

# Whitley Strieber

**Louis Whitley Strieber** (/ˈstriːbər/; born June 13, 1945) is an American writer best known for his horror novels *The Wolfen* and *The Hunger* and for *Communion*, a non-fiction account of his alleged experiences with non-human entities. He has maintained a dual career of author of fiction and advocate of paranormal concepts through his best-selling non-fiction books, his Unknown Country web site, and his Internet podcast, Dreamland.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

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## Early life and education

Strieber was born in San Antonio, Texas, the son of Kathleen Mary (Drought) and Karl Strieber, a lawyer.<sup>[3]</sup> He attended Central Catholic High School in San Antonio, Texas. He was educated at the University of Texas at Austin and the London School of Film Technique, graduating from each in 1968. He then worked for several advertising firms in New York City, rising to the level of vice president before leaving in 1977 to pursue a writing career.

## Early fiction

Strieber began his career as a novelist with the horror novels *The Wolfen* (1978) and *The Hunger* (1981), both of which were made into feature films, followed by the less successful horror novels *Black Magic* (1982)<sup>[4]</sup> and *The Night Church* (1983).<sup>[5]</sup>

### Whitley Strieber



Author Whitley Strieber and Anne Strieber, lecturing to MUFON

<b>Born</b>	Louis Whitley Strieber June 13, 1945 San Antonio, Texas, U.S.
<b>Occupation</b>	Writer/novelist
<b>Period</b>	1978–present
<b>Genre</b>	Social science fiction, Ufology, Horror novels
<b>Notable works</b>	<i>The Wolfen</i> (1978) <i>The Hunger</i> (1981) <i>Communion</i> (1987)
<b>Spouse</b>	Anne Strieber
<b>Website</b>	
	www.unknowncountry.com (http://www.unknowncountry.com/)

Strieber then turned to speculative fiction with social conscience. Collaborating with James Kunetka, he wrote *Warday* (1984), about the dangers of limited nuclear warfare, and *Nature's End* (1986),<sup>[6]</sup> a novel about environmental apocalypse. He independently authored *Wolf of Shadows* (1985),<sup>[7]</sup> a young adult novel set in the aftermath of a nuclear war.

In 1986, Strieber's fantasy novel *Catmagic* was published with co-authorship credited to Jonathan Barry, who was billed as an aerospace industry consultant and a practicing witch.<sup>[8]</sup> In the 1987 paperback edition, Strieber states that Jonathan Barry is fictitious and that he is the sole author of *Catmagic*. Strieber's personal publishing company, Walker & Collier, is named after two characters in *Catmagic*.

Later, less successful thrillers by Strieber include *Billy* (1990), *The Wild* (1991), *Unholy Fire* (1992)<sup>[9]</sup> and *The Forbidden Zone* (1993).

## Short stories

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The author's short stories were collected in the 1997 limited edition volume *Evenings with Demons*.<sup>[10]</sup> More recent short stories include "The Good Neighbor", published in *Twilight Zone: 19 Original Stories on the 50th Anniversary*, and "The Christmas Spirits" (2012), a modern retelling of Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol<sup>[11]</sup>.

## Communion and "the visitors"

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Strieber contends that he was abducted from his cabin in upstate New York on the evening of December 26, 1985 by non-human beings. He wrote about this experience and related experiences in *Communion* (1987), his first non-fiction book. Although the book is perceived generally as an account of alien abduction, Strieber draws no conclusions about the identity of the alleged abductors. He refers to the beings as "the visitors", a name chosen to be as neutral as possible to entertain the possibility that they are not extraterrestrials.

Both the hardcover and paperback edition of *Communion* reached the number one position on *The New York Times Best Seller list* (non-fiction), with more than 2 million copies collectively sold.

Although published as non-fiction, the book editor of the *Los Angeles Times* pronounced the follow-up title, *Transformation* (1988),<sup>[12]</sup> to be fiction and removed it from the non-fiction best-seller list (it nonetheless made the top 10 on the fiction side of the chart). "It's a reprehensible thing," Strieber responded. "My book is a true story ... Placing this book on the fiction list is an ugly example of exactly the kind of blind prejudice that has hurt human progress for many generations."<sup>[13]</sup> Criticism noting the similarity between the non-human beings in Strieber's autobiographical accounts and the non-human beings in his initial horror novels were typically acknowledged by the author as a fair observation, but not indicative of his autobiographical works being fictional: "The mysterious small beings that figure prominently in *Catmagic* seem to be an unconscious rendering of [the visitors], created before I was aware that they may be real."<sup>[14]</sup>

Over the next 24 years (since the 1987 publication of *Communion*), Strieber wrote four additional autobiographies detailing his experiences with the visitors: *Transformation* (1988), a direct follow-up; *Breakthrough: The Next Step* (1995),<sup>[15]</sup> a reflection on the original events and accounts of the sporadic contact he'd subsequently experienced; *The Secret School* (1996),<sup>[16]</sup> in which he examines strange memories from his childhood; and lastly, *Solving the Communion Enigma: What Is to Come* (2011).<sup>[17]</sup>

In *Solving the Communion Enigma*, Strieber reflects on how advances in scientific understanding since his 1987 publication may shed light on what he perceived, noting, "Among other things, since I wrote *Communion*, science has determined that parallel universes may be physically real and that time travel may in some way be possible". The book is a consolidation of UFO sightings and related phenomena, including crop circles, alien abductions, mutilations and deaths in an attempt to discern any kind of meaningful overall pattern. Strieber concludes that the human species is being shepherded to a higher level of

understanding and existence within an endless "multiverse" of matter, energy, space and time. He also writes more candidly about the deleterious effects his initial experiences had upon him while staying at his upstate New York cabin in the 1980s, noting "I was regularly drinking myself to sleep when we were there. I would listen to the radio until late hours, drinking vodka..."<sup>[18]</sup>

Other visitor-themed books of Strieber's include *Majestic* (1989),<sup>[19]</sup> a novel about the Roswell UFO incident; *The Communion Letters* (1997, reissued in 2003),<sup>[20]</sup> a collection of letters from readers reporting experiences similar to Strieber's; *Confirmation* (1998),<sup>[21]</sup> in which Strieber reviews a variety of evidence that is suggestive of alien contact, and considers what more would be required to provide 'confirmation'; *The Grays* (2006)<sup>[22]</sup> a novel in which his impressions of alien contact are presented through a fictional thriller/espionage narrative, and; *Hybrids* (2011)<sup>[23]</sup> a fictional narrative that imagines human/alien hybrids being born into the modern world.

Additional visitor-themed writings include a screenplay for the 1989 film *Communion*, directed by Philippe Mora and starring Christopher Walken as Strieber. The movie covers material from the books *Communion* and *Transformation*. Strieber has stated that he was dissatisfied with the film, which utilized scenes of improvised dialogue and includes themes not present in his books. Strieber also wrote a screenplay for his novel *Majestic*, which to date has not been filmed.<sup>[24]</sup>

Whitley Strieber has repeatedly expressed frustration that his experiences have been taken as "alien contact" when he does not actually know what they were. Strieber has reported anomalous childhood experiences and suggested that he may have suffered some sort of early interference by intelligence or military agencies.<sup>[25]</sup>

He was extensively tested for temporal lobe epilepsy and other brain abnormalities at his own request, but his brain was found to be functioning normally. The results of these tests were reported in his book *Transformation*.

## The Whitman Massacre

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In *Communion*, Strieber wrote of having told friends over the years that he had witnessed the University of Texas tower shooting in Austin, Texas on August 1, 1966, when he had in fact not been on campus that day:

For years I have told of being present at the University of Texas when Charles Whitman went on his shooting spree from the tower in 1966. But I wasn't there. ...

For years I have explained my sudden departure by saying that I couldn't stand the place after the Charles Whitman sniper incident. The truth was, I could have remained after that incident. It was my secret terror that drove me away.

Strieber presents his claim to have witnessed the Whitman shooting in *Communion* in the context of alien abduction screen memories, expressing puzzlement at having repeated this false claim over the years. In two interviews prior to *Communion*, however, Strieber described in graphic detail what he purportedly witnessed. In a 1985 interview with Douglas Winter published in *Faces of Fear*, Strieber described:

I had just had a Coke. I was walking from the student union to the academic center, which was an open-shelf library near the Tower, when I heard a sharp bang that echoed off the University co-op across the street behind me. And the reason I am alive today is that I didn't turn around. I thought it was coming from the Tower. Maybe I saw some movement out of the corner of my eye. All the people in front of me thought the sound came from the co-op in front of us, not the Tower behind.

The next thing I saw was a little boy on a bicycle coming toward me - his head just exploded. I didn't hear that one. I knew then that it was coming from the Tower. The other people all took cover that shielded them from the co-op, but left them exposed to the Tower. They were all killed, shot. I ran to a little retaining wall about three feet

high which was near that base of the Tower building, about twenty yards from it. And I laid down there.

He shot two girls in the stomach right behind me, thirty feet away from me. And they were lying there in the grass, screaming, begging, pleading for help, trying to crawl along. One girl's legs wouldn't work. The other one was vomiting pieces of herself out of her mouth. And I could smell the blood and the odor of their stomachs, what was in their stomachs and their colons. The smell was horrible coming out of these poor kids, two young coeds. And he did that to get me and this other guy who was hiding behind this embankment to come out. I stayed there. I was sick with dread, watching them die, knowing that that gun was waiting. And the other guy suddenly went out and tried to pull one of them away and got shot in the head and killed. Whitman just shot the top of his head off.

I stayed right where I was for a long, long time — until I saw them, with my own eyes, bringing Whitman's body out. The ambulance men came up to me and said, 'You can come out now, he's dead.' But I would not move until I saw him.

Critics including panelists on the British television discussion programme *After Dark* questioned Strieber about his statements in *Communion* about not having been at the Whitman shooting.<sup>[26]</sup> Strieber announced that in his latest book, *Transformation*, he had changed his mind and decided he had witnessed the shooting. Despite this, according to public information, no "little boy on a bicycle" was killed by Whitman that day. Further, according to Ed Conroy in his *Report on Communion*, Strieber's mother stated during an interview that Strieber had been in Austin the day of the shooting, but not on campus.<sup>[27]</sup>

## The Master of the Key

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In 2001, Strieber self-published a book entitled *The Key*<sup>[28]</sup> in which he claimed that while on a book tour for his book *Confirmation*, he was visited in the early morning of June 6, 1998, at his Toronto hotel room by an unknown man who presented him with a "new image of God".<sup>[29]</sup> Strieber engaged the man in dialogue for "half an hour" though Strieber also conceded that "once our conversation was transcribed, it became obvious that more time was involved" and "he must have been with me for at least two hours".<sup>[30]</sup> Subjects discussed included the Holocaust,<sup>[31]</sup> sudden climate change,<sup>[32]</sup> the afterlife,<sup>[33]</sup> psychic ability,<sup>[34]</sup> UFOs,<sup>[35]</sup> and using the human soul in machines.<sup>[36]</sup> According to Strieber, the man did not give his name, and in the book Strieber refers to him as Master of the Key. While he was writing the book, Strieber said that unlike other events he had experienced "the reality of this one isn't in question."<sup>[37]</sup>

In the section of *The Key* entitled *The Conversation*, Strieber presented a transcription<sup>[30]</sup> of the conversation which Strieber has claimed is "80 to 90 percent accurate",<sup>[38]</sup> "90% accurate or more".<sup>[39]</sup> In 2011, Tarcher/Penguin printed a new edition of *The Key*, which contained significant differences with the version of the transcription contained in Strieber's original Walker & Collier edition. In response, Strieber alleged that his own 2001 self-published edition had been "censored" by "sinister forces".<sup>[40]</sup>

## Current works

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Whitley Strieber is currently the host of the spiritual and science-themed internet podcast, *Dreamland* (<http://www.unknowncountry.com/dreamland>), available on a weekly basis from his website, Unknown Country.<sup>[41]</sup> The program was a former companion show to *Coast to Coast AM*, with both shows founded by broadcaster Art Bell, before being taken on by Strieber in 1999.

Strieber has also continued writing novels, including *The Last Vampire* (2001), and *Lilith's Dream* (2003), both being sequels to his 1981 vampire novel *The Hunger*. As well, he has authored *2012: The War For Souls* (2007), a horror novel about an interdimensional invasion, and *Critical Mass* (2009), a thriller about nuclear terrorism. Strieber also co-authored the graphic novel *The Nye Incidents* (2008), along with co-authors Craig Spector and Guss Floor.

His novel, *The Omega Point*, is a novel "based on a hidden connection between 2012 and the Book of Revelation".<sup>[42]</sup> This title released in 2010 is Strieber's second novel dealing with the subject of 2012, the first being his novel *2012: The War for Souls*.

An entry in the popular teen-lit genre, *Melody Burning*, was published in late 2011. The story centers on a feral teenager who lives within a skysyrise building unnoticed, and a new tenant, a pop-star named Melody, with whom he falls in love.

In 2012, Strieber began an alien-themed thriller series called 'Alien Hunter,' the first volume of which was published in August 2013. A series based on the book was released by SyFy in April 2016 called *Hunters*.<sup>[43]</sup> The second volume in the series, *Alien Hunter: Underworld*, was published in August 2014.

In March 2014, Strieber and his wife Anne published an account of her illness called *Miraculous Journey*. Mrs. Strieber experienced a cerebral hemorrhage in 2004, and in 2013 underwent treatment for a brain tumor.

Strieber collaborated with religious scholar Jeffrey J. Kripal on 2016's *Super Natural: A New Vision of the Unexplained*, a study of occultism, supernatural experiences, and parapsychology that explores "why the supernatural is neither fantasy nor fiction but a vital and authentic aspect of life".

## Media appearances

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On November 1989 Strieber made an extended appearance on the British television discussion programme *After Dark* alongside others including astronaut Buzz Aldrin.<sup>[44]</sup>

Strieber, and perhaps his wife Anne, made a cameo appearance in the 2009 movie *Race to Witch Mountain*.<sup>[45]</sup>

Television appearances during the publication of *Communion* were numerous and included *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*. He has made appearances (including a 2006 interview on the *Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson*) in support of his newer novels.

He has been featured many times on the overnight radio show *Coast to Coast AM*, both as guest and guest-host. On April 6, 2013 he did a two-hour interview with John B. Wells.<sup>[46]</sup>

## Cultural influences

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In the TV series *Babylon 5*, there is an alien race that is similar to the Greys in *Communion*. This race is named the Streibs after Whitley Strieber.<sup>[47]</sup>

In an episode of *The X-Files*, "Jose Chung's From Outer Space", the cover of the book *From Outer Space* is a parody of the cover of *Communion* (the difference being that the alien on the cover is depicted smoking a cigarette).<sup>[48]</sup>

In the 120th book in *The Hardy Boys* series, *The Case of the Cosmic Kidnapping* (1993), the character of "Hodding Wheatley", a Connecticut-based writer who had undergone UFO experiences, is inspired by Strieber, as indicated by the surname of the character "Wheatley".

*In Search of Truth*, a 2001 concept album by Swedish progressive metal band Evergrey, was inspired by the ideas presented in *Communion*.

The post-punk dance music group The Mekano Set cite Whitley Strieber's non-fiction work as an influence on their work. They wrote a tribute to Strieber for their 2013 album *The Three Thieves* (a reference to characters from Strieber's novel *The Grays*) entitled *What is it Whit?*<sup>[49]</sup>

## Personal life

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Whitley Strieber is currently a practicing Catholic. He is also associated with the Gurdjieff Foundation.<sup>[50]</sup> He left regular work in the Foundation shortly before the experiences reported in *Communion* but remains involved in the mystical teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff and P. D. Ouspensky and makes frequent references to them in his non-fiction writings.

Strieber was married to Anne Strieber until her death in 2015. According to his website, he lives in California as of April 2019.

## Books

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- *The Wolfen* (1978)
- *The Hunger* (1981)
- *Black Magic* (1982)
- *The Night Church* (1983)
- *Warday* (1984)
- *Nature's End* (1986)
- *Wolf of Shadows* (1985)
- *Catmagic* (1986)
- *Communion* (1987)
- *Transformation* (1988)
- *Majestic* (1989)
- *Billy* (1990)
- *The Wild* (1991)
- *Unholy Fire* (1992)
- *The Forbidden Zone* (1993)
- *Breakthrough* (1995)
- *The Secret School* (1996)
- *The Communion Letters* (1997), with Anne Strieber (editors)
- *Confirmation* (1998)
- *Superstorm* (1999)
- *The Key* (2001)
- *The Last Vampire* (2001)
- *Lilith's Dream* (2002)
- *The Coming Global Superstorm* (2006)
- *The Grays* (2006)
- *2012* (2007)
- *Critical Mass* (2009)
- *The Omega Point* (2010)
- *Hybrids* (2011)
- *Christmas Spirits* (2012)
- *Solving the Communion Enigma* (2012)
- *Orenda* (2013)
- *Alien Hunter* (2013)
- *Miraculous Journey* (2014)
- *Alien Hunter: Underworld* (2014)
- *Super Natural: A New Vision of the Unexplained* (2016), with Jeffrey J. Kripal
- *Alien Hunter: The White House* (2016)
- *Hunters* (2016)
- *Afterlife Revolution* (2017)<sup>[51]</sup>

## Film and TV adaptations

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- *Wolfen* (1981; Orion/Warner Bros.)
- *The Hunger* (1983; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)

- *Communion* (1989; New Line Cinema)
- *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004; Lionsgate Films)
- *Hunters* (2016; SyFy)<sup>[43]</sup>

## See also

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- List of UFO sightings
- UFO

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  - [Problems with Strieber and The Key \(http://strieberthekey.com\)](http://strieberthekey.com) A scholarly analysis of Whitley Strieber's *The Key*
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