

Irving is taken up with background material and appendices. A valuable feature of the Ertel/Irving volume is a lengthy summary of the entire controversy at the beginning of the book. The contrast between the accuracy of Irving's summary of the facts and the summary in the preface by Paul Kurtz in the beginning of Benski could hardly be more extreme. In fact, it would be worth buying the Ertel/Irving book just to get this summary. Equally valuable and revealing is a chronology of the French study, which one will find in Ertel/Irving but not in Benski. Ertel/Irving also contain a chronology of the recent study and its background. Those interested in the background to the Benski book will find this instructive.

These books display very different attitudes toward the Mars Effect data, a difference I think worth remarking upon. Benski wants the Mars Effect to go away. Their argument is that enough time has been spent on the Mars Effect without real payoff. Now it is time to forget the whole thing, except as a footnote. In fact, they compare the Mars Effect to N-rays and polywater. If one accepts their data and remarks at face value, it is hard to reach any other conclusion. If one were to read only this book, it would be hard to take the Mars Effect seriously. Only those familiar with the players would choke over the statement that the study was done "without *a priori* beliefs." Are we really expected to believe this?

The attitude of the Ertel/Irving book is very different. The authors think that there is a tenacious Mars Effect, that research should focus on where this effect manifests itself, and adopt a program to highlight and illuminate the workings of this (and similar) effects. In other words, rather than trying to close debate, their research invites continued inquiry. It is noteworthy that Ertel had previously done considerable work on the Gauquelin data, showing their weaknesses as well as their strengths. I like this attitude. I do not know whether there is a Mars Effect, but if there is one, its workings are more likely to be illuminated by the hard and unremitting labors of Suitbert Ertel than by the sort of committee work evident in Benski and his associates. There are too many unanswered questions here to turn away from this subject, and truth will not be served by pretending that the issues have been resolved when in fact they remain.

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Glyphbreaker by Steven Roger Fischer. New York: Copernicus/Springer, 1997. 240 pp., ill. About \$25. ISBN 0-387-98241-8.

Investigating anomalies offers great challenges. One seeks to study what the consensus of scholarship or science asserts to be spurious or impossible. Any progress is dismissed if it contradicts established views. Very rarely can one

make a living as a teacher or researcher while engaged primarily in pursuit of anomalies.

On all these grounds, anomalist researchers will be able to empathize with Steven Roger Fischer. He became fascinated by the challenge of two undeciphered scripts in unknown languages: the apparently hieroglyphic script of the Minoan Phaistos Disk and, on the other side of the world, the Rongorongo Script of Easter Island. The conventional wisdom says that decipherment is possible only of an unknown script recording a known language, or of an unknown language in a known script — that one can but shrug at an unknown script when the underlying language is not known. Nevertheless Fischer succeeded in both instances. His story is intellectually exciting, and written sufficiently well that lay people like myself can follow it with interest and pleasure.

In some respects, decipherment of the Phaistos Disk was a replay of Michael Ventris's decipherment of the Minoan Linear B syllabic script: Ventris too was an independent scholar, and his work too was strongly resisted until the very end because it broke a dogma — that the language in which Linear B was written could not be Greek. John Chadwick was one of the first established scholars to support Ventris, and described Ventris's exciting and ingenious work in a marvelous book, *The Decipherment of Linear B*. It is then ironic — though anomalists will find it eminently believable — that Chadwick in his turn resisted Fischer's developing insight that the Phaistos Disk too recorded Greek — albeit a very early, pre-Homeric Greek. Another cited example of established authorities holding back progress is that of Arthur Evans, whose misconceptions dominated Minoan-Mycenaean scholarship for half a century (p. 26). “For 40 years Evans hoarded his private Linear A and Linear B tablets, refusing others permission to reproduce or even study them” (p. 29).

It is a great pity that this book has some major flaws. (My advance proof had no index, though one is referred to in the Table of Contents.) In the body of the text, the reproduction of the glyphs on the Disk is barely readable, as though made with a dot-matrix printer of insufficient resolution. On pp. 197 and 199, the Figure legends should surely state X^1YX_n , not X^1YZ_n . The text is an unfortunate melange of the intellectual story of the decipherment with a personal account of the doings of Fischer and his wife, much of the latter written rather like the “To our Friends” form letters that one gets from acquaintances once a year, embarrassingly personal and telling really more than one needs or wants to know. In a number of places, there is a bit too much of a self-praising slant; “a distinguished Swiss academic publishing house” agreed to publish one of Fischer's books, but a peek at the Bibliography reference reveals the publishing house to be Peter Lang, to whom academics often have to pay handsome subsidies to get their work published. The book also suffers from a lack of good copy-editing, for example to remove or moderate some purple, school-childish, prose: “The once-glorious capital of the Czars was then locked in the chaotic throes of the dying Soviet empire” (p. 179); as well as a number of extreme statements and superlatives: The Minoans (p. 10) are Europe's “great-

est” mystery and the historian’s “greatest” challenge? What about the Etruscans? Or the Basques? For that matter, how much more we would like to know about the Celts, whose name we take in vain without really knowing all that much about them. Then again, I wish it were true, but it just isn’t, that “There’s no secret so hidden that it cannot be found, no voice so mute that it cannot be heard.” New Zealand is “our planet’s last refuge” at page 8, but when the Fischers return to it they find (p. 205) “rejection of its British heritage, and virulent North American and Asian commercialization.” Yet surely page 8 was written, or at least could have been revised, after that return?

The personal stuff predominates early in the book, and readers can rest assured that it is worth persisting to get to the intellectual story. One has to respect Fischer’s drive and dedication, and admire the support his wife gave, for decades of living on the edge of poverty in order to accomplish an advance — a major advance — in humankind’s knowledge. The account of the decipherments is riveting. I learned a lot from this book and wager that others can too. I hope in years to come to read even more about Fischer’s work and life — but written, I hope, with the help of more professionally accomplished storytellers or editors.

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The Threat, The Secret Agenda: What The Aliens Really Want... And How They Plan To Get It by David M. Jacobs. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998, 287 pp., \$23.00, (c). ISBN 0-684-81484-6.

As with the study of any subjective phenomenon, whether it is a form of poetry, history, art, or science, there comes a time when fragments of the ideas that drive it are captured. Captured for at least a moment, and displayed before us to be examined until they can slip away, change, or find their way to completion. Prof. David Jacobs appears to have done that in *The Threat*. He seems to be allowing us a view into the private agenda of one non-human species’ pervasive interactions with a subset of our own species.

He starts with a substantial overview of the history of “ufology,” which is based upon his own involvement with the field over the years and many references to the work of others. This book has both very detailed “Notes” and “Index” sections which help ground the reader, even one who may be unfamiliar with this phenomenon and field of study. This approach continues through his discovery of abductees and his first impressions of their hazy-sounding claims of interactions with other beings. And it takes a number of years before he becomes convinced enough to think that their claims could be real. This attitude-swaying evidence includes physical marks, emotional impact on the

abductees, as well as the cross-section of people affected, none of whom fit the stereotype of the hapless person. His interest at that point was sufficient to persuade him to learn hypnosis techniques and begin working with abductees.

From what can be gathered from the book, that process took three to four years, and clearly was not a skill learned overnight. Jacobs devotes an entire chapter (*Shadows of the Mind*) to the methods, benefits, and pitfalls of hypnosis, where he details his own approach. He seems greatly interested in the human side — the trauma and difficulties the abductees face in their day-to-day lives while struggling to cope with the aftermath of the abductions. He also covers an array of issues involved with hypnosis ranging from “Normal Event Memory” through “False Memory Syndrome” to “Media Contamination,” plus “Leading the Witness” and “Mutual Confirmation Fantasies.”

What does he encounter in these hypnotic regressions with the abductees? Plenty! Is all of it believable? Personally, I don't know. My own way of pondering something this fantastic is to consider that maybe only $x\%$ might be true — the “ x ” representing a decreasing value as the level of “fantastic” rises. Which things fall into that $x\%$? Which do not? That is hard to decide. Perhaps many people will find his compilation of, and speculation about, the abductees' stories concerning the following topics somewhere on a scale from compelling through repulsive:

1. Breeding program (alien/human hybrids);
2. Extrauterine gestational units;
3. Unaware abductees;
4. Human interaction with and nurturing of the hybrids;
5. Current and continuing roles of abductees with aliens;
6. Jacobs' opinion of the “Positives”;
7. Future result of this interaction (agenda) and roles.

In addition to numbers 3 and 6, the ideas most interesting to me were: The “eyes” (specifically, pages 83 through 85) — Alien ability to bypass short-term memory (page 111, middle paragraph) — Independent Hybrid Activity (Chapter 10).

While I do find a number of concepts he discusses intriguing, the very nature of his unilateral approach to the enigma of alien abduction bothers me. My response to his basic attitude towards the “Positives” (people who view the phenomenon as having more mutually beneficial motivations) reflects my own overall reaction. The impression Jacobs leaves about the Positives implies that they are hiding from the harsher truths surrounding abductions, or that they are deluded into their lighter viewpoints. Is his outlook complete? I suspect not. Even Jacobs admits that there may be some merit to the Positives' stance. I sincerely hope that the various beings, which appear to share our universe(s), are capable of a broad spectrum of attitudes. If the groups of beings that Jacobs refers to in *The Threat* are a ruthless lot towards us, then perhaps others are

more compassionate. I am not ready to judge the whole lot of “them” as being negative or positive.

Perhaps the most amazing statements Jacobs makes, amidst all the details of the aliens’ motivations, was at the end of Chapter 2. There he describes the abductees (“the scouts”) as being in a “special situation” on the “front lines” of a very important series of happenings:

“As ‘participants/observers,’ they have the most important role of all. They bring researchers like me the pieces of the puzzle so that we can put them together. They are not just the victims of abductions, they are also the heroes, without whose accounts we would have no meaningful insight whatsoever into the UFO phenomenon” (p. 29).

Hmmm. If more than my own x% view of this book is true and abductees are “heroes” deep down inside themselves, then maybe the many human beings that share that same kind of strength are our hope. Maybe that basic rough-hewn part of us which is inseparably coupled with our hearts, genes, and souls will be a bit more than the aliens bargained for. Is the heart, perhaps, mightier than the scalpel?

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Reincarnation and Biology. A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects. Vol. 1: Birthmarks. Vol. 2: Birth Defects and Other Anomalies by Ian Stevenson. Westport, Connecticut, and London: Praeger, 1997, 2268 pp., \$195.00 (c). ISBN 0-275-95282-7.

Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect by Ian Stevenson. Westport, Connecticut, and London: Praeger, 1997, 203 pp., \$59.95 (c). ISBN 0-275-95188-X. \$17.95 (p). ISBN 0-275-95189-8.

Reincarnation and Biology. A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects is a long-awaited book. As one opens the large two volumes of 2268 pages, it becomes evident why we have waited so long. Readers may experience a mixture of awe and despair when faced with more than 2200 pages. Fortunately, Praeger has also published a small volume, *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect*, which Stevenson has written to satisfy the needs of readers who wish to understand the essential content of the larger work without troubling themselves over details. This volume summarizes the findings, the arguments, and the conclusions of the larger work. Both works, the two-volume *Reincarnation and Biology. A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects* and *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect*, contain 26 chapters, bearing the same headings in both works.