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PREFACE

THIS book is an attempt to build a bridge—a tenuous and fragile one—between a fancy and a myth. It is not a scientific book. It could be called a philosophical book, if there were a philosophy of nonfacts. It is not a documentary, unless the dreams of children at play and the cries of women burned alive can be documented. Yet many lives have changed (secretly, unnoticeably sometimes), and, indeed, many innocents have been burned alive because of that fancy. This book is a tribute to all the people who dared preserve a dream.

It is readily acknowledged that our time has surpassed all epochs in history for the accumulation of technical knowledge, physical power over our environment, and economic might. It is less often pointed out, however, that our age has generated, and continues to generate, mythical material almost unparalleled in quantity and quality in the rich records of human imagination. More precisely, I am referring to the fact that people, during the past twenty years, have very frequently reported the observation of wonderful aerial objects, variously designated as flying saucers, unidentified flying objects (UFO's), etc.; that among these narratives descriptions of landings made by these craft are commonplace; and that quite a few accounts purport to inform us of the physical characteristics, the psychological behavior, and the motivation of their occupants. These matters, then, are the subject of *Passport to Magonia*.

During those same twenty years, there has been a fury of speculation about the nature of UFO's, and the speculation has developed into several investigations conducted by scientific and military panels. In these studies, the material that pertains to the landings of the craft, and which found little credence in the popular press, has been generally ignored. Thus the only angle from

which the total phenomenon could have been viewed in its true perspective has been neglected: the investigators have never recognized the fact that beliefs identical to those held today have recurred throughout recorded history and under forms best adapted to the believer's country, race, and social regime.

If we take a wide sample of this historical material, we find that it is organized around one central theme: visitation by an aerial people from one or more remote, legendary countries. The names and attributes vary, but the main idea clearly does not. Magonia, heaven, hell, Elfland—all such places have in common one characteristic: we are unable to reach them alive, except—as we shall see—on very special occasions. Emissaries from these supernatural abodes come to earth, sometimes under human form and sometimes as monsters. They perform wonders. They serve man or fight him. They influence civilizations through mystical revelation. They seduce earth women, and the few heroes who dare seek their friendship find the girls from Elfland endowed with desires that betray a carnal, rather than purely aerial, nature.

This book is an attempt to build a bridge between two clusters of rumors, observations, and reports: on the one hand, the claims of men and women who are alive today and state they have observed such beings; and, on the other, the large body of similar data that has come to us through tradition.

To a certain extent, this is a shocking book, and it should be. The public is greatly interested in the possible scientific solutions to the flying saucer problem, as is illustrated by the various controversies we can read in the daily press. But this book does not answer this need. I say it once more: this is not a scientific book. It aims only at the documentation of a recurrent myth; namely, the myth of contact between mankind and an intelligent race endowed with apparently supernatural powers. In the pursuit of this goal, I have had to take great liberties with many current beliefs, with scientific conformity, and with some matters of faith. I have resisted, however, the temptation to "extrapolate" our system of scientific knowledge in an effort to explain the phenomena. I am not tempted to guess at the solutions, because the nature of science causes such guesses usually to end in failure. It is not my purpose to assess the contributions of the official investi-

gators, or to take their place. I am not trying to solve any problem, to promote any theory, to provide any reassurance, or to support any belief. Whatever light I throw on this subject will create more areas of shadow than I care to count. But if I can bring a few pieces of information to the attention of people who need them, then my task will be over.

To summarize, then: the book you are about to read is an effort to provide systematic documentation and literary illustration of modern folklore in the perspective of ancient myths and traditional legendary material.

I frankly confess it: I entirely forgot that I was a scientist by profession when I began the manuscript of *Passport to Magonia*. My only guide has been the persistent feeling that science had offered no answer to some basic needs in our hearts, and that perhaps the present loneliness of man, echoed in the great miseries of times past, had provided most of the emotional power, most of the intellectual quality, mobilized in that unreachable goal: Magonia—a place where gentle folks and graceful fairies dance, and lament the coarse world below.

JACQUES VALLEE