

Beckley traces such stories back to medieval times and themes, but psychological and psychosocial commentary are not the author's strongest points. Nor is he fabricating these tales out of whole cloth, either. Although Beckley rarely meets a footnote or reference he likes, unless it happens to have an address and a dollar sign in it, he is, after all, only reporting what others have told him or written. Typically, but not always, these others are a "reliable" or "well-known" UFO investigator who no one else has ever relied on or heard of. But if verifiable facts aren't allowed to get in the way of a good yarn, why should reliable sources fare any better? If abducting Grays and Nord's are believable, why not MIBs?

Black Choppers

The latter category, in fact, has taken on a new twist with the advent of the black helicopter, which seems to be well on the way to replacing the worn-out dark sedans of the early days of ufology. Whether this represents a psychological undercurrent of fear of modern technology, or merely an increase in the MIB's black budget, Beckley fails to note. Such stories continue to surface in the serious literature, however, most recently in personal Epilogue of Ed Conroy's *Report of Communion*, and once started, they burn like grass fires, tenaciously and almost impossible to put out.

Few seem to notice or care that once you start being aware of black helicopters, the more black helicopters there are to be aware of. Flying back to San Antonio not too long ago, for example, I glanced out of the window in time to see a shiny, new black helicopter on the ground in front of a small hangar, its rotar blades slowly turning. Curiously, the chopper bore no obvious markings. Equally curious, perhaps, my inflight reading had been Conroy's *Report*. Now, was it a mere coincidence of perception on my part, or an act of persecution or surveillance on the part of the MIB? Your choice not only reveals a good deal about how you think about UFOs, but also about how like-

ly (and possibly even entertaining) you're apt to find *The UFO Silencers*.

The author stirs in all sorts of disconnected bits and chunks before the book not so much concludes, as simply ends with the last episode. As documentation of the MIB phenomenon itself, or as an attempt to analyze what, if anything, it might mean, *Silencers* is fairly thin gruel. But both as source and

Of Wolves And Aliens

THE WILD

By Whitley Strieber

Tom Doherty Associates, NY, paperback, 378 pp, \$5.95

Review by Robert J. Durant

Whitley Strieber is by far the best known abductee. His *Communion* was on the best-seller charts for six months, and the sequel, *Transformation*, also sold very well. Fans of horror fiction made him a star in that field long before *Communion* appeared. Now Strieber has produced a new book, *The Wild*, which I picked up in the supermarket, a certain signal that he has become a genuine mass media fixture.

On the surface, the book has nothing to do with abductees or ufos. It is instead a return to his bread and butter horror fiction, and once again deals with a favorite Strieber theme — sentient, almost supernaturally powerful wolves. And like his previous horror fiction, this one is gripping and hard to put down.

But the book is worth reading on a deeper level, too, as part of the search for the "real" Whitley Strieber and the true nature of his bewildering abduction experiences.

The central figures are Bob Duke, a man given to poetry but a failure in the practical world of business, his wife Cindy, and their 12-year-old son, Kevin. Prior to embarking on a career as a writer, Strieber worked in advertising, apparently with indifferent results. The rest of the description of the Duke family is plainly true to life, a thinly veiled biographical sketch, in-

cluding the Greenwich Village apartment, the Ulster County cabin, and much else of both a concrete and personal nature that Strieber-watchers have picked up in one place or another over the years about Whitley, Anne and Andrew Strieber.

One day Bob Duke turns into a wolf, abruptly metamorphosing right in front of his family. This absurd, impossible event launches the story. The fact that Strieber makes everything following the metamorphosis perfectly logical, and indeed fascinating, is a tribute to his skill as a writer.

But the book is far more than just a horror thriller. The nature of a universe that can permit sudden dramatic upheavals in the laws of physics and in everything that we thought was "true" and "right" is repeatedly questioned in the text. It quickly becomes obvious that Strieber has used the metamorphosis as a metaphor for the nearly equally absurd and impossible abduction experience. Yet, he is telling us, through the cleverly contrived medium of a man-to-wolf story, it happened. And the event demands explanation.

A consistent theme of profound puzzlement and distress runs through Strieber's formal and informal commentaries on his dealings with the aliens. Lately he has turned his back on ufologists, denouncing them as useless at best in the quest for mean-

ingful interpretation of the abduction experience. Like most abductees, he feels abandoned by his own civilization. Neither science nor religion has provided answers or solace: *"He has no way of explaining himself, not even in his own mind. His only thought was that ours is an age at the far limit of time, and it is at limits and extremes that the impossible can happen. Or maybe the mysterious fifth force that physicists speculate about had something to do with it. Maybe it was a disease, psychological or otherwise."*

The wolf that had been Duke/Strieber enters the world of unadulterated nature, where higher and more universal laws beyond our ken control existence. His wife and child metamorphose and join him in the new life, closing the personal ring. Our human culture is left far behind without regret.

It is troubling to watch an acute intellect such as Strieber's struggle helplessly in the face of "the phenomenon." Even more unsettling is the picture of a man of truly refined instincts and immense erudition embracing wolves, primeval enemies and competitors of man, as models for both the aliens and a regenerated (Transformed?) mankind.

Ufologists can propound convincing arguments for the reality of extraterrestrial visitation. But for them the subject remains abstract and sterile, an armchair exercise, and that is something that enrages abductees, for whom the experience is overwhelmingly real and personal: *"What eats us? We can't understand it any more than the chicken can understand Frank Perdue. There is something out there."*

In addition to his wife and son, the metamorphosis was witnessed by Monica, a psychiatrist and friend of the family: *"The woman was slowly coming undone, tortured by her inability to understand what had happened to Bob, and unable to enlist the aid of any of her fellow scientists and doctors in her research. Monica was now a haunted woman, her practice in ruins, her wealth disappearing into the well of what the rest of her profession saw as*

an insane quest." Sounds painfully familiar. Like "Bob" and "Cindy" and "Kevin," Monica is a figure based on a very real person. Indeed, most of us who toil in this perplexing field of ufology can sigh agreement with this description. Aren't we all, researchers and abductees alike, victims?

And in a passage reminiscent of his writing in *Communion* on the social nature of the aliens, Strieber speaks thus of the "wolves": *"How could anybody have ever thought that these were simple beasts? Bob was faced with the shocking realization that the wolves had evolved an intelligence and a sense so great that it was literally incomparable, and yet so different from man's intelligence that it was all but invisible to the human mind."*

We suppose that the alien intelligence laughs at us, carrying on a sort of cosmic Keystone Kops routine that makes hilarious sense to them, but leaves our pythagorean sensibilities stupefied. One is reminded of the extraordinary elaborations of last year's Crop Circles. Surely this is an intelligence at work, and surely something like communication is the purpose. And there is a delicious irony in the use of cereal crops as the medium of communication, the same cereal agriculture that founded our human civilization.

Dr. David Jacobs, a leading abduction researcher, once told me that the common denominator of abduction experiences is what he called "the stare." That is, the experience begins with the onset of what we would call hypnotic trance, and the trance is produced by a steady gaze from the awesome eyes of the aliens.

In the final pages of *The Wild*, Cindy has been metamorphosed and the son, Kevin, is being asked to join his parents, completing the family transition to the new world. A native American Indian has accompanied Cindy and Kevin, providing guidance from the rich store of his race's mysticism. Cindy, now a wolf, is standing with her paws on Kevin's shoulders, looking into his eyes: *"They do it to you," the Indian shouted. "Kev, they do it with their eyes!"*

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