

**The Far Side of Geography: Tales from the X-Files of German  
Geopolitics**

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**ABSTRACT:** There exists an extensive fringe literature which asserts the role of occult and esoteric ideas in Nazi Germany. This gives a major arcane influence to Karl Haushofer, German geopolitics, and the significance of the 'heartland'. This paper explores this strange literature, examining the ways in which it distorts the authentic history of Haushofer and geopolitics and invents an 'imaginary geography' of places of hidden power. It then attempts to trace back the origins of the myth, and finds one important source in the combination of black propaganda by British SOE in World War II and the flurry of popular and exaggerated writing on geopolitics in the USA in 1941. It also argues the importance of contesting the irrational accounts in the fringe literature.

## Introduction

Recent work in cultural geography has explored many aspects of the geographical imagination and its history. This has embraced the 'imagined geographies' of colonial explorers and administrators, the geographical discourses of travellers, the fictional worlds of adventure stories<sup>1</sup>, and the geographies of religious beliefs<sup>2</sup>. The mystical and numinous have been touched upon, but cultural geography has so far not explored very far into the world of esoteric, fringe and occult knowledges and beliefs. As Driver has recently asked "Where are the histories of the occult in modern geography?"<sup>3</sup>

Geography has not always been a stranger to astrology, the occult and mysticism, as the historical studies of renaissance geography by Livingstone demonstrate<sup>4</sup>, and Matless has discussed the esoteric and mystic beliefs of the early twentieth century geographers Francis Younghusband and Vaughan Cornish<sup>5</sup>. But the contemporary popularity of 'New Age', 'Aquarian', esoteric and occult ideas and beliefs, whether at a serious or semi-entertainment level, has not yet found a reflection in geographical

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<sup>1</sup> R. Phillips, *Mapping men & empire. A geography of adventure* (London, Routledge, 1998)

<sup>2</sup> e.g. C. S. Tauxe, 'Mystics, modernists, and constructions of Brasilia', *Ecumene* 3 (1996), pp. 43-61.

<sup>3</sup> F. Driver, 'Sub-merged identities: familiar and unfamiliar histories', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 20 (1994), pp. 410-413. Quotation is p. 413, note 8.

<sup>4</sup> D. Livingstone, 'Science, magic and religion: a contextual reassessment of geography in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *History of Science* 26 (1988), pp. 269-294. See also D. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> D. Matless, 'Nature, the modern and the mystic: tales from early twentieth century geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 16 (1991), pp. 272-286. See also his 'Aliens, empire and naked climbing: an eminent geographer remembered', *Journal of Historical Geography* 22 (1996), pp 86-90.

enquiry. Programmes such as the American television series *The X-Files* testify to the widespread appeal, whether credulous or mocking, of those ideas that lie on the hazy boundary between fact and fiction.

These esoteric, occult or bizarre landscapes take us beyond the usual distinctions between the everyday world and our social constructions of it and the world of the imagination: they take us to what might be termed 'the far side' of geography, following Larsen's expression<sup>6</sup>.

The present study is not an attempt to survey these bizarre landscapes and esoteric geographies in any comprehensive way, nor does it systematically explore the theoretical and discursive issues that such imagined geographies raise (both in terms of structuring our understanding of them, and relating them to more familiar, everyday and 'rational' geographies of the world). Instead, it is a much more modest venture: it opens up a particular window onto these occult and esoteric landscapes, and then follows paths out into the landscapes. The paper is an examination of the way Karl Haushofer and the school of German geopolitik have become woven into a whole literature on the Hitler's secret knowledges, the Nazi occult and its links with other esoteric traditions. The examination is in two parts. The first explores this literature and its imagined geographies, and discusses its significance. The second part is a small piece of specific historical detection: since most of the assertions about Haushofer are inaccurate by normal historical criteria of evidence, how did Karl Haushofer come to find himself in this strange landscape? The question has an unexpected answer, leading to British 'black propaganda' operations in World War II, combined with the flurry of popular (and paranoid) writing on German geopolitics in the United States in 1941.

### **A Window onto a Strange Landscape**

The exploration in this paper could seem to be a piece of 'Saturday afternoon research', a *divertissement*, and it began, literally, one Saturday afternoon when I accidentally came across a copy of Maclellan's *The Lost World of Agharti*<sup>7</sup> on the 'returned books' trolley at the local public library, and opened the book to be confronted with a photograph I recognised: Karl Haushofer the German geopolitician. *The Lost World of Agharti* is very much a book belonging to the fringe-esoteric genre, along with books on Atlantis, the Bermuda Triangle, the Secret of the Holy Grail, UFOs, tunnels under the earth, and occult knowledge from either the Orient or ancient European sources. A chapter presents Karl Haushofer as the major occult influence on Adolf Hitler, with Haushofer instructing him in knowledge obtained from the secret Asian city of Agharti, using geopolitical ideas and the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* as a cloak for this knowledge. Further search, together with a footnote in the authoritative biography of Haushofer by Jacobsen, which I could not resist

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<sup>6</sup> Larsen is a popular and widely-published American cartoonist. His 'Far Side' cartoons depict animals (cows, sheep, moose) talking, living human lives, sometimes owning humans, and in reversing the 'normal order' are very effective social commentaries.

<sup>7</sup> A. Maclellan, *The lost world of Agharti. The mystery of Vril power* (London, Souvenir Press, 1981)

following up<sup>8</sup>, revealed that Maclellan was only one example of quite an extensive literature.

### The Fringe Literature

During the twenty-five years after 1960 a range of books in English, French and German asserted links between a variety of forms of esoteric and supernatural knowledge and the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler. English-language examples include Brennan, Fitzgerald, King, Maclellan, Ravenscroft, Sklar, Suster<sup>9</sup>; and French-language ones include Ambelain, Angebert, Aziz, Frere, Pauwels and Bergier, Prieur<sup>10</sup>. Others include Bronder<sup>11</sup> (German), Mila<sup>12</sup> (Spanish) and Galli<sup>13</sup> (Italian). Further examples are cited by Goodrick-Clarke<sup>14</sup> in one of the few scholarly studies of this literature, and by Goodwin<sup>15</sup>. Most of this literature refers to Haushofer, though the importance given to his role varies. Other figures, such as Dietrich Eckart and Alfred Rosenberg, also play leading roles. Attention here is restricted primarily to those elements directly related to Haushofer and geopolitics. Goodrick-Clarke provides a serious historical account of German occult groups, and of the recent mythology<sup>16</sup>; Howe<sup>17</sup> gives a history of astrology under the Reich, as well as critical insights into the role of British counter-propaganda.

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<sup>8</sup> H-A. Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer: Leben und Werk*, 2 vols (Boppard Am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag). The footnote (in volume 1, pp. 451-452, footnote 12) deserves its own footnote: it pointed to E. Howe, *Astrology and the Third Reich. A historical study of astrological beliefs in western Europe since 1700 and in Hitler's Germany 1933-45* (Wellingborough, Aquarian Press), and to L.Pauwels and J. Bergier, *The dawn of magic* (London, Anthony Gibbs and Phillips, 1963).

<sup>9</sup> J.H.Brennan, *Occult Reich* (London, Futura, 1974). M. Fitzgerald, *Storm-troopers of Satan. An occult history of the Second World War* (London, Robert Hale, 1990). F.King, *Satan and the Swastika* (London, Mayflower, 1976). A.Maclellan, *The lost world*. T.Ravenscroft, *The spear of destiny* (London: Neville Spearman, 1972). D.Sklar, *The Nazis and the occult* (New York, Dorset Press, 1977); G. Suster, *The legacy of the beast* (London, W.H.Allen, 1988).

<sup>10</sup> R. Ambelain, *Les arcanes noirs de l'hitlerisme* (Paris, Robert Laffort, 1990). J-M. Angebert, *Hitler et la tradition Cathare* (Paris, Editions Robert Laffort, 1971). P. Aziz, *Les societes secretes nazies* (Paris, Ed. Magellan, 1994). J-C. Frere, *Nazism et sociétés secretes* (Paris, 1974). L. Pauwels and J. Bergier, *Le matin des magiciens. Introduction au realisme fantastique* (Paris, Gallimard, 1960). J. Prieur, *Hitler et la guerre luciferienne* (Paris, Editions J'ai Lu, 1992)

<sup>11</sup> D. Bronder, *Bevor Hitler Kam* (Geneva, Marva, 1975)

<sup>12</sup> E. Mila, *Nazismo y esoterismo* (Madrid, 1990; French translation, *Nazisme et escoterisme*, Paris, 1990)

<sup>13</sup> G. Galli, *Hitler e il nazismo magico* (Milano, Rizzoli, 1989)

<sup>14</sup> N. Goodrick-Clarke, *The occult roots of Nazism. The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany 1890-1935* (Wellingborough, Aquarian Press, 1985)

<sup>15</sup> J. Goodwin, *Arktos. The polar myth in science, symbolism and Nazi survival* (Kempton, Ill., Adventures Unlimited Press).

<sup>16</sup> Goodrick-Clarke, *The occult roots*, especially his Appendix E, pp. 217-225.

The core ideas in these books are not easy to summarise, for they each manipulate 'facts' and ideas to suit their own agendas. Thus Angebert relates them to the so-called arcane knowledge of the Cathar tradition, and Ravenscroft to the claimed properties of possession of the 'Spear of Longinus' in Vienna (supposedly the spear which pierced the side of Christ at the crucifixion). Despite these variations in the mythical narratives being presented, it is possible to set out the main assertions about Haushofer and *geopolitik* as a basis for examining the processes of distortion and derivation. The central claims, found initially in the 1960 Pauwels and Bergier book, and later elaborated on, are that Hitler's rise to power and subsequent policies were assisted by influential groups and advisers with access to 'hidden powers' and arcane knowledge. General Haushofer was a key guru: his interests in the Orient and periods of service as military attache in Japan had given him access to forms of esoteric knowledge:

Au Japon, Haushoffer [sic] aurait ete initie a l'une des plus importantes societes secretes bouddhistes et se serait engage en cas d'echec de sa 'mission' a accomplir le suicide ceremoniel<sup>18</sup>.

In Japan, Haushofer would have been initiated into one of the most important secret Buddhist societies and would have committed himself to fulfil carry through a ceremonial suicide if his mission failed [present author's trans.]

[The selection of the French conditional perfect tense - "would have been" - about a past event is significant: building castles on the sands of such conditional possibilities is there right at the start of this mythology of the Nazi occult!] Bronder asserts that Haushofer met the mystic Gurdjieff in Tibet. In Germany after World War I, Haushofer was mentor and friend to Hess, who became Hitler's Deputy, and visited Hitler at the Landsberg Prison in 1923, greatly influencing the ideas and writing of *Mein Kampf*, as well as introducing Hitler to occult knowledge and to Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race*. Hess is claimed to have said Haushofer was "le magicien, le maitre secret"<sup>19</sup>, and the description "The Master Magician" became a regular one in this literature. It is further claimed that Haushofer was a leading figure in the secret society Thule Gesellschaft, which was developing Eastern esoteric knowledge for the benefit of Germany (Bronder<sup>20</sup> prints a membership list including Haushofer), and of the supposedly-related Vril Society or Luminous Lodge in Berlin. Pauwels and Bergier claim:

C'est, semble-t-il, avec Karl Haushoffer que le groupe Thule va prendre son veritable caractere de societe secrete d'inities en contact avec l'invisible, et devenir le centre magique du nazisme<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Howe, *Astrology*. This is a revised and extended version of his earlier study, *Urania's children. The strange world of the astrologers* (London, William Kimber, 1967). This earlier work is cited by some of the other relevant literature.

<sup>18</sup> Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin*, p.348.

<sup>19</sup> Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin*, p.347.

<sup>20</sup> Bronder, *Bevor*, p.??

<sup>21</sup> Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin*, p.345.

It is, so it seems, with Karl Haushofer that the Thule group came to take on its true character as a secret society of initiates in contact with the Invisible, and to become the magical centre of Nazism [present author's trans.]

The supposed occult knowledge had to have a 'source', a place where the groups currently with access to the knowledge lived, necessitating a geography of such occult power, assumed to be in the 'Orient' and increasingly localised into the high and remote fastnesses of Central Asia. Haushofer and the German secret societies are claimed to have had links with the oriental secret society of the Green Dragon, sometimes presented as Japanese but also as associated with Tibet, and with other Asian groups. Through these links Haushofer and others were able to disseminate the oriental knowledge associated with Agharti and the hidden Central Asian kingdom of Shamballah. Some of this 'knowledge' had become available through the writings of the late-19th century theosophist Helene Blavatsky and others such as Jacolliot and Ossendowski, and through the 'coded' novels of Bulwer Lytton and Arthur Machen (on Machen, see Pauwels and Bergier, 1960, 262-278), but the Third Reich would exploit these hidden powers by alliances, colonisation and conquest of Central Asia.

These arcane and theosophist writers claimed that the groups in Central Asia had gained access to secrets of power, life and 'Vril energy'<sup>22</sup>, and lived in either remote areas or in cities and tunnels under the earth in regions like the Himalayas. Books such as Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) told of such groups as the Vril-ya with their powers of telepathy and telekinesis, but presented them in fictional format, being recognised as 'fact' only by initiates and those subtle enough to read their truth. It is here that Karl Haushofer's geopolitical ideas are regarded as significant. Haushofer's writings emphasised the importance of the "heartland" described by Halford Mackinder. The esoteric writers argue that the crude geopolitical and "realpolitik" arguments for the importance of the heartland were a cloak, to persuade the public that the area was of vital national significance to Germany but also to hide the real reason: the need to link up with and dominate the stronghold of Vril and other mystical powers. The 'heartland' was not simply the emerging locus of world military strategy and political control, but also the geographical focus of occult power, the control of which was far more important than its mere strategic location on the world map.

Later studies also incorporate 'information' on Karl's son Albrecht, a political geographer and geopolitician in his own right and an adviser to the German Foreign Office in the 1930s, and the role of the Haushofers in Hess's flight to Britain in 1941. They argue that members of the Vril Society (including Haushofer) had contacts in the 1930s with the English secret Order of the Magic Dawn, and that leading British

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<sup>22</sup> It may be interesting to note that the term 'vril' can still be regularly seen today - on supermarket shelves in the form of the drink Bovril (or 'bo[vine]-vril'). The drink was invented by J.Lawson Johnston in 1889 when the term 'vril', and Bulwer Lytton's use of it, were still popular. See R. Bennet, *The story of Bovril* (London, Bovril Ltd., 1953).

politicians were associated with the Order<sup>23</sup>. Hess's flight, organised by the Haushofers, was to make use of these links to associates such as the Duke of Hamilton. They also claim that the esoteric, theosophical tradition had two strands, the 'black magic' strand represented by the Thule and Vril groups, and a 'white magic' strand represented by the anthroposophical thought of Rudolf Steiner and his associates<sup>24</sup>. Albrecht Haushofer is seen as associating with the latter strand in joining the 'white rose' of the anti-Nazi resistance during World War II, and being murdered by the Gestapo in the Moabit Prison in 1945<sup>25</sup>. Albrecht's famous *Moabit Sonnets* are interpreted as an admission and condemnation of his father's 'black' arcane knowledge and its effects, quoting especially Sonnet 38, *My Father* (stanzas 1 and 4):

A sapient legend from the Orient  
tells us that the spirits of evil power  
lie imprisoned in the ocean's night,  
sealed in by the hand of an anxious god.

....

But my father broke away the seal.  
He did not see the rising breath of evil.  
He let the daemon soar into the world<sup>26</sup>.

Finally, with the defeat of Germany, Karl Haushofer is claimed to have honoured his Japanese vows by committing suicide in ceremonial fashion by *hara-kiri*.

Haushofer, his geopolitics and the Thule group are only one strand, though an important one, in this literature. Other esoteric and occult traditions and organisations are identified, though they can only be touched upon here. From Pauwels and Bergier onwards, Horbiger's strange theories of 'Universal Ice' (whereby the planets, their satellites, together with the Earth's moon, were covered with spheres of ice, which formed a universal building block) have been included. Horbiger's ideas enjoyed much support under the Nazis as part of an Aryan and non-Jewish science, especially since his glacial cosmogony linked ice-capture to formation of the present moon and the destruction of Atlantis<sup>27</sup>. This in turn linked with theories that Atlantis was in fact a centre of Nordic civilisation. The esoteric literature identifies the Nazi SS as an important focus for the search for 'hidden knowledge', especially through its *Ahnenerbe* (Ancestral Heritage) organisation, which pursued archaeological research on Aryan lines. Amongst their projects was considerable archaeological work putting forward the case for Atlantis being a bronze-age city located close to present

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<sup>23</sup> Angebert, *Hitler*, p. 137 and pp. 274-276.

<sup>24</sup> Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin*, p. 287.

<sup>25</sup> Angebert, *Hitler*, p. 276, and Ravenscroft, *The spear*, pp.220-224.

<sup>26</sup> A. Haushofer, *Moabit Sonnets* (London & New York, W.W.Norton, 1978; translated by M.D. Herter Norton). The Sonnet is on p. 77.

<sup>27</sup> R. Bowen, *Universal Ice. Science and ideology in the Nazi state* (London, Bellhaven, 1993), provides a detailed, critical assessment of Horbiger's theories and their role in Nazi Germany.

Heligoland, with a Nordic-Aryan legacy<sup>28</sup>. Himmler's development of the SS as a semi-mystical order with its ceremonial centre at the Wewelsburg castle also became components in later accounts of the German occult<sup>29</sup>.

### Passage to America

The transmission to America of these readings of the Nazi's 'hidden knowledge' also generated some new interpretations. The European readings examined so far have usually seen themselves as describing a phenomenon that finished in 1945, but many American readings carry the narrative forward. A substantial literature has been created, but much of it is hard to trace, produced by small-scale publishers for sale in specialised outlets or mailorder, or is posted on the internet and may have a short life<sup>30</sup>. A key element is based on one of two forms of 'Nazi survival'. The first centres on the escape and survival of organised Nazi groups, moving to South America or even Antarctica. Thus Friedrich claims that German expeditions to Antarctica in the 1930s found interior warm seas and that Nazi submarines took Nazi groups there in 1945<sup>31</sup>, and Mattern goes on to claim that these groups included rocket scientists and that UFOs are German space-technology emanating from Antarctic bases!<sup>32</sup> The second strand (which sometimes also incorporates the first) is a version of conspiracy theory: the US recruitment of Nazi rocket scientists in 1945 was only the visible peak of a much wider-reaching alliance between some American groups and Nazi groups based especially in Bavaria (which links neatly with Haushofer's Bavarian home and the US Army's occupation of the region in 1945)<sup>33</sup>. Bavaria was the base for the short-lived mystical freemason group (in the late eighteenth century) led by Adam Weishaupt known as the Illuminati, and from these tenuous links a web of American-Bavarian, CIA-Gestapo conspiracies can be constructed. Two writers weaved these ideas into a trilogy (now collected into one volume) that became a bestselling underground novel, *The Illuminatus Trilogy*<sup>34</sup>. And in its pages can be found:

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<sup>28</sup> An extensive account of this interpretation can be found in J. Spanuth, *Atlantis of the north* (London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1979).

<sup>29</sup> See in particular N. Pennick, *Hitler's secret sciences* (London, Neville Spearman, 1981); Fitzgerald, *Storm-troopers*; and Sklar, *The Nazis*, include extensive discussions of these SS dimensions.

<sup>30</sup> Examples are H. Buechner and W. Bernhart, *Hitler's ashes: seeds of a new reich* (Thunderbird Press, 1995) and H. Buechner and W. Bernhart, *Adolf Hitler and the secrets of the holy lance* (Thunderbird Press, 1995?).

<sup>31</sup> C. Friedrich, *Germany's Antarctic claim: secret Nazi polar expeditions* (Toronto, Samisdat Publishers, 1979)

<sup>32</sup> F.Mattern, *UFOs, Nazi's secret weapon?* (Totonto, Samisdat Publishers, 1974).

<sup>33</sup> These ideas are the basis for the novel sequence 'Projekt Saucer' by the English writer W.A.Harbinson: *Inception* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), *Phoenix* (1995), *Genesis* (1980), *Millenium* (1995).

<sup>34</sup> R. Shea and R.A. Wilson, *The Illuminatus Trilogy!* (New York, Dell Publishing, 1975).

Karl Haushofer was never tried at Nuremberg; ask most people to name the men chiefly responsible for the *Vernichtung* (annihilation) decision, and his name will not be mentioned; even most histories of Nazi Germany relegate him to footnotes. But strange stories are told of his many visits to Tibet, Japan and other parts of the Orient; his gift for prophecy and clairvoyance; the legend that he belonged to a bizarre sect of dissident and most peculiar Buddhists, who had entrusted him with a mission in the Western world so serious that he vowed to commit suicide if he did not succeed.... It was Karl Haushofer, clairvoyant, mystic, medium, Orientalist, and fanatic believer in the lost continent of Thule, who introduced Hitler to the Illuminated Lodge in Munich in 1923. Shortly thereafter, Hitler made his first bid for power<sup>35</sup>

They later have a footnote that:

..as an indication that Adolf Hitler's link with the Illuminati was not invented for this work of "fiction" - we suggest that the reader look into *The Morning of the Magicians*, by Pauwels and Bergier<sup>36</sup>

*Illuminatus!* lampoons and mocks the whole American conspiracy genre, but part of its appeal has been this uncertainty as to whether it also half reveals (and half conceals through its fictions) some genuine truths. Undoubtedly it stimulated further interest in various alleged conspiracies, including the German occult<sup>37</sup>. The book itself claims to exemplify a strategy of resistance, deliberately confusing and mixing reality and fiction, which Shea and Wilson term (elegantly) 'guerrilla ontology' and (crudely) 'OM' or 'Operation Mindfuck'<sup>38</sup>. The fantasy can be found woven still further in documents to be found on Internet sites devoted to UFO-alien-conspiracy themes: here the American-German conspiracy is linked to aliens ('the Grays') and the geography (with its supposed underground tunnels and communities) becomes focused on the western USA, in the Mojave desert (the native indians' "dreamland") and the Roswell region. Here one has really entered the terrain of the X-Files, but it is worth remembering that substantial numbers of Americans believe in alien visitations and abductions<sup>39</sup>

These themes of the Nazi occult are not restricted to books and television series, as shown by the major successful film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1979), which depicted the American archaeologist (Harrison Ford) trying to stop Nazis acquiring the Ark of

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 218-219.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 783. Aquino, in his reading list, makes the point that Pauwels and Bergier 'is an excellent book to recommend to a friend who thinks you're crazy for being interested in the occult', whilst *Illuminatus!* 'is perhaps a good counterweight... a good book to give to someone who's too obsessed with the occult!'

<sup>37</sup> The IllumiNet Press publish numerous books on conspiracy themes; one that treats the Nazis (and many others) as part of a long historical thread is M.Howard, *The occult conspiracy: secret societies, their influence and power in world history* (IllumiNet, 1995)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.784.

<sup>39</sup> J. Dean, *Aliens in America. Conspiracy cultures from outerspace to cyberspace* (Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press, 1998)

the Covenant and the secret powers its contained. The Nazi occult also appears in computer games, such as the Black Dahlia and Nephilim, and in music<sup>40</sup>.

There is a different strand to the American reception of tales of the German occult and Haushofer, one that certainly takes the ideas seriously. Pauwels and Bergier's book made an impression on Anton LaVey and the San Francisco Church of Satan which he established in 1966. In 1975 a substantial part of the group, led by Michael Aquino, broke away and formed the Temple of Set. Both LaVey and Aquino have claimed that Haushofer and the Nazi occult had access to genuine magical forces. LaVey's book includes amongst its dedications one 'To Karl Haushofer, a teacher without a classroom'<sup>41</sup>, and he is reported as viewing *The Dawn of Magic* as 'the first and best work ever done describing the Satanic influence in the world'<sup>42</sup>. Aquino notes 'This is the book that kicked off the occult revival of the 1960s', and he comments on the German occult literature, 'This is a very potent, controversial, and dangerous area of magic, whose implications are rarely examined, understood, or appreciated by the profane'.

### Occult Landscapes and Hidden Geographies

The American literature may give Haushofer a much more minor role, but the American developments do help uncover some interesting features of the imagined geographies of occult knowledge. The sources of 'hidden knowledge', together with the communities that control the knowledge, need a geographical location and a landscape to reside in. To successfully survive, reproducing both the communities and the knowledge, a certain size and complexity are inherent. Yet the communities have to be 'hidden', unknown to the everyday eyes of the world. A small group of Nazi survivors might possibly reside in a remote Bolivian town, but an organised society with advanced rocket and 'UFO' technology could not. The imagined geographies of these 'hidden communities' are therefore usually projected onto remote, unexplored and unoccupied parts of the earth, often with the cities further hidden in underground tunnels and caverns. As exploration progressed through the 19th and early 20th centuries, these remote and unknown places have gradually disappeared from the map, and the geographical centres of the occult have had to move: northern Thule gave way to the Orient. Blavatsky's 'Secret Doctrine' steadily moved its emphasis from ancient Egypt to Mesopotamia to Tibet and the Gobi Desert, and as Tibet itself became known, the hidden worlds had to go underground - to the cities in tunnels under the Himalayas. Bishop has charted the wide range of myths associated with 'Shangri-La' in Tibet, and writes:

The utopia (u-topia, or non-place) of Shangri-La was an ideal fantasy world at a time when geographical mystery had not yet totally vanished from the surface of the earth. Located, if not literally

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<sup>40</sup> There is an Australian (Queensland) heavy-metal rock band *The Spear of Longinus*.

<sup>41</sup> A. LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* (San Francisco, 1969)

<sup>42</sup> The quotation is attributed to LaVey in an extensive and annotated Temple of Set reading list prepared by Aquino, and available on the Internet: the location is <ftp://ftp.lysator.liu.se/pub/religion/satanism/ToS/Reading-list/>. The comments on the literature, mainly by Aquino, are by no means uncritical.

anchored, in geography and history, it stood midway between the Victorian quest for the Holy City and mid-twentieth century concern with metaphysical and psychological systems.<sup>43</sup>

As Central Asia became explored, mapped, and linked to the telegraph and then the telephone, so Shamballah or Shangri-La could no longer be identified with Lhasa or any real city on the surface of the earth:

*The myth of Tibet could no longer be trusted to Tibet, to the geographical place; instead it had to be transferred on to what was truly timeless and formless. That place alone could never be threatened.*<sup>44</sup>

The esoteric writers still required physical locations, places in time and space. The invention of 'warm regions' of Antarctica offering Nazi bases is simply trying to make use of the last *Terra Incognita*; and the UFO-alien focus on the Mohjave region and 'Dreamland' is an attempt to locate the 'hidden knowledge' in one of the remotest parts of the USA (and also provides an occult heartland with the USA). Once these regions lose their appeal, there are only Other Dimensions and Inter-Planetary options available (both of which have their advocates).

### **Esoteric Discourse and its Critique**

How should all this literature be examined? Perhaps the diverse cavalcade should simply be enjoyed, one of those occasions for humour, mockery and irreverence such as Matless encountered in his work on Younghusband: 'If you must include a belief in aliens and naked climbing within a history of geography, then the last thing to do is incorporate them into a still deadly serious canon'<sup>45</sup>. Yet the esoteric literature, in its very diversity, is sometimes itself serious, sometimes playful, and no one response would be appropriate for all.

It is important not to assume the esoteric/fringe literature has any uniformity of viewpoint on its subject-matter. Some authors (and readers) take the hidden knowledge and powers seriously, seeing them as dangers or opportunities. Others (again both authors and readers) probably regard it as mere entertainment, and some books are doubtless put together purely as money-making ventures. Much of it operates, however, in a middle zone, where fact and fiction become blurred: it may be fantasy, but it may be true - can you risk it? This is the world portrayed through series such as the X-Files, and this blurring of the fact-fiction, real-imaginary boundaries is part of the appeal.

These esoteric/fringe and occult literatures are highly self-referential: 'facts' are borrowed, reinterpreted and fitted into new frameworks, and there is little or no attempt made to check back against authoritative or standard historical documentation. Matless has argued that Foucauldian 'genealogy' is appropriate for

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<sup>43</sup> P. Bishop, *The myth of Shangri-La* (London, Athlone Press, 1989), p.217

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.217.

<sup>45</sup> D. Matless, 'Effects of history', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS 20 (1994), pp. 405-409; quotation at p. 407.

the investigation of many geographical discourses, which should not simply be compared against an external (and authoritative) reality:

Representations, images, knowledges, fantasies are suggested here as being highly concrete stuff, not to be regarded as merely reflective or distortive of the world (though mirroring or distortion may be their declared aim), but as constitutive, as what the world is made of, really<sup>46</sup>.

The present esoteric representations can be seen in this way, 'history in the form of a concerted carnival', as Foucault describes genealogy<sup>47</sup>, but they also require more critical and standard historical appraisal. Without attempting to circumscribe the ways this material can be studied, there are three types of question to be asked here of these esoteric and occult representations. The first two are standard historical, rather than genealogical questions, whilst the third returns (to some extent) to genealogy.

The first question is: what is the factual and evidential basis for the claims and narrative being set forth? The second one is: if the factual claims are untrue, or unsubstantiated, on the basis of normal historical and documentary evidence, how (historically) did they come to be asserted as true? The third, and much wider-ranging question is: how does the esoteric literature function as a discourse, what are the social (and political) functions of these beliefs and practices, and why do they arise when and where they do?

The remainder of this paper is addressed to these questions. The first two receive most attention, whilst the third requires a much wider examination, beyond the scope (and space) of the present paper, though some aspects are discussed here.

Attempting to 'demythologise' the esoteric/fringe literature by subjecting it to the normal processes of historical and documentary investigation is thus only one way of approaching this literature. Yet the esoteric literature itself makes claims about its factuality and literalness, and the serious authors would not want to persist in claims that can be shown to be factually incorrect. Now there are perspectives within the esoteric literature that are less pregnable to standard, scholarly analysis. The first flows from extreme conspiracy theory: the archives and 'facts' have been manipulated by the conspirators to change the historical record and hide the truth. This is the argument put forward by some over the Roswell Incident in the USA. However, none of the literature on Haushofer makes this argument, so it need not concern us further here. The second perspective flows from the widely-held view (in esoteric circles) that only the 'initiates' can see the hidden patterns in what other see as coincidence and randomness. This should not affect the discussion of basic factual evidence (but would affect how apparently-disconnected facts of Haushofer's life were interpreted). If, however, it is argued that initiates have access to special techniques of historical research, then the 'results' of such research do pose problems for normal scholarly

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<sup>46</sup> D. Matless, 'An occasion for geography: landscape, representation, and Foucault's corpus', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10 (1992), 41-56; quotation at p. 44.

<sup>47</sup> M. Foucault, 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history', in P. Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1986), pp. 76-100; quotation at p.94.

discussion. This is the position with Ravenscroft's book, which is allegedly based on Stein's special (and vague) techniques of 'memory historical research'<sup>48</sup>. For the most part, the writers on Haushofer's connections with occult knowledge write as if they believe they are recording standard, historically-based information. In this they ought to welcome careful investigation and checking, and their accounts are verifiable (or falsifiable) in the usual, scholarly manner. The following sections of this paper therefore looks at the evidence on this.

### **Sifting Fact from Fiction and Fantasy**

It needs to be re-emphasised that, in the form it is presented, virtually all of this tale (or set of variant tales) about Haushofer is untrue. But the gross traductions and calumnies are fanciful embroidery around some true elements in Haushofer's biography, and we need to sift out these elements.

Haushofer was indeed fascinated by the Orient and Japan especially - it was his specialist geographical area and he wrote his PhD on it, together with several books - and he did serve as military attache there from the end of 1908 to summer 1910. On his departure he was made a Commander (class IV) of the Order of the Rising Sun<sup>49</sup>, a regular Order like the British CMG or CB or the French Legion d'Honneur. There is, of course, no record of any secret societies or special initiations. Haushofer never visited Tibet or high Central Asia: the nearest he got was a view of the distant Himalayas as he crossed India by train (to dine with the British commander Lord Kitchener) on his journey to Japan, and his return journey by the Trans-Siberian railway from Vladivostok to Moscow<sup>50</sup>. There is no record of any contact with Gurdjieff, and Gurdjieff himself may not have been in Tibet<sup>51</sup>.

In Germany, the Thule Society did exist, founded by Rudolf von Sebottendorff in 1918<sup>52</sup>. It was one of a number of occultist societies and groups that formed in Germany (and other Western European countries) in the late 19th and early 20th century<sup>53</sup>. They fostered nationalistic myths linked to Aryan racism and anti-semitism, but their impact was very limited. Goodrick-Clarke examines their history in detail. They did have some political impact on the infant Nazi party in its early years, and later a stronger one on Himmler's SS. Eckhart, Hitler's most influential Munich mentor, certainly attended meetings, as did Alfred Rosenberg and Hess. But by 1925 its influence was largely over. There is no solid record of any Vril Society or Luminous Lodge in Berlin. Nor is there any record of Karl Haushofer being linked to the Thule Society, Bronder's membership list being a fake<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Ravenscroft, *The spear*, pp. 203-219.

<sup>49</sup> Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer*, vol. 1, p.467.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 86-112.

<sup>51</sup> See J.Webb, *The harmonious circle* (London, 1980).

<sup>52</sup> Goodrick-Clarke, *The occult roots*.

<sup>53</sup> See R.H. Phelps, '“before Hitler Came”: Thule Society and Germanen Orden', *Journal; of Modern History* 25, pp. 245-261.

<sup>54</sup> Goodrick-Clarke, *The occult roots*, p.221.

Haushofer was a teacher and friend of Hess, and did visit Hitler in the Landsberg prison. However it was not Bulwer Lytton's novel that he took, but rather Ratzel's *Politische Geographie* (1897), which Hitler would undoubtedly have found hard-going. Haushofer's contact with Hitler, both then and later, was quite limited, and scholars have debated his exact influence on both the book and later German foreign policy<sup>55</sup>. However one draws the balance-sheet, he was certainly not the guiding hand or guru, and his writings did not promote an 'Aryan' racist strategy. Nor is there any evidence of Haushofer having any beliefs in occult or mystical powers in the heartland of Central Asia.

Albrecht Haushofer did have some contact with British officials, and had met the Duke of Hamilton. He had been attempting to make some negotiating links in 1941, but they were unofficial, and he was horrified by Hess's flight<sup>56</sup>. The English Order of the Magic Dawn did exist, but was defunct by 1923<sup>57</sup>, and there is no evidence of Hamilton or other leading figures having any links with it or any similar organisation. Albrecht Haushofer did work for the resistance and was murdered<sup>58</sup>. He did write the *Moabit Sonnets*, which reflect on the whole German tragedy and are a major contribution to German literature. Sonnet 38 is an allegorical poem about the potential forces of evil, not a specific allegation about the use of occult power by his father. Finally, Karl Haushofer did commit suicide in 1946, but not in any Japanese ceremonial fashion: he took poison<sup>59</sup>.

There are even some elements in the Haushofers' biographies that the fringe writers have missed but could have possibly employed. Like many other Germans of their times, they did have some interest (even belief) in astrology: Karl's birth-chart, in his own handwriting, is reproduced in Jacobsen<sup>60</sup>, and Albrecht had an interest in Hitler's horoscope<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example, M. Bassin, 'Race contra space: the confluct between German geopolitik and National Socialism', *Political Geography Quarterly* 6 (1987) pp. 115-134; H. Heske, 'Karl Haushofer: his role in German geopolitik and Nazi politics', *Political Geography Quarterly* 6 (1987), pp. 135-150; Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer*; G. Stoakes, *Hitler and the quest for world domination* (London, Berg, 1986)

<sup>56</sup> The intriguing story of this episode and Hess's links with Karl and Albrecht Haushofer is traced in detail in J. Douglas-Hamilton, *Motive for a mission. The story behind Hess's flight to Britain* (London, Macmillan, 1971), and this narrative is then also used as the basis for a novel by Peter Lear (a pseudonym for the detective writer Peter Lovesey), *The Secret of Spandau* (London, Michael Joseph, 1986).

<sup>57</sup> E. Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn. A documentary history of a magical order 1887-1923* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).

<sup>58</sup> U. Laack-Michel, *Albrecht Haushofer und der Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart, Ernst Klett Verlag, 1974).

<sup>59</sup> E. Walsh, *Total power. A footnote to history* (New York, Doubleday, 1948), pp. 32-34.

<sup>60</sup> Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer*, vol.1, plate 2.

<sup>61</sup> R. Hildebrandt, *Wir sind die Letzten* (Berlin, 1949), pp. 100-114. Also Howe, *Astrology*, pp. 195-196.

There is not space here to report all the historical evidence and critical assessments of other aspects of the Nazi period deployed in the esoteric literature. Goodrick-Clarke provides the most comprehensive historical assessment<sup>62</sup>, demonstrating that there were occult elements, but they were fragmented and disconnected, and had little real impact on the Nazi regime. The SS Ahnenerbe did pursue some strange researches, but its major thrust was to promote a nationalistic, Nordic archaeology<sup>63</sup>. Through the Ahnenerbe the SS did promote Central Asian expeditions (the Nanga-Parbat expeditions of 1934 and 1937, on which the Munich geographer Prof. Carl Troll was present, and the 'SS-Tibet-Expedition' of 1938/39), but there is no evidence of occult objectives for these ventures<sup>64</sup>. Wewelsburg castle was designed as the cult centre for Himmler's Nordic SS order and its ceremonial, but more than that should not be read into it<sup>65</sup>

### Tracing the Origins of the Haushofer Myth

The fringe literature is not scholarly in attributing its sources, or quoting accurately, so it is not at all easy to trace back to the roots of the inclusion and emphasis on Haushofer. However, it is clear that Pauwels and Bergier (1960) was pivotal in the growth of this literature, and all the later writing builds upon this. On Haushofer they quote only three specific sources: Fishman (1954), Ley (1947) and de Wohl (1952), and both turn out to be crucial in understanding the origins of the myth.

Jack Fishman's *The Seven Men of Spandau*<sup>66</sup> is a series of interviews with seven German war criminals then imprisoned by the Allies in Spandau Prison in Berlin, one of them being Hess. Fishman writes:

He [Hess] went there [Germany] as a student at Munich University and almost at once came under the influence of Professor Karl Haushofer, who was to dominate much of his future philosophy and thought. It was, in fact, the learned professor who really inspired Hess's wartime flight. Haushofer's theory of geo-politics (geographical factors determining political relationships) was, of course, to become part of Nazi doctrine, so it is hardly surprising that Hess became devoutly attached to his tutor<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Goodrick-Clarke, *The occult roots*.

<sup>63</sup> See B. Arnold, 'The past as propaganda: totalitarian archaeology in Nazi Germany', *Antiquity* 64 (1990), 464-478, and M. Kater, *Das Ahnenerbe der SS 1935-1945: ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches* (Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt).

<sup>64</sup> M. Rossler, *Wissenschaft und Lebensraum. Geographische Ostforschung im National-Sozialismus* (Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1990), and Kater, *Das Ahnenerbe*.

<sup>65</sup> K. Huser, *Wewelsburg 1933-1945* (Paderborn, 1982), and Goodrick-Clarke, *The occult roots*, pp. 177-191.

<sup>66</sup> J. Fishman, *The seven men of Spandau* (London, 1954)

<sup>67</sup> Fishman, *The seven men*, pp. 24-25.

Hess himself, who was very disturbed at the time of the interview, commented on Haushofer's influence on him and his friendship, claiming Haushofer had 'second sight' and that three dreams by Haushofer, seeing Hess "piloting an aeroplane to an unknown destination" had convinced Hess to make his flight in 1941. But that is all there is; there is no direct quote about Haushofer as the "Master Magician" as cited by Maclellan, Ravenscroft and others. I searched through Fishman's book several times, certain I was missing something, but the statement is simply not there. And, if one goes back to what Pauwels and Bergier actually write, one reads:

Dans les rares moments de lucidité qui lui laisse son inexplicable maladie, le prisonnier Hess, dernier suivant du groupe Thule, aurait déclaré formellement que Haushofer [sic] était le magicien, le maître secret<sup>68</sup>.

In the rare moments of lucidity that his inexplicable illness allowed him, the prisoner Hess, last follower of the Thule group, would have declared formally that Haushofer was the magician, the secret master [present author's trans.]

Once again, as good Frenchmen, Pauwels and Bergier have been cautious in their choice of tenses, and did not assert quite as boldly as later writers have assumed they did, but their speculation has very successfully helped spawn and exaggerate the Haushofer myth.

The second source employed by Pauwels and Bergier is Willy Ley, a former rocket engineer who emigrated to the United States. Ley wrote an article in 1947 (perhaps appropriately published in the magazine *Astounding Science Fiction*) discussing the role of pseudoscience in the Nazi regime and revealing the existence of a Berlin 'Society for Truth' that "devoted its spare time looking for Vril"<sup>69</sup>. There is no mention at all of Haushofer, and the connection between Haushofer and any Vril Society is entirely made by Pauwels and Bergier.

### **Louis de Wohl**

The third source in Pauwels and Bergier leads to a more interesting trail, with unexpected results: *The Stars of War and Peace* by Louis de Wohl (1952)<sup>70</sup>. This book describes de Wohl's astrological work, before and during World War II, and contains a section on Karl Haushofer and German geopolitics as influences on Nazi strategy:

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<sup>68</sup> Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin*, p. 347.

<sup>69</sup> W. Ley, 'Pseudoscience in Naziland', *Astounding Science Fiction* 39 (1947), pp. 90-98 (quote at p. 92).

<sup>70</sup> L. de Wohl, *The stars of war and peace* (London, Rider, 1952). This reference is footnoted in Pauwels and Bergier's original French edition, *Le matin* (p. ), but is omitted from the English translation, so that working just from the English version one could not follow the trail.

“In order to make clear what was really going on behind the scenes I must now refer to an organization of whose existence and importance I had informed my superiors to the best of my ability: the Geopolitical Institute in Munich, led by a man who combined the two dignities most respected by the German mind: that of a general and that of a professor.

General Professor Dr. Karl Haushofer (born 27 August 1869) was in many ways what is called in India the guru, the sacred teacher of both Hitler and Hess. Hess was devoted to the old man with the fanaticism of a religious disciple. Haushofer was a queer mixture of scientist, military man, genius and crackpot. It is significant that he spent a substantial part of his life making studies in the East and that he was, at least to my knowledge, the only European who had been made an honorary member of the secret Japanese society called the Black [sic] Dragon”<sup>71</sup>.

If one wants a specific source from which the later (mis)use of poor Haushofer springs, this is surely it, put together with Fishman and other elements and embroidered upon shamelessly. But we can go back a stage further and ask how and why de Wohl came to write about Haushofer, and this brings us to England and America.

Ludwig von Wohl was born in Berlin in 1903, of Hungarian descent and partly Jewish. Before Hitler came to power von Wohl made a career as a journalist, novelist and film script-writer, but came to London as a refugee in 1935, altering his name to Louis de Wohl. He recounts his life up to 1937 in his autobiographical *I Follow My Stars*<sup>72</sup>, and his later career is examined by Howe<sup>73</sup> (1984). De Wohl had become interested in astrology in the 1930s, building a small clientele, and at the start of the War he eventually persuaded the British authorities that he had a role to play using his astrological skills. De Wohl, who Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart described as ‘the German astrologer and exhibitionist’<sup>74</sup>, was clearly irrepressible. His own account of his wartime experiences (in *The Stars of War and Peace*) is not entirely reliable, but Howe (who himself worked in British ‘black propaganda’ and met de Wohl) provides a more credible narrative<sup>75</sup>. This was based on the evidence of a former senior secretary (only identified as ‘Miss I’ by Howe) to Sir Charles Hambro, the second-in-command at the Special Operations Executive (SOE).

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<sup>71</sup> de Wohl, *The stars*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>72</sup> L. de Wohl, *I follow my stars* (London, G.G.Harrap 1937). His other astrological books include *Secret service of the sky* (London, Cresset Press, 1938) and *Commonsense Astrology* (London, Andrew Dakers, 1940), and a novel, *Introducing Dr. Zodiac* (London, Andrew Dakers, 1940). During the 1950s he converted to Roman Catholicism and wrote a number of devotional Catholic historical novels. He died in 1961.

<sup>73</sup> Howe, *Astrology*.

<sup>74</sup> K.Young (ed), *The diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart*, volume 2 (London, Macmillan, 1981)

<sup>75</sup> Howe, *Astrology*.

De Wohl's offering was to provide astrological analyses supposedly based on Hitler's horoscope and the methods being employed by Hitler's own astrologers, i.e. 'second predicting' likely German actions and timings. From the summer of 1940 he offered his 'reports', but "It was not easy to find a niche for me. Neither the War Office nor the Admiralty could employ an astrologer"<sup>76</sup> (de Wohl, 1952). But he did find a sort of foothold in the new Special Operations Executive (SOE) being developed by Hambro<sup>77</sup>, and continued to provide his reports that nobody took at all seriously. Perhaps simply to find a role for de Wohl, and get him out of everyone's hair, "Sir Charles Hambro decided to send de Wohl on an astrological mission to the U.S.A."<sup>78</sup>, with the aim of spreading astrological propaganda that was unfavourable to German prospects. At this stage in the War, the atmosphere in the USA, and the possibility of USA entry into the War, was critical for British prospects, and every avenue was worth exploring, however unlikely. De Wohl clearly took his astrology seriously, but believed it could be used in the Allied interest, whilst for the others it was simply 'black propaganda'.

De Wohl arrived in the USA, ostensibly as a private citizen, in June 1941. The American OSS (Office of Strategic Services) were informed of the project, and Sweet-Escott comments "Our friends in OSS were not impressed. I have no doubt that they thought that the de Wohl mission was a cover story for something infinitely more sinister"<sup>79</sup>. The SOE secretary, who joined de Wohl in New York as a minder, noted:

De Wohl worked out astrological 'maps' of various people he thought were of particular use to Hitler and then told select gatherings of journalists all the 'astrological bad aspects' to which his selected victims would be subject during the near future, in the hope of giving the said victims an aura of 'bad luck' ... Publicly and privately he tried to drive home the fact that it would be better for the United States to enter the war voluntarily than be pushed into it.<sup>80</sup>

SOE in London were supposed to send items of black propaganda for de Wohl to make use of, but they did not arrive, and the SOE secretary commented "It seemed to me at the time, and still does, that what could have been an excellent piece of psychological warfare turned out, from lack of co-operation, into a fair flop"<sup>81</sup>. In August 1941 de Wohl lectured to the national convention of the American Federation of Scientific Astrologers in Cleveland, using the occasion to argue the key role of astrological advice on Hitler. And it was here he introduced Karl Haushofer and his Geopolitical Institute in Munich as a central adviser, with geopolitics providing the grand direction of military strategy and astrology "functioning as the time-keeper"<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> de Wohl, *The stars*, p.

<sup>77</sup> On SOE see M.R.D.Foote, *SOE: An outline history of the Special Operations Executive 1940-46* (London, BBC, 1984), and B. Sweet-Escott, *Baker Street Irregular* (London, Methuen, 1965).

<sup>78</sup> Howe, *Astrology*, p.210.

<sup>79</sup> Sweet-Escott, *Baker Street*, p.147.

<sup>80</sup> quoted in Howe, *Astrology*, p.212.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.212.

<sup>82</sup> de Wohl, *The stars*, p.34.

The exact dates are significant in this discussion of Haushofer: de Wohl did not discover or invent Haushofer's role, he arrived in the States at just the time that popular and sensationalist accounts of German geopolitik were being published. The year 1941 saw many analyses and exposes of geopolitik, but none reached a wider public than Frederick Sondern's *Reader's Digest* article on "The Thousand Scientists behind Hitler", which appeared in June<sup>83</sup>. Here was the master-strategist with his Geopolitical Institute, 1000 staff and grand geopolitical plans. Sondern also had a paper in the popular *Current History*, also in June<sup>84</sup>, and articles by other writers also appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, *New Republic*, *Nation*, *Fortune* and *Harper's*<sup>85</sup>. Sondern asserted:

Dr. Haushofer and his men dominate Hitler's thinking. That domination began 17 years ago when the World War general flattered the ex-corporal by paying him visits in prison. Haushofer saw possibilities in the hysterical agitator who had launched an unsuccessful beer-hall revolution. The prison visits became frequent; the distinguished soldier-scientist fascinated Hitler, then finally made him a disciple. The ascendancy has grown as Dr. Haushofer again and again has proved the accuracy of his knowledge and the wisdom of his advice.... It was Haushofer who taught the hysterical, planless agitator in a Munich jail to think in terms of continents and empires. Haushofer virtually dictated the famous Chapter XVI of *Mein Kampf* which outlined the foreign policy Hitler has since followed to the letter<sup>86</sup>

O'Tuathail has recently traced and analysed the construction of this American mythology, with its 'hysterical and paranoid readings of Haushofer as the man behind Hitler' and its 'accounts of an imaginary Geopolitical Institute in Munich', and asked what the mythology reveals about 'the unconscious fears and fantasies associated with the specification of "geopolitics" as an object in U.S. political discourse?'<sup>87</sup>. The important aspect for the present analysis is that de Wohl arrived just as the most exaggerated accounts were hitting the newsstands, and articles like Sondern's give him a theme he could immediately make use of, one that American audiences would recognise and which he could adapt slightly for his purposes.

De Wohl simply gave an astrological twist to the contemporary American exaggeration of Haushofer's role. The predictions he then made (that Haushofer advocated moving the war westwards, invading Brazil after success in West Africa, so directly threatening the American hemisphere) were directed to worrying the Americans, but they seem to have had no impact, and the events of late 1941 - the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the German invasion of Russia - made them

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<sup>83</sup> F. Sondern, 'The thousand scientists behind Hitler', *Reader's Digest*, 38 (issue 230, June 1941), pp. 23-27.

<sup>84</sup> F. Sondern, 'Hitler's scientists, 1000 scientists and spies working under Dr. Karl Haushofer', *Current History*, 1 (issue 53, June 1941), pp. 10-12.

<sup>85</sup> The items are listed in A. Gyorgy, *Geopolitics. The new German science* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1944).

<sup>86</sup> Sondern, 'Hitler's scientists', p.11.

<sup>87</sup> G. O'Tuathail, *Critical geopolitics* (London, Routledge, 1996), pp. 111-140. Quotation at p.114.

obsolete. De Wohl returned to London in February 1942, and found some employment with Sefton Delmer's PWE (Psychological Warfare Executive) forging astrological material for distribution in occupied Europe<sup>88</sup>. De Wohl's account of his astrological predictions for Haushofer, published in his 1952 book, seems to have made no impact, and lay ignored until Pauwels and Bergier came across it, and used it in 1960 as the basis for their linkage of Haushofer to the Nazi occult and Haushofer's role as Hitler's 'master magician'.

There is one further source that was to be influential. This is Edmund Walsh's *Total Power*<sup>89</sup>, a source not apparently used by Pauwels and Bergier, but certainly employed by Ravenscroft, Maclellan, and possibly Angebert. Edmund Walsh (1885-1956) was an American Jesuit priest who was also an expert on international relations, becoming Vice-President of Georgetown University in Washington, and Regent of the School of Foreign Service<sup>90</sup>. Walsh was one of the few genuine US experts on German geopolitik, and at the close of World War II was flown to Germany to interrogate Haushofer before the start of the Nuremberg hearings. When they met, Haushofer complained that his interrogators lacked knowledge and experience of geopolitics, and wondered whether the USA could not send Isaiah Bowman, Owen Lattimore, or "a priest in a university in Washington who has written much against me and whose writings I have collected"<sup>91</sup>. Walsh provides a detailed account of the interrogations, a copy of Haushofer's final "Defence of German Geopolitics", and of the tragic events of Albrecht Haushofer's murder and Karl Haushofer's suicide<sup>92</sup>, and it is surprising that academic historians of geopolitics have not made more use of this work. It is a sensitive and humane analysis, but also an impassioned one, written in the immediate aftermath of the War, and this led Walsh into statements that were to prove ammunition for fringe writers lighting on his work:

In Chapter XIV of *Mein Kampf* one can almost feel the presence of Karl Haushofer, although the lines were written by Hess at the dictation of Hitler. What Haushofer did was to hand over a sheathed sword of conquest from his arsenal of scholarly research. Hitler unsheathed the blade, sharpened the edge, and threw away the scabbard<sup>93</sup>.

These words are quoted by both Ravenscroft and Maclellan<sup>94</sup>. Walsh's discussion of Albrecht Haushofer's life, death and Sonnets is also used in these later works, and his

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<sup>88</sup> The activities of PWE, and de Wohl's activities within it, are described in S. Delmer, *Black boomerang* (London, 1962); E.Howe, *Astrology*; and E.Howe, *The black game: British subversive operations against Germany, 1939-1945* (London, Michael Joseph, 1984).

<sup>89</sup> E. Walsh, *Total power*.

<sup>90</sup> There is a useful biography of Walsh by Father L.J.Gallagher, S.J., *Edmund Walsh, S.J.: a biography* (New York, Benziger Brothers, 1962), but his life and geopolitical work deserve fuller analysis.

<sup>91</sup> Walsh, *Total power*, p.11.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-67, and Appendix at pp. 344-353.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>94</sup> Ravenscroft, *The spear*, p. 228, and Maclellan, *The lost world*, p. 106.

discussion (entirely appropriate in context) of Haushofer in terms of the 'divided German soul', "the Dionysian and the Apollonian conflict"<sup>95</sup>, may well have encouraged the 'black magic' versus 'white magic' interpretations. It is precisely such partial, and tendentious, readings of comments by normal historians and writers that litter much of the fringe literature. Quotations from historians such as Alan Bullock and Hugh Trevor-Roper on Hitler's personality and psychology are used to bolster supernaturalist arguments which the historians themselves would undoubtedly reject.

The roots of the strange and false story of Haushofer's occult involvement and influence thus lie in the coincidence of a farfetched British SOE operation and the outburst of paranoid and hysterical accounts of Haushofer and German geopolitik in the USA. In the decades after World War II there were enough sources that briefly mentioned Haushofer as a mysterious influential figure, and enough specific 'hooks' in his life-story, for writers inclined to occult and arcane explanations to make use of. Once established, such myths and falsehoods are hard to put to rest. But it is surely also the case that they were aided and abetted by the lack of serious critical reflection and historical analysis of German geopolitics in the years from 1945 to the 1970s<sup>96</sup>. The shunning of the word 'geopolitics' and the lack of serious research meant that Haushofer myths were left completely unchallenged. It is worth noting, for example, that the myth of the 'Institute of Geopolitics' in Munich could be told in an academic text as late as 1985<sup>97</sup>.

### Concluding Comments

There remains the larger issue of why people are attracted to such irrational and occult explanations, an issue too large to do more than touch upon here. Certain personalities or castes of mind do seem to be attracted (or grow an attraction) to extraordinary explanations. Normal facts and comments are 'read' to fit such explanations, and outsiders are told they simply lack the insights needed to 'see'. In the case of the Nazis, the events and horrors of 1933-45 were of such a scale and depth that some see supernatural forces as a necessary explanation. Both Goodrick-Clarke<sup>98</sup> and Webb<sup>99</sup> see this as one driving factor behind the appeal of occult accounts. Yet this makes it all the more vital to argue against and contest such viewpoints: the enormity of the Nazi horror was the result of the actions (and inactions) of ordinary men and women, some of them unbalanced, but in the main with the usual ingredients of good and evil. Bringing in occult forces as explanation reduces human responsibility for what happened and reduces the vigilance to make sure we do not do it again. For these reasons it is important to fight against all irrational accounts, and this is justification enough. But it is also the case that genuine historical fact can be stranger - and far more intriguing - than fantasy or fiction, and the Haushofers' actual lives, together with the present tale of Louis de Wohl and SOE, surely exemplify this.

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<sup>95</sup> Walsh, *Total power*, p.66.

<sup>96</sup> L.W.Hepple, 'The revival of geopolitics', *Political Geography Quarterly* 5 (supplement), pp. S21-S36

<sup>97</sup> G. Parker, *Western geopolitical thought in the twentieth century* (London, Croom Helm, 1985).

<sup>98</sup> Goodrick-Clarke, *The occult roots*.

<sup>99</sup> J. Webb, *The occult establishment* (La Salle, Illinois, 1976).