UFO–Mary
Marian Apparitions and Esoteric Encounters:
Visits with Mary, UFOs, Contactees and the Trickster

A compilation of blog and on-line writings on paranormal aspects of BVM apparitions

Vol. 1

Regan Lee
with Richelle Hawks
Introduction

This is a collection of my articles on Marian Apparitions in the context of esoterica. The articles have been previously published on-line with various sites: UFO Digest, my own blogs, and my Trickster’s Realm column for Tim Binnall’s Binnall of America website.

I am convinced that Marian apparitions transcend the literal religious interpretations, existing beyond a religious doctrine. The events are manipulated by other forces, possibly alien, as in extraterrestrial, or by some other non-human, yet intelligent entity.

And I’m not beyond throwing in a bit of military psy-ops as a contributor to some of these manifestations either.

That’s not to dismiss the impact of the feminine divine shining through; the urge, the necessity, of that energy to be acknowledged cannot be underestimated.

Equally important are the folk; the sincerely religious, the seekers, and the spiritual who, coming together, partake in an intimate (even while very public) and mystical happening. My opinion that the phenomena is a Fortean, esoteric, paranormal and UFO one does not intend to marginalize -- and certainly not trivialize -- the experience as a religious one, or, the religious and devout individuals who encounter Mary and other religious happenings on their journeys.

Regan Lee
Eugene, Oregon
Winter, 2008
Speculation on Mary as a Trickster

An American professor is describing his atheism to a Mexican who is attempting to understand his faith. Suddenly there is a gleam of understanding in the eyes of the senora. "We know that you do not believe in Jesus," she said with a look of sympathy, "but surely you must believe in the Virgin of Guadalupe!" ~ Virgin of Guadalupe Goddess of the Americas, Patrice Wynne


There aren’t many female aspects of the Trickster. But I wonder if Marian apparitions can’t be considered a female version of Trickster manifestation.

If we accept that Marian apparitions are a paranormal/anomalous (and not religious) phenomeana, and often within the context of UFOs, and that the Trickster is an innate part of paranormal, UFO phenomena, then it isn’t too outlandish to consider the symbol of the “Virgin” Mary as a Trickster.

Demetria Martinez, in a short piece on her relation to the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, considers Mary a “sacred Trickster”: Guadalupe, that sacred trickster who -- faithful to her Aztec predecessor -- appeared on the hill where Tonantzin, the corn goddess, was worshipped by Nahuatl-speaking people ~ Brown paper and a candle – author turns to Our Lady of Guadalupe for inspiration and support – (National Catholic Reporter, Demetria Martinez, September 2000)

I’ve often been struck by the irony of the Catholic Church cracking down on both those church members who believe appearances of Mary is a part of their religious experience, as well as the Marian Apparitional phenomena itself. It’s clear there is an entire political agenda present in the church’s stance on maintain power in contrast to the appearances of a deity that seems, whether intentionally or as a byproduct, to mock the church’s position.

In this way, these apparitions of Mary could be seen as a manifestation of
Trickster. She shares other characteristics with Trickster:

- She appears outside of, and regardless of, the church’s official, authoritarian position.
- She appears within the context of paranormal, supernatural, and or UFOlogical phenomena.
- Her messages are often contrary to what is currently presented by the church.
- She continues to appear, despite the efforts of authority to quench those appearances.
- The phenomena invites debate, stirs up trouble, and creates divisions among Catholics, the religious, the spiritual and the non-religious or spiritual alike. From church goer to UFO researcher, all groups engage in controversial and opposing discussions about her appearances. Science enters the fray; more debate.
- Often Marian apparitions occur on sacred ground or in places where previous supernatural, anomalous appearances have taken place.
- The messages of Mary are often urges to reject the church’s official line. Trickster laughs at authority, usurps it, mocks it.
- People continue to follow their beliefs, curiosity, and remain true to their personal experiences in terms of Marian apparitions by visiting her shrines, creating groups, communicating with others who share similar views, often in defiance of church mandate.
- At times, the church has gone so far as to get the law involved in shutting down pilgrimages, etc. Here the authority cracks down on the anomalous; even, in typical Trickster like irony, that authority is itself anomalous.

Paranormal phenomena has occurred in many MAs, (Marian Apparitions): rosaries turning gold or silver, aerial phenomena, dramatic weather events, the strong scent of roses, etc. These can be compared to various “stunts” performed by UFO occupants, in an anomalous, paranormal
Even the symbolism of Mary herself, often thought of as only a Catholic icon, is Trickster like. Mary was not a “virgin” in the strict sense in Jewish and other traditions; Mary, a Jew, was mother to Jesus Christ, another Jew. Her pregnancy is a mystery; occurring because of a “visitation” of an angel. If these events were placed in a UFO/alien/paranormal context, the presence of the Trickster is apparent.

The Trickster is a joker. From the spiritual aspects of marian apparitions; Guadalupe, Medjugorje, Lourdes, etc. to the pop culture circus like appearances of the Blessed Mother on window panes, trees and tortillas, we see the extremes and contradictions of Trickster. From the divine (appearing on holy sites) to the ridiculous (appearing on bread, tortillas and oily windowpanes) the Trickster holds up the image of Mary to all of the folk, while thumbing its nose at the approval of the church, as well as society.

**Mary as Political Icon**
The Virgin of Guadalupe is a political symbol, not just a religious icon. Her image appears on t-shirts, candles, all kinds of mundane objects.
People put her image on their cars. Keys hang from plastic encased images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, her image is stuck to the front of refrigerators. Other Marys appear in these ways as well.

Even non-Catholics, like myself, have taken on her iconography to represent an oppositional stance towards the institutionalization of spiritually. Though raised in that tradition and baptized and growing up in part in Hispanic culture, I also come from a Jewish background: you can’t get more inverse than that!

In these ways, we can look at Marian Apparitions as an aspect of the Trickster, and consider the symbol of Mary in all her manifestations as both a feminine and divine side to the Trickster.

First published on-line at UFO Digest, August 5, 2007
http://www.ufodigest.com
A couple of weeks ago I wrote a piece on Mary as a Trickster for UFO Digest. (Speculation on Mary as a Trickster.) What I pondered was: can we consider Marian apparitions not strictly as a religious figure, (and certainly not literally) but as a female Trickster? Stephen Yulish responded on UFO Digest with a piece of his own: Many Apparitions of Mary may be Tricksters but the Real Mary was not!

He and I seem to agree, kind of sort of, on the Trickster aspect, but for the wrong reasons. For example, Yulish writes:

Regan Lee’s August 6 article in UFO Digest, "Speculation on Mary as a Trickster" was most fascinating. I would tend to agree with her that many if not all of the apparitions of Mary whether they are on a barn or on a tortilla or in the skies above Lourdes, are examples of tricksters, or what I would call demonic manifestations.

I have never said or suggested the Trickster is “demonic” and I don’t ever consider the Trickster in that context. Yulish, however does. So in that sense, he has misrepresented what I’ve written. Yes, I think Marian Apparitions are a Trickster like phenomenon, but never “demonic.”

This misrepresentation isn’t personal however. It’s caused by his world view, which is a religious one. Yulish considers UFOs “demonic manifestations of fallen angels sent here to deceive people.”

Yulish is correct when he writes “The Catholic Church in it's exuberance to win over native people's often incorporated pre Christian symbols and practices.” He continues that Mary couldn’t forgive sins, that she wasn’t a “saver of souls.” That may be, that’s religious doctrine, and I’m not concerned with that as much. My focus was on the image of Mary and within a paranormal context.

Yulish thinks that at a certain point later on, he “separates” from my views. I say that he’s “separated” much earlier, given his “demonic” viewpoint:
In my mind, these are examples of Ms. Lee's trickster motif. By "tricking" people into believing that Mary can save people or forgive their sins, they are kept from the truth that only Jesus can do these things. To associate these false apparitional tricksters with UFO sightings makes my case that both manifestations are demonic delusions to lead people from the truth.

He agrees, as I said “kind of sort of,” but I can’t agree, for Yulish is coming from a pronounced religious point of view. I don’t think for two seconds “only Jesus can do these things” for I don’t believe in Jesus as a divine being. Nor do I think the Trickster apparitions are “false” in the sense he means, nor “demonic.”

Yulish separates himself once again from me here:

Where I seem to separate myself from Ms. Lee is in her statement that Mary was not a virgin and might have been impregnated by an angel etc. Scripture is clear that the real Mary was a nice Jewish, virgin girl who found favor with God (Luke 1:27–35) and was immaculately infused by the Holy Spirit (God) not by an angel. The angel just told her what was happening.

Well, we’re just going around in circles. Scripture makes it clear, yes. Christian scripture. That don’t make it so. And this is the point his entire disagreement hinges on: he’s coming from, at all times, a Christian bias, whereas I am not.

One believes what they believe, and if Yulish believes in his version of a religion, in this case Christianity, fine. But he is in error in believing I think the Trickster is “demonic,” etc. for I do not.

Published on my blog The Orange Orb, September 21, 2007
http://orangeorb.blogspot.com

Below are comments left by readers:
T. Sena said... (Tina Sena is author of the blog YUFLOGOLOGY, and contributes to Binnall of America with her column Esoterica.)

Hello R. Lee,

Just wanted to say, I read the MARY AS TRICKSTER article and was like, "WHOA!" Because it completely opened my mind to something I never, ever posited before. Where do you come up with this stuff? Brilliant. Thanks for keeping me awake.

–Tina
October 6, 2007 10:48 PM

richelle said...
(Richelle Hawks also write a column for Binnall of America: Medusa’a Ladder. Richelle also contributes to my Women Of Esoterica blog, with several women writers of esoterica coming together to contribute, and has her own blog, Beamships Equal Love. Richell’s articles appear on American Content and UFO Digest, one of which is reprinted in this document:

I can't believe I missed this post/topic. In reading the other Lilith/Trickster commentaries at Women in Esoterica, and now this, I feel like there is a reductionary/pedestrian view by some readers of what a "Trickster" is, and that may account for some of the opposition. In both comments, something is mentioned about the apparition/figure literally 'tricking' or deceiving us. That is obviously part of it, but far, far from an entire meaning. This simplistic misunderstanding of the Trickster archetype might be part of the argument? Here's something I wrote in a recent Trickster–related article:

"A trickster is an omnipresent mythological and Jungian archetypal character defined as a clever, crafty mischief–maker, whose aim it is to survive in a threatening environment by use of non–traditional, mundane or magical means and pranks."

Perhaps you have a better definition in your arsenal of Trickster writings. I listed a ton of modern day tricksters, to give my mainstream audience at
AC an idea. I think writing within an esoteric framework, such examples generally may not necessarily be warranted. But, for the Trickster, it seems it may help to avoid misinterpretation.

Again, forgive me if you have already addressed this elsewhere. But, here are those examples:

"Easily recognizable traditional, cultural, and classical literary tricksters include court jesters and harlequins, Rasputin, the kokopelli, Brer Rabbit, fairies, Parsifal, Pan, skinwalkers, witches, St. Germaine, and Count Cagliostro. Modern incarnations of the trickster continuum include: Amelia Bedelia, Bugs Bunny, Bart Simpson, Star Trek's enigmatic Q, the Borg, Dr. House, Wile E. Coyote, evil clowns, Pink Panther, Aleister Crowley, Andy Kaufmann, Elvis, Gilligan, Lucy Ricardo, John McEnroe, Harry Potter, Britney Spears, and perhaps the Grand Poobah of modern day tricksters, Michael Jackson."

Taking all these personalities into consideration, we can see an aura of the Trickster emerge. Tricksters are just 'trickERS.'

December 5, 2007 2:27 PM

R. Lee said...
richelle,

Good post. I have addressed some specific examples of Trickster here and there, not to the extent you have, -- and I agree, the idea of the Trickster isn't so simple as some believe, like, say, Yulish, who comes from a constrained religious viewpoint.

R. Lee said...

Tina Sena,
thanks!

richelle said...

I meant Tricksters are NOT just trickERS.
Apparitions and Control

I wonder what has prompted the Vatican to officially investigate the apparitions at Medjugorje at this time? After years of denying there’s anything going on, (the apparitions began in June of 1981) the Vatican’s just now deciding to investigate. There have been some investigations -- for example, the Bishopric Conference in 1991 in then Yugoslavia, which decided that "nothing out of the ordinary" occurred. And the local Bishop, Bishop Ratko Periç, for the area, denies that there is anything unusual appearing at Medjugorje. But this new team is of the Vatican, led by a Cardinal Vinko Puljić of Bosnia, and so their conclusions will be the final word on the subject.

Catholics have been divided on this issue; some priests have been threatened with excommunication, some have left the church, some have defied the church. . . meanwhile, the people (the "folk") continue to experience something supernatural/paranormal/religious. Catholics as well as non-Catholics (and people of many faiths, including agnostics) have experienced the unusual at Medjugorje. Millions of visitors go there every year; the once poor town has now become "one of the most developed and rich small towns in the country."

It’ll be interesting to find out what the Catholic Church’s new stance on the apparitions will be. Will they simply announce that there is definitely nothing going on and deny everything? Are Catholics to be advised that they are committing a sin if they continue pilgrimages to the site? Or will the Vatican decree that it is a sacred site and give the official go ahead to Catholics world wide to pilgrimage to Medjugorje?

The refusal to recognize apparitions as legitimate phenomena is interesting, but not surprising. As I wrote in the last Trickster’s Realm column, much of this acceptance/denial by the Vatican is one of control. Control the people and control their out of ordinary experiences. The parallels between that and government cover–up and disinformation on UFOs and other Fortean phenomenon are obvious. Denial, ridicule and manipulation of UFO, paranormal and religious events aren’t because of ineptness on the part of the authority involved, or ignorance. In fact, they know very well what they’re doing. It’s about control.
Meanwhile, we have the Vatican happily acknowledging the existence of ET. Monsignor Corrado Balducci, Chief Exorcist for the Vatican, came out with this pronouncement a couple of years ago. Accepting that extraterrestrials exist does not conflict with Catholic beliefs, says the church. (And yet there are many Christians who either deny the existence of UFOs and aliens, as well as Marian apparitions, or who do acknowledge them but as Satanic manipulations. As somewhat of an outsider, I can see this for the anti-Catholic bigotry it is, wrapped up in religious justification. When it comes to religious dogma and beliefs, anything goes.)

So why this juxtaposition between denial of Marian apparitions, and acceptance of aliens from space? One reason is the slick affirmation of original sin. Aliens are free of original sin, since they weren’t born on earth (or whatever aliens do to procreate) and so are exempt from the whole Garden of Eden legacy. But I think it’s more an issue of control. ET is out there, they aren’t making any claims to Catholicism or any other religion, (though some would argue that, who’ve interpreted their alien visitations in a religious context) and it’s all kind of vague.

Marian apparitions, however, are much more specific: they occur in the context of Catholic experience, they’re in your face, they appear to the folk, not the authority. And, she’s a chick. The Vatican is run by males, the church is dominated by men, the whole thing -- Bible, Catholic Church (and patriarchal religions in general) is that cliché of old white males who are deeply invested in control.

I suspect that many at the top know a lot more about the esoteric nature of these apparitions -- as the ones at governmental top levels do about UFOs -- and realize the paranormal, Fortean implications within these phenomenon. Human history has shown us over and over how the priests, the authorities, the ones in charge, knew the fuller dimensions of whatever religious / sacred / paranormal thing they were dealing with, choosing to reveal only the shallower aspects. All for control.

Notes:
Vatican to Probe Medjugorje Sightings
First published June 30, 2008 for my Trickster’s Realm column on Binnall of America: http://www.binnallofamerica.com
I collect Tarot decks, so I had to get this one, the Fatima Oracle cards. I just ordered it today. I'm not crazy about the artwork, but how could I resist; what with my interest in UFOs and Marian Apparitions?

Here's an interesting item from Joaquim Fernandes on UFO Updates from January, 2000. (Fernandes is author, along with Fina d'Armada, of Extraterrestrial Intervention in Fatima – the apparitions and the UFO phenomenon I tried ordering the book this past Christmas but Amazon.com told me it was unavailable. I haven't tried too hard since but I'll get around to it soon. It's a book I'm very interested in reading.

According to the item on Updates, the book says that there there was, at Fatima, a

  a "fourth percipient" namely Carolina Carreira, whom describes a "telepathic type of contact with a fair–headed being of small stature who instilled into her head a repetitive order

Microwaves, beings from above; all very interesting. Vallee of course has written on the UFO/paranormal connection between events like Fatima and other religious apparitions, as have others.
This subject alone -- the UFO/Marian Apparition phenomenon -- is enough to keep one busy!

Published on-line for my The Orange Orb blog, Tuesday, July 24, 2007
The Mystical Contactee Encounters of Dana Howard: Parallels to Marian Apparitions?
There aren’t as many female Contactees of the Golden Age of UFOs as there are male, but there are a few. One was Dana Howard, who wrote about her encounters in *My Flight to Venus* (1954), *Diane: She Came From Venus* (1956), *Over the Threshold* (1957), *Vesta, the Earthborn Venusian* (1959), as well as others. As we can see, Howard was a prolific writer! (Daniel Fry, another Contactee, had a short announcement in his newsletter *Understanding* about Dana Howard’s appearances in California.) (In that same issue is a letter from Contactee Orfeo Angelucci!)

While I’m intrigued by the Contactees in general, and realize there are many perspectives and theories surrounding “what really happened” I’d like to focus on the symbolic of Howard’s experience, rather than attempt to prove or disprove her experience. What stood out for me as I read about Dana Howard’s accounts were the similarities to Marian Apparitions. Howard’s experiences seemed to be a blend of space age Contactee encounters, complete with flying saucers, and some of the characteristics of appearances of the Virgin Mary.

1939: The First Encounter
"Still wrapped in the warm intoxication of the spirit, my vision was directed to a gnarled old tree overlooking the antediluvian hills. Leaning casually against the grotesque trunk was a woman being of unsurpassed loveliness. Her head was radiant with a crown of fire, strands of golden hair cascading gently over her beautiful, slightly olive-tinted shoulders. The strange mystic light flooding her dark, prophetic eyes, added a wistful something to all her other charms."

Similar in ways to reports of seeing the entity Mary. But the sighting turns space age, for Howard follows Diane into a flying saucer:

“... a beautiful rocket-shaped ship suspended in mid-air about three hundred feet from the earth. . . In the main it seemed to be constructed of some sort of translucent materials, but trimmed in gold, and gem-studded. An almost invisible "ladder" extended from
the ship to the earth, and I obediently followed the radiant being up
the filmy stairs without questioning. Once aboard, my sacrosanct
companion vanished, and I never saw her again."

Sixteen Years Later
In 1955, sixteen years after the first encounter, Diane the Venusian
appeared for the second time, this time during a seance. The seance was
conducted by a well known medium at the time, Reverend Bertie Lillie
Candler, in Los Angeles, California. An eight foot tall female figure,
described as being very beautiful, appeared before them. Howard
describes the materialization:

“I saw a rising glow of phosphorescence. It was very tall at first, but
out of this phosphorescent substance a form began to manifest
itself. She was definitely different from the other "spirit"
manifestations, a solid, fleshly being, delicate in charm and
manner.”

I’m reminded again of some parallels to Marian apparitions. (After Diane
appeared, she changed her appearance from the eight foot tall being to a
more human like five foot tall being.)

The female entity said she was the same Diane from Venus that Dana had
met sixteen years ago, and was responsible for giving Dana telepathic
messages during that time. Like most of the other good looking
humanoid beings of the Contactee era, she imparted messages of the
importance of spiritual growth, transformation of both body and psyche,
and eventual life on Venus.

What did Diane, the Venusian, have to say to Dana? Diane referred to Dana
as “my daughter.” (alternately calling her “child of earth’) several times,
for example:

"My daughter . . . always remember – without inner perfection there
can be no outer perfection. There must be perfect balance between
the realm of spirit and the realm of materiality."
At the seance in Los Angeles, Dana Howard wasn’t the only witness; there were many others who verified seeing the entity.

Dana Howard’s account of the “materialization seance” follows:

“Reverend Bertie Lillie Candler, proclaimed by many as the greatest physical medium of the world was holding a private seance at the Church of Divine Light, 837 South Parkview Street, Los Angeles, California.”

I had never attended a materialization seance before, and my inquiring mind asked all sorts of questions. As my cerebral atoms whirled with curiosity toward the close of the meeting the "little white church" seemed to me, electrified with a powerful vibration.

Then–some ten or twelve feet from the draped–off area where Reverend Candler was in deep trance I saw a rising glow of phosphorescence. It was very tall at first, but out of this phosphorescent substance a form began to manifest itself. She was definitely different from the other "spirit" manifestations, a solid, fleshly being, delicate in charm and manner.
She called for DANA. Overwhelmed with emotion I could not choke back, I went up to her, standing only inches away from the manifestation. While I did not recognize her instantly, I knew there was something quaintly familiar about her. Standing like a sylph-like goddess, and bowing low in greeting to the twenty-seven persons present, the rich tones of her voice vibrated through the little church.

"I AM DIANE. I COME FROM VENUS."

Witnesses
Witness Lucile Points, present at the seance, said:

“A beautiful, fleshly being came, rather hesitantly at first, then saying, 'I am Diane. I come from Venus.' Since I was sitting next to the draped-off place I greeted this beautiful one asking: 'With whom do you wish to speak?' She replied softly: 'I wish to speak with Dana.'

There were other witnesses as well:

"On April 29, 1955, the writer, Mrs. Gladys Campbell and my friend, Mrs. Maude Haas, attended a materialization seance at the Church of Divine Light, 837 South Parkview Street, Los Angeles, California . . . the medium being Reverend Bertie Lillie Candler of Florida, one of the foremost materialization mediums of this country.

"I am more than happy to give an account of what I witnessed to the best of my recollection, and you will recall] when you spoke at the Pyramid Church in Alhambra the following Sunday after the visit, I was the one who got up and verified your statements concerning the visit of Diane.

"It was truly a marvelous thing to be present and see for myself such a wonderful personality, and I know you must be very humble and gratified to have the facts that you brought before the public in your book–' My Flight to Venus', substantiated in such an unexpected manner."
There were many other witnesses that day who also wrote letters confirming their experience.

**Symbolism**

It’s interesting Diane said she came from Venus, for Venus of course is the planet representing the female sex, fertility, beauty, love. It is the morning and the evening star. Diane gave many messages on love to Dana Howard:

"Child of Earth . . . try to listen through space for the voice of one who has not forgotten. Try to make every breath, a breath of love. Try to make every word a word of love. Make every act an act of love. To do so, is to love and be loved. When you find the great jewel of love in your heart, you will find also, as you walk down the streets of life, the good and the noble in every soul you meet. “

The name Diane, a form of Diana, means the Divine. So we have a Divine Love from the heavens, appearing to an earthling with messages of love, creativity, and the need for constructive transformation; raising the self up to a higher vibration.

The symbolism in these encounters is interesting. Was it a true encounter with an alien? Or the same presence that is manifest in appearances of the Virgin Mary? It is interesting the experience took place during a seance; a perfect setting for manifestations of all kinds of spirits and entities; including some part of Dana Howard herself that was Diane. We don’t know and probably never will know if Dana Howard’s experiences were some kind of liminal, paranormal experience, or if she made the whole thing up. (but what of witnesses?)

The following item is very interesting, for its church setting and the relation to Marian apparitions, and the desert setting for Contactee experiences:

The appearance of the lovely Diane in the "little white church in Los Angeles" is only one side of the miracle that occurred on April 29, 1955. Out on the desert where your author resides during resort season, another miracle had happened. Mrs. Barbara MacDonald, a
member of the Ground Observation Corp, a civilian agency attached to the Air Force reported that her skywatchers had broadcast four strange ships seen high in the desert skies during the week of Diane’s visitation. There was no chance for error here.

There were other witnesses to the ships in the desert skies. These ships were reported as having portholes, made no sound, traveled at great speed, and disappeared before their eyes.

Other sightings by witnesses took place at Desert Hot Springs in California over several days.

**Venusian, Mary, or Both?**

Howard’s first encounter with Diane, in 1939, took place outdoors, in the country, a usual setting for Marian apparitions. Dana’s description recalls some of the descriptions from witnesses to Mary:

> Her head was radiant with a crown of fire, strands of golden hair cascading gently over her beautiful, slightly olive-tinted shoulders. The strange mystic light flooding her dark, prophetic eyes, added a wistful something to all her other charms.

The entity appearing at Fatima was seen above a tree. young Bernadette saw what she called a “Lady in White’ at Lourdes, appearing in a grotto. Several descriptions of Marian apparitions, going back centuries to the present, often include reports of the being bathed in white light.

**The Contactee Era**

It’s always interesting to find information on a Contactee from that era. This episode has many similar qualities to other Contactee experiences, along with some contrasts. The Venusian, good looking in appearance, imparting messages of love and health and healing are common. There were witnesses to the event; as happens in both some of the Contactee encounters, and Marian Apparitions. But the way the being appeared to Dana Howard, and the symbolic nature of this encounter make this a bit different. The two females, the feminine and divine in the symbolism,, white light, and church setting seem to parallel Marian apparitions more than Contactee encounters. Yet, the entity did not say she was from “Heaven” but Venus, and there were other witnesses to sightings of flying saucers in the California desert.
Was what Dana Howard the same force behind Marian apparitions and many UFO/Contactee events? Possibly. Some researchers have suggested this over the years.

Whatever “really” happened, the Dana Howard encounter is certainly a highly interesting case!

Notes:
Dana Howard: http://www.galactic-server.net/rune/divenus2.html
Daniel Fry:
http://danielfry.com/?758

Published on-line at UFO Digest, December 20, 2007
Marian Trinkets and Apparitions

Apparitions of the Blessed Mother, or BVM (Blessed Virgin Mary) have been interpreted in many ways. Naturally depending on one’s world view and spiritual/religious beliefs, these appearances are taken to be literal religious events. Or, they are considered bunk, mental aberrations, mass hysteria, if you’re a Randi-bot. Some think of them as paranormal events. I’m in the latter camp. Some consider them to be within the religious category, but not as a benign, loving entity but the reverse side; of the devil. Satanic. Apparitions, yes, but ones sent to deceive.

The Catholic Church has both embraced and rejected Marian Apparitions. In the case of the ongoing appearances of "Mary" at Medjugorje, the Catholic Church has consistently dismissed them. They’ve done their best to discourage Catholics from accepting the apparitions as authentic. (Of course the question looms: authentic what?) They have not come out to bless these appearances, and have come down very hard on priests who insist these apparitions are divine. The most recent of these attacks on Medjugorje comes from "former Vatican exorcist" Bishop Andrea Gemma, who calls the apparitions "work of the devil . . . diabolical deceit". Gemma attacks the decades long appearances at Medjugorje for being vulgar:

"In Medjugorje everything happens in function of money: Pilgrimages, lodging houses, sale of trinkets. This whole sham is the work of the Devil. It is a scandal."

And then he says something scary; that the Vatican will "crack down" on the whole thing. The Church has banned pilgrimages to the site, but of course the journeys continue.

While the Church picks and chooses which Marian apparitions are to be believed, they have no problem in coming out with the statement that ET is real. Cool, but kind of contradictory. (Monsignor Corrado Balducci, who is one of the governing bodies with the Vatican, has come forth to say that there is nothing demonic about ET.)

What to make of all this? The purpose of this piece isn’t to delve deeply into all the academic, historical religious and philosophical aspects of Marian Apparitions and Catholic mysticism. Hell, I’m not even Catholic. Yet I have a deep interest in Marian Apparitions, for many reasons; one
being I’m a paranormal junkie. While not a Catholic, I was raised as one. Kind of, sort of. Actually, I’m Jewish, but grew up in a mixed family; many who were Mexican with a strong Catholic tradition. So off to Catholic school I went. I rejected Christianly when I was eleven, but many aspects of Roman Catholic culture have stayed with me.

So, why does the Catholic Church have such interesting, contradictory contrasts? Money. Power. Control. Simple really, and no different than other systems, be they religious, scientific, academic, or governmental. Keep factions at odds with each other, approve one thing even while denying another, make accusations of money while cheating, stealing and making your own. Control the masses any way you can. Confuse them with tales of extraterrestrials being real, while calling other esoteric encounters hysteria, or fantasy. The point is, the ones in power get to decide who says what is real, not the people.

Maybe some of this has to do with the folk getting too uppity. The "seers" of Medjugorje are said to all be doing well for themselves:

Today, the seers own smart houses with security gates and tennis courts and expensive cars. One is married to a former US beauty queen.

 Apparently this is proof that Satan is involved.

I suspect there’s some within the powers that be in the Church that go beyond the old power and control set-up; they know that Marian Apparitions are not literal events within the context of religious doctrine.

So are glow in the dark virgin Marys less crass than the "trinkets" sold at Lourdes or Medjugorje? Or this:

The church struck a decidedly modern licensing deal with a jewelry company to manufacture gold- and silver-plated re-creations of the Vatican Library’s jewelry collection, to be sold exclusively at Macy’s for between $12 and $75. (They did reject selling Pope on a rope however.)

I remember shilling for school funds by selling magazine subscriptions; when I was eight years old; the prize for most sold was a large blue and white plastic Mary. Plug her into the wall and she gave off a pinky
yellowish aura. Approved of by the church, or at least by my parish, it was in good taste.

Notes:
Medjugorje "work of the devil": Ex Vatican exorcist
Lysandra Ohrstrom: From Vatican Visors to the 'Popewich,' Merchants Roll Out Papal Kitsch

Published for my Trickster’s Realm column on Binnall of America, June 16, 2008
**Raccoons and Virgins, Glowing in the Night**

I’m not a Christian (or a Catholic; I don’t make a distinction but apparently some do, as our local Letters to the Editor section reminds us every couple of weeks) but I remain fascinated with the gory, colorful lives of the saints, the holy cards, rosary beads, and BVMs. (Blessed Virgin Mary.) Probably in large part due to my eight years of Catholic school indoctrination. (If you want to grow up defiant, confused, persecuted, bewildered, philosophical and pretentious, be Jewish, raised in a Bohemian Buddhist family where Mama read the Tarot, told us which life we were currently reincarnating in, and go to Catholic school.)

Being a Jewish Native Wiccan Pagan Buddhist (in other words, typical American New Ager; or at least, nodding towards them in appreciation) and non-Christian, I know that the Virgin wasn’t a Virgin, just a woman that experienced some very weird alien type stuff. Still, I remain riveted to any research into Marian Apparitions, probably because of my childhood education, but also because I am convinced there is a UFO and/or Ultra Terrestrial cause behind such manifestations.

Which brings me to the glowing virgins. I have two plastic BVM statues on my altar that glow in the dark that I picked up at the Goodwill. The other night I was in bed, idly looking at the softly glowing skinny forms, and wondering, why do they make glow in the dark Virgins? What does the glowing represent? A light, a beacon of illumination in the darkness? Which presumes that darkness is a negative. Is it because of the other world associations with the BVM? Holy, spiritual, above and beyond mere mortal? But, wasn’t Mary mortal? Yes, but touched by God. Ah, so only those touched by God glow. Yet, we’re -- according to Christian doctrine -- all created in “his” image. Which means we should all be glowing.

That got me thinking about something else that glows: raccoons. (Yes, this is how my mind works.) Specifically, the raccoon that Dr. Kary Mullis saw on a Friday night in April 1983. This is one of my favorite ‘high strangeness’ encounters of all time:

> On another Friday night, during the summer of 1985, Dr. Kary Mullis drove up to his cabin. Arriving around midnight after driving for about three hours, Mullis dumped groceries he bought on the way, switched on the lights (powered by solar batteries) and headed,
with flashlight in hand, to the outside toilet located about 50 feet west of the cabin. He never got there that night. Quoting from his 1998 book Dancing Naked in the Mine Field, Mullis encountered something extraordinarily weird on the way. “...at the far end of the path, under a fir tree, there was something glowing. I pointed my flashlight at it anyhow. It only made it whiter where the beam landed. It seemed to be a raccoon. I wasn’t frightened. Later, I wondered if it could have been a hologram, projected from God knows where.”

Unlike my silent and glowing virgins, the raccoon not only glowed, but spoke:

“The raccoon spoke. ‘Good evening, doctor,’ it said. I said something back, I don’t remember what, probably, ‘Hello.’ The next thing I remember, it was early in the morning. I was walking along a road uphill from my house.”

Dr. Mullis didn’t know what happened, how he ended up on the road, or what happened to his flashlight, which never turned up. It seemed that about six hours of “missing time” had occurred, the items from the grocery bags were still strewn about, and, like many encounters of this kind, once comforting and pastoral parts of the woods were now to be avoided completely, (I remember when my husband and I saw a UFO -- a silver craft, hovering, with beam of light coming from it above a field -- a highway that I loved to drive on now became a source of severe anxiety whenever I passed by that place.)

Dr. Mullis wasn’t the only one who experienced missing time, Louise, his daughter, couldn’t account for three hours while walking in the same area.

In his own book Mullis concluded, “I wouldn’t try to publish a scientific paper about these things, because I can’t do any experiments. I can’t make glowing raccoons appear. I can’t buy them from a scientific supply house to study. I can’t cause myself to be lost again for several hours. But I don’t deny what happened. It’s what science calls anecdotal, because it only happened in a way that you can’t reproduce. But it happened.” (italics mine)
Was it necessary for whatever force was behind this strange encounter to have the raccoon glow? Wasn’t it enough for it to talk? Whatever the intelligence behind this, it certainly wanted to be sure to get Dr. Mullis’s attention.

It sounds like what often occurs during so many other abduction cases. Whitley Streiber has written about the anomalous animals that appeared at his cabin, and witnessed by others, in connection with UFO and/or alien encounters, and Hopkins has discussed this as well, among others. (Or, what we commonly interpret as abduction cases.) It could have been something else; some sort of encounter with the faery realm, perhaps it's that ‘daimonic reality” Patrick Harpur delves into so majestically. Whatever it was, animals that talk, that appear much larger than normal size, figure often in these kinds of experiences. It seems that whatever it is, doesn't want to frighten us as it “hypnotizes" us and brings us into their reality.

(Which brings up another question: why do some of these abduction encounters involve large animals that talk and sometimes glow, or appear as a holy icon, while others are more clinical; mute gray aliens coldly taking us into extraterrestrial examining rooms?)

Glowing anything will get someone's attention. The apparitions that many interpret as the Virgin Mary are very likely another aspect of the same phenomena behind the glowing raccoons, and other high strangeness animal encounters.

*Published on-line for my Trickster's Realm column for Binnall of America, July 24, 2006*
The Lady

UFO and paranormal researchers who study BVM apparitions say that, in many of these apparitions, "the lady" never says who she is. She doesn't tell the witness she is the Blessed Mother; that's an assumption and interpretation on the part of the witness.

This fact, and parallels to psychic, paranormal and UFO phenomena, supports the theory that BVM appearances are UFO related, not literal religious events only.

In *Heavenly Lights: The Apparitions of Fatima and the UFO Phenomenon*, the authors Joaquim Fernandes and Fina D'Armada also mention this. In Chapter I of the book, they begin by pointing out that the lady appearing to the child witness Lucia didn't say who or what she was; the assumption it was of course the Virgin Mary was made by the deeply religious people in the area.

They quote Antonio dos Santos, Lucia's father, who said of the apparition's origins:

"*If the kids saw a woman dressed in white, who else could she be but Our Lady?*"

Lucia's mother questioned her about the visitation:

"*Lucia, I heard it said that you saw Our Lady at Cova da Iria,*" her mother asked.

Lucia responded with:

"*I never said that it was Our Lady -- rather, a small, pretty lady.*"

Visitations of ladies, often dressed in white, that come from the heavens, go back thousands of years, predating Christianity. The BVM phenomena cannot be considered in such strict and narrow terms as purely a literal religious phenomenon, as the authors of *Heavenly Light* write, these apparitions are neither literally religious, nor are they to be dismissed as delusions:
Between the two extremes of irrational pity and rational intolerance, viewed in the long tradition of "the manque," there lies a vast no-man's land, where the practice of a "third way" is the beginning to find legitimacy in academic circles.

Entry, November 18, 2008, from my blog UFO-Mary.
Babbling to Mary

This item from a Louisana newspaper says the child is often seen talking to the stature of Mary; “In this photo, she was holding her hands up and talking to Mary in her own babble language.” (Is she seeing something we don’t see?)

Amy and Andrew J. DiMaggio Jr. of LaPlace don’t have to be told that their 1-year-old daughter Anna Maria is special. They get a glimpse of it every day when the toddler walks out to the front yard of her house and begins an animated conversation with the Blessed Mother. “Whenever she is with us in the front yard, she will always stop playing at some point and walk up to our statue of Mary,” the DiMaggios said. “In this photo, she was holding her hands up and talking to Mary in her own babble language. We hope that this picture will inspire your readers to remember the words of Jesus who said that to enter the kingdom of heaven we must be as open as a child.”

Source: New Orleans “Clarion Herald” September 11, 2002
Trickster–Mary–Devil in the Mysterious Valley?

Much has been written about the image of the Blessed Virgin disguised as something else: a terrestrial fairy, elemental, or ET, something from another dimension and so on. Some sort of entity that comes from a paranormal source, putting on a display for humans. Much debate about this idea, from outright rejection by religious literalists as well as UFO researchers, to a more integrated perspective, along the lines of Jacques Vallee, Ingo Swan, John A. Keel, etc.

While "the Lady" is often reported as not saying she's the Mother of God, the assumption that she is is made by the religious ones she appears to. Her messages and actions are benign; although, some fundamentalists insist there is nothing good about BVM visitations; that it's the devil behind the sightings. Especially in the case of the Medjugorje appearances; many Catholics and other religious writers hold that apparition up as a solid farce. No holy mother, but the devil for sure.

Former Vatican exorcist Bishop Andrea Gemma calls the Medjugorje apparitions "work of the devil . . . diabolical deceit" and attacks the decades long appearances at Medjugorje for being vulgar:

"In Medjugorje everything happens in function of money: Pilgrimages, lodging houses, sale of trinkets. . This whole sham is the work of the Devil. It is a scandal."

The following is from the Angelus site, from Medjugorje Exposed:

Today, we waited for the Virgin at Marija's; with me were Marija, Ivanka, and Jakov. We began praying at 6:20 p.m. The Virgin appeared right away. We asked her about the Franciscan Friars and sisters of our parish...We asked her about the man who saw Jesus in the street as he was driving people in his car. He met a man covered in blood—this man was Jesus—he gave him a blood-stained handkerchief telling him to throw it in the river. Going on his way, he met a lady—it was the Blessed Virgin Mary; she asked the driver for the bloodstained handkerchief. The man offered her a handkerchief belonging to him, but the Virgin asked for the bloodstained one: 'If he had not given it to me it would have been the last judgment for all!' The Virgin said this was true.) (from
Vicka's diary dated September 4, 1981)

The Trickster does seem to be strong in the Medjugorje sightings in a crazy, conflicting, and bizarre yet very Fortean way.

We're used to urgings to pray, become more virtuous, build places of healing, hope and sacred gathering, magical displays like rosaries turning to gold or silver, the scent of roses and cinnamon, swirling, dancing suns and brilliant light beams at play during BVM visits. Nothing devilish about that. The above example of Medjugorje gives us a different picture, one that is sinister.

Chris O'Brien, UFO and high strangeness researcher and chronicler of the highly anomalous events going on in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado, mentions a strange tale of a BVM sighting in the mid 1800s in his book Secrets of the Mysterious Valley. The area was, and still is, a true paranormal hot spot; UFOs, cattle mutilations and other UADS (unexplained animal deaths), Bigfoot sightings (!), and much, much more. Stories about high strangeness events go back hundreds of years in that area.

What O'Brien mentions is in the context of a serial murdering gang. Besides the Fortean, paranormal, UFO weirdness in the area, there has always been severe tension -- and often still is, according to O'Brien -- between whites and Mexicans and people with Mexican–American heritage, (as well as between land barons, etc.) In the mid 1800s, Felipe Nerio Espinoza, no doubt fueled by the tragic murders of his family by whites during the war, set out to murder as many whites as he could, and managed to kill many people, cutting out their hearts, before being caught and killed himself.
A priest related that Felipe told him of a vision he had:

The Virgin Mary had come to him and commanded him to kill one hundred Americans for each of his (six) slain relatives. He wished to kneel at the altar and make a vow to do so . . . (p305 Secrets of the Mysterious Valley)

The priest said that he explained to Felipe that the Virgin would never say anything like that to anyone, and that "it was the devil, tricking him" (p305)

This "vision" could be considered the psychotic thoughts of a brutal killer; but is it possible other, unseen forces, had something to do with his actions? As O'Brien continues, that area of Colorado has a history of "Old Scratch" (the Devil) sightings and lore. O'Brien says that this entity appears even today, often appearing at "dances and/or social events." (p 311) O'Brien has never found an actual witness, but has interviewed plenty who insist that they "knew someone who was there" (p 311)

O'Brien wonders if there's a connection between Felipe's vision and the devil legends:

"It's difficult not to come to the conclusion thatFelipe's "vision" was something akin to demonic in nature. What well-meaning benign spirit like our Blessed Virgin Mary would demand such retribution? (p 311

illustration: Arthur Rackham, 1915
Marian apparitions are not a strictly and literal religious event, but a Fortean/UFO occurrence; a theory I share with those UFO and paranormal thinkers who think the along the same lines. Appearances of the BVM (Blessed Virgin Mary) are not to be interpreted literally within the confines of religious dogma, but are manifestations of something paranormal, and very possibly extraterrestrial.

Both events -- UFOs and BVM sightings -- have their deceptive side. The UFO phenomena contains a huge amount of contradictory, Trickster, manipulative, and contrasting behaviors. For example, the Contactee Era was primarily benign; usually tall, good looking aliens, kind and helpful, who appeared to the contactees. Their messages were positive, their very appearance was positive: tall, good looking, stunningly handsome and beautiful. They usually came from planets associated with love and grace: Venus, Neptune. These experiences seemed to be replaced with abductions -- kidnappings -- by usually short, gray, characterless beings who did rude things and didn’t seem at all interested in conversing with us as any kind of respect or consideration. The contradictions within the UFO phenomena are numerous.

Both the religious and the non-religious observer of Marian Apparitions know that these appearances by Mary also contain contradictions. Not all apparitions are considered valid; some are considered false by the religious: tricks by a negative force (like the devil, Satan, those who interpret the “Trickster” as a strictly demonic and literal entity) to confuse and deceive. The apparitions at Medjugorje are considered by some religious scholars to be a faux event, for many reasons: the apparitions have been going on for too long, (The visitations at Medjugorje began June 24th, 1981) and the behaviors of the BVM are not what is expected of the Virgin or church doctrine.

Students of UFOlogy know that many UFO events are full of trickster characteristics. One famous example is the experience of farmer Joe Simonton of Eagle River, Wisconsin, who, in April of 1961, saw a 30 foot wide UFO land near his house. Three short, but human–appearing beings, wearing uniforms, asked the farmer for a jug of water and in return they gave him three pancakes. (The number three is important here too; three being a powerful number in folklore and esoterica.) A classic Fortean/UFO
event that makes no sense. The UFO literature is full of these seemingly nonsensical encounters. Here we have a visitation from space, with beings giving gifts, but what’s the message, where’s the proof?

Published on UFO Digest, September 2, 2008
A New Vision: The Virgin Mary Tree of Salt Lake City
by Richelle Hawks

Background: In May 1997, in a downtown Salt Lake City neighborhood, a city worker discovered an image of the Virgin Mary in a tree stump that had been struck by lightning. News of the apparition spread quickly throughout the largely Hispanic area, and a platform and stairs were soon erected by the city to accommodate the steady stream of worshippers. Ten years later, the faithful still find their way to the tree, and the area is festooned with rows of candles, objections of devotion, and a kneeling altar.

In 1997, I was working at Barnes and Noble near downtown Salt Lake City. I was an evening manager of a section which included new age and paranormal books, and thereby had my fair share of interesting conversations with odd customers, and vice versa. After a while, nothing fazed me or got me very excited. But, one night, a woman and her son were looking for some books on healing, and asked me if I had yet seen the “Virgin Mary vision” downtown.

In a rapturous frenzy I pummeled the poor woman with questions, and after closing the store at midnight, my friend Kristi and I eagerly drove the few blocks to the site. There was a ladder up against a tree as the woman described. Kristi and I took turns climbing. The only light in this rundown, crack-house-infested neighborhood was a lone, flickering streetlamp. But, there did seem to be a darker, detailed oval figure in the smooth stump—which could pass even in the bad lighting for the traditional Virgin of Guadalupe. And it was wet—‘crying’, as the woman described.

In such a very Mormon city, the seeming irony of a very Catholic icon appearing in the heart of Salt Lake is obvious. But Marian apparition itself may be the bigger and most telling mystery. In his fabulous book, Daimonic Reality, Patrick Harpur suggests appearances of the Virgin Mary are essentially appearances of the divine feminine emerging poignantly from the collective unconscious, which may be shaped by expectation and mythologies emerging in progression from the original, indistinct appearance.
Harpur asserts most Marian appearances begin rather ambiguously; Mary never seems to name herself initially, rather, she seems to adapt into her specific role as questions are asked, and as the event and story grows. Of course, Harpur is referring to events of personal apparition, not an image on a window or tree. But interestingly, this image-apparition in Salt Lake City seems to still follow these ideas.

While not everyone would have instantly recognized the tree image as the Virgin Mary, it is difficult to find argument in the image’s rather graphic feminine aesthetic. The dark, long oval shape is an obvious vulva—as is the traditionally depicted Virgin of Guadalupe image—only aesthetically speaking, of course.

Although there doesn’t seem to be a documented case for the original instance of the Salt Lake City Virgin Mary Tree image, the story goes like this: it was first noticed by an unnamed city worker, who was attending to or cutting the tree’s broken limb, which had been damaged by lightning. Through the original efforts of the worker, and then soon the support and petitions of the Latino/Catholic community, the Salt Lake City leaders erected stairs and a platform—a formalized, city-sanctioned and maintained formal shrine. This is markedly similar—almost a retelling, albeit rather generic and austere—of the original apparition-story of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

In 1523, Juan Diego, a native Mexican farmer, heard music, saw a blinding light, and witnessed a lady dressed in clothes like those of an Aztec Princess. There were several encounters, and in one, she asked for a shrine to be built. Attempting to convince the Catholic leaders of the reality of the encounters and her wishes, Juan Diego gathered anachronistic, unlikely winter roses in his robes as instructed by the lady, and upon presenting them to the leaders, all were convinced of the veracity of Juan Diego’s story of the apparition, when they found her miraculous image emblazoned upon his robes.

The Virgin Mary Tree image as it stands today is quite altered from its original appearance. There are vague references and stories that the image was vandalized at some point, but ten years of liquid oozing from
and onto the surface of the stump probably has a lot to do with its transformation. I recently climbed the stairs of the shrine, and was amazed at what I found.

There is a framed photo affixed to the tree, right above the apparition-stump area. The photo has an early image, so one can easily navigate the stump visually, and make sense of the now ‘vandalized’ image. While the original Virgin of Guadalupe image is virtually gone, there is a new, larger image just to the right—a classic Madonna and Child icon. It’s fairly unmistakable, and I believe, even more striking and clear than the original image. How this could go unnoticed is perplexing. But what could it all mean?

Within the idea that such apparitions arise somehow from the collective unconscious, one can assume that there is some statement or need being addressed or filled. In Daimonic Reality, Harpur writes, “...it is a psychological law—a law of the soul—that whatever is repressed returns in another form...” and then, in giving examples of such, he writes, “Over-masculine authoritarian Christianity is vexed by subversive visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary.” In applying these ideas to the Virgin Mary Tree in Salt Lake City, it does seem to fit, and in several layers of ways. It may be pertinent to take a look at the possible meaning of the Guadalupe Virgin and the now-apparent Madonna and Child symbolism,, within a local context.

The Virgin of Guadalupe image itself is apparently ubiquitous within contemporary Latino communities. In an article reviewing Ana Castillo’s book Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe

Robert Orsi adds to Castillo’s words about the presence of the image of the Virgin:

She appears today on bolo ties, playing cards, tattooed on the skins of cholos in East L.A. and South Phoenix, on belts, pillows, towels, cigar boxes, lamp–shades, ‘among horns honking, ambulances running, children crying, all the people groaning and dancing and making love,’ in the struggles of farm workers, in the places of the sick and dying, carved in soup bones, and in ravines on the border between Mexico and the United States, helping her people make the crossing north in the middle
of the night by distracting the border patrols.

As I stated before, the area in which the Virgin Mary Tree is located is largely a minority and Hispanic, non-Mormon population. It has also been an area fairly steeped in poverty and crime. According to the above descriptions, it is fair to assume the Virgin of Guadalupe image represents hope.

Certainly, in the decade since the appearance, the neighborhood area is almost completely transformed. The grassy vacant lot behind the tree is now a brand new, busy children’s park. Directly across the street is the amazing Koko’s Kitchen—an award winning Asian restaurant with some of the city’s best sushi, and legendary miso soup. There’s now a trendy charter school down the street, full of brainy-cool emo middle school kids, Salt Lake Arts Academy. The image was a vehicle that broadcast the voice and image of the Latino community to the larger population, and also physically and psychically attracted the larger population to the
area. In all, the image seems to have been a catalyst of inclusion.

Looking in a larger local and social framework, the idea of an emerging feminine divine is quite loaded. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is quite established and self-satisfied as a patriarchy. In the very recent past, there have been heated issues by larger groups of some members over women’s earthly and heavenly roles within the dogma.

There is the obvious, tired old misogyny: women are not able to partake in the Priesthood (the Mormon Church has lay clergy—all worthy male church members are expected to advance through all the levels of Priesthood.)

Perhaps more central though, there has been a moderate amount of strife over requests to know more about Heavenly Father’s wife, Heavenly Mother. According to standard lore, all requests for information, both formal and informal, are answered with something like: “Heavenly Father respects Her so much and She is so sacred that He doesn’t want to parade her around.”

If that isn’t repression of the feminine divine, I don’t know what is. Here, we have the unusual instance in which the existence of a Divine Mother is not a source of debate or speculation—it’s dogma. An actual acknowledged Goddess within Christianity, whose name, image, attributes, role, etc. are literally being hidden from her wanna-be worshippers.

Sound familiar? The enormous popularity and ripple-effect of the Da Vinci Code, in which the divinity of Mary Magdalene is proposed, indicates a conscious desire/need on a much larger Christian scale for a divine feminine personage. The Mother is a central archetype, and that has been reflected in religious worship and devotion since ancient times. It’s not going to go away, regardless of its institutional status.

But what of the new image on the tree—the Madonna and Child? On its own religious terms, it represents salvation, and is one of the most recognizable and revered icons within Christianity. On a secular or literal level, it presents an image of safety, and familiarity; a maternal setting of
undisputed cross-cultural, pan-socio-economic commonality: peace, love, and family. And, for hundreds of years, it has also been one of the most widely used icons for personal prayer and devotion --exactly what has been happening at the tree for ten years.

The Virgin Mary Tree has changed. I suggest it has not necessarily been vandalized, but has morphed naturally, through the effects of the still-oozing trunk, countless touches, and even super-naturally, through a decade of thousands and thousands of visiting believers, millions of prayers, and petitions for miracles. And transformed too, by the collective unconscious itself, which in its mysterious manners and wisdom, uses our landscapes and forms as a mirror, in which we may willfully gaze at our own visions, gleaning hints of understanding of our personal and joint state and place in the universe.

by Richelle Hawks
Originally appeared on UFO Digest
Image: Richelle Hawks
Recommended Reading

Fernandes, Joaquim and D'Armada, Fina: Heavenly Lights: The Apparitions of Fatima and the UFO Phenomenon

Hansen, George: The Trickster and the Paranormal

Harpur, Patrick: Daemion Reality

Hawks, Richelle: A New Vision: The Virgin Mary Tree of Salt Lake City, UFO Digest

Johnson, Francis: When Millions Saw Mary

O'Brien, Chris: Mysterious Valley

Swann, Ingo: The Great Apparitions of Mary: An Examination of the Twenty-Two Supranormal Appearances

UFO-Mary (blog)

UFO Resource Center: The Blessed Virgin Mary and UFOs: UFOs and Marian Apparitions

Vallee, Jacques: Passport to Magonia

The Angelus Site

Regan Lee on-line:

Blogs:
Women Of Esoterica
Vintage U.F.O.
The Orange Orb
Mothman Flutterings
Frame 352
Snarly Skepticism . . . (and unofficial JREF watch)
UFO-Mary
Elsewhere:
UFO Digest
Binnall of America (column; Trickster’s Realm)
American Chronicle
UFO Magazine: The Green Room

UFO Magazine (column: The Orange Orb)
Darklore Volume 2, 2008: Mothman and Other Synchronicities,

Richelle Hawks on-line:

Blogs:
Beamships Equal Love
Women Of Esoterica (contributor)

Elsewhere:
UFO Digest
Associated Content
Binnall of America (column: Medusa’s Ladder)