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To cite this article: John Sharples (2016): Sky and Stardust: The Flying Saucer in American Popular Culture, 1947–1957, Cultural and Social History, DOI: [10.1080/14780038.2015.1095447](https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2015.1095447)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2015.1095447>



Published online: 17 Feb 2016.



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# Sky and Stardust: The Flying Saucer in American Popular Culture, 1947–1957

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## Introduction

This essay investigates the relationship between the flying saucer within post-war American popular culture and narratives of home, technology, and authority. As an object embodying a specific cultural moment, the flying saucer became a nodal point, a discursive centre, where discussion of aesthetics, power and modernity came together, projected into the minds of Americans via print media, advertisements, songs and material culture. As an alternative focal point of post-war culture to the atomic bomb, blue suede shoes or Marilyn Monroe, the flying saucer was a bright light cast against darkening skies, revealing an American audience looking optimistically towards a utopian future and guardedly back at the massive destruction of twentieth-century global conflict. As a ‘monster,’ this symbol of modernity possessed a certain plasticity of identity, evoking variously and non-linearly feelings of fear and fascination, even playfulness. As an historical object, assessed in relation to technological and social change, the flying saucer eventually became thoroughly domesticated and acclimated within American society. Between Kenneth Arnold’s sighting which sparked national interest in the phenomenon on 24 June 1947 and the launch of Sputnik I on 4 October 1957, over 5,000 flying saucer observations were reported to the United States Air Force (USAF). In 1950, five or six sightings per day were logged,<sup>1</sup> before spiking in 1952, when more flying saucers were spotted ‘than at any time since the initial flood’ in 1947, totalling 1,700.<sup>2</sup> Reports became more sporadic in 1953 when only 429 sightings were received, subsequently declining further to ‘hardly more than a trickle.’<sup>3</sup> Sputnik’s launch saw the flying saucer eclipsed to a degree as the generational other, taking its place within a genealogy of historical threats from above.

## Historiography

The flying saucer has most often been viewed from its role in science fiction and cinema. Works such as M. Keith Booker’s *Alternative Americas: Science Fiction and American Culture* (2006)<sup>4</sup> and Mark Jancovich’s essay ‘Re-Examining the 1950s Invasion Narrative’ (1996)<sup>5</sup> have impressively covered the issue. Less well-considered has been the way popular non-fictional accounts of the phenomenon of the flying saucer questioned official, institutional and scientific explanations, inviting readers to participate in the debate, subverting accepted

power hierarchies. Also less considered has been how the flying saucer was viewed as both a returning or constant presence in the sky – a revival of pre-modern fears – and a symbol of modernity disavowed from tradition. This article situates these two issues within cultural approaches to unusual phenomenon relating to knowledge and meaning. Most pertinently, by describing the flying saucer as a *monster*, this essay employs methodological frameworks outlined by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Asa Simon Mittman, who have attempted to define the *monster* in relation to themes of otherness and human status. As such, use of the term *monster* suggests a specific relationship with the concept of domesticity and the limits of knowledge. A number of common methodological approaches have been outlined which take into account the physical appearance of the monster; its location; its process; and, most profitably, its challenge to common sense. Others begin with etymological definitions, highlighting the origins of the word *monster* in the word *men* (an Indo-Iranian root) and hence *memory*, as well as, from St. Augustine, *monstrare* (to signify something out of the ordinary) and, from Cicero, *monere* (to warn).<sup>6</sup> This approach is equally instructive, suggesting an interwoven, almost paradoxical, relationship between that which is ‘deviant, transgressive, threatening and therefore horrible, terrifying, and tremendous yet also astonishing, marvellous and prodigious.’<sup>7</sup>

More recently, however, the monster’s status as pure culture has been emphasized. In this light, the flying saucer possesses a specific relationship with a specific cultural moment. Monsters ‘proliferate in times of crisis. They are [often] born ... of a prevailing apocalyptic mood, usually triggered by political upheaval and threatening loss of control.’<sup>8</sup> If the monster is ‘born as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling and a place,’<sup>9</sup> then the flying saucer ‘must be examined within the intricate matrix of relations (social, cultural, and literary–historical)’ which created it.<sup>10</sup> Within the cultural space of its creation, the epistemological relationship between the flying saucer as *monster* and the frameworks of normative discourse became hazily delineated with relation to boundaries of familiar and unfamiliar. Equally, as products of a culture, the flying saucer should be viewed not as an outsider, but firmly within ‘the discursive arsenals of enlightened rationality.’<sup>11</sup> Intercutting these two approaches, Terry Kirk distinguishes between institutional and popular forms of knowledge, whereby scientific knowledge ‘orders monsters in terms of relationships to nature’s norms’ whereas, at a popular level, ‘monsters remain[ly] culturally constructed repositories of superstition.’<sup>12</sup> Although unguarded use of the term ‘superstition’ is unwelcome in this context (appearing most commonly within flying saucer texts as largely derogatory or to pathologize belief), the point remains that reports on flying saucers, whether the product of a knowing posture or something else, frequently resisted the disenchantment of the world which ‘enlightened rationality’ supposedly brought about, both emerging from and challenging discourses of the individual, the home, and the nation in the post-war US.<sup>13</sup>

This divergence between popular and institutional knowledge can be framed less conventionally – namely as an interplay between two orientations of looking – up and down. Looking up, ‘watching the skies!’ in science-fiction parlance, suggests both an observational attentiveness, and a capacity for fantasy or day-dreaming. Looking down suggests, alternatively, a grounded-ness, a down-to-earth-ness, or a myopic existence, with one’s head in the sand. The intermingling of these orientations is a critical part of the flying saucer story. The way the flying saucer raises connections between the impossible and the mundane has been noted in a number of works including Susan Lepselter’s ‘Why Rachel Isn’t Buried In Her Grave: Ghosts, UFOs, and a Place in the West.’<sup>14</sup> Lepselter considers ‘the leaps and boundaries

of UFO discourses, uncanny conspiracy theories, ghost stories, and tales of everyday life' as well as the rural American West, focusing on narratives of class, loss, colonization and the body's 'unmoored location in a world of accelerated technological change.'<sup>15</sup> These issues, in part, surrounded the flying saucer in the period 1947–57. Particularly important is Lepselter's emphasis on the primacy of personal, subjective experience, contrasting a shadowy 'they' of authority with a familiar, proximate 'us.' The conjunction of such thoughts with more down-to-earth matters confirms that the intermingling of the 'fabulous and the real ... rises out of a shared imaginative and social field.'<sup>16</sup>

### Part One: 'I Know What I Saw'

In this story of elusive beginnings and endings, it was Kenneth Arnold's sighting in June 1947, only weeks before the 'Roswell incident,' which established the flying saucer as a topical news story. Reports on Arnold's sighting were significant in laying down the tonal and linguistic patterns of future accounts, and presenting an initial conflict between Arnold's empirical evidence and the United States Air Force's contradictions. The Associated Press on 25 June 1947, in an article headlined 'Pilot Sees "Saucer-like Objects" Flying at 1,200 m.p.h. in Oregon,' described how 'nine, bright, saucer-like objects flying at "incredible" speed at 10,000 feet altitude were reported by Kenneth Arnold, Boise, Idaho pilot, who said he could not hazard a guess as to what they were.'<sup>17</sup> 'Call me Einstein, Flash Gordon or just plain crazy, but I know what I saw!' Arnold remarked, whilst adding that what he had seen 'seem[ed] impossible.'<sup>18</sup> But what had he seen? The term 'flying saucer' was, according to Arnold,<sup>19</sup> an invention of the press, not Arnold himself (although he did use the term in a letter to air force intelligence) and the term in the media frequently resided in quotation marks, calling attention to itself and the gap between Arnold's report and an imagined potential. *Time* headlined a 14 July 1947 article on the phenomenon 'The Somethings,' further suggesting an initial uncertainty about what was seen (or how to contain it in a pithy headline).<sup>20</sup> Arnold referred to a saucer only to describe the *movement* of what he saw, that is, nine shapes which 'flew like a saucer would if you skipped it across water.'<sup>21</sup> In its linguistic construction, the term 'flying saucer' used to describe the uncanny repetition of the nine shapes linked together in the sky fell back on familiar terrestrial experiences.<sup>22</sup> The term stuck, despite its dubious correlation with Arnold's evidence. Demonstrating its infectious tendency, a Gallup poll of August 1947, only two months after first contact, revealed that 90% of those polled were familiar with the term or idea of 'flying saucers' or 'discs.' Later polls found the phrase more well-known than other terms such as 'Cold War.'<sup>23</sup> By 1956, the term 'flying saucer' was in *Webster's Dictionary*.<sup>24</sup>

What did this naming convention imply? In part, a desire to connect what was seen to what was already understood through its connection to normal, human processes, born of an anxiety to explain and 'the twin desire to name that which is difficult to apprehend and to domesticate (and therefore disempower) that which threatens.'<sup>25</sup> If the monster is 'the embodiment of difference,'<sup>26</sup> then the term 'flying saucer' attempted to reduce or contain this difference by giving the object linguistic fixity. That is, naming a thing is a strategy of dealing with the unknown. As Jacques Derrida pithily put it, 'a monstrosity can only be "mis-known" (*méconnue*), that is, unrecognized and misunderstood. It can only be recognized afterwards, when it has become normal or the norm.'<sup>27</sup> The naming process was the first step towards normalizing the flying saucer which left no material trace beyond a psychological one, no visible sign of life but a radar blip, no sound but silence. Its sensory elusiveness and

the anxieties it embodied highlight the flying saucer as a monstrous object and, necessarily, an historical object, one understood through its impact or 'challenging of cultural convention and common sense.'<sup>28</sup> Hence, the need for a name, albeit one Arnold claimed to be a misleading and inaccurate one.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, Arnold claimed that he did not describe what he saw in terms of its appearance but only its movement. In an interview with Ed Murrow, he complained how, 'they misquoted me ... Most of the newspapers misunderstood and misquoted [me]. They said that I said that they were saucer-like; I said that they flew in a saucer-like fashion.'<sup>30</sup> Arnold's disagreements stemmed in part from interpretation of the visual image of the flying saucer, specifically the sense of spectatorship it generated and the sensual immediacy of its outline and movement in the sky. That is, how does one interpret what one sees? W.J.T. Mitchell contrasts two modes of interpretation, namely that of 'spectatorship' and 'reading,' noting that '*spectatorship* (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of *reading* (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.):'<sup>31</sup> Arnold's report highlights the sensory immediacy of his sighting and its inability to be read appropriately. After all, how could one decipher something so seemingly outside cultural convention and normality? Instead, Nicholas Mirzoeff talks of a dimension to visual culture 'at the heart of all visual events' – 'the undeniable impact on first sight that a written text cannot replicate ... the feeling ... that separates the remarkable from the humdrum ... this surplus of experience' which evokes 'admiration, awe, terror and desire.'<sup>32</sup> This is not just a case of seeing is believing, but a submission to the sensory delight or dread which the image provided – a suspension of disbelief in part which re-enchanted the sky and rendered explanation supplementary. The name 'flying saucer' gave in to these aspects of spectacle, avoiding interpretation and submitting to emotion.

The visual, spectacular nature of the flying saucer which early reports highlighted remained a continuing feature of coverage within this period. Appearing on the front-page of the local newspaper *The Times-News* (North Carolina) on 23 May 1951, flying saucers were spotted over Kansas and Minnesota:

about 50 residents at the eastern end of Rainy Lake, near International Falls, Minn., said they saw a "crystal ball" which performed like "a huge humming bird" as it flashed across the skies. It was later joined by another "crystal ball." And an American Airlines pilot said a "bluish white star played tag" with his plane at an altitude of 21,000 feet southwest of Dodge City, Kans. ... The Minnesota observers said their "crystal ball" dashed across the sky at speeds "in excess of 700 miles an hour," then stopped suddenly and hung motionless above the lake. Then it shot upwards 200 feet in a split second, they said.<sup>33</sup>

The almost child-like quality of the 'Lubbock Lights' confirmed the representational strategies used to attempt to ensnare the flying saucer. In this 'performance,' the flying saucers adoption, and then defiance, of human or animal characteristics can be seen at work. Attempts to describe the shapes as 'playing tag' or appearing 'like a huge humming bird' broke down when faced with sudden movement and beyond-human (or bird) speeds. The arresting nature of the 'flying saucer,' its capacity to disrupt and stop everyday convention, was also seen in 1954, when AP reported how a light-show in Sand Springs, Oklahoma – 'a mysterious ball of fire that "darts up and down at the stroke of midnight" – ha[d] created a serious traffic problem ... For three straight nights police have found no less than 150 cars parked on the highway with their occupants gazing skyward.'<sup>34</sup> Alternate headlines in other local newspapers declared 'Mysterious Ball Of Fire Ties Up Oklahoma Traffic,'<sup>35</sup> and 'Flying Disc Jams Traffic,'<sup>36</sup> as if reporting on road-works or a car accident.

Naming the flying saucer was one aspect of a strategy of containment for dealing with the 'impact' of its monstrosity. Emphasizing its playful aspects was a second. Yet, another strategy, highlighted by Arnold's comments, attempted to link the saucer with contemporary technological progress, in short to confirm its historical status. By this measure, the flying saucer did not embody a total rupture with the past. In a letter to the USAF, Arnold described how 'several former Army pilots informed [him] that they had been briefed before going into combat overseas that they might see objects of similar shape and design that [he] described and assured [him] that [he] wasn't dreaming or going crazy.'<sup>37</sup> Certainly, the flying saucer within much of the cultural material it generated existed between spaces, between time, as a 'curious vision of modernity,' and a totalizing object, disturbing attributes thought uniquely human. Modern life, post-war modern life, demanded new modern objects and new symbols. Yet, equally, the flying saucer appeared as one of several 'curiosities that illuminate[d] something shadowy and forgotten behind the neat façade of a rational world, returning 'enchantment, magic, and wonderment,'<sup>38</sup> poised between rational scientific enlightenment and superstition. Ken Hollings' *Welcome to Mars* (2008) records how the post-World War Two period was a space where the 'fantasy of science' including the flying saucer, alien abduction, brain-washing, and drug experimentation (willing and unwilling), appeared less imaginary, presenting fantasy as history and history as fantasy.<sup>39</sup> Technology in this period seemed to close the gap between science fiction and reality. The flying saucer appeared on the boundary of this sci-fi life. It was not straightforwardly unbelievable within post-war American society, but instead poised on the boundaries of the possible. Early accounts of flying saucers were near 'to the ragged edge of aviation technology.'<sup>40</sup> Arnold, after all, had been piloting 'an extremely high-performance, high-altitude airplane that was made for mountain work'<sup>41</sup> when he saw the saucers. The Enola Gay had taken off from Roswell Air Force Base less than two years previously and Air Force Captain Charles 'Chuck' Yeager would break the sound barrier in the Bell X-1 rocket-powered plane on 14 October 1947. On May 1947, *Mechanix Illustrated* had the soon abandoned US Navy's disc-shaped 'Flying Flapjack' on their front cover. Later tests of the machine attracted reports of flying saucer sightings,<sup>42</sup> such was its radical break with the traditional airplane silhouette. To name but a few technological and bodily advances of the period 1947–57, the secrets of DNA were discovered; Everest was conquered; IBM's electronic brain was announced; the transistor and microwave were invented; and Roger Bannister ran a sub-4-minute mile. In each case, bodily or scientific limits were extended.<sup>43</sup>

The flying saucer should not be seen, therefore, as a creation solely of the superstitious mind. Waldemar Kaempffert, reviewing 'Those Strange Little Men; Flying Saucers,' by sceptic Donald H. Menzel in 1953, misguidedly, believed that the flying saucers proved that science had not yet 'seeped down into the multitude. A belief in witches, devils and evil spirits may strike drivers of automobiles and owners of television sets as amusing and pathetic,' but the widespread belief in flying saucers and the 'acceptance of tales of "little men" who were found in one that was wrecked are cut from the same pattern.'<sup>44</sup> Yet, Kaempffert was guilty of another form of superstition, namely believing that that 'the program of Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy.'<sup>45</sup> Technological progress being mistaken for exorcisms of the past is, of course, nothing new. Even in contemporary, 'modern' society, these beliefs in what some term superstitious remnants have not disappeared.<sup>46</sup> As Lepselter states, 'uncanny discourses are stubbornly resistant to, yet inextricable from, modernity's processes of rationalization

and disenchantment.<sup>47</sup> Kenneth Arnold was no uninformed, wide-eyed pilot and certainly the initial reaction, whilst occasionally mocking, did not suggest his report was inherently absurd. Other reports, at least initially, received an open-minded reception. When in 1950, for example, *Life* magazine<sup>48</sup> published images of 'Farmer Trent's Flying Saucer,' far from being seen as a superstitious individual, *Life* noted that 'No more can be said that ... the man who took them is an honest individual and that the negatives show no sign of being tampered with ...'<sup>49</sup> A letter to the magazine from a reader the following month did, however, suggest the photographs were the result of a forgery and that Farmer Trent was more 'dishonest' than naïve.<sup>50</sup>

However the press or Arnold characterized the new agent in the sky, the flying saucer remained a symbol of modernity – a disavowal of the immediate past (in which we live) and the present (in which we never quite seem to live), a disavowal of the superfluous baggage of everyday life, as well as a gesturing towards the future. Disavowal, according to David Punter, is the 'heart of the gesture of modernity: there may be all manner of ancestors beckoning back towards the past, but it is only by ignoring [or pretending to] or transcending their sireniac blandishments that the genuinely "new thing" can be discovered and valued' or even invented.<sup>51</sup> Regarding the flying saucer, these 'ancestors' consisted of previous, pre-Arnold sightings which were unsuccessfully dusted down to try and connect Arnold's vision with a longer tradition of objects in the sky, again an effort which aimed at the domestication, or at least a disarming, of the saucers. Charles Fort's accounts of objects in the sky, for example, were recorded and reclaimed by Relman Morin, of AP, in 1952, in an article headlined 'Flying Saucer Found To Be Old Discovery – Reports Published 30 Years Ago; Some Go Back 100 Years.'<sup>52</sup> Claims for Biblical sightings of the flying saucer were also made – 'take Ezekiel Ten. A wheel within a wheel. What a fine description of a flying saucer.'<sup>53</sup> Flying Saucers were an 'Old, Old Story - Luminous Whatzits in Sky Have Been Seen Before.'<sup>54</sup> These fragmented sightings – 'a flying saucer scare in 1897, a great cigar-shaped saucer ... seen in 1882, and ... the Hebrew prophet Ezekiel witness[ing a] flying saucer[r]'<sup>55</sup> – redefined the flying saucer as an historical object. *Popular Science* reported 'Flying Saucers are Old Stuff,' in 1952, again suggesting flying saucers were nothing new.<sup>56</sup> A more convincing genealogical claim was found within the work of science fiction.<sup>57</sup> Physicist Milton Rothman suggested that 'the idea of space vehicles shaped like flying saucers was imprinted in the national psyche for many years prior to 1947,' pointing to 'the November 1929 issue of *Science Wonder Stories*, published by the legendary Hugo Gernsback. The cover of this magazine shows a spaceship that looks like a giant Frisbee, clutching in its tentacles a dwarfed Woolworth building.'<sup>58</sup> Historicizing took the form of looking backwards. Like any genealogy, history was read in reverse. Artificial chains of ancestry were imagined in an effort to give purpose, meaning and order to the flying saucer.

Posing a cognitive challenge, the flying saucer was a provocative object and an exotic body, defying, through its plane of movement, speed, and silence, the accepted convention of flight. To talk of such an object as a 'monster' may seem odd. Traditional monsters in cultural criticism often possess a physical threat which the flying saucer, aside from in the movies, did not. Yet, 'it is now clear that in many cultures ... monsters can be comic, even playful'<sup>59</sup> (as the flying saucer undoubtedly was), whilst also possessing an unspoken physical threat beyond this. For Arnold, the matter was straightforward; what concerned him was not knowing, and insisting he was not 'crazy.' Hence, the flying saucer's monstrosity – its impact – was ultimately 'rooted in the vertigo of redefining one's understanding of the

world.' As Noël Carroll writes, 'monsters are not only physically threatening; they are cognitively threatening. They are threats to common knowledge,' which interrogate 'our (their, anyone's) epistemological worldview,' defining 'monstrosity from within, from a condition of normality which is altered.'<sup>60</sup> The thread of a connection between the limits of human technology and the flying saucer only served to emphasize the disconnection between the two, since the latter did not 'appear to depend on the same stresses and strains as the helicopter or jet plane do to get in the air. ... [I]t seem[ed] to swoop effortlessly down from above.'<sup>61</sup> Its unearthliness seemed inimitable. Shortly after Arnold's sighting, on 21 June 1947, one joker's attempt to create a flying saucer – in an incident dubbed the Maury Island Hoax – was unmasked by the somewhat earthly debris and smoke trail the craft left behind.<sup>62</sup> Its accordance to terrestrial chemical convention revealed it as less than spectacular, less than monstrous, and less than alien.

Instead, whatever Arnold or the media claimed, it was not movement or speed that define[d] the flying saucer, nor its shape, nor visual appearance of metallic lightness, of reflective surfaces that glinted and flashed, nor lack of sound, but its simultaneous escaping from the boundaries of everyday life and its connection to them.<sup>63</sup> The notion of epistemological rupture (signalled by the movement of Arnold's sighting) was further emphasized by the unstable nature of the flying saucer's form within popular culture. As one contemporary investigator of the flying saucer noted, the term flying saucer was 'applied to anything in the sky that [could not] be identified as a common everyday object.'<sup>64</sup> Soon after the initial sightings, 'objects of every conceivable shape and performance' were classed as flying saucers and the term 'flying saucer' became a broad term applied to, amongst other things, 'a formation of lights, a single light, a sphere, or any other shape, and it c[ould] be any color, performance wise, flying saucers c[ould] hover, go fast or slow, go high and low, turn ninety degree corners, or disappear instantaneously.'<sup>65</sup> Again this confirms Mittman's observation that morphology is less important than 'impact' in the monstrous identity. The term 'flying saucer' expanded beyond any of its signifiers, describing a family of objects in the night sky with their unfamiliarity in common.<sup>66</sup>

Domestication of the flying saucer meant keeping its potentially more threatening aspects under control. Three disparate examples of this can be seen in advertisements which utilized the figure of the flying saucer and the alien visitor in 1952 and 1953. In the first, the introduction of flying saucer pajamas for children was delayed 'because stores thought the original design of an evil-eyed Martian might frighten young customers. The new design ha[d] only clouds, stars and saucers – but the saucers glow[ed] in the dark.'<sup>67</sup> Nothing too threatening was permitted. As should be apparent, censorship stems from parents, not children, and the complaints about scary aliens are indicative of the projected fears of grown-ups. Reds *under* the bed were bad enough, never mind aliens *within* it. No doubt more wholesome was the Buck Rogers toy set, advertised alongside Sylvania TV sets – now 'with Bigger Better-Than-Ever Halolight.' Children whose parents sat through a demonstration of the television set were rewarded with free gifts including 'eight flying saucers' and, importantly, a 'flying saucer dis-integrator.' Standing figures of Buck, Wilma, Space Rangers and Martians' were also included. In the advertisement, the human heroes' guns are being pointed at the aliens, who remain subdued and under control.<sup>68</sup> Last, a full-page advertisement for 'Statler Hotels' depicted a Martian landing his ship and, in rhyme, through five panels, declaiming his amazement at the hospitality of the hotel. The alien, named Ooma Goo Goo, declares 'I wish my wife and kids were here ... But then, alas, his time was up. With teardrops in his eye, "I'm coming back,"

he promised – and he vanished in the sky.<sup>69</sup> The (inspired) *Mad Men* who conjured up this idea carefully suggested in each panel the luxuries and earthly delights of the hotel. In these three cases, the flying saucer's otherness is derailed by its association with human control or the practices of everyday life.

In the child-like displays in the night-sky, its appearance on children's pajamas, in toy form, or in advertisements, the flying saucer provided a visual counterpoint to other technological performances of the period. The most notable of these – perhaps the most spectacular technological performance of any twentieth-century creation – was that of the atomic bomb, or more specifically, the mushroom cloud of the atomic bomb. As Carl Jung stated, in 1959 'the threatening situation of the world today'<sup>70</sup> influenced the representations of the flying saucer – a threatening situation which, in large part, stemmed from 'the bomb.' Films such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) made explicit the connection between the flying saucer and the Manhattan Project's conjunction of political power and scientific force, as well as reminding one of the inter-textual nature of the object – wrapped up within a tradition of science-fictional texts. Yet, the two technologies inspired different feelings and emotions. Accounts of the atomic bomb suggest a horrifying spectacle – a much different account of monstrous technology than the flying saucer. Eyewitness accounts, for example, of the Nagasaki atomic bomb, dropped on 9 August 1945, described a multi-colour explosion – 'a bluish-green light that illuminated the entire sky all around. ... [the sound] like the boom of cannon fire.' In scale, the atomic bomb dwarfed its surroundings. Observers

saw a giant pillar of purple fire, 10,000 feet high, shooting skyward with enormous speed ... becoming ever more alive ... It was no longer smoke, or dust, or even a cloud of fire. It was a living thing, a new species of being, born right before our incredulous eyes. ... it was a living totem pole, carved with many grotesque masks grimacing at the earth ... struggling in an elemental fury, like a creature in the act of breaking the bonds that held it down.<sup>71</sup>

Such violence of language is not seen within flying saucer accounts which largely evaded the inherent violation of sensory communication. Indeed, describing the atomic bomb as a monster 'represents a typical post-war way of conceptualizing the atomic bomb as a primeval creature. In early reactions to its use, references abound to the atomic bomb as a "Frankenstein monster."<sup>72</sup> The bomb remained an outsider. It held no promise of a utopian future. It was made without constraints of responsibility. It was 'an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond – all of those loci that are rhetorically placed as different and distinct but originate Within.' Whilst, 'through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal [science-fictional, almost imagined] space,'<sup>73</sup> the atomic bomb's monstrosity, in contrast to that of the flying saucer's, particularly after the acquisition and testing of the technology by the Soviet Union in late 1949, 'gave way to horror ... when [it] threaten[ed] to overstep these boundaries, to destroy or deconstruct the thin walls of category and culture.'<sup>74</sup> No one, to state the obvious, ever described a mushroom cloud as playful.

Although the playful aspect to the event described below balanced out its potentially more terrifying aspects, that the flying saucer's monstrosity was of a different order, yet in some instance, connected to the visual icon of the atomic bomb, was made apparent can be seen in accounts of a July 1952 incident when strange lights were spotted over the White House. This was not the opening line of a science fiction story, but rather one of the more famous flying saucer incidents, symbolically intertwining the flying saucer with concepts of Home and Homeland – a threat to one was a threat to all. The two would become

increasingly commingled in the following decade. Truman's 1947 State of the Union had after all called for both a 'continuation of an aggressive program of home construction' and stated that 'our goal is collective security for all mankind.'<sup>75</sup> As William J. Levitt remarked, 'no man who owns his own house and lot can be a communist. He has too much to do.'<sup>76</sup> A home, and especially to own a home, was a marker of the physical and mental health of a nation. An attack on the White House, as in so many science-fiction films, symbolized an attack on American values and the gleaming balls of light over Greek Ionic architecture formed a powerful image. The linguistic conformity of responses to the lights is striking and substantially different to eyewitness accounts of the atomic bomb. On 19 July 1952, one observer, Harry Barnes noted that, 'we knew immediately that a very *strange* situation existed ... their movements were completely *radical* compared to those of *ordinary* aircraft.'<sup>77</sup> Airman William Brady stated he saw an 'object which appeared to be like an orange ball of fire, trailing a tail ... *unlike anything I had ever seen before*. ... [it] took off at an *unbelievable* speed.'<sup>78</sup> Staff Sgt. Charles Davenport's description emphasized how light 'would appear to stand still, then make an *abrupt* change in direction and altitude.'<sup>79</sup> A Captain of an airline flight described 'odd lights.'<sup>80</sup> A 'stunned silence'<sup>81</sup> was one recorded response. *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, Iowa, in language reminiscent of insect invasions or biblical plagues, headlined its report 'Saucers Swarm Over Capital.'<sup>82</sup> Jet fighters were placed on alert with orders to shoot the saucers down. The scientific detachment of reports to the public was replaced by a more traditional reaction to the threat of invaders. On 24 September 1952, it was admitted that 'the flying saucer situation ... ha[s] national security implications ... the potential for the touching-off of mass hysteria and panic.'<sup>83</sup> At the same time, the performative quality of the display was appreciated by *Life* who wrote how 'the unidentified blips were bounding all over and performing most remarkably. Some seemed to hover idly, some reversed themselves back and forth, others sped along making right and left ninety degree turns.'<sup>84</sup> This even stretched into comedic tone. That the 'authorities' who had dismissed the reports of flying saucers for five years were chasing shadows and radar blips provided a darkly ironic commentary on the whole flying saucer phenomenon.

## Part Two: 'It was a strange time ...'

'Belief in alien visitors from other worlds via spacecrafts,' states Peter Dendle, 'is a hallmark of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, especially in the post-war period: it is a signature folklore of the technological age.'<sup>85</sup> In Dendle's opinion, aliens serve a similar role to that of Bigfoot, ghosts, angels and gods: to surround and accompany us.<sup>86</sup> As an all-encompassing narrative, this is not a bad one. Yet, the notion that belief in flying saucers was a reaction to a feeling of cosmic loneliness strikes one as odd, particularly when the texts describing flying saucer sightings were so playful and often humorous.<sup>87</sup> More useful is Dendle's notion that whilst the discourse surrounding 'alien visitation is conspicuously intertwined with government conspiracy,' concerning the concealment of knowledge, 'it is not simply that belief in aliens requires a subsequent mistrust of government; rather ... the monster [has] become a vehicle for active resistance to authorities perceived as sole proprietors and disseminators of human knowledge.'<sup>88</sup> It is to this former aspect towards which this essay now turns, particularly the way 'mistrust' manifested itself at the popular level.

As suggested, Kenneth Arnold's initial account was met with disbelief by military and aviation authorities. An Associated Press newspaper account, dated 26 June 1947, recorded

how 'Army and Civil Aeronautics Administration spokesmen expressed scepticism ... over' Arnold's report, remarking that 'nothing flies [as] fast [as Arnold's alleged saucer] except a V-2 rocket, which travels at ... 3,500 miles an hour.'<sup>89</sup> Over the decade, numerous government reports investigated flying saucers. Project Sign, Project Saucer, Project Grudge, and Project Blue Book successively attempted to unravel the mystery Arnold had provoked. More pertinently, Arnold's sighting established the flying saucer as a site of debate between institutional or scientific knowledge and the accounts of laymen or the popular press. Government-approved reports and scientific explanations from the likes of Donald Menzel, when finally released, found little support within a section of the sceptical popular press and print media which had seized upon the saucer as an ongoing story ripe for commercial exploitation and playful manipulation, eluding or ignoring government and institutional boundaries. In the same vein, a whole host of works regarding the flying saucer emerged, purporting to be written by 'experts' on the phenomenon. The most pervasive of these accounts was perhaps Donald Keyhoe's *The Flying Saucers Are Real* (1950) – a work concerning reported UFO encounters between 1947 and 1950 and 'the first influential attempt to promote the idea of "flying saucers" as alien spacecraft.'<sup>90</sup> In outlining the reaction to such encounters by the United States Air Force, Keyhoe believed that there was a policy of gradual revelation whereby the USAF would only reveal the truth concerning the existence of extra-terrestrials when it thought appropriate, redefining the period as a liminal state between sighting and revelation. Keyhoe's principal evidence was an extract from a 1947 United States Air Force document entitled 'Project "Saucer" Preliminary Study of Flying Saucers' which stated that 'the saucers are not jokes. Neither are they cause for alarm .... [In light of human technological progress], 'we should ... expect at this time above all to behold such visitations.' Despite this initial claim, later sightings were met with denial by the USAF, or explained away as meteorological phenomenon. Much of Keyhoe's work concerned the motivations and contradictions he believed were present in these institutional responses. 'I have carefully examined, he stated in 1950, 'all Air Force saucer reports made in the last three years. ... I believe that the Air Force statements, contradictory as they appear, are part of an intricate program to prepare America – and the world – for the secret of [flying] disks.'<sup>91</sup>

Keyhoe's account set up a shadowy 'they' against a familiar 'we,' feeding on the undercurrents of paranoia (as a cultural symptom) which technological threats to security generated. As Cynthia Hendershot stated, 'In the Atomic Age, there is no place to hide' and 'The very pervasiveness of the threat makes paranoia the ideal system for expressing fear ...'<sup>92</sup> Yet, in *The Flying Saucers are Real*, the USAF, not the flying saucers, are the enemy. That the account reads more like a conspiracy thriller – it is written in first-person, noir-adventure style - only adds to the subjective, paranoid nature of Keyhoe's work. Equally, the mundane nature of much of his investigation contrasts with the extraordinary suspicion he possesses. One section, for example, begins, 'It was a strange time. I picked up the telegram from my desk and read it a third time.' In this passage, the act of searching for the secret of the flying saucer has transformed even everyday tasks such as reading one's communications and letters into a 'strange' experience, emphasized by the banal repetition of 'time.' Like a post-war, science-fictional Philip Marlowe on the hunt for a life-changing treasure, Keyhoe characterized his adventure as an uncovering of the truth. He noted in the introduction to *The Flying Saucers are Real*, how he had 'tried to show the strange developments in [the] search for the answer; the carefully misleading tips, the blind alleys ... entered, the unexpected assistance, the confidential leaks, and the stunning contradictions.'<sup>93</sup> In March 1954, the Air Force position

was still that “given enough factual data” every “flying saucer” report over the last six years could be explained in natural, earthly, non-sensational terms.<sup>94</sup>

By contrast to Keyhoe’s labyrinthine story of misdirection and concealment, institutional accounts of the flying saucer myth presented the flying saucer story in an understandable, logical, and linear manner, attempting to reduce the object’s monstrosity. Press releases were given out with ‘meaning fixed and pre-determined so that the reader [wa]s a site merely to receive information. ... [whilst obscuring] any elements that would open up the text to multiple meanings,<sup>95</sup> whereas participatory investigation such as Keyhoe’s, placed the reader ‘in a position of control, tak[ing] an active role in the construction of meaning. ... [replacing stable meaning] by a proliferation of meanings and a disregard of narrative structure.’<sup>96</sup> Donald Menzel’s writings, for example, explicitly sought to shut down debate on the matter outside of a scientific tradition. In *Look* magazine in 1952, he wrote on ‘The Truth About Flying Saucers,’ asking why ‘have so many civilized people chosen to adopt an uncivilized attitude toward flying saucers?’ Answering this, he suggested that people ‘naturally attribute mystery to the unusual,’ people are ‘all nervous. We live in a world that has suddenly become hostile. We have unleashed forces we cannot control; many persons fear we are heading toward a war that will end in the destruction of civilization,’ and that ‘people enjoy being frightened a little.’ Menzel stated that ‘balloons, papers, distant planes, Venus and the like’ accounted for the majority of sightings and ‘an optical phenomenon’ for the rest. Amusingly, if unnervingly, Menzel ended by suggesting that ‘You, too can have flying saucers in your home. Perhaps not as elaborate as the ones I have just described, but nevertheless adequate to demonstrate some of the effects. You may simulate the gradual bending that causes a mirage by using a sharp reflection at a water surface.’<sup>97</sup>

In a different type of participatory mode, newspapers invited reader theories and subjective interpretation replaced objective analysis and traditional forms of knowledge production. *Life’s* 9 June 1952 article on ‘the case for flying saucers,’ for example, rather than close off interpretation, instead ‘provoked a tremendous barrage of letters. Some have been nonsensical,’ noted the editor, ‘some philosophical, some have contained provocative and plausible theories. ... [T]he story prompted an unprecedented response from the readers.’<sup>98</sup> Continuing, *Life* stated that ‘readers can aid the search ... by reporting the sighting of any strange aerial objects to the nearest Air Force representatives.’<sup>99</sup> On similar lines, although to different ends, Ralph Steiner’s ‘How to Expose Flying Saucers,’ *Popular Science*, January 1953, urged readers to help expose flying saucer sightings as simple scientific phenomenon. ‘You’re invited,’ ran the piece, ‘to join the Air Force’s new project for studying saucers ... you, too, can join the hunt.’<sup>100</sup> When, in 1951, the USAF had tried to explain sightings as ‘only plastic balloons, used by the Navy in the study of cosmic rays,’ the reaction was incredulity. Whilst various authority figures suggested that if only the public had listened to them, they would receive enlightenment and ‘that the public had preferred myth to fact,’ this ignored the conditions which had contributed to the widespread popularity of the flying saucer as a cultural object. Dr. Urner Liddell claimed that ‘nobody seemed to want to believe us’ and Dr. Robert A. Millikin that ‘everybody with any intelligence knew all along that the flying saucer speculations were hooley. ... the public wanted something sensational ...’ More legitimately, Frank Scully could still ask, ‘Why should we believe the Navy this week since they are constantly blowing hot and cold?’<sup>101</sup>

Further, in response to another report on the sightings, *Life’s* 7 April 1952 edition, with no-less a cover star than Marilyn Monroe, posed the question ‘Have We Visitors From Space?’

Giving a sceptical response to previous official investigations into the flying saucer controversy, the article described how Project Saucer and Project Grudge 'seemed to have been fashioned more as a sedative to public controversy than as a serious inquiry into the facts. ... On Dec. 27, 1949,' they continued, 'after two years of operation, Project Saucer wrote off all reports of unidentified aerial phenomena as hoaxes, hallucinations or misinterpretations of familiar objects – that is, all but thirty-four. These stubborn thirty-four, seemingly unexplainable, were briskly dismissed as psychological aberrations.'<sup>102</sup> The article followed this with a series of conclusions, first suggesting 'what they [the thirty-four sightings] [we]re not' and what they may be. 'They are not,' it stated, 'psychological phenomena. ... They are not a Russian development. ... They are not distortions of the atmosphere resulting from atomic activity. ... They are not all Skyhook balloons.'<sup>103</sup> In its sceptical conclusion, the author asked,

Who? What? And When? ... the real depths of the saucer mystery bemuse penetration, as the night sky swallows up a flashlight beam. What of the other shapes? Why do the things make no sound? How to explain their eerie luminosity? What power urges them at such terrible speeds through the sky? Who, or what, is aboard? Where do they come from? Why are they here? What are the intentions of the beings who control them? Before these awesome questions, science – and mankind – can yet only halt in wonder. Answers may come in a generation – or tomorrow. Somewhere in the dark skies there may be those who know.<sup>104</sup>

This conclusion was, in many ways, the highpoint of healthy scepticism and an astonishing position for the respectable, middle-class periodical to take, marking something of a turnaround from a 1950 *Life* article, entitled 'Out Of This World,' where the author wistfully remarked on how 'in a way we could wish that the tales of the interplanetary visitors were true. In the past the unification of peoples has seldom occurred, short of conquest, unless they were confronted with a powerful and potentially menacing outside enemy.'<sup>105</sup> Rather than following the official reports based on detailed investigation by the USAF over a period of years, *Life* chose instead to side with personal, subjective experience, linking sightings with the technological optimism of the era and the anxiety which such technology could provoke.

Readers of the flying saucer problem were hence presented with a range of explanations. In a market place of ideas, one could choose one's own interpretation. In an 'unofficial' poll for the sceptical *Popular Science* in August 1951, eyewitnesses to flying saucers were asked what they thought they saw, concluding that 'the experts can say what they like, but a lot of people who saw "flying saucers" have made up their minds for themselves.' A majority – fifty-two percent – believed they 'saw "man-made aircraft,"' sixteen percent believed they 'saw "something commonplace,"' four percent believed they 'saw a "visitor from afar"' and two percent were 'uncertain.'<sup>106</sup> The way the flying saucer was a contested space mirrors Susan Lepselter's comments on collective accounts of alien abductions as 'a jumble of echoing returns.'<sup>107</sup> As early as July 1947, some were experiencing 'explanation fatigue.' *Billboard* commented that 'with almost everyone coming up with a so-called solution to the flying saucer mystery ... 2 More Solutions To Flying Saucer Puzzle Won't Hurt.'<sup>108</sup> Certainly by 1957, the tone had shifted, again seen through coverage in *Life*. Reporting on the Interplanetary Space Convention near Giant Rock Airport near Yucca Valley, California, the reporter found '1,200 earthlings [gathered] to reaffirm their unshakeable belief in the existence of flying saucers.' The cult-like properties of this gathering were evidenced by the desert setting that looked like 'a lunar landscape' and the recitals of saucer stories by each devotee to the larger group. A sceptical tone pervaded the report. 'Conveniently,' it was noted, 'spacemen speak English very well – usually with an American accent.' One conference attendee reported how 'spacemen ha[d]

visited him often, once even stayed for [a] meal of ham and eggs.' Another remembered how he had been on-board a spaceship where he saw various inventions including 'a closet that clean[ed] clothing with light,' linking alien technology with new domestic, consumer products. A third met an alien chief, 'a small, beautiful woman' who 'engaged him in philosophical discussions.'<sup>109</sup> The tone here was somewhat tongue-in-cheek, echoing the 1957 Gore Vidler satiric-comedy play 'Visit to a Small Planet' concerning a well-dressed, well-spoken alien, Mr. Kreton, who lands on a Virginia lawn, causing mayhem in the everyday lives of American citizens.<sup>110</sup> The flying saucer had become merely a playful nuisance, disrupting but neither disordering nor destroying the pattern of everyday life.

## Conclusion

You'd better pray to the Lord when you see those flying saucers  
 It may be the coming of the Judgment Day  
 It's a sign there's no doubt of the trouble that's about  
 So I say my friends you'd better start to pray  
 ... If you'll just stop and think you'd realize just what it means  
 They're more than atom bombs or falling stars.  
 (When You See) Those Flying Saucers, 1947.<sup>111</sup>

In July 1947, the Buchanan Brothers, comprised of the country musicians Chester and Lester Buchanan released '(When You See) Those Flying Saucers' on the RCA Victor record label. This continued their propensity for combining current news stories with more traditional country music themes. In August 1946 their song 'Atomic Power' had been a modest success. Other songs released by the pair in 1947 included 'The Silver Meteor,' 'There is a Power Greater than Atomic,' and 'The Steam That Blows the Whistle (Never Turns the Wheel).' Fast forward nine years, to July 1956, when Luniverse released Bill Buchanan and Dickie Goodman's 'The Flying Saucer' (a.k.a. 'The Flying Saucer Parts 1 and 2') - a mix of sampled sounds and spoken word arrangements describing a flying saucer landing. The different thematic emphases of the two songs reflect a shift in how the flying saucer was seen within American culture. On the one hand, '(When You See) Those Flying Saucers' preached the moral message of unidentified objects in the night sky, connecting the sacred and the stars, the potential of Judgment Day with technological Armageddon, and the threat of invasion from an unidentified other. Conversely, 'The Flying Saucer' demonstrated that the flying saucer could appear as an object of fun and an icon of popular culture, still capable of generating fear, but safely contained within the context of nearly a decade of cultural inversions, hoaxes, explanations, and mutations. The flying saucer, thrusting towards perpetual newness, and discarding its past like the trails of a comet, was received by the public in thoroughly fragmented form. It was an object woven substantially, if not entirely, 'with citations, references, [and] echoes.'<sup>112</sup> If the narrative fragment is the 'trope of the modern,'<sup>113</sup> then the flying saucer bears witness to this fragmentation. Beginning with a voice-over, imitating Orson Welles' 1938 *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast, Buchanan and Goodman's song solemnly intones, 'we interrupt this record to bring you a special bulletin. The report of a flying saucer hovering over the city has been confirmed. The flying saucers are real.' Interspersed with music samples and sci-fi sound effects, the song ends with the US President bidding farewell to the spaceman with the words 'lay off my blue suede shoes,' and the spaceman stating 'see you later, alligator.'<sup>114</sup>

In this song, the flying saucer is thoroughly domesticated. A decade of pop-cultural activity had transformed the flying saucer from ultimate outsider, to a familiar, if not entirely friendly, part of American society.

Just a few months after the release of 'The Flying Saucer,' the appearance of Sputnik I in the night sky on 4 October 1957 marked a succession in the line of extra-terrestrial objects capable of expressing generational anxieties – anxieties made more real by the satellite's earthly origins. Flying saucers would still receive attention within popular, respectable forms of media, including *Life* and *Time*, yet the initial enthusiasm would not be repeated. The shadow of Sputnik should not obscure how the plasticity of the flying saucer as a cultural object saw it able to pose as a manifestation of optimism, of a bright future pointing to Man's destiny, of fear, of wonder, marvel and excitement, and to function as a form of entertainment played out within the pages of newspaper and periodicals, challenging institutional forms of knowledge, playing the part of a monster, and generating invasion worries in a nation still recovering from the Second World War. Flying saucers brought together the symbolic associations of looking up and looking down; of vigilance and day-dreaming; and of grounded-ness and short-sightedness. They were part of an intricate socio-cultural matrix which placed scientific or institutional knowledge, represented by accounts such as those of Dr Donald Menzel, against popular knowledge, represented by accounts such as those of Donald Keyhoe, and personal knowledge, represented by accounts such as those of Kenneth A. Arnold. These provide a diverse and contradictory archive with which to analyse a specific historical moment of post-war USA and process of cultural construction, one experienced at an individual level, positioned within the realms of popular culture but eluding the grasp of government authority. Read as a collection of sensory experiences, noiselessly carving shapes in the sky and challenging everyday expectation, the counter-cultural, yet domesticated, flying saucer remains an important object for historical inquiry regarding not only the history of psychological phenomena, but also the monstrous geography of the immediate post-World War Two period and of the traditional American institutions of home and homeland.

## Notes

1. Drew Pearson, 'Air Force Checking Job Shows "Flying Saucers" Do Not Exist,' *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 November 1950, p. 6.
2. AP, 'Flying Saucers Spotted Again,' *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, 22 July 1952, p. 1.
3. Arthur Edson (AP), 'It's Summer! That Means It's "Flying Saucer" Time,' *Eugene Register-Guard*, 24 July 1955, p. 7.
4. M. Keith Booker, *Alternative Americas: Science Fiction Film and American Culture* (Westport, CT, 2006).
5. Mark Jancovich, 'Re-Examining 1950s Invasion Narratives,' in *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 26–49.
6. Terry Kirk, 'Monumental Monstrosity, Monstrous Monumentality,' *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal*, 40 (2008), p. 7.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 8.
9. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses),' in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis, 1996), p. 4.
10. Ibid., p. 5.
11. Kirk, 'Monumental Monstrosity,' *Perspecta*, p. 7.
12. Ibid.

13. See also: Jan Bondeson's *The Feejee Mermaid and Other Essays in Natural and Unnatural History* (New York, 1999) and James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), Back Cover.
14. See also: Patricia Barbeito, "'He's Making Me Feel Things in My Body That I Don't Feel": The Body as Battleground in Accounts of Alien Abduction,' *Journal of American Culture*, 28(2) (June 2005), pp. 201–215.
15. Susan Lepselter, 'Why Rachel Isn't Buried In Her Grave: Ghosts, UFOs and a Place in the West,' in Daniel Rosenberg and Susan Harding (eds.), *Histories of the Future* (Durham, N.C., 2005), p. 257.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
17. AP, 'Pilot Sees "Saucer-like Objects" Flying at 1,200 m.p.h. in Oregon,' 25 June 1947. This article was reprinted widely, for example, in *The Montreal Gazette*, 26 June 1947, p. 1.
18. Ken Hollings, *Welcome to Mars: Fantasies of Science in the American Century, 1947–1959* (London, 2008), p. 15.
19. This is a matter of some dispute. See: <http://ufoupdateslist.com/1999/mar/m17-009.shtml> (UFO Updates, 17 March 1999) – accessed 29 April 2015.
20. 'The Somethings,' *Time*, 14 July 1947.
21. Hollings, *Welcome to Mars*, p. 11.
22. Allan Lloyd-Smith, *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* (New York, 2005), p. 2.
23. <http://brain.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0455&p=1> (Gallup Poll asking people about their familiarity with various terms, 28 April 1950, also asked on 23 July 1947, 28 April 1950, 2 May 1950, and 29 August 1952) – accessed 1 August 2014.
24. Edward J. Ruppelt, *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects [Henceforth RUF0]* (New York, 1956), p. 5.
25. Cohen, 'Preface: In a Time of Monsters,' in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, p. viii.
26. *Ibid.*, p. x.
27. From Jacques Derrida, 'Some Statements and Truisms About Neo-Logisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and Other Small Seismisms' (1987), quoted in Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida: Routledge Critical Thinkers* (Oxon., 2003), p. 111.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.
29. Further comments from Arnold partially support his contention that he was misquoted. On 26 June 1947, United Press quoted Arnold saying, 'They were shaped like saucers and were so thin I could barely see them.' Associated Press noted that, 'He also described the objects as 'saucer-like' and their motion 'like a fish flipping in the sun.' ... He said they appeared to fly almost as if fastened together.' The *Chicago Tribune* added Arnold's supposed observation that 'They were silvery and shiny and seemed to be shaped like a pie plate. ... I am sure they were separate units because they weaved in flight like the tail of a [Chinese] kite' (<http://ufoupdateslist.com/1999/mar/m17-009.shtml> (UFO Updates, 17 March 1999) – accessed 29 April 2015).
30. <http://www.project1947.com/fig/kamurrow.htm> ('Transcript of Ed Murrow-Kenneth Arnold Telephone Conversation,' 7 April 1950) – accessed 29 April 2015.
31. Quoted in Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'What is Visual Culture?' in *The Visual Culture Reader* (London, 2002. 2nd ed.), p. 5.
32. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London, 1999), p. 15.
33. UP, 'Reports Of Mystery Objects In Kansas, Minnesota Skies ...,' *Times-News* (North Carolina), 23 May 1951, p. 1.
34. AP, 'Is It A Ball O'Fire Or Flash In The Pan,' *Miami News*, 27 September 1954, p. 7.
35. AP, 'Mysterious Ball Of Fire Ties Up Oklahoma Traffic,' *Victoria Advocate*, 27 September 1954, p. 1.
36. AP, 'Flying Disc Jams Traffic,' *Sarasota Journal*, 27 September 1954, p. 2.
37. Donald H. Menzel, 'The Truth About Flying Saucers,' *Look*, 17 June 1952, pp. 35–39.
38. David L. Martin, *Curious Visions of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), Front Flap.
39. Hollings, *Welcome to Mars*, p. xiii.
40. Hollings, *Welcome to Mars*, p. 12.
41. <http://www.project1947.com/fig/look61752.htm> (Kenneth Arnold, 'I Did See the Flying Disks,' *FATE Magazine*, Spring 1948) – accessed 29 April 2015.
42. Hollings, *Welcome to Mars*, p. 13.

43. These advancements also permeated into the domestic space. Sold on the promise of the future, each Levittown house (See also: Lynn Spiegel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham, NC, 2001)), for example, came with a refrigerator, stove, a Bendix washer, and a built-in Admiral television set (<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9,171,812,779,00.html> ('Up From The Potato Fields,' *TIME*, 3 July 1950) – accessed 4 August 2014) - 'space-age technology in a space-age home' (Hollings, *Welcome to Mars*, p. 5).
44. Waldemar Kaempffert, 'Those Strange Little Men; Flying Saucers. By Donald H. Menzel,' *New York Times*, 1 March 1953, p. 10.
45. Martin, *Curious Visions of Modernity*, p. xiii.
46. A Gallup Poll from 1996 revealed that forty-five per cent of those surveyed believed aliens had visited the earth. In 2010, a CBS News poll found thirty per cent believed the same thing. Further, thirty-three per cent believed in ghosts, thirty-seven per cent in haunted houses and twenty-one per cent in witches. Peter Dendle states that 'folklorists and other cultural interpreters of the future will have every right, retrospectively, to say that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries many people still quaintly believed in "monsters," such as Bigfoot, lake monsters, aliens, and ghosts.' (From Peter J. Dendle, 'Conclusion: Monsters and the Twenty-First Century: The Preternatural in an Age of Scientific Consensus,' in Asa Simon Mittman (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 442–3).
47. Susan Lepselter, 'The Flight of the Ordinary: Narrative, Poetics, Power and UFOs in the American Uncanny,' PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2005, p. x.
48. That the flying saucer was discussed in places such as *Life* should indicate how widely the phenomenon permeated. As a sign of *Life's* popularity, for example, in 'just thirteen weeks in the early 1950s, over one half of Americans had seen a particular issue.'
49. 'Farmer Trent's Flying Saucer,' *Life*, 26 June 1950, p. 40.
50. 'Flying Saucer,' *Life*, 17 July 1950, p. 12.
51. David Punter, *Modernity* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 210.
52. Relman Morin (AP), 'Flying Saucer Found To Be Old Discovery ...,' *Portsmouth Times* (Ohio), 7 August 1952, p. 30.
53. Arthur Edson (AP), 'Briton Arrives In U.S. To Seek Flying Saucers,' *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, 2 June 1954, p. 16.
54. Relman Morin (AP), 'Flying Saucers Old, Old Story,' *Spokesman Review*, 7 August 1952, p. 18.
55. 'Q's & A's,' *Altus Times-Democrat*, 28 April 1953, p. 6.
56. Robert L. Unger, 'Flying Saucers Are Old Stuff,' *Popular Science*, May 1952, p. 45.
57. There was also perhaps an eagerness to construct what Arnold saw as something it was not, to mould it into a particular and more familiar science-fictional shape. *Time's* 'The Somethings' article, as if to make the link even more explicit, began with a passage of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (1898), describing something rushing 'up into the sky and out of the grayness ... very swiftly into the luminous clearness above the clouds ...; something flat and broad, and very large, that swept round in a vast curve' ('The Somethings,' *Time*, 14 July 1947).
58. <http://www.frankwu.com/Paul-8.html> ('Gallery of Frank R. Paul's Science Fiction Artwork') – accessed 29 April 2015.
59. John Block Friedman, 'Foreword,' in Mittman (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, p. xxvi.
60. Mittman, 'Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies,' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, pp. 7–8.
61. Hollings, *Welcome to Mars*, p. 14.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
64. Ruppelt, *RUFO*, p. 6.
65. *Ibid.*
66. A similar process can be charted regarding representations of alien visitors. Preceding Susan Lepselter's essay in the anthology *Histories of the Future*, is a family tree of-sorts charting changes in the depictions of aliens, varying in height, shape, colour, the number of limbs, and so on. The illustration begins with 'little green men,' moving onto 'hairy dwarfs,' 'reptilians,' and 'lizard

- men' (Timeline of Aliens' (illustration), in Rosenberg and Harding (eds.), *Histories of the Future*, p. 256). All come under the category 'aliens,' whilst differing substantially, marked by difference and otherness somehow.
67. 'Flying Saucer Pajamas,' *Life*, 25 August 1952, p. 38.
  68. 'Sylvania TV With Bigger Better-Than-Ever Halolight,' *Life*, 13 October 1952, p. 55.
  69. 'Statler Hotels' (advertisement), *Life*, 5 January 1953, p. 58.
  70. Carl Jung, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth Of Things In The Sky* (New York, 1997), Back Cover.
  71. <http://www.abomb1.org/hiroshim/laurenc1.html> (William L. Lawrence, 'Eye Witness Account: Atomic Bomb Mission Over Nagasaki,' 9 August 1945) – accessed 29 April 2015.
  72. Cynthia Hendershot, *Paranoia, the Bomb, and 1950s Science Fiction Films* (Ohio, 1999), p. 76.
  73. Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses),' in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, pp. 7, 9, 17.
  74. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
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  85. Dendle, 'Conclusion: Monsters and the Twenty-First Century: The Preternatural in an Age of Scientific Consensus,' in Mittman (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, p. 446.
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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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