

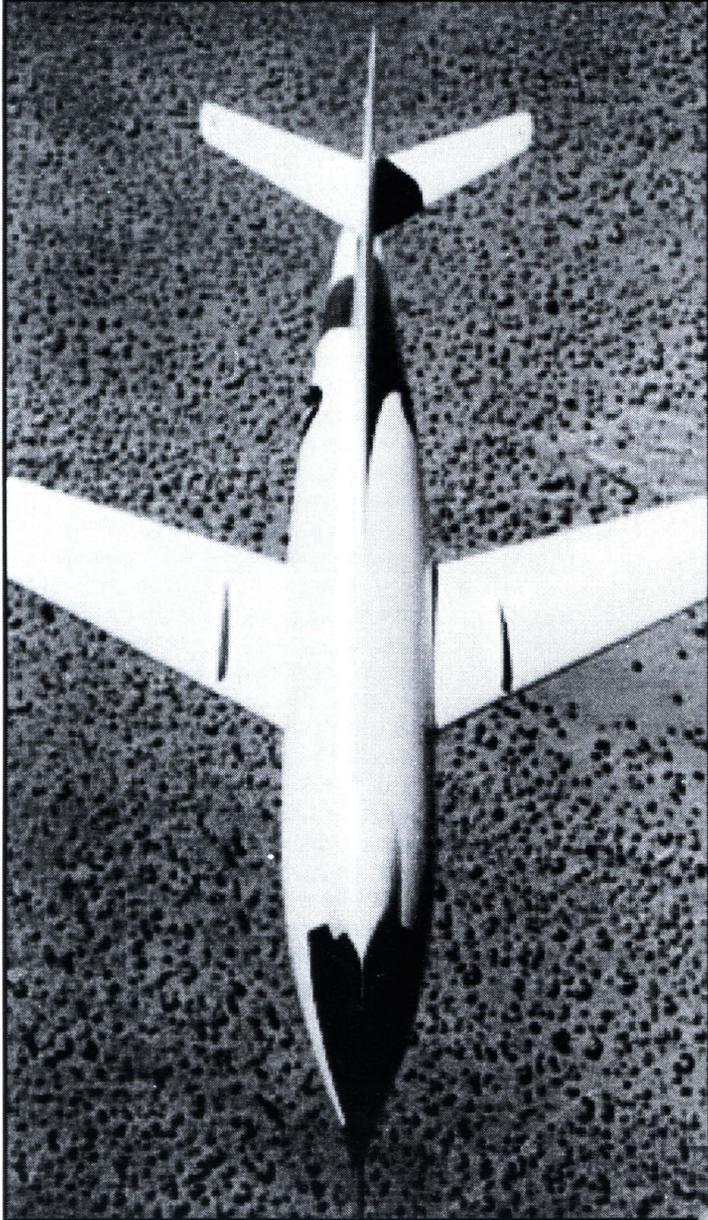
MAGGONIA 91



INTERPRETING
CONTEMPORARY
VISION AND
BELIEF

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FEBRUARY
2006



Rocket planes and vanishing pilots in Playboy: Black Sabbaths, and Witchcraft in the Ozarks

ROGER SANDELL MEMORIAL
ESSAY COMPETITION



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ROGER SANDELL MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION



This year it is 10 years since our great friend and colleague Roger Sandell died, and many times in those years we have wondered what

he would have made of some strange development in the fields we study. With his characteristically incisive mind, encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject's literature, and his sheer wit and humour, it would undoubtedly be something which would illuminate the topic and help us understand it better.

To remember Roger we have on a couple of occasions held essay competitions on topics which were of particular interest to him, to try to encourage and develop discussion, and we felt that this sad anniversary would be a suitable time for another.

One of Roger's particular interests, as long-time Magonia readers will know, was the world of conspiracy theories – he was perhaps at the time the leading British expert on the subject of conspiracy theories surrounding the Kennedy assassination. Of course, this does not mean to say that he *believed* any particular theory, but that as a historian it was necessary to know about and understand them, and the climate in which they arose.

Similarly with the Satanic Abuse panic of the early nineties (and later, see BackPage) he brought an understanding of earlier conspiracy claims and rumours to bear on a contemporary issue. He also contributed article to a number of political publications which stripped away some of the myths surrounding political conspiracy theories, and indeed, revealing some of the realities behind them as well.

So we are inaugurating the third Roger Sandell Memorial Essay competition, with a prize of £100. This will be for the best essay on the

subject of Conspiracy Theories. Obviously we are not asking you to advocate any one particular theory, but to look at the history of theories, how they develop, the effects they have on society and the individual and the ways in which they shape their surroundings.

We are a UFO-oriented magazine, so our main interest will be in UFO-related theories, but in many ways, as Roger demonstrated in his essays, this whole field is indivisible – right-wing politics infiltrates ufology, UFOs turn up in 9/11 conspiracies – so no aspect of the subject can be ruled out.

There is another topic which we would like to offer for your consideration. We've had a bit of fun lately with The Pelican's 'Make Ufology History' campaign, but it does have a serious point. It is in fact asking if ufology really exists as a science or 'proto-science'. Is there any coherent intellectual structure to the study of UFOs, or is it simply a hobby, which involves collecting random pieces of data and arranging them into patterns, rather like a stamp collector might set out an album page – an interesting exercise, and in many ways satisfying, even educational, but hardly a scientific endeavour. We would welcome your thoughts on this as well – is ufology a science, could it ever be a science, or is The Pelican right, and we should 'Make Ufology History'?

There will be a prize of £100 (or equivalent) for the best essay, which will be judged by the editors of Magonia. The winning entry and any other suitable essays will, subject to agreement with the authors, be published in Magonia. We are looking for contributions about 6-7000 words length and should be in English. The closing date for entries will be 1st June 2006. Entries may be submitted typed on A4 paper and sent to the editorial address as shown at the bottom of the column on the left: or they may be submitted by email. Please use plain text or RTF formats, and email them to: magonia@magonia.demon.co.uk. Please entitle them "Essay Competition Entry" in the subject line. The winning entry will be announced in our autumn issue, in August or September.



Playboy, The Saturday Evening Post, and the Vanishing X-15 Pilot's Return

Curtis Peebles

IN THE ARTICLE "The Case Of The Vanishing X-15 Pilot," I investigated the claim, made by Dr. Robert Wood in a 1968 telephone conversation with Dr. James E. McDonald, that Douglas test pilot Gene May was abducted during an X-15 flight in the early 1960s. May and the aircraft were released after three hours, according to Dr. Wood, and landed safely at Edwards AFB. The story was included in Ann Druffel's book *Firestorm Dr. James E. McDonald's Fight For UFO Science*. I also discovered a similar account, heard by an X-15 engineer attending a Giant Rock flying saucer convention in the early 1960s. In fact, the stories were bogus on several levels, including the fact that Gene May never flew the X-15 aircraft. [1]

Soon after publication of the article in *Magonia 88*, two very different responses to the article were received. Both involved science fiction stories, but which were published in magazines not normally associated with this

literary form. The stories not only give insights into the X-15 abduction, but also into the birth and development of the abduction myth, as well as the outlook of believers. The first came in an e-mail from Luis González, in which he noted a possible "cultural source" for the tale of the in-flight abduction of an X-15 pilot. He recalled that Jacques Vallee had mentioned the story "Control Somnambule," written by William Sabrot and published in the May 1962 issue of *Playboy*. In the story, an astronaut is abducted in space, examined for several hours, and then returned after being hypnotized to forget everything. [2] The similarities with the X-15 abduction story were obvious.

The Playboy Abduction

"Control Somnambule" is told in the form of a letter from "Amos P. Fineman, M.D.," a psychologist, to "General James Kearny," of the directorate of Air

Force Intelligence. It described the statements made by astronaut "Captain Paul Davenport" under deep hypnosis. Davenport was launched by a Saturn C-1 booster with a high energy second stage and a Centaur third stage. He was the sole occupant of a stripped-down Apollo capsule making a flight around the Moon. Just before the Apollo capsule goes around the far side of the Moon, he releases a high-intensity flare, which can be seen from Earth, and fires a solid fuel rocket to go into orbit. As the capsule loops back around the Moon, Davenport radios he has the Earth in sight, has released another flare, and that the solid fuel rocket has fired to break him out of lunar orbit. Davenport then says, "Hello, you blue beautiful old - . ." Then there is only silence; no voice communication, no life support telemetry, no radar tracking of the Apollo capsule. The Sugar Grove radio telescope and the Jodrell Bank receiver attempt to contact

the capsule, but with no success. It has vanished completely. And then, five hours and 54 minutes after he vanished, Davenport radios "...earth, here I come," completing the sentence he began just before he disappeared. The telemetry and radar tracking of the capsule also resumes as if nothing had happened. Davenport is immediately asked about the nearly six hours without contact, and he is astonished. He says that there had been no interruption at all. He could not explain why contact was lost, or what had happened during that period. The flight continues without further problems, and a successful splashdown is made in the

hangar-like spacecraft, and then saying "...those are people?" Fineman asks him to describe the aliens, but he says, "Can't see a thing. Blurred." Davenport is frightened as he is taken out of the capsule, and lashes out. He then says, "They're talking to me. Soothingly. Quietly. One of them....He's patting me on the head - like I'm a scared dog, or something. An infant." The spacecraft which captured Davenport's capsule is, itself, entering a much larger spaceship. He says, "This thing is bigger by far than the [U.S.S.] Forrester. It's like a mountain of metal." Again, Fineman asks him about the aliens, but Davenport replies, "No.

I can see everything else - this wall. Metal. Warm. And this room - low table. Bright lights. Like a lab, maybe? Wall with a big chart, or graph on it. But - not them. I can't see them....Blur. Just a blur."

Davenport describes being stripped naked, and then undergoing an internal examination with a fluoroscope and detailed external physical examination. A mold is also made of his body. Davenport

is then taken into an "operating room" and wires are placed on his temples. As Fineman watches, "...on each side of his head, the hairs stood straight out; the skin over the temples became completely white, bloodless." Davenport goes limp, and Fineman concludes he had been put into "a deep, electrically induced coma" aboard the alien ship. His pulse rate is a quarter of normal, and his body temperature is also low. Under hypnosis, Davenport is reliving the physiological reactions to his experience.

Fineman notes "...a spasmodic shudder of his stomach muscles," and opens Davenport's shirt. Fineman sees, "A fine red line ran from his breastbone down to his lower abdomen. Even as I watched, the vivid red streak faded until it became a thin white scar line that might have been only a creased imprint from the couch. And, in a moment, even that vanished; nothing remained but matted hair."

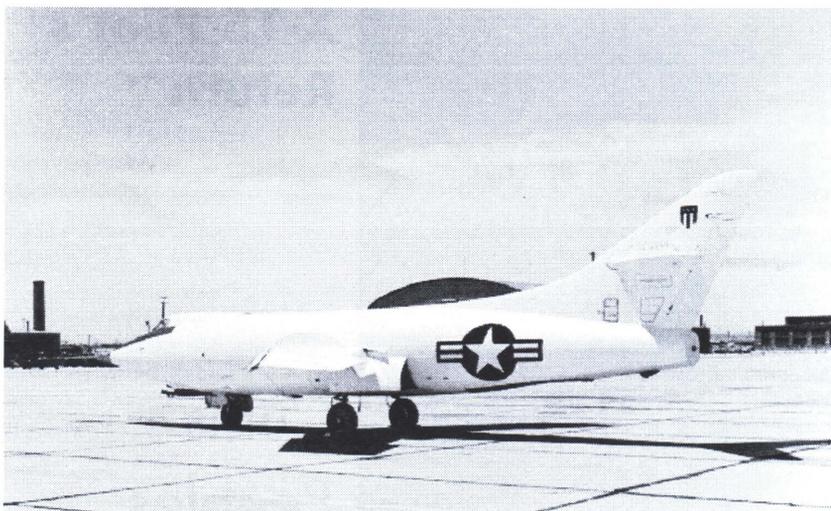
Slowly, Davenport's pulse, heart rate, and breathing return to

normal. He then said, "They are telling me - When I return to flight, I will not remember. I - will - not - remember..." Davenport continues that the aliens are trying to dress him in his spacesuit. They have difficulties, and Davenport goes through the motions of adjusting the clips and snaps, then lowers the helmet onto his head. He describes being put back into the capsule, then lies still on the couch. Davenport finally says, "Hello, you big beautiful old earth." He is back aboard the capsule, sixty hours from re-entry. Fineman asks him, "How about the big spaceship?...The operating room?" Davenport replies, "I don't follow you at all, friend." The experience was over. Davenport's memory of the six hours had been obliterated at the conscious level.

Fineman requests that Davenport undergo a gastrointestinal examination. During the interview, Davenport had described signs of appendicitis before the launch, but he had dismissed it as pre-launch excitement. The g-forces of launch made the pain worse, but after orbiting the Moon, Davenport said the symptoms had vanished. The fluoroscope shows a long thin line on his abdomen, where the mark had appeared during the hypnotic session. Additionally, the end of the large intestine glowed. Exploratory surgery showed that Davenport's appendix had been removed. Additionally, there was a long row of regular geometric figures - triangles, loops, dots, and dashes - outlined in a pale blue "tattoo" on his large intestine.

Fineman's conclusion was that the experiences related by Davenport under hypnosis were real. He and the capsule had been captured by an alien "scout" ship in mid flight. Fineman suggested that the scout had been attracted by the flares released as the capsule went around the Moon. This scout had radar deflecting devices, to conceal it from the tracking stations, as well as the subatomic force field which completely stopped the capsule's on-board instrumentation. Davenport's inability to see the aliens was apparently due to "some brilliant emanations" which blurred his vision.

Davenport was then transferred to the huge "mother" ship. In the course of an examination, his



What influence "Control Somnambule" had on the May abduction story is problematic. In both, the X-15 and the Apollo spacecraft disappeared for several hours, then reappear where they should be. Both the X-15 pilot and the Apollo astronaut tell their stories to a psychologist.

Atlantic. The loss of communications was initially blamed on an intense storm of highly-charged subatomic particles. This deflected the radar signals, and caused the electronic equipment to stop and Davenport to black out. Then a technician, "Harry Wyckoff," discovers the timing tracks on the spring-operated cockpit camera film stopped at one set of coordinates, then began again at a much later set. Wyckoff also finds the film has been cut, and then spliced. There are four frames showing an empty cockpit. Wyckoff reports the discovery, and Fineman is brought in to the case. Fineman takes Davenport, now under hypnosis, back to the moment when the capsule disappeared. Davenport says, "Gravity...I - I'm feeling gravity - and there's been an interruption from the Sunnyvale monitoring station....It's a - a ship. Dead ahead. As though I'm tailing it....I'm moving up on it....There's a hatch opening - and - I'm going into it. The spaceship - I'm inside it." Davenport describes being in the

diseased appendix was discovered. Davenport was taken to an operating room, and it was removed. The aliens used an instantaneous tissue regeneration process to heal the surgery, which caused the area to glow under the fluoroscope. At the same time, the tattoo markings were placed on his large intestine. Once Davenport was revived, the aliens put him into a trance, then gave him a post-hypnotic suggestion to forget everything which had happened. He was then dressed, put back in the Apollo capsule, and released back into space on the return trajectory.

The aliens' effort to conceal their abduction of Davenport and his capsule failed because the cockpit camera was spring operated, and was not affected by the subatomic force field. They cut and re-spliced the film, but could not alter the markings on the edge of the film. Additionally, leaving the four frames showing an empty cockpit was a serious mistake, as the capsule's hatch could not be opened from the inside.

Fineman's letter (and thus the story) concluded by drawing the analogy of zoologists capturing a few animal specimens, attaching tags, and then releasing them back into the wild. The tag includes a request for the finder to send such data as the date the animal was captured, its location, size, weight, and similar information. This would be used to collect data on their growth patterns, life span, migration patterns, and similar questions. He concludes by writing:

"Do you follow me? It would appear from Davenport's queer 'tattoo' that he was seized in flight, swiftly and expertly examined – inside and out – tagged, and then released.

"By whom – and for what purpose – remains to be seen." [3]

The story "Control Somnambule" contains many of the elements of later abduction mythology. There is "missing time," a strange scar, use of hypnosis by both the aliens to conceal the abductees' experiences, and by a psychologist to recover them. There are also physical examinations and operations by the aliens, the early 1960s predecessors of "implants" or "tracking devices," while the tattoo could only be described as "hieroglyphics." Abduction-type

stories have been noted in both 1930s science fiction magazines and fairy lore. [4] Peter Rogerson even briefly mentioned the *Playboy* story in his article, "Notes Towards a Revisionist History of Abductions Part 2 Fairyland's Hunters." He noted, "Missing time, abduction and medical examination all featured together in a piece of fiction, 'Control Somnambule....'" [5]

The timing of "Control Somnambule" in relationship to the origins of abduction stories is interesting. The Betty and Barney Hill abduction occurred during the night of September 19/20, 1961. The Hills could not have been influenced by "Control Somnambule" as it was not printed until the following spring. Sabrot could not have been influenced by the Hill abduction story, either, as it also had not yet been published. The first account was in the January-February 1962 issue of the NICAP newsletter, *The UFO Investigator*. But this did not include anything about their alleged abduction. The Hills did not go to see Dr. Benjamin Simon until December of 1963, and *The Interrupted Journey*, describing their experiences, was not published until 1966. [6]

What is occurring are two independent views of what would happen to a human taken aboard a flying saucer. If the aliens were here to study humans, presumably just as human zoologists would examine captured animals, aliens would run a battery of tests on captured humans. There are differences between the Hill abduction and Sabrot's science fiction story. What Betty Hill described differed little from existing early 1960s medical technology. In contrast, the fictional Davenport abduction had the tissue regeneration device and an electron scalpel for treating his appendicitis.

"Control Somnambule" suggests another possible influence on abduction stories – nature documentaries. Sambrot was quite explicit in drawing parallels between human zoological studies of wild animals and what was done to Davenport by the aliens. The scene in which he is reassured by the aliens brings to mind a similar image of a captured gazelle being calmed by a wildlife researcher. This also reflects the status of the human astronaut vs. the aliens. Davenport may be the first human to orbit

the Moon, but he is the one playing the role of the gazelle.

It is also worth noting that, as a cultural influence, nature documentaries would likely be more familiar than science fiction stories to mass audiences in the early 1960s. Long before the *Animal Planet* satellite channel existed, there were television shows such as *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom*. These would have made the procedure of trapping, examining, tagging, and then releasing a wild animal a common cultural image.

The David Howard abductions suggest a possible example. He recalled screaming in terror when he was first abducted in 1983. Then a voice inside his head reassured him, "Don't be afraid. We're not here to hurt you." His legs were then painfully clamped; probes were stuck in his side, then he was turned over and a "tracer" was put in his brain, to allow the aliens to locate him. Howard said, "You're treating me like an animal." The alien replied, "Well, you are an animal."

Davenport's experiences in "Control Somnambule" have differences from the structure of later abduction stories, such as Howard's. In these, the abductees frequently describe having conversations with the aliens, being taken on tours of the ship, visiting the aliens' home world, or receiving celestial wisdom. In "Control Somnambule," the aliens did none of these things. But, then again, the zoologists don't explain to the gazelles what they are doing either. [7]

What influence "Control Somnambule" had on the May abduction story is problematic. In both, the X-15 and the Apollo spacecraft disappeared for several hours, then reappear where they should be. Both the X-15 pilot and the Apollo astronaut tell their stories to a psychologist. Both the bare bones account by Dr. Wood, and the more detailed version told by the Giant Rock speaker, took place after the story was published. (1968 in the first case, and probably 1963 or 1964 for the Giant Rock story.) However, the other story elements, such as X-15 vs. Apollo moonshot, or early 1960s vs. near future, are very different. There is a better source of the May abduction story.

"What it is ain't exactly clear..."

I was surprised to open my copy

1. Curtis Peebles, "The Case Of The Vanishing X-15 Pilot," *Magonia 88*, (May 2005), p. 3-7.

2. E-mail, June 15, 2005 from Luis González to John Rimmer.

3. William Sambrot, "Control Somnambule," *Playboy* (May 1962), p. 63, 66, 128-133. William Sambrot was born in 1920, but no other biographical information was found. Sambrot wrote science fiction short stories between 1953 and 1967. His themes included aliens among us stories, fantasy, and Cold War thrillers, many of which were published in *The Saturday Evening Post*. The paperback book *Island Of Fear and Other Science Fiction Stories* (Pocket Books, 1963) was a collection of his work. Sambrot showed a working knowledge of space technology in his stories. The C-1 booster in "Control Somnambule," for example, was a real Saturn rocket in development at that time.

4. Martin Kottmeyer "Entirely Unprejudiced: the Cultural Background of UFO Abduction Reports," <http://www.magonia.demon.co.uk/arc/90/entirelymk.html>, and David Sivier, "Indexing The Machine Elves Fairyland Motifs In UFO Narratives," *Magonia 90* (November 2005) p. 14-17 are just a few of the articles dealing with these similarities.

5. Peter Rogerson, "Notes Towards a Revisionist History of Abductions Part 2 Fairyland's Hunters," <http://www.magonia.demon.co.uk/arc/90/revis02.html>. The source cited is Jacques Vallee's book *Confrontations* (Souvenir Press, 1990) p.190.

6. "UFO's Cause Panic, One Death," *The UFO Investigator* (January-February 1962), 2.

7. Peter Brooksmith, *Alien Abductions* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1998), p. 7-9, 13-17, 126, 127). Howard's "abductions," which continued for 13 years, were the result of narcolepsy. They occurred only when he was asleep. He observed, "...they were inside my head."



8. Frank John Reid, "Curtis Peebles, The X15 And Angela's Ashes," *Magonia 89*, (August 2005), p. 16, 17.

9. *ibid.*, p. 16 columns 1, 2, and the first half of column 3.

10. *ibid.*, p. 16, last half of column 3, and "Ezekiel 25:17," spoken by Samuel L. Jackson, *Music From The Motion Picture Pulp Fiction*, (MCA, 1994), track 16.

11. Graham Doar, "The Outer Limit," *Saturday Evening Post* (December 24, 1949), p. 22, 23, 72. Doar was born in 1912. An author's profile suggested that the story's theme was based on his celebrated his 33rd birthday on August 6, 1945; the same day Hiroshima was bombed. "The Outer Limit" was the high point of his time as a writer. An internet name search indicated he had only four more stories published: "They Won't Believe Me" (*Amazing Stories* May 1951), "No Price Too Great" (*Fantastic Adventures* December 1951), "Who Knows His Brother" (*Startling Stories* February 1952), and "So Wise, So Young" (*Amazing Stories* June-July 1953).

of *Magonia 89* and find Frank John Reid's article "Curtis Peebles, The X15 And Angela's Ashes." [8] This soon turned to bemusement as I read the article. Mr. Reid, the history consultant at the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS), took great offense to my article on the May abduction. Mr. Reid's article could be considered a post-modern academic treatise, a stream of consciousness essay, or as an example of typing at the top of one's lungs.

Mr. Reid's assessment of the May abduction is contradictory. On one hand, he dismissed the story as too trivial and unimportant to be worthy of checking, yet it was still important enough for Wood to pass on to McDonald, for Druffel to include in her narrative, for Mr. Reid to write his defense of their actions, and for him to attack me for ever bringing it up.

Mr. Reid engaged in total irrelevancies, such as reminiscences about his Catholic childhood, his reading of the book *Angela's Ashes*, an incident in which the book's author recalls tearing out a page in a magazine as it dealt with birth control, and a long and pointless story about losses of Liberty ships during World War II. These take up much of the first half of the article, and have nothing to do with the May abduction. [9]

Mr. Reid also never actually says the May abduction story is true. He never explicitly says that Gene May really did fly the X-15, that he really was abducted by a flying saucer in mid-air, and that he and his X-15 were released and landed at Edwards AFB after being missing for three hours. But I have observed that believers seem to feel compelled to defend a UFO sighting with "great vengeance and furious anger" whenever doubts about it are raised. [10]

The result is another

contradiction by Mr. Reid. He defends the May abduction story without saying it is true. He does so with a science fiction story.

Graham Doar's "The Outer Limit," was published in the December 24, 1949 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. In the story, a test pilot named "Bill" with the rank of Captain is making a maximum speed run in the "X2JTO" aircraft. He jettisons the turbojet-powered take off assembly, which parachutes to the ground, then begins firing the plane's eight rocket engines. The plane has enough fuel for ten minutes with all eight rockets firing. Bill passes through Mach 5 and is still accelerating. As he ignites the eighth rocket, "the sunlight glinted on some object far ahead and above him." He does not believe in flying saucers, and concludes, "Whatever this object was, this metallic ellipsoid turning slowly above him, it wasn't a ship. He knew that." Bill still has six minutes of fuel left, and decided to take a closer look. He points the nose of the plane toward the object. The X2JTO is forty miles high when it disappears from radar.

Ten hours pass with no trace of plane or pilot. Bill's commanding officer, a Colonel named "Hank," has concluded that both have been lost. The F-80 chase planes reported that they had lost sight of the X2JTO about the time the fourth rocket was fired. Everything was going well, they reported. Then the colonel's telephone rings and an excited sergeant reports that the X2JTO is about to land. [11]

When the colonel meets with Bill, the first question he asks the pilot is, "I've got to know – how you stretched ten minutes' fuel to keep you in the air over ten hours?" Bill tells him "Well, Hank, I chased me a flying saucer. And I caught it. Or rather it caught me." Bill says that he was flying at 200,000 feet and

about 4,000 miles per hour when he went after the object. He continued, "It must have been going at about half my speed. I caught up fast. It was – oh – egg-shaped and perfectly smooth. No visible openings anywhere." Bill tells the colonel that he made two passes to look the object over, and had started a third, when "There was a humming sound – a kind of gentle vibration – and I blacked out. I was heading straight at the thing, Hank, and I felt this – sort of twang, as though I'd run into a harp string, and the – the black came down over me. I thought – I felt it coming for a split second – I thought..."

Bill comes to inside the ship. He describes it as being full of "incredibly intricate-looking machinery," which was deafeningly loud. As with Davenport in "Control Somnambule" thirteen years later, Bill cannot see the aliens, but says "They were – just presences." The aliens use telepathy to communicate. Bill says that they sought to impress him with how far they had traveled and how difficult the trip had been, in order to make clear "the importance, the absoluteness of their message." By this point, the colonel is sure that Bill's experience was a delusion, brought on by stress, and he calls in "Major Malcolm Donaldson," who is a psychiatrist, to treat Bill's condition.

With both the colonel and Donaldson present, Bill describes the aliens' threat. The aliens had long ago discovered atomic power, and experienced wars which nearly destroyed their civilization. "Now," Bill says, "they have outlawed war throughout the sectors of space they patrol, and anywhere else they can reach. Whenever their detector system picks up traces of an atomic explosion, they send a patrol..." Arriving at Earth, he continues, "They found wars and

The real event that "The Outer Limit" was probably based on had nothing to do with the D-558-II, Gene May, or late 1940s rocketry. Rather, it was the death of Capt. Thomas F. Mantell in January 1948, nearly two years before the story was published.



rumours of war. Factories busily turning out atomic weapons. So they quarantined us. This intergalactic board of health decided we were infected with a communicable disease. They sealed us off from the rest of space until we were well."

Bill explains that the aliens had established a layer of particles about a hundred miles up. Radioactive fallout from an atomic bomb explosion drifting upward will enter this layer, and when their concentration exceeds that of the normal background activity, the particles in the layer will begin to fission, and the Earth will be incinerated. After the aliens were finished with their warning, Bill heard the "harp twang" again, and found himself back in the X2JTO as it glided toward the base. The interview ends, and Bill is taken back to his quarters. The colonel is convinced the pilot has had a mental breakdown. Donaldson is about to leave. Before he does, however, he says, "Oh colonel. There is one thing. It's outside my field, but I'm curious. How did he keep that plane in the air for ten hours – with only ten minutes' fuel?" [12]

Mr. Reid summarizes the story, and then describes a chain of events:

"(1) In 1950, had anyone – an insider, or just an assiduous reader of public rocketry info – wanted to take Doar's story as a roman a clef, or just fiction about a real person, a reasonable candidate for 'Bill' would be Gene May.

"Of course there are fictionalizing differences (e.g. the near future, Bill's much younger than May, etc.) But Peebles tells us May 'was also involved in the initial test flights of the Douglas D-558-II Skyrocket. This aircraft used both a jet engine and a rocket engine, and was designed to fly above Mach 4....'....

"(2) In the early 1960s, a speaker at the annual Giant Rock

contactee/New Age circus transformed the more-flight than-fuel tale into an X-15 incident, claiming to have been in the ground crew. According to Peebles's source the pilot wasn't named. But an insider/fan wouldn't guess Gene May, who was long out of the game – he'd opt for one of the publicized X-15 pilots....

"(3) In 1968, an apparently-reliable colleague from Vandenberg Air Force Base told Dr. Wood the X-15 version. So how did Gene May – whom the 'colleague' claimed to know, having details of his career right – climb back into the cockpit?" [13]

Mr. Reid then answers his own question by ascribing the "colleague's" actions to "malice," then to hatred, and finally ops for him to be part of a vast conspiracy against ufology. Mr. Reid continues:

"It might be joker's malice, no more than the urge to twit. It might be that someone hated Wood's guts, and wanted him to embarrass himself – or hated McDonnell-Douglas, Wood's employers....Or it may have been the pale malice of an intelligent asset supplying disinformation.

"....So yes, there are low-level intelligence assets, and it's just possible Wood ran into one." [14]

Going step by step through Mr. Reid's proposed chain of events shows its flaws:

1) Mr. Reid suggests that Doar's science fiction story could have been interpreted as a true story. In reality, the description of the fictional X2JTO rocket plane has nothing in common with the D-558-II, or any existing or planned aircraft. Mr. Reid notes that, in the story, the X2JTO has a jet-powered first stage, which separates at high altitude and parachutes to a landing. The D-558-II originally carried a J34 jet engine within the center fuselage.

The two air intakes were in the forward fuselage, and the downward pointing exhaust pipe exited on the underside of the aft fuselage. The LR8 rocket engine was mounted in the extreme end of the fuselage. The jet engine could not be jettisoned, or parachuted to a landing. [15]

The illustration of the X2JTO in the story, done by Melbourne Brindle, does nothing to encourage belief in the story as true. With fat delta wings, oval rocket nozzles, and single fin, it resembles an Oldsmobile hood ornament. Visible on the side of the fuselage is a row of piston engine exhaust pipes, such as on a propeller-powered P-51 Mustang. [16]

Mr. Reid suggests that readers might think that the "Bill" in the story was actually Gene May. He also seems to imply that May's retirement from test flying in December 1949 would add to this belief. Again, these are unsupported speculations on his part, and there are reasons against them. "Bill" has the military rank of "captain," while May was a civilian contractor test pilot, and had not flown in the military. It is also doubtful that May's retirement was publicized.

Mr. Reid also notes that among the "fictionalizing differences" is that Doar's story takes place in "the near future." In reality, a key story element is counter to this, and would be apparent to readers at the time. Bill comments that "We've exploded – five, is it? – atomic bombs. Maybe seven?" [17] In December of 1949, a total of *nine* atomic bombs had been exploded. They were Trinity (July 1945), Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 1945), Crossroads Able and Crossroads Baker (July 1946), Sandstone X-Ray (April 1948), Sandstone Yoke and Sandstone Zebra (May 1948), and Pervaya Molniya (August 1949). This would date Bill's fictional abduction to between the end of

12. *ibid.*, p. 67, 68.

13. Reid, "Curtis Peebles, The X15 And Angela's Ashes," p. 17, columns 1, 2, and the first half of column 3.

14. *ibid.*, p. 17, column 3.

15. Scott Libis, *Douglas D-558-2 Skyrocket* (Simi Valley: Navy Fighters, 2002), p. 56-61. This was the configuration of the D-558-IIs flown by Gene May. All of Gene May's flights were ground take-offs. This greatly reduced the maximum speed which could be reached.

16. Doar, "The Outer Limit," p. 22, 23. The designation "X2JTO" matched no actual U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, or company designation system.

17. Doar, "The Outer Limit," p. 67 column 3, second full paragraph. "The Outer Limit" was also reprinted in *Big Book of Science Fiction* (New York: Crown Publishers 1950). This is the hardcover edition; the paperback edition of this title does not include it. A more recent reprint is *The Classic Book of Science Fiction* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1982).

18. Reid, "Curtis Peebles, The X15 And Angela's Ashes," p. 17, column 3.

19. J. Allen Hynek, Jacques Vallee, *The Edge Of Reality* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1975), p.63.

20. Reid, "Curtis Peebles, The X15 And Angela's Ashes," p. 17, column 3.

21. The most easily available account of the Mantell incident is the study on UFO UpDates: <http://www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/ufoupdates/listers/mantell.html>

22. Reid, "Curtis Peebles, The X15 And Angela's Ashes," p. 16 column 3.

23. "Page 11," <http://www.sperdvac.org/Page%2012.htm> and "Beyond Tomorrow" http://www.old-time.com/otrlogs2/bt_log.txt. *Beyond Tomorrow* was originally titled *Beyond This World*, and "The Outer Limit" was its audition show. The program debuted on April 5, 1950, and lasted three shows. "The Outer Limit" was the program's last show, broadcast only ten days after the *Dimension X* version.

24. "Page 11" and "Robert Montgomery Presents Episode Guide, 1953" web page.

25. Reid, "Curtis Peebles, The X15 And Angela's Ashes," p. 17, column 2.

26. Peebles, "The Case Of The Vanishing X-15 Pilot," p. 7 column 3 second full paragraph. As noted in [15] all of Gene May's D-558-II flights were ground take offs. This meant the fully loaded D-558-II had to roll across the lakebed, lift into the air, and climb to high altitude before beginning the high-speed run.

In addition to being very dangerous, this used up much of the onboard fuel, limiting the airplane's speed to just over Mach 1. It was not until 1950, after May had retired, that the D-558-IIs were modified for air launch from a B-29. The fastest flight ever made in a D-558-II reached Mach 2.005. This was made on November 20, 1953, by NACA pilot A. Scott Crossfield in the D-558-II #2.

This was the first Mach 2 flight by a piloted aircraft, and the only Mach 2 flight ever made by any D-558-II. Both D-558-II #1 and #2 had their jet engine and jet fuel tank removed, and replaced by larger rocket fuel tanks. The D-558-II #3 was also modified for air drop, but retained the dual jet/rocket propulsion system. Details of the Mach 2 D-558-II flight are in: Curtis Peebles "Risk Management in the X-Planes Era D-558-II vs. X-1A at Mach 2," *Quest* Volume 11, Number 4, 2004, p. 40-47.

July 1946 and early May 1948.

2) In his brief account of the Giant Rock story, Mr. Reid proclaims that an "insider/fan" would have picked one of the real X-15 pilots as the one who was abducted. The reason given was that May had long been retired, but no evidence is offered to back his speculation. When Gene May's name became connected with the X-15 abduction story is not known. It may have been mentioned in the book the speaker was selling, but this has not been tracked down. It may not have occurred until Dr. Wood heard the story several years later. [18]

There is evidence that use of a bogus X-15 pilot's name would not have caused suspicions among UFO believers. Dr. Wood worked for McDonnell Douglas, and was directly involved with the company's space activities. Yet May's name did not trigger any suspicions. CUFOS itself provides another example. J. Allen Hynek and Jacques Vallee's book *The Edge Of Reality* has a list of astronaut UFO sightings. This includes a May 30, 1962 sighting of five disk-like objects by X-15 pilot Joe Walton. There was no X-15 pilot named "Joe Walton," and no X-15 flight was made on this date. The actual pilot was Joe Walker, and the flight date was April 30, 1962. Yet again, no suspicions were raised, and the story was used. [19]

3) Mr. Reid then suggests that Dr. Robert Wood was the victim of a government disinformation plot. As proof of this conspiracy, Mr. Reid offers a personal recollection of a suspected Soviet agent attempting to infiltrate an Eastern European émigré group. This is yet another irrelevant story. But by invoking "disinformation," he transforms the false May abduction story into "proof" of government plots and cover-ups. Mr. Reid ends the article by congratulating himself: "The X-15 business is more ambiguous than Mr. Peebles's ringing sermon would have it. I find real history (like real life) oft annoying that way, and God's motto seems to be 'What?'" [20]

How Gene May Was [Probably] Abducted

Reading "The Outer Limit," I was struck by how well it matches the X-15 abduction story told nearly two decades later. In both, the pilot of a high performance research aircraft vanishes without a trace for several hours, then

reappears suddenly. The pilot is then interviewed by a psychologist, and describes being taken aboard a flying saucer. The key story element, that the aircraft lands long after its fuel would be exhausted, is central to both tellings. The implication is that "The Outer Limit" was the original inspiration for the May abduction story.

The real event that "The Outer Limit" was probably based on had nothing to do with the D-558-II, Gene May, or late 1940s rocketry. Rather, it was the death of Capt. Thomas F. Mantell in January 1948, nearly two years before the story was published. Mantell went chasing after a bright metallic-looking object in a Mustang fighter, blacked out from lack of oxygen, and crashed. The remark by Bill in "The Outer Limit" that the object was flying at half his speed was similar to one of Mantell's transmissions. Finally, Mantell, like the fictional "Bill," was a captain. [21]

While *The Saturday Evening Post* had a massive circulation, "The Outer Limit" reached a much wider audience than just the magazine's subscribers. Mr. Reid suggested that the story may have been dramatized on one of the early science fiction radio or television shows, but did not check. [22]

An Internet name search showed that Doar's story "may be the most often used science fiction story in radio." "The Outer Limit" was dramatized five times on radio and twice on television. This began less than two months after its original publication. The CBS radio anthology program *Escape* was first, broadcasting its interpretation on February 7, 1950. This was followed on April 8, 1950 by another version, which was the premiere episode of *Dimension X*. Doar was in good company, as this radio show also used stories by Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and other noted writers of the era. "The Outer Limit" was used yet again by the program *Beyond Tomorrow* on April 18, 1950, then by *Suspense* on February 15, 1954 and *X Minus One* on November 16, 1955. Several of these shows also reran their "The Outer Limit" episodes at later dates. [23]

"The Outer Limit" was the pilot episode of one of the earliest adult science fiction television programs, *Out There* on October 28, 1951. Doar's story again

appeared on *Robert Montgomery Presents* on January 26, 1953. The cast included Jackie Cooper and Robert H. Harris. This was only six months after the "Invasion of Washington" during the Great Flap of 1952. *Robert Montgomery Presents* was one of the highest rated television programs during this period.

How the aliens were presented in the original story and the radio shows differs. In *The Saturday Evening Post* story, Doar told the story through the thoughts and comments of the three human characters. The aliens were "off stage," in the form of log entries. In the *Escape* dramatization, test pilot "Bill Westfall" meets the aliens "Xegion" and "Zyll," who deliver the warning that their force screen will explode once enough atomic particles accumulate. The *Dimension X* version, in contrast, leaves the audience to wonder if test pilot "Steve Weston" is delusional, if he was abducted by aliens, and just how he kept the aircraft aloft for ten hours after it ran out of fuel. The *Dimension X* script also adds a new plot twist. A nuclear weapon is scheduled to be tested at midnight. Weston is assured that the test will be postponed. This was just a ruse to reassure the agitated test pilot. As the show ends, it is thirty seconds to midnight. [24]

Given the number of times that "The Outer Limit" story was dramatized, and the large audience these broadcasts would have reached, it is reasonable to speculate that the Giant Rock speaker heard the story, updated it with the real X-15, and told it as an "I was there" first hand account. It can further be speculated that the person who told Dr. Wood the abduction story had learned of the Giant Rock account, either second hand, or from attending the convention. At some point in the process, Gene May replaced the fictional "Bill," "Westfall," and "Weston" as the abducted pilot. Although speculative, this provides a direct connection between Doar's 1949 story and Dr. McDonald nearly two decades later. This also makes no assumptions about whether or not people thought the story was true, if they thought Gene May was involved, and does not involve the Men in Black.

"The Outer Limit" also gives insights into the development of the flying saucer myth. This is an

element of the mythology that Mr. Reid rejects as "heresy." Bill, like the later contactees, is carrying a celestial warning from the heavenly beings to stop nuclear testing. He, like the contactees, was also specially selected to be the messenger. In the *Escape* script, Zyll warns Westfall that atomic war "would upset the balance of the entire universe, throw all space into chaos." The later contactees would have the "space brothers" making similar comments. These story elements suggest that the ideas and concepts of a proto-contactee mythology already existed at the dawn of the flying saucer era. What the story lacks, however, is the mysticism of the contactees.

The offense that Mr. Reid took at my article may also trace its roots to a clash of cultures. It was inexplicable to Mr. Reid as to why I jumped on what he saw as a throwaway incident in the McDonald book. What he did not understand was that I was a child of the space age, and the X-15 was part of that childhood. I can recall seeing documentaries on the X-15 in the early 1960s. With such a cultural background, and being familiar with such research aircraft as the X-15 and D-558-II,

it was inexplicable to me that the Gene May X-15 abduction story would ever have been believed.

Other examples of these cultural differences appear in Mr. Reid's article. Several times, he makes comments which indicate a lack of familiarity with the design and capability of the D-558-II. As part of his argument that "The Outer Limit" was believed by some readers to be a fictionalized true story, he quotes me as saying: "But Peebles tells us May 'was also involved in the initial test flights of the Douglas D-558-II Skyrocket. This aircraft used both a jet engine and a rocket engine, and was designed to fly above Mach 4....'" [25]

The fictional X2JTO in "The Outer Limit" was captured by the alien spaceship at a speed of Mach 5, which is close to the performance claim made by Mr. Reid for the D-558-II flown by Gene May. There is, however, a problem with this quote. What I actually wrote was:

"He was also involved in the initial test flights of the Douglas D-558-II Skyrocket. This aircraft used both a jet engine and a rocket engine, and was designed to fly above Mach 1." [26]

BACK ISSUES

- There are still back issues of MUFOB and Magonia available, (our team of archaeologists is always busy) at a price of £2.00 each, post paid (add £1.50 for each additional copy).
- Please make cheques payable to 'John Rimmer' and send to the address on page two. The issues listed here are all from the very earliest days of the magazine, and are all fine examples of the lost art of stencil duplication.
- We also have back numbers of Magonia available, and we will list these next time. If you just *can't* wait, send us a SAE and we'll rush you a full list.

MUFOB

- Vol. 2, No 6, November 1969; Looking back at the 60s, forward to the 70s
- Vol. 2, No 1, January 1970: ETH, a look at the Alternatives
- Vol. 3, No. 2, April 1970: Arthur Shuttlewood - 'Great truths'
- Vol. 3, No. 3, June 1970: Death and Life of British Ufology
- Vol. 3, No. 5, November 1970; Techniques for UFO Photographers
- Vol. 3, No. 6, December 1970; UFOs, Alive and Well in Fairyland; Hoaxes
- Vol. 4, No. 2, June 1971; Ubatuba, physical evidence? The Sun Maiden
- Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer 1971; John Keel Under Fire from Alan Sharp
- Vol. 4 No. 6, Winter 1971; The Charlton Crater, ufological self-deception
- Vol. 5, No. 2, 1972; New Directions for UFO Research

25
YEARS
AGO

"Second Look" was a short-lived series where we invited contributors to look at some of the topics which had previously been covered in Magonia/MUFOB. In Magonia 6, the American ufologist Willy Smith took a critical look at Dr. Alvin Lawson's work on 'imaginary abductees'. This work was published before Lawson's 'birth trauma' hypothesis for abduction experiences was fully developed - we covered this in a subsequent issue, and some American ufologists still haven't forgiven us for it.

In their initial stages Lawson's experiments simply consisted of comparing 'real' abduction narratives with imaginary



abductions created under hypnosis in laboratory conditions. Lawson concluded that two sets of narratives were essentially describing the same phenomenon, and from this conclusion went on to develop the 'birth trauma' hypothesis.

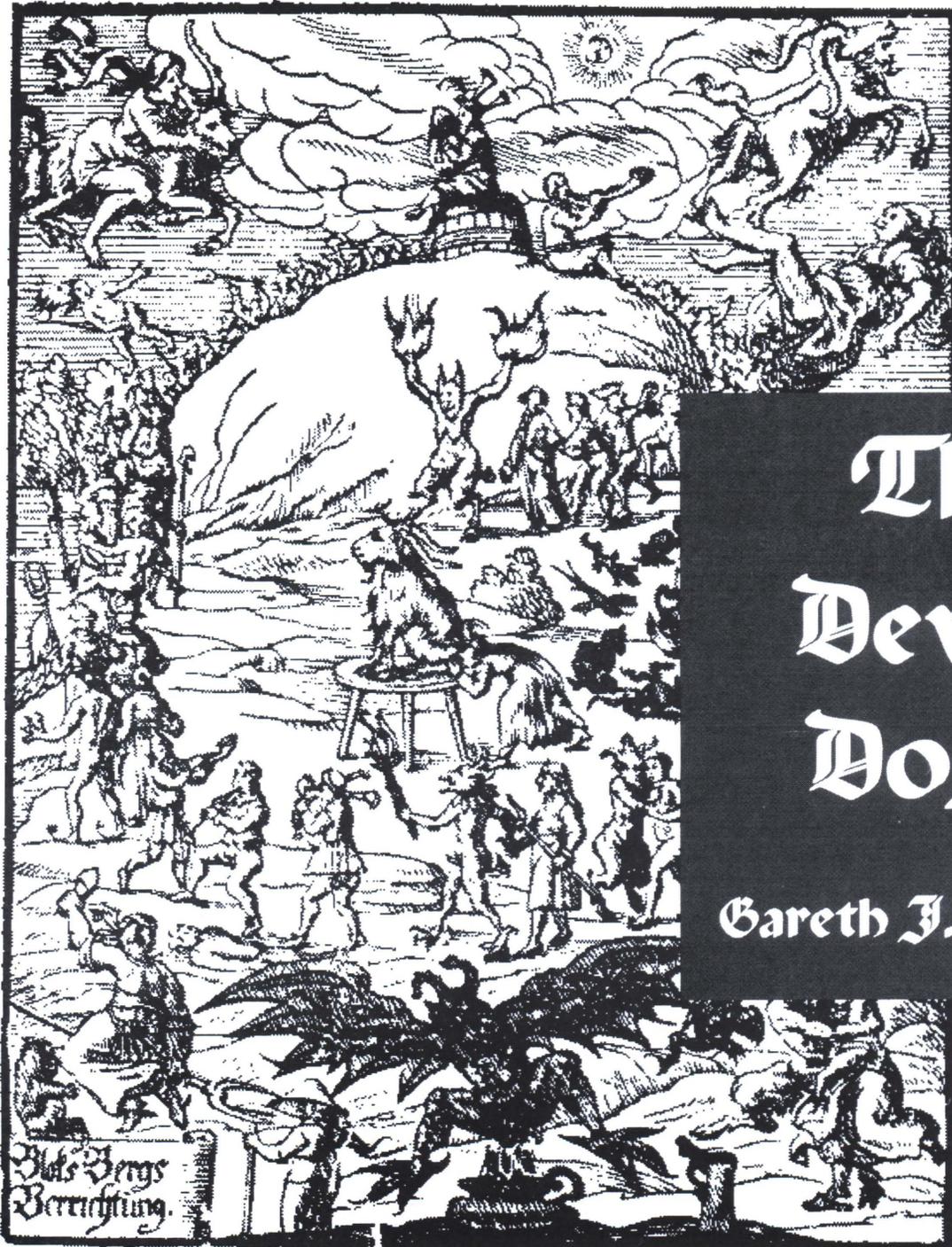
Smith vigorously challenged these conclusions, largely on the basis that the experimental protocols would have been unable to distinguish between subjects who had an a priori

knowledge of the UFO abduction phenomenon, and those who didn't. He concludes that there is in fact a substantive difference between 'real' and 'imaginary' abductees, drawing in his defence on such, some might say rather dubious, evidence as the emotional reactions, the connection with a UFO experienced before the abduction event, physical traces, time lag, homogeneity in description of the abductors, and independent corroboration.

I think it is fair to say that 25 years on, none of these factors has proved satisfactory proof of the existence of abductions as an objectively-real phenomenon.

Further on in the magazine, John Hamey continued with his notorious 'deserts of arid speculation', examining the development of the concept of the plurality of worlds, concluding that 'Science, philosophy and theology are not independent of each other, and it is the course of their development over centuries which provides the present-day intellectual background to controversy concerning UFOs and life on other worlds'

INTCAT ploughed on through the 1960s, with a strong emphasis on South American cases, Jenny Randles looked at a hoax Man in Black case, and historian John Fletcher examined the myth of Madoc, the Welsh prince who allegedly discovered America and led to the development of a myth of a mysterious tribe of Welsh-speaking Indians, which was so pervasive that President Jefferson, himself of Welsh ancestry, instructed Lewis and Clark to seek them out.



The Devil's Dozen

Gareth J. Medway

In Magonia 88 David Sivier criticised the theory of Stan Gooch, first published in his book *Guardians of the Ancient Wisdom* in 1971, that Christianity originated with a secret lunar cult. Whilst I agree with most of what he says, I must dispute his explanation of why there are said to be thirteen in a witch coven. Mediaeval religious orders were arranged into groups of thirteen, in imitation of Christ and his twelve disciples; so, Sivier suggests, since witchcraft was supposed to be a blasphemous parody of Christianity, witches would have been imagined to, do the same.

He cites the authority of Elliot Rose's *A Razor for a Goat*,

though the same idea had previously been stated, as if it, were a proven fact, by Rossell Hope Robbins: "Inasmuch as witchcraft was viewed as an obscene parody of Christianity, and since a common form of monastic organization was (as Chaucer noted), the "convent" of thirteen (in commemoration of Christ and the apostles), the demonologists finally invented a corresponding "convent" or "coven" of thirteen witches ." [2] Robbins does not provide any evidence for this claim, however. Rose's book makes a number of dubious assertions, such as that: "Thirteen in itself has no great mystic significance for mankind at large; there are those who insist

on looking back to a hypothetical race of ancients who counted the year as thirteen Customs of Women instead of the more usual twelve lunations, but this is an aberration of perverse ingenuity unbacked by concrete examples." [3] Here is one of the pieces of evidence he thinks to be non-existent:

But how many months be in the year?

There are thirteen I say [4]

In Europe, belief in witchcraft goes back to prehistory, and is mentioned in some of the earliest law codes, such as the Twelve Tablets of Rome, which date from centuries before the Christian era. The early Church tried to discourage it, and prescribed

Brian Appleyard, in his recent book *Aliens: Why They Are Here* observes that whether or not there are nuts and bolts UFOs, the aliens are certainly here in the sense that they have become part of our culture, and the same was the case with witchcraft.

penances for women who believed that they flew about at night with the Goddess Diana. Charlemagne made it a capital offence to kill someone on the grounds that he or she was a witch, specifying this to be a Pagan custom. [5] Around 1400 they did a sudden about-turn, the Inquisition started promoting belief in witchcraft, and organised persecutions of their own. Thus began the 'Burning Times', which lasted for some three hundred years.

When modern historians began to study the subject, they chose to focus on the Burning Times, which are very well documented, as opposed to the earlier periods, for which there is only limited evidence. Accordingly, writers such as Henry Charles Lea sought the origins of witchcraft beliefs within Christian theology alone. [6] This gave the impression that witchcraft was a purely Christian invention, a view no doubt encouraged by the fact that many of those historians were anti-clerical.

Whether these beliefs were actually true need not detain us: Brian Appleyard, in his recent book *Aliens: Why They Are Here* [7], observes that whether or not there are nuts and bolts UFOs, the aliens are certainly here in the sense that they have become part of our culture, and the same was the case with witchcraft. The point is that to some extent it is possible to separate the prehistoric beliefs from the Christian ones. Obviously, before the time of the Gospels, it cannot have been thought that witches recited the Lord's Prayer backwards. On the other hand the practice of removing a curse by drawing blood from the woman who laid it did not have any basis, so far as I can discover, in theology, and was no doubt an archaic folk custom.

As to there being thirteen in a coven, though this is routinely stated by modern authors, there are actually only three primary sources that I am aware of, two from British trial records, and one

from folklore: I must observe straightaway that none of these is the work of a demonologist, as implied by Robbins. Isobel Gowdie, a Scotswoman who was tried in 1662, confessed: "There are thirteen persons in ilk Coven". Though I have said it does not matter hee if these meetings really occurred, it is evident that Gowdie was delusional, as she stated that the witches would ride on the souls of dead men, and that "All the coven did fly like cats, jackdaws, hares and rooks, etc., but Barbara Ronald, in Brightmanney, and I always rode on a horse, which we would make of a straw or a bean-stalk." [8]

A decade later, a maidservant named Anne Armstrong, of Northumberland, claimed in court that a woman named Anne Forster had come to her at night, put a magic bridle on her which changed her into a horse, and ridden her to a witches' meeting: she said that there "were five coveys consisting of thirteen person in every covey". But she also said that they were "every thirteen with a divell, who called every one to account, and those that did most evill he made most of." [9] The devil was not one of the thirteen, and if he is counted as a member - and after all, he was the leader - then there were fourteen present in each 'covey'.

Though it is not discussed by any modern author that I have seen, there seems to have been a general belief that a witch could turn a human into a horse and ride it, as the allegation occurred in two other seventeenth century cases [10] and was casually alluded to by Samuel Butler [11]

The Body feels Spur and Switch,

As if 'twere ridden Post by Witch'

twenty miles, an hour pace ...

It survives to this day in the term 'hag-ridden'. It is certainly an ancient belief, as it is not mentioned by the demonologists (some discuss animal metamorphosis, but not riding),

yet it occurs in the plot of the Old Norse *Eyrbyggja Saga* [12]

Since Anmstrong had almost certainly never heard of Gowdie, the organisation of witches into covens of thirteen, must also have been a matter of common knowledge, in the same way that everyone nowadays knows what happens when you get abducted by aliens, and it has perhaps indirectly survived in the Scots phrase "the Devil's dozen". Yet it is not known to occur in any contemporary published source (the trial records were only printed in the nineteenth century). Indeed, I know of only one printed use of the word 'coven' from this period [13] This suggests that it was a piece of popular rather than learned lore.

'The Witch-ride', an Icelandic folktale [14], tells how a young man became employed as a servant by a vicar. On Christmas Eve the vicar's wife suddenly put a bridle on him, and rode him through the air to a little house where she tethered him to the wall. He was able to look inside, and see twelve women being instructed by a mysterious man. It turned out that the women were all vicar's wives, and the man "the Fiend himself." A very similar Scottish legend, though does not mention the number of the witches, concerns a blacksmith's wife who regularly turned an apprentice into a horse by touching him with a wand. [15] In both stories, the youth was eventually able to slip, the bridle and put it on his mistress, who was later executed. Probably both are of Norse origin, having brought to Scotland and Iceland by Viking settlers. Since covens of thirteen were known in Protestant areas, it is unlikely that they have any connection with the organisation of the Catholic Church.

More likely, we should look to northern European folklore. Though I recognise that analogies can be misleading, a clue to the original identity of the Icelandic



1. Stan Gooch, *Guardians of the Ancient Wisdom?*, Fontana, 1980, (1st Wildwood House, 1979).
2. Rossell Hope Robbins, *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*; Peter Nevill, 1959, p.117.
3. Elliot Rose, *A Razor for a Goat*, University of Toronto Press, 1989, pp.160.
4. 'Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar', *The Oxford Book of Ballads*, Oxford University Press, 1946, p.600.
5. Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, Granada, 1976, p.208.
6. Henry Charles Lea, *Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1939, mainly volume 1. He even missed some Christian sources, such as Voragine's *Golden Legend*, which was the main inspiration for belief in the pact with the devil.
7. Scribner, London, 2005.
8. Robert Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials In Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1833, Vol.III; pp.606, 613.
9. Depositions from the Castle of York relating to offences committed in the Northern Counties in the seventeenth century. *Surtees Society*, 1861, pp-193, 195. Other supposed examples of covens do not stand up to scrutiny, for example, Janet Howat of Forfar testified in 1661 that at the first meeting she attended there were witches "to the number of 13 of all"; but she went on to say that at her second meeting were "about 20" - George Kinloch, *Reliurae Antiquae Scotiae*, Edinburgh, 1848, p.124.
10. The second Pendle case of 1633, for which see John Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, London, 1677, pp347-48, and the trial described in *Strange & Terrible Newes from Cambridge*, London, 1659. The first of these collapsed after the principle witness admitted to having lied: so probably did the second, for the pamphlet was soon followed by a counterblast. *A Lying Wonder Discovered, and The Strange and Terrible News from Cambridge proved false*, 1659.

At the present day, witch covens, that certainly have a real existence, regard thirteen as the ideal number, but this does not happen often as it proves too difficult to arrange.

'Fiend' may be found in the Dutch miracle play *Mary of Nimmegen*, written circa 1500 about a woman who lived with the devil for seven years. Strangely enough, Mary is the heroine suggesting another story of pre-Christian origins. What confirms this is that it is said that, though the devil changed himself into approximately human form, he had only one eye, because "the dyvell can never turne hym in the lykenes of a man... [16] The real reason, clearly, is that he is actually the one-eyed God Odin, or the Dutch equivalent which I think was Wodan. In pagan times, clearly, a woman who had a god as a lover would have been a heroine. So the devil who taught witchcraft to vicar's wives may also have been Odin.

In that case, the witches may well have been his companions the Valkyries, who were usually said to have been twelve or thirteen in number, which would make for covens of thirteen or fourteen when the leader was included. As Brian Branston remarked: "... it may be suggestive that Grímnismál, listing thirteen Valkyries by name should make up the same number as the witches coven. [17] It is a fact that, in early English, the equivalent term walkyrie was used as a synonym for witch. In 1014 Wulfstan, the Archbishop of York, delivered a sermon about how the country was overrun with sinners, mentioning that 'her syndan wiccan and waelcyrrian', i.e. "here are witches, and walkyries". [18] Nor was this an isolated example, for the fourteenth century alliterative poem *Cleanness* says "Wyches and walkyries wonden to that sale", i.e. "Witches and walkyries went to that hall". [19] Perhaps walkyries were also identified with vicar's wives.

I do not claim to have proved conclusively that covens of thirteen are derived from Odin

and the Valkyries, but it seems to me to be at least as plausible as the equally unproven Christian parody view expressed by Robbins, Rose and Siviers. Margaret Murray's *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* quoted the Gowdie and Armstrong trials, suggesting that this was the normal method of organisation. Thereby, the notion of covens, which had completely died out, was revived in the public imagination. Murray's theory that witchcraft was a survival from Pagan times has been heavily criticised, mainly on the grounds that the Sabbats were not real events, but even if they were not a survival of Pagan practice, they did somehow preserve elements of pagan belief. At the present day, witch covens, that certainly have a real existence, regard thirteen as the ideal number, but this does not happen often as it proves too difficult to arrange.

11. Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, edited by John Wilders. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967, First Part, Canto 11, lines 1157-59.

12. Translated by Hermann Pálson & Paul Edwards, Southside Publishers, Edinburgh, 1973.

13. An Apology for M Antonio Bourignon, 1699, p.293. Though this was published in London, the author was probably a Scotsman, suggesting that the word was only known in the north of Britain.

14. *Ghosts, Witchcraft and the Other World*, translated by Alan Boucher, Iceland Review Library, Reykjavik, 1981, pp.20-22.

15. Thomas Davidson, *Rowan Tree and Red Thread*; Edinburgh, 1949, pp. 85-6.

16. *Mary of Nimmegen*, Harvard University Press. Cambridge. Massachusetts, 1932, a facsimile of an English chapbook version of the story from about 1518, Sig.A4r. The original play was translated by Harry Morgan Ayres as *A Marvelous History of Mary of Nimmegen*. Martians Nijhoff, The Hague, 1924. The devil having one eye is mentioned on p.12 of the latter.

17. Brian Branston, *Gods of the North*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1980, p.191.

18. *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader*, fifteenth edition. Oxford University Press, 1979, p.91.

19. Line 1577, in Pearl. *Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, edited by A. C. Cawley & J. J. Anderson. Everyman's Library. 1983.

Don't forget, there's a lot more to Magonia than this magazine.

There's a website with an archive of articles from 35 years of publication. Check out www.magonia.demon.co.uk. This site is currently not being updated due to technical problems, so for current updates log onto John Harney's two sites. There's Magonia Extra at www.magonia.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk. This includes the complete text of MUFORG Bulletin, the Merseyside group magazine of the 1960's which was the earliest predecessor of Magonia, along with book reviews, the fabulous Pelican column, a picture gallery and a detailed report of the historical Alborough platform case from the early years of the last century. Magonia Extra is Magonia's complementary magazine. It's only available as a print copy to what John Harney describes as 'the favoured few' (if you have to ask, you're not one of them!) but anyone can read it on-line at www.users.waitrose.com/~magonia. This contains more articles, reports reviews, comment and polemic. In fact everything you expect from Magonia, and it's all free!

And if that's not enough for you, and you live in or are passing through London, you can meet Magonia editors and readers at our regular monthly get-togethers at the Railway pub in Putney, on the first Sunday of every month, from about 7.15 onwards. The Railway is just opposite Putney Railway Station (*quelle surprise!*) at the corner of Upper Richmond Road and Putney High Street, London SW15. Putney rail station is about 10 minutes from Waterloo, and the pub is about ten minutes walk westwards from East Putney tube station.

The Railway is a Wetherspoon's pub, so there's reasonably priced drinks, and food is served all evening. We tend to hang around at the back of the pub - just look for the table with all the weird magazines strewn across it!

Cheers

THE PELICAN WRITES

El Pelicano es fuerte en sus apreciaciones, pero muy razonable



One reader, on noticing the absence in the last issue of *Magonia* of its most noteworthy feature, wrote: "I hope The Pelican's absence was only temporary; he never fails to brighten the morning tea and toast." One feature which never fails to brighten ufology is the pick-and-mix approach to solving UFO cases. It also never fails to provide good reasons why ufology will never be taken seriously by mainstream scientists and politicians, apart from a few who have evidently gone soft in the head, usually due to the ravages of advancing age. These are the sort of people who take Exopolitics seriously rather than seeing it for what it is - a kind of role-playing fantasy game in which one can score points by winding up "serious ufologists" by cleverly getting them to write lengthy refutations of stories by "whistle-blowers" about alien activities which are too absurd to be worth noting.

However, back to pick-and-mix. The Pelican takes as his example the notorious Socorro sighting of 24 April 1964 when police officer Lonnie Zamora claimed to have witnessed the brief landing of a strange craft. Although a few UFO believers were of the opinion that Zamora had witnessed a brief visit to Socorro by a pair of ETs, most of them were rather more cautious and preferred to classify the case as unexplained, unless and until some further reliable information was forthcoming. However, some of them couldn't resist accusing Hector Quintanilla, the head of Project Blue Book at the time, of being a "debunker" even though he, too, listed the sighting as unexplained.

Sceptics were generally less cautious, as some seemed

desperate to provide a mundane explanation, even if it had to be force-fitted by the usual process of ignoring awkward details.

Here The Pelican must remind readers that he is not a sceptic -- at least not in the manner of those for whom scepticism is practised as a kind of secular alternative to religion -- despite the misinformation put about by certain unscrupulous American ufologists.

The force-fitted explanations range from the almost plausible to the utterly ridiculous, so let us take a brief look at some of them.

One of the favourite explanations is that Zamora was startled and confused by the unexpected appearance of a hot-air balloon. These balloons, in their present form, were new and quite rare at the time of the sighting. This explanation seemed less likely when all efforts to find any record of such a balloon being in the area at the time failed. Another problem, ignored by many, was that a strong wind was said to have been blowing at the time, which would have made a hot-air balloon unmanageable. There is also the problem of how it could have disappeared over the horizon before anyone else arrived on the scene, despite being unable to travel any faster than the wind.

Another theory, investigated by Quintanilla, was the possibility that it was the test of a lunar landing vehicle, but he found that these were not operational in April 1964. (1)

A similar explanation was offered which suggested that it might have been a test of a Lunar Surveyor. Such tests, involving the Surveyor being attached to a helicopter, were actually being carried out on the White Sands Missile Range on 24 April 1964, although apparently not at the time of the sighting. (2) However, it seems unlikely that the tests would take place so near a town and that Zamora would fail to realise that he was looking at a device attached to a helicopter. Again, there is the problem of how the helicopter, encumbered by the Surveyor, would manage to disappear from view before any other witnesses arrived.

Now we come to the obvious explanation, apparently first seriously suggested by Phil Klass, that it was a hoax. Although sceptics have pointed to inconsistencies in Zamora's account, and later alterations to it, those who interviewed him,

including the sceptical Quintanilla, were convinced he was telling what he believed to be the truth. As the mayor of Socorro owned the land on which the incident took place, it was alleged that he conceived the idea of a UFO hoax which would enable him to develop the area as a tourist attraction. So he at least had a possible motive. But it has not been explained what motive Zamora would have had, or why he should be willing to get involved in something which could bring him and the local police force into disrepute.

A variation on the hoax theme was that Zamora was not a hoaxer but was the victim of a hoax devised by a group of physics students. As no one could identify these people or suggest what they could have rigged up to fool Zamora, then managed to dismantle and remove before anyone else arrived, then this explanation was taken seriously by hardly anyone.

The Pelican has saved the silliest explanation to the last. "A mirage of Canopus was the object reported by police patrolman Lonnie Zamora over Socorro (New Mexico) in April 1964. This appears to have been caused by an inversion over the Rio Grande valley, south of the town." (3) This is the verdict of Stuart Campbell, who has some pretty weird notions about mirages, ones not shared, needless to say, by experts on atmospheric optical phenomena. According to Campbell, mirages were also the causes of many other well-known UFO incidents, such as Trindade, a "mirage of Jupiter", the Cash-Landrum report, Canopus again. A mirage of Canopus also lured Frederick Valentich to his death in the Bass Strait, Australia. This shows that Saucer Logic can be used by sceptics as well as believers. Or perhaps that should be Inverse Saucer Logic?

Anyway, so far as the Socorro case is concerned, The Pelican remains perched firmly on the fence.

Notes

1. Hector J. Quintanilla, 'Project Blue Book's last years', in Hilary Evans and Dennis Stacy (eds), *UFOs 1947-1997*, John Brown, London, 1997
2. David E. Thomas, 'The Socorro, NM UFO - Explained?' www.nmsr.org/socorro.htm
3. Stuart Campbell, 'Mirages: Can mirages explain UFO reports?' www.astronomycafe.net/weird/lights/mir/UFO.htm

Strange Fruit

Ozark Folklore and the Continuation of Traditional Witch Beliefs in the Modern Satanism Scare

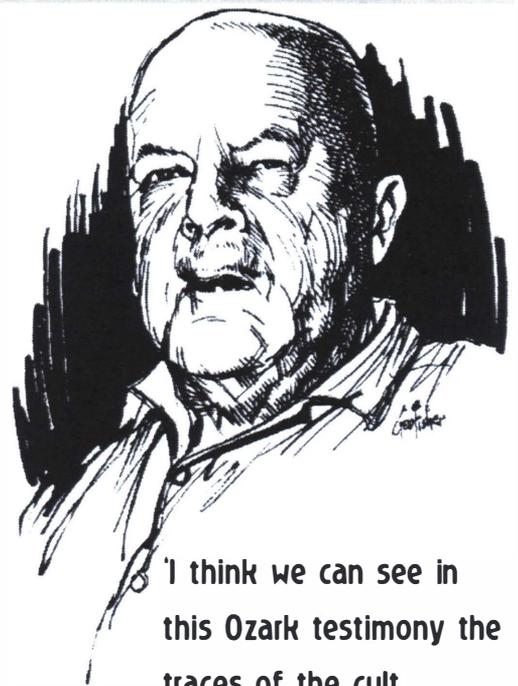
ONE OF THE MAJOR problems presented by the Satanism scare of the 1980s and 1990s is the apparent reappearance of a set of beliefs and a persecuting mindset little different from the magic and superstition of previous centuries in the economically and technologically developed world. Indeed, the problem is particularly acute in the case of America, one of the most important crucibles for the forging of the Satanism scare, and a nation that has prided itself on its scientific and technological modernity.

In searching for the origins of the modern Satanism scare, historians and sociologists have necessarily paid most attention to the contemporary societal factors stimulating its rise, like the increasingly irrational ideologies permeating psychotherapy, victim culture and the drive to identify as pathological an increasingly wide range of human behaviour seen as shocking or deviant, such as 'emotional incest' or 'sex addiction', the emphasis of certain sections of American social reformers and some Feminists in demands for the children of the poor to be taken into state care, and the breakdown of a moral consensus on issues such as sexual morality, which has allowed Satanic Child Abuse to become an issue that can unite conservative Christian Evangelicals and Feminists and left-wing groups in a moral crusade.¹ The genesis of the modern witchcraft accusations in the demonology of Middle Ages, including the Blood Libel myth directed at the Jews

has been recognised and explored by a number of researchers, and comparisons drawn between the great witch hunts of the past, such as those directed against the Bogomils in the ninth and tenth centuries, and the great witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.² These have all been identified as having a common origin in the breakdown in the wider Christian community, such as between Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic for the earlier persecution, and Roman Catholic and Protestant for the latter.³ However, while some historians have effectively demonstrated the origins of modern allegations of satanic ritual abuse in nineteenth century anti-Satanist and anti-occultist propaganda, such as Gareth Medway in his *The Lure of the Sinister*, few seem to have considered that there may also have been operating an unbroken tradition of witch beliefs that may also have fed into and stimulated the Satanism scare of the last twenty years.

Contemporary sceptical researchers into the Satanism scare have instead traced its roots in the narratives of adult survivors, often converts to Christianity, such as Doreen Irvine and June Johns in the 1960s and 1970s. These authors 'presented Satanism (not distinguished much from Wicca) in turns of kinky adult sex, homosexuality, drug taking and suburban wife-swapping, with the now largely vanished phenomenon of the desecration of churches'.⁴ The motif of child abuse,

however, only entered these narratives because, 'as society became more permissive and secular this repertoire ceased to conjure up images of ultimate decadence and evil'.⁵ Yet while contemporary historians, such as Dr. Ronald Hutton in his *The Triumph of the Moon*, have effectively refuted the idea of a Palaeolithic cult of a horned god continuing unbroken into the twentieth century, it is however quite possible that some elements of a witch-cult, in so far as it was believed to exist in socially backward, agricultural communities in America, continued to exist from the sixteenth century onwards to inspire the Satan hunters of the late twentieth century. Indeed, the Canadian historian, Elliot Rose, in discussing the existence of a 'witch-society' in the Ozark country of the US, as described by the American folklorist, Vance Randolph, drew explicit comparisons between it and the descriptions of contemporary witchcraft practices by Gerald Gardner. He concluded that 'I think we can see in this Ozark testimony the traces of the cult stripped to what its unlearned members considered its essentials, after persecution and enlightened scepticism between them had deprived it of both learned leadership and true continuity of



'I think we can see in this Ozark testimony the traces of the cult stripped to what its unlearned members considered its essentials, after persecution and enlightened scepticism between them had deprived it of both learned leadership and true continuity of tradition'

- Vance Randolph

tradition.¹⁶

Randolph's study of Ozark folklore is valuable for the insight it gives on a number of Fortean topics, not just witchcraft. For example, his description of the appearance of spectral lights along the "Devil's Promenade", a lonely stretch of road in Oklahoma, fourteen miles from Joplin Missouri, is interesting not just for its description of the lights themselves, but also for the explanations offered for them. These include not only the supernatural – that they are the spirits of a murdered Osage chief, or a Quapaw woman who killed herself after the death of her husband in battle, but also for the scientific and pseudo-scientific. Thus it is suggested that the lights are those of cars driving on Highway 66 five miles away, are marsh gas or 'that the effect is produced somehow by electrical action of the mineral deposits in the ground.'¹⁷

Randolph's book was originally published in 1947, about the same time the UFO myth was gestating, and although this explanation for strange lights seems to have been forgotten until proposed in the 70s by Persinger and Paul Devereaux, its recording by Randolph suggests that the piezo-electrical explanation for such unexplained lights has its basis in the folkloric rationalisations offered for such phenomena, rather than the cold, detached theorising of a laboratory researcher.

The points of contact and contrast between Gardnerian and Ozark witchcraft discussed by Rose was the appearance in both cults of nudity and ritual sex, and instruction in the cult's mysteries of an initiate by a parent or other family member. In the Ozarks the novice witch was taught the cult's traditions by a parent of the same sex, while they were inducted into the cult by a member of the opposite sex in ritual coition in front of a naked coven. For Gardner, however, instruction had to be carried out by a member of the opposite sex, and although initiation was performed naked, it did not involve sex.⁸ Beyond the similarities and differences between the two cults is the question of the similarities of

both to the incestuous, satanic cults described in *Michele Remembers*. In this conception of a modern, satanic cult, as formulated by the social worker, Maribeth Kaye, and criminal psychologist, Lawrence Klein, 'membership is transmitted primarily through families' and 'sexual child abuse and torture is deliberately employed by Satanist families as a technique to brain-wash and program children to confuse evil with virtue, so that they will follow instructions to commit Satanic evil acts without feeling any guilt.'⁹

This is similar in concept to the Ozark belief that 'the secret doctrines must pass only between blood relatives, or between persons who have been united in sexual intercourse. Thus it is that every witch obtains her unholy wisdom either from a lover or a male relative ... A mother can transmit the secret work to her son, and he could pass it on to his wife, and she might tell one of her male cousins, and so on.'¹⁰

While the transmission of the secrets between family members is not necessarily incestuous, and there were rituals that could transform a woman into a witch which did not involve sex, such as repeating the Lord's Prayer backwards and firing seven silver bullets at the moon, the important element nevertheless in consecrating the witch in her unholy career was sex: 'A virgin may possess some of the secrets of "bedevilment," imparted by her father or her uncle, but she cannot be genuine witch, for good and sufficient reasons.'¹¹

According to the tradition, this sexual initiation took place at the family burial ground, at midnight at the dark of the moon, over three consecutive nights. Devils and the spirits of the evil dead did appear, conjured up by the blasphemous incantations of the witches and the recital of the Lord's Prayer backwards, the person initiating the witch was another mortal human being, not Satan himself. In this respect it differed from some of the medieval and early modern witch narratives, in which the witch copulated with Satan or a demon,¹² but was similar to the recovered memories of survivors of Satanic Ritual Abuse, who were sexually abused by their fellow humans, although the Devil and other demons nevertheless also appeared during the ceremonies. It

thus appears that, amidst the basis of such fears of child ritual abuse in the concern over all too real cases of incest and child abuse that were appearing in the 1970s, the Satanic Ritual Abuse scare also drew on traditional stories of witch families and sexual initiation, and conflated the two elements according to the fears of the times.

Appearing with the motifs of multigenerational witch families and satanic sex also was the belief that witches burned the body of newborn children in order to acquire further magical powers, and that the ashes were used to make luck charms.¹³ While this element of the myth ultimately derives from Inquisitor's allegation against a group of heretics at Orleans in 1022, that they burned the bodies of children born from their orgies to Satan and used the ashes in a blasphemous parody of the Christian Eucharist,¹⁴ it is also of the same type as the allegations in the modern Satanism scare that women were being used as 'brood mares' to supply children for sacrifice to Satan.

This folklore, although fantastic to those raised in a more sceptical environment, was responsible for several Satanism scares even before the appearance of the moral panics several decades later. Randolph knew three women who were not only believed to be witches, but also believed themselves to be witches.¹⁵ One panic concerning an alleged 'Witches' Sabbath' supposedly occurred when a group of young people were photographed dancing nude at the side of a road outside a cemetery, apparently conforming to the pattern of a witches' Sabbath. Randolph himself considered that they were just drunken young people, and that the photograph of a similar gathering at Forsyth, Missouri, showed a group of Holy Roller religious fanatics outside their camp on the White River, accompanied by thrill-seeking young men from nearby villages.¹⁶ If nudity, either in a Christian ecstatic ritual context or simply done for less elevated pleasures was practiced in backwoods Missouri, then it might explain why the Venusians who contacted Buck Nelson were similarly naked when they landed on his farm and walked into his farmhouse carrying their coveralls.¹⁷

The supposedly satanic activities carried out in Missouri were

1. Sandell, R., review of Mark Prendergast, *Victims of Memory: Incest Accusations and Shattered Lives*, Hinesburg, Upper Access 1995, *Magonia* 53, August 1995, pp. 22-3.

2. Victor, J.S., *Satanic Panic: The Creation of Contemporary Legend*, Chicago, Open Court, 1994, pp. 273-90; Sandell, *ibid.*, p. 23.

3. Sandell, 'Victims', p. 23.

4. Harney, J., Review of Jean La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1988, in *Magonia* no. 64, August 1998, p. 17.

5. Harney, J., 'Devil', p. 17.

6. Rose, E., *A Razor for a Goat: Problems in the History of Witchcraft and Diabolism*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1989, p. 213.

7. Randolph, V. *Ozark Magic and Folklore* (New York, Dover 1964), p. 234.

8. Rose, E., 'Razor', p. 212.

9. Victor, J.F., *Satanic Panic: The Creation of Contemporary Legend*, Chicago, Open Court, 1994, p. 97.

10. Randolph, V., *Ozark Magic and Folklore*, New York, Dover 1964, p. 266.

11. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, p. 267.

12. See, for example, the description of a sabbat in the *Memoires of Jacques du Clercq*, in P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *The Occult in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan 2005), p. 126; also J.B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1972), pp. 144-5.

13. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, p. 281.

14. Russell, *Middle Ages*, p. 87.

15. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, p. 265.

16. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, pp. 267-8.

17. Bord, J. and C., *Life Beyond Planet Earth: Man's Contacts with Space People* (London, Grafton 1991), p. 135.

18. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, p. 266.

19. Concerned parent quoted in "Trouble's Brewing Over Witch in School Reader," *Buffalo News*, March 10, 1991, pp. A1, A14, cited in Victor, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

20. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, p. 264.

21. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, p. 264.

22. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, p. 300.

23. Randolph, *Ozark Magic*, p. 279, 'Long Stanton', in *Folklore, Myths and Legends*, London, *Readers Digest* 1973, p. 242.

24. See Davies, O., *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951*, Manchester, Manchester University Press 1995.

Porter, B., review of M. Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire*, London, I.B. Tauris 2004, *Lobster* 49, summer 2005, p. 35.

not necessarily so spectacular. Even something as relatively harmless as teaching schoolchildren to say their times tables backwards as a learning aid, in such an atmosphere of superstition and fear, could be construed as suspiciously antichristian because of its similarity to the witches' supposed practice of repeating the Lord's Prayer backwards. According to Randolph, one 'pious Baptist lady' in McDonald County, Missouri, denounced the local schoolteacher for teaching the girls in her care their multiplication tables in such a way, because of the danger that 'they'll be a-sayin' *somethin' else* backwards tomorrow.'¹⁸ Again, there's a remarkable similarity to modern conflicts and attempt to maintain supposed Christian education in schools. This has included not only the topical debate about evolution, but also the campaign by American Fundamentalist Christian organisations against the use of the *Impressions* curriculum in school. Although designed to introduce primary school children to literature, it has been attacked for encouraging violence, Satanism, occultism, cannibalism and cultural relativism, in tones strongly reminiscent of the earlier concern about teaching the Lord's Prayer backwards: 'We believe there is a desensitisation effect here ... Pretty soon, casting and chanting spells will seem so commonplace to kids that, when they're confronted with the advances of satanic groups on a darker level, it will seem more acceptable.'¹⁹

At the time Randolph was writing, it was felt that witches were extremely common, with one informant telling him that 'witches are thicker than seed ticks', but that 'it's all under cover nowadays.'²⁰ A major cause of the growth in witchcraft was the increasingly immoral behaviour of the young, who lived 'too fast and heedless'.²¹ Despite this pervading climate of fear, suspicion and violence – Randolph gives several instances where people were shot or otherwise assaulted as suspected witches – nevertheless the country seemed placid and untroubled to outsiders. 'Things happen in these hills which are never mentioned in the newspapers, never reported to the sheriff at the county seat. The casual tourist sees nothing to suggest the current of savage hatred that flows beneath the

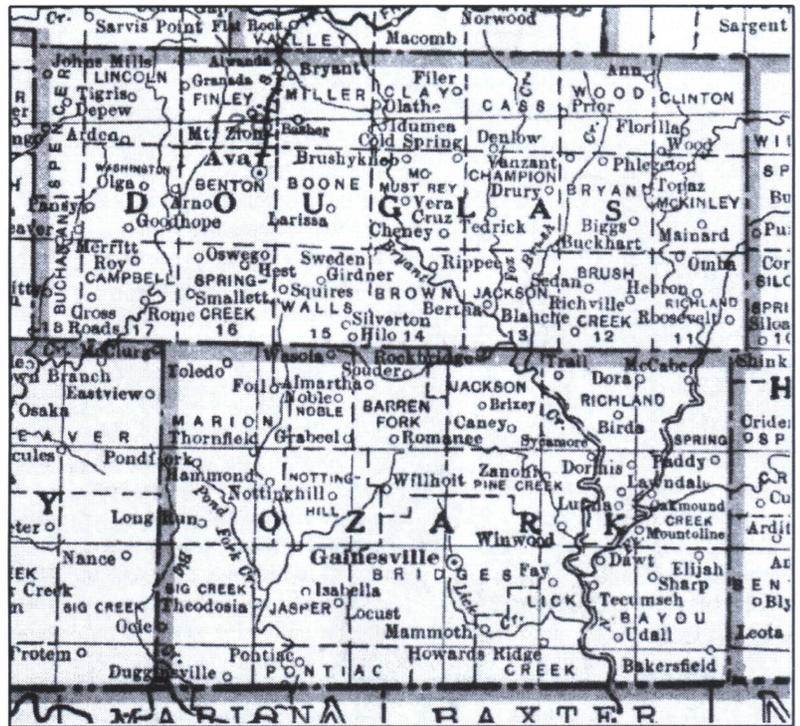
genial hospitality of our Ozark villages.'²²

Since the days of the pioneering folklorists of the nineteenth century, the folk traditions of backwoods Appalachia have been of interest to folklorists because of the way they have independently preserved British folklore, including traditions that may have become extinct in the mother country. Certainly much Ozark folklore is remarkably ancient. The incidents recorded by Randolph of hill people who believed they had been changed into horses and ridden by witches are of the same type as the seventeenth century British allegations against witches and other heterodox religious groups, like Quakers, such as those made by Margaret Pryor of Long Stanton in 1657.²³ It thus seems likely that the Ozark beliefs about witches represent the persistence of sixteenth and seventeenth century British and European traditional ideas about witchcraft, as adapted by conditions in the frontier settlements of the New World. This is significant, because, as historians of witchcraft have pointed out, popular belief in witchcraft did not die out with the triumph of scepticism amongst the ruling elite in the eighteenth century, but still persisted into the twentieth century in some parts of Britain, France and the Netherlands, for example.²⁴

It's something of a truism that the heartland of American Fundamentalist Christianity, with its heavy emphasis on deliverance ministry and spiritual warfare against demons and the human agents of Satan is the traditionally economically backward rural south, and its possible that the appearance and growth of Charismatic Evangelical Christian ministries nationwide during the 80s transmitted traditional southern lore about witches to a broader national audience as mediated by the Evangelists' own emphasis on the literal truth of Scripture. In this atmosphere, where archaic, premodern ideas exist alongside a parallel, and contradictory belief in technology and progress, it's fair to say that modern America is indeed a 'medieval society with modern

technology', a situation ready for the spread of VERY similar medieval irrational fears and superstitions.²⁵

It thus appears that the ultimate genesis of the Satanism scare in America was not the concern over new religious movements and cults in the late 1960s and 1970s, such as the Manson 'Family' and the activities of various devil worshippers, such as the Church of Satan, but traditional rural witch lore in the rural Deep



South. While the rest of America was economically buoyant and felt morally and culturally secure, this folklore was largely confined to that area. With the growth of new religious movements in the 60s and the economic and social dislocation of the 1980s, the social climate nationally became more favourable to the spread of irrational fears of secret satanic conspiracies, lent verisimilitude by the existence of explicitly satanic religious movements like the Church of Satan and Temple of Set, and non-Satanist religions like Wicca, which claimed descent from the medieval witches but did not involve the worship of Satan. Thus, the witch-hunts and panics Randolph reported in the 1940s became both the model and the precursor for the national and international panics four decades later, though this time led by people from backgrounds often very different from superstitious rural poor of the backwoods hill country.

Things happen in these hills which are never mentioned in the newspapers, never reported to the sheriff at the county seat. The casual tourist sees nothing to suggest the current of savage hatred that flows beneath the genial hospitality of our Ozark villages'



BOOKREVIEWS

All reviews by Peter Rogerson, except where stated

Bob Trubshaw, *Sacred Places. Prehistory and Popular Imagination, Heart of Albion Press, 2005*

This is a profoundly Fortean book. Not in the sense that it gives instances of frog falls or other anomalous events around prehistoric 'sacred sites' - though it does discuss some of the strange phenomena, such as Earthlights and otherworldly acoustic effects now being explored by academics and veteran Fortean like Paul Devereaux - but in its view that beliefs about the past are devices constructed to supply meaning and significance in the present. As if to follow Fort's statement that all theories and beliefs are merely popular fashions to be worn for a while, the book discusses the origins of European notions of landscape in renaissance art theory, the very recent construction of the British myth of the rural idyll in response to the fears and desires of the late 19th century middle class, contrasting this with non-western and premodern approaches to landscape. It considers the adoption of a scientific, philosophical materialist attitude by professional archaeologists, which rejected any attempt to reconstruct past mystical beliefs and mindscapes, as a product both of the attempt of the practitioners of the new discipline to differentiate themselves from their antiquarian predecessors and the influence of the logical positivist philosophy of the time. It then charts the gradual rejection of this view attitude under the influence of Postmodernism, and the particular influence of different anthropological approaches to space and place, rock art and the revival of interest in Shamanism in the 80s.

It also explores the rise of Earth Mysteries, ley lines and alternative archaeology from Alfred Watkins' notions of 'old straight track(s)', to the energy lines of the 60s, and their transformation into spirit paths

and archaeological alignments. It's in this part of the book that names familiar to the readers of this magazine crop up - John Michell, Janet and Colin Bord, Paul Screeton, Paul Devereaux, Nigel Pennick, Philip Heselton and Magonia's own, much-missed Roger Sandell, who was interested in the link between leys and UFOs. It then discusses Goddess spirituality and its interpretation of the landscape, and the New Antiquarianism of Julian Cope, based on 19th century Nature worship and outmoded archaeological views, and progresses to the development of a middle ground which saw professional archaeologists taking over many of the conceptual approaches of fringe archaeology, leaving much of the latter seeming, by comparison, very old fashioned and outmoded indeed.

The final section of the book examines contemporary notions of the landscape of Neolithic Britain, with Stonehenge, Avebury, Pembrokeshire and Dumfries and Galloway as particular examples. A vital part of the book's argument is the importance of visiting and experiencing these places to the process of gaining an understanding, though he rejects the shallow, superficial experience of the tourist in favour of the consciousness-changing approach of the pilgrim. It is only on the ground, away from maps and plans, that an appreciation of a site can be properly gained by finding what they conceal is as important as what they reveal.

The book concludes that archaeology is a game, with no referee and whose rules change according to the players, and argues for a 'multivocal' approach to place where beliefs are like tools, to be used and rejected for whatever insights they bring, while rejecting the cultural relativism that sees all views of the past as equal.

It's a timely book, now that Postmodernism and other approaches to the past stressing the subjective experience, such as

Feminist archaeology and historiography, the archaeology of cult and ritual and, in history, magic and witchcraft, and even fringe archaeology and ley lines are now taught in university courses, and doubtless many students will benefit from the insights in this book. There are problems with it, however. Firstly, despite his rejection of the notion that all ideologies of the past are equal, the book doesn't stress the point made by some Postmodern historians that even if an objective account of the past is impossible, it is still vital as the goal of historical writing and the techniques of postmodernism can serve a useful purpose in allowing historians to approach closer to this elusive goal by realising the artificiality of their narratives, though this is the underlying agenda of much of the book.

Related to this is his second point, that popular archaeological coverage, like Time Team, with its 'holes and goodies' approach situated on individual sites, divorced from the rest of the landscape, falsifies the complexities of constructing narratives about the past. There's an element of truth in this, but it ignores the amount of archaeology presented as countryside and nature programming, such as Aubrey Manning's fascinating exploration of human interaction with the landscape in his *Landscapes of Britain*, or Mark Norton's more landscape based approach in *Time Flyers*. Furthermore, there is the problem of communicating the complexities of building up a nuanced idea of the past allowing for different interpretations without leaving the impression among all too many people that 'history is bunk' and nothing historians write is true.

This is just a quibble however, in what is an excellent book that shows the depth of scholarship of fringe 'Earth Mysteries' publications and researchers, and one particularly useful for its plentiful illustrations and copious notes to encourage further reading.

David Sivier

Mark A Hall. *Thunderbirds: America's living legends of giant birds*. Paraview Press, 2004. £10.50.

A collection of reports suggestive of very large birds, sometimes reported as carrying away people, from both tradition and modern testimony. These stories are presented as evidence for a claws-and-feathers bird, but there is the usual problem of the lack of physical evidence. Hall discusses the so called big-bird photograph which a number of people claim to have seen and Ivan T Sanderson claimed to have once possessed. No-one has ever tracked this photograph down and Hall suggests a number of reasons for this, such as people actually seeing a drawing etc. Of course one answer might be that these are cases of false memory, and Sanderson's claims, backed up by none other than John Keel, suggest that both those gentleman were/are fantasists of the first order.

That of course does not mean that all such reports can so easily be explained, and the best verdict to date on Big Bird and its colleague the giant owl, is that the jury is still out.

Anthony Freeman (editor). *Sheldrake and His Critics: the sense of being glared at*. Imprint Academic, 2005. £7.50 (Journal of Consciousness Studies Volume 12 no 6)

This special issue of the *JCS* takes Rupert Sheldrake's claims that people can sense when they are being stared at by some unknown processes as an example of how science deals with 'heresy'. Freeman notes that it is the 'magical' nature of Sheldrake's claims which cause most scientific discomfort, and that it is precisely these magical views associated with Gnosticism that were among the first to be denounced as heretical. Heresy also implies betrayal by an insider.

Sheldrake here is pitted against his critics, and it is perhaps not surprising that those favourable to paranormal claims are inclined to be favourable to his evidence, and those sceptical of paranormal claims to be sceptical of the same evidence, as always you pay your money and take your choice. Even the parapsychologists however show little enthusiasm

for his attempts to revive pre-modern theories of vision.

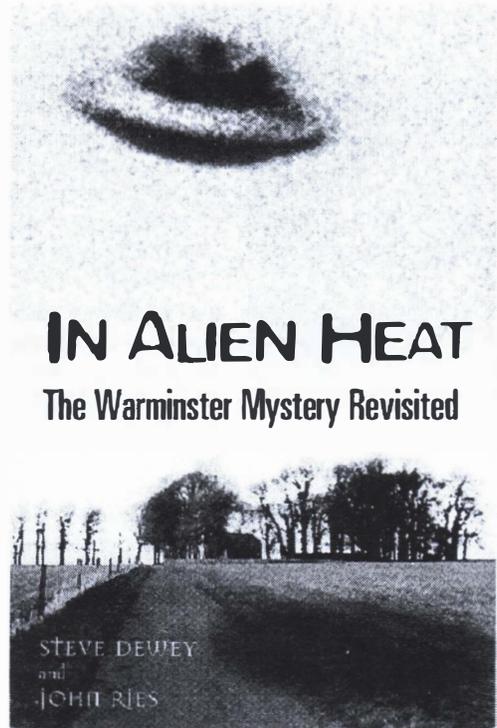
However if you think that Sheldrake's ideas of rather strange, they are nothing compared to those of something called 'biological naturalism' which appears to hold that the entire perceived world is inside the skull, and your real skull must lie beyond the bounds of the perceived horizon. Not surprisingly this has a few takers as Sheldrake's theories.

Steve Dewey and John Reis. *In Alien Heat; the Warminster mystery revisited*. Arcturus Books, 2005. £11.00/\$17.95

Whatever happened to Warminster? Thirty years ago it was the biggest UFO event on the planet, at least as far as British ufologists were concerned. Almost every active researcher and every ufological hanger-on must have visited the small Wiltshire town at some time in the 1960s or early 1970s - including your editor and his colleagues on MUF0B - which at that time stood for the Merseyside UFO Bulletin. But mention Warminster to British ufologists today and you're likely to be met with a puzzled look, or an embarrassed shrug. It's all a bit passé, isn't it? As the authors of this say that Warminster is "if not forgotten, at least an embarrassment to modern-day ufologists". Not like Rendlesham, then; there's a British UFO case worth talking about... isn't it?

Well, Rendlesham was all over in a couple of days, the total number of claimed witnesses is - what? - twenty, thirty at a stretch, and it's still provoking controversy, books and TV specials. Yet Warminster was going for about ten years, there are hundreds, maybe thousands of witnesses to the UFO events that clustered around the town but this book is the first that has been written about it for nearly thirty years, and as the authors point out, there have been precious few mentions of it anywhere else either.

I think one of the reasons for this is that Warminster had little or no military involvement, and almost no American interest. Dewey and Reis point out that it was touched on in only a couple of American books, and is not mentioned at all in Jerome Clark's monumental UFO Encyclopaedia apart from a one-line dismissal of



Dewey and Reis are two local people who were teenagers during the heyday of the phenomenon so they can bring a personal perspective to other accounts.

Arthur Shuttlewood ("the somewhat gullible books of local journalist Arthur Shuttlewood").

Of course Warminster is almost surrounded by the military establishments on Salisbury Plain, and in the town itself, so it might be argued that there is a military link, as with the Rendlesham and Lakenheath cases. However, in the case of Warminster, the ufologists were vociferous in declaring that the UFOs had nothing to do with military activities, and, of course, unlike Rendlesham, there was no US military involvement.

Dewey and Reis are two local people who were teenagers during the heyday of the phenomenon so they can bring a personal perspective to other accounts. They are also meticulous in their collation of data from local newspapers, UFO magazines and personal accounts.

The first two chapters give a very good account of the context in which the UFO phenomenon arose, looking at such related topics as the infamous Charlton Crater, the RAF Topcliffe and West Malling incidents, and, of course, Lakenheath.

A particularly interesting chapter, 'The British Context', examines the way in which UFOs came to Britain in part as an aspect of the Americanisation of popular culture, but were then tempered by the "myths of Deep

England", producing the hippie-based landscape mysticism of people like John Michell, and perhaps accounting for the number of Church of England clergymen who seemed to be involved in British ufology in the 1950s and early '60s. Dewey and Reis certainly see Arthur Shuttlewood as being part of this tradition. And perhaps it is this 'Englishness' of the Warminster mystery which has prevented it from being 'Big in Japan' or, more importantly for ufological events, big in the USA.

Of course, Shuttlewood, the self-styled hard-bitten journalist who brought Warminster to national prominence, is central to the Warminster story, and the authors give a well-documented account of his role in developing the mystery. The first manifestation of the Warminster phenomenon was 'The Thing' This was a purely auditory phenomenon, a noise, with accompanying vibrations or a kind of whirlwind, which rattled roof-tiles and apparently killed birds - although Dewey and Reis have found little evidence of the latter.

Shuttlewood's reports in the *Warminster Journal* helped to define the phenomenon, and his later position as contactee/guru/ringmaster sealed the Warminster legend for posterity. However he was probably not central in converting

the Warminster 'Thing' into the Warminster UFO. A number of people helped out, not least those two old ufological warhorses John Cleary Baker and Gordon Creighton.

The early days of the Warminster Thing are charted in the correspondence columns of the *Journal* as much as in the news reports. A dialogue opened between correspondents promoting a UFO explanation for the 'Thing' (curious that one unexplained phenomenon should be seen as an explanation for another, but that's something that seems to often happen in our fields!) and those expressing the mundane viewpoint – mainly that it was all down to the Army. The leading UFO proponent, David Holton, a homeopathic practitioner and herbalist (classical 'new age' occupations) is soon joined in the pages of the *Journal* by Gordon Creighton, at which point the UFO becomes central to the Warminster story and the purely auditory phenomenon virtually dies out.

The Chairman of the local council suggested holding a town meeting to discuss the Thing, and at about this time Cleary-Baker pops up in the *Journal* requesting information for an article he is writing for the BUFORA magazine.

I have a video of part of the famous public meeting, which shows Council chairman Emlyn Rees on the platform, surrounded by a galaxy of ufological stars including Charles Bowen and John Cleary-Baker (by now a veteran of the Warminster *Journal*'s correspondence columns!). Creighton is not on the platform, but addresses the assembly from the floor asking them how many are frightened by 'The Thing': the response is a roar of laughter, and when at the end of the meeting Rees asks how many in the audience have seen it, just two or three hands are raised in a crowded hall.

Dewy and Ries's account of the origins and build-up of the phenomenon is detailed and fascinating, and their description of the way in which Shuttlewood began to emerge as what the call the 'maven' is carefully observed.

On my visit to Warminster I was, like many others, impressed, indeed a little overwhelmed, by the atmosphere of the location, the dramatic quality of the skywatches on Cradle Hill, and

the impressive way in which Shuttlewood instinctively directed the observers to see what they had come to see. The authors, as teenagers, were participants in many of these events, and confirm the power which Shuttlewood's quiet yet authoritative voice conveyed. They agree with my own impression that on a dark, cold skywatch with a group of skywatchers forming almost a Communion on the lonely hilltop, Shuttlewood's commentary created an hypnotic effect which enhanced one's susceptibility to the strange and unaccustomed lights and sounds of the locale.

But it was not just Shuttlewood, vital though his contribution was to the developing Warminster myths.

Ken Rogers also played a vital part, and after Shuttlewood's virtual retirement from the scene kept the story going through his *Warminster UFO Newsletter*, and later Peter and Janet Paget's creation of Star House and the *Fountain Journal*, which integrated Warminster entirely into the New Age ethos.

Also vital in the development of Warminster were the hoaxers. At MUF0B/Magonia we are particularly interested in the SIUFOP crowd who conducted a number of experimental hoaxes in and around Warminster, some of which have been described in these pages, and these are described in this book also,

placing them in the context of

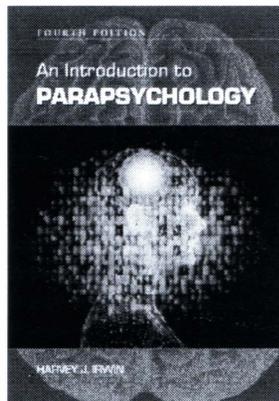
other hoaxes such as the famous Faulkner photograph, which created the iconic Warminster UFO image, and was reproduced on the cover of Shuttlewood's first book. The SIUFOP hoax was an experiment which exposed the shoddy investigative techniques and gullibility of most ufologists. I think that its exposure, initially in the pages of FSR in Charles Bowen's indignant 'Pathetic Cheats' editorial may have contributed to the general disillusionment with Warminster that set in though the 1970s.

Dewy and Ries are not concerned with 'explaining' the Warminster mystery. This is no catalogue of UFO sightings, no attempt to promote an ET or a 'skeptical' viewpoint on what

happened all those years ago. It is, in the very best sense, 'literary criticism' (*pace*, Jerome), taking a story - the history and development of the Warminster phenomenon, and examining how it grew and fitted together as a narrative, how that narrative was influenced by other stories and contexts, and how in turn it affected them. As I have suggested, Warminster is as much about what was said and written about it as what actually happened or was reported to have happened. In many ways Warminster was what anybody wanted it to be: to the MUF0B Mobsters (who are generously quoted in this volume, (my only criticism in the author's confusion between MUF0B and MUFORG – at the time we were writing were two quite different animals) is was an example of the credulity of the UFO believers, to BUFORA it was the One Big Case that they could throw all their resources at, to the Skywatchers it was a chance to meet The Other face to face.

This book is a considerable achievement, meticulously researched and documented, well-written, often humorous account of a fascinating piece of not just ufological history, but British social history. Perhaps it will help recover Warminster from the historical black-hole it seems to have fallen into. Buy it. Read it.

John Rimmer



Harvey J. Irwin *An introduction to parapsychology*, 4th edition **McFarland and Company, 2004 £25.95**

This latest edition of a standard text book on parapsychology defines the

subject as "the scientific study of experiences which, if they are what they seem to be, are in principle outside the range of human capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists" and Irwin takes care to argue that in his view that the study of parapsychology does not entail automatic endorsement of the view that these experiences are caused by actual paranormal processes.

However despite the definition the subject matter of the book is rather narrower, it looks at the anecdotal and laboratory evidence for "psi and survival", thus it treats Near Death Experiences but not alien abduction experiences, despite the similarities between the two and the possibility that they may have related causes. I also note that the range of potential explanations of some of these experiences and phenomena ranges within the parapsychological mainstream. Despite this there is a refreshingly generous treatment of spontaneous cases as compared with some similar works, and the book can be read quite easily by those without a PhD in statistics.

Irwin finally concludes that when all the factors of possible fraud, misperception, misremembering and exaggeration have been taken into account there is still a residue of both anecdotal and experimental evidence which points to something well worth investigating, whether or not this investigation would lead to major revisions within science.

For anyone wishing to see what parapsychology at its best looks like, then this book is as good as anything in the field.

Michael C Luckman, *Alien rock: the rock and roll extraterrestrial connection* **Pocket Books, 2005 \$13.95**

Michael Luckman is a ufologist who had taught rock music at a New York college and is here trying to combine these two interests and with an account of the of the ufological experiences and interests of a variety of rock stars. Of course all this demonstrates is that rock stars in as in to popular culture as anyone else and have a tendency to leap onto what ever fad can get them a bit of publicity. Many of the anecdotes come from the legions of hangers on and wannabe hangers on that famous people attract.

If this material is worthless as scientific data, as folklore it is fascinating for revealing the extent to which rock music has become a religion, with its icons taking the role of holy men and women who experience wondrous events, channel supernatural forces, or, especially as in the case of Elvis, can become messianic figures. These are classic examples of what sociologists call charisma.



HOLD THE BACK PAGE

BBC TV recently showed a programme in its *real Story* thread which was a follow-up on the children involved in one of the 'Satanic Abuse' scandals from the early 1990s. This one involved a group of children from Rochdale, in Lancashire who were separated from their families by a group of social workers with an "obsessional belief in satanic abuse". The children involved were now adults and able to tell their side of the harrowing story. In all there were about 80 such cases.

You might think that after several similar cases were exposed, and after Professor Joan La Fontaine's 1994 report dismissed the alleged evidence for ritual abuse, that the subject might have quietly dropped, with perhaps the 'obsessive' social workers being quietly 'retired' or moved to office jobs. But the Satan-hunters have never quite gone away, with accusations were made against nine adults in the Isle of Lewis, who were accused of sexually abusing children in satanic rituals, which were subsequently dropped 'for lack of evidence' leaving the people concerned still fighting to clear their names. There was also a recent case in Pembrokeshire, which we mentioned in *Magonia*, but have heard no more about.

Private Eye magazine (20 January 2006) has now discovered the extent to which these ideas are still current in social work departments: "There is a network of believers across the UK among professionals and assorted therapists who work with children and adult 'survivors' who reinforce each other's convictions that what they now call 'ritual abuse' exists, through literature, websites, conferences and training courses."

For some reason these seem to be particularly concentrated in Dundee, around the figure of Laurie Matthew who as a child was indecently assaulted by her uncle. She is a regular speaker at conferences and has written a book, *Where Angels Fear, Ritual Abuse in Scotland*, and via her organisation RANS (Ritual Abuse Network, Scotland) runs a website offering 'support for survivors' which amongst other things provides the well-known 'checklist' of signs which point to ritual abuse, claims that children are being specially bred

for sacrifice, and ghoulish details about 'the reality' of ritual abuse.

Another Dundee organisation, Tayside Ritual Abuse and Abuse Help, has run training days on ritual abuse for social workers working with young people.

What is particularly worrying is that, according to the *Eye*, Matthews is now in a position to influence official policy by her presence on a Scottish Parliament group which is producing a national strategy for dealing with abuse victims.

Another member of the group is Dr Sarah Nelson, who has written chapters in books including *Ritual Abuse: The Challenge for Feminists* and who has written an account of the Orkney case to be published in a forthcoming book, *Ritual Abuse in the 21st century: Clinical, Forensic and Social Implications*. Interestingly, this is not being published by one of the major academic publishing houses, but by the Southern Methodist Press.

As *Private Eye* asks: "How long before there is another satanic panic?"

Nick Redfern's recent book *Body Snatchers in the Desert* has opened the possibility that the Roswell incident was the result of a rather repellent US Government experiment using mentally handicapped humans in dangerous experiments to test the effects of high altitudes and radiation. Previously Peter Rogerson had made a similar suggestion, wondering what could be so secret that the American Government was happier to run with the ET story than the truth. Now we have come across an interview with Stanley Kubrick in a book titled *Are We Alone: the Stanley Kubrick Extraterrestrial Interviews*, published last year. At one point, while discussing government secrecy, he muses:

"Undoubtedly something did crash, but what? Was it a flying saucer? Was it some government aircraft or rocket? Was it a high altitude weather balloon from the secret Project Mogul? Or what?"

At this stage the interviewer and Kubrick start imagining:

"SK and I developed a theory that, we felt, explained what really went on. It started out as an exercise in 'what would the most off-the-wall paranoid explanation be? But over the next few days I began to take it more

seriously and, I suspect, SK did too though neither one of us wanted to admit it to the other"

"Ask yourself this: what could the government be up to that must remain secret for all time, even at the cost of possibly panicking the public by surreptitiously suggesting it was a flying saucer from another world? What had to remain secret even fifty years later when the Government Accounting Office in 1994 got the USAF to prepare an investigative report (announcing that it was indeed weather balloons)? We would not have thought twice about the 1994 report were it not for one small item that set off alarm bells: the USAF's mention of anthropomorphic 'test dummies'. The reader will recall that several witnesses claimed to have seen the bodies of dead aliens after the crash. Here, for the first time, the government acknowledges that there were bodies, yes, but they were test dummies..."

He continues: "Not far from Roswell is the White Sands Missile Range where rockets were being tested from 1945 onwards. Could it be that what was going up in them were test humans, not dummies?"

Then, in a chilling foretaste of Redfern's book, he continues: "Now, these were the infant days of rocketry and the chances of fatalities were high, so we can discount the military seeking volunteers from the services when 'expendable' humans were freely available. And who were these expendable humans? How about 'mental defectives' from state asylums? They would not be required to perform any function in the rocket, they were there merely to have their physiological states recorded by instruments. That might be the secret to be kept at all costs".

Now did Kubrick come up with this scenario out of his own imagination (as I hasten to add did Peter Rogerson) or, as a person who clearly had information channels open to all sorts of people in all sorts of places, did he catch wind of the sort of rumours that reached Nick Redfern? And if so, just who was disseminating those rumours, why, and on whose behalf? Are we getting into the stage of having cover-ups for the cover-up? Truly we are in a hall of mirrors!