INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

**UFO AND ALIEN ENCOUNTER NARRATIVES: A CROSS-CULTURAL
ANALYSIS**

by

RAVI RAMKISSOONSINGH, B.A., M.A.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
School of Canadian Studies**

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

May, 2002

© 2002, Ravi Ramkissoonsingh

**National Library
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services**

**385 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

**Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques**

**385, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-72057-8

Canada

**The undersigned recommend to the Faculty
of Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis**

**“UFOs and Alien Encounter Narratives:
A Cross-Cultural Analysis”**

submitted by Ravi Ramkissoonsingh, Hons. B.A., M.A.

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

.....
Thesis Supervisor

.....
**Acting Director
School of Canadian Studies**

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

May, 2002

Abstract

Narratives surrounding UFOs and aliens come from all over the world and are not bound by age, ethnicity or class. This thesis will examine the global fascination with UFOs and aliens and include an analysis of the influence of mass media and religion in the evolution of the phenomena. The emergence of UFO and alien encounter narratives in Canada will be discussed more specifically and comparisons will be made to what has been recorded elsewhere in the world.

Acknowledgements

Many contributed in some way to the completion of this thesis. I would like to thank my partner, Shannon MacRae, for all of her help, support, guidance and encouragement. Furthermore, Shannon came up with the idea of doing this thesis so I am eternally grateful to her. Sacha, Shyla, Sophia, Solomon, Leonard and Lucy also helped me through this process in ways that only they could. My parents, Phulo and Deon, and the rest of my family have always supported my educational pursuits which I greatly appreciate.

I would like to thank my advisor, Prof. Michael Dorland, who encouraged me to go forth with this unusual subject matter and suggested the more specific topic of this thesis. I especially appreciate his patience through this long process. Finally, I am grateful to my thesis committee for all of their suggestions and assistance.

Table of Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. The Global Evolution of UFO and Alien Encounter Narratives	22
3. The Development of the UFO and Alien Encounter Narrative in Canada	43
4. Cross-Cultural Comparison Between Canada and the Rest of the World	67
5. Conclusion	103
6. References	111
7. Bibliography	117

UFO and Alien Encounter Narratives: A Cross-Cultural Analysis

The belief that intelligent extraterrestrial beings have been visiting earth through travel in spaceships or UFOs has been and continues to be the focus of much controversy. Researchers from such diverse fields as physics, geology, psychology, medicine and English literature, among others, are involved in the thriving field of 'ufology' as the study of this phenomenon has been called. Narratives surrounding UFOs and aliens come from all over the world and are not bound by age, ethnicity or class. This chapter will introduce the topic of UFOs and aliens as part of a global popular culture through the emergence of a globalized fascination with UFO/alien narratives. These narratives' impact on Canadian popular culture will be discussed more specifically and comparisons made to what has been recorded elsewhere in the world. Later chapters, besides delving deeper into all of the aforementioned issues, will examine the role of mass media in the evolution of UFO/alien narratives and the relationship between religion and belief in UFOs and aliens.

The term 'UFO' stands for 'unidentified flying object'; it does not necessarily mean 'alien spacecraft' but is simply defined as any airborne object which cannot be identified. An old axiom among UFO researchers says that ninety-five percent of UFO sightings have rational, logical explanations such as airplanes or other (earthly) aircraft, falling

meteors or misidentified stars. However, it is the other five percent of sightings that are debated by skeptics and believers alike (Randles, 1997; Rutkowski, 1999). Although these are technically 'unidentified' flying objects, over the past half century in particular, many people have come to believe that intelligent extraterrestrial life is behind the existence of such objects. This notion of space aliens has become ingrained in the popular culture of not only North America but also in many other areas of the world. The topic of extraterrestrials is the second-most accessed topic on the Internet after sex (Dean, 1998). Furthermore, several opinion polls taken over the years indicate that a significant proportion of the population believes that intelligent life from outer space has been visiting earth. For instance, approximately eight percent (or just under one in ten) North Americans have reported seeing a UFO, twenty-seven percent of Americans believe that space aliens have visited earth and two percent of Americans report having been abducted by aliens (Dean, 1998; Rutkowski, 1999). Furthermore, a poll recently commissioned by *Time/CNN* showed that eighty percent of respondents believe that the U.S. government is covering up its knowledge of the existence of aliens while sixty-five percent believe that a UFO crashed in Roswell, New Mexico in 1947 (Dean, 1998). Obviously, there are many people who have very strong beliefs that events are

occurring for which there have been no satisfactory earthly explanations.

Although narratives surrounding UFOs and aliens have become increasingly popular in the last five decades or so in particular, there have been reports of strange lights in the sky for much longer than that. As far back as the 1890s, Dean (1998) reports that "thousands of sightings of mysterious airships and strange, cigar-shaped craft were reported in the western United States. Occasionally, witnesses claimed to have seen or spoken with the occupants" (pp. 32-33). References to 'Martians' and intelligent life on Mars were not uncommon at this time (Dean, 1998).

However, it was not until 1947 when American pilot Kenneth Arnold saw "nine disks flying like a saucer skipping over the water" (Dean, 1998, p. 33) that the media coined the term 'flying saucer', and the notion of intelligent extraterrestrial life visiting earth really gained momentum.

Cameron (1995) believes that one of the main reasons why the notion of aliens visiting earth has become so popular in the last century is because of the emergence of the modern media. Stories of strange lights in the sky prior to the twentieth century tended to remain at the local level as there were no national and international media outlets to spread such stories. However, the rise of the media over the last century has changed this tendency. According to Cameron, newspapers, tabloids and magazines quickly realized

how such stories captured the public's imagination and were quick to seek out witnesses and report their sightings. One notable example of the media feeding on and fuelling the public's interest in aliens occurred in 1938 when Orson Welles broadcast *War of the Worlds* on radio across the United States. This programme, based on H.G. Wells' fictional account by the same name, was in the form of a live news broadcast about Martians invading earth. Many listeners panicked as they believed that this invasion was actually occurring; a panic that was so notable that it was studied by sociologists and psychologists for years afterward (Randle, Estes & Cone, 1999). The entire event was front-page news in the U.S.; so even for those who were not exposed to science fiction at that time, as Randle, Estes and Cone (1999) argue "the event brought the concept of alien invasion into the homes of average Americans before the 1940s" (p. 121).

Likely the most significant event that has fuelled UFO/alien interest in North America is the now infamous incident of 1947 where an alien spacecraft is alleged to have crashed near Roswell, New Mexico. Within hours of the occurrence of this alleged event, the U.S. military issued a press release confirming that a flying saucer had crashed. However, a few hours after issuing this first press release, the military backtracked and stated that it was only a weather balloon that had crashed in New Mexico. Although the official U.S. government account has changed on several

occasions over the years, ultimately, in 1994, the official government conclusion was that a special top-secret surveillance balloon which was launched to observe Soviet nuclear testing from the upper atmosphere was the object which crashed near Roswell (Shermer, 1997). The controversy surrounding the happenings in Roswell only served to plant the seed in the minds of many Americans that aliens have indeed visited earth but that the U.S. government has conspired to cover up these incidents. This suspicion of the government covering up tangible evidence of alien visitation to earth has been evident in Canada as well.

The fascination with UFOs and aliens in Canada has run concurrently with that of the United States. This cannot be considered surprising considering that Canadians have been greatly exposed to American media over the years and are therefore as familiar with high-profile UFO sightings such as the Roswell incident, as well as the reported sighting of UFOs over the White House in 1952, as Americans are. Cases such as the Roswell incident seem to transcend borders and have become part of a truly global UFO/alien culture as they are studied by UFO researchers - known as 'ufologists' - around the world.

Canada has contributed a few of the cases that have attained significance worldwide because of the nature and amount of evidence for extraterrestrial visitation which is claimed to exist by 'believers'. The 1967 'Shag Harbour'

case may be considered to be 'Canada's Roswell' because of some of the similarities between the two cases. An airborne object, as large as sixty feet in diameter by some accounts, was seen by multiple witnesses to have crashed in the water near the fishing village of Shag Harbour, Nova Scotia (Randle, 1997). Although, like the Roswell incident, this case received much publicity in the days just following the event, it eventually faded from the nation's memory and scrutiny until almost three decades later when a Canadian investigator decided to take another look at the Shag Harbour case after seeing an *Unsolved Mysteries* segment about the Roswell incident on television. The Roswell case had similarly lain dormant for about three decades before being re-investigated in the late 1970s. Just as with the Roswell case, Shag Harbour investigators interviewed witnesses and pored over old government files about the case. The results of this investigation seem to indicate that Canadian and American military personnel were aware of the UFO and unsuccessfully attempted to retrieve it (Randle, 1997).

An examination of Canadian and American government documents is said to reveal that "a small [military] flotilla sat over the submerged UFO for a number of days" (Randle, 1997, p. 6). Apparently, a retrieval operation was postponed when it seemed that a second UFO was underwater, presumably to repair the first one. After a week, a Soviet submarine crossed into Canadian waters near where the UFOs were located

which distracted the military personnel who decided to go after the submarine. Once the military flotilla made its move, the UFOs were reported to have come out of the water and "leapt into the air to disappear at high speed" (Randle, 1997, p. 6). The investigators concluded from their interviews and available government documents concerning the case that something extraterrestrial did crash into the ocean as agencies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Canadian Navy and North American Air Defence Command acknowledged that a UFO had indeed entered the water. However, none of these agencies could find what had crashed and denials were issued by some of the military personnel interviewed, although official documents show that they had worked on the case (Randle, 1997). Just as the Roswell case left many Americans believing that the government was covering up alien visitation, the Shag Harbour case has planted the suspicion in the minds of many Canadians that the Canadian government was also keeping valuable information concerning UFOs and aliens from the public.

Another Canadian case that has attained worldwide prominence also occurred in 1967 when a prospector named Stefan Michaluk, while on a prospecting expedition, saw a UFO land near Falcon Lake, Manitoba. This UFO, as reported by Rutkowski (1999) was the traditional 'flying saucer' shape and Michaluk was able to not only get a good look at it, but touch it as well. He heard voices from within the UFO but

when he tried to speak with whoever was on board, the UFO suddenly took off. The momentum of the departure forced hot gas out of a gridlike exhaust vent into Michaluk's face. This hot gas set Michaluk's shirt on fire and inflicted a "bizarre pattern of round burns which later left deep scar tissue" (p. 28) on his chest. Furthermore, radioactive pieces of metal were found at the site where the UFO landed (Rutkowski, 1999). All of this physical evidence is cited as confirmation that Michaluk had an encounter with a strange object of some kind. However, the possibility has been raised by some that Michaluk's encounter could have been with a top-secret vehicle which the American or Canadian military may have been testing rather than with an object with origins outside of earth (Rutkowski, 1999).

As the Shag Harbour and Falcon Lake cases illustrate, Canada's UFO/alien history is quite rich. Other than the distrust of the government concerning UFO matters, there are some additional striking similarities between the UFO/alien histories of Canada and the United States. Following the Roswell incident and a growing number of sightings of UFOs, the United States Air Force, in 1947, established Project Sign (which ultimately became the now famous Project Blue Book in 1952) to collect and investigate reports of UFOs. Likewise, Project Magnet was established under the Department of Transport for Air Services in Canada in 1950. The original purpose of Project Magnet was to study 'geomagnetic

phenomena' which ostensibly became a study of the UFO phenomena in Canada (Campagna, 1998). Another similarity between the two countries concerns the belief that the respective governments have been involved in the testing of flying saucers that have been captured and may be trying to build their own flying saucers, using the technology of extraterrestrial craft and aliens that have been captured. Just as there are many rumours in the United States that such testing of flying saucers is occurring at a top-secret military base in the Nevada desert called Area 51 (Hay, 1997), there have been rumours in Canada that the Royal Canadian Air Force and the A.V. Roe Company collaborated on a flying saucer type vehicle named the AvroCar (Cameron, 1995; Campagna, 1998). The rumours and theories that abound concerning UFOs in Canadian popular culture are certainly not unlike those that are evident in American popular culture and are quite rich in their own right.

Besides simple sightings of UFOs, another component of the UFO/alien phenomenon is that of alien encounters and abductions. Reports of alien encounters and abductions have spanned the globe and, though there is great variety in detail among accounts, there are also some striking similarities between stories (Rutkowski, 1999). The incident at Roswell, New Mexico may have been one of the first cases where extraterrestrials were actually claimed to have been seen (in this case, most of the eyewitness testimony consists

of having seen the dead bodies of what were presumed to be extraterrestrials though some witnesses also claim to have seen one surviving alien (Randle, 1997)). However, until the early 1960s, it was rare for incidents which could be considered to have extraterrestrial origins to involve anything more than a sighting of a UFO.

The notable exception to this would be the 'contactee movement' which rose to prominence in the 1950s, following the Roswell incident and a wave of UFO sightings in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Aliens were seen by the 'contactees' as "benevolent space brothers who claimed they were concerned with our well-being" (Randle & Estes, 1997, p. 80). Furthermore, at least initially, the messages being transmitted by the aliens were allegedly being sent telepathically or through channelling rather than through any physical contact with these beings (Randle et al., 1999). Randle, Estes and Cone (1999) report that "many contactees graduated from channelled contact to physical contact with the aliens" (p. 86), but this physical contact tended to be voluntary on the part of the contactees and led to pleasant experiences such as accepting an alien's invitation to take a ride on a flying saucer. Randle and Estes (1997) describe the climate in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s when these contacts began taking place between humans and aliens:

As a nation we felt helpless against the awesome power of the hydrogen bomb, and we feared the invisible but ever-present Communist threat. At the same time, man was on the threshold of space. It now seemed clear that we would soon be sending rockets to other planets. All of these circumstances contributed to the belief that the galactic federation would soon intervene to save us from ourselves. (p. 82)

Thus, it was thought that the extraterrestrials could have a positive effect on earth and were interested in preventing earthlings from destroying themselves and their planet.

Although the image of aliens as benevolent beings is considered by some 'believers' to be the overriding notion of why extraterrestrials visit earth, a considerably different view of aliens has emerged in the last four decades. This negative image has come out in narratives of alien abductions. The case of Betty and Barney Hill's abduction in 1961 was the first North American case of its kind. The Hills were travelling back to their home in New Hampshire from a vacation in Quebec when they encountered a UFO. After stopping their car to look at the UFO and its six occupants for several minutes, the Hills suddenly panicked as the UFO descended and the couple quickly drove off. However, after getting home at a much later hour than they believed to be the case and following several days of not feeling well, the

Hills sought help from several doctors. Among the professionals the Hills consulted was a psychiatrist who later performed hypnosis on the couple. Under hypnosis, the couple were able to recall an elaborate sequence of events they had been unable to remember consciously after watching the UFO descend. The Hills recalled being abducted by the occupants of the UFO and being subjected to physical examinations by these strange looking beings. While Barney Hill kept his eyes shut during most of the ordeal, Betty Hill communicated with the leader of the alien crew and was even shown a map indicating the origins of the extraterrestrial visitors. Following their interaction with these alien creatures, the Hills were returned to their car with no conscious memory of the events that had just occurred (Randle & Estes, 1997). The Hills' abduction account included elements that would become common to many of the abduction stories of the next four decades including the description of the alien beings (especially for North American abductees), the subjection to uncomfortable physical examinations, the sense that there was 'missing time' (or a period of time that was unaccounted for), and little or no memory of the traumatic events although there was a feeling that 'something' happened. In many abduction cases, such as the Hills', hypnosis would be required to 'unlock' the memories of the traumatic events.

Although details may differ from case to case, there are some additional similarities among abduction narratives. The inclusion of these common threads also tend to differentiate abductees' experiences from those of contactees. For instance, many abductees claim to have been implanted with devices during their abduction experience which may be used by the aliens to track or monitor the abductee. Such monitoring, according to Day (1997), may allow for easier access to the abductee for further testing and probing by the aliens. Abduction narratives often involve a sexual component (such as the abductee being forced or seduced into having sex with an alien in order to create a 'hybrid' baby) and invasive medical and sexual experiments performed on abductees. The major difference between the experiences of contactees and abductees is that in the case of the latter, the whole encounter is an involuntary one on the part of the abductee (Randle et al., 1999). Accounts of alien abductions have become increasingly common since the Hill case and, along with the simpler reports of UFO and alien sightings without any human/alien physical interaction, have spawned many theories as to why this whole phenomenon has flourished in the last few decades.

Dean (1998) proposes that the present fixation with UFOs and aliens may be intertwined with fears of the millennium. Dean writes:

Many have associated end-of-the-century culture with boundary breakdown and transgression, especially as heretofore excluded possibilities, be they monsters, the supernatural, or previously repressed sexualities and subjectivities, make their way into the social imaginary. Not only does the alien mark that intrusion of the other so typical of end-time strangeness, but its reinscription of the promise of truth iterates the certainty of knowledge characteristic of apocalyptic modes of truth. (p. 32)

Dean further points out that references to Martians and "sightings of mysterious airships and strange, cigar-shaped craft" (p. 33) were not uncommon in the final years of the nineteenth century in the United States.

Kaminer (1999) links the growth of the UFO/alien phenomena with the rise of New Age religions and the therapeutic culture that have contributed to the decline of rationalism. Kaminer explains that 'New Agers' dismiss traditional religions as authoritarian or absolutist and that "New Agers seek individual relationships with whatever Higher Powers they imagine - direct relationships, unmediated by established churches" (p. 99). By the early 1990s, New Age beliefs combined with a therapeutic culture which, according to Kaminer, elevated the idea that 'guardian angels' watch over and protect each person. These angels, which descended

from heaven or a world other than earth, became a replacement for the "arbitrary, abusive Old Testament God" (p. 103). Kaminer posits that the UFO stories of the last two decades, which includes the richness in detail of the increasing number of alien abduction accounts, have been "shaped by the therapeutic culture's focus on child abuse and New Age angelology" (p. 106). The New Age angels are often seen as being from other planets and may be identified or confused with aliens while the therapeutic culture is not concerned with whether there is any evidence of wrongdoing to the client (such as being the victim of an abduction experience) but in 'feeling realities'. That is, the validity of an experience is based not so much on whether the experience actually happened but on whether the 'victim' feels that it did happen.

Support for the notion of religion's playing a role in the UFO/alien phenomenon may come from Hay's (1997) assertion that "after contact with UFOs and aliens, a sense of spirituality is sometimes rekindled, which is comparable to religious conviction" (p. 81). Hay further writes that:

Ufology can be viewed as a new religion, since traditional religions have lost appeal to the "baby boom" generation. Could the hunger for a meaning to life be satisfied through belief in aliens, with their supposed interest in our spiritual growth? (p. 81)

Rutkowski (1999) has examined the fanatical belief in UFOs which can result in the formation of UFO cults. Rutkowski, in a vein similar to Kaminer's belief, considers fanatical UFO belief to be an 'anti-science' movement as "it rejects the scientific evaluation and rational explanation for UFOs in favour of a more mystical and religious view" (p. 220). However, Rutkowski also differentiates between 'fanatical UFO believers' and other UFO buffs - he argues that fanatical believers are said to reject any interpretation of UFOs as "conventional phenomena" (p. 220). Rutkowski further considers 'fanatical UFO believers' as claiming to 'know' the truth whereas other UFO buffs are only interested in searching for 'the truth'. In its extreme, UFO belief cults can become obsessive, leading to tragic and self-destructive consequences. Rutkowski points to the Heaven's Gate cult where thirty-nine members of the group committed mass suicide in 1997 with the belief that the "Comet Hale-Bopp was the harbinger of spiritually-enlightened aliens ready to 'process' humans ready to 'move on' to a better life" (Rutkowski, 1999, p. 227). Incidents such as this one certainly indicate that a belief in UFOs and aliens can take on powerful religious overtones for some people.

Another theory for the growing UFO/alien phenomenon comes from Shermer (1997) who writes:

In my opinion, the alien abduction phenomenon is the product of an unusual altered state of

consciousness interpreted in a cultural context replete with films, television programs, and science fiction literature about aliens and UFOs. Add to this the fact that for the past four decades we have been exploring the solar system and searching for signs of extraterrestrial intelligence, and it is no wonder that people are seeing UFOs and experiencing alien encounters. (p. 95)

Shermer uses the example of what occurred following the airing of the 1975 NBC movie *The UFO Incident* which depicted Betty and Barney Hill's abduction experience. The depiction of the aliens in the film as having "a large, bald head and big, elongated eyes" (p. 95), and the circumstances surrounding the Hills' abduction experience have been similarly reported by many abductees since the movie aired. Shermer sees this whole process as a 'feedback loop' - the increased number of reports of alien encounters since the airing of *The UFO Incident* has resulted in a greater number of depictions of such events in the media which only serves to further feed the UFO/alien craze.

The hypotheses concerning the effects that religion and popular culture play in the continuing worldwide fascination with UFOs and aliens seem to have some credibility when applied to a recent incident that is considered to be part of the entire phenomena. Just as the United States (the Roswell

incident) and Canada (Shag Harbour) have 'defining' UFO incidents which seem to include so many of the points which are debated by believers and skeptics alike (i.e. what the believers say is strong eyewitness evidence backed up by equally strong evidence that the government is covering something up), Brazil also claims such a case. In Varginha, Brazil in 1996, several witnesses are said to have seen alien creatures that wore no clothes and were reddish in colour with a number of bumps or protuberances on their large heads. One witness described the creature he saw as having "long, thin arms that hung to the knees, and short, thin legs with big feet. The skin was shiny, as if it had been rubbed with oil and it smelled strongly of ammonia" (Randle, 1997, p. 146). Three young women who saw one of the creatures believed that it was the devil. Sightings of flying saucers in the area led investigators to believe that these creatures were aliens from outer space. According to various reports, there were anywhere from two to seven of these creatures reported in the area and at least one of these aliens had died. Rumours have abounded that the Brazilian military was able to capture at least some of these creatures and transport them to a hospital and then into a local university, presumably for research purposes. As in Canada and the United States, many citizens of Brazil believe that their military and government is covering up what happened at Varginha (Randle, 1997).

Brazil has a long history of UFO sightings and reports. In fact, what many consider to be the first ever alien abduction experience occurred in Brazil in 1957 when a farmer named Antonio Villas Boas, who, while plowing a field, was allegedly abducted by some strange looking five foot tall creatures and seduced by a beautiful human-like women aboard a spacecraft (Day, 1997). Day (1997) considers Brazil to be the 'hot spot' for UFO encounters in South America. With the rich UFO/alien history in Brazil, it is not surprising that there is a national interest in the topic which rivals that of the United States (Randle, 1997). This great pop culture interest in UFOs/aliens may result in the type of 'feedback loop' which Shermer (1997) advocates. It is also interesting to note that the young female witnesses in Varginha believed the alien creature they saw to be the devil and attempted to convince the mother of one of the women that it was in fact the devil that they saw. The connection between religion and UFO/alien phenomena is evident here with the aliens being seen as malevolent rather than benevolent beings.

Another point of interest is that the creatures seen at Varginha do not resemble the stereotypical 'greys' seen in North America which are "creatures smaller than humans with inverted teardrop-shaped heads and large almond-shaped black eyes" (Randle & Estes, 1997, p. 1). Although there is a wide discrepancy in the reports from around the world as to what aliens look like, it is interesting to note that the

'monster' type aliens encountered in Brazil seem to have been seen more often in South America than elsewhere (Randle & Estes, 1997). Furthermore, 'Nordic' type aliens who are described as "tall human-looking blonds" (Dean, 1998, p. 227n9) have been more frequently encountered in Scandinavia than the 'greys'. Scandinavians also report aliens who have "heads with two antennas, or heads divided, or abstract sort of features" (Dean, 1998, p. 227n9) which one Finnish researcher believes may be attributable to Scandinavian folklore which contains many references to gnomes who live in the mountains and kidnap children from their homes (Dean, 1998). Reports of blood-sucking beasts called 'Chupacabras' that have allegedly been responsible for numerous animal mutilations in Puerto Rico have been linked to UFO sightings with further reports of such creatures appearing throughout the Spanish-speaking communities of the United States as well as Mexico. Suggestions that the Chupacabras are mutations of the 'grey' aliens have been made by some investigators while others suggest that "the Chupacabras smack of urban legends" (Randle, 1997, p. 140). In any event, this is yet another example of the cultural variability in alien abduction narratives that is worthy of further study.

The fascination with UFOs and aliens is a worldwide phenomenon and a vibrant part of popular culture in much of the world. Canada, because of its proximity to the United States and its exposure to American media, shares a very

similar UFO/alien history with its southern neighbours. For instance, the ubiquitous 'grey' alien has become a greatly commodified item throughout North America while the suspicion that governments and the military are conspiring to cover up 'the truth' about UFOs is also quite evident in the narratives surrounding UFOs and aliens in both countries. An examination of UFO/alien narratives elsewhere in the world indicates that there are many similarities with those of North America but there are also some important differences as well, such as in the types of aliens being encountered. Ultimately, these narratives may tell us more about humankind than about any extraterrestrials that may be out there.

The Global Evolution of UFO and Alien Encounter Narratives

The mass media have undoubtedly played a major role in the global fascination with UFOs and extraterrestrials. As the media have expanded over the last century, it is no coincidence that the UFO phenomenon has grown accordingly as media outlets have discovered the attraction which the general public has towards the unexplained. However, beyond the obvious role which the mass media have played in granting the UFO phenomenon great exposure, little research has been done concerning the influence the media have in shaping the beliefs of its audience (Sparks, Pellechia & Irvine, 1998). Sparks, Pellechia and Irvine (1998) examined how the inclusion and exclusion of discrediting information from a scientific authority affected beliefs in UFOs in one of the few controlled studies that has been done in this area. They found that viewers who saw a video containing testimony about the 1947 flying saucer crash in Roswell, New Mexico, without discrediting information from scientists, showed a greater belief in the existence of UFOs as being extraterrestrial in origin than viewers who saw a video with the discrediting information. The importance of these results cannot be understated because of the common belief that the

media's coverage of the UFO phenomenon tends to include far more evidence supportive of the 'extraterrestrial hypothesis' than information discrediting this theory.

Klass (1996) believes that television coverage of UFOs is even more one-sided than print media coverage of the phenomenon. According to Klass, while the print media devotes sixty to seventy percent of its content to pro-UFO views, television tends to allocate at least ninety-five percent of its UFO content to views supporting the extraterrestrial hypothesis. To support his viewpoint, Klass examined the content of several programs which dealt with UFOs that are considered to have high credibility with the American public such as CBS's *48 Hours*, hosted by news anchor Dan Rather, and a TNT cable special hosted by Larry King. Klass, who is considered to be a leading UFO skeptic, was either interviewed for or contributed documents supporting his anti-UFO viewpoints for several of these programs. However, upon examination of these programs, he found that there was little or no testimony from skeptics and very little, if any, of his contributions were used.

Sheaffer (1998) provides further anecdotal evidence of the media's bias towards a pro-UFO perspective. Sheaffer

recounts that on June 19, 1998, ABC News reported that "a panel of scientists is conducting the first independent UFO investigation in nearly 30 years" (p. 5), while the Associated Press reported that "an international panel of scientists was convened to conduct the first independent review of UFO phenomena since 1966" (p. 5). According to Sheaffer, though, it took little research to discover that the panel in question was composed of investigators with a decidedly pro-UFO stance and their work should not be considered an 'independent' review of UFOs. However, the pro-UFO media stance does not appear to be limited to the United States. Keay (1994) reports that an Australian Broadcasting Corporation program about UFOs allotted only ten percent of on-air time to rebuttals by skeptics. These findings are significant because television and the print media are largely responsible for the dissemination of reports of extraterrestrial activity to the general public.

Randle, Estes and Cone (1999) compare the spread of modern-day reports of UFO sightings and alien abductions with the spread of folk stories and urban legends throughout history. According to these authors, although information was transmitted less rapidly at the turn of the last century than it is today, the narratives were still

transmitted. Stories about fairies or ghosts might take weeks or months to be transmitted across different regions of a country but, ultimately, they were spread. In 2002, a story of alien abduction told on CNN can be transmitted to millions of people within seconds but it still contains the basic elements of traditional folk stories. The authors also claim that UFO sighting and alien abduction narratives have become part of a 'collective consciousness' just as many urban legends have. In the 1980s, a story circulated about an individual finding a hypodermic needle in a Pepsi can. Soon after the story broke in the media, there were approximately fifty other reports of hypodermic needles also found in Pepsi cans. An investigation showed none of the reports, including the original, to be true, but it is a good example of how the mass media and popular culture can influence beliefs (Klass, 1996). Likewise, Randle et al. (1999) believe that popular culture has had an enormous impact on the growth of UFO and alien abduction narratives.

Randle et al. (1999) have noted that stories of alien abduction are strikingly similar to fables from folklore that have been passed down through the ages. For instance, ancient Romans and Greeks told stories of gods, with great powers, who lived far away and came down from the sky to

breed with humans. Half-gods and half-mortal hybrids, known as demi-gods, such as Hercules, were born of such unions. These stories sound quite similar to modern-day alien abduction accounts in which extraterrestrials breed with humans to create a hybrid race. As well, Randle et al. discuss how the tales of ancient Romans and Greeks contain a sexuality which modern-day alien abduction stories also include:

The satyr, from Greek mythology, was a woodland god with pointed ears and goat's legs. The most prominent feature was a large, erect phallus.

The satyrs pursued the wood nymphs with a single thought on their minds. They captured, abducted, and raped the nymphs, often taking them deep into the woods to perform their terrible, and sometimes inexplicable, rituals. (p. 106)

This myth does not sound unlike the present-day claims of sexual abuse at the hands of extraterrestrials. As Randle et al. point out, no complex understanding of human reproduction is necessary in either the tales of ancient Romans and Greeks or in the modern-day alien abduction accounts. Humans are simply abducted by a greater power

and forced into sexual acts for the purpose of producing a hybrid race.

The whole notion of "nocturnal sexual activity by a supernatural force and the collection and dissemination of sperm" (Randle et al., 1999, p. 108), which has been one of the markers of alien abduction, can be seen in stories told through the ages. Randle et al. (1999) have found this common theme in stories of visitations by demons and witches, incubi and succubi, the devil or satan, and stories of fairy abduction. Randle et al. propose that although the basic structure of the story has remained the same - abduction by a supernatural force which leads to forced sex and reproduction - some of the details have gradually changed to make the story more acceptable to each cohort:

In fact, it can be suggested that a belief in fairies, trips into the underworld, or witchcraft, are no longer acceptable in our modern world. Science has shown that fairies don't exist, the underworld is a myth, and modern witches practice their craft as a religion but have no magical or supernatural powers. However, spacecraft do exist, travel into space by

American astronauts is so common the networks no longer cover the shuttle launches as live events, and science argues about the reality of alien visitation. Fairy abduction is a myth, but alien abduction could be real. (p. 110)

The details of the basic abduction story have changed to incorporate extraterrestrials over the last two decades to better fit with our knowledge of the world (Randle et al., 1999).

Narratives which contain no supernatural events have been found to share some elements with modern-day alien abduction accounts as well. Sturma (2000) has found parallels in contemporary alien abduction accounts with captivity narratives from almost two centuries ago in Europe, North America and Australia. The captors in the latter cases were aboriginal. Sturma recounts the story of one of the best known aboriginal abductees, Mary Rowlandson, who described her captors as "'wild beasts', 'devils' and 'hell hounds'." (p. 15). Sturma points out that both alien abduction and captivity narratives contain positive and negative elements:

Those taken in both captivity narratives and abduction stories often express ambivalence

toward their captors, combining fear and desire ... From the beginning, though, some narratives admired and romanticised Indian lifestyles. In a similar way the responses of alien abductees range from horror to love toward their abductors. While some abductees represent aliens as bent on the Earth's conquest, others see them as offering salvation from human violence and destruction.

(pp. 15-16)

These more positive notions of alien abduction have been expressed by some of the more recent alien abductees like Betty Andreasson, who views herself as a missionary whose mandate is to minister to other humans on the aliens' behalf (Matheson, 1998). According to Sturma, the spiritual and personal growth that abductees experience is similar to the redemption that captives in the captivity narratives achieved by resisting the temptations of assimilation to the Indian way of life and surviving the trials of being a captive. Alternatively, many captives came to identify with their Indian captors and reject white society much like many alien abductees come to identify with their abductors and believe, like Betty Andreasson,

that they are deriving special benefits from their abductions.

Additionally, the treatment accorded by the mass media to alien abduction narratives is quite similar to that given to captivity narratives. Sturma (2000) writes that:

Just as alien abduction has become a favourite topic of the tabloids, the captivity motif furnished the subject matter of pulp thrillers and penny dreadfuls. Modern narratives of alien abduction share many of the sensational, melodramatic and traumatic qualities of captivity narratives. In both cases individuals are forced against their will into a foreign world on the other side of their cultural frontier ... The mythic power once associated with the Western frontier has been largely displaced in contemporary consciousness by outer space. (pp. 15-16)

Like the gods of the fables from folklore or the stories of visitations by demons and witches, the captivity narratives also contain the sexual element that we so often see in alien abduction accounts. The abductees of aliens have much in common with the vulnerable white women of captivity

narratives who were also said to be forced into hybrid breeding with their captors (Sturma, 2000).

Clearly, then, there are commonalities between many of the narratives that have appeared in the mass media and throughout the history of story-telling and alien abduction accounts. Some of these narratives appear in modern times to be far-fetched to most people like the stories of demons, witches and fairies while others, like the captivity narratives, may be seen as having more credibility even if some details may have been exaggerated. As opinion polls have demonstrated in both Canada and the U.S. (e.g. Dean, 1998; McClelland & Betts, 2001), there are many people who believe in the authenticity of UFO sightings and reports of encounters with and abductions by aliens from outer space. Why and how do people believe what they believe concerning aliens?

Shermer (1997), in his text, Why People Believe Weird Things, believes that alien abduction accounts can be explained by scientific evidence and very earthly phenomena. He attributes alien abduction experiences to altered states of consciousness such as when an abduction experience is recalled only under hypnosis, which characterizes many such accounts. Furthermore, a majority

of alien abductions, according to Shermer, occur at night during the process of sleeping, which he believes to be the result of the phenomena known as 'hypnogogic' and 'hypnopompic' hallucinations which occur just after falling asleep or just prior to waking up respectively. During these unusual states, the sleeper experiences strange visions, which can include seeing alien type creatures, and sleep paralysis, which can result in the feeling of being constrained. The altered mental states that bring about lucid dreams and hallucinations and the fascination with the sexual component of alien abductions is nothing new as we have heard similar accounts throughout history involving demons, spirits and ghosts; only in the last half century, aliens have replaced the paranormal forces of the past in these narratives of victimization. For Shermer, the most logical explanation for accounts of alien abduction is provided by the maxim of eighteenth century Scottish philosopher David Hume who claimed:

That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish. (p. 45)

Shermer applies this maxim in arguing that it is far more plausible that humans are experiencing fantasies of being abducted and sexually abused by aliens and interpreting these fantasies in a way that is consistent with the social context and age in which we are presently living than it is the case that these accounts are actually true.

Alternatively, Anderson (1998), in his article, "Why Would People Not Believe Weird Things?" is not surprised by the belief in the authenticity of alien abduction and other UFO accounts when compared to the plausibility of some widely held religious and scientific beliefs. For example, Anderson questions why so many people believe much of what is written in the Bible. Is a belief in supernatural phenomena any less rational than a belief in a charismatic leader who is credited with "among other things, walking on water and turning it into wine, creating bread and fish out of nothing, and bringing dead people back to life" (p. 43)? When you consider that this same leader was born from a virgin and came back to life after being dead for three days, Anderson questions why belief in such a person, as hundreds of millions around the world profess, is any more plausible than a belief in alien visitation to earth.

Some of the claims made by scientists, according to Anderson, can be as difficult to believe to some as the existence of UFOs is to others. For instance, according to Anderson, evolution not only tells us what we don't want to hear - "that we came out of primordial slime" (p. 44) - but it also seems quite implausible to many. Anderson writes:

On the face of it, evolution by natural selection provides a logical explanation for the development of life on this planet. However, to account for all of the enormous complexity in life forms by random genetic variation requires an act of faith by most people. Myriad genetic changes must have taken place over an immense span of time for such evolution to have occurred. For a society in which many people don't understand events that occurred even a decade ago, such profound depths of time are beyond the comprehension of most people. (p. 44)

To many people, a belief in the existence of UFOs and extraterrestrial life that impacts ours is more plausible and reassuring than belief in a complicated scientific principle such as evolution.

Kaminer (1999) suggests that belief in aliens has become diametrically opposed to belief in science because of the emphasis on 'feeling realities' by the therapeutic culture and New Age spirituality movements of the last two decades. The truth is in what one feels rather than in what one knows or what really happened. Kaminer reports that prominent Harvard psychiatrist and alien abduction researcher John Mack "talks about alien abductions the way religious people talk about God, disdaining the skeptic's interest in proving they occurred." (p. 106) Skeptics are seen as the enemy and science as a villainous discipline. Skeptics are to UFO and alien abduction believers what atheists and agnostics are to organized and established religion. They are seen as unenlightened and often treated with contempt because of their refusal to believe in extraterrestrial visitors.

Kaminer further compares the believers of extraterrestrial visitation and popular spirituality to those who believe in extreme right wing political movements. All of these people embrace conspiracy theories and believe that people at higher-levels are 'covering up' the truth. In fact, Kaminer reports that there are crossovers from the New Age movements to the right wing

militia movements and that she knows of a convert to the militia movement who is also a UFO believer. She writes:

He has always thrived on the presence of enemies, and so, in a way, do popular spirituality authors. If there is no evil, only unenlightenment in the benevolent universe they depict, there are still enemies: notably science, rationalism, and established religion, which is almost always distinguished from spirituality - as doctrine, not feeling ... Despite their majoritarian appeal, mass-market spirituality books offer the pleasures of membership in a besieged minority. Like extremist political movements, they shine with moral vanity. (p. 129)

We again see here how a belief in UFOs and extraterrestrial visitation fills a need in many people which traditional religion and science do not.

Although many people possess a strong belief that aliens have been visiting earth, there have been changes over time in the narrative structure of witness accounts of UFOs and extraterrestrials. The cover of Whitley Streiber's best-selling 1987 text Communion displays the image of the 'grey' alien that has been popularized in the

North American media in recent years but prior to 1987, the 'Streiber alien' did not necessarily bear much resemblance to the extraterrestrials that witnesses claimed to have encountered. Randles (1999) provides a full description of the 'grey' alien:

About 4 feet tall, occasionally a little smaller or taller, with a disproportionately large head, they sometimes have a pointed chin and spindly body. Eyes are very large and often dark.

Little sign of mouth or nose is present. Skin colour is white, grey or like parchment. Body hair is absent. Lack of sexual body

characteristics is often alluded to. (p. 112)

The 'greys' comprised only two percent of the alien encounter cases worldwide during the 1950s and, by the 1970s, only seven percent of cases involved grey aliens. It was only beginning in the 1980s that a significant proportion of encounters with extraterrestrials involved 'greys' (31%) and only in the last decade or so that a majority of cases have been attributed to the 'greys' (Randles, 1999). According to Randles, the 'greys' became the dominant alien entity in the United States beginning in

the early 1970s; however, they did not become the dominant entity worldwide until much later.

By tracing the evolution of alien encounter narratives, there appear to be two noteworthy events that have helped bring about the dominance of the 'greys' and the increase in accounts of abductions of human beings by extraterrestrials. As discussed in the opening chapter, the alien abduction of Betty and Barney Hill while driving home to New Hampshire from Quebec led to the first of these influential events. Although the Hill encounter itself occurred in 1961, it was not until a depiction of their story aired on NBC as a made-for-TV movie in 1975 that their story became especially well-known. Coincidentally, within days of the airing of this movie titled *The UFO Incident*, several new cases of alien abduction, which had been a rare phenomenon prior to this time, were reported (Randles, 1999). Additionally, reports of encounters with grey aliens increased soon after the movie aired. Ironically, the original description of the aliens which the Hills encountered was quite different from the ones which would be depicted in the movie and from later accounts provided by Betty Hill. Randle and Estes (1997) report that Betty Hill originally described the aliens as

having noses similar to that of Jimmy Durante while original testimony provided to Dr. Benjamin Simon, who treated the Hills, and original notes by Betty Hill indicated that the aliens were not the classic 'greys'. However, over the years, Betty Hill's description of her alien abductors has changed to the point where they very much resemble the classic grey alien which was the type depicted in the movie. I would argue that the airing of *The UFO Incident* was the event which brought the 'greys' to prominence in the United States. It was also the event which introduced the 'greys' to millions as the alien entity type that was carrying out abductions and testing of human beings. Randles (1997) summarizes the effect of the movie on American viewers especially well:

Prior to late-1975 there were few people aware of the details of the alien contact. Stories had been told in the press and in the books, but millions had now seen them dramatized, including the form of the grays, the medical examination and hints about genetic experimentation ... The way in which abductions are carried out was no longer an open secret. (p. 83)

Clearly, then, this television movie account of the Hills' abduction greatly influenced the narrative surrounding extraterrestrial encounters in the United States.

I would argue that the second event which cemented the dominance of the grey alien in the United States and led to the rise of similar reports elsewhere in the world was Whitley Streiber's 1987 text Communion. Streiber's text became the number one book on the New York Times best-seller list in May 1987 (Dean, 1998). The author gained popularity worldwide as he toured all over the world and his publishers ran an extensive publicity campaign replete with large posters on billboards and bus shelters with the image of the classic grey alien from the cover of his book peering at passers-by (Randles, 1997; Randles, 1999). Streiber, who was already a well-known horror writer, wrote about his own alien abduction experiences in Communion. Themes from his account that would become commonplace in the UFO literature beginning in 1987 included being awakened in the middle of the night (as opposed to the Hills' version and other reported abductions which occurred while travelling and sighting a UFO in the sky), feeling paralyzed and helpless (which many scientists and skeptics refer to as the common phenomenon of 'sleep paralysis'

(e.g. Shermer, 1997)), and being abducted from one's own bedroom.

Applying Shermer's (1997) 'feedback loop' theory that was raised in the opening chapter (this loop is defined by Shermer as one "in which outputs are connected to inputs, producing change in response to both" (p. 101)), we can once again see how Streiber's narrative may have had a profound effect on later claims of alien abduction.

Randles (1997, 1999) reports that the popular television series *Dynasty: The Colbys* incorporated an alien abduction experience into their story line that was very similar to Streiber's in detail. The character who was abducted, Fallon, even experienced the smell of cinnamon connected with the aliens which was an identical feature shared with Streiber's account. According to Randles (1997), this cinnamon element, which had never been reported prior to Streiber doing so, was seen in several cases following both Streiber's real-life account and Fallon's fictional one. Whereas skeptics like Shermer believe that the newly-introduced cinnamon aspect is simply a case of popular culture feeding the extraterrestrial 'feedback loop', UFO investigators like Randles (1997) ask:

Was this a new clue uncovered by Streiber and now reinforced by the *Dynasty* fiction? Or had a hoaxer copied Streiber's story and, like the television series, imagined that this feature would make their contact more credible? (p. 111)

Whether one is a believer or skeptic of alien abductions and UFO experiences, Streiber's Communion appears to have opened the door to an increase in encounters worldwide with grey aliens and their propensity to abduct human beings.

The Development of the UFO and Alien Encounter Narrative in Canada

In the first chapter, I mentioned that Canada has made some major contributions to the global fascination with UFOs and aliens, such as the Shag Harbour and Falcon Lake cases. Randles (1999) points out that Canada shares many cultural traits with the United States but also has a shared culture with Britain and France. As such, a comparative consideration of which nation Canada is most similar to with respect to its alien contacts yields interesting results. Not surprisingly, it would appear that Canada has the most in common with the U.S. and the least in common with France. With "the mass media and movie industry, which has taken aliens to its heart, rooted in the U.S.A." (Randles, 1999, p. 90), it is to be expected that Canada's UFO experiences would be most like its closest neighbours. However, as we will see later in this chapter, there are also some striking similarities to Britain's experiences which the U.S. does not share, particularly concerning the phenomenon of crop circles. Interestingly, Canada's rich UFO history predates the seminal Roswell incident of 1947 in the United States.

The first known UFO sighting in Canada apparently occurred in 1752 when a Hudson's Bay Company explorer named

David Thompson and a companion described seeing a "large 'mass of jelly' fly through the air and crash to Earth" (McClelland & Betts, 2001, p. 47) in the Landing Lake area, near what is now Thicket Portage, Manitoba. Thompson and his companion searched for the downed object but were unable to find it. They had a second sighting of a similar object a few days later (Colombo, 1991; McClelland & Betts, 2001). Another notable early case occurred in 1933 near Nipawin in Saskatchewan when two men and one woman driving in a pick-up truck saw a landed, disc-shaped craft with a ladder. They saw several small humanoids in silver, one-piece suits with ski caps apparently repairing the craft. The witnesses, who were low on fuel, were unable to reach the craft which was sitting in a marsh. However, according to Randles (1999), when the witnesses returned two nights later, the UFO was gone but had left marks on the ground. Furthermore, the humanoids had left footprints. This curious incident does not sound unlike many cases that we see throughout the world today. A skeptic might point out that this incident could simply have been a case of several humans - who appeared small because the witnesses were seeing them from some distance - repairing a top-secret craft that the military was attempting to test in a remote

region. Alternatively, considering that accounts such as this one were rare in 1933 and that witnesses in rural Saskatchewan would presumably have had much less media exposure to UFOs and aliens at that time compared to today, this particular incident is one that a UFO believer would consider to be quite credible.

The beliefs of Canadians concerning UFOs and extraterrestrials is no less strong than that of Americans. According to Ledger and Styles (2001), "the incidence of UFO sightings in Canada is slightly higher per capita than in the United States" (p. 64), with one third of all Canadian sightings originating in Atlantic Canada.

According to McClelland and Betts (2001):

A 1996 Angus Reid poll found 70 per cent of Canadians believe intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe, and just over half of those sampled said they thought the planet had already been visited by extraterrestrials. (p. 44)

Ledger (1998) reports that roughly three million Canadians or 10% of the population of Canada have seen a UFO. A similar proportion of Americans has reported seeing a UFO. However, according to Ledger (1998), most sightings are not

reported. The National Research Council (NRC) in Ottawa, which collected Canadian UFO reports until 1996, has only three hundred maritime UFO reports on file from 1947 to 1988 which represents only about 1/75th of all maritime sightings. According to Ledger, Canadians are similar to the rest of the world in their reluctance to report sightings of UFOs due to the fear of ridicule by other citizens.

With the influence of the American media in Canada, it should not be surprising that there are many more similarities than differences with the UFO phenomenon between Canada and the U.S. As the United States has their seminal event with Roswell, Canada has theirs with Shag Harbour. As discussed in the opening chapter, media fascination with both cases did not emerge until decades after the events allegedly occurred. Also, both of these cases have been at the root of the UFO conspiracy theories that have sprouted up in each country. The conspiracy theorists believe that the federal governments in each country are involved in a 'cover-up' of vital information concerning the recovery of alien spaceships and bodies from incidents such as Roswell and Shag Harbour. In both Canada and the United States, researchers have been able to

painstakingly put together a chronology of events concerning each country's investigation of UFOs with the help of the Access to Information Act in Canada (Ledger & Styles, 2001) and the Freedom of Information Act in the U.S. (Ledger, 1998; Randle, 1998). Documents that have been retrieved using these Acts often have great amounts of information blacked out (Ledger, 1998; Randle, 1998) which has only fuelled the allegations of government 'cover-up' in each country.

Not only are there the previously mentioned similarities but there also exists the similarity between the Canadian and American experience with the UFO phenomenon and the general relationship the Canadian government has with the United States. The two countries do more trade with each other than with any other nation, are strong allies involved in a common defence organization, NORAD, and members of many of the same international organizations (e.g. the G8, NATO). The cooperation of the two governments in so many areas also extends to their handling of the UFO phenomenon. Of note in the emergence of the UFO phenomenon in Canada is the extent to which the United States government and military have been involved. The fact that the American government

was heavily involved in the investigation of both the Shag Harbour and Falcon Lake incidents (see Introduction) only illustrates just how much influence the U.S. has had on Canada's handling of the UFO phenomenon.

The sense that the Canadian government has been greatly influenced by that of the Americans in its handling of the UFO phenomenon is a logical one in that the events at Roswell preceded those at Shag Harbour by twenty years and the renewed media coverage of Roswell in 1978 preceded the renewed interest in Shag Harbour by fifteen years. The American government was forced into formulating a policy about dealing with the UFO and extraterrestrial visitation issue largely because of the Roswell incident so it should not be surprising that the Canadian government took a similar tack in dealing with this issue when a Roswell-like event happened within its borders. However, shortly after the Roswell incident and well before the events at Shag Harbour, the close co-operation of the Canadian government with the American one in UFO matters began.

Wilbert Brockhouse Smith is considered to be the 'father' of ufology in Canada (Cameron, 1995). Smith was an engineer who worked for the federal Department of Transport. One of his interests was in geomagnetic

propulsion; that is the possibility "to use and manipulate the earth's magnetic field as a propulsion method for vehicles" (Campagna, 1998, p. 16). While attending a conference in Washington, unrelated to UFOs, Smith came upon two newly-released books on flying saucers which initiated his interest in the topic and would make him a central figure in the history of the Canadian government's investigation of the UFO phenomenon (Campagna, 1998).

After making inquiries at the Canadian Embassy in Washington about people in the U.S. government who could help him in discovering more about the UFO phenomenon, he was put into contact with Dr. Robert I. Sarbacher of the Georgia Institute of Technology who was also a member of the American Research and Development Board (Campagna, 1998; Colombo, 1991). Sarbacher told Smith that it was the U.S. military's opinion that flying saucers exist and that they were classified by the military as "two points higher than the H-bomb" (Campagna, 1998, p. 33). According to Campagna (1998), Sarbacher, on behalf of the American government, proceeded to invite Smith and the Canadian government to exchange information about "geomagnetic propulsion research possibilities" (p. 34), within which the study of UFOs fell. Smith was then able to obtain the

permission of Dr. Omond Solandt, who was chairman of the Canadian military's Defence Research Board, to further pursue research on the UFO phenomenon (Campagna, 1998).

Smith opened the first 'flying saucer sighting station' in the world in Shirley's Bay, Ontario, west of Ottawa, on November 13, 1953 (Cameron, 1995; Colombo, 1990). According to Cameron (1995):

[The station] was a small building, about twelve feet square, next to the Ionospheric Observatory. Stocked with a gamma ray counter, a magnetometer, a radio receiver, and a recording gravimeter, it monitored the upper atmosphere for cosmic radiation, electromagnetic fluctuations, radio noise, and variations in the earth's gravitational pull. (p. 11)

The station detected one 'atmospheric disturbance', unlike anything else that it had detected up to that time, on August 8, 1954. Smith believed this anomaly was due to a flying saucer although he could not actually see anything in the sky due to fog and cloud in the area (Cameron, 1995; Colombo, 1991). However, despite this breakthrough, Smith was ordered to close down the station two days later by C.M. Brant, the superintendent of radio regulations for the

Department of Transport, who saw the whole project as an embarrassment to the department and believed that flying saucers should be a matter for the National Defence Board to investigate, rather than his own department (Campagna, 1998).

Wilbert Smith continued to investigate UFOs in his spare time even after his UFO detection centre was shut down. He even became involved with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's experiments which attempted to make telepathic contact with alien beings. Smith, through a medium named Mrs. Swan, claimed to make contact with aliens; in particular, with one named AFFA "who told Smith about new concepts of space and time, matter and energy, which Smith subsequently expounded upon in a manuscript he called *The New Science*" (Campagna, 1998, p. 47). However, these alleged telepathic contacts appear to have done little for Smith's credibility and his claims for the reality of UFOs and extraterrestrial visitation (Campagna, 1998; Ocean Entertainment Ltd., 2000).

Notwithstanding Wilbert Smith's experimentation with mental telepathy in later years, the documentation that has been uncovered by UFO researchers such as Campagna (1998) and Colombo (1988) do indicate that the Canadian government

was heavily involved and interested in the topic of UFOs. The United States began with Project Sign in 1947 to investigate UFOs and then changed the name of this secret project, first to Project Grudge and then to Project Blue Book, to thwart those in the government and military without proper clearance who were finding out about the flying saucer investigation (Randle, 1998). Likewise, in Canada, there were two notable 'Projects'. Smith's original investigation was called Project Magnet while the Defence Research Board established Project Second Storey in 1952. Smith had concluded in his Project Magnet report of 1953 from the objects that he had seen (he had a UFO sighting himself while driving on Wellington Street in Ottawa) and investigated that:

The characteristics of the objects seemed to rule out conventional methods of propulsion and that their behavior was beyond the capability of known earthly technology. Smith went on to stress that there was no scientific basis to believe they were optical illusions. (Campagna, 1998, pp. 41-42)

Campagna (1998) notes that neither the Department of Transport nor the Defence Research Board endorsed or

rejected Smith's report. However, it is interesting that it was following Smith's Project Magnet report that he was allowed to set up his government-sanctioned UFO detection station.

As Project Magnet was entering its third year, Project Second Storey began in 1952. Some researchers (e.g. Colombo, 1988) believe that Project Second Storey was established by the Defence Research Board in response to a pair of sightings over a NORAD control centre in North Bay, Ontario in the first few months of 1952. (Coincidentally, a wave of sightings over Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1952, is said to have been the impetus for a secret U.S. Air Force investigation into UFOs (Randle, 1998).) Project Second Storey was a committee comprised of Wilbert Smith, Dr. Solandt from the Defence Research Board and members from government and military organizations such as the Directorate of Air Intelligence, the Directorate of Naval Intelligence and the Directorate of Military Operations and Planning (Campagna, 1998). Obviously, the Canadian government, like their American counterparts, was interested in the UFO phenomenon. The members of Project Second Storey attempted to standardize the investigation of UFO reports and were interested in exchanging information

with the American government on the whole UFO matter (Campagna, 1998). As Campagna (1998) discovered, Project Second Storey followed the U.S. approach to keep everything discussed at meetings confidential. Eventually, Wilbert Smith believed that Project Second Storey was only interested in receiving and compiling UFO reports rather than actively investigating them though and that is why he continued with his own separate investigation. Ultimately, in February, 1954, Project Second Storey simply shut down by concluding that UFO sightings did not "lend themselves to a scientific method of investigation" (Campagna, 1998, p. 57). Colombo (1988) believed that whereas Smith's Project Magnet report "showed innocent enthusiasm and political naïveté" (p. 205), the deliberations of the Defence Research Board's Project Second Storey Committee: seem, in retrospect at least, as a deliberate attempt to wind-up Project Magnet and wind-down the federal government's involvement with what has been called "UFOria". (p. 205)

Smith's detection of the anomalous object at his UFO detection station occurred in August 1954 and so ended the most public phase of the Canadian government's interest in the UFO phenomenon.

It is interesting to note that in the mid 1950s, the American government, just like the Canadian one, publicly concluded that there was nothing to the UFO phenomenon and that it was not worthy of scientific investigation (Randle, 1998). These declarations were being made despite an increasing number of sightings throughout North America and a heightened interest in UFOs and extraterrestrials in the 1950s. Publicly, there was another threat that both the United States and Canada were concerned about - the threat of Communism (Colombo, 1988). The Soviet Union was an emerging superpower at this time and the threat of nuclear war was an ever-present one through the 1950s in both the U.S. and Canada. There were concerns within both countries that some UFOs were actually secret Soviet aircraft, just as there were concerns that the 'Foo Fighters' seen during World War II and the Korean War were actually enemy, rather than alien, aircraft (Ledger, 1998). However, in the years following World War II, there was some question about the 'Foo Fighters' being enemy aircraft as German records indicated that Nazi pilots were encountering the same phenomena (Ledger, 1998) while an examination of Japanese records following the war revealed that the Japanese pilots thought that these strange objects were American secret

weapons (Hausdorf, 1998). Likewise, in the years following the fall of the Berlin Wall, it has been revealed that the Soviets thought that many of the UFOs that they were seeing belonged to the Americans or their allies (Ledger, 1998).

There appear to be far more similarities between Canada and the United States than differences upon examination of each country's respective UFO narrative histories. For instance, there are few differences apparent in the early sightings of each nation and in the handling of UFO investigations by each country's government. Furthermore, the predominant type of alien encountered in each nation has followed a similar pattern with cases prior to the 1970s often involving a small humanoid type of extraterrestrial while the ubiquitous 'grey' has most often been seen in both countries in the last three decades (Randles, 1999). A comparison of the 1967 Shag Harbour incident in Canada with the 1947 Roswell case in the United States does yield some notable differences, however, especially concerning the mass media coverage of each incident and its effects on the credibility of the respective cases.

The 1947 Roswell case may be the most documented UFO case in the world. Although the Roswell incident occurred

more than fifty years ago, the bulk of the coverage about it in the mass media has been going on for only the last twenty four years (Randle, 1997). However, even in this limited time, Randle asserts that:

There have been hundreds of magazine articles written about it; reality-based television programs, as well as various news magazines, have discussed the case; and movies have been made about it or have mentioned it frequently.

Several books have been written. (p. 178)

The Roswell case has also made the small city of Roswell, New Mexico world-famous and has itself been turned into a cottage industry:

There are three UFO museums there, though one is outside the city and hardly qualifies. According to various hotel, motel, and restaurant owners and managers, a solid, steady business is now generated by tourism. It's estimated that five million dollars are brought into the local economy because of interest in the UFO crash.

(Randle, 1997, p. 178)

However, as Dean (1998) notes, the enormous media attention and industry that has become Roswell, has so taken on a

life of its own that it has made it easy to forget what originally made Roswell famous. Upon attending the lavish celebrations which marked the fiftieth anniversary of the 'Roswell Incident' (as it is commonly referred to) in the New Mexico city, Dean observed that:

It seemed like the anniversary of nothing because there was commemoration without narrative. That is to say, there were lots of details about bodies and sites and wreckage, lots of stories from highly credible witnesses, but no coherent narrative account of the events that we were supposed to be remembering. UFO researchers debate over when the crash was supposed to have happened: Late June, July 2, July 4? Was there one crash? Two? More than that? Some suggest that there were crashes all over the Southwestern desert. Were there alien bodies? What happened to the wreckage? (Dean, 1998, p. 187)

The enormous media attention that Roswell has received has led to a growing number of people who claim to have witnessed important aspects of the Roswell case. This has led in turn to conflicting stories which has resulted in the narrative becoming increasingly cloudy. Conversely,

the Canadian Shag Harbour case provides a startling contrast to Roswell.

The Shag Harbour incident has a degree of credibility that has eluded other prominent UFO cases such as Roswell. Prominent UFO researcher and nuclear physicist Stanton T. Friedman believes that:

The Shag Harbour incident is very important because it's one of the very few cases where we have some really good indication that something came down close to military systems, was seen by people, and it hasn't yet brought forth the knives from the noisy, nasty negativists that Roswell has, for example. (Ocean Entertainment Ltd., 2000)

Chris Styles, who claims to have witnessed the object that was alleged to have crashed in Shag Harbour points to the fact that, unlike Roswell, the deeper that one delves into the investigation concerning Shag Harbour, the stronger the case looks. Styles claims that:

The Shag Harbour Incident is unique in that it's one of the cases that the more data you learn, the more witnesses, the more documentation, this case does not evaporate. The more you learn, the

stranger the case gets in terms of its unconventional reality. (Ocean Entertainment Ltd., 2000)

Ledger and Styles (2001) believe that the Shag Harbour case is the only government-documented UFO crash in the world.

Ledger and Styles (2001) uncovered official government documents, in various government and university archives, which talk about a UFO impacting the waters of Shag Harbour. One document recovered was a priority message to Canadian Forces Headquarters from the Rescue Coordination Centre in Halifax which claims that a UFO had made impact with the waters of Shag Harbour and named several witnesses including a RCMP corporal. Another official document discovered was a telex from Canadian Maritime Command to the Fleet Diving Unit Atlantic that instructed that divers be sent out to investigate the object in Shag Harbour. On this particular document, the word "UFO" was printed in capital letters and underlined three times. Yet another document - an RCMP X-File - was 'accidentally' discovered in a Nova Scotia university archive in 1993. This document makes mention of a second research effort off Shelburne, Nova Scotia, and suggests that the object being sought in Shelburne is the one that had crashed in Shag Harbour

(presumably, the object moved from Shag Harbour underwater to Shelburne). Unlike the Roswell incident, in which 'uncovered' government documents 'proving' the existence of a crashed UFO and alien bodies have been alleged to be forged (Randle, 1997), the official government documents relating to Shag Harbour have never had their legitimacy questioned due to their discovery in public archives. This single difference, in and of itself, provides the proponents of the Shag Harbour incident with credibility that proponents of Roswell can only dream of.

Another startling difference between the Roswell and Shag Harbour cases is that the latter incident has not provided a 'cottage industry' for Shag Harbour as the Roswell case did for that city. A search on the internet search engine Google yields 62,100 'hits' for websites containing both the words "Roswell" and "UFO" and only 200 'hits' for websites containing the words "Shag Harbour" and "UFO" together. One explanation for this discrepancy may be that the Shag Harbour incident has only been in the public consciousness since 1993 while Roswell became a global popular culture phenomenon fifteen years earlier. However, even taking the difference in time of exposure of these two incidents into account, the more plausible

explanation for the difference in notoriety between Roswell and Shag Harbour may lie in the amount of media coverage that each incident has received, which is reflected, in part, by the number of internet resources that are dedicated to each case. Lipset (1990) may provide as good a reason as any as to why the Roswell incident is so much better known than the Shag Harbour case throughout North America. Lipset argues that Americans know little about Canada because their schools and mass media rarely discuss events that occur north of the border. Canadians, on the other hand, according to Lipset, are exposed to considerable information about Americans and events that occur in the U.S. Therefore, it should be no surprise that even extraordinary events that occur in the U.S., such as the Roswell case, receive far more attention from the approximately three hundred million inhabitants and the American-dominated mass media of North America than a similarly unusual event that takes place in Canada, such as the Shag Harbour incident.

Although the Shag Harbour UFO incident does not appear to have generated the kind of economic windfall as Roswell has, a town in western Canada has managed to tap into the interest in UFOs like no other place in the country has.

St. Paul, Alberta has been the home of the first UFO landing pad in the world since July 2, 1967 (Colombo, 1991; McClelland & Betts, 2001). McClelland and Betts (2001) report that the town of five thousand residents attracts some thirty thousand visitors each year with its fascination with UFOs. Other than the landing pad, the town's businesses have colourful names like *Mama's Flying Saucer Pizza & Breakfast* and the *Galaxy Motel* and the town's mascot is an extraterrestrial named "Zoot" that "looks like a large-eyed blue bug" (p. 44). One of the components of the UFO phenomenon that has been evident in the St. Paul area and elsewhere in western Canada is that of animal mutilations, especially cattle. One well known resident of St. Paul, Fernand Belzil, has investigated more than sixty cattle mutilations in western Canada. According to McClelland and Betts (2001), cattle mutilations have been considered the handiwork of extraterrestrials because:

All the blood has been drained and certain organs surgically removed. The lack of footprints surrounding the carcasses has led some to rule out natural predators and practitioners of satanic rituals. So that leaves, perhaps, creatures from outer space? (p. 44)

Cattle mutilations as a 'subset' of the UFO phenomenon is yet another shared experience that Canada has with the United States (Randle, 1997).

One other subset of the UFO phenomenon is the crop circles that have been encountered throughout the world. Crop circles are complex designs that mysteriously appear in farmers' fields. Intricate in design, these crop circles are often heralded as evidence of UFO activity. Although many crop circles have been discovered to be "hoaxes inspired by the huge publicity for aliens...many strongly believe that they are messages from outerspace warning of ecological disaster" (Randles, 1999, p. 169). Two of the earliest recorded incidents of crop circles occurred in Canada. In August of 1966, crop circles were seen in a farmer's field outside Camrose, Alberta (Colombo, 1991). Although similar circles in fields had previously been attributed to fungal infections, the district agriculturalist concluded that there was no evidence of any fungus growth and said that he had never seen anything like the Camrose crop circles before because of the depression and imprints on the turf (Colombo, 1988). A second case on September 1, 1974 in Langenburg, Saskatchewan, generated more publicity and a more explicit link with UFOs.

According to Colombo (1994), a farmer named Edwin Fuhr reported seeing five metal domes, "arranged in a rough semi-circle, silently spinning a foot or two above the ground" (p. 32). After approaching the landing site, "Fuhr found five rings of depressed grass, swirled in a clockwise direction, some of it scorched or burned" (Colombo, 1994, p. 32). Notably, the Langenburg crop circles were very similar to the types of crop circles that were beginning to be encountered in Britain ten years later (Colombo, 1994). Although crop circles have since been seen throughout the world, it seems as though Canada and Britain have led the way in this particular subset of the UFO phenomenon.

What are called 'crop circles' today have been compared by folklorists to folk stories of 'fairy circles' which are "circular paths in fields and woods made by the trampling of feet, specifically those of the fairy-folk" (Colombo, 1988, p. 315). According to Hefner (2002), fairy lore is most prevalent in Europe and the British Isles. One possible explanation for crop circles being a shared phenomenon of Canada and Britain in particular could be that many Canadian farmers are of British or European heritage and reside in rural areas that may not be as influenced by American culture as urban ones. Perhaps,

they have a greater awareness of the British and European narratives of fairies and fairy circles and are more apt to see and report such phenomena themselves.

The Shag Harbour UFO incident, the UFO landing pad at St. Paul, Alberta and the early crop circles and cattle mutilations that have been seen in western Canada, in particular, are just a few of the contributions that Canada has made to the global UFO phenomenon and illustrates the rich UFO history that we have in this country. Much of Canada's UFO history is similar to and shared with that of the United States, but there are notable differences as well such as those surrounding the mass media coverage of and credibility given to the Shag Harbour incident as opposed to the Roswell incident, and the appearance of crop circles linked to UFOs which occurred much earlier in Canada than elsewhere. As we will see in the next chapter, the comparison between North America and the rest of the world yields further details of interest concerning the UFO phenomenon.

Cross-Cultural Comparison Between Canada and the Rest of the World

Clearly, unidentified flying objects and alien beings have been encountered universally and reported by millions of people. However, the details and interpretations of these sightings can be as different as the people who see them. While one person in Canada may see strange looking figures through the window of an object in the sky and interpret this as extraterrestrials exploring earth and its peoples, someone else in Puerto Rico may see the same event and believe that Chupacabras are about to be dropped on them to suck the blood out of their lovable pet. Yet another person in Brazil may believe that the devil is coming to get them while a Maori in New Zealand may attribute such sightings to evil spirits. Although differences in interpretation exist, believers in extraterrestrial visitation point out that there are similarities in UFO and alien contacts throughout the world as well. What will become clear throughout this chapter is that UFO and alien encounters do not occur in a vacuum; other events, whether political, religious or to do with popular culture, may influence the interpretation or explanation of a UFO event. I will explore both the

similarities and differences in UFO and alien narratives throughout the world in the present chapter while demonstrating just how complicated gaining an understanding of this entire issue can be.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, there are many similarities but also a few differences in the UFO culture between Canada and its closest neighbour, the United States. Even within Canada, however, there is a decided lack of uniformity concerning the interpretation of UFOs and aliens. For instance, two of the world's most notable religious movements connected to belief in extraterrestrial life (also derisively referred to as 'UFO cults') have taken up residence in the province of Quebec: the Order of the Solar Temple and the Raelians. The Order of the Solar Temple was based almost exclusively in Quebec, Switzerland, France and Martinique (Sloan, 2001). The movement is best known for having spawned several mass suicides and murders among members and former members in Quebec and Switzerland between 1994 and 1997, but is also known for its belief that, upon death, members would be taken to a new world on the star 'Sirius' (BBC News, 2000). The Raelians are another group that has deep roots in Quebec. This New Age UFO movement is one of the few

remaining and most active UFO cults still in existence which is likely due, in large part, to the lack of an apocalyptic philosophy in this movement. Rutkowski (1999) reports that:

According to the Raelians, aliens are really the "Elohim" referred to in some biblical teachings, meaning literally, "those from the sky." They created humans in a laboratory on their own planet and put us on Earth. We accidentally gained intelligence through interbreeding, and became self-conscious. The aliens left us to our own affairs, but they occasionally send messengers to check on us, such as Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha ... Raelians believe that all of the miracles and visitations recorded in the Bible were performed or caused by aliens and their UFOs. (pp. 224-225)

The founder of the Raelian movement is a former French race car driver born as Claude Vorhilon, but now known simply as Rael. He is considered to be the latest alien messenger and currently resides in Quebec - one of the major home bases for the movement. The province's ties to these two major New Age extraterrestrial-related movements is

certainly unique within Canadian UFO culture and likely has much to do with the shared culture and language that Quebec has with countries such as France and Switzerland. Just as English-speaking Canadians have been exposed to and affected by the American, and to a lesser extent British, UFO culture with the influence of the American and British media in Canada, it should be no surprise that segments of the French-speaking population of the world have been influenced in a similar way. The impact of largely francophone New Age movements such as the Order of the Solar Temple and the Raelians is most evident among French-speaking populations such as that of Quebec (Davis, 2001).

New Age movements such as the Order of the Solar Temple and Raelians are a facet of the UFO and alien phenomenon that transcends borders. In the opening chapter, I introduced the notion of a global UFO culture and discussed some of the 'defining' or seminal UFO events in Canada, the United States and Brazil. These events have become well-known around the world and have transcended borders themselves. However, it is not only in these three countries where such events have taken place. An examination of UFO narratives from around the world reveals several defining UFO moments in many countries which evoke

great discussion among believers and skeptics alike universally. These defining UFO incidents, in and of themselves, may tell us more about this global phenomenon than anything else.

In recent years, Mexico seems to have become obsessed with UFOs. Although the history of contact in Mexico goes back to 1883 when an astronomer produced the first known UFO on film (Randles, 1999), it was a series of sightings in 1991 that appears to have provoked the recent craze over UFOs in this country. In particular, the defining UFO incident in Mexico seems to have occurred on July 11, 1991, in the midst of a solar eclipse in Mexico City, when a metallic object appeared. This shiny object was captured on film by dozens of observers (Day, 1997; Randles, 1999). A second key moment in Mexico's UFO history occurred just months later on Mexico's Independence Day when there were more mass UFO sightings. According to Day (1997), there have been mass UFO sightings on each Independence Day since 1991. The annual Independence Day UFO sightings in Mexico could be seen as a way for Mexicans to distinguish themselves from the United States and could be considered as an issue of national pride for many Mexicans. Although these events do not contain actual encounters or even

sightings of aliens such as the Shag Harbour, Roswell or Varginha, Brazil incidents, they have managed to capture the imagination of many Mexicans and others around the world to the same extent. These UFO encounters are also representative of Mexico's UFO history in that there have been many sightings of UFOs but few alien contacts. Furthermore, the few alien contacts that have been reported have tended to involve humanoid type extraterrestrials rather than the 'grey' that is so common elsewhere in North America (Randles, 1999). As Randles (1999) points out, this is rather remarkable considering that Mexico "borders to the north with the most abduction-saturated nation on Earth, the USA" (p. 106). However, it is possible that Mexico is less influenced by the United States' popular cultural fascination with alien contacts because of language differences between the two nations.

Language is obviously the single most important mediator in the transmission of culture and is likely the single greatest factor that accounts for the many similarities in UFO narratives between nations and regions that share a common language. Not surprisingly, accounts from English-speaking nations such as Britain, Australia and New Zealand bear more similarities than differences to

those of Canada and the United States. As such, the narratives surrounding alien experience seem to be largely grounded within a language community as opposed to geographic proximity between national cultures. It would seem that the linguistic links between narratives is not only determined by a shared language through which experience is narrated, but also by a linguistically-based cultural set of interpretative skills.

For example, Britain's seminal UFO event, the Rendlesham Forest incident of December 1980, is a cross-national example of the transference that occurs between the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Over the years, British UFO experiences have tended to bear more similarity to that of the Americans with the grey alien gaining popularity since 1987 when Whitley Streiber's text Communion was published coupled with a prior history of alien abductions (Randles, 1999). Coincidentally, the Rendlesham Forest UFO was witnessed by both British civilians and American military personnel stationed on a base in the area. There were multiple sightings with the first one occurring on December 26 when several people saw and radar tracked an unidentified flying object crashing into the Rendlesham Forest (Birnes & Burt, 2000; Randles, 1997). A pair of

U.S. Air Force patrol men even came face to face with the landed UFO and reported sensing a distortion in time and space in its immediate vicinity (which is said to be a common occurrence during close contacts with UFOs and aliens and known as the 'Oz effect') (Randles, 1997, 1999). Physical evidence was discovered after this first sighting with triangular imprints and radiation levels ten times higher than normal detected on the ground where the UFO was said to have landed (Randles, 1997). However, the detection of this evidence was only the prelude of this infamous incident.

On the night of December 27-28, 1980, strange lights were once again seen in Rendlesham Forest and even more American military personnel were on hand to greet them. According to Randles (1997), some of the men even reported having seen "small aliens with large heads and big eyes floating in the woods" (p. 96). A trail of paperwork in the form of U.S. military memos which reported the sighting of these strange lights documented the events. Furthermore, an audiotape was made by one of the senior officers during the occurrence of this second incident, although it was not released to the public until some years later (Birnes & Burt, 2000; Rayl, 1996). In fact, much of

the official documentation of the Rendlesham Forest incident was either not fully released by the American military or was released instead by the British government and, like Roswell and Shag Harbour, interest in the case became more intense only some years after it originally occurred (Birnes & Burt, 2000). This 'British Roswell' appears to be more credible than the original Roswell but contains some of the same flaws (which notably happen to be absent from the Canadian Shag Harbour incident). These flaws include inconsistencies among witnesses, especially concerning whether alien beings were actually sighted or not. There is also some question as to whether at least one of the key witnesses who has stepped forward could even have been present that night (Birnes & Burt, 2000). However, the evidence that appears to be beyond dispute includes some of the official documents that have been released as well as the audiotape recorded by then Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt, who was later promoted and is considered to have an impeccable reputation. His audiotape alone provides a chilling account of what he believes to have seen that night (Birnes & Burt, 2000). However, the skeptics question whether all of the individuals involved on both nights only saw the lights of

a lighthouse in the area. Furthermore, this incident occurred at a time when the Soviets had just invaded Afghanistan and relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Bloc were as icy as ever. This fact has led some researchers to believe that the American military could have been conducting top secret tests of new technology that even their own officers on the ground at Rendlesham Forest were unaware of (Birnes & Burt, 2000). Nevertheless, the 'British Roswell' has only served to fuel the great interest in UFOs which exists in the British mass media and speaks to the cross-national 'contamination' between American and British UFO mythology.

Australia has been a hotbed for UFO activity over the years. Randles (1999) points out that Australia's pattern of UFO contacts "mirrors the cultural progress of Australia as it has gradually developed from a British colony to have stronger ties with Asia and the U.S.A." (p. 63). As in the U.S. and Britain, the late 1980s saw a surge of abduction accounts and a shift in the type of alien encountered from the humanoid type to the 'grey' (Randles, 1999). Like Canada and the United States, a Freedom of Information Act was passed by the Australian government in 1982 which has provided much new information to UFO researchers in that

country. Unlike Canada and the U.S., however, the Australian government has been seen to be more open to investigation of UFOs. Randles (1999) reports that an office was even turned over by the Australian government to a noted UFOlogist who was allowed to copy all of its files and encouraged to publish them for the UFO community.

There are two particularly noteworthy UFO cases from Australia which have received worldwide attention. The first occurred on the evening of October 21, 1978 when a pilot named Frederick Valentich disappeared while flying his single-engine Cessna 182 airplane from Victoria over the Bass Strait on his way to King Island (Clark, 1998). His radio conversation with an air traffic controller has been widely played on television since that time and provides a compelling account of an encounter with some kind of metallic object. After declaring that the object was continually hovering over his plane and that it was not an aircraft that he had ever seen before, Valentich fell silent and all that could be heard for the next seventeen seconds was a loud, metallic scraping sound. That was the last that anyone heard from the pilot (Clark, 1998). Clark (1998) reports that there were many UFO sightings in the area that day and that the popular theory is that

Valentich's disappearance was the result of an encounter with a UFO. Neither his plane nor his body have ever been found despite a number of searches and a large amount of media attention which has been accorded to the case. This case bears some resemblance to the disappearance of an American military squadron of five aircraft plus a large seaplane over the Bermuda Triangle in the 1940s (Jung, 1978) in that that disappearance has been attributed by some to UFOs as well. However, while some convincing alternative explanations have been provided to explain the latter case, there have been few such explanations for the Australian one.

The second noteworthy Australian case occurred in 1993 when a woman named Kelly Cahill and her husband were involved in a UFO encounter that is quite similar to many that have been reported in Canada, the U.S. and Great Britain. While driving on a lonely road in the early hours of August 8, the Cahills believed that they were approaching a strange object in the sky. On two occasions, as they were about to approach the object, it suddenly disappeared. When they reached their home, they noticed that the journey had taken longer than it should have (i.e. there was 'missing time'), Kelly Cahill experienced some

strange physical effects such as a triangular scar near her navel and an infection of the womb and she also had strange dreams and flashbacks in the following weeks. What differentiates this case from the thousands of other such incidents reported is that there appear to be two other independent sets of witnesses to this event. Cahill, under hypnotic regression, was able to distinguish the license plate of one of the other cars, whose occupants were later tracked down and who confirmed Cahill's story.

Furthermore, this second set of witnesses described yet another vehicle at the scene which contained a single male occupant who has also been tracked down by researchers and confirmed the events in question (Randle & Estes, 1997; Randles, 1997, 1999). Randles (1999) also reports that "unexpected magnetic deviations were recorded on a compass" (p. 53) in the area of the encounter. This case, with its independent witnesses providing strong supporting evidence, could be considered to be the Australian Shag Harbour or Roswell. However, what this and other Australian cases lack that has commonly been documented in Canada, the U.S. and Britain, is an uncooperative military which could be a result of the Australian government's relative openness to the UFO phenomenon. Nevertheless, Australia's UFO history

bears many similarities to that of their English-speaking brethren which suggests many of the same popular cultural and media influences (e.g. Communion) in this country as has been seen in North America and Britain.

Interestingly, Australia's closest neighbour, New Zealand, does not have as strong a history with UFO encounters as does its neighbour. Randles (1999) theorizes that this difference between the two nations may be due to New Zealand's not having moved as far away from its cultural roots as have the Australians. In other words, New Zealand has not established the same close ties with the United States nor has it been affected as much by American culture as the Australians have. This cultural distance has been reflected in New Zealand's UFO experiences. There have been few reported alien abductions or contacts of any kind (Randles, 1999). However, there have been two UFO experiences of note in this country. The New Zealand equivalent to Shag Harbour or Roswell occurred on New Year's Eve, 1978, when a television crew saw strange lights while flying in a cargo plane over Kaikoura while re-creating a similar mid-air UFO encounter from ten days earlier (Clark, 1998; Randles, 1999). The objects were detected by radar and captured by the TV crew on film,

which led to massive media attention throughout the world. However, despite much analysis of the film and many theories as to what the objects could be, there has been no definitive explanation given to account for these strange objects (Clark, 1998).

The second notable New Zealand incident demonstrates the importance of cultural and linguistic difference in the interpretation of UFO encounters. Randles (1999) reports that this incident, which occurred in February 1969, involved a native Maori. He witnessed a white glow coming from some bushes and upon investigation:

Here stood several, tall entities with pale skins, thin faces and long, blond hair. They are apparent to us as Nordics, but to the poor Maori they were terrifying. Retreating to a safe distance, he then gave these 'visitors' a sight they were unlikely to forget - a special version of his tribal greeting. This consists of dancing around making 'gestures' and then urinating in a circle. The ritual is meant to ward off evil spirits, which is what he believed these 'aliens' to be. (Randles, 1999, pp. 69-70)

Clearly then, the Maori did not see this event as an encounter with a UFO or aliens but it has been documented by at least one UFO researcher as a UFO and alien sighting. Was this really a sighting of a spaceship and extraterrestrial creatures and was not seen as such by the witness because of his lack of exposure to the tabloids and media reports that devote so much attention to this topic? Or was it actually an encounter with evil spirits as the Maori believed which was misinterpreted by English-language UFO researchers? A report such as this further demonstrates the complexity of the whole issue of UFOs and aliens and the inherent difficulties in trying to understand the strange sights that people from all over the world are encountering.

As popular culture has greatly influenced the development of the UFO and alien encounter narrative in the English-speaking world, the political climate of the time has been a strong influence in Eastern Europe. Under the communist governments of the old Soviet bloc, the official government position on UFOs was not unlike that of Canada or the United States. Officially, the governments had no interest in UFOs with the Hungarian government, in 1954, claiming that all reports of UFOs originated in capitalist

countries and were thus considered to be capitalist propaganda (Ramet, 1998). Unofficially, however, the communist governments of Eastern Europe, led by the Soviet Union, were keenly interested in UFOs. The Soviets even conducted their own investigation of the Roswell UFO incident (Ramet, 1998) though this may have been due to concerns that the Roswell crash was a result of American military tests of top secret aircraft gone awry.

According to Ramet (1998), the Soviets used stories of UFOs to cover up incompetence or negligence on the part of their own officials and citizens. In 1961, an explosion destroyed a factory which manufactured armoured tanks.

Ramet (1998) writes that:

At first, Soviet authorities blamed the explosion on US operatives, but later, local witnesses promulgated a UFO theory, blaming the explosion on a supposed "ball of fire" which allegedly hovered above the scene for a few minutes after the explosion to make sure that its mistake had been accomplished. That the UFO story could protect factory workers from charges of gross negligence, while avoiding unnecessary

provocation to the US seems rather obvious. (p. 84)

The interplay between politics and UFOs in the Soviet Union was especially evident in 1983 with several notable incidents. In May 1983, a UFO that was tracked by radar crossed into secret Soviet airspace near Gorki and stayed for some time, even after being warned to leave (Randles, 1999). No shots were fired at this object. On August 26, the Soviets dispatched six fighter aircraft to intercept an intruding aircraft near a top secret submarine base on the Latvian coast. Upon firing heat-seeking missiles, five of the six Soviet aircraft exploded, presumably due to incompetence or negligence of some kind. A story that the aircraft were firing at a UFO was floated to deflect responsibility for the downed Soviet craft. Later, the story was changed with the disaster being attributed to ball lightning (Ramet, 1998). Ramet (1998) concluded that "two cover-ups are better than one, insofar as the second cover story makes the first cover more believable" (p. 84). Ironically, only six days after that event, on September 1, it is reported that what was thought to be a UFO (Randles, 1999) crossed Soviet military airspace over Sakhalin Island:

The same procedure was followed (as in the May incident), but this time a Soviet fighter did shoot the 'UFO' out of the darkness. Sadly it was not a UFO at all but a Korean Airlines Boeing 747, full of civilians, that had strayed off-course. The tragedy brought short-lived condemnation from the world. Was that because the UFO connotations of this case were known to intelligence agencies, if not to the grieving relatives or the world at large? (p. 85)

The Soviet UFO narrative is certainly unique in that UFOs are said to have been used to concoct cover stories for the incompetence of the country's officials and citizens while a potentially 'real' UFO story was covered up despite causing some worldwide tensions because the truth would be even more difficult to accept!

Politics have played a role in the reporting of UFO encounters in what is now the former Soviet Union. Before the fall of communism, UFO sightings were generally frowned upon by the Soviets. After a brief period in the mid 1960s, when researchers were allowed to discuss and investigate UFO sightings after a spate of them in Eastern Europe, the USSR and China, Ramet (1998) argues that "UFO

sightings could be mentioned in the Soviet media only to debunk them" (p. 86). After the fall of communism, many previously suppressed or unreported UFO sightings became known and the fascination with UFOs in this area began to take off. In fact, one UFO incident has become known as the 'Russian Roswell' (Birnes & Burt, 2000).

According to Birnes and Burt (2000) the Russian Roswell involved:

the 1991 pursuit of a cylindrical UFO by Russian fighters and the object's crash landing at the edge of the Tien Shan mountain range in central Asia. The pursuit, the crash, and the near decade's worth of attempts to reach the site and retrieve the debris are one of the most exciting stories to come out of the annals of Russian UFO experiences. (p. 56)

The object in question was allegedly tracked by radar and chased by military aircraft which experienced strange mechanical and communication failures during their chase of the odd craft. After giving up pursuit of the UFO, the object continued to be tracked on radar before eventually just disappearing. As in the other 'Roswells', some time passed (in this case, one month) before stories of an

actual crash of an alien craft started to spread among residents somewhat near to the alleged crash site which was in an extremely remote region. As in the Shag Harbour incident, expeditions were undertaken to try to find evidence of the downed object - one in 1992 and another in 1998 - but no physical evidence has ever been recovered. From the 1992 expedition are accounts of an encounter with a strange looking crashed object which emitted great amounts of radiation and "its own highly charged force field" (Birnes & Burt, 2000, p. 64). Photos were reportedly taken by expedition team members but they were overexposed due to the high levels of radiation. Likewise, videotape of the scene was also destroyed due to incredibly strong magnetic and electrical fields. The 1998 expedition is most notable for not having recovered any tangible physical evidence. When expedition members arrived at the site, the object described six years earlier had disappeared, as had the radiation and strong magnetic and electrical fields and the area appeared to have been scrubbed clean (Birnes & Burt, 2000).

What was this extraordinary UFO? As the site is close to the Russian-Chinese border, one theory, according to Birnes and Burt (2000) is that it was a Russian

surveillance device used to track Chinese troop movements that the Russian government desperately needed to recover.

Another similar theory is that the UFO was:

An American unmanned surveillance probe that the Russians had actually managed to divert and force to crash into the mountain. If so, it would have been a treasure trove indeed, one that the military would have wanted to keep secret.

(Birnes & Burt, 2000, p. 74)

As in the Shag Harbour, Roswell and Rendlesham Forest UFO incidents, an explanation that is tied to the military has been floated here. However, there has been no 'smoking gun' uncovered in this case such as official government documents implicating the government in some way as there has been with the Canadian, American and British 'Roswells'. It is interesting that the frequent mixing of politics and UFOs in this region is evident in this incident as well.

The political climate in China has had a substantial effect on that nation's UFO history. While the years following the second World War saw an enormous surge of UFO sightings and interest in many parts of the world, UFOs were considered to be an inappropriate topic of discussion

under the Marxist government of China. Hausdorf (1998) writes:

On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong announced the birth of the People's Republic of China. From then on, Marxist ideology ruled supreme, dominating the lives and thoughts of the Chinese people. This strictly materialistic doctrine permitted no preoccupation with borderline scientific pursuits. Research into the phenomenon of UFOs was considered to be such a pursuit. The Marxist view of the world acknowledged neither God nor extraterrestrials: Everything was rationally explicable and of this world. (p. 148)

According to Hausdorf, in the years following Zedong's death in 1976, the Chinese government was still very hostile to the subject of UFOs and considered them to be "at best a fictional creation of the imperialist warmongers, who used the supposed threat of alien invasion as another reason for establishing horrendous defense systems" (p. 148). Within a couple of years, however, this approach to the unexplained changed when an article about UFOs appeared in a major Beijing newspaper and the hunger

for information about UFOs and aliens surfaced in China. Reported sightings of UFOs poured in from all over the country and there was so much interest in the topic that the Chinese government was even forced to ask the University of Wuhan to start a UFO study group (Hausdorf, 1998).

Since the late 1970s, the Chinese government has been very forthcoming in providing information concerning sightings by military personnel and revealing the information that they have collected on the topic. Reports have surfaced from the 1960s and early seventies of military encounters with UFOs that were officially explained as being North Korean, American or Russian aircraft that were illegally in Chinese territory. The attribution of UFOs as enemy aircraft, as in the case of the 'Foo Fighters' of World War II, has certainly not been an uncommon phenomenon and in many such incidents in China, it appears that the government truly believed this to be the case as well. Doubts about the origin of the strange objects that the Chinese military were seeing only came about in the early 1970s when the government began to consider that these cases were simply too numerous and abnormal for earthly enemies to be wholly responsible. It

was at this point that the government secretly started to investigate UFOs under the auspices of the military although, publicly, UFOs were still a forbidden topic of discussion (Hausdorf, 1998).

The types of cases that have been reported in China bear many similarities to those which have been reported elsewhere. For example, the disturbance of electrical systems on airplanes and other vehicles during encounters with UFOs has been a common feature throughout the world including China. The types of objects that have been seen in China are not unusual either with many glowing lights, silvery and shiny objects, and cigar- and disk-shaped objects being encountered (Day, 1997; Hausdorf, 1998). The types of aliens that have been seen are not the 'greys' that have been commonly sighted in North America, Britain and Australia but the humanoid types that have been commonly seen elsewhere in the world and that were more frequently seen in the aforementioned regions prior to the publication of Whitley Streiber's 1987 text Communion. Alien abductions, such as the incidents described by Streiber, are also rare in China (Randles, 1999), which might suggest, not surprisingly, that Streiber's text has made little impact in that country.

There were two rather unusual UFO incidents that took place in China in the 1970s which stand out. Both incidents occurred during the airing of open-air movies and, in each case, the UFOs were witnessed by large groups of people. The first of these incidents occurred in 1977 during the screening of a Romanian film when two large UFOs suddenly came out of the sky and flew just over the crowd of three thousand people. The objects, which were a bright, glowing orange, came so close to the crowd that the intense heat from them could be felt and a deep hum could be heard from the strange craft. Panic and a stampede ensued which resulted in the death of two children (Day, 1997; Hausdorf, 1998). The second such incident occurred a little over a year later when soldiers and fighter pilots who were gathered to watch an open-air movie observed a strange, large object fly across the sky. According to Hausdorf (1998), what makes this sighting so credible was that this object was seen by a large crowd of military officers, many of whom were specially trained to identify any aircraft or anomalies in the sky that were known to exist at that time. These officers, however, considered this aircraft to be unlike anything that they knew of and

could not come up with any plausible explanation concerning this craft's origin.

China's UFO history also includes an alleged 'Roswell-esque' incident. However, China's Roswell occurred more than 12,000 years ago. Like the original Roswell and other such defining UFO events, this story did not come to light until much time had passed; in this case, the story did not become known until the 1960s when it was reported in a Soviet science magazine (Hausdorf, 1998). The magazine reported that in 1938, a Chinese archaeologist found a series of graves in the Bayan Kara Ula region. Upon excavation of these graves, the remains of beings with very large skulls and tiny bodies measuring no more than four feet long were found. According to Hausdorf (1998):

The anatomy of these creatures consisted of a very slender structure, with narrow shoulders and thin extremities. According to the expedition's report, it was as if these creatures had had rickets, or their skeletal structure was related to that of flying mammals or birds whose limbs are built to withstand great stress. To this day, extremely ancient legends circulate in this part of China about small-bodied yellow beings

said to have appeared out of the clouds, and who, because of their strange, ugly appearance and bizarre behavior, were attacked and in large part murdered by the local inhabitants. (p. 31)

Also found at the scene were stone disks with spiraling grooves that spelled out a message that was said to be not native to this planet (Hausdorf, 1998). Later expeditions would uncover 716 such disks which were examined for many years by a small group of scientists, led by Professor Tsum Um Nui, who would claim, in 1962, that they had decoded the messages contained on these disks.

The decoded messages told a story of a group of extraterrestrials whose spaceship crashed in the Bayan Kara Ula region 12,000 years ago. Most of the aliens had survived the crash but their spaceship could not be repaired and they were stranded in this desolate region. The local inhabitants, known as the Ham, did not understand and were fearful of these extraterrestrial beings which led to many of the aliens being massacred (Hausdorf, 1998). Hausdorf (1998) reports that even within the group of scientists who decoded the messages on the disks, there is some disagreement concerning who exactly put the messages there. Some believed that a small group of aliens survived

the massacre and left the messages themselves while others believed that the Ham may have left these primitive messages, either by themselves or with some help from some of the surviving aliens. There were even disagreements as to whose bodies were found in the graves at Bayan Kara Ula as the Ham were of a short stature themselves and it could have been their remains found in these graves. (This conjecture of just whose bodies were found is similar to the controversy in Roswell, New Mexico concerning whether there were aliens, humans or dummies found at a crash site in that famous incident.) Hausdorf suggests that the bodies could have been human-alien hybrids, much like the present day stories of aliens abducting humans for the purposes of stealing sperm and ova in order to create a hybrid race.

The one thing that could be agreed upon by all of the scientists in the group that discovered the disks was that the messages contained on the disks told a story of an alien spaceship crash in Bayan Kara Ula 12,000 years ago. With all of the political upheaval in China over the last few decades, Hausdorf (1998) reports that the disks have disappeared, reappeared and been hidden during this time and that it is not entirely clear just where they are

presently. The research papers of Professor Tsum Um Nui and his group have also vanished. Like so many of the other significant UFO and alien cases from around the globe, the hard evidence has been difficult to find. As for the aliens themselves that were alleged to have crashed 12,000 years ago in China, there are reports of 120 dwarfish beings (between two feet one inch and three feet ten inches in height) living in an isolated area not far from the Bayan Kara Ula mountain region (Hausdorf, 1998). However, there is no evidence that these beings are related to or descendants of some extraterrestrial race although, as in any good UFO and alien narrative, there is much conjecture concerning their connection to aliens.

A cross-cultural examination of UFO and alien narratives from around the world demonstrates just how much complexity there is to this entire issue. People from all over the world are encountering strange sights, and in many instances strange creatures, but attempting to delineate a precise pattern to all of these encounters is frustrating at best. Common sense would suggest that it is unlikely that millions of people from around the world are delusional or pathological. Spanos, Cross, Dickson and DuBreuil (1993) found that people who had seen UFOs or even

claimed to have been abducted by aliens did not score any lower on indexes of mental health or intelligence than did people who had not had any UFO experiences. This brings us back to the question of what are people seeing and why are they seeing what they are?

I would argue that witnesses to UFO events are definitely seeing and experiencing something. The narratives of witnesses are influenced by a variety of factors including their historical and cultural positioning. For instance, the type of alien being encountered tends to be different depending on where and when the extraterrestrial was seen. Little people, or fairy-like creatures, were often seen prior to the twentieth century and even in substantial numbers until the 1970s throughout the world. However, as media depictions of aliens have changed to reflect the 'grey' alien, the fairy-like creatures are rarely seen anymore. Europeans tend to see humanoid and Nordic-like extraterrestrials more than anywhere else in the world but since Communion was published in 1987, the 'greys' have taken over as the dominant entity even in Europe (Randles, 1999). Monster-like aliens, such as the ones allegedly seen in Varginha, Brazil, tend to be encountered more often in South America

than anywhere else in the world. In a nation such as Brazil, with its deep Roman Catholic and syncretic religious roots, perhaps the monster-like aliens are seen as the devil as was the case among some witnesses to the Varginha incident (see Introduction). Furthermore, Randles (1999) writes that the South American media tend to report more fantastic accounts of UFO and alien tales than anywhere else so the monster-like extraterrestrials may better fit the narrative in that part of the world. The appearance of the monster-like Chupacabras in Spanish-speaking communities in the United States but not as much elsewhere in that country may be testament to the power of language and culture in influencing UFO and alien narratives. In the first half of the twentieth century especially, it seems that interpretations of alien visitors appeared to be influenced by ancient myths, legends and folk stories, such as the fairy-like entities that were often seen. Since that time, it appears that the aliens that people are seeing and describing in narratives of their experiences are more strongly influenced by the presentation of such entities in television, movies and books (Randle & Estes, 1997). Also, it appears that the greater the distance culturally that a region is from the

hub of UFO and alien activity, the United States, the larger and more prominent are the differences in the narratives of witnessing.

Alien abduction of humans has been one of the hottest topics within the spectrum of the UFO mystery. Cultural influences may be most noticeable in narratives of alien abduction. Olmos (1994) outlines four distinct periods that are evident in the development of alien abduction narratives. Olmos sees the first or beginning period as occurring from 1967 to 1969 and includes the publication of a two-part article in *Look* magazine on the Barney and Betty Hill case, which sold millions of copies, as well as a book on that same case. Furthermore, a book was published on the Antonio Villas Boas case from Brazil during this period. The second period, comprising the years 1974 to 1978 is called the 'expansion' period by Olmos, and includes the widely viewed NBC movie about the Hill case as well as other notable abduction cases. One of these, about logger Travis Walton, received huge publicity in the American tabloid press and was later made into a feature film. Considerably more people in the West were exposed to the concept of alien abduction during this expansion period. Olmos' next period is termed the 'explosion'

period and includes the launching of many books on the topic of alien abduction throughout North America. Olmos makes special note of a book during this period by Bud Hopkins, who coined the phrase 'missing time' that is such a key element of alien abduction cases. Finally, Olmos calls the period from 1983 to 1985 the 'saturation' period in which "without any spectacular new input, the market saturates, the popular furor dies down, 'ordinary' abductions are no longer news, and mass media interest declines" (p. 100). Olmos calls this the end of the first cycle and theorizes that abduction reports "would increase considerably" (p. 100) with the publication in 1987 of Communion and Bud Hopkins' best-seller Intruders. Olmos' predictions have certainly proven to be correct and, clearly, he sees the alien abduction phenomenon to have been influenced by popular culture more than any other factor.

With the statistics that had been compiled until 1987, Olmos (1994) discovered that 50.5% of all recorded alien abduction cases had occurred in North America, while 63.7% of worldwide abductions occurred in English-speaking countries. Randles' (1999) updated analysis would indicate that not much has changed in the years since 1987. No

country even comes close to the United States in numbers of alleged alien abductions. Brazil and Argentina are next in line followed by the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. These six nations, including four predominantly English-speaking countries and two South American neighbours, have accounted for the vast majority of reported alien abductions in the world. French, German and Spanish-speaking (other than Argentina) regions of the world have relatively few alien abductions while the phenomenon is almost non-existent in Asia and most of Africa. Of note is that African alien abductions have occurred mostly in South Africa and Zimbabwe, which are two countries that have English as an official language and which have been influenced culturally by Europe and the United States to a greater degree than most other African countries (Randles, 1999).

UFOs have been seen all over the world and there tends to be little regional variation concerning what is being seen in the sky. Bright glowing lights are seen in Canada, China and Namibia. Variation in the types of objects being seen over time is more evident. Whereas cigar-shaped UFOs were commonly seen fifty years ago, other UFOs such as the triangular-shaped ones which provoked a wave of excitement

in Belgium in the late 1980s (Birnes & Burt, 2000) have been more commonly seen in recent years. As mentioned in the opening chapter, UFOs are 'unidentified flying objects'. This does not automatically make them alien spaceships but does leave them open to interpretation which, as I have attempted to show, creates its own set of problems.

Conclusion

The fascination with UFOs and aliens is truly a global phenomenon. While sightings of strange lights and objects in the sky have been reported for as long as humans have inhabited the earth, the modern interpretation of these strange phenomena as alien spacecraft has only been evident for the last century or so. I have argued that the mass media's role in this phenomenon has been crucial. The emergence of the modern media over the last century has run in parallel with the growing interest in UFOs and extraterrestrials. From Orson Welles' radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds* in 1938 which terrorized many Americans to the 1975 film about Betty and Barney Hill and the 1987 text by Whitley Streiber, Communion, which have fuelled the concept of visiting 'greys' abducting humans in order to create a hybrid race, the mass media has been central to the creation of UFO and alien encounter narratives.

I have also argued that there is a religious element to narratives surrounding UFOs and aliens. While traditional religious beliefs have waned in the last half century in many parts of the world, belief in the reality of extraterrestrial visitation to earth has grown significantly. From the contactees of the 1950s to many

abductees of the 1980s and 1990s, a benevolent view of aliens exists among many peoples. Those who hold a more positive view of aliens believe that they have come to earth to bring messages of what will happen to our planet if we continue on a self-destructive path. The aliens are concerned and they want to save humanity and if they must go to extraordinary measures to do so, including kidnapping and forcing humans to reproduce with them in order to populate earth with a superior hybrid race, then the ends justify the means. Belief in a traditional deity is not helping humanity but these alien beings are and belief in them becomes a new religion. This is not the viewpoint of many abductees, however, who are terrorized of the aliens who they see as trying to take over Earth and impose their own will on humans. In these cases, aliens are often equated to monsters or the devil.

Many Canadians possess these varying beliefs in UFOs and aliens. The Canadian UFO and alien narrative is as compelling as any. Our proximity to the centre of the mass media, the United States, and their fascination with the extraterrestrial phenomenon has heavily influenced Canada's UFO and alien history. The close relationship which the Canadian and American governments share with respect to

economic, military and foreign policy is seen by many to extend to the issue of UFOs. Many people in both countries believe that there has been a similar spirit of co-operation in covering up the 'truth' about the origins of UFOs. Parallels are seen in the American and Canadian governments' response to such seminal UFO events as Roswell and Shag Harbour. In particular, there are questions surrounding the role of the military in each of these seminal UFO incidents - in the case of Shag Harbour, both the Canadian and American militaries were allegedly involved - and a trail of government documents that have not been easy to unearth surround the mystery. The responses of the respective governments have only served to further raise suspicions concerning the origins and objectives of the aliens.

I have argued that UFO and alien encounter narratives worldwide have not evolved in a vacuum. Religious, political and popular cultural events influence the interpretation and explanation of UFO incidents. People from all over the world have seen unusual objects and lights in the sky and many have observed strange beings as well. In some countries such as Russia and China, there have been times when discussing such sightings have been

taboo and other times when these governments have been seemingly more open to the idea of extraterrestrial visitation than those of Canada or the United States. I have attempted to show that the interplay of language and culture in the transmission and interpretation of UFO and alien incidents explains similarities and differences in UFO and alien encounter narratives more than geographic proximity. For example, the French-speaking regions of Quebec and Switzerland, while separated by a great geographical distance, have had similar experiences with UFO religious movements such as the Order of the Solar Temple. Also, chupacabras are not seen in Calgary or Chicago but they have allegedly been encountered in Puerto Rico, Mexico and Spanish-speaking communities in the United States. Chupacabras are considered by many to be of alien origin but descriptions of these creatures vary widely. Dr. John Perivolaris, a Latin American specialist at the University of Manchester, claims that:

Whenever there is a sighting, people have great difficulty in defining precisely what this creature is, whether it is reptile, bird, mammal, or other creature, or insect. That is a projection, I think, of the uncertainty of

Hispanic identity. Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, in particular and I believe it is among these communities that the most sightings have occurred, are most insecure about the borders between the United States and Latin America. (BBC Production for TLC, 2001).

Clearly, the interpretation of UFO events is affected by a variety of factors that demonstrate the complexity of the entire issue.

As the twenty-first century gets underway, the interest in UFOs does not appear to be decreasing. Reported UFO sightings in Canada increased by 42% in 2001 compared to the previous year (Trepanier, 2002). At times of political crisis, such as during World War II and at the height of fears of nuclear annihilation in the 1950s, reported sightings of UFOs and aliens tend to increase dramatically. This may be the case because at times of high stress, people could be looking for a diversion of the type that a UFO brings or they could have the feeling that the UFOs and aliens are sending messages that they are concerned about what is happening on earth and would like to help in some way. With the war on terrorism being waged by the United States and their allies on the heels of the

terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington, and growing unrest in the Middle East, it should not be surprising that reported sightings in Canada showed such a large increase in 2001 and we might expect similar increases worldwide in the years to come.

Within Canada, Vancouver and Ottawa had more reported UFO sightings than anywhere else in the country (The Ottawa Citizen, 2002; Trepanier, 2002). The Ottawa area has been a hotbed of UFO sightings over the years which could be due to a sense of insecurity that citizens may feel living in a political capital which they feel could be a target for some kind of sinister activity, whether it is at the hands of human or alien enemies. Citizens of a coastal city such as Vancouver might also feel vulnerable to enemy attack. As was indicated in the third chapter, a disproportionate number of UFO sightings have been reported in the Maritimes as well (Ledger & Styles, 2001), so investigating whether citizens in capital and coastal areas in other countries report more UFO activity may be worthy of further study.

Crop circles also came back to prominence in 2001 after a decade of believing that most were either hoaxes or a result of pranksters (BBC Production for TLC, 2001). In Britain, the re-emergence of crop circles was especially

notable because it was not expected that the pranksters would be out in the farm fields due to Foot-and-Mouth Disease. In the same field in Britain during the summer of 2001, the first ever crop circle of a face was discovered and then, the next day, the first ever crop circle pictogram was also discovered which was believed by many people to contain a decipherable message. One researcher, Andy Thomas, claims that a similar message was beamed up by astronomers into space in 1974 from the giant radio telescope at Arecibo, Puerto Rico. Thomas claims that a changed version of the Arecibo message was the crop circle found. The only problem with Thomas' theory is that the message sent by the astronomers was aimed at a star cluster some 20,000 light years away and presumably would not have been picked up by any entity at this early date (BBC Production for TLC, 2001). It will be interesting to see if this trend in increasingly complex crop circles continues.

With the increasing use of new technologies and the Internet, cultural and national borders are dissipating and the effect on narratives of UFOs and alien encounters should be fascinating. Over the coming years, it will be interesting to see if narratives become more uniform

throughout the world and what differences continue to exist between different regions. One certainty is that UFO and alien encounter narratives will continue to tell as much about humans as they will about any aliens that may or may not be visiting earth.

References

- Anderson, W.R. (1998). Why would people not believe weird things? *The Skeptical Inquirer*, 22 (5), 42-45, 62.
- BBC News. (2000). *Africa: When devotion means death*. Retrieved March 30, 2002, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa/newsid_682000/682357.stm.
- BBC Production for TLC. (Producer) (2001). *Weird Almanac 2001*, aired January 4, 2002 on The Learning Channel.
- Bader, C.D. (1995). The UFO contact movement from the 1950s to the present. *Studies in Popular Culture*, 17 (2), 73-90.
- Birnes, W.J. & Burt, H. (2000). *Unsolved UFO mysteries: The world's most compelling cases of alien encounter*. New York: Warner Books, Inc.
- Cameron, V. (1995). *Don't tell anyone, but ... UFO experiences in Canada*. Burnstown, ON: The General Store Publishing House.
- Campagna, P. (1998). *The UFO files: The Canadian connection exposed*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited.
- Clark, J. (1998). *The UFO book: Encyclopedia of the extraterrestrial*. Detroit: Visible Ink Press.
- Colombo, J.R. (1988). *Mysterious Canada: Strange Sights, Extraordinary Events, and Peculiar Places*. Toronto:

Doubleday Canada Limited.

Colombo, J.R. (1990). *Mysterious Encounters: Personal Accounts of the Supernatural in Canada.*

Willowdale, ON: Hounslow Press.

Colombo, J.R. (1991). *UFOs Over Canada.* Willowdale, ON: Hounslow Press.

Davis, J.D. (2001, August 8). Scientist backing cloning of humans is member of UFO cult. In *The Miami Sun-Sentinel*. Retrieved April 21, 2002 from

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/southflorida/sfl-809rael.story?coll=sfla-home-headlines>

Day, M. (1997). *Aliens: Encounters with the unexplained.* Wayne, NJ: CFB International.

Dean, J. (1998). *Aliens in America: Conspiracy cultures from outerspace to cyberspace.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Hausdorf, H. (1998). *The Chinese Roswell: UFO encounters in the Far East from ancient times to the present.* Boca Raton, FL: New Paradigm Books.

Hefner, A.G. (2002). *Fairy tales.* Retrieved April 6, 2002, from <http://www.oasistv.com/news/1-18-02-story-2.asp>.

Jung, C.G. (1978). *Flying saucers: A modern myth of things*

- seen in the skies (R.F.C. Hull, Trans). New York: MJF Press. (Original work published 1964)
- Kaminer, W. (1999). *Sleeping with extra-terrestrials*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Keay, C.S.L. (1994). Comments on "Alleged Experiences Inside UFOs". *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 8 (2), 283-284.
- Klass, P.J. (1996). That's entertainment! TV's UFO coverup. *The Skeptical Inquirer*, 20 (6), 29-31, 58.
- Ledger, D. (1998). *Maritime UFO files*. Halifax, NS: Nimbus.
- Ledger, D. & Styles, C. (2001). *Dark object: The world's only government-documented UFO crash*. New York: Dell Publishing.
- Lipset, S.M. (1990). *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada*. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.
- Matheson, T. (1998). *Alien abductions: Creating a modern phenomenon*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- McClelland, S. & Betts, J. (2001, August 13). UFOs ... seriously. *MacLean's*, 114 (33), 44-47.
- Ocean Entertainment Ltd. (Producer) (2000). *The Shag Harbour UFO Incident*, aired March 3, 2001 on Space: TheImaginationStation.

- Olmos, V-J. B. (1994). Alleged experiences inside UFOs: An analysis of abduction reports. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 8 (1), 91-105.
- Ramet, S.P. (1998). UFOs over Russia and Eastern Europe. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 32 (3), 81-99.
- Randle, K.D. (1997). *The Randle Report: UFOs in the 90s*. New York: M. Evans and Company, Inc.
- Randle, K.D. (1998). *Project moon dust: Beyond Roswell - Exposing the government's continuing covert UFO investigations and cover-ups*. New York: Avon Books, Inc.
- Randle, K.D., & Estes, R. (1997). *Faces of the visitors: An illustrated reference to alien contact*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Randle, K.D., Estes, R., & Cone, W.P. (1999). *The abduction enigma*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, Inc.
- Randles, J. (1997). *Alien contact: The first fifty years*. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc.
- Randles, J. (1999). *The complete book of aliens & abductions*. London: Judy Piatkus (Publishers) Ltd.
- Rayl, A.J.S. (1996). *Inside the military UFO underground*. Retrieved March 30, 2002, from <http://www.v-j-enterprises.com/milufo.html>.

- Rutkowski, C.A. (1999). *Abductions & aliens: What's really going on?* Toronto: The Dundurn Group.
- Sheaffer, R. (1998). Massive uncritical publicity for supposed 'independent UFO investigation' demonstrates media gullibility once again. *The Skeptical Inquirer*, 22 (5), 5-7.
- Shermer, M. (1997). *Why people believe weird things: Pseudoscience, superstition, and other confusions of our time*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.
- Sloan, J. (1999). *Religious Movements Homepage: Order of the Solar Temple*. Retrieved March 30, 2002, from <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/solartemp.html>.
- Spanos, N.P., Cross, P.A., Dickson, K., & DuBreuil, S.C. (1993). Close encounters: An examination of UFO experiences. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 102, 624-632.
- Sparks, G.C., Pellechia, M., & Irvine, C. (1998). Does television news about UFOs affect viewers' UFO beliefs?: An experimental investigation. *Communication Quarterly*, 46 (3), 284-294.
- Sturma, M. (2000). Alien abductions. *History Today*, 50 (1), 14-15.

The Ottawa Citizen. (Editorial) (2002, March 4). Alien

Nation: We don't believe in extraterrestrials so why do we keep seeing UFOs?. In *The Ottawa Citizen*.

Retrieved March 4, 2002 from

<http://www.canada.com/ottawa/ottawacitizen/editorials/story.asp?id={5B1B83EC-C0D7-41E2-93C1-ADDF17E915B1}>.

Trepanier, N. (2002, February 27). The truth is out here in

Ottawa: City hotbed of UFO sightings. In *The Ottawa*

Sun. Retrieved February 27, 2002, from

<http://www.canoe.ca/OttawaNews/os.os-02-27-0003.html>.

Bibliography

- Bryan, C.D.B. (1995). *Close encounters of the fourth kind: Alien abductions, UFOs and the conference at MIT*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Crabtree, A. (1985). *Multiple man: Explorations in possession and multiple personality*. New York: Praeger.
- Kingwell, M.G. (1999). *Dreams of millennium: Report on a culture on the brink*. Toronto: Penguin.
- Mack, J.E. (1994). *Abduction: Human encounters with aliens*. New York: Wheeler Publishing Incorporated.
- Mack, J.E. (1999). *Passport to the cosmos: Human transformation and alien encounters*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Ross, C.A. (1994). *The Osiris complex: Case studies in multiple personality disorder*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Spanos, N.P. (1996). *Multiple identities & false memories: A sociocognitive perspective*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.