

**The Alien Reports We Have**  
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*Song saw the man she called father on the back porch every night, talking into his collar and charting the paths of stars with a correcting-fluid pen on the back of a star map, looking for UFOs. Most people's obsessions, Song reasoned, came up with a price. Of the many things she knew him to preoccupy his days with, this seemed most harmless.<sup>1</sup>*

UFO researchers (debunkers, skeptics or believers, alike) are fully aware of one particular aspect of this riddle: with a few exceptions, most of the small fraction of (usually dated) unsolved sightings are ephemeral, ambiguously recorded or poorly documented. This is a fact. And this stands as the basic reason for the unreliability of the “evidence” and the distrust in its value by the powers that be. Yet the true core of apparently impressive, unsolvable events that only alien presence can account for are the “close encounters.” Tales of landings of other-worldly spacecraft on Earthly soil, with companion humanoids on board.

As for the qualifications of observers—pilot, military person, scientist, clergyman, law enforcement officer, politician, or judge—none of it really matters in the final analysis. These are ordinary people claiming to have experienced the First Contact. There is no point in discussing if an airborne observer sighted a flying object or a fireball meteor. Or if a blob in pixelated Navy footage is a balloon, a bird or a drone. If the flying discs of the ‘fifties do represent a pivotal turning-point type of incident in the century, then humankind should concentrate major investigative resources on the *thousands* of testimonies of this space-age-coming, collected by UFO organizations down the years, especially during the sixties and seventies, although not restricted to that time frame.

Why are the hardcore defendants of the UFO/ET reality not highlighting examples of this supposed alien intervention in our planet as the basis for their belief? Why don't they propose these incidents to the United Nations, national governments, the Academy of Sciences, or scientific journals? This should be their top priority and target, instead of discussing minute details about angular size or distance of the observation of a light in the sky back in the late forties.

These are meant to be the best cases. The ultimate proof. No doubt. Nonetheless, they are not flagged as important or decisive. Not so fundamental as to demonstrate that we have been visited by travelers from other parts of the universe. Does no one find it strange?

I have a theory. Call it a guess or a suspicion. A reason for this. Even for the most fervent believer, the story of the brief landing of a spaceship with its walking occupants is difficult to swallow. Not only because in the mass of reports there are no matches between them. Basically, because they are one-witness cases. Extraordinary occurrences lived by single onlookers, or by two, with luck. On occasion, certain atmospheric UFOs (IFOs) are viewed by hundreds at a time, but

why do these august episodes of interaction with extraterrestrial races only happen to isolated, solitary souls?

Therefore, it is legitimate to ask: were these real experiences? No nuts and bolts are ever left behind. No paper, formulae, holography, or digital message left. Not a gift. Never, ever. Miserable LGM. Just to scare a pacific peasant, farmer or driver. What about if those were only imagined apparitions? Considering the absence of proof in the form of exotic materials or anything more solid than circumstantial ground traces, we have the right to raise the probability that the narrations of the arrival of super spacecraft are merely stories that did not actually occur.

Facing this type of scenario, we have only two options: it was true or it wasn't. Patently, it was not true. The implications of aliens landing in our backyard after a trip of light years for a few minutes' appearance, only to rapidly escape, are preposterous and insane. Thus, the rational alternative is that this did not happen. And the debate is open: either it is a fabrication and a fable, or it is a hallucination and a creation of the mind. Or a mix.

In the first plot, the claimant relates a subterfuge, a lie that went out of control, a conscious falsehood that they repeat time after time and color and exaggerate in front of TV journalists. In this instance, pushed by one of a myriad possible causes, the communicator simply made up a tale. It is the experienced investigator who would ascertain the clues to the fraud.

In the second plot, the subject is under a short-term, non-traumatic psychological ecstasy. In this scenario, something was imagined, probably under stress, without a mental aftermath other than a memory of the alleged experience. Who is to decide when this option applies? Indeed, the work is left for psychologists, therapists and psychiatrists.

This class of "close encounter" is a borderline experience. Borderline in the sense that they exist within the interface between the fantastic and the veritable. Not rhetorical. As the reported events did not happen in the real world, it is a mental issue, it's all in the mind. I call it the inner world. Our job is to recognize when someone either spins a tale, invents a story and consciously makes it up, or is involved in a self-delusion, a bogey vision.

In the first case, the person simply behaves like the usual liar. We do not need to elaborate. The second cause is a short-lived, extreme but recoverable psychological state engendering ghostly sightings based on recalls, dreams, readings, or movies. And not just any kind of weird visions: the contact with spacemen, specifically. If we have a reason to defend the sincerity of the single narrator (more robust than ideological naïveté), what else remains?

Fake reports may have many motivations, triggers and excuses. It is our failure to expose them that leaves reports of this type unresolved. I would like now to concentrate on asking whether the cognitive process producing a false experience

has a unique psychological signature. Or many? The bottom-line experience is when someone thinks he or she underwent an encounter with beings from another planet. Certainly, a personality disorder limited in time and strength. But which one? If fully awake, a standard visual hallucination? Temporary dissociation? Temporal lobe epilepsy? A false memory? If sleep-related, a hypnopompic/hypnagogic trance? Sleep paralysis? Lucid dreaming? Specialists are in demand to explore this category of alleged observations.

I just doubt that there exists a false memory of a false vision that exclusively encompasses the notion of the extraterrestrial visitation, i.e., when an apparently normal individual (yet psychologically untested) claims to have observed over an extended lapse of time (in the absence of corroborating eyewitnesses) a typical scene of a close encounter with an spacecraft. It connects indissolubly to the flying saucer mythology, which developed during a given time of history within a given cultural and social environment. But if it exists, finding and modelling this “alien hallucination” will certainly be a serious contribution from UFO stories to Psychiatry.

I personally support a very subtle form of falsehood or deception, rather than an awake-sleep-type episode that centers on the coming of beings from another planet. I tend to favor a deceit over a subjective vision. Unless psychologists create a distinct model for an "alien hallucination," I am inclined to favor the most economical hypothesis—i.e., a soft form of fib, for a majority of events of this nature.

This brief exposé delineates two alternatives for those lone individual experiences: percipient-wise, accounts can be either true (but psychological in nature) or not true (this is, prevarications). I back up the untrue position, based on 50 years of my own field work, interviews of many people, and processing the on-site inquiries made by international colleagues. However, a third alternative has been suggested: alien encounter narratives would be the contemporary revelation of the historical transcendent experience of the sacred and the holy. In the long tradition of experiencing closeness to the supernatural, in a technological society gods would become spacemen.

In my view, it does not hold water. Firstly, we still view and collect such religious experiences in the form of reported miracles, virgin apparitions, or cures by saints. So, it does not appear like an evolution of one myth into another. Above all, there is a major difference in the phenomenology. How physical has a transcendent experience been across history? In the alien encounter we find a 3D machine perfectly described, distance, time, duration and other parameters and measurements clearly defined, beings with faces, expressions and clothes portrayed without a doubt, spacecraft crewmembers' behavior properly explained, landing and launch maneuvers depicted in detail. It is a well-defined narrative lacking ambiguity.

I cannot agree with this third “alternative” because this seems to be more a theoretical speculation from folklore or religion study scholars, abstract enough to

be refuted. There are UFO authors who are masters in this writing technique as well. This looks like an armchair hypothesis that pretends to link the UFO landing story to the field of one's expertise. Merging a concise problem into a more generic, vague category does not help to solve it but to hide it forever behind incomprehension.

My sentiment is that in studying these cases we place ourselves at the limit of our own competence (how to professionally assess people's weird testimonies?) and ideology (can we accommodate in our liberal mind that normal people can fool and cheat us for nothing?).

The tales of encounters with extraplanetary humanoids make us wonder about the significance and nature of those imaginary worlds. It is now time to rationalize in psychological terms those immaterial, groundless accounts which belong to the realm of psychology.

I still stick to the true/untrue dichotomy, certainly supporting the untrue one, basically because evidence is nil after 70 years. This has great significance, indeed. See how much hardware astronauts left on the Moon and space probes left on the surface of Mars, just in a handful of landings. Our UFO landing records amount to thousands and not a single piece of a "Martian" gadget has been retrieved!

As an aside, obviously related to this theme, the most elementary and shabby form of systematic counterfeit of the encounter with spacepersons scenario is the contactee. On the other hand, the most convoluted type of mental disorder associated with extraterrestrial contact seems to be the abduction phenomenon.

For many, witnesses of CE phenomena are non-witnesses, as these are non-events. Others feel they are bona fide viewers of an illusion that is the product of multiple factors, ranging from the purely personal—"psychological"—to the diverse cultural contexts in which the phenomenon has occurred. For the legion of "believers," CE events truly represent alien visits. This informal writing does not purport to convince one way or the other, but to give some food for thought and open new avenues for research.

#### Notes

(1) Rusty Barnes, "Song & Jimmy: Four Scenes," in Mostly Redneck Stories, Sunny Outside (Buffalo), 2011, page 121.

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