

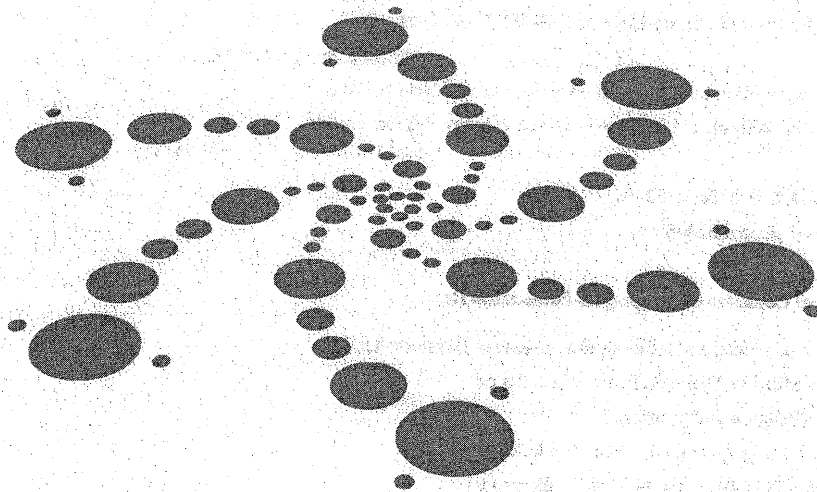
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Social and Religious Dimensions of Extraterrestrial Contact

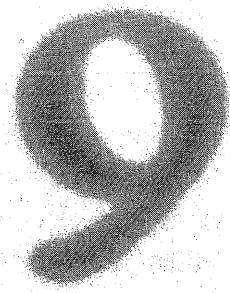
WORLDS

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Close Encounters of the French Kind

*The Saucerian Construction
of "Contacts" and the Controversy
over Its Reality in France*

Pierre Lagrange

"Excuse me, sir?" he said with an edge in his voice, "but I believe you also claim to have visited other planets by flying saucer—planets unrecognized by astronomy."

"That's right," . . .

"Just where are those planets?"

"Oh, they're . . . places," . . . "Real planets don't let themselves be bossed around by a pack of astronomers!"

—*The Wanderer*, Fritz Leiber

Is it possible to study and to explain science and parascience, black holes and flying saucers, scientific theories and ufological beliefs with the same methodological tools? Not so long ago, research on subjects such as sorcery were considered studies of human inanity. It took all the energy of scholars such as Jeanne Favret-Saada (1980), to show how biased this judgment was, and how, in effect, such an assessment actually revealed a researcher's prejudice. Today the academic study of flying saucers is in the same state as the analysis of peasant witchcraft was before Favret-Saada broke through. Most scientists shelved the saucer phenomenon as irrational or pathological (Bartholomew 1989). This stigma makes the subject a *sociological untouchable*. Is it possible to do a sociological study of the flying-saucer phenomenon without reducing it to a sociopsychological phenomenon? Sociologists, historians, and folklorists have made a few attempts, and their efforts have helped to realize

some progress (Jacobs 1975; Dégh 1977; Westrum 1977). Let us review briefly those achievements before going further.

The majority of sociological studies on UFOs have concentrated on UFO religions, contactees, and their followers (Lewis 1995, 2003a; Partridge 2003). Newer studies take a radically different approach from the reductionist and psychiatric-oriented view common in the sixties. For instance, the psychiatric-oriented diagnosis of H. Taylor Buckner claimed, "Men in the audience tend to be either young schizophrenics or aged with advanced senility. I have never seen a male saucerian who could make a successful presentation of normalcy" (1966, 13). Such assessments have been severely criticized by sociologists like John Lofland (1966), who studied the same groups without noticing what Buckner had claimed to see. In fact, many researchers (Wallis 1974; Balch and Taylor 1978; Lewis 1995, 2003a; Tumminia 1998, 2005; Partridge 2003) showed that these people were spiritual seekers influenced by the cultic milieu and not necessarily abnormal. David Stuppel and William McNeece remark, "This pathological model of cult membership is both gratuitous and inaccurate" (1979, 47). They further state that the many different reasons that may bring someone to join a group indicate, "It is faulty to assume that cult members are alike in psychological or sociological characteristics." After the 1970s, studies of contactees took a nonpsychiatric turn in sociological circles (Lewis 1995).

UFOs have ended up in the classification of scientific anomalies, and the social activity around UFO phenomena has been relegated to the realm of parascience. The analysis of parascience has also made some progress since the seventies and eighties with the emergence of academic disciplines focused on the social construction of knowledge and the sociology of science itself (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984; Latour 1995). These fields helped advance the analysis of controversies about scientific anomalies by moving the analysis from epistemology to sociology, from content to context, from the facts to the people who study them, and from scientific *thinking* to scientific *practice*—without abandoning the content for the context, or the facts for the people who study them (as sociology does when it studies "mentalities" or "beliefs"). Thus, the analysis shifted from epistemology to sociology—thanks to a new perspective within sociology itself.¹

The sociology of science rethought sociology and produced new analyses to

1. Scholars like Bruno Latour (1993), showed that so-called social and cultural factors (beliefs, cultural origin, historical context, political pressure) also played a role in the production of scientific culture, just as much as they do in the construction of nonscientific culture.

show how content and context, facts and scientists, are produced at the same time in the same processes. Such studies showed that material factors (scientific instruments, laboratories, etc.), and not just scientific thinking, play an important role in the production of facts (Bloor 1976; Wallis 1979; Mulkay and Gilbert 1982; Latour and Woolgar 1990). In turn, this new analysis contributed to a new definition within sociology applicable to both science and parascience. Thus, historians and sociologists of science also have come to focus on controversies over scientific anomalies and to some small extent over alternative disciplines, such as parapsychology and ufology. In the wake of research on the social construction of science, studies of the "parasciences" created the conditions for a more symmetrical analysis, which moved from the notion of pathological science to the idea that within parascience "nothing unscientific is happening," as Harry M. Collins and Trevor J. Pinch (1979, 237) remarked. Ron Westrum (1977) showed that we could study controversies on scientific anomalies without assuming there was a priori any difference between UFO facts and scientific facts.

Paul McCarthy (1975) was the first to take into consideration the work of Thomas Kuhn and to study the career of University of Arizona professor James McDonald. McCarthy also examined the work of skeptical astrophysicist Donald H. Menzel, as well as the efforts of debunker-journalist Philip J. Klass. These thinkers attempted to show that there is no "Great Divide" between scientific and pseudoscientific minds (McCarthy 1975; Wallis 1985; Latour 1983, 1993; Lagrange 1993). By moving from psychological arguments about the pseudoscientific mind to the material conditions in which works are produced, they have shown the role that methods of interpretation play in the acceptance or rejection of anomalies and phenomena. Furthermore, they argue that this should not be a cause of concern because even in normal science specific lines of reason are necessary to the production of scientific facts. By taking into consideration the context, cultural setting, and social dynamics, they have revealed that the cultural milieu (previously only mentioned in regard to a sociology of knowledge or the history of scientific errors) plays a role in the acceptance of truth, reality, and new phenomena (Shapin 1982; Latour 1993). Thus, David Bloor's (1976) strong claim that a symmetrical analysis of scientific truth and error was feasible proved to be correct.

Although progress has been made, it should be noted that most studies are still performed as if there was a divide between science and parascience. More important for our purposes, the borderline has moved from an asymmetrical relationship between science and parascience to an asymmetry between ufology and contactees. For instance, sociologists who study contactees do not necessarily study ufology and

vice versa. The two domains remain for the most part ignorant of one another, and there is no debate on the feasibility or need for symmetrical study. The problem of interpretation has never been raised, and it has never even been discussed. Instead, the community of researchers has responded as if there was no problem, or as if the solution clearly indicated that there is a great division—a fundamental difference between *minds*—between science and other systems of thought, such as ufology or contacteeism (Latour 1983, 1993).

For example, Festinger, Riecken and Schachter's (1956) superb study of Marian Keech's followers, *When Prophecy Fails*, is seen as a way to explain a psychological mechanism that elucidates religious beliefs and beliefs in general. At no time does Festinger even suggest that his theory could apply to scientists or his own research team. However, the sociologist of science Bruno Latour discovered the very same phenomenon of cognitive dissonance in the history of science. In his books *Science in Action* (1995) and *The Pasteurization of France* (1993), Latour demonstrates how Pastorians found themselves in a similar situation to that of Mrs. Keech's followers when they had to explain why their predictions about the abatement of certain diseases were refuted by the facts.²

An Example of Asymmetry: How David Jacobs Discusses Contactees

If we consider, for example, one of the few studies on UFO controversies, the pioneering work of David Jacobs's *UFO Controversy in America* (1975), we see how the author gives an asymmetrical treatment of UFO researchers and contactees. The bias becomes clear when he studies contactees, because his tone shifts from sympathy to criticism. Jacobs says that contactees have had prejudicial consequences for the serious study of UFOs, and he recalls how ufologists had to fight against the publicity engendered by contactees. Why a priori should we consider that the ufological approach to UFOs is sounder than that of contactees and contactee religions? Is it because we trust more in a scenario that mentions words like "evidence" and "scientific method" than in scenarios that imply following the word of a guru without discussion? Thus, the question is not, Why are the contactees less serious than ufologists? Rather we should ask, What are the criteria for being serious in ufology and in contacteeism?

2. See the French edition of Bruno Latour's *La Science en action: Introduction à la sociologie des sciences* (1995), page 452 and pages 458–59. This part is not reproduced in the American edition, *Science in Action*.

David Jacobs also stresses what he considers to be negative aspects, in particular the fact that the contactees do not submit their claims to the expertise of UFO investigators. This argument seems acceptable when viewed from the perspective of ufology, but from another perspective, that of the contactees, it may appear obtuse. In fact, the argument is close to that of historians who study religion from the point of view of anticlericalism; religion can only look faulty to them. This antithetical attitude is incorrect. If we use the same method to analyze the world of ufology from the point of view of its skeptics, like CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Paranormal), then we would not describe them, but only condemn them.

David Jacobs also thinks that the followers of such contactees are gullible, and he explains their behavior only in terms of belief. However, terms, like "gullible" and "belief," are not good explanations of contactees, but the very interpretive points that need to be explained. Jacobs does to contactees what most educated people do to ufologists; he presumes they are all wrong or deluded by their own convictions. Jacobs avoids the trap of treating ufologists as believers, but he falls into the very same trap when it comes to characterizing contactees. He moves the line of asymmetry from the boundary between science and ufology to the boundary between ufology and contactees. However, if asymmetrical explanations utilizing terms such as belief and gullibility are not suitable for ufology, then they are not suitable for contactees, either. The question is not, Are contactees and their followers gullible people? Rather, we should ask, How is the boundary between being serious and being gullible constructed for ufologists and contactees alike? This question aims at understanding how these categories were constructed and applied. Therefore, if we want to understand the vocabulary used by ufologists, we have to recall the history of its invention.

David Jacobs clearly discusses the way ufologists draw on the rhetoric of UFO skeptics; in his book (1975) they appear as skeptical as the skeptics themselves. However, Jacobs has a different view when it comes to contactees; he attributes knowledge to ufologists, but only beliefs to contactees. While he avoids using the rhetoric of skeptics in his description of ufologists, he reproduces the rhetoric of the ufologists toward the contactees rather than explaining its use and characteristics. In describing a situation, one should be careful not to use the interpretive arguments employed to socially construct that situation, in this case the empiricist skeptic versus the gullible believer. This characterization of belief is an accusation, not an explanation.

Historical contexts deeply affect meaning. As historian Alain Boureau (1990)

showed, there was no objective concept of belief in the Christian Middle Ages—merely a concept of truth. During that time, priests, nuns, and others concerned with the public good used cautionary stories about morality called *exempla*. These tales sometimes described the lives of saints and their miracles or sinners and their paths to damnation (e.g., Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale"). Exempla represented normal truths. In a penetrating study, historian Jean-Claude Schmitt (1994) demonstrated that we cannot compare the medieval exempla of dead people returning among the living to the modern concept of NDE (near-death experience) because exempla did not connote any "paranormal experience." The contexts are completely different. By analyzing the context of meaning, we can understand the context of interpretation.

The Hoax Argument

Another example of the asymmetrical treatment of contactees and ufologists in David Jacobs's book is the hoax argument. For Jacobs, if the contactees are not merely naïve people, then they must be hoaxers. Indeed, investigations have revealed that many photos show fakery, not "real" interplanetary saucers. However, the hoaxes of contactees should not astonish historians, nor stop them from analyzing the phenomenon. Rather, they should be astonished by the fact that other social actors, such as skeptical ufologists or reporters, use this argument to exclude contactees from legitimate dialogue. Historians and other social scientists should not stop analyzing UFO phenomenon when notions of "proofs" or "hoaxes" enter the scene, but rather they should explain why these arguments are used and how they are constructed. The hoax is not an explanation of the contactee's attitude; it is the very issue that must be explained by a careful description of the relations between ufologists and contactees. The question is not, Why are contactees hoaxing? Instead, we should pursue the question, Why do ufologists use the hoaxing argument to stop all discussion on the validity of contacteeism as a genuine UFO experience?

The mystery is not necessarily why people follow contactees who are hoaxing. Instead we should ask, "Why do we label this or that a hoax?" For example, most textbooks print pictures of stars and galaxies in false colors that have nothing to do with films used by scientists in their daily work. We never speak of this as hoaxing, even if these pictures have no scientific value. Why not try to understand the role of hoaxing as constructed by contactees in the same way that we understand the reasons popular scientific magazines and textbooks alter pictures of stars and galaxies?

A Martian Anthropologist Facing the Hoaxing Argument

We remember E. E. Evans-Pritchard's (1937) argument that although all Zande are witches, some of them are not. Intrigued by this apparent contradiction, the anthropologist learned from the Zande that there was a difference between warm and cold witches. However, this seemed to be an ad hoc explanation, and these two contradictory beliefs troubled the Western anthropologist. How can people believe in ambiguous and contradictory things? Sociologist David Bloor (1976) imagines how a Zande would react to some of our contradictions. For example, in our society people who voluntarily kill other people are killers, but bomber pilots are not killers. They are soldiers. Thus, we are just like the Zande: we believe in contradictory things by producing differentiating labels and explaining away the contradiction.

Regarding the contactees, if a contactee falsely states that he is a professor, he is a liar and everything that he says is suspect. French sociologist Gérald Chevalier (1986) used this argument to show the pseudoscientific status of paranormal amateurs. Let us consider another argument: when Leon Festinger and his colleagues entered Marian Keech's group, they used false identities. They used deception. Is their study, *When Prophecy Fails*, suspect because of this deception? No, in fact, it is considered to be a major social-psychological work—and it is! Thus, we are just like the Zande: we believe in contradictory things. According to Jim Schnabel (1994), we believe that people who tell lies are liars, but we also believe that there are warm and cold liars. Take, for instance, the American notion of "white" acceptable lies and "black" unacceptable lies. A Martian anthropologist might be as astonished by us as we are by the Zande.

George Adamski is sometimes called the father of contacteeism, but he was also the purveyor of great hoaxes. I am not saying that "Professor" George Adamski was a great academic, like Leon Festinger, but only that we should take into consideration the context of his deceptions to understand his motive. It is not an excuse, just a method to explain apparently bizarre contradictory facts. The sociologist needs to ask Martianlike questions. He or she needs to be astonished by what is commonplace to everyone else. He or she must be as astonished by Festinger's lie as others are by Adamski's. Like the sociologist of science who "naïvely" asks how the scientific evidence and proof were constructed (a foolish question for an epistemologist, a positivist, or a rationalist), a sociologist of contactees should ask how the notion of fraud was constructed, who constructed it, and what context it served. Taking the examples of Pritchard and Festinger, we see the boundary of interpretation between the observer and the observed. The meaning and the context of words evident to members of a group should be considered by those who analyze that group.

Strangely enough in areas of ufology and contactees, no sociologist has ever tried to analyze the social construction of hoaxing.

Charges that Adamski's story was based on hoaxing do not take into account that there is anything else to explain, as if words like "hoax" and "truth" were self-explanatory. The next standard procedure is to look for psychological or psychiatric rationales to better understand the attitude of the "hoaxer," a practice that adds weight to the arguments the skeptics have already stressed. However, this method adds nothing to the social analysis of how we construct the argument, "It's a hoax and Adamski is a liar or a pathological case." Instead of describing what happens when people speak of a hoax, they assume the role of critic. As David Stuppel says, "It's pointless to dismiss Adamski and his successors simply as lunatics and liars. That diverts us from an examination of the social processes and historical conditions that produced this modern variant of utopian thought" (1980, 271).

In one of the rare French anthropological works on contemporary belief in extraterrestrials, Wiktor Stoczkowski (1999) notes that Adamski's pictures are most probably faked. But like John A. Saliba (1995), to whom he makes reference, he also refuses to reduce his analysis of this and other similar cases to this "evidential" aspect: "Encounters with extraterrestrials cannot be reduced to that. To neglect their religious dimension means that we refuse the possibility of understanding the main reasons for explaining the fascination of the phenomenon with the majority of those who are the actors or the followers" (Stoczkowski 1999, 267).

A sociologist who moves from a description of ufology to a denunciation of contactees is like a scientist who studies the physics of planetary orbits and then makes moral judgments about the fact that meteors strike the earth. Thus, without an impartial scientific explanation for meteors, the researcher stands to lose credibility for all other work. Along the same lines, why would a social explanation of extraterrestrial contacts be finished merely by asserting that they are probably staged hoaxes or they are the products of alleged pathological liars? Why should we shift from the practice of using descriptions when we refer to science, only to use denunciations when we refer to extraterrestrial contacts? This makes no sense! Metaphorically speaking, the "orbital path" of the contactee should be studied and explained with the same tools used to study and explain the "orbital path" of ufologists.

Alison Lurie's Symmetrical Novel

One of the few symmetrical arguments presented on contactees and science is Alison Lurie's novel, *Imaginary Friends* (1967). In contrast to Festinger's book, which

focuses only on the UFO cultists (who as a result, appear peculiar), Lurie's book discusses both the cultists and the sociologists. With this symmetry, the sociologists appear as peculiar as the cultists. However, the point is not to imbue sociologists with an aura of irrationality, but to cease crediting cultists with one. Thus, Lurie describes sociologists the same way she describes cultists. Lurie's novel does not pass for social science, although it points to the sociological idea that someone should be analyzing the scientists.

What seems evident and taken for granted when we read Festinger becomes strange and anomalous when we read Lurie. This is a perfect example of why we should maintain the obligation to examine fully all the social actors in the description: ufologists, skeptics, the contactees, and scientists (physical and social). Thus, any description of the actions of scientists and skeptics should look as interesting, as strange, and as exotic as the description of contactees.

The French Case

This chapter contributes to the sociology of the flying saucer (or more specifically, of ufologists and contactees) without reducing any aspect of it to a sociopsychological phenomenon. The obvious trap is in pushing the sociology to one side and concentrating only on the subject at hand, or inversely, of abandoning the subject by smothering it with sociological explanation. The obvious traps are often the most lethal. The methodology applied here will be to consider, above all, the accounts of the people involved and *their ability to furnish explanations*.

The case studies here discuss contactees and scientists from the French UFO scene. Reviewing the first French flying-saucer authors and investigators initially requires an assessment of how they considered contact cases. Then, a study of two contactee cases will be presented. The first case consists of a UFO group founded by a contactee named Pierre Monnet, and the second famous French contactee case is that of Jean Miguères. Additionally, the last section describes how scientists and ufologists investigated the Cergy-Pontoise abduction case of Franck Fontaine in the late seventies. No one actor is considered a priori more significant or more valid than any other. On the contrary, every attempt will be made to show how the actors themselves reached their conclusions, and by what mechanisms they defined who was right and who was wrong or who was credible and who was not. These accounts allow the actors themselves to *create the differences*. In other words, the various protagonists will do the sociology, rather than some researcher.

If no one doubts the correspondence with reality of texts on endorphins or on

interstellar gas, there is no reason to introduce such doubts for saucers. Therefore, the need arises to see how the saucers themselves go from hand to hand in the "circulation" of the stories. Verification of the reality or unreality of saucers is not a prize awarded by the observer at the end of the process, for it is the very issue at stake for all the protagonists in dispute. It is this dispute that will gradually construct and deconstruct the phenomenon. At one moment, the narrative may collapse under the weight of certain actors, while at another moment it may regain its realism. It is not for the analyst to decide in advance if the saucers are real or not. On the contrary, the researcher must follow the tribulations of ufologists and contactees alike.

What Ufologists Did: The Invention of Endless Controversies

Contacteeism did not appear in France until the 1970s, apart from a few unpublished cases in the wake of Spiritualism about 1900 (Flournoy 1983; Evans 1986). Before the 1970s, books by American contactees were translated, but they were not widely read except by UFO researchers. The translated books of Major Donald E. Keyhoe (1950, 1951), Frank Scully (1950, 1951), and Gerald Heard (1951a, 1951b) appeared early in the fifties. Following them, British author Desmond Leslie and American contactee George Adamski published *Les soucoupes volantes ont atterri* (*Flying Saucers Have Landed*) in 1954. In 1965, Howard Menger's *From Outer Space to You* appeared in French, reaching a limited audience.

It is not enough to say that different categories of people were interested in flying saucers or that flying-saucer investigators were either opposed to or sympathetic toward contactees. Rather, what needs description is what these people achieved and how they created differences between themselves. We will first follow several major French figures prominent in the flying-saucer milieu of the fifties to see how they discussed contactee cases (Lagrange 1990). These French figures include the people involved with the first UFO magazine, *Ouranos*, the first UFO authors, Jimmy Guieu and Aimé Michel, who wrote two of the most famous books on flying discs. Then, the discussion will shift to other groups, like GEPA (Groupe d'Etude des Phénomène Aériens), that appeared in the early sixties.

***Ouranos* and the Invention of French Ufology**

What we now call ufology began with thinkers nicknamed saucerians. The French called the field of inquiry by the blanket term *saucerism* (*soucoupisme* in French), because it covered all aspects of the UFO phenomenon without the distinctions and

separatism that exist today. The first French flying-saucer magazine, *Ouranos*, unwittingly paved the way for setting up divisions within the field. The inaugural issue appeared on June 24, 1952, in both French and English. Its editors were Eric Biddle and Marc Thirouin, who practiced law and followed the "Atlantean" Paul Le Cour.

This first issue was the size of a pack of cigarettes, and it was subtitled "An International Bulletin Devoted to the Serious Study of Flying Saucers and Kindred Subjects." It is clear that the effort started from scratch and lacked an organized network of contributors. Biddle and Thirouin were not linked to any flying-saucer groups, but rather to Atlantean societies in Paris and London. They referenced books by authors such as Keyhoe, Heard, and Scully, and various news clippings.

Originally, *Ouranos* sought all perspectives. In the second issue, Eric Biddle mentions on page 25:

Through the kindness of Mr. Egerton Sykes, Chairman of the Atlantis Research Centre, London, we have received a large batch of flying saucer material published by the Borderland Sciences Research Association of San Diego, California. This offers a different and, to my mind, highly significant, approach to the problem and in our next issue I propose to deal with it at some length.

The fourth issue of *Ouranos* (April 1953) published and discussed Borderland Sciences Research Association (BSRA) views. *Ouranos* also devoted considerable space to various topics: discussions of sightings, astronomers' views on flying saucers, conferences organized by scientific or aeronautical circles or by *Ouranos* members, and bibliographies of articles published in the press. One of the goals of *Ouranos* was to investigate sightings.

The first issue of *Ouranos-Actualités*, a supplement, appeared in May-June 1953. It was a mimeographed magazine of fourteen pages. Marc Thirouin wrote the first article, entitled "The Fantastic Revelations of Professor George Adamski, Astronomer at the Mt. Palomar Observatory." He begins by making a statement that *Ouranos* has already shown that it is objective and that it is not seeking sensationalism. Further, he writes that he has no reason to suspect Professor Adamski or Borderland Science Research Associates, the American group that provided documents on Adamski.

Thirouin then reports that Adamski revealed that he had seen a flying saucer and its occupant in a meeting organized by the BSRA and in the presence of "a dozen personalities." Thirouin mentions the status of several participants in the dialogue (a specialist on electromagnetism, an electronics expert from the U.S. Air

Force, an economist and writer, an anthropologist, and the director of the BSRA). The remaining pages of the bulletin devote discussion to sightings and investigation reports.

French veteran saucerian (*soucoupiste*) Henri Chaloupek (1997) remarks that soon after this article was written, Marc Thirouin read Adamski's book in English and concluded that the story was a crude hoax because all the elements that encouraged him to endorse Adamski's claims had proved undependable. For instance, George Adamski was not an astronomer, and although he did live on Mount Palomar, he did not work at the observatory, as implied.

In order to understand why these criteria are important for Marc Thirouin, a review of another flying-saucer case is valuable. This famous landing occurred during the 1954 UFO wave in northern France. On October 10, 1954, Marius Dewilde from Quarouble saw a flying saucer land and observed two little men marching toward him. A ray of light, which came from the saucer, paralyzed him. His story made headlines. At first, Thirouin was skeptical because of the way the story was told by the press. From one account to another, the details of Dewilde's story differed. However, when he met Marius Dewilde, he realized that the press had invented the incredible details, not Dewilde, the actual witness to the flying-saucer event (Thirouin 1959).

By comparing the situations of Adamski and Dewilde, we understand on what criteria Thirouin based his acceptance or rejection of a narrative. He initially accepted Adamski because of his social status, and then rejected him when he realized that Adamski was systematically shifting from one status to another, multiplying his identities and the versions of his story. On the other hand, although Marc Thirouin initially rejected Dewilde's testimony because of inconsistencies in the particulars, he changed his mind when he realized that journalists had introduced the disparate details, not Dewilde.

The differences between contactees and typical flying-saucer witnesses appear in these two examples. What matters to Thirouin is that the story can be checked and that the same witness tells the same version consistently. For him, the fact that Adamski's identity is never the same or that his story may not be the same represents a serious problem.

Ouranos was inventing a basic criterion of flying-saucer reality. As Thirouin says in his preface to Jimmy Guieu's first book: "In 1951, when my friend, Eric Biddle, and I founded *Ouranos* we had in view the solution of a problem whose vast importance we realized, but we had very little idea as to the practical methods of attaining this end" (Guieu 1956, 11). By the end of the fifties, some members of *Ouranos* con-



9.1. In 1954, Marius Dewilde heard a loud sound at night and went to investigate. He saw a large object on the railroad tracks. After various news reporters interviewed him, his story became distorted by the press. Courtesy of Mary Evans Picture Library.

sidered it impossible to mix the two aspects of saucerism—thereby creating two aspects. They decided to start a new scientifically oriented society, GEPA. Thus, a new division appeared between ufology and contactees. In Thirouin’s mind, however, there was no divide between the two saucerian narratives.

It is noted that for a pioneer ufologist like Marc Thirouin, it was important that a story remain the same from one account to another. Nonetheless, the history of UFO discussions in France indicates that Adamski did not disappear from the spot-

light the moment Thirouin declared him a hoaxer. Apparently, other ufologists found ways to maintain the discussion on his case. It seems that ufologists have a strong tendency to reopen cases that are considered closed by other investigators. An example is noted in the following interpretation of the Adamski case by another investigator and friend of Thirouin's, Jimmy Guieu.

Jimmy Guieu: From Field Investigation to Occultism

In September 1952, Marc Thirouin met a young science-fiction writer named Jimmy Guieu (Chaloupek 1997).³ Jimmy Guieu (1926–2000) began a career as a writer at the Fleuve Noir publishing house in 1952 after briefly selling insurance. His early attraction to all things of a scientific or occult nature led him as a young schoolboy to perform experiments in alchemy. After reading the first accounts of flying saucers, he was intrigued and was soon convinced that the phenomenon was real. After meeting with Marc Thirouin, he began generating publicity for *Ouranos* during appearances on radio shows and in his science-fiction novels, which underscored saucer and paranormal themes. He became an *Ouranos* investigator, the delegate for the southeast of France, and he was quickly promoted to the rank of chief of Investigating Service of the Commission. From then on, Guieu became the most visible spokesperson for *Ouranos*. In 1954, he published *Les soucoupes volantes viennent d'un autre monde* (*Flying Saucers Come from Another World*). The book's appearance was well-timed, released just before the UFO wave hit France that autumn. Two years later, Guieu authored a second book, *Black-Out sur les soucoupes volantes* (*Black-out on the Flying Saucers*), with a foreword by French poet Jean Cocteau.

Jimmy Guieu's *Flying Saucers Come from Another World* is of special interest, because it is the first such work published by a French UFO investigator (a second book was published by Aimé Michel later that year) and because Guieu discusses contactees. In the first chapters, he reviews historical cases. He then presents both the positive evidence and the skeptics' position. A chapter is devoted to Donald H. Menzel, the Harvard astrophysicist who published the first attempt at a systematic explanation of all UFO sightings in 1953. In chapter 11, the discussion turns to George Adamski. Jimmy Guieu had interviewed Desmond Leslie for his show on Radio Monte Carlo, and he returned convinced of the latter's authenticity. He iden-

3. Other sources are my interviews with Jimmy Guieu on February 16, 1987 and with Georges Hilaire Gallet on November 2, 1991. Guieu was born in 1926 in Aix-en-Provence in the southeast of France; his actual first and middle names are Henri René.

tifies George Adamski as an "amateur astronomer." Unlike Thirouin, he did not allude to any inconsistencies in Adamski's story. Instead, Guieu describes the story "as told [to] me by Desmond Leslie" (1956, 232) rather than focusing on any dissimilar, contradictory accounts. As independent confirmation, Guieu also mentions that a saucer similar to the one photographed by Adamski was photographed in England. Guieu writes, "This sighting confirms the existence of saucers like the one which Adamski examined at close quarters" (1956, 238). It is particularly intriguing to compare Guieu's rhetoric with that of another author who published a book that same year: Aimé Michel.

Aimé Michel: The Divide Between Eyewitness and Contactee

In 1954, Aimé Michel published a book on flying saucers, *Lueurs sur les soucoupes volantes* (Light on flying saucers), as did Jimmy Guieu. Its release at the beginning of the summer came a few months before one of the most important waves of French UFO sightings and supposed landings. Concurrent with the publication of Michel's book, Leslie and Adamski's *Flying Saucers Have Landed* was translated. In the first edition of *Lueurs sur les soucoupes volantes*, Michel mentions Adamski. In a footnote, he expressed strong criticism of Adamski's tales and doubts about his saucer stories, as well as misgivings about another testimony that was supposed to corroborate his sighting. Thus, Michel doubts the very same element that Guieu considers independent evidence for Adamski's claim. Michel concludes, "Does not this evidence corroborate Adamski's startling narrative? It would be more convincing if the two amateur astronomers [who took a picture of a saucer similar to Adamski's saucer] had not told us that they had previously read Adamski's book and knew it well" (1967, 99). The symmetry between Guieu and Michel is complete.

Aimé Michel initially made no distinction, but he would later contribute to the invention of a powerful division between contactees and witnesses to landings. His first book mentioned saucer crashes in the Spitzberg, Norway, area and Aztec, New Mexico, as reported by Frank Scully, and he included the first stories involving landings of little men that had gained some fame. In the second edition of *Lueurs*, printed during the autumn of 1954, Michel added a little extra material because there were many reported landings. His skepticism shows in this quote:

Let us add one more word about the numerous cases reported in the newspapers during the summer and fall of 1954, especially those in which "little men" emerged from saucers on the ground. All the implausibility records were broken during

those months. The scientific probability that the incidents really took place is infinitesimal. Nevertheless we must not forget that if the saucers exist, they have been constructed by living beings, and that life itself is simply the result of a long perseverance in the improbable. . . . Therefore it would be only after a long and difficult investigation that we could decide about these cases—unless, of course, there are sensational new developments. (Michel 1967, 99)

At that early stage, Michel drew no lines between landings and contacts, or stories told by Frank Scully and those told by George Adamski. Michel also considered that there were no major differences between the American landings as told by Scully and the French ones, the reports of which had multiplied in the press. Any possible dissimilarities were less important than their tabloid origins. Thus, while his opinion had already been formed regarding Adamski and Scully, he preferred to wait for an investigation on the 1954 landings before reaching a conclusion. It was not until he discussed the issue with Jean Cocteau, investigated the matter, and received additional information from his network of correspondents (which he gained after the publication of *Lueurs*) that he started to change his views.

By 1958, when Michel published *Flying Saucers and the Straight-Line Mystery* (*Mystérieux objets célestes*) first in the United States and then in France, he had evolved in his thinking about the landings.⁴ The book is dedicated to the analysis of the 1954 UFO wave, and it also devotes some space to contactees. A clear distinction appears now between landings reported in France and stories like Adamski's. He even used Adamski as an argument *ad contrario* to reinforce the legitimacy and authenticity of the landings. Michel had followed the advice of Jean Cocteau: to be less skeptical regarding cases containing incredible details and to look for some logic behind the French saucer stories. Michel discovered that when placed on a map, flying-saucer sightings had a tendency to generate straight lines for cases of three or more sightings. To legitimate the landings and to discover this straight-line trait of the phenomenon, Michel had to suspend disbelief, to stop "distrusting the facts, an attitude too often developed in the course of scientific research." He had to accept the apparently absurd landing stories that he had rejected in his first book. Michel states, "Cocteau himself believed the witnesses who said they had seen saucers on the ground, with their occupants" (1958a, 51).

4. Aimé Michel's evolution can be compared with that of Civilian Saucer Intelligence of New York. For a description of the way ufologists changed their minds on landings in France and in the United States, see Lagrange (1990).

In *Flying Saucers and the Straight-Line Mystery*, Michel pioneers his theory of *orthoteny*, a theory that said investigators could find straight-line patterns by plotting reported sightings of UFOs. However, in the same book where he suspends disbelief on saucer landings, he introduces a division between stories of landings and stories of contactees. Thus, on the one hand, Michel constructed the legitimacy of landings by suspending his disbelief, and on the other, he deconstructed the legitimacy of contacts by maintaining his disbelief. He does not ask for proof from eyewitnesses to landings, but demands proof only from the contactees. In part 6 of the book, Michel constructs an argument designed to reject contactee stories. He builds an analogy between the tales of the contactees and tales told by armchair travelers of antiquity and the Middle Ages, like Pomponius Mela and John Mandeville. Michel explains how such travelers' tales produced religious art and beliefs, and how contactee tales now produce contemporary religious beliefs. He introduces an analogy between religion and contact *and* between hoaxer and contactee claims. Michel constructs a new division between religious aspects of flying saucers and what eventually becomes ufology.

Following different strategies, instead of simply opposing contactees and ufologists, we have seen how researchers constructed their acceptance or rejection of contact stories and how ufologists differed from each other. Later on, an example of the difference in strategy between the ufologist and the scientist will be the highlighted using the Cergy-Pontoise abduction case of Franck Fontaine.

GEPA: Starting Again at Zero

In 1962, a group of dissident members from *Ouranos* headed by engineer René Hardy left Marc Thirouin's group to found GEPA (Groupe d'Etude des Phénomène Aériens). GEPA was one of the first respected ufology associations. It lasted from 1962 to 1977. René Hardy, René and Francine Fouéré, and General Lionel Chassin started the organization as an association of scientists, citizens, and military for the study of UFOs. It would go on to publish fifty-one "bulletins" before it dissolved, all of which defined further divisions between ufologists and contactees.

GEPA's founders thought that Thirouin had gone too far in the realm of occultism and pseudoscience, and they believed scientists and engineers should investigate the problem in a scientific manner.⁵ However, the first issues of their bulletin

5. Information from my interview with Francine Fouéré in Paris on June 25, 1996, and from Chaloupek (1997, 27).

gave none of these reasons and did not even mention *Ouranos*. They created a new localized division between scientific and (what they considered) occult-oriented ufology. Thirouin and Guieu did not really construct a barrier between typical UFO cases and contactees, only between cases they accepted and cases they rejected. Michel invented a division between landings and contacts, and GEPA introduced a new partition between serious UFO researchers and occult-oriented ufologists. The tendency of *Ouranos* collaborators to take at face value extraordinary testimonies, like those of Adamski, Scully, and others, was the reason for this dissidence.

The border between contacteeism and ufology was also moving. René Fouéré wrote an article for GEPA's bulletin no. 6, which contributed to formulating this new divide, in which he said, "Among those who admit that flying saucers are piloted craft of extraterrestrial origin, a profound divide has been established for years. We find, on one side, passionate followers of Adamski and, on the other side, his firm adversaries" (1964, 3). René Fouéré discussed Adamski's evidence (photographs and testimony about the moon) and found it wanting. He also suggests that Adamski may have been fooled by his extraterrestrial friends. When Adamski died, Fouéré wrote another article (1965) in which he elucidated his reasons for rejecting Adamski's claims. It was not because Adamski was a contactee with an occult-oriented testimony, but because his worldview was nothing new to a philosophy student like Fouéré. At the same time, Fouéré recognized that Adamski's writings did not give him "an impression of a deliberate falsification." He also acknowledged that many people became interested in UFOs because of the publicity generated by Adamski's claims.

Nonetheless, René Fouéré maintained an ecumenical attitude, and even if he was a skeptic, he did not close the door. In contrast, GEPA's bulletin rarely discussed contactees, and it generally ignored contactee claims. Considering the diversity of opinions expressed so far regarding Adamski, it can be noted that the early UFO researchers did not share a common viewpoint. Indeed, René Fouéré withholds concluding anything substantial about Adamski, and this ability not to conclude will become one of the most important behavioral characteristics of ufologists. It serves to differentiate them from both scientists and contactees.

What happened to the first ufologists? Did they hesitate between serious study of ufology and the shadowy world of contactees? Did they vacillate between a scientific and a religious attitude? Perhaps the truth is somewhere else. At first, ufologists did not see any difference between UFO landings and contacts. They could not have known that the contacts belonged to another category because this knowledge required biographies and bibliographies of contactees—a difficult task in the absence

of any sort of network, to say the least. It was necessary to have a library on the subject, and the first investigators had to collect, translate, and publish the available literature. Lacking such a compilation, Thirouin did not know that Adamski was not a professional astronomer and that his address at Mount Palomar, California, had nothing to do with the Mount Palomar Observatory. He did not know that Adamski served as the former guru of a Royal Order of Tibet who channeled information from eastern Ascended Masters in the 1930s, or the leader of an Advanced Thinkers Club that had published his inspired science-fiction novels in the late 1940s. Although it can be argued that taking for granted the story of a meeting with Venusians is already indicative of a questionable research methodology, the controversy over UFOs was new at that time and its ground rules unknown. Thus, little by little, France's first ufologists conceptualized the distinctions between cases they considered legitimate and those they did not.

There is also another area of differentiation between Thirouin, Guieu, Michel, and Fouéré. It is not so much their acceptance or rejection of contactees, but the fact that these divisions were more localized than globally accepted ones. From one group to another, the criteria were not the same and the border shifted elsewhere. Ufologists spent most of their time creating not only differences, but also localized differences; thus, they showed a strong capacity for reopening debates and creating a relativistic universe where every detail could be discussed again and again. What one ufologist said or wrote appeared simply as an opinion, a personal point of view. Michel was apparently one of the few who succeeded in creating a discussion that forced others to develop arguments. Among Thirouin, Guieu, and others in the field discussions appeared to multiply, but nothing like a common shared knowledge emerged before going further. Each new participant started again from zero. Michel himself was at the source of this relativistic policy in ufology. He advised UFO groups like *Lumières dans la Nuit* (LDLN) and UFO journals like GEPAs' *Phénomènes spatiaux* to publish everything so the reader could "judge for himself."⁶ Obviously, scientific journals do not publish everything, because initial selections are challenged and culled by referees and editors. Such an open-door policy defied scientific norms.

However, we should also remark that with the creation of GEPAs and the evolution of groups like LDLN in the late sixties, a divide not only appeared, but it was maintained between UFO cases and contactee cases. Since the discussion on UFO cases can be endlessly reopened, the fact that ufologists put aside contactee cases

6. Information from interviews with Francine Fouéré, 1996.

shows that they considered them to belong to a different domain. The result was not rejection but silence. Contactee cases were not discussed in UFO journals. LDLN did not reply to letters of contactees (Monnet 1978) or persons suspected of being contactees. When the French UFO prophet Raël appeared in the media in 1974, LDLN published a brief note to mention the case without reaching a conclusion regarding its authenticity.

GEPA maintained a boundary between "legitimate" UFO stories and contactees. Their UFO journal, *Phénomènes spatiaux*, published narratives of abductions or close encounters with dramatic details, but they did not publish other stories, for example, of Dr. X, a physician who claimed a UFO miraculously healed wounds on his body. The reason is unclear. Often, the reason given has more to do with "feelings" than with clearly expressed arguments. "We thought the case didn't belong [in] the category of UFOs," recalled Francine Fouéré in an interview.⁷ Therefore, although there seemed to be a clear borderline between UFOs and contactees, closer inspection indicated that discussions became ambiguous, and cases jumped easily from one category to another. So in due course, GEPA sustained a boundary of interpretation between UFO cases and contactees in this collection of data from their publications.

What Contactees Do: Message Versus Evidence

Having described the endeavors and discussions of the first ufologists regarding contactee cases, this study now turns to the 1970s to assess some of the first French contactees. Two cases reflect the relations that existed between contactees and ufologists. These cases will be used to elucidate how ufologists deal with contactees and how contactees construct their rhetoric (how the boundary of interpretation is constructed from their points of view). These dual interpretations show how ufologists and contactees form patterns of divergent logic. Psychological or psychiatric explanations for the contactees will be avoided. Following the methodology used in studying UFO investigators, symmetry must be maintained, and the same kind of explanations used for ufologists and scientists must also be applied to contactees.

The tenuous situation of contactees versus ufologists is best illustrated by Pierre Monnet and Jean Miguères. The case of Monnet remains salient because it provides a systematic comparison between the work of a contactee and the work of a ufologist. The Jean Miguères case shows us how a contactee evolves, how his testimony

7. Information from interviews with Francine Fouéré, 1996.

changes with time, and how a logical narrative that is consistently different from the discussion over "evidence" is constructed.

How a Contactee Group Became a Ufology Group: GREPO

In March 1975, Pierre Monnet founded GREPO, Groupe de Recherche et d'Etude du Phénomène Ovni (Group for the Research and Study of UFO Phenomenon).⁸ Monnet was not a ufologist; on the contrary, he was a contactee. He made his first appearance on the UFO scene around 1972 when he sent a letter to the French UFO group *Lumières dans la Nuit*, to let them know about an extraterrestrial contact he claimed to have had in 1951 in the southeast of France. LDLN did not bother to investigate the case or to reply to the letter. It was only when a Belgian ufologist named Roger Lorthioir, a member of the Fédération Belge d'Ufologie (FBU), rediscovered the letter in LDLN files that the case was reopened ("Contact," 4). Investigators from the FBU met Monnet on June 7, 1974, and they accompanied him to the place of contact. Their first report then appeared in *Ouranos* in a series of articles on contactees signed by a pseudonymous Pierre Ensia (1974).

What did happen to Monnet? While on a bicycle ride one night in July 1951 in the little town of Courthezon, Monnet was suddenly teleported five kilometers to the entrance of a large, deep rock quarry. As if under hypnosis, Monnet entered the area, where he saw a light some sixty meters ahead. A metallic craft radiated light, and as Monnet drew closer, background noise disappeared. He then realized that along one side of the craft stood four humanlike beings who then initiated a telepathic discussion.

Monnet wrote to several UFO authors, such as Jimmy Guieu, Guy Tarade, and Jean-Claude Bourret, and decided to establish a UFO group known as the GREPO in March 1975.⁹ What happened with GREPO is of interest. From Monnet's point of view, and as he explained later to members of the group, he started GREPO to learn about other extraterrestrial encounters because he wanted, above all, to have an-

8. See "Contact," a special issue of *Vaucluse Ufologie* (no. 2: 1979, 19). *Vaucluse Ufologie* is the name of an amateurish UFO magazine, which had several special issues. One of these was called "Contact." There were no authors cited for the issues. Further citations to page numbers for this issue are given in the text.

9. See "Editorial," a special issue of *Vaucluse Ufologie*, no. 8 (May 1978). Further citations for this issue are given in the text.



9.2. In 1975, Pierre Monnet founded GREPO, a French UFO research group. He later left the group. In 1978, he published *Les extra-terrestres m'ont dit* (The extraterrestrials told me). Courtesy of the Mary Evans Picture Library.

other meeting with the aliens. He wanted to renew the contact initiated in 1951 ("Contact," 11).

A young UFO buff named Jean Manuel Cervantès and another ufologist, Christian Langlumé, joined GREPO in November 1975. Although the membership slowly grew, the situation did not last because despite the fact that the members were newcomers to the field of ufology, their motive was to investigate, not to become followers of a contactee. In 1976, Langlumé left GREPO to set up SOVEPS (Société vaclusienne d'Etude des Phénomènes spatiaux). At the end of that same year, GREPO planned to publish a journal called *Infor Ovni*, but it never did. Monnet communicated with other UFO groups with the goal of creating a French UFO Federation (Fédération française d'ufologie). However, as a contactee, other ufologists did not take him seriously, and they did not trust him as a UFO researcher ("Editorial," no. 8). In December 1976, a discouraged Monnet gave up all his projects, left ufology, and quit GREPO ("abandonna tout projet, l'ufologie, et le GREPO"; "Editorial," no. 11). He left GREPO, which then became a "normal" UFO group ("Contact," 12), and GREPO changed its status to a local delegation for LDLN, GEOS (Groupe d'Etude des Objets spatiaux), and the CUFOS-France (a later controversial French delegation of the Center for UFO Studies). In 1978, Monnet finally published a book on his contact experience under the title, *Les extra-terrestres m'ont dit* (The extraterrestrials told me).

However, what is interesting is that since the GREPO investigators had access to Monnet in 1979, they published a report on his case. This report helps to explicate the divergent logic of Monnet and of his fellow ufologists. The investigators wanted to weigh the evidence for the case and find it weak. They checked each of Monnet's claims and each time they found the evidence lacking or inconclusive. From their report, it is clear that they were not motivated by some sinister agenda. They did not draw any conclusions, only discussed their available hypotheses: fraud, pathological case, implausibility, and so on.

After detailing the story of Monnet's contact and what happened afterward, in particular his numerous claims of telepathic communications, the GREPO investigators discussed the available hypotheses. One investigator discussed the habitability of the star from which Monnet's extraterrestrials originated. The report also took note of the striking similarities between the content of Monnet's story and details from the movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, released the year of his contact, 1951. They did this for a good reason: Pierre Monnet had repeatedly told them that he had seen the movie in 1951 and several times since ("Contact," 43). They compared his case with that of another contactee known under the code name of Roméo-Charlie. In the report, Lilyane Troadec provided a portrait of Roméo-Charlie that took into account psychological, graphological, and astrological data. In this report, the investigators repeatedly mentioned the fact that Roméo-Charlie had come back from Indochina because of a "nervous breakdown." They wondered if there might be a psychiatric aspect to Monnet's adventure, but they do not conclude this in the end.

On several occasions, the investigators regretted that Monnet had so little interest in finding evidence to support his claims. It is, in fact, what surprised them most, particularly because they had done UFO field investigations with Monnet on other cases and found that he was "an excellent investigator." Nevertheless, Monnet soon returned to his position as a contactee, and several times his behavior surprised the members of the group. On one occasion, in particular, the members of the group had the opportunity to see a UFO and even took a picture of it. Their report remarked that each time Monnet had the opportunity to find empirical evidence, he turned away from it.

The need to maintain symmetry here requires that any discussion of lack of proof is balanced by an understanding of what proof meant for the members of GREPO and conversely for Monnet. Two enigmas emerge here: the investigation by the ufologists and the construction of Monnet's personal contact story. We do not need psychology to explain the situation, but only to understand why ufologists and contactees construct different definitions for the same things. The solution appears

when we compare the report by GREPO and the book by Monnet. The GREPO report always focused on the evidence without attention to the extraterrestrial message. On the contrary, there was no discussion of the evidence in Monnet's book, and all the pages were devoted to a careful description of the contact and the messages received.

Monnet maintained that his contact was a real experience, and he said that he double-checked to make sure *it was real and not a dream*. He also offered criteria to formulate a difference between real contactees and hoaxers and said he did not want to be thought of as a cult or sect leader. Monnet and his former ufologist friends constructed their realities differently. As soon as Monnet claimed his experience was real, he moved to the discussion of the messages, while in contrast the ufologists from GREPO shifted away from the messages, preferring instead to devote their time to discussing the available hard evidence—ultimately finding it weak.

Monnet reacted strongly and bitterly to the publication of GREPO's report on his case. He sent a letter to the group stating that he was hurt by the text and by their desire to debunk his story.¹⁰ While his former friends remained UFO investigators and participated in UFO groups, Monnet left the UFO milieu to create the *Ordre de la Chevalerie de l'Etoile d'argent* (Knighthood Order of the Silver Star), and he published a newsletter called *L'Etoile d'argent* (*The Silver Star*) in the 1980s.¹¹

Jean Miguères: Relations Between a Contactee and Ufology

On Tuesday, July 28, 1992, a man was shot and killed by his stepfather on the streets of Lyon, France. This man was Jean Miguères, one of the most famous French contactees.¹² Born in 1940 in Algiers, Miguères achieved fame after the publication of his first book in 1977, *J'ai été le cobaye des extra-terrestres* (I was the guinea pig of the extraterrestrials). In it, Miguères told his readers that extraterrestrials first contacted him as he was about to crash the ambulance that he was driving. He claimed that while he was still in the wreckage a strange entity appeared near him, spoke to him, and put a small disc on his neck that regenerated his body.

After the accident, Miguères was rushed to the hospital, where he endured vari-

10. His letter is reproduced in *Vaucluse Ufologie*, no. 17 (Mar. 1980).

11. See Jean-Pierre Troadec in "Des ambassades extra-terrestres en France," *Nostra* 20 (Jan., 1983): 8–10.

12. See *Le Progrès*, July 30, 1992. See also Jean-Pierre Troadec (1992).

ous medical exams and surgical interventions. According to him, he should have died of his injuries, but instead he miraculously survived three clinical deaths. In the book, he provided medical affidavits detailing his injuries, as well as psychiatric evaluations concluding that he was quite sane. The meticulous description of these events and what transpired later fill more than a hundred pages of the book.

In the second part of the book, Jean Miguères transcribes the extraterrestrial messages he received while again in the hospital in 1970. He also describes his subsequent search for people who could help him understand what was happening to him. While hospitalized, he asked his wife to find him a book on UFOs. She brought him Guy Tarade's *Soucoupes volantes et civilisations d'outre espace* (Flying saucers and outer-space civilizations). When Miguères decided to write Tarade, he received a quick reply asking for some kind of evidence. Guy Tarade asked Jean Miguères to invite his alien friend to fly a saucer above Nice between January 15 and 31, 1971. Miguères sent a telepathic message to the extraterrestrials and waited. Then, on February 20, 1971, Miguères was surprised to receive a letter from Tarade explaining that he had seen a UFO.

In 1973, Jean Miguères became a member of Tarade's CEREIC (Centre d'Etude et de Recherches d'Elements inconnus de la Civilisation, or the Center for the Study and Research of Unknown Elements of Civilization), and he was promoted to the rank of vice president two years later. Miguères became friends with some of Tarade's colleagues, like Jimmy Guieu. He began speaking in public and met Alain Lefevre, a reporter from *L'Espoir Hebdo*, who wrote a paper on him and later became his publisher.

In his book, Jean Miguères (1977) explains that he went through several mutations: a physical mutation, which he claims everyone could see, a deep physiological mutation, and a psychic mutation, which was far more difficult to explain to other people, but which had a profound effect on him. He also mentioned how he discovered that he had a "strange power" to heal people.

In a brief conclusion, Jean Miguères reveals that in 1975 he had received a telepathic message from his alien friends regarding an artificial planet they had in orbit between Venus and Earth. Then, while reading the newspaper in January 1976, Miguères learned that American astronomer Charles Kowal had discovered a small planet in that orbit.

Several pages are devoted to reproductions of documents and pictures including medical documents to verify condition; affidavits from photographers and ufologists; pictures of Miguères with people he had the opportunity to meet; TV and radio shows that he appeared on; and the many articles written about him in maga-

zines. Miguères and his publisher seemed intent to show the reader that the author was already well-known, respected, and taken seriously.

In his first book, he urges the reader to judge his story from the proof given, and it seems he was preoccupied with producing the available evidence to back up his claims. Miguères notes that his contemporaries are skeptical and need evidence, and he admits that his attitude would be similar. In his second book, *Le cobaye des extraterrestres face aux scientifiques* (The extraterrestrials' guinea pig faces the scientists), Miguères describes what happened to him after the publication of his initial book. He also devotes a discussion to his relations with French scientists. Then, in the second part of the book, he describes how he met Canadian and American scientists. He points out that in contrast to the French scientists the Canadians believed him. He then moves to revelations about his extraterrestrial contact that he refrained from publishing in his first book, in particular the transcript of an interview (remembered under hypnosis) in which he takes on the personality of an alien called Strôb. He also describes his experiences with the representatives of the Conspiracy of Silence, the so-called Men in Black, a government intelligence agency, and a private UFO group that was acting under sinister orders to suppress information. He informs his readers that he has changed since his first contact experience in 1969. From the first to the second book, Miguères moves his emphasis from one of evidence to one of skepticism, and more important, to an accusation of a government and scientific cover-up. At the same time, Miguères explains how he has changed—he no longer considers himself purely human.

Miguères published his third book, 1996: *La Révélation*, in 1987. It takes a step further in the constructing of the narrative of Jean Miguères as the messenger of the aliens. Miguères is no longer one who has experienced the UFO phenomenon and who looks to the expertise of ufologists. He is finished giving proof of what happened to him. The book is entirely dedicated to the transcript of his message from the aliens.

In 1996: *La Révélation*, Jean Miguères shifts to another kind of evidence. On several occasions, he insists that the reader must decide the truth of his story on a personal basis. Jean Miguères suppresses the distinction between fact and fiction. In order to attain this goal, he introduces distance between himself and his alien alter ego, Strôb, writing his book as though it were fictional. Anticipating discrepancies between the content of this book and his preceding books, and to forestall difficulties that the reader might encounter, Miguères explains that it was good that he purposely blurred the picture (“c’est bien à dessein que j’ai ‘brouillé les cartes’ ”) (1978, 42).

What is of special interest in Miguères' case is the evolution from his first book to his third and last. Although he always speaks of evidence, he always constructs a new message in a new context, and thus, his notion of evidence is amassed in a predominantly religious way. He shifts more and more from "scientific proof" to the idea that one must look within to find the answer. Incrementally from his first to third book, he moved away from the ufologists and scientists and from their discussions of evidence. Many ufologists concluded that it was a hoax, while others continued to consider Miguères a genuine contactee. Thus, as noted in other cases, while ufologists can hold diverse points of view, debates over unseen evidence are lost in the case of Miguères, whose message is ever more elaborate, and who is not the same person/contactee from one book to the next.

We have described how ufologists discuss contactee cases, always reopening them, never concluding, and we have compared the logic of UFO investigators and contactees and have seen how a contactee can move from the position of an investigator to that of a messenger for the aliens. We have also noted how contactees presented their stories, which evolve from their first encounters with the aliens to the construction of their key messages. The discussion now turns to scientists and how they deal with contactees in a prominent case study. This discussion will emphasize the differences between scientists and ufologists. To place this discussion in perspective, it must be noted that few scientists actually study UFO phenomena because of the stigma attached to it.

What Scientists Do: The Construction of Networks

In November 1979, the French media revealed that a young man from the Paris suburbs named Franck Fontaine had been abducted at Cergy-Pontoise. Two of his friends, Jean-Pierre Prévost and Salomon N'Diaye, testified about his disappearance. The media explored that angle, while the police, suspecting some more sinister event, searched the area (dragging the river, etc.). Franck Fontaine had completely vanished. Exactly one week later, Fontaine reappeared, apparently, at the same spot from which he originally disappeared. From then on, the controversy took a new turn because of the ufological aspects of the account. Although initially Fontaine remembered few details of his abduction, everything changed when *Paris-Match*, the French equivalent of *Life* magazine, offered a significant amount of money for an exclusive story complete with details of the abduction (de Brosse 1979). Suddenly, Fontaine began to remember details. Shortly, a GEPAN team arrived at Cergy-Pontoise to investigate.

GEPAN (Le Groupe D'Étude des Phénomènes Aérospatiaux Nonidentifiés, or the Group for the Study of Unidentified Aerospace Phenomena) was founded in May 1977 thanks to the efforts of Claude Poher, an engineer with a keen sense of science policy.¹³ Poher did a statistical study of eight hundred UFO cases that helped influence the National Space Center (CNES), the French equivalent of NASA, to conclude that the subject could be studied with some promise. As the military had been in charge of collecting UFO reports since the beginning of the modern UFO era, and more systematically since 1974, they decided that a copy of each report would go to Poher. For a year or two, he worked alone on the subject, and then in 1977 his work was officially recognized with the creation of GEPAN. A team of scientists from the CNES agreed to participate in this venture in their spare time. Hence, they produced a series of field investigations and statistical research projects.

However, Poher left GEPAN in 1978, and Alain Esterle, a young, highly trained engineer became the new director. Under Alain Esterle, GEPAN published a series of monographs detailing case investigations, statistical studies, psychological experiments, and research on propulsion systems as in the field of magneto-hydrodynamics. This was because several scientists, most notably, French physicist Jean-Pierre Petit, had suggested that this could explain certain enigmas attributed to UFOs (absence of sonic booms, changes of colors, and sudden right-angle adjustments in trajectory).¹⁴ In 1983, CNES decided to put an end to the GEPAN venture and closed its office, replacing it with a new service much reduced in scope, called SEPRA (Atmospheric Reentries Phenomena Expertise Service). Candidly speaking, SEPRA is what is known in French bureaucratic slang as a *placard*, a facade. It has practically no budget, half a secretary (no secretary during several periods), and very few technicians or help from other services.

With the Franck Fontaine abduction at Cergy-Pontoise, GEPAN wanted to check the details of the case, in particular to submit the abductee to several medical tests. For instance, if Fontaine had gone into space, his blood pressure would have been altered. This "test of the cosmonaut," as journalist Robert Roussel (1994) called it, was never performed because of the reluctance of the abductee. (Of course, cos-

13. On the history of GEPAN, see Robert Roussel (1994). See also Perry Petrakis's 1998 interview with Claude Poher in *Phénomène* (Poher 1998).

14. For a personal account of Jean-Pierre Petit's relations with GEPAN, see Jean-Pierre Petit (1990).

monauts, astronauts, and more precisely, *spationauts* in French, do not pass medical exams to prove they have been to space.) Several other unsuccessful attempts at verification ultimately led the investigators to conclude that the case was a crude hoax. Hence, GEPAN published in 1981 its report and conclusion in a monograph, entitled "Note technique no. 6," which was available to the public.¹⁵

However, the story did not end there. Apart from GEPAN, the witnesses also met with private UFO researchers, and more important, Jimmy Guieu. After writing his first two books in the fifties, Guieu kept on studying UFOs, and after Marc Thirouin's death in 1972, remained with *Ouranos* for a while. In the late seventies, he founded a new group, the IMSA (World Institute for Advanced Studies). Upon hearing about the Fontaine case, Guieu went to Cergy-Pontoise to investigate. In April 1980, he published a book coauthored by Fontaine and his two friends (Guieu et al. 1980). In this book, they say that the Cergy-Pontoise story is authentic; moreover, the real contactee was not Franck Fontaine, but his friend Jean-Pierre Prévost. Under hypnosis, Prévost had discovered how he had been contacted, and that the extraterrestrials wanted to work through him. Jimmy Guieu opened the book by attacking GEPAN and its methods. For Guieu, GEPAN was another Condon Committee. Physicist Edward U. Condon, who directed an official study in the United States, between 1966 and 1969 concluded that nothing scientific could be gained from maintaining a study of UFOs (Condon and Gillmor 1969). Many considered this action an official attempt at covering up the issue of UFOs, and the Cergy-Pontoise case looked like a similar cover-up.

After Guieu published his book, a number of French ufologists concluded the same thing that GEPAN did. In their minds, the Cergy-Pontoise alien abduction appeared to be a hoax. The case became the special interest of a private group named Control, headed by Michel Piccin, who was living in the area and did an extensive investigation from the outset. But here again, we see a difference in the work of amateur and professional scientists, although it has nothing to do with the quality of research, but rather with the duration of the debate and the ability to reopen the case. For these scientific investigators, that meant the end of the story, and no one reopened the case. Control similarly issued a document with full details of the encounter that also concluded that it was a hoax.¹⁶ Michel Piccin even collaborated on

15. The source for this information is Esterle et al. (1981).

16. The source for this information is Marcel Piccin's *Cergy-Pontoise*, which was privately published in 1982.

several articles written by Hilary Evans that were published in the magazines, *The Unexplained* and *Fate*.¹⁷ In 1983, Jean-Pierre Prévost, who had left the group and the influence of Guieu, explained (most ufologists say “revealed”) that the entire affair was a hoax.

From then on, most UFO researchers definitively put the Cergy-Pontoise case in the hoax category, but certain other ufologists simply ignored Control and GEPAN’s conclusions, touting the case as a real abduction or suggesting other scenarios to explain it. An important characteristic of ufology appears here: the impossibility to conclude or to have everyone in agreement about a particular case. Earlier, we discussed how ufologists in the fifties expressed different views on George Adamski, but with the passage of time, it seemed that this ability to keep a case open indefinitely became a characteristic of the milieu. In ufology, for each case and for each research topic there is always someone who reopens the discussion or who publishes a new book with fresh revelations. There is always someone who has another opinion or another interpretation of the same facts, and this opinion can end up in a book or article only to launch a new controversy. Adamski was no exception, and Cergy-Pontoise is no exception, either. For years after the publication of GEPAN’s work and Control’s articles and reports, and even after Jean-Pierre Prévost had confessed to the hoax, Jimmy Guieu continued to say that the case was authentic, and he continued to publish articles about UFO incidents occurring in the area.

In the meantime, rumors spread that the case was not a real abduction but actually a government deception. Jacques Vallee (1979) published *Masters of Deception* in which he claimed that the Cergy-Pontoise case was much more complicated than the investigators stated. While there was no UFO abduction, government agents engaged in a deceptive program had abducted Fontaine. Since there are no official spokespersons for ufology, the state of ufological interpretation varies according to who is speaking. Even today, people debate Vallee’s theory on Cergy-Pontoise, which he reiterated in a later book called *Revelations* (1991). Vallee and others with additional theories about Men in Black (MIBs) helped to keep the case open.

17. See Hilary Evans (1982a, 1982b). Also see Hilary Evans and Michel Piccin (1982). Editor’s note: For photos and more details on the Cergy-Pontoise case, see Richard Williams (1991). Numerous Web sites discuss Cergy-Pontoise and some have pictures. In reaction to Guieu, Jean-Pierre Prévost wrote his own book, *The Truth about the Cergy-Pontoise Affair*. He attracted followers and formed an organization. Before he ever admitted it was a hoax, a large number of his followers assembled in a field in 1980 to greet the saucers.

Case Closed?

For GEPAN, these endless discussions had no appeal. GEPAN considered the case closed and moved on to other questions. The Cergy-Pontoise case became a black hole labeled a hoax. Theoretically, a scientific case can be reopened, but a scientist needs very good reasons, and more important, he or she needs funding, an approved project, colleagues, and laboratory tools to function. If a scientist reopens a case for reasons that are not shared by colleagues, that scientist can be labeled a maverick and run into professional trouble. In comparison, it is much easier to reopen a case in ufology. However, even if ufologists use categories to differentiate "serious" from "not so serious" ufologists, the absence of a global ufological network makes it far more difficult for UFO investigators because they usually work on the margins of respected research. In contrast to established researchers, ufologists usually take their cases to the public, and there is a greater tendency on their parts to proliferate divergent points of view outside accepted academic science.

The contactee stories mentioned earlier are just a few examples. However, they are special because they show the socially constructed divisions between ufologists and scientists, and thus, help to clarify the differences between their respective methodologies. Since the seventies, there have been many other cases. Of course, Raël (Claude Vorilhon) is the most famous (Palmer 1995, 1998, 2003, 2004) with his International Raëlian Movement, although many other new groups have coalesced around messages from aliens. Despite the claim of teaching the ultimate heavenly science, Raël has been of more interest to social scientists than to physical scientists. Most of the newer contactees had no prior relationships with ufologists. Both methodologies (ufology and science) led to the publication of books and journals, but the participants did not associate with one another. Of course, they knew of each other but they did not engage in dialogue, except, for example, when contactees like Raël made headlines. Therefore, when ufologists began to investigate contact cases in the eighties, they did so from more or less a sociological perspective and sometimes from a psychiatric stance (Troadek 1983) because some had preconceived ideas about the abnormal origin of the phenomenon.

Conclusion

Good scholarship requires that we present the two versions of UFO investigation that were most generally used when describing the divisions amongst ufologists, scientists, and contactees in France, although it must be noted that both versions are

biased. The first version describes the contactees as following a path fraught with ambushes from the obstinate scientific rationalists and the ufologists. The rationalists and certain ufologists are unwilling to recognize the existence of privileged close encounters with extraterrestrials. The second prejudicial version of the story proceeds as if the contactees had made mistakes and persisted in their errors. Worse, they had been just a bunch of lunatics and liars. Of these two narratives, the second version is the one most often presented, as noted in the beginning of this article with the work of David Jacobs. He and others object to the publicity sought by contactees, and their lack of submission to self-appointed ufological authorities. Nevertheless, the two versions contain similarities.

When disbelief is suspended regarding the existence or nonexistence of UFOs and alien contact, the possibility arises of describing how the actors went about reaching their conclusions. As in the case of the French contactees, all the necessary phenomenological explanations are provided by the social actors themselves. Scientists and many ufologists doubt the stories of the contactees because they "know" that psychological explanations account for their sightings. The contactees, in turn, doubt the explanations given by the scientists and ufologists, and they prefer to ally themselves with other people who seem to accept their accounts. More important, we have seen how the actors can shift from one world to another. Ufologists were not always severely critical of contactees, and contactees have spent some of their time discussing evidence.

Straddling the borderline between the two intellectual territories in ufology, Pierre Monnet could simultaneously be both a contactee and a UFO investigator. A ufologist can be a skeptic and a UFO advocate; a scientist can work in a laboratory and become a cultist upon emergence from the lab. How do people believe in contradictory things and move from one world of interpretation to another? Each day we have access to sundry social worlds. This access allows us to understand how people can live in different worlds concurrently, and be at the same time astronomers and ufologists—or ufologists and cultists. The actors must not be judged as backward or progressive, rigorous or frivolous, honest or dishonest, but as equally understandable within the context of their aims.

While there is no evidence of any kind supporting the existence of a "Great Divide" (Goody 1977) between scientific thinking and other systems of thought like ufology or contacteeism, there is considerable evidence for the existence of numerous yet small material discrepancies between the social actors and their different social worlds. It is normative for ufologists to adopt this view in their efforts to distinguish themselves from people they reject, and we have described how these

perceived differences were formulated. However, it is not wise for historians or sociologists to take for granted such divisions that are socially constructed and not a priori, since they know these divisions are the actual results of historic negotiation and controversy.

However, the existence of interpretive differences is a fact. The question arises, What really happened, and what are the interpretive differences amongst scientists, ufologists, and contactees? Reviewing the particularities of each category of actors, scientists must end controversies; therefore, they reduce the number of hypotheses and actors. As Latour would say, the characteristics of scientists exist in their ability to multiply black boxes. They can do this thanks to the proliferation of instruments of measurement and empirical validation. It can be argued that scientists do not think, nor do they look at reality. Instead, scientists build instruments and fill the world with them. From their perspective, their instruments document an objective reality, as opposed to the notion that their brains and their processes of interpretation construct a situated *reality*. Resultantly, this *reality* is not seen by the scientists themselves, who instead, look at diagrams and data trails emanating from their instruments. As Latour explained, an instrument can be either a technical tool or a human being, but it has to be disciplined to perform a given task. When a scientist diverges from the accepted paradigm, this excludes him or her from acceptance and proper consideration. The divide between what is scientific and what is not was invented for that purpose.

In contrast, ufologists multiply the number of hypotheses and encourage unconventional thinkers. Ufology also provides numerous arguments and controversies against the establishment and within its own ranks, but the divisions never really work, and they are not maintained for very long. Hence, people considered by other researchers to be cranks or debunkers are much more difficult to exclude from the discussion. Thus the controversy is prolonged. The border between who is or is not a ufologist is much more difficult to define than the border between who is or is not a scientist. An important characteristic of many segments of ufology is the quasi-absence of laboratories and technical instruments. For example, the debate remains the same now as in 1947 over the objectivity of testimonies because the witnesses are simply that, witnesses, and not equipped observers. Thus, ufology now comprises a world of debates in which few nonhuman instruments are involved; hence, it lacks those very instruments that render possible the closure of scientific controversies.¹⁸

18. To see how scientists close controversies, win over their colleagues, and move rapidly from one subject to another, see the classic work by Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of French Society* (1993).

Accordingly, it is rare to reach the end of UFO controversies, and, most of the time, they appear to just start up again after a while. This leads to two questions. Why is it so difficult to "learn" something "positive" about UFOs? Why is it so difficult to add new knowledge to existent knowledge without always reopening the discussion?¹⁹ French astronomer Pierre Guérin says that ufology is characterized by a simple law: each new fact debunks the preceding facts. Guérin's law is a sociological law that explains a characteristic of ufology: the impossibility of coming to a conclusion. Each new thinker discredits the facts submitted by previous thinkers, as each new commission debunks the assessments of earlier commissions. This could be viewed as a negative effect; however, the analyst need not be a judge of what is right or wrong regarding the behavior of the actors. Because science is considered the frame of reference for our reality, this description of the perpetual state of controversy within UFO groups appears negative to many observers.

However, this aspect of ufology could also be seen as a positive attribute. If the chief characteristic of ufologists is their ability to multiply controversies without ever concluding any of them, then ufologists can be viewed as being quite open-minded, and much more open to contradiction. In fact, they encourage the propagation of other views. With that in mind, they build few barriers between what is normal and what is not; when they do construct such cordons, they do not last. Research indicates that the diversity of beliefs of UFO adherents is widespread, eclectic, and inconsistent; they all have firm beliefs, but they never agree. Thus, the views proliferate instead of reducing in numbers.

The focal point is that those who suggest new ideas never construct them in such a way as to end the debate. It may be that this proliferation of hypotheses and controversies is owing to ufology's not being constructed *en dur* (in a hard or solid manner), and that the arguments are not structured along the same lines of strategy used in science. A good scientist is one who builds an argument in such a way that colleagues feel obliged not only to take it into account, but to abandon their own arguments in favor of it. Scientists attain this end thanks to their instruments, funding, and the like (Latour 1995). In contrast, the ideal form of a good ufologist is one who suggests a new hypothesis that exercises no constraints, whatsoever, on the

19. A perfectly clear example of a UFO discussion that is always reopened is the famous and premier Ken Arnold case. Almost every year someone comes forward with a new explanation for this case, and the Internet has helped in this regard. Even the most select Internet newsgroups, like the Project 1947 Discussion List (invitation only), carry many discussions on this classic case without any ufologist ever succeeding in putting an end to the controversy.

work of others. Therefore, a good ufological argument does not generate mere interest, but passion.

Distinctively, contactees are not building networks like scientists, and they are not focusing on controversial evidence like ufologists. What are they doing? How can we maintain a nonreductionist definition of contactees when they repeatedly change their stories and fabricate details? The temptation to assign psychological explanations should be mitigated by remembering Bloor and the Zande: what appears contradictory (asking to be believed while fabricating a story) may have a normal explanation. Remembering that the actors themselves should do the analysis, then, what are they saying and doing?

Returning to the celebrated contactee George Adamski, when speaking of his claims ufologists always focus on his photographs. For the ufologist, any doubt regarding the authenticity of the alien saucer photographed by Adamski precludes any further discussion of his experience. In spite of this, we should not ask, Why do contactees have so little evidence? Rather, we should pose the question, Why are ufologists so fascinated by evidence, when it seems that it is of so little import to contactees and their followers?

For the contactee and for those involved in contactee religions, the discussion over scientific proof is secondary and thus is not a sign of either honesty or dishonesty. Even if the photographs are forgeries, the message still has meaning. There is an example that clearly shows how a contactee can consider the message to be more important than how it is obtained. In a work that compares scientific and religious rhetoric, Bruno Latour (1990) shows that the scientific and religious modes of transmitting a message are different. In science, the source of the data must be clear, and the researchers must be able to put in a straight line all the *maillons de la chaîne* (links in the chain). Conversely, what is important in religion is the meaning of the message for the listener. The message has meaning here and now for the reader, it is not simply the last representative of a long chain of mediations. The message must transform the reader rather than construct an external reality. In contrast, in science the message must remain the same all along; in religion, the message can change depending on the context, but its meaning should remain the same.

In their book on George Adamski, Swiss follower Lou Zinsstag and Timothy Good (1983) revealed how Adamski had reprocessed (in the context of his Venusian contacts) messages he had previously used decades before in another context, those of the Royal Order of Tibet. Adamski had simply changed the words "Royal Order of Tibet" to the words "Space Brothers." It is impossible for a UFO investigator (or scientist or journalist) to give credence to a fabricated narrative such as this. To better

understand the contactee's position, we should refrain from asking, How can Adamski take his followers as fools and fake what he is saying? Instead, it would be more useful to inquire, Why is source of so little importance to Adamski that the same message can be attributed to both Tibetan masters and Venusian philosophers?

In *Watch the Skies! A Chronicle of the Flying Saucer Myth*, aviation historian Curtis Peebles describes how Adamski's claims were challenged and shown to be fraudulent. In lectures, George Adamski asserted that his material had been cleared by the FBI. Then, when confronted by the FBI, he denied making the claim. However, he provided a letter signed by three FBI agents in order to stop certain rumors regarding fake documents. In 1955, James Moseley revealed that most of Adamski's claims did not accurately reflect what was supposed to have happened (Peebles 1994). The witnesses he quoted had not, in fact, seen what he alleged in his book, which had been "edited, expanded, and improved" by a friend. Additionally, Adamski took pictures, which he then attributed to others.

In either a ufological or scientific context, this lack of evidence can be devastating. In a contactee context, it only illustrates that a book by a contactee should not be read like a scientific paper. Readers of scientific papers are supposed to be able to reopen every black box constructed by the author to discuss its content and mode of production; if they cannot check every detail, then there is a problem. In contrast, books by contactees are not required to pass this inspection, because they are meant to inspire. Hence, deconstructing Adamski's proofs is secondary because the logic of George Adamski's behavior and message is elsewhere.

When skeptics read Jean Miguères' book and see how the content evolves, changes, and even contradicts what the author first said, they can only offer a medical diagnosis on the case or unmask the hoax perpetrated by Miguères.²⁰ Nevertheless, for Miguères this evolutionary change in his basic story is not a problem. On the contrary, it is what makes the transmission of the message possible, and like Miguères, the reader must be transformed by the message. Typically, in his first book, Miguères shows a poor quality picture of the wreckage of his ambulance, and he says that he sees a face and a man with an oxygen mask. However, the picture was taken several days after he was removed from the wreckage. For the UFO investigator, this is evidence that the contactee is either insane or assuming his readers are

20. See the papers published by UFO researcher and longtime Miguères adversary Perry Petrakis in a UFO magazine, *Bulletin de l'AESV*, which became *Ovni-Présence* (in particular no. 10, Apr. 1979, and no. 25, Mar. 1983). OVNI or Ovni means UFO in French.

particularly gullible. But the author is only maintaining the meaning of the message; he is constructing in another context and through other means.

Following Pierre Monnet's case, we discover that his meeting incorporated details very similar to the movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, which he viewed in 1951. Thus, more doubts arise. Is this a similar situation to Adamski's in which the American contactee first wrote a science-fiction novel, and then incorporated details from it into his contactee story? Perhaps, but we can only begin to understand why contactees mix the different genres of fiction and reality in an effort to attain their goals if we stop looking for evidence.

When learning English, it is unimportant if the sentence—My tailor is rich—refers to any reality. The task is to learn English through examples. It seems that here we have a similar situation as evinced by the sentence—My tailor is from Venus. The task for the student is to understand. Of course, unlike the English teacher who does not claim to have met the tailor, the contactee claims to have had a meeting with the Venusian. Nevertheless, the reality is embedded within the message, rather than the evidential documentation of the experience. Had they irrefutable evidence, contactees would submit themselves to UFO investigations instead of recruiting followers. Thus, the sentence is not as real as a scientific formula, nor is it entirely fictional because the narrative is used as a learning tool. It only becomes real when people agree to be changed by the meaning of the narrative. Another comparable situation is that of medieval exempla, which were mentioned earlier. Preachers would tell the tales of ahistorical biblical sinners in order to pass the message on to believers. Thus, the desire to check the reality of the tales dulls the point because the importance lies somewhere else within the structure of religious belief.²¹

It is necessary to understand the practical differences between contactees' construction of reality and that of ufologists or scientists. It is intriguing to see how contactees use their logic when forced to answer questions on evidence. Because they are constantly obliged to shift from scientific evidence to the content of their message, the situation appears rather complicated. For instance, similar to Miguères and Monnet, the 1950s American contactee Howard Menger was another perfect example of how contactees change their stories. Initially, Menger said he met an alien woman. Then, when faced with the need for evidence, he shifted, saying that the meeting was an allegory. The circumstances appear rather difficult for the con-

21. See Bremond, Le Goff, and Schmitt (1982); see also pages 170–203 and in particular pages 189–90 in Berlouz (1990).

tactee. The contactee hears so much about science and evidence that he or she almost accepts the vocabulary of adversaries, thereby producing the type of evidence that cannot help but make the critics' case.²²

The contactee, the ufologist, and the scientist—all live in parallel worlds of interpretation and meaning, alien to one another. In the collective process of the social construction of knowledge of UFOs, their worlds separated along boundaries of meaning and methodology. The French case reveals the ways that saucerism divided into different territories with few border crossings. By deconstructing the case of French saucerism, we can better understand how boundaries of interpretation cordoned off and defend as real the internal logic that constructed them in the first place. This exercise will help us analyze what we call science and what we call parascience in a more balanced fashion.

Will the last person to leave the social studies of UFOs please turn on the tape recorder?

22. There is a considerable difference between the way science is described and used as rhetoric by skeptics and the way it is used in actual scientific practice. For an illustration of the use of science as rhetoric by CSICOP and its limit when skeptics are obliged to move from discussion to practice, see Pinch and Collins (1984).