minimal investment got him millions of dollars worth of advertising. Let’s face it, how often does a UFO cult get onto the front page of the newspaper? Thankfully, it’s quite rare — and usually only when they’re killing themselves. But by claiming to have created the first human clone — whether true or not — they get publicity, which turns into money and probably new members as well.

Hmmm. Maybe that should be the next REALL fundraiser. I don’t suppose there are any volunteers? Nah. Didn’t think so.



(“From Evil Crones to Goddess Worship” continued from page 6)

pets from trial records of witch prosecutions, showed that these ladies were practicing a fertility cult. They were priestesses, healers, and seers. Any malevolence was in the eye of the upright Christian men who were shocked by women of power and wisdom. Murray had sparked the idea of feminist witchcraft, goddess worship, and the current religion of Wicca. Sisterhood is powerful.

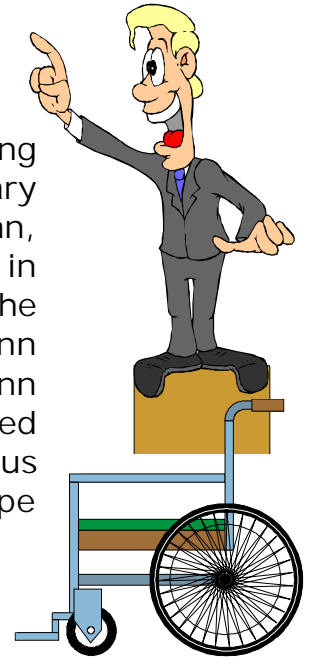
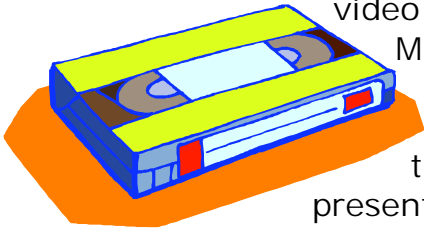
And yet, she had it wrong. She was guilty of academic sins of commission and omission, and no one has evidence that the poor witches who were tortured and burned were practicing any sort of larger cult that met in covens or worshiped ancient deities. Scholars agree there was no such organized religion practiced by witches, but of course that doesn’t matter. Savage shows in this profusely illustrated book that whether we need a scapegoat on whom to blame barrenness, a negative role model with which to warn our children, or a high priestess of cultural renewal, the image of the witch will always be there to scare or inspire, reinforcing the regrettable idea that there is something anomalous, something otherworldly, something not quite human, about a powerful woman.

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Our Next Meeting

Faith Healer Benny Hinn

At our Tuesday, January 7, meeting, we will be showing an hour-long *Dateline NBC* investigative documentary examining the popularity of faith healer Benny Hinn, who reportedly rakes in \$100 million a year in donations from people seeking medical miracles. The video includes interviews with former Hinn Ministries employees who are critical of Hinn and his group. The showing will be followed by discussion of faith healing. Please join us to view and discuss this videotape presentation.



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