“This is central control. This is central control. Stand by for information to follow. We are ready to transmit. We are ready to transmit.” So begins a typical communication from Korton, an alien being channeled by the Reverend Bob Short of Blue Rose Ministry. Since he was interviewed by the British broadcaster and champion of the weird and wonderful, Louis Theroux, he has gained something of a faux cult following. Indeed, the first time I came across the voice of Korton was during research into reggae. While working my way through a broad range of contemporary British dub music, I happened upon a sample of Rev. Short channeling Korton on a piece of music entitled “Kortonic Dub” by Alien Dread (available on Kortonic Dub). This, however, is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the fascination with the idea that extraterrestrial intelligences might want to communicate with humanity. For example, the Scottish comic book writer Grant Morrison, for example, relates an “abduction experience” in 1994, while he was visiting Kathmandu with a friend, following which he was able to channel extraterrestrial knowledge into his apocalyptic series The Invisibles, which ran to seven volumes (1994–2000) (Morrison 2012: 253–64). The point is that, not only is popular culture saturated with evidence of the contemporary interest in extraterrestrial life, but there are many who believe that there are beings beyond the Earth’s atmosphere that are able to speak through psychically sensitive individuals. Moreover, they do so, because, like benevolent deities, they care about the planet Earth, they care about the human race, they care about human politics, and they care about the well-being of individual humans. From deep in space, from the other side of the universe, even from other universes and other levels of existence, they reach out to humanity, offering advice (which is usually platitudinous) and wisdom (derived largely from New Age occulture) to small groups of people gathered in hired conference rooms, community centers, and homes. Whether one considers this fascination with the channeling of aliens an important and possibly inevitable replacement for traditional, institutional religion in the modern world or an unfortunate, but hardly unusual, outbreak of public irrationality, a ministry to the gullible, it is a persistent and certainly an interesting recent phenomenon that deserves analysis (Brown 1997; Klimo 1987). As well as telling us something about contemporary alternative spirituality, it tells us something more generally about the continued human desire to reach beyond the mundane for succor and wisdom.
Concerning the sociological theory of ‘occulture’, briefly: it refers to the environment within which, and the social processes by which, particular meanings relating, typically, to spiritual, esoteric, paranormal, and conspiratorial ideas emerge, are disseminated, and become influential in the lives of individuals and in the societies in which they live. Often, central to these processes is popular culture, which disseminates, deconstructs, and reinterprets occultural ideas. Remixed, such ideas incubate new spores of occultural thought (Partridge, 2004; Partridge 2005; Partridge forthcoming: 1). Channeled material from extraterrestrials provides an excellent example of occultural creativity, in that it draws widely from, as well as contributing to, the constantly replenished reservoir of ideas and theories available in the West.

Modern Mouthpieces for Modern Deities

Popular speculation about extraterrestrial life quickly becomes embroiled in discussions of an occultural nature. Perhaps needless to say, much of this type...