



# MIND MAGIC

DID POSITIVE THINKING WIN TRUMP THE 2016 ELECTION?

NO PUSSYFOOTING ANOMALOUS BIG CATS ON THE PROWL  
LADY LYCANTHROPE THE WOLF WOMAN OF MOBILE, ALABAMA  
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# ForteanTimes

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## RETURN OF THE OLD ONES

HP LOVECRAFT AND THE HORRORS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

## HAUNTED ISLANDS

POPOBAWA AND THE GHOSTS OF ZANZIBAR

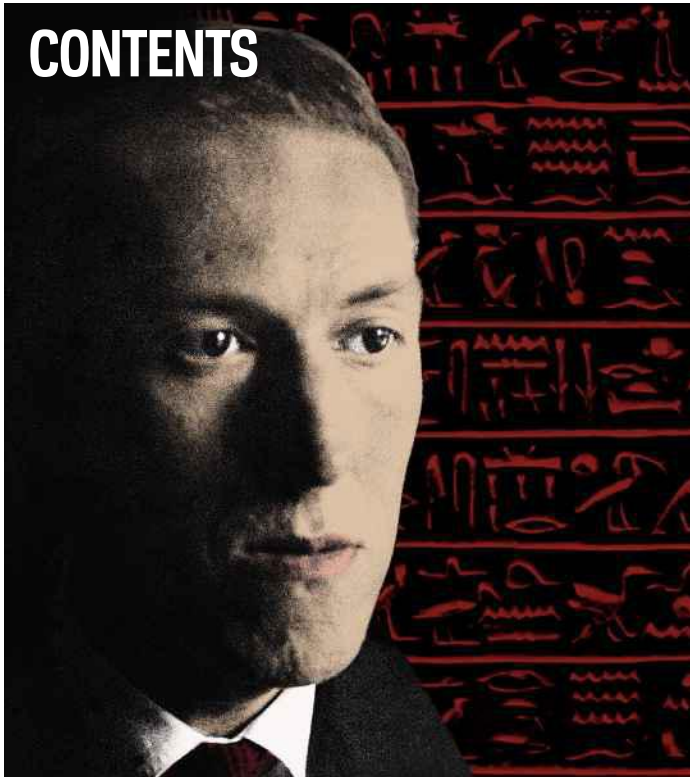
## FURRED REICH

SAVITRI DEVI, HITLER'S HINDU CAT LADY



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# CONTENTS



32 *HP Lovecraft and the Horror of History*



THE SAVITRI DEVI ARCHIVE

46 *Hitler's Hindu cat lady*



JOHN MOORE / GETTY IMAGES

40 *Donald Trump: Mind Magician*



MARK RALSTON / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

6 *Fit on the farm: The strange rise of Goat Yoga*



# FORTEAN TIMES 369

## Why fortean ?

Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE  
**78**

## STRANGE DAYS

A digest of the worldwide weird, including: Seafood rain, British big cat round-up, Montana monster and Vishnu late for work...

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 14 SCIENCE          | 18 GHOSTWATCH    |
| 16 ARCHÆOLOGY       | 23 ALIEN ZOO     |
| 17 CLASSICAL CORNER | 28 THE UFO FILES |

## FEATURES

### 32 COVER STORY HP LOVECRAFT AND THE HORROR OF HISTORY

The weird tales of HP Lovecraft reveal a man whose relationship to history was both complex and deeply contradictory. **JAMES HOLLOWAY** explores the ways in which Lovecraft's fictions articulated racist fears, cosmic horror and a warning to the archaeologically curious...

### 40 DONALD TRUMP: THE MIND MAGICIAN

**GARY LACHMAN** asks: did positive thinking put Donald Trump in the White House? Are the alt-right practising a form of chaos magic? And what did a cartoon frog have to do with it?

### 46 THE FURRED REICH

**SD TUCKER** explores the strange life of Savitri Devi, the noted feminazi and ultimate cat-lady who tried to make a religion out of Nazism and a god of the Führer, and finds that she has since become something of a cult political figure herself.

## REPORTS

### 30 BLASTS FROM THE PAST

The wolf woman of Mobile, Alabama **THEO PAIJMANS**

### 58 BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

The Condon Report **THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE**

## FORUM

55 The haunted factory **RAY NEWMAN**

56 The real mystery of dowsing **IAN H MACHELL**

## REGULARS

- |              |                |                   |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 02 EDITORIAL | 73 LETTERS     | 79 PHENOMENOMIX   |
| 61 REVIEWS   | 78 READER INFO | 80 STRANGE DEATHS |

**EDITOR**  
DAVID SUTTON  
(drsutton@forteantimes.com)

**FOUNDING EDITORS**  
BOB RICKARD (bobrickard@mail.com)  
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteantimes.com)

**ART DIRECTOR**  
ETIENNE GILFILLAN  
(etienne@forteantimes.com)

**BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR**  
VAL STEVENSON  
(val@forteantimes.com)

**RESIDENT CARTOONIST**  
HUNT EMERSON

**SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES**  
www.managemymags.co.uk  
customercare@subscribe.forteantimes.com

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USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 800-428-3003 (toll free)  
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Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)330 333 3492

**LICENSING & SYNDICATION**

FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT: Syndication Manager

RYAN CHAMBERS TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 4027  
ryan\_chambers@dennis.co.uk

Senior Licensing Manager  
CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 3840  
carlotta\_serantoni@dennis.co.uk

Licensing & Syndication Executive  
NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 3998  
nicole\_adams@dennis.co.uk

**YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET**  
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**PUBLISHER**  
DHARMESH MISTRY  
dharmesh\_mistry@  
dennis.co.uk

**CIRCULATION MANAGER**  
JAMES MANGAN  
james.mangan@  
seymour.co.uk

**EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER**  
GERALDINE GROBLER  
geraldine.grobler@  
seymour.co.uk

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**  
HELINA OZYURT  
helina\_ozyurt@  
dennis.co.uk

**DIRECTOR LIFESTYLE**  
ANDREA MASON  
020 3890 3814  
andrea\_mason@  
dennis.co.uk

**SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE**  
BRADLEY BEAVER  
020 3890 3722  
bradley\_beaver@  
dennis.co.uk

**SALES EXECUTIVE**  
IMOGEN WILLIAMS  
020 3890 3739  
imogen\_williams@  
dennis.co.uk

**GROUP ADVERTISING**

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BRETT REYNOLDS  
KERIN O'CONNOR  
JAMES TYE  
FELIX DENNIS

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# EDITORIAL



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

## FORCES OF CHAOS

Last year (FT359:2), we reported on the growing movement amongst witches in the US to oppose President Trump in the way they felt best qualified to do: through magic. Monthly meetings (at “every waning Moon”) were used to cast mass binding spells on The Donald, aimed at preventing him unleashing “harm and destruction” on the world at large. Nearly a year on, it’s hard to tell whether the spells have worked or not. Are things any better? Could they have been far worse? And how could we possibly tell if Armageddon had been narrowly averted by magical action?

Meanwhile, perhaps Trump has been conducting some sort of astral plane counter-attack of his own, aided by the forces of the alt-right movement. FT regular Gary Lachman’s new book (see p61 for a review) explores some fascinating modern intersections of the political and the esoteric. His article in this issue (p40) traces currents in American thinking that reveal an unsuspected continuity between the New Thought movement of the 19th century, the ‘positive thinking’ self-help manuals of the 1950s and beyond and the adoption of the techniques of Chaos Magic by the contemporary alt-right. If Lachman’s argument is convincing, then there’s a large dollop of irony to be enjoyed in the spectacle of Pepe the Frog displacing the similarly batrachian nightmares of HP Lovecraft, so beloved of CM practitioners, in bending the world to the will of the new meme magicians. One of the outcomes of a technique-based, results-focused practice such as Chaos Magic was, arguably, that the replacement of beliefs with ‘Belief’ allowed anyone to employ any mythic form for any desired end. Is Pepe merely a *reductio ad absurdum*? On the basis of claimed results and subsequent synchronicities, it would seem not. Admirers of William Burroughs, Genesis P Orridge, Grant Morrison and other countercultural icons perhaps shouldn’t be too surprised to see their heroes displaced by the likes of Richard Spencer and Aleksandr Dugin.

Speaking of HPL and his nightmarish visions, turn to p32 for our cover feature, in which James Holloway explores the master of weird fiction’s complex, contradictory and uncomfortable relation with issues of history and race. And our third warning

from history comes courtesy of SD Tucker (p46), who asks why the obscure Nazi apologist (and craziest of cat ladies) Savitri Devi seems to be enjoying a resurgence among the esoterically-inclined alt-right.

### FT INDEXING UPDATE

Now that around 98 per cent of FT’s back issue catalogue has been digitised, Bob Rickard has launched phase two of the indexing project and here provides a progress update: “The initial work in preparing batches of pages for the indexers was the main bottle-neck here as I was faced with monumental drudgery. For example,

the relatively simple process of assembling a work folder for each page – which involved creating and naming a set of sub-files and a special ‘results’ page – took, I estimated, about 25 key-presses. Since the pagination of FT has ranged from around 20 pages in the early issues to 80 pages per issue, I estimated that, at the FT360 mark, we probably had around 26,000 editorial pages. Just my simple folder-creation task, alone, threatened to

become an RSF-inducing 650k keystrokes. Fortunately, my tech-savvy son-in-law Alex was able to write several simple programs to automate the worst of this tedium, allowing me to create sufficient batches so that I could send them out to our small ‘crowd’ of 10 volunteers sooner than I expected. The actual task of extracting indexable words from a page of digitised text is relatively straightforward, as I also supply a PDF image of the page for quality checking, and a page of 11 headings under which to file the extracted words, phrases, dates and references. Currently 10 volunteers have bravely stepped up to do the plodding. Obviously, a few more would be most welcome. You would only need a standard word-processor, and to be familiar with using a PDF file and simple cut-and-paste methods. It’s work you can do in spare time and all communication is via the Internet.”

If you’d like to help, contact Bob at bobrickard@mail.com.



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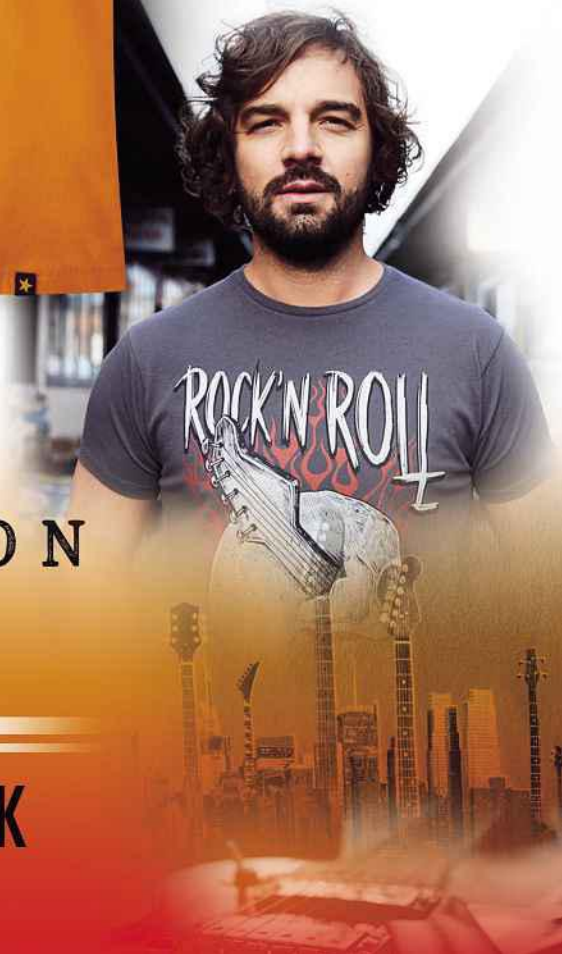
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A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

# STRANGE DAYS

## SEAFOOD SPECIAL DELIVERY

Chinese city flooded with sea creatures, and Storm Emma's fishy wake



ABOVE: Photos of the Qingdao storm shared on social media showed a variety of creatures stuck to car windscreens; the octopus seen below was a fake.

A severe storm that swept through the coastal city of Qingdao in China's Shandong Province on 13 June 2018 toppled trees and large signposts, flooded the streets and brought traffic to a standstill. More unusually, it caused a rain of sea creatures, if we are to credit these arresting images, posted on China's microblogging platform Weibo, that look like a scene from a dark sci-fi movie – shrimp, molluscs and starfish, some stuck to windscreens, as well as a suspicious-looking falling octopus. According to the Qingdao Meteorological Administration, violent weather was recorded in the late afternoon of 13 June, including hail and hurricane-force winds blowing at a shocking 56km (34.8 miles) a second – registering a 12 on the Beaufort scale. The wind speeds set a new all-time record

### *The storm is believed to have caused waterspouts*



for June. The storm is believed to have caused waterspouts in the Yellow Sea, the traditional explanation for lifting creatures out of water. (As far as we know, such phenomenal levitations

have never actually been witnessed.) Local forecasters refused to confirm whether the photos were real; however, the octopus was soon revealed to be photoshopped, and a number of humorous fake images were circulated online in the wake of the storm appearing to show robots and monsters posing next to the damage.

• After Storm Emma back in March, the UK saw its own sea life displaced onshore as masses of creatures, including starfish, crab, mussels and lobsters, were washed up on the coast following a drop in temperature caused by the storm. Tens of thousands of creatures were piled up in places along the North Sea coast, including Holderness coast in Yorkshire. Similar mass mortality was reported in Kent and Norfolk. *dailymail.co.uk*,

*oddiycentral.com*, 15 June; *Unilad.co.uk*, 16 June 2018.

• Some recent fish falls: southern Ethiopia, May 2000; Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, Aug 2000; Netherhampton, Wiltshire, May 2001; Woollahra, nr Sydney, Sept 2003; Ocean Springs, Mississippi, July 2003; Northern Territory Australia, Feb 2010; Sri Lanka, May 2014; Oroville, northern California, May 2018 [FT137:8, 139:6, 152:21, 180:8, 188:8, 262:24, 315:5.] Repeated falls of blind fish in Honduras [FT357:10]. Tadpoles and fish fell all over Japan in June 2009 [FT252:4-5]. Earthworms fell in Jennings, Louisiana, in July 2007 [FT299:17] and across southern Norway in April 2014 [FT328:22]. Rissoid snails fell on Flitsham, Norfolk, in Aug 2014 [FT319:9]. Arctic lampreys fell on Fairbanks, Alaska, in June 2015 [FT330:23].



## MOGS OF MYSTERY

Anomalous Big Cats prowls the UK's streets

PAGE 10



## MARIAN MIRACLES

Healing at Lourdes and a weeping statue

PAGE 22



## PARROT FASHION

Clever birds shop online and testify in court

PAGE 24

# THE CONSPIRASPHERE

Caught up in the excitement, **NOEL ROONEY** unleashes his inner John Motson and offers readers his conspiracy commentary on the the 21st FIFA World Cup

## WORLD CUP CONSPIRACIES

I have to start this column with a confession; I have, for many years, harboured the pipe dream of being a football commentator. I'm that irritating viewer who utters the appropriate cliché a nano-second before the person who's actually being paid for the phrase gets to it and, yes, that is my only qualification for the job. So, when this column coincides with the sporting farrago that is the FIFA World Cup, I cannot but explore the footling footie conspiracies that have accompanied the dribbles, dives and desperate drivels that calibrate civilisation into leap-year segments. Oh, and Paul Sieveking's dad invented football commentary as we know it (see **FT317:49**), so it's clearly a fortean subject.

The 1958 World Cup saw the first appearance of the great Pelé, helping Brazil to win the tournament in Sweden: or not. A documentary film, *Konspiration 58*, made and released rather belatedly in 2002 (by which time Pelé was reduced to doing ads for erectile dysfunction treatment) claims that the 1958 tournament never happened; the whole thing was filmed in a Los Angeles film studio, part of a CIA experiment in sporting psy-ops. The film turned out to be an elaborate didactic hoax of sorts, designed to illuminate the dubious process of postmodernist revisionism on which most of the Internet is now based. But it's a good shot early doors, in the parlance.

The 1970 tournament in Mexico featured England as defending world champions (not a phrase that slips easily off the sporting tongue). The team's iconic captain, Bobby Moore, was accused, just before it all kicked off, of stealing a bracelet studded with emeralds from a Colombian jeweller; it later transpired that the accusation may have been part of a sting operation by the Colombian secret service to undermine the England players, though on whose behalf it is not clear. A bit of an own goal, given

Colombia's failure to actually qualify for the tournament.

Ronaldo, another Brazilian great, who would go on to score the winning goals in the 2002 event, was less effective in the 1998 final, won by hosts France. He had apparently suffered some kind of fit on the morning of the final, and was declared too ill to play. But come the kick-off, a pale, wobbly Ronaldo duly played for Brazil, who duly lost. Conspiracies of the corporate kind circulated within minutes of the final whistle: Nike, then sponsors of the Brazil team, were rumoured to have forced the player to appear, despite his illness; or alternatively, they put undue pressure on the Brazilian management to make him play, all for the televisual treat of a few more ticks on a few more famous boots. Foul, obviously.

The current tournament is hosted by Russia so, naturally, there are conspiracies afoot. In this case, the remarkable early success of the Russian team (the lowest ranked side in the whole tournament) is causing a few whispers of 'fix!', but their unforeseen form pales into insignificance before the Plague of Flies that has excited some commentators (no, not that kind of commentator) into speculating that Putin is engineering the biblical blip to put more fancied sides off their stride. Given that insects the size of Mothman were regularly caught on camera in Brazil in 2014, this theory may not have legs.

But the world champion of football conspiracies has to be the claim, made by Syrian football pundits (yes, that is apparently a thing) that the El Clasico match between Barcelona and Real Madrid in 2012 featured sequences of passes that were in fact coded messages to the rebels in that war-torn land, mapping out the best routes to smuggle arms into the country. Some TV commentators provided maps, overlaid with the passing grids, to prove the point. Talk about a game of two halves.

## EXTRA EXTRA!



FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## BLAME UNICORNS FOR RISE IN COST OF YOUR BREAKFAST

Toronto Star, 4 May 2017.

## Bitten burglar sues dog, and loses

Toronto Star, 24 May 2017.

## POLICE CALLED TO FIGHT BETWEEN ALADDIN AND BATMAN

Hull Daily Mail, 3 Nov 2017.

## Police seeking Jesus after assault on Jedi

D.Telegraph, 4 Nov 2017.

## TERRIERS TO FREE PITBULL

D.Express, 10 Feb 2018.

## Fish in net fury

D.Star, 26 Feb 2018.

# GOAT YOGA

Welcome to "Goat Yoga," the latest fitness craze sweeping the United States, where people are lining up for the popular classes. The new workouts taking place on farms across the country involve pygmy or Nigerian dwarf goats roaming about or joining in as yogis practise their exercise routines. Lainey Morse of Corvallis, Oregon, claims to be the founder of goat yoga. In 2016, she was diagnosed with autoimmune disease whilst going through a divorce and found that one of the only things that lifted her spirits were her beloved goats. When a yoga instructor friend suggested teaching a yoga class as the goats wandered around, goat yoga was born.

Goat yoga has now spread to the UK, with classes being offered in Devon and Suffolk. Devotees report lowered stress levels, and not just from laughing, it would seem. Animal behaviourist Dr Roger Mugford said that the goats "can lower the heart rate because they release the 'cuddle chemical' oxytocin, which produces the same type of feelings as when a mother looks at her baby or a lover looks at their partner." *D. Mail*, 25 May, 2017; *Evening Standard*, 21 June 2018. PHOTOS: MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES







## SIDELINES...

### PERSIAN FISH FALL

An Iranian video shows many small fish, some alive, distributed along a section of paved highway in the city of Golpayegan following rain on 24 April. Could they have been lifted by tornado from a reservoir 11 miles (16km) away – or (more likely) had they fallen from a vehicle? *mysteriousuniverse.org*, 2 May 2018.

### URANUS STINKS

According to research at Oxford University published in *Nature Astronomy*, the planet Uranus – butt of juvenile jokes – actually *does* smell like flatulence. Its upper atmosphere is made up of hydrogen sulphide, which smells like rotten eggs. *New York Post*, 25 April 2018.

### HE IS THE WALRUS

A walrus was spotted in the UK for the first time in five years – in Orkney. It was first seen on 8 March off the shores of North Ronaldsay. It came ashore on Sanday the following day – thought to be the first ever to land there. A sighting so far south of the North Pole and the Arctic Ocean is a rare occurrence. In 2013, a male became the first walrus to land on North Ronaldsay for 25 years. *D.Mirror*, 10 Mar 2018.

### ENTERTAINING GHOSTS

A Thai foundation screened three open-air movies at a graveyard in Chon Buri's Phan Thong district on the night of 17 April for its 100 dead residents, along with a few staff and neighbours. It was the third time this year that movies had been screened at the graveyard. Boonsom Silapachai said he believed it would bring good luck for staff, and the ghosts would enjoy the movies. *The Nation (Thailand)*, 18 April 2018.



MARTIN ROSS

## INDIAN PIONEERS

Ancient Sanskrit Internet and women's vision quest to Wales



ARWYN ROBERTS / DAILY POST WALES

ABOVE LEFT: Jennie and Marie at the grave of Dr Fraser in Llanbeblig churchyard.

### HONORING DOCTOR FRASER

A vision led an Indian woman and her daughter to travel over 45,000 miles to a grave in North Wales. It was the first time that Tlhangmingthangi Hnamte – Christian name Jennie – and her daughter Lalthangliani Hnamte – also known as Marie – had left India. When Jennie, 69, was confined to bed by a sudden illness 10 years ago, she was told in a vision to search for the grave of Dr Peter Fraser – a Christian doctor who spent time in India as a missionary in the early 20th century. “My mother first had the vision where she heard a voice telling her to visit the grave back in 2009,” said Marie, 33. “She didn’t know who Dr Peter Fraser was when she heard the voice speaking to her, but after speaking to her father, we found out that her grandfather was a tribal elder in Mizoram and had spent a lot of time with Dr Fraser and was a devout admirer of his work.” Dr Fraser died in 1919 at the age of 59. His many achievements included abolishing the practice of selling members of the Mizo tribe as slaves to the British in Mizoram.

After a lengthy flight and a two-hour taxi ride from Manchester airport, the two women arrived in Caernarfon on 2 March 2018. “We hadn’t

planned on what to do once we were here, but my mother had another vision telling her she had to go to a local church and speak to a woman in red and that everything would be fine.” On Sunday, 4 March, Jennie and Marie visited the town’s Llanbeblig Church where the first person they met was Sylvia James – who was wearing red. Ms James and other members of the congregation and local community then spent days looking for the grave by surfing the Internet and historical records, and located it in the graveyard of Llanbeblig Church. They spent hours clearing it of brambles and weeds and the Indian women cleaned and repainted the gravestone. On 7 March the community held a special service at the site. The grave was draped with garlands while the Rev Roger Donaldson said prayers and sprinkled holy water. “This means so much to us as a family,” said Marie. “We can’t thank all the volunteers enough for what they’ve done to help us. We’re just speechless.” *Daily Post*, 8 Mar 2018.

### A HELMET ON MARS

Senior Indian politicians from the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) claim that the Internet was in use during

the times of the *Mahabharata*, the legendary Sanskrit war epic. “Internet and satellite communication had existed in the days of *Mahabharata*,” said Biplab Kumar Deb, chief minister of India’s northeastern Tripura state, speaking at a regional workshop on computerisation. Defending his claim, he asked: “How else could Sajaya [the charioteer of King Dhritarashtra] give a detailed account and description to the blind king about the battle of Kurukshetra? It means Internet was there; the satellites and that technology was there in this country at that time... My country had the technology years ago, which no country had. I am proud of that, and I think every Indian should feel proud. I want to repeat that we should accept the truth, and should not get confused.” Tathgata Roy, the BJP-appointed state governor of Tripura, endorsed Mr Deb’s claim, saying his views were accurate and “topical”.

In January, Satyapal Singh, federal minister for higher education, was criticised for demanding that Darwin’s theory of evolution be removed from school curricula because no one “ever saw an ape turning into a human being”. Mr Singh, who holds a postgraduate degree in chemistry, said he was speaking as a “man of science”.

In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told an audience of doctors and scientists in Mumbai that plastic surgery, genetic science and stem-cell studies existed thousands of years ago in ancient India. He said that was how the Hindu god Ganesha’s elephant head was attached to a human body, and how the warrior god Kartikeya was born outside his mother’s womb. Since the BJP came to power four years ago, other party supporters and members have claimed that cars, aircraft and space vehicles capable of interplanetary travel existed millennia ago. Warring kings even left behind a helmet on Mars, which was discovered by Nasa scientists. *Irish Times*, 20 April 2018.



# JOINED AT THE HIP

Recognition for one-time stars and death of Tanzanian twins



WELLCOME LIBRARY

## PLAQUE FOR THE HILTONS

Conjoined twin sisters could be the first in Britain to get a blue plaque under a plan to celebrate disability. A fundraising campaign has been launched in Brighton to commemorate Violet and Daisy Hilton, joined at the hips and buttocks, who achieved worldwide fame as musicians and dancers in the Twenties and Thirties. Alf le Flohic, a local historian, is trying to raise £1,500 to fund the plaque outside 18 Riley Road, where they were born to 21-year-old unmarried barmaid Kate Skinner on 5 February 1908.

The sisters were adopted by a Brighton pub landlady (Kate's employer) and put on show for money just weeks after their birth. They were fused at the pelvis, but shared no major organs. Their fame peaked in the US in 1927 when they were earning \$4,000 (£3,000) a week,

about three times the average American salary at the time. As adults they toured the world on the vaudeville and burlesque circuits, singing and dancing, and appeared in the films *Freaks*



**LEFT:** Conjoined twins Violet and Daisy Hilton photographed in 1927. **BELOW:** Maria and Consolata Mwakikuti, who died in June this year at the age of 21.

(1932) and *Chained for Life* (1952). They died of Hong Kong flu in 1969. *D.Telegraph, 31 May 2018.*

## TANZANIAN TWINS

Tanzanian conjoined twins Maria and Consolata Mwakikuti died on 2 June, at the age 21, after suffering respiratory complications. The women, who were joined from the navel downwards and shared organs like the liver and lungs, had two hearts and separate heads and arms. They were admitted to hospital in December 2017 to treat their heart disease. Their parents died while they were still infants, and they were raised by the Catholic charity Maria Consolata, which had adopted and named them. Last year, their high school graduation triggered a wave of congratulatory messages nationwide.

In an interview with the BBC they said that after they had completed their university education, they wanted to become teachers. They were against the idea of being surgically separated, and had hoped to get married to one husband one day. *BBC News, 3 June 2018.*

# SIDELINES...

## ACQUIRED TASTE

About 600 people were evacuated from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology library on 28 April after students and staff mistook the smell coming from the air-con system for a gas leak. Specialist crews searched for the leak, but only found a rotting Durian fruit in a cupboard. Durian smells like "turpentine and onions, garnished with a gym sock" and is commonly banned from hotel rooms and public transport across Southeast Asia. *[AP] Fox News, 30 April 2018.*

## 'BLONDES MUST DIE'

Brain tumour survivor Michael Williams, 47, of Skewen, near Neath, South Wales, became obsessed with killing blonde women after successful surgery. He was caught with a knife and baseball bat, threatening to run over a woman with a van. Psychiatrists could not say whether the operation five years ago had changed him. He was jailed for four years. *D.Telegraph, Sun, 27 Feb 2018.*

## FOLLOW YOUR NOSE

A foul stench coming from a two-storey home in Madagascar led to the discovery of 10,000 endangered radiated tortoises. They covered the floors of every room in the house, and the smell of urine and faeces was "overpowering". *The Week, 25 April 2018.*

## BARKING PARROT

A resident in the southern German town of Loerrach called the police on 14 May to report sustained loud shouting from the apartment next door. Investigating officers found a 22-year-old man arguing with his girlfriend's parrot, which couldn't talk but barked like a dog. Since no one was hurt and no offence committed, the officers left. *[AP] 15 May; (Sydney) D.Telegraph, 19 May 2018.*

## NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

A Chinese woman developed life-threatening blood clots on her brain after staring at her phone for 20 hours straight. The 47-year-old migrant underwent three hours of surgery. She had been glued to her device on a long-distance train journey from Henan province to Guangzhou. When she arrived, she could barely speak and was having difficulty moving the limbs on one side of her body. *D.Telegraph, 16 Mar 2018.*



## SIDELINES...

### CANNY COWS

A cow set for an abattoir escaped by ramming a fence and swimming to an island on Lake Nyskie in southern Poland. Three weeks later, its owner, Mr Łukasz, a farmer from Buków, gave up on capturing the animal after attempts at retrieval led it to repeatedly swim off. Meanwhile, a Dutch cow called Hermien took refuge in a forest near Lettele for six weeks. Locals used crowd funding for her care at a cow sanctuary. *BBC News, 19 Feb 2018.*

### MERCILESS

Farmer Graham Thomas, 55, has been jailed for hanging his sheepdog Prince from a tree after it failed to round up his flock properly in August 2017. He attached a 20ft (6m) rope around the neck of the Welsh border collie at his farm in Rhymney, South Wales. He cut the animal down before burning its body. *D.Telegraph, Metro, 23 Mar 2018.*

### SONNY DELIGHT

A baby has become the sixth living generation in his family. Sonny Newsome was born to Paige Steel, 21, who lives near her mum Donna, 37, in Barnsley, South Yorkshire. Donna's mum is Katrina Callam, 55, and Katrina's mum is Marion Tennant, 76. Marion's mum, Evelyn Flavell, held her great great grandson on her 102nd birthday. A US family has seven living generations, probably a world record. *Sun, 29 Feb 2018.*

### BEE-FRIENDED

Ever since she rescued a dying, wingless bumblebee in her garden last Spring, Fiona Presly, an Inverness library assistant, has developed a special bond with her bee friend, who is happy to sit, eat and sleep on her hand. "I think I have proved here that you can have a relationship with an insect," she says. *Daily Record, 19 Mar 2017.*

### ROCK GONE

In an exhibition in Toronto, a woman pocketed a stone on which Yoko Ono had written: "Love yourself". The thief was being hunted by the Canadian police. The nondescript pebble was said to be "worth £12,400". *D.Telegraph, 10 April 2018.*

## BIG CAT BULLETIN

Anomalous felines continue to prowl Britain's streets and fields



ABOVE: The black ABC filmed in the Quantock Hills of Somerset in April 2017.

*Sightings of anomalous big cats (ABCs), large Alsatian-sized and typically melanistic (black), continue to be made across the British Isles, though the decline in local newspaper coverage has meant a falling-off in reports reaching Fortean Towers. Here are the highlights of 2017/18, as reflected in clippings received.*

- Just after midnight on 4 January 2017, Alan Tomlinson believes he saw a 'panther' near to Junction 1 of the M180 in South Yorkshire, close to Doncaster services in Thorne. Its tail was 2-3ft (60-90cm) long. *Doncaster Free Press, 12 Jan 2017.*

- On 4 March, a mutilated ewe was found less than 100 yards from a croft in Swordly in the Scottish Highlands, thought to be the work of an ABC roaming the most remote parts of northern Scotland, killing sheep and leaving no trace but bones and wool. Jim Johnston, 66, of Bettyhill said that over the past five years about 40 sheep had been found dead, apparently killed in one go, all neatly stripped of their skin before being eaten, across an area of about 200 square miles (518 km<sup>2</sup>) between the parishes of Farr and Tongue. He said the predator "manages to peel the skin off, probably because it doesn't like

the wool, and it skins the sheep in a most expert way. It has a very powerful bite. It crunches right through the bones and kills the animal very easily." *Independent, 7 Mar 2017.*

- On 15 April, a 32-year-old woman and her teenage daughter filmed a sleek black ABC prowling through long grass near a picnic area in Crowcombe Park Gate in the Quantock Hills, Somerset. Some members of Beastwatch UK identified it as a panther or jaguar, while others suggested it could be two dogs together, a bear, or a horse (!). One said: "I'm 99.9 per cent sure that it's a feline. Everything about it is like a melanistic jaguar." Danny Bamping of the British Big Cats Society, whom the tabloids routinely consult on

the subject these days, thought it more canine than feline. Police logged 13 ABC sightings in Somerset in 2016. *D.Mail, Sun, D.Mirror, 17 April; Western Gazette, 20 April 2017.*

- At 4.30am on 18 June, taxi driver Jahid Choudhury photographed a large beige cat beside Napsbury Lane, St Albans, Hertfordshire. He was adamant it wasn't a domestic cat. The previous April, a half-eaten deer had been found in nearby Wheathampstead. In late August, a brown-beige "cougar", 5ft (1.5m) long excluding the tail, was seen near Fleetville, Hertfordshire. "The tail itself was really long and it wasn't bushy like a fox, and it had a funny stump at the end of its tail," said the (unnamed) witness. This was said to be at least the fifth ABC report near St Albans during 2017. In 2016, Hertfordshire Police had logged 26 ABC reports in the previous five years. *Hertfordshire Advertiser, 22 June, 7 Sept; D.Star, 23 June; Sunday Sun, 10 Sept 2017.*

- On 18 September, Pauline Kerman, walking along the Cinder Path near Whitby, North Yorkshire, saw a large cat looking "very much like a puma" 200 yards away. *Whitby Gazette, 29 Sept, 8 Oct 2017.*

- A woman driving home at night in Gloucestershire last December was chased along a road near the Woolpack Inn in Slad by a "black panther".



ABOVE: The large beige cat filmed by Jahid Choudhury in St Albans.



The unnamed 31-year-old from Stroud said: "I was driving about 40 miles an hour [64km/h] and it was bounding along the verge on the right-hand side of the road. After two or three minutes it shot up into the fields. It was the size of a small Labrador." Big cat tracker Frank Tunbridge said "quite a number" of ABC sightings in Gloucestershire in 2017 "have occurred in daylight hours, and often close to human habitation" – although there were also many nocturnal encounters, such as one by seven people in Woodchester Park at 10.45pm one night in July, "roughly Labrador size, jet black, with yellow eyes". Tunbridge claimed that there were "between 20 and 25 sightings" of ABCs reported every week throughout the UK. *Gloucestershire Live*, 2 Aug; *Western Daily Press*, 27 Dec 2017; *Sunday Sun*, *D.Star Sunday*, 14 Jan 2018.

- On the morning of Sunday, 14 January 2018, taxi driver Michelle Woodall, 49, saw an 8ft (2.4m) "black panther" walking into woods in Sible Hedingham, near Braintree in Essex. "I was just doing my hair when I looked out of the window and saw a panther-like cat," she told *essexlive.news* (16 Jan 2018). "It was walking along like it was in no rush, it certainly wasn't frightened of anything. It was the walk that was so distinctive because obviously a dog, a cat, a fox move completely differently." She watched it take up to six strides before it disappeared into woodland by the River Colne.

She took her five-year-old Parson Russell Terrier to the spot where the animal had vanished. "As soon as we hit that path his nose went down, his tail went up and he dragged me along," she said. "We went just over a mile and the whole way down were pawprints." There were about two dozen with a diameter of about 6in (10cm). She came across them in every 10 strides on the footpath to Sudbury. "I took a photo of a Labrador's pawprint and it was a third of the size of this cat – and it was a big Labrador." Locals said they had seen the big cat in the village as well. "This panther

was jet black," she said. "It was daylight and I know what I saw as does everybody else."

Zoe Newley, who lives a mile from Ms Woodall, said her husband had seen "the black panther" in the village last October; and two women from Sible Hedingham claimed they encountered an ABC on 8 August 2015; Jenny Ward said her 16-year-old son Jason spotted a black cat "bigger than a golden retriever" which stared at the stunned pair before crouching and disappearing into woodland.

- At 6pm on 20 February, a 12-year-old girl called Emily encountered a big cat in Chilsham Lane, Herstmonceux, East Sussex, while taking her dog Ziggy for a walk. "It looked like a big black girl lion," she said. "It looked at me then I got Ziggy and just ran." *Sussex Express*, 23 Feb 2018.

- In April, Bex Finch and her two children, sitting parked in a lay-by at Torrs in Devon, saw a large dark cat streaking across a field and then "just sitting in the bushes". She told the *North Devon Gazette* (18 April 2018): "It had a long black tail, the head was quite low, it was a feline shape... It was much longer than a dog, about the size of a Labrador or German shepherd in height but much longer... It was black or very, very dark brown... long and sleek, very panther-like." They watched it for about five to seven minutes. A few days earlier, farmer Mike Botton-Gordon had found a ewe savaged at Churchstow in Devon. A neighbour said he had seen a large cat in a field two miles away in March. *Sun*, 13 April 2018.

- On 14 May, Dawn Paige checked her security cameras after noticing that wheelie bins at her home in Oldbury, West Midlands, had been moved in the early hours. She found footage around 3am of what appeared to be a big cat, about a metre tall. Dudley Zoo, four miles (6.4km) away, said it was not one of their nine big cats. "I had the shock of my life when I saw that thing come into view", said Ms Paige, 53, a teaching assistant. "At first, I thought it must be a big dog, but it moves just like a cat. I took



ABOVE: The big cat (or big dog) caught on CCTV in Oldbury, West Midlands.

the footage into work and asked some of the teachers what they thought, and they agree with me it looks like a leopard, or a she-lion. I've got a little dog and I'm absolutely terrified for her safety."

The *Sun* said the zoo "agreed the creature... looked like a big cat", but Richard Brown, a curator at the zoo and a former big cat keeper, was quoted in the *Daily Mail* the next day saying that it was a "boxer or mastiff-type dog". He added: "It appears to have a muzzle on it, whereas cats have flatter faces. It's also flat-footed in the way it walks, and is flatter along the back than I would expect a big cat to appear." *Sun*, *Metro*, 17 May; *D.Mail*, 18 May 2018.

**Other ABC sightings for 2017:** 25 Jan: St Albans, Herts, "large, sandy-coloured". 17 Mar: Harpenden, Herts, "jet black". Mid-Mar: between Egginton and Stratton, Derbyshire. 25 April: Bicester, Oxfordshire, "black panther". (The 'Beast of Burford' seen in Oxfordshire since 1990.) May: "black panther" seen eating fox in woods near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire. 27 July: St Albans, Herts, "brown or sandy coloured". 31 July: Longstanton, Cambs. Aug: Herne Bay, Kent. Aug: Obthorpe, Lincs. 2 Sept: Hortonwood, Shropshire. (*Hertfordshire Advertiser*, 2 Feb, 23 Mar, 3 Aug; *D.Mirror*, 3 Feb, 2+4 Aug; *Derby Telegraph*, 22 Mar; *Western Daily Press*, *D.Mirror*; 1 May; *D.Star*, 1 June; *Sun*, 25 Aug; *Shropshire Star*, 5 Sept 2017.)

For our last ABC reports, see **FT344:20-25, 348:20.**

## SIDELINES...

### GOAT DECAPITATED

Herefordshire farmer Don Coates was horrified to find his pet pygmy goat decapitated. Nine-year-old Liquorice, who lived in her paddock with four other goats, would have been an easy target as she was disabled. "There is no way an animal could have done it," said Mr Coates. "Liquorice's head was just gone in a clean cut." He believes the crime was motivated by occultism. *Sunday Express*, 12 Nov 2017

### TEMPTING TREAT

A Canadian chocolate company has launched a treat called Shyte and encourages people to use the hashtag #eatshyte. Master chocolatier Kevin Richards says it is an acronym for "Seriously Helps You To Energize". The £5.60 chocolate bar comes in several flavours, but can be bought only at select stores in Ontario and Alberta. *Sun*, 21 April 2018.

### KENTISH WILDLIFE

A man brandishing a 3ft (90cm) spear in Sheerness, Kent, said he needed it to "fend off lions". Adam Haber, 20, was also armed with a knife when arrested last September. He was given a suspended five-month jail term at Maidstone Crown Court. *Metro*, 23 April 2018.

### MONKEY MUMMY

Workers redeveloping the 116-year-old Dayton Department Store building in Minneapolis, Minnesota, have discovered the mummified remains of a spider monkey in an air duct on the seventh floor. It seems that teenager Larry Murphy and a friend had stolen it from the pet department in the 1960s, and released it in the building when the friend's mother refused to keep it. *BBC News*, 11 April 2018.



MARTIN ROSS



## SIDELINES...

### UNKNOWN PLAGUE

Kangaroos, both grey and red, have been dying in their millions across the western plains of New South Wales, struck down by an unknown illness that causes inflammation, stilted movement, hæmorrhaging and blindness. A vet said it was a disease, not a genetic problem, but no bacterium or virus had been identified. The total kangaroo population of NSW last year was a record 17.4 million, but by Christmas this had dropped by up to 40 per cent. *The Australian*, 27 Jan; *Times*, 29 Dec 2017.

### LIVING IN HOPE

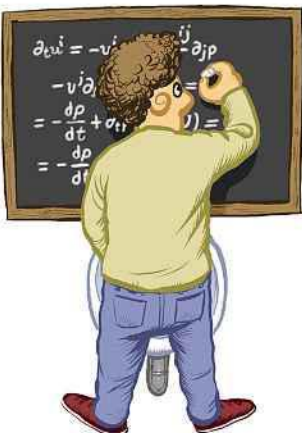
Ram Dyal, 36, who dug up his dead baby son to try and resurrect him, was arrested in Babbalpur, northern India. *Sun*, 28 Mar 2018.

### BEAVER BOTHER

Fashion student Nancy Fofana, 22, was walking to the supermarket near her home on a Gloucester housing estate on 13 May when a beaver ran out of a hedge towards her. She managed to film it as it stopped to stare. "Then it started towards me," she said. "I thought it was going to attack, so I ran." She assumed it had come from the River Severn nearby. *Sun*, 14 May 2018.

### MY AIM IS TRUE

In a study of the gender gap in physics (in the UK, only one in five A-level students is a girl), Australian scientists suggest the reason lies not in brain structure but in lavatorial habits. Having spent years learning to aim their urine at a target, the academics argue, boys have a natural head start in the understanding of force, momentum and fluid dynamics. *Times*, 16 Sept 2017.



## TREE NEWS

Britain's ancient oaks toppled and burnt, and the 'haunted' wood being damaged by ghost hunters

• Tales of ghosts and ghouls have long been told about the ancient Dering Woods in Kent. The popularity of shows such as *Celebrity Haunted Hotel Live* and ITV's *Strange But True* has obliged the Woodland Trust to hire a security firm to deter hundreds of ghost hunters who have descended on the woods, leaving abandoned campsites and fires, trampling flowers and bushes, and disturbing bats, badgers and dormice. The Trust has spent £41,000 protecting the woods from the damage caused by visitors pitching camp in the hope of witnessing the apparition of a gypsy woman who accidentally burned herself to death or a schoolmaster who hanged himself. For years, people with an interest in the paranormal have visited Dering Woods and nearby Pluckley (which has a reputation as the most haunted village in Britain). Its reputation has drawn film crews and documentary makers. Latterly, teams of ghost hunters equipped with night cameras and microphones have descended upon the woods, hoping to record ghostly noises or ghoulish apparitions. *D. Telegraph*, 5 Oct 2017.

• Even when there is no wind, many trees move their branches up and down at night. Research suggests they have a 'pulse' – like a heartbeat – and are pumping water upwards. "We've discovered that most trees have regular periodic changes in shape, synchronised across the whole plant," said Dr András Zlinszky of Aarhus University in Denmark. Each shape-shift hints at changes in water pressure. Dr Zlinszky used lasers to scan 22 species in windless, lightless conditions. In seven species, branches moved up and down by about a centimetre every three to four hours. Previously it was thought that trees just waited for evaporation from leaves to 'pull' the water up. Moving the water up in stages may save energy. "If water is pumped between



LEFT: Dering Woods in Kent, where thoughtless ghost hunters have been disturbing local flora and fauna.

• A 1,000-year-old oak tree planted on Offa's Dyke near Welshpool as a Welsh boundary post has fallen down. The Buttington Oak, with a girth of 36ft (11m), was found on its side by tree expert Rob McBride, who said it would have been planted to mark the site of the Battle of Buttington in AD 894 between the Saxons and the Danes. *D. Telegraph*, *D. Mirror*, 17 Feb 2018.

sections, only the hydrostatic pressure of an individual section would need to be overcome by transport, not the full pressure resulting from the height of the tree," he said. The pumping mechanism is as yet unexplained. *Metro*, 26 April 2018.

• Lost dental fillings could soon be a thing of the past. Currently, resin fillings typically last for seven to 10 years before they crack and fall out. It has now been discovered that an extract of pine tree roots alters the chemical structure of teeth to make them stronger and allow fillings to bind to them better. The compounds in the pine tree extract make dentine (the tissue layer beneath dental enamel) 10 times stronger. Dr Guido Pauli of the University of Illinois at Chicago tested extracts taken from the root bark of Chinese red pine, *Pinus massoniana*. He applied these to human molars before testing how they deformed when a force was applied to them. He also found that dentine was changed so that it was more compatible with resin fillings when they were applied to a tooth, binding to them more tightly. The results were published in the *Journal of Organic Chemistry*. *D. Mail*, 25 Mar 2017.

• Old Knobbly, the oldest oak in England dating back to the reign of King John, was badly damaged by arson in February. Experts hope the tree in Mistley, Essex – only 13ft (4m) high with a girth of 38ft (11.6m) – will be strong enough to survive. It has been set ablaze in the past. The village was home to the witchfinder Matthew Hopkins. Legend has it that women hid in the oak's hollow trunk to avoid being burnt alive in the 1640s. *D. Mirror*, 7 Feb 2018.

• A Bosnian Pine growing in the highlands of northern Greece was planted in AD 941, according to dendrochronology, and (misleadingly) has been declared Europe's oldest tree. It was discovered by scientists at Stockholm University and the University of Mainz, and has been named Adonis. It is one of more than a dozen others which are of millennial age, found in a treeline forest high in the Pindos mountains. Swedish dendrochronologist Dr Paul Krusic, who led the expedition, said: "It is quite remarkable that this large, complex and impressive organism has survived so long in such an inhospitable environment." *dailymail.co.uk*, 21 Aug 2016.



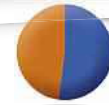
Maria's store helps her support her five children



■ Raised: £265.00  
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Khoeurm's farm will provide jobs for her local community



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# EmDrive: Mission Impossible?

DAVID HAMBLING says we shouldn't count the EmDrive out just yet, despite the latest news stories

The EmDrive, an 'impossible' space drive claimed to work without propellant [FT201:14], was in the media spotlight recently with headlines splashed over the Internet crowing that this irritating invention did not work. The anomaly had finally been resolved, and the upholders of scientific order heaved a sigh of relief. But if you scratch beneath the gloss put on by the media you find a different story.

A working EmDrive would revolutionise space travel. Spacecraft and satellites already have unlimited power, thanks to solar cells, but only limited propellant. Remove that limitation and probes could reach Mars in weeks, satellites would be lighter and cheaper and last longer, and new spacecraft could run rings around anything without an EmDrive.

However, according to classical physics, the EmDrive is impossible. Radiation exerts pressure, but in 2002 British inventor Roger Shawyer claimed that by containing microwaves in a truncated cone, he can get them to exert more pressure on one end than the other, producing a net thrust. Physicists do not believe a closed system can produce thrust, any more than you can haul yourself into the air by pulling at your bootstraps. Hence physicists condemn the EmDrive without looking at it, or Shawyer's explanation of the underlying theory.

Shawyer looked like another lone eccentric; but a Chinese team led by Prof Juan Yang at Xi'an Northwestern Polytechnic started building their own EmDrives in 2008, consistently reporting anomalous thrust. Their results were ignored in the West, even when the China Academy of Space Technology announced in 2016 that it had validated the EmDrive and was preparing to test it in space [FT320:12].

Cannae LLC, a private company in the US, announced to little fanfare that it was developing a similar device for commercial space flight. What attracted attention though was when NASA's Eagleworks, a freewheeling laboratory licensed to explore outlandish technology, announced that they too had successfully tested an EmDrive in 2016. NASA management took a dim view, not wanting to give the impression that taxpayer's money was being wasted on junk science.

"This is a small effort that has not yet shown any tangible results," according to NASA's official communiqué. Since then there has effectively been a news blackout on the Eagleworks' results. Any further experimental results will have to pass peer



ABOVE: The EmDrive's British inventor, Roger Shawyer, with his 'impossible' space drive.

review – challenging when your peers reject the idea outright – but there is believed to be a paper due for publication in December.

Yet another team, this time at the University of Dresden under Prof Martin Tajmar, tested the EmDrive in 2015 and noted 'anomalous thrust' [FT332:14]. However, Tajmar cautiously noted that while many obvious sources of error – such as air currents, thermal expansion and ionisation – had been eliminated, something else might be producing inaccurate readings.

When Tajmar published further results this May, the news was everywhere. *"Impossible' EmDrive Space Thruster May Really Be Impossible"*, said space.com. *"EmDrive? More like BS drive: Physics-defying space engine flunks out,"* said the Register. *"Impossible' EmDrive doesn't seem to work after all,"* said *New Scientist* – this with some relief, after the magazine weathered a huge controversy in 2006 over whether they should even have run a feature on it.

What Tajmar's latest study actually said was not that the EmDrive did not work. Rather, his team has found that the magnetic shielding around some cables appeared to be faulty, so the Earth's magnetic field might be producing a tiny amount of force. This could account for some of the 'anomalous thrust', but not necessarily all of it, as Tajmar was at pains to point out.

"We are an order of magnitude below the power levels from the NASA tests and we need to test different geometries and frequencies," Tajmar told *Fortean Times*. "It will take another year before we can say for

sure what's going on."

Roger Shawyer meanwhile has suggested that the design Tajmar's team is using is flawed and would not produce thrust anyway.

In the meantime, the researchers continue their work, but frustratingly, none will provide details. Shawyer is carrying out projects for un-named customers, including one for low-cost mass-produced EmDrives. Cannae formed a partnership to launch a CubeSat – a tiny satellite – fitted with a propellantless drive, but has declined to comment on its progress since 2016. In China, CAST have not provided any further updates on their EmDrive launch plans.

A space launch is the ultimate test. If an EmDrive-propelled satellite could carry out manoeuvres for several months, something impossible for a conventional drive, it would prove the EmDrive is commercially viable. Theory would be irrelevant. Everyone will be building EmDrives, not caring whether they work by quantum flux, pilot waves or space pixies. Existing spacecraft will be obsolete overnight.

This means there are good commercial reasons for anyone on the verge of a breakthrough to keep quiet while they gear up to take a lead in the new space race. An EmDrive may already have successfully flown, and the inventor might now be confidentially sharing flight data and cutting deals with industrial partners.

Equally, if the sceptics are right and the EmDrive only appears to work because of flawed experiments, the space tests are doomed to failure. The researchers may have nothing to announce because they simply cannot get it to work. They will all quietly drop out.

At this stage either is possible.

One wild card is that the EmDrive works because we have simply misunderstood how conservation of momentum works. In that case, you don't need a precisely engineered cavity and microwave generators, as the effect can be reproduced with a flow of water. This is the theory of researcher William Somerville, a Chilean-based scientist who is now promoting his fluid space drive as an alternative.

Sceptics would like Tajmar's report to be the beginning of the end for the EmDrive, and they may be right. But science is indifferent to prejudice, and Tajmar's next set of results may well show the irksome anomalous thrust still present. And one success in space will change everything.

The EmDrive show is not over yet.



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## PAUL SIEVEKING finds a city revealed by satellite spy photos and an example of bovine trepanation



**ABOVE:** The ancient city of Qalatga Darband, believed to have been founded in 331 BC by Alexander the Great, was discovered by a team of Iraqi and British archaeologists. **BELOW:** The trepanned cow skull.

### ANCIENT GREEK CITY

Qalatga Darband, a fortified settlement in Iraqi Kurdistan with a thriving wine trade, which is thought to have been founded by Alexander the Great, went unrecorded until its remains were discovered by archaeologists examining declassified spy satellite photographs taken by the American government for military purposes in the 1960s but not made public until 1996. The city's density and complexity were unsuspected until a camera-equipped drone survey in 2016. It is an open site covering roughly 148 acres (60ha), situated on a natural terrace overlooking the Lower Zab River on its northern bank. The outline of a large rectangular building was revealed beneath fields of wheat and barley. There are other buildings along with a fortified wall and stone presses suitable for wine production.

Excavation was not possible until improved security allowed the British Museum to explore the site as a way of training Iraqis who will be asked to rescue sites damaged by Daesh, such as Nineveh, Nimrud and Hatra. The buried city, dated to the first and second centuries BC, was built on the likely route that Alexander took in 331 BC as he was pursuing Darius III of Persia, whom he had defeated in battle at Gaugamela. Statues of Græco-Roman deities and terracotta roof tiles show a strong Greek influence, indicating that its early residents were Alexander's subjects and those of his successor. One statue depicts a seated female figure who may be Persephone,

goddess of vegetation and wife of Hades; the other is a nude that could be Adonis, a divine personification of fertility. *Times*, 25 Sept 2017.

### HOLY COW!

About 5,000 years ago, humans used crude stone tools to puncture a hole in a cow's head, making it the earliest known instance of skull surgery in an animal. It's unclear whether the cow (*Bos taurus*) was alive or dead when the operation took place, but if it was alive, the animal didn't survive for long, given that its skull shows no signs of healing, researchers said in a study for the journal *Scientific Reports*. However, the intent of the surgery remains a mystery. If the operation, known as trepanation, was meant to save the cow, it would be the oldest known evidence of veterinary surgery on an animal, said the study's lead researcher, Fernando Ramirez Rozzi, director of research specialising in human evolution at France's National Centre for Scientific Research in Toulouse. It's also possible that Neolithic humans were simply using the cow to practise trepanation, in order to perfect the technique before applying it to humans.

The ancient cow skull was found during an excavation lasting from 1975 to 1985 at the Neolithic site of Champ-Durand in Vendée, a region on the Atlantic coast of western France. A variety of animal bones, pottery, stones and flint tools have been discovered at the site. It was thought to be a meeting place, graveyard and market. An analysis showed that the cow skull dated to sometime

between 3400 and 3000 BC, and that the animal was clearly an adult.

When past archaeologists first looked at the nearly complete cow cranium, they thought another cow must have caused the gouge. But the hole – which is 2.5in by 1.8in (6.4x4.6 cm) – was so peculiar that one of the original researchers asked Dr Ramirez Rozzi to take a second look at it in 2012. "At that time, we looked, and very quickly, we saw that it was trepanation in the cow skull; it was not a goring at all," he said. A scanning electron microscope revealed cut marks around the hole that looked eerily similar to scrape marks seen on the skulls of human trepanation patients. If another animal had gored the cow, the violent blow would have caused fractures or splintering around the wound, for which there was no evidence, either internally or externally. Nor does the hole look as if it had been caused by an infectious disease, such as syphilis or tuberculosis.

Trepanned human skulls have been found throughout Europe and South America. Many patients survived the procedure because the bone often healed, but we don't know why it was done. The earliest evidence of human trepanation dates to the Mesolithic period (c.8000-2700 BC). Archaeologists have several ideas about why ancient people would scrape or drill a hole into a skull. Perhaps the technique was meant to solve a medical condition, such as epilepsy or head trauma, or maybe it was part of a ritual. Either way, the Stone Age surgeons became very good at it. In the cow's case, it's not clear why Neolithic people would have gone the extra mile to save a cow with some kind of medical disorder; it's more likely the skull was used for trepanation practice. *livescience.com*, 19 April; *Times*, *D.Telegraph*, 20 April 2018.





# CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

## 227: DIPLOMAT PUDDINGS

I'm writing this on 13 June 2018, the day between Singapore summit and Moscow World Cup opener. We live in a welter of conferences and meetings: Brexit, Davos, G-7, Trump and 'Little Rocket Man'. What happened in their ancient equivalents?

Around 499-8 BC, Aristagoras of Miletos went to Sparta seeking its help in the Ionian Revolt against Persia. As related by Herodotus (bk5 chs50-1), he gained audience with King Cleomenes who had with him his eight-year-old daughter Gorgo, refusing Aristagoras's request to send her away. The latter began by offering a bribe of 10 talents for Spartan assistance. Cleomenes refused. Aristagoras kept raising the ante until he reached 50, at which point little Gorgo cried out: "Father, go away or this man will corrupt you." Cleomenes left the room, and that was the end of negotiations. One doubts it was common practice to include precocious children in high-level talks. Perhaps Gorgo may be seen as a young prefiguration of Ivanka Trump, described in the *Washington Post* (20 June 2017) as "a validator for her father".

In 416 BC, at the height of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians attacked the neutral island of Melos. A meeting was hastily arranged between the two sides. Thucydides (bk 5 chs84-106) gives a purported verbatim text of what is now commonly called 'The Melian Dialogue'. The gist of the Athenian speeches is stark: Might is Right. If you had the upper hand, you'd do the same to us – Socrates disputes this 'philosophy' in Book One of Plato's *Republic*. Negotiations collapsed, the Athenians conquered, they slaughtered all Melian males and enslaved the women and children.

Roman diplomacy was equally belligerent. Full story in Livy (bk45 ch12) and Polybius (bk29 ch27). In 168 BC, Popilius Læna led a delegation to prevent King Antiochus IV from attacking Egypt. When they met, the latter attempted a handshake. Instead, Læna thrust at him documents containing pre-emptive demands from the Senate. As Antiochus tried to temporise, Popilius used his rod of office to draw a circle around the king in the sand, proclaiming: "Before you step out of that circle, give me an answer to take to Rome." The astounded King immediately capitulated – rather more

effective than Obama's Syrian 'Red Line'.

It is generally thought there is an allusion to Popilius's mission and fleet in this sentence from Daniel 11. 30 in the Old Testament: "For the ships of Kittim (or Chittim) shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant."

Similar obduracy was shown by the five-man Roman delegation sent to Carthage in 218 BC to demand the latter hand over Hannibal. The Carthaginians attempted to argue, but were cut off by Quintus Fabius (one of the quintet) who gathered the folds of his toga and held them out, saying: "I offer you peace or war. You choose." The Carthaginians shot back: "Give us whichever you choose." Fabius (obviously pre-decided) gave them War, which the other side unanimously shouted to accept.

In 255 BC, Roman general Regulus was sent home by his Carthaginian captors to negotiate peace. Instead, he urged his countrymen to fight on, then returned to Carthage knowing he would be tortured to death. As compensation, his widow was given several Carthaginian prisoners whom she savagely and slowly executed.

This quintessential Roman episode furnished a patriotic Ode (bk3 no5) from Horace and inspired Kipling's Regulus in his *Stalky & Co.* series (1899).

Normal rules of diplomacy did not apply in the case of Numidian Prince Jugurtha, who gave the Romans a lot of trouble in North Africa c.118-108 BC. After much political in-fighting between Roman commanders Marius and Sulla, the latter made a deal with Jugurtha's father-in-law and military ally, King Bocchus of Mauritania. Prime source Sallust (*Jugurthine War*, chs109-13) says that he, after arranging the meeting, long hesitated over whether to betray Jugurtha to Sulla or vice-versa. Finally, swayed by generous bribes from the Roman, he opted for the former. Jugurtha, who came to the meeting unarmed, as per agreement, was captured and taken to Rome, where, after losing an ear-lobe when his otic bling was ripped off, he was incarcerated in Rome's notorious Tullianum gaol and starved to death.

Diplomacy of a rather different kind was employed by the young Julius Caesar.

In 80 BC he was ambassador to the court of King Nicomedes IV of Bithynia, where he was said to have conducted negotiations in the royal bed. Suetonius, *JC*, ch49, quotes Cicero's claim that Caesar lost his virginity on a golden bed with purple coverlets, furnishing his soldiers' satiric triumphal marching song: "All the Gauls did Caesar vanquish, Nicomedes vanquished him. Nicomedes does not triumph, who subdued the conqueror" – the Latin suggests Caesar was the passive partner. This incident inspired one of Caesar's political rivals to dub him "Every wife's husband, every husband's wife".

Modern conferences are also junkets at the tax-payers' expense. Singapore coughed up 15 million dollars for the Kim-Trump love-in. See also Alyson Krueger's online account of the extravagances at Davos. But, nothing can compare with the meeting between Nero and Armenian King Tiridates.

According to Suetonius (*Nero*, ch13) and Dio Cassius (bk62, ch5), Tiridates was rapturously received on arrival and escorted with full pomp to Nero who ceremoniously performed his official coronation. The emperor was particularly impressed by his insistence on wearing his sword (against Roman custom) for the occasion, albeit he did reluctantly agree to have the scabbard nailed shut so that he could not draw it. He received a huge popular reception, especially when demonstrating his archery skills in shooting one arrow through two bulls. A sumptuous banquet followed. Tiridates was understandably bored and irritated when Nero, clad in gladiatorial costume, 'entertained' the guests with his execrable voice. Tiridates turned to praising crack general Corbulo, "a man of mighty physique" (Tacitus, *Annals*, bk13 ch8 para3), fresh from big Eastern victories. This encomium did Corbulo no favours; he was presently ordered by Nero to commit suicide – which he did. To cap all this, he received a total of 200 million sesterces from the emperor.

Singing apart, Trump would have loved all this – coronation, cash and – a Roman first – an exhibition of Ethiopian female wrestlers. One can visualise him groping the grapplers.

"An ambassador is an honest gentleman who is sent to lie abroad for the good of his country" – Thomas Wootton (1568-1639, uttered in 1604 on a mission at Augsburg).



## The haunted islands of Zanzibar

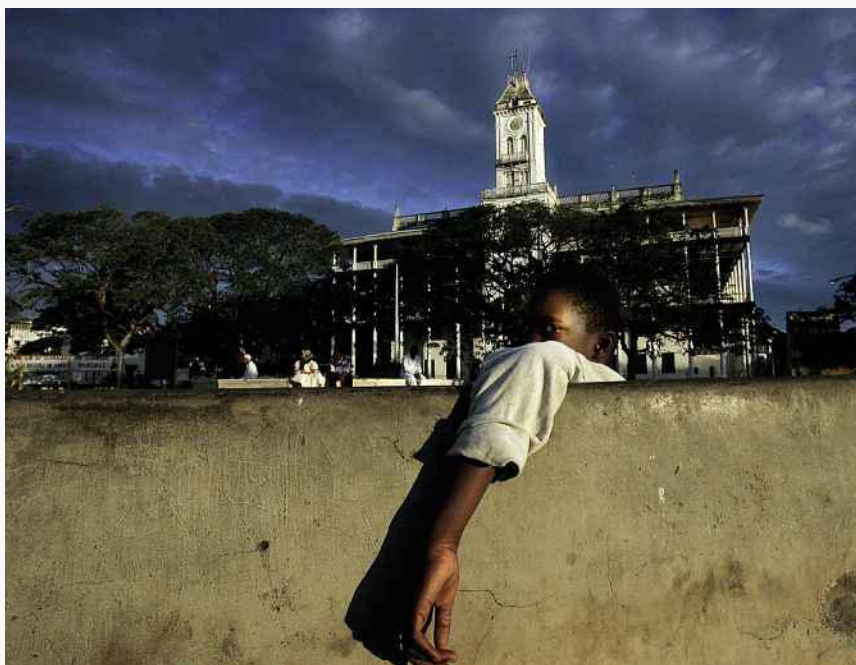
Despite the lure of sun, sea and sand, ALAN MURDIE finds time for a spot of exotic ghost hunting

With the summer holiday season well upon us, I pause to reflect upon some ghost stories I collected during a holiday of my own taken earlier this year. Never having believed myself that ghost hunting should only be conducted in temperate climes and preferably restricted to the colder months (note the Borley ghosts were most active May-September and largely quiet in wintertime, a tribute to the lost potency of long-gone English summers) I duly headed off to the islands of Zanzibar, 30 miles (48km) from the coast of Tanzania, East Africa.

For centuries these exotic islands were a focal meeting point between black Africa and the Islamic world, creating a fabled society based around spices and the slave trade, until British pressure suppressed the latter. Ruled by Sultans from Oman, Zanzibar became a British Protectorate in the 19th century and was later the scene of the Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896, the shortest armed conflict in history, a mere 32 minutes being taken to quell a rebellious anti-British ruler. The last Omani Sultan was deposed in a revolution by African revolutionaries in January 1964 and the country became a semi-autonomous region of the Republic of Tanzania.

Naturally, I will spare the reader descriptions of my days relaxing on the crystal sand beaches, swimming in sapphire blue seas, inhaling the scents of fragrant forests, and enjoying the delicious meals of lobsters, sea food and tropical fruits. What is important for us here is that come the swift fall of the tropical night on Zanzibar – as in Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* ‘with one stride comes the dark’ – many spots dotted around these beautiful islands are considered badly haunted. Locals I spoke to proved keen to share their stories of supernatural and fortean phenomena of every sort, interpreted through a prism of Islamic, Christian and traditional African beliefs. The most notorious spots were identified as the small islands of Pemba and Unguja, off the main island. All stories mentioned here should be understood as “alleged”.

On mention of ghosts in Zanzibar almost everyone I spoke to immediately exclaimed “Popobawa!” this being the name of the most dreaded of all entities on Zanzibar. [Editor’s note: see FT86:11 and Benjamin Radford’s feature, FT241:34-39. An alternative spelling is popo ubawa.] Having the solidity of an early mediæval European



MARCO LONGARI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

TOP: Popobawa seems to have departed, but Zanzibar remains plagued by other malevolent entities.

### Walls, locked doors and barred windows offer no protection against Popobawa



phantom rather than the ethereality of the typical Western ghost today, his name is known by all in the 20-45 age group. Many of these were growing up in the mid-1990s when stories about him came to prominence, first in the Tanzanian capital of Dar es Salaam and then spreading out to Zanzibar and its islands. Popobawa is conceived as a sexually rapacious, semi-human male entity, sometimes glimpsed but often cloaked in invisibility, who invades homes and communities to molest and violate his victims. Scarily, walls, locked doors and barred windows offer no protection against him. Indiscriminately attacking men, women and children, who are paralysed in his presence and unable to resist his assaults, he is notoriously indifferent to age, gender, disability and selected point of penetration.

My youngest informants, who would have been scarcely more than infants at the time of this bisexual spectral rampage, tended to laugh at mention of his name. They viewed popobawa as a bogeyman figure who scared them as children but whom they now view as an example of quirky Zanzibar humour – some even jokingly linking him with Queen star Freddy Mercury, born on Zanzibar in 1946 but who left as a child and never returned. Not so the older generation. Whilst

the young laugh at mention of popobawa their parents and siblings who remember that time consider the entity no laughing matter. They remember nights of fear when both children and adults were terrified of sleeping alone. They recall families leaving their homes and large communal sleep-outs in yards and on rooftops across the island, with people gathering in the earnest hope that safety would lie in numbers (physical barriers being no deterrent) and to hear the latest announcements the next morning about this sadistic creature and his attacks the previous night. Now older and more experienced, some considered the stories were garbled accounts of sexual assaults by human perpetrators, including individuals masquerading as the demonic entity, or attributable to bad dreams and exaggerated anxiety caused by the panic. Several mentioned that they never seemed to meet an identifiable victim – but who would readily admit to being a victim in what in many ways is still a rather traditional Islamic society? It was clear that the panic has left its mark on the local psyche, and though knowing his name, some still will not speak of popabawa at all. One of my informants observed that had social media then existed it would have surely been far worse. The panic stimulated the formation of groups holding armed hunts for the marauding entity. These might set upon anyone and one young man suffering a mental disability was hacked to death by such a machete-wielding mob after they suspected him of being popobawa. Fortunately, popobawa seems to have vanished from Zanzibar since late 1997. Naturally, it is hoped his depredations have now ceased permanently.

Popobawa may have gone, but plenty of other disturbing entities remain to afflict and molest the populace. Indeed, popobawa may be considered merely one extreme of a spectrum of remarkably unpleasant Zanzibar entities, many of them behaving like the malevolent ghosts in the stories of Elliot O'Donnell and those penned by M R James or H Russell Wakefield. They have negative effects on the health of witnesses and domestic dwellings possessed by them become veritable pest houses for the evil dead. The ruinous state of many old buildings and the proximity of graveyards doubtless contributes to such negative impressions.

Grandest of all haunted houses on Zanzibar is the People's Palace, on the seafront in Stone Town, the island capital. Built in the early 19th century by the Omani Arab Sultans, it now serves as a museum. A popular tourist place in the day, it has a very different atmosphere at night. Staff told me that those who guard the building after dark have been troubled by unexplained footsteps and the figure of a woman in a



ABOVE: The night-time streets of Stone Town, where various apparitions have been reported.

black veil, who appears in the grounds and is cut off below the knees. This apparition was witnessed gliding in the yard in 1991 by a young policeman assigned to guard the building after dark. Deeply shaken, he thought of abandoning his post, but he summoned his courage and stood firm. Later in the night he heard the unexplained sound of a baby crying and at 3.15am he perceived a stream of blood pouring through the main door of the palace and out to the main gate before vanishing. By now greatly terrified, he managed to snatch some sleep, but was troubled by nightmares in which he was seeing a crowd of men in Arab dress passing through the same gates carrying kettles and pots, following the trail of blood. Not surprisingly, he quit the next morning, turning to a local sorcerer for a cure for nervous symptoms that afflicted him for weeks afterwards.

Time and again, illness, shock and misfortune follow in the wake of meeting ghosts on these islands, as detailed in an intriguing pamphlet entitled *Zanzibar Ghosts* (2000, 2006) compiled from local sources by an Islamic scholar, Mr Amir A Mohammed. By good fortune I was able to consult a copy of this work, which its author describes as an attempt "to highlight some isolated incidents of the people of the Zanzibar islands who have horrible experiences coming face to face with ghosts and demons". Many of the encounters described appear folkloric, having the character of urban legends, and often with

an implicit moralistic subtext, gently warning against casual promiscuity, drunkenness, gaming and going out late at night for no good purpose. But also included are a sprinkling of named sources and anecdotal details that suggest some are derived from genuine experiences.

Stories are told of the terrible house at Kisiwandui, home during the 1950s to a family of eight devout Muslims who all pined away and died as a consequence of the haunting. Misfortune continued to pursue the survivors after they left the house, and by 1970 only one was left alive, suffering mental illness. A widowed lady and her daughter followed them, being forced to live there for two years after they fled from their home in Stone Town during the violence in the 1964 revolution. Luckier than their predecessors, they told of nights troubled by strange noises, unexplained male and female voices, the sound of bells ringing and someone reciting verses from the Qur'an. Doors would shake and rattle of their own accord. The only person who could endure residing in the property was its lady owner, who was believed to know some secret behind the manifestations.

A man named Abbas Darajani (interviewed in 2000 by Amir Mohammed) told of the sighting by a 70-year-old friend of a veiled female apparition late one night on Malindi Street near the ferry terminal. The form glided rather than walked around the witness, cutting across his path. It pursued him, vanishing from one spot, only to menacingly materialise in another place, before veering so close that it brushed up against him. Deeply shocked by this encounter, the man fell seriously ill upon reaching home. His vision degenerated, and despite extensive medical interventions partly funded by his friend Abbas Darajani, he lost his sight. The old man blamed the ghost for sending him blind. Perhaps the apparition was a symptom of an underlying ophthalmic disorder, but one is reminded of certain traditional stories of fairy encounters in the British Isles which end "and the fairies took away his sight".

Daylight encounters with apparitions may also prove highly disturbing. A 30-year-old man named Khalfar who worked as a builder and stonemason told Amir Mohammed of an unpleasant experience near the village of Mkanjuni in the centre of Pemba Island. He was working building a cattle dip in the forest and needed to fetch water from a local spring to mix cement. Going to the spring with a bucket, he saw what he took to be an Arab woman in a white skirt washing clothes in the pool. As he approached, he cheerfully greeted her, but she did not respond. Ignoring his repeated calls, she simply continued with washing the clothes. Drawing parallel with the woman, he spoke



# GHOSTWATCH

directly to her again, asking permission to draw water, and began dipping his bucket into the pool. Suddenly the woman looked towards at him in fury, her face the epitome of evil. She released a loud and terrifying hissing sound that seemed to penetrate his brain. Realising that this was no living woman but an evil spirit, he tried to run but found the energy had been sucked from him. He eventually staggered back to the building site in a state of collapse. He remained physically and sexually impotent for six months until cured with traditional herbs.

Even those Zanzibar ghosts that appear superficially neutral are considered malevolent. Across the islands the European motif of the woman in white is replaced by a ghostly lady in black Islamic dress. One walks after dark in the areas around the Mnazi Mnoja hospital, the High Court and Victoria Park in Stone Town. She appears harmless, but then why does she flee from anyone who recites verses of the holy Qur'an?

The seas around Zanzibar are also believed to be filled with ghosts. Apparitions of children have been seen by divers in the waters of Stone Town harbour and, as in many parts of the world, marine spirits are blamed for drownings among fishermen. Phantom ships and sailing craft are claimed on the north of the island, cruising close to villages by the shore. Fisherman plying for catches at night around Unguja Island also report encounters with living creatures in the Indian Ocean that they cannot identify. These leviathans can be "as big as islands" and can move very fast. Others see "shining objects flying like meteorites above sea-level". These sightings sound like accounts of ghost lights or, of course, UFOs. In Islamic thought these flying objects might be viewed as the craft of the djinn or non-human spirits created by Allah.

Species of phantom vehicles also turn out to be well-represented on mainland Tanzania. One informant, Samuel Lwelela, currently employed at the Zanazibar resort of Pongwe, kindly shared with me some detailed stories from his home village Malita in the region of Simiyu in Tanzania. There are stories of a phantom tractor that can fly and has the power to abduct people. My informant believed he saw two of these flying tractors as a boy in about 1975, and was told afterwards by his grandfather to read the Bible and not to mention such things again.

Mr Lwelela believed he had a second sighting of the ghostly tractors as a young man on the outskirts of the village. Standing by a river valley in broad daylight, he and some companions saw four tractors approaching the village across rough terrain. They were dark and appeared to be



ABOVE: The waters around Zanzibar are filled with ghosts, phantom ships and strange creatures.

physical vehicles, visible for a considerable time until suddenly they vanished inexplicably before their eyes.

Possibly some kind of mirage might be an explanation for such multi-witness sightings, but knowing his region, Mr Lwelela is doubtful. Stories of phantom beings on steeds or travelling vehicles and craft that fly around at night and make off with hapless living witnesses are widely known in folklore. They are a theme of many European ghost stories and in other cultures worldwide. The appearance of the phantom tractors did not seem to portend anything, but interestingly the manifestation occurred during a time when they were trying to impose quarantine precautions upon their village as a protection against a virulent epidemic.

Sorcery and witchcraft still thrive on Zanzibar, contrary to decrees to suppress them, first imposed by the British and then after the 1964 revolution. Despite the arrival of mobile telephones, laptops and satellite television, traditional sorcerers on Zanzibar remain both respected and feared by many and, as in other parts of the world, are believed to have powers to direct spirit entities and get rid of ghosts. Though people may draw upon Islamic prayers and various Christian rites of exorcism, a specialised form of African exorcism known as 'the Ghost Dance', an ecstatic ritual used throughout the islands against spirit-induced illness and demonic possession is rated as a top cure. It comes in various forms, with the most efficacious considered the Kibuki Ghost Dance imported by Comorian immigrants from Madagascar between 1850 and 1870. First the dancers put on coloured fabrics and take up spears and then drape a robe over the patient. The dancers then begin beating drums whilst

imbibing copious amounts of alcohol until becoming thoroughly intoxicated. Then begins a whirling dance about the sick person, which continues for three days, at which point the spirit or demon is placated by their performance and departs.

To probe into the subject of African witchcraft is to enter a vast territory, hitherto largely the monopoly of anthropologists, only occasionally with an awareness of psychological research (see e.g. *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* (1969) edited by John Beattie and John Middleton) or contributions from other disciplines (e.g. neurological studies of trance states by psychiatrist William Sargent).

Also speaking with Zimbabwean tourists on these matters, I learned that this respect for native witchcraft continues amongst populations of European origin in other African nations. Far from dismissive of the powers of native sorcery, these white citizens thought that African witchdoctors might have powers and skills of some kind, and that a traditional conjuring man might succeed where a Western trained doctor had failed. All acknowledged how witchcraft remains a potent belief system within those rural communities who live in closer daily connection with the natural environment, a view echoing that of previous generations in the colonial era and before liberation in Southern Africa (see *African Witchcraft*, 1962, by Greta Bloomhill).

Altogether, such views rather confirm the opinion given by the rationalist William Lecky in his *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism* in 1865: "If we considered witchcraft probable, a hundredth part of the evidence we possess would have placed it beyond the region of doubt."

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## MATTERS OF FAITH

### God incarnate warned over poor work attendance, divine tax dodger busted, naked End-Timers and new Marian miracles



ABOVE LEFT: Rameshchandra Fefar has been entering the fifth dimension. ABOVE RIGHT: Michael and Shannon Oulette following their arrest. BELOW: Sister Bernadette Moriau.

#### SLACKER VISHNU

An Indian man has repeatedly refused to go to work as he says he is no longer a mere mortal. Rameshchandra Fefar was appointed superintending engineer with the Sardar Sarovar dam project on the Narmadar river near Navagam in Gujarat in September 2017. He told his boss he was God incarnate after being questioned over his poor workplace attendance, having only worked 16 days in the last eight months. "I am Lord Vishnu's 10th incarnation as Kalki," he said. "I am doing penance at home by entering into the fifth dimension to change the global conscience. This work I cannot do in the office. Thus I don't remain physically present in the office." He claimed that the intense meditation he performed at home had been instrumental in ending India's recent droughts. "Even if you don't believe I am indeed the tenth incarnation of Lord Vishnu I will prove it in coming days," Fefar told reporters. "I realised that I am Kalki avatar when I was in my office in March 2010. Since then, I am having divine powers. Just like everybody laughed at me at the time of Mahabharata, you guys are doing the same because you're unable to see God in me". *dailymail.co.uk, 21 May 2018.*

#### DIVINE DEBTOR

A cash-strapped Melbourne restaurateur has claimed he is divine to avoid an £85,000 tax bill. Kim Huit Tang argued in

the Supreme Court that he was "a living spirit in the greater universe continuum" over whom the court had no jurisdiction. In a 15-page affidavit described by Judge Peter Gardiner as "rambling and nonsensical", Tang claimed he was not himself but a "living breathing soul force" and "a spirit of House Tang". To quote: "We are who we are, not, who the imagination, devices or records of me, say that we are." Well, quite. He was being sued by creditors after failed restaurant Rice Bar Not Only Rice, which he no longer owned, racked up £70,747 in debts. His company has been in liquidation since May 2016. The judge ordered Tang to pay all outstanding debts as well as the plaintiff's legal costs. *(Queensland) Courier-Mail, 14 May 2018.*

#### READY FOR THE END

Michael and Shannon Ouellette were arrested on 14 May after they were seen naked walking away from their house in Southmayd, Texas, that had just caught fire. "It was definitely a breaking point for them," said Joshua Meek, their next-door neighbour. He said he had known the couple and their 13-year-old daughter for four years. Their kids would often play together. "They were very good people, very warm people, helpful people," he said. But recently, he said, they were getting rid of all their stuff and acting oddly. "They went and sold every one of their personal

belongings. They went to the park and literally were handing out \$100 bills." Meek said he thinks they were getting ready for The End. "I think they were ready for a new start," he said. "They believed today was Judgement Day." The couple were arrested for attacking a police chief and an officer, evading arrest and endangering their child. The daughter was flown to a hospital in Plano. *KXII News (Texas), 16 May 2018.*

#### MIRACLE AT LOURDES

The case of a French nun who recovered from a decades-old back problem that prevented her from walking normally has been recognised as the 70<sup>th</sup> miracle at France's shrine of Lourdes. The appropriately named Sister Bernadette Moriau from Beauvais, northern France, visited the holy spring in the foothills of the Pyrenees in July 2008, then aged 69. She had spent 40 years in a wheelchair and relied on morphine to fight chronic nerve pain. She said: "I felt a well-being throughout my body, a relaxation, warmth. I heard a voice saying 'Remove the apparatus'. In an act of faith I took it off. And when I took away the brace and splints my foot was straight and I could move without any pain." Her chronic sciatica had disappeared for the first time since her condition

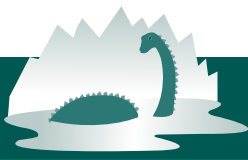
was diagnosed at the age of 27. Nicolas Brouwet, Bishop of Lourdes, announced the miracle at Mass on 11 February. Five million supplicants visit the shrine every year. Over 7,000 miracle recoveries have been claimed, but only 70 are recognised by the Church. The first was in 1858 when pregnant Catherine Latapie, 38, fell from a tree and paralysed two fingers while breaking her fall to save the baby. After dipping her hand in a stream at Lourdes, she was able to move her fingers again. *D.Telegraph, 12 Feb; D.Mirror, 13 Feb; Sunday People, 18 Feb 2018.*

#### OUR LADY'S TEARS

A Virgin Mary statue at Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Hobbs, New Mexico, is apparently crying tears that smell of roses. Father Jose 'Pepe' Segura was told about the tears on 20 May and he saw people wipe the bronze statue's face only to have the tears reappear. "That's when I saw that she really was crying," said Father Pepe. "I think it's a reminder for all of us to get closer to God and to stop being violent." On 24 May, church officials arrived to test the tears and help rule out mundane explanations. They also X-rayed the statue and investigated its provenance. "The process could take years," we are told. In any case, parishioners are convinced that they witnessed a miracle. *dailymail.co.uk, 27 May 2018.*







## KARL SHUKER investigates some puzzling Indian tigers and a Montana monster mystery

### A NEW TIGER?

In December 2012, two eight-month-old orphan tiger cubs – a male dubbed Ipra and his female sibling Chipi (a third sibling died of pneumonia) – were captured near Anini in the Upper Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh, India, which borders China. Almost a year later, they were taken to the Biological Park in Itanagar, the state capital. Here they have thrived and matured, but into a surprisingly different form from the Bengal tiger subspecies, the only one native to India. Currently five and a half years old, not only are both much larger and more aggressive than Bengal tigers, but also their striped pelage's background coloration is a different shade, and they even lack the white patch behind the ears typical of Bengal tigers.

Yet the only subspecies of tiger bigger than the Bengal is the Siberian (Amur) tiger, which, as its name suggests, lives very far away from Anini. Consequently, to determine whether these two mystifying tigers' phenotypic idiosyncrasies are also mirrored by genetic differences, blood and hair samples were sent by the Biological Park to the Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES) at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad, for genetic analyses. Here is where the biggest mystery of all arises – because although the samples were sent to LaCONES two years ago, the park has still not received any results! Genetic analyses are relatively commonplace nowadays, so why this extraordinary delay? Meanwhile, Ipra and Chipi live on at the park, blissfully unaware of the considerable interest and debate that their exceptional form has engendered among Indian zoologists.

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/does-the-bengal-tiger-have-a-bigger-cousin-at-home/article23867331.ece> 12 May 2018.

### THE MONTANA CRYPTID THAT CRIED WOLF

Even more perplexing and headline-generating was the canine cryptid shot on a private ranch near Denton in the Lewistown area of north-central Montana, USA, on 16 May 2018. With long greyish-brown fur, a large head, and a definite canine appearance, it superficially recalled a wolf in overall form. Yet according to Ty Smucker, wolf



ABOVE: The Montana monster – was it an emaciated bear, a dire wolf or a specimen of an elusive dogman?

management specialist for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), who had examined close-up colour photos of this creature's body, its feet seemed too small, its ears too large, and its body and limbs too short. As to be expected, the story of its procurement and unresolved taxonomic status soon went viral on social media, resulting in a diverse array of proposed identities ranging from the mundane to the monstrous.

At one end of this taxonomic spectrum were suggestions that it might be a specimen of the elusive dogman, a bizarre entity whose existence remains unconfirmed, but is said to be capable of walking bipedally like a humanoid dog. A related notion, whose seriousness remains as undetermined as the creature's identity, is that it was a werewolf. No less thought-provoking were opinions that it was nothing less than a dire wolf *Canis dirus*, a very large, burly New World species believed to have become extinct almost 10,000 years ago. Another postulated cryptozoological connection was one that linked it to an equally contentious wolf-like or even hyaena-like American mystery beast known variously as the *shunka wara'kin* or ringdocus, an alleged (but never verified) taxiderm specimen of which is currently on display at the Madison Valley History Association Museum in Ennis, Montana.

And then there was the proposal that it was a young, emaciated grizzly bear – but I have yet to see any young bear, emaciated or otherwise, that has a characteristically canine head and jaws, not to mention a long bushy tail! My own thoughts were that it was a purebred wolf, a wolf/domestic dog hybrid, or a purebred domestic dog but of decidedly crossbred

ancestry in terms of the number and varieties of breeds that may well have contributed to it (i.e. a mongrel or mutt of no recognised heritage). Among domestic species of mammal, the domestic dog is unparalleled in terms of its morphological and genetic diversity, and I have little doubt that this diversity could readily engender the phenotype of the Denton beast.

All too often in cryptozoology, an unusual specimen is procured, only for its remains to be discarded or lost without any samples having been secured from it and subjected to formal scientific examination. Happily, however, in this particular instance FWP game wardens went to investigate it after it had been shot, and its entire carcass was sent to their laboratory at Bozeman for study. Bruce Auchly, information manager for Montana FWP, publicly stated that they were awaiting a DNA report back from the lab, after which we would finally know whether Denton's cryptid was merely crying wolf or whether it really was something out of the ordinary.

In mid-June, Montana's FWP issued an official press release with the DNA results. Despite the fact that certain investigators had opined that it looked odd, the mystery beast in question was actually an ordinary adult female grey wolf *Canis lupus* – not a dire wolf at all, merely a dire disappointment, at least as far as some cryptozoologists were concerned. <https://eu.greatfallstribune.com/story/news/2018/05/24/wolf-dog-dogman-some-mysterious-creature-montanans-look-answers/634379002/> 25 May 2018; [http://fwp.mt.gov/news/newsReleases/fishAndWildlife/nr\\_1108.html](http://fwp.mt.gov/news/newsReleases/fishAndWildlife/nr_1108.html) 18 June 2018.



## PARROT FASHION | African greys put felons behind bars and go shopping with Amazon Alexa; plus the origins of the UK's burgeoning parakeet population



ABOVE: Corienne Pretorius's African grey parrot Buddy, who succeeded in placing an order using Amazon's Alexa software.

### PARROT SHOPPING

Corienne Pretorius, 39, was baffled after a £10 order for gift boxes, which she hadn't ordered, arrived at her house in Greenwich, southeast London. She eventually realised the culprit was Buddy – the family's African Grey parrot. The bird mimics her voice, and had placed the order using Amazon's Alexa voice-operated software.

"I couldn't believe it when I realised that it was Buddy who had used Alexa to make an Amazon order," she said. "None of us even knew how to use her for that. We've had the Echo for about four months and I use it to play music or make to-do lists but I've never ordered anything online. On Sunday [17 Sept 2017] we had popped out of the house for a couple of hours, but when I came home, I could hear Buddy talking but couldn't quite make out what he was saying. Then I heard Alexa say 'Sorry I didn't quite get that'. Buddy then said 'Alexa' and some gibberish, and she replied

*"He swears in Afrikaans. When we go to bed he says 'Goodnight'"*

'What is it you want to order?' I didn't hear what happened after that and didn't think anything of it until I was working on my computer and got a notification that my Amazon order had been placed. I hadn't ordered anything and couldn't figure out what had been ordered. I asked my husband and my son who didn't know what I was talking about so then I asked Alexa: 'What was my last order?' and she said it was these golden gift boxes. I laughed out loud because I knew then and there that it must have been Buddy.'

Ms Pretorius, who is originally from South Africa, bought the four-year-old bird on a whim in 2013, and says he has always

mimicked her when she is out of the room. "Buddy talks a lot, but never when he can see me," she said. "If I'm in the room, he won't say anything because he's listening and then when I leave he talks in my voice. He started making this bizarre squeaking noise, and it was only when I opened the fridge and it made the same noise that I realised that he was mimicking the door of the fridge opening. He is hilarious – we have a cat and he mimics the cat too, he's such an attention seeker. He also swears in Afrikaans. When we go to bed he says 'Goodnight'." *D.Mail, Sun, 20 Sept 2017.*

### PARROTS FOR THE PROSECUTION

A parrot brought a serial burglar to justice by biting the man's hand, allowing his blood to be used as DNA evidence. Vitalij Kiseliiov broke into the home of Peter and Trudy Rowing in Gillingham, Kent, during the night of 15 June 2017, stealing a laptop, a phone, two oxygen

tanks and four cans of lager. He also tried to take Rocky, the African grey parrot, out of his cage – the birds can retail for £500. Rocky bit Kiseliiov on the hand, and he left a trail of his blood around the house. Mr Rowing, 72, said he and his wife had had Rocky for more than 20 years, adding: "The police reckon Kiseliiov threw Rocky out of the window because he bit him. They found blood by the door. They got him the next day because he was on their DNA database."

Rocky was soon reunited with his owners after their granddaughter put out an appeal on Facebook. "Someone found Rocky and passed him to the RSPCA," said Mr Rowing. "We were able to prove that he was our bird and he was reunited with us a few days later. He was very shaken for a good few days, but is back to normal now." Kiseliiov, 37, who admitted six burglaries in Gillingham, was jailed for four years and will then be deported back to Lithuania. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, Sun, 11 Aug 2017.*

• The defendant in a Michigan trial that featured the testimony of a parrot [FT344:11] has been found guilty of first degree murder and sentenced to life without parole. Glenna Duram shot her husband, Martin, in front of the couple's pet in 2015, before turning the gun on herself in a failed suicide attempt. The African grey named Bud had been repeating a conversation ending with the words "Don't fucking shoot" in the victim's voice. "That bird picks up everything and anything, and it's got the filthiest mouth around," said the victim's mother, Lillian Duram. A prosecutor initially considered using Bud's squawkings as evidence in the murder trial, but this was vetoed by the judge, who pointed out the bird couldn't be cross-examined. There was a precedent, however: a cockatoo named Bozo was called to give evidence in a 1990 divorce case in Argentina [FT59:9]. *BBC News, 20 July; Sunday Sun, 8 Oct 2017.*

For other recent parrot tales, see FT355:8-9.

## UK PARAKEET ORIGINS

The contemporary legend that Britain's parakeet population began with birds from the set of *The African Queen* might actually be true, according to Hana Ayoob, a curator speaking at the Cheltenham Science Festival in June. She said that her great grandfather had lived near to Worton Hall Studios in Isleworth, west London, where many of the jungle scenes were recreated. He recalled that after filming finished in 1951, "little green parrots" began to arrive in local gardens.

"No one is 100 per cent sure where they came from," said Ms Ayoob. "There is a story that at the end of filming of *The African Queen* they released all the parakeets that had been used on set. There is a lot of scepticism around this story, but my great-grandparents were living near to the studio at that time and my great granddad remembers one day these little green parrots started to appear in his garden, and his neighbour's gardens and started eating his apple trees. He started feeding them with nuts and dates and dried fruit, and so did loads of his neighbours, and then when winter arrived they started building them little wooden shelters in the back garden. This went on for quite a few years until the winter of 1962-63, which was quite a cold winter, and the birds disappeared. The theory is that then they moved into central London because it was much warmer, and they have thrived there."

Escaped parakeets have been spotted in Britain since the 19th century, with the earliest

recorded sightings in Norfolk in 1855, Dulwich in 1893 and Brixton in 1894. However, the populations began to increase rapidly after the Fifties, and by the Nineties they were frequently spotted in the capital. The bird is native to southern India, but there are now around 8,600 breeding pairs of ring-necked parakeets living throughout England, with the biggest population in west London. They have also been spotted on the borders of Wales and Scotland. The birds have a 35-year lifespan and few local predators, enabling them to breed freely.

Stories about their origins range from claims that Jimi Hendrix released a breeding pair in Carnaby Street in the Sixties, to suggestions they escaped from private collections during the Great Storm of October 1987. Other legends said they escaped from a pet shop in Sunbury on Thames in 1970, or from Sion Park in west London in the early 1970s when debris from a passing plane damaged the aviary. The link to *The African Queen* emerged when large flocks started appearing near Isleworth in the Nineties, but it was initially dismissed as fanciful, particularly as the film was often wrongly listed as being filmed at Shepperton Studios in Surrey. Some film historians also insisted that parakeets were never used in the film. But Ms Ayoob added: "The birds probably came from several locations." *Citymetric.com*, 17 Nov 2017; *D.Telegraph*, 10 June 2018. See also Mythconceptions 125, 'Parakeets of London', FT258:23.



ABOVE: Ring-necked parakeets are an increasingly common sight in parts of the UK.

## 226: NETTLE WHIPPING



### The myth

Stinging nettles were introduced to Britain by soldiers of the Roman Empire, who used to flagellate themselves with the herb so as to keep warm in this damp, chilly outpost.

### The "truth"

There can't be many vegetables that have more myths attached to them than *Urtica dioica dioica*, that unrivalled provider of delicious spring greens and remarkably painful stings. The Romans did not introduce nettles; archaeologists have shown that nettles were in use in Britain at least as far back as the Bronze Age. Urtification – which means being beaten with stinging nettles, and which presumably hurts quite a lot – is a genuine medical practice, mostly used as a remedy for arthritic pain. There's no evidence that Roman soldiers did it to keep out the cold – and besides, nettles die back in winter. It used to be thought that formic acid was the leading stinger in stinging nettles, but histamine, acetylcholine and serotonin are now the main suspects. Why the pain is so long-lasting is still a puzzle.

### Sources

[www.compoundchem.com/2015/06/04/nettles/](http://www.compoundchem.com/2015/06/04/nettles/); [\\_Around the world in 80 plants\\_](#) by Stephen Barstow (Permanent Publications 2014); [www.thepoisonarden.co.uk/atoz/urtica\\_dioica.htm](http://www.thepoisonarden.co.uk/atoz/urtica_dioica.htm); [www.theguardian.com/science/2011/dec/04/bronze-age-archaeology-fenland](http://www.theguardian.com/science/2011/dec/04/bronze-age-archaeology-fenland); <https://lialodwick.wordpress.com/2014/04/10/romannettle/>; <https://physoc.com>

### Disclaimer

The nettle is as mysterious as it is useful and ubiquitous; almost everything known about it seems to be half-known. FT's rich, moist letters column provides the perfect habitat for you to display your *Urtica* info.

### The undead

Having inexplicably failed to read our debunking in 2003 [FT178:28], the British government ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/528193/Eatwell\\_guide\\_colour.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/528193/Eatwell_guide_colour.pdf)) continues to advise citizens to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid per day. What next? A public health campaign against sitting on cold radiators?





## MEDICAL BAG

This issue's round-up of rogue remedies sees Hans Asperger linked to Nazi science and a doctor flogging homeopathic sound files online...



ABOVE: A new book links Asperger with the Nazis' child euthanasia programme.

### ASPERGER OUTED AS NAZI

The world of autism has been shaken by the revelation that Hans Asperger, the Viennese paediatrician whose name has come to be associated with "higher-functioning" individuals on the autistic spectrum, was involved in the child euthanasia programme during the Nazi occupation. A study based on contemporary documents by Herwig Czech revealed that Asperger was directly involved in the assessments of children with disabilities, many of whom were transferred to the Spiegelgrund clinic, where nearly 800 were killed. In *Asperger's Children*, American historian Edith Sheffer shows how Asperger's career benefitted from the anti-Semitic purge of the medical profession, and how his concept of autism emerged from the prevailing eugenic consensus prevalent in Western medicine at the time.

The dramatic rise in the recognition of the syndrome, among adults as well as children, owes much to the work of the late Lorna Wing, who first introduced Asperger's work to the English-speaking world in the Eighties. For

Wing, a founding member of the National Autistic Society and the mother of an autistic daughter, as well as a clinical and academic authority, the Asperger's label was above all a means of overcoming the stigma that attached to the diagnosis of autism. Documentary filmmaker Saskia Baron, whose brother is autistic, suggests that perhaps "Wing syndrome" would be a more appropriate label. *Dr Mike Fitzpatrick, in D.Telegraph, 18 June 2018.*

### SOUNDS DODGY

The California medical board is threatening to revoke the license of Dr William Edwin Gray III for selling homeopathic sound files over the Internet that he claims can cure a variety of ailments, including Ebola, SARS, swine flu, malaria, typhoid, and cholera. Gray graduated from Stanford Medical School in 1970. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, he said he had decided not to contest the board's allegations, as it would be too expensive. Because homeopathy doesn't require a medical license, he can largely go about his business without it.

Homeopathy relies on principles such as "like cures like", meaning that a substance that produces symptoms similar to a disease or ailment is able to cure that condition – when heavily diluted. Homeopaths also believe in the "law of infinitesimals", which suggests that dilution increases a substance's potency. Most homeopathic remedies are diluted to the point where they no longer contain any of the original substance. Some homeopaths believe that water can have a memory of the substance. Gray says that sound waves can carry "the energetic signal in homeopathic remedies" to treat patients.

He claims to be able to collect that energy by placing vials of homeopathic remedies (like water) in electrified wire coils and recording any emitted sounds. With this method, he produced 263 "eRemedies," which are 13-second recordings (conveniently available as either .wav or .MP3 files) said to sound like hissing. Patients – who are not examined or even seen by Gray – can get these "remedies" via his website. There they can "dose" themselves with the recordings to treat a variety of ailments.

Gray's website lists 23 ailments that the recordings can treat. A user simply answers a series of questions

about their condition and the website serves up the appropriate eRemedy. The individual recordings go for \$5 a pop and users can also subscribe to receive 25 for \$100. In the biographical section of the site, Gray claims that in 2014 he "created [a] campaign to treat Ebola via cellphone, curing 3 out of 3 within 4 hours simply by playing the appropriate eRemedy several times in an hour." Robert Stewart, who founded the New York School of Homeopathy, was sceptical of Gray's claims, saying: "He's on his own in this". *arstechnica.com, 26 May 2018.*

• Here's a sonic remedy that actually works: an ultrasound patch that drastically cuts healing times for bed sores and serious cuts. In tests, the 100g (3.5oz) device, little bigger than a sticking plaster, dramatically reduced the size of chronic leg ulcers after four weeks. Patients who were not given the treatment saw an average increase in wound size over the same period. The patch delivers pulses of low-frequency ultrasound 15 minutes at a time. At the time of the report, scientists didn't know how it worked, but were looking at the effects of ultrasound on macrophages – immune



ABOVE: Just click on a cure! Some of the 'eRemedies' on Dr Edwin's website.



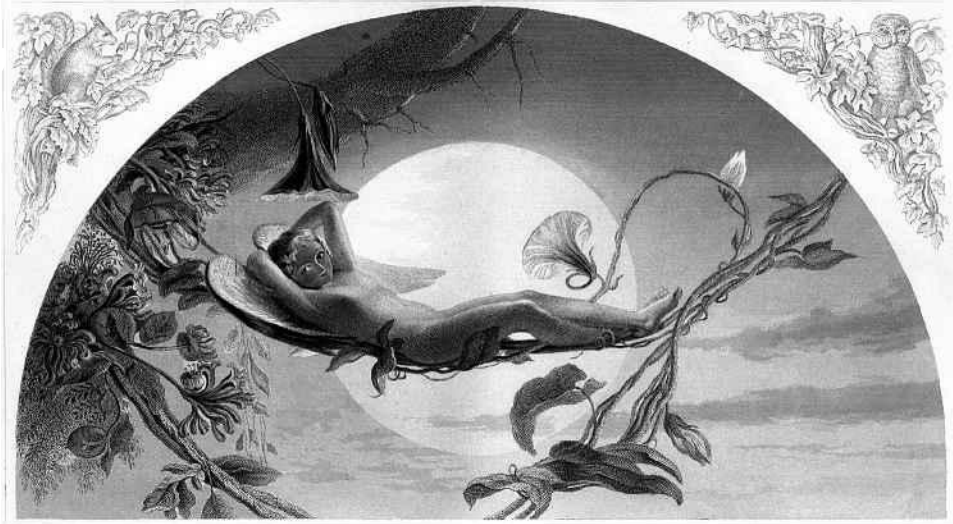
cells that play a critical role in healing – and collagen production. Laboratory studies showed that skin cells from mice experienced a 32 per cent increase in metabolism and 40 per cent increase in multiplication rate after being exposed to low-frequency ultrasound. Venous ulcers often take months and occasionally years to heal. Standard treatment involves controlling the swelling and fighting infection. *D.Telegraph, 2 Aug 2013.*

## LEAKING BRAIN

In 2013, Kendra Jackson from Nebraska was in a car accident, hitting her face on the dashboard. Several years later, she began having a runny nose, painful headaches and trouble sleeping. “[It was] like a waterfall, continuously, and then it would run to the back of my throat,” she said.

At first, doctors blamed allergies; then an ear, nose and throat specialist at Nebraska Medicine in Omaha said she had cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leaking from her brain – about 8oz (237ml) every day. (The brain produces roughly 17oz/503ml a day.) CSF is a clear liquid that flows between the brain and its outer covering, and between the spinal cord and its outer covering. The fluid cushions the brain and spinal cord, and helps clear waste from the brain. If it leaks from a nostril or down the throat, it can have a metallic taste. Though brain fluid leaking out of the nose certainly sounds alarming, people may have the condition, known medically as CSF rhinorrhea, for years before serious problems emerge, such as bacterial meningitis.

The source of the leak in Jackson’s case was a very small hole between her skull and nostrils. Entering through the nose, doctors were able to plug up the leak with some of her own fatty tissue. She was expected to make a full recovery. *livescience.com, 7 May 2018.*



## FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

### FIRST FORTEANA?

When did fortean research in Britain begin, if by ‘fortean’ we mean a critical interest in anomalies?

It would certainly be a mistake to point to Charles Fort or even some of his Victorian predecessors as the first to write about the impossible. Already in the mid-late 1600s John Aubrey was collecting and, crucially, assessing information that would fit comfortably in *Fortean Times* in 2018; in fact, I have no doubt that if Aubrey were alive today he would be a contributor. Then there are a number of interesting mediæval writers. Gerald of Wales and William of Newburgh both lived in the 12th century and both included fortean phenomena in their works with pointed asides.

However, the absolutely earliest fortean find I have turned up appears in a Welsh text, the *Historia Brittonum*. The *Historia* is dated convincingly to 829-830, but is made up of a selection of material, some of which may be considerably older. (The author of this miscellany is sometimes erroneously called ‘Nennius’.)

In many recensions of the *Historia* there is included a selection of wonders, 14 marvels to be found in the west of Britain, which includes levitating stones and ash trees growing apples. Among these is a reference to the Licat Amr, a stone tumulus that changes its dimensions every day and that

was to be found somewhere in Herefordshire (the Amr is probably the river Gamber).

In itself, this list of ‘marvels’ is not a work of forteana. The author is recounting traditions uncritically. However, in the case of the Tomb of Amr, the short account ends with a fascinating clause – which I would submit are the first fortean words in British history. They are, in Latin, *et ego solus probavi*: “and I myself have tried it”.

In other words, sometime in the early Middle Ages – and the ‘I’ here is usually, rightly or wrongly, understood to be the compiler of the *Historia* – a Welsh man decided to take a tape measure to see if a tumulus had changed dimensions overnight. (Oh, to have been there!)

How sure can we be that this is the earliest fortean investigation in British history? Well, I am fairly certain – though I would love

to be corrected – that it is the first recorded fortean investigation. But there can be no doubt that earlier records will have been kept, and were then dispersed and destroyed as history did its worst with sword, fire and flood. Somewhere in the inaccessible library of lost works there will be the records of a Romano-British squire who diligently wrote out his communications with knocking poltergeists, and the diary of a druid who jotted down fish falls.

Simon Young’s new book *Magical Folk: British and Irish Fairies* is out now from Gibson Square

A SELECTION  
OF WONDERS  
INCLUDES  
LEVITATING  
STONES AND ASH  
TREES GROWING  
APPLES



# A poltergeist, some debris and the Devil

PETER BROOKESMITH surveys the latest fads and flaps from the world of ufological research



ABOVE: What has Mr Bigelow got stored at his aerospace facility? BELOW: Pope Francis, alien negotiator.

## MORE ALPHABET SOUP

Okay, let's get the rubbish *du jour* out of the way first. The AATIP (Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program)/BAASS (Bigelow Aerospace Advanced Space Studies)/TSAAS (To The Stars Academy of Arts and Science) stuff (**FT361:28** et seq), as if you hadn't guessed. There's still no sign of any verifiable connection between the FLIR-1 video TSAAS has been promoting and the 2004 sighting by various F/A-18 pilots flying from the USS *Nimitz*. Six-plus months on, this has gotten old real fast, in American idiom. And we've seen no verifiable provenance for the other two videos either. Meanwhile, a 2009 letter to the deputy Secretary of Defense from then-Senator Harry Reid has surfaced. In it he pleads for the AATIP project to be expanded and classified, which might suggest to a cynic that even then the Pentagon wasn't wholly enchanted by what it was doing. And sundry persons associated with BAASS and now with TSAAS have popped up to tell us that they discovered UFOs and poltergeists are closely connected phenomena. Mm-hmm. So is that what those videos are showing? Polty in the sky with diamonds? Do they hope this kind of eye-twirling will attract more investors to TSAAS? Ol' Phineas T Barnum must be kicking himself he never thought of anything like this.

In related news, the same sundry persons associated with BAASS and TSAAS have been letting us have hints and glimpses of some of the mysterious UFO-related 'crash

débris' for the storage of which that nice Mr Bigelow supposedly modified a building or two in Las Vegas (see the *New York Times* report at [www.nytimes.com/2017/12/16/us/politics/pentagon-program-ufo-harry-reid.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/16/us/politics/pentagon-program-ufo-harry-reid.html)). It turns out that the sample currently being hawked about is either the same odd magnesium-and-bismuth material (or a part of it) whose true and mundane nature Linda Moulton Howe has been suppressing all these years (see *Flying Sorcery*, **FT345:30**). The hawkers include Drs Hal Puthoff and Jaques Vallée, who really ought to know better.

Those interested in keeping abreast of this rolling circus should visit the Metabunk.org site, UFO UpDates' Facebook page, and the blogs of Jason Colavito, Jack Brewer, Robert Sheaffer, and Keith Basterfield. Mr Colavito is particularly entertaining for his forays into pottymouthdom combined with despair and assiduous sleuthing. Much recommended.

Speaking of blogs: Curt Collins, who's made a speciality of burrowing into the (in)famous Cash-Landrum affair, now has another one on the go called 'The Saucers That Time Forgot'. Definitely worth a gander for stuff you've never heard of and stuff that should often make you laugh.

And while you're hunting down these excellent sources on the Web, try saying the acronym TSAAS out loud. But not in front

of the children. What you hear may be a guide to the maturity of what passes for ufology today...

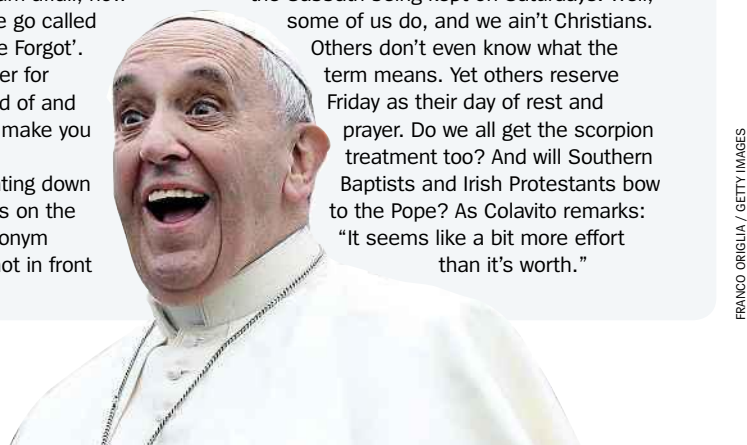
## POPE FRANCIS TO THE RESCUE

It's always good to know that Satan still keeps an eye on ufology and still stirs its pot (or pulls its chain) from time to time. The aforementioned Jason Colavito tells us that a character named Galal P Doss, who runs an Egyptian cosmetics firm but is also "a former Seventh-Day Adventist from Egypt with a track record of making bizarre prophecies, such as his failed prophecy that the pope to succeed Benedict XVI would be a demon pretending to be the resurrected John Paul II" now informs us that the prophecies of Revelation are coming to pass. One is thankful there is someone out there who can understand them without resort to scholarship. Doss is much possessed by what happens when the 'fifth angel' blows his trumpet (personally, I predict he will play a couple of choruses of 'Kind of Blue' – or maybe something pinched from Bix).

*Revelation* tells us: "I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth", which Doss reckons foretells "a celestial invasion of demons posing as 'aliens'. The pain that these 'aliens' will inflict is likened in the Bible to the sting of a scorpion. The Scriptures state that people will want to die to escape the pain, but will be unable." Aliens? Hell, no. Demons.

In their agony, the people of the Earth turn to their one true leader, Pope Francis. He negotiates with the aliens, who apparently make the pain stop, provided Christians still keep the Sabbath on Sundays. To Doss, this proves the aliens are demons, for he is much obsessed with the Sabbath being kept on Saturdays. Well, some of us do, and we ain't Christians.

Others don't even know what the term means. Yet others reserve Friday as their day of rest and prayer. Do we all get the scorpion treatment too? And will Southern Baptists and Irish Protestants bow to the Pope? As Colavito remarks: "It seems like a bit more effort than it's worth."



BILL INGALLS / NASA VIA GETTY IMAGES

FRANCO ORIGLIA / GETTY IMAGES



## Welcome to the flying circus

JENNY RANGLES greets a new identified flying object that still managed to fool the British press

At least 95 per cent of all UFO sightings are really IFOs – Identified Flying Objects – explicable in a variety of ways that we have become used to anticipating. The fun part is when a new option suddenly appears. It only happens every decade or so, though every IFO was once a novelty that had to go through a period of cultural awakening as society slowly came to terms with why it looked so odd.

Indeed, it is no coincidence that UFO sightings first became common in the wake of World War II, a conflict that saw rapid growth in aviation and rocket technology; once the war was over, our skies blossomed with strange looking aircraft and the public saw things they had never seen before. The secrecy engendered by the ensuing Cold War added to the mystery, exacerbating the idea that ‘the powers that be’ knew more than they did.

The process repeated as the UFO mystery escalated. In the 1960s, as telecommunications satellites went ‘up there’, we started to see them ‘down here’ for the first time, and a new wave of IFO misperceptions began. It was a decade or so before satellites became common enough that most people knew what they looked like. This rinse-and-repeat pattern is common in ufology – the 1970s and 80s saw it happen again with stealth aircraft, for example. They are up there, they are secret, we see them and assume they are UFOs – and it is not in the interests of the military or aviation industry to disagree, at least until such time as the technological or commercial edge is achieved and another IFO morphs from its alien form into what it always was. As the 21st century arrived, we saw the same thing happen again, when launching dangerous fire lanterns into the sky at New Year’s Eve and birthday parties caught on. I charted the development of this ‘new’ breed of IFO in this column a decade ago. By now, fire lanterns rarely trigger UFO cases and more often are reported to the police as a ‘fire hazard’.

However, here we are again: there’s a new kid on the block, the first to become a star on social media via the ‘post a YouTube video of what I just saw’ school of UFO reporting. I saw this in action last summer when videos were posted of a ‘startling’ UFO over southern England. They looked impressive and, for a time, the possibility existed that they were a genuine atmospheric phenomenon akin to ball lightning. But after several repeats and an emerging pattern of clues, I started looking for a more mundane explanation.

The case that drew my attention occurred in August 2017 near Cley Hill, Warminster, in Wiltshire. This is a town whose name



reverberates through UFO history, so it was no surprise to find something odd in the sky generating interest. The video reported in the local press shows a spectacular spluttering ‘energy’ ball with a trail of sparks beneath it appearing to loop around in tight circles across the twilight skies. Some distance away, the camera operator was baffled. You can see why they thought this was a rare atmospheric phenomenon like ball lightning; if so, it would be the best-ever footage.

Digging into this case I discovered it was not unique. Sightings started in May 2017, around the bank holiday weekend near Frome, Somerset. Another man had shot and posted footage of this, revealing a fiery glow that moves and spirals upwards, then erupts into a trail of sparks in its wake. Once you start thinking about what this *might* be, as opposed to what the media wishes it to be, then answers soon emerge. So, in May 2018, when this new breed of UFO reappeared, accompanied by mass media exploitation and another tenuous UFO link, I was prepared.

On Friday 11 May, 19-year-old Lucas Budel, from High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, posted on YouTube a 53-second clip he shot before sunset with the following brief account: “I initially thought I saw a meteorite falling and then it suddenly halted and went straight back up. I tried to record it but it disappeared into thin air. Then it came back a few minutes later and this is the footage I got. What was not visible in the footage was red sparks flying off it that looked like electricity.”

This looks a lot like the summer 2017 reports; if these had been resolved, as I believed they had, then this new case was surely on the ropes. Yet, surprisingly, after the video gained interest and was re-posted a few times with comments added (a few even suggesting my own answer) the tabloids discovered it. So, at the end of May (with no date of the sighting recorded) both the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Star* added a new twist, ratcheting up the story. This was that the UFO had been seen near an RAF base where UFOs were once investigated. The base has no aircraft operating; in fact, the admin centre

took over all paper records in 2009, just before the MOD shut down 50 years of UFO investigation, so they never really did much more than cross-check for foreign aircraft intruding into British airspace.

The cameraman described how he was sitting at his computer when the UFO appeared and on a second attempt was able to capture its “electrical cloud” before “whatever it was lost its power and started falling to the ground before the ‘engines’ started back up.” The media reports suggested ball lightning, military testing or extraterrestrial craft, although it was none of these things.

The key to this case – as I had found with the 2017 sightings – is that on the day in May when the film was actually shot, two miles south of the High Wycombe location, at Booker Airfield, there was an air show. As a spectacular twilight finale, a sophisticated small aircraft with pyrotechnics attached flew a daring display in tight loops whilst releasing its fireworks into the surrounding skies. These aerobatics create quite a show, and follow careful protocols involving clear summer weather at dusk for maximum safety and spectacle. It was confirmed as what is on the video by those present on this Friday at Booker and others who lived near the airfield and saw the flight from their gardens. It was not hard for me to track this case to source, although it was apparently beyond two British newspapers. Amusingly, they might have uncovered a real fortaean coincidence. The airfield runway over which the ‘UFO’ performed is less than a mile across fields from the Lane End Conference centre. This just happens to be where in August 1983 a spectacular weekend UFO conference was staged by BUFORA, with a huge influence on UK UFO history. It was here that Brenda Butler, Dot Street and I first reported the existence of the Halt memo that proved the Rendlesham Forest case real; but this also put a stop to plans to release the MoD files that, 26 years later, ended up at the very airbase the *Mail* and *Star* had got so excited about. And it was at this conference that the *News of the World* first heard about Rendlesham, leading to their front-page story weeks later that reverberated around the world and is still recalled today.

What all this perhaps teaches us is that we should seek possible solutions rather than unsolved mysteries: fortaean investigation works best that way. However, we are seeing here a soon-to-be-common new style of IFO, and I doubt this will be the last time the truth will disappear behind a real and metaphorical haze of pyrotechnics.

# BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

## 73 THE WOLF WOMAN OF MOBILE AND OTHER HUMAN-HEADED HOUNDS

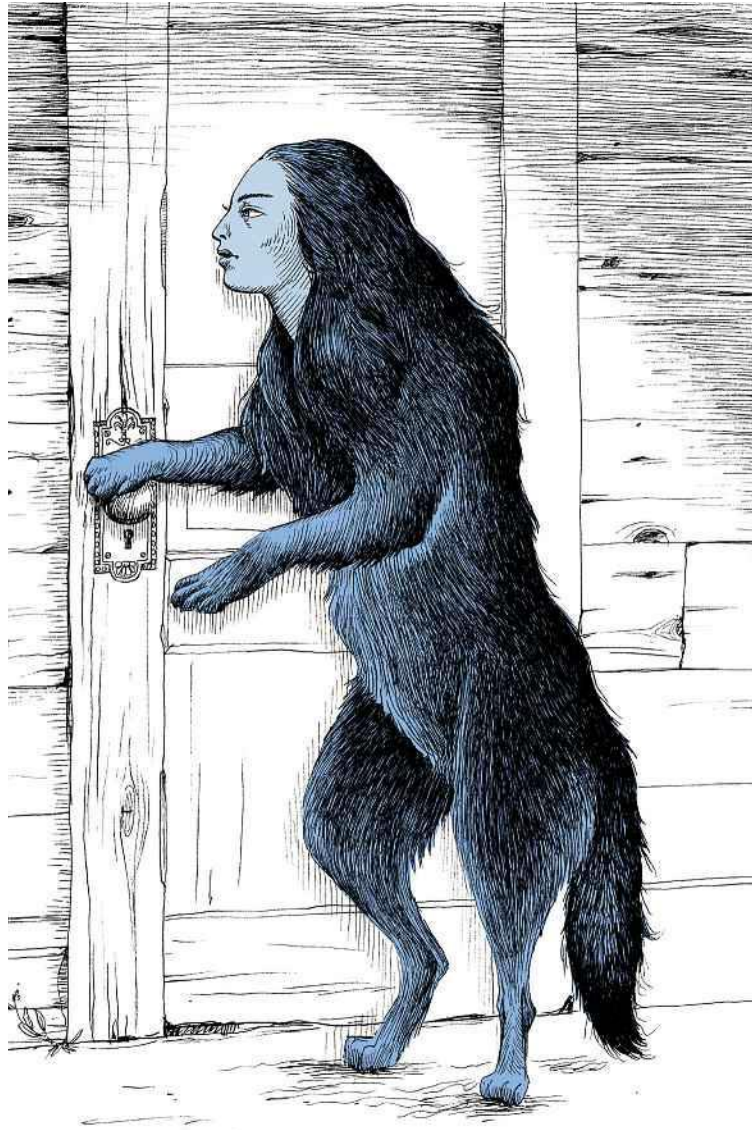
**THEO PAIJMANS** sniffs out some odd encounters with canine-human mash-ups of the most alarming kind

One scene in the Seventies remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is especially memorable. Towards the end of the film, a dog with a human face briefly walks into view. It is an unexpected sight, lifted out of a surreal nightmare and certain to shock viewers. Something eerily similar once stalked the streets of the city of Mobile, Alabama, at night – but seven years before the film was released.

In April 1971, local newspaper the *Mobile Register* asked its readers: “Does a ‘wolf woman’ exist in Mobile?” Its editorial office had been deluged with phone calls, 50 in a week it said, during the day and even at night. Patiently listening to the frantic callers, the newspaper staff began to wonder if there was something out there after all.

Dozens of frightened residents of Davis Avenue and the Plateau neighbourhood told the same story. When night fell, a strange creature, half woman and half wolf, began prowling their streets. It had made its unexpected debut about a week earlier, in the area around Davis Avenue. “It was like a woman and wolf, pretty and hairy,” said one witness. “The top half was a woman and the bottom was a wolf. It didn’t seem natural,” another resident explained.

Local police refused to comment officially on the sightings but indicated that they had launched an investigation. “Apparently the fears are real, regardless of the status of the phantom or whatever,” the newspaper bemusedly concluded, and it remembered a previous monster scare that had hit Mobile back in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup>



One night, officers went out to meet a man who claimed to have cornered the wolf woman, but upon arrival they found only a frightened collie dog.

If the newspaper report was meant to quell the unrest, it failed. Two days later, the paper admitted that at first the news staff ignored the telephone

calls about a mysterious wolf woman or dog woman reported in certain parts of the city. But after the initial newspaper report was published, the calls

only increased: “It was evident that some of the people were genuinely frightened.” Treating the panic in a tongue-in-cheek fashion had seemed the best editorial approach at the time, but that had backfired, the newspaper admitted. As a result, the panic became even more intense: “The phone calls rose to a crescendo...” But the newspaper could only speculate about where and how the scare had started. Perhaps it began as a friend-of-a-friend story, or foatale, it suggested: “We don’t know how the wolf woman stories got started. Maybe somebody got scared by some little thing and told a friend. The friend told two more and pretty soon a lot of people were looking over their shoulders. You know how it is when someone starts telling ghost stories.”<sup>2</sup>

Two weeks later, the scare had abated and disappeared from the pages of the newspaper. At a talk, Dan T Davis, the chief of the Pritchard Police Department, reminisced about how his officers had received many telephone calls from residents who claimed to have seen the wolf woman. One night, officers even went out to

a man who claimed to have cornered the wolf woman, but upon arrival they found only a frightened collie dog.<sup>3</sup> At the end of April, the wolf woman had not been featured in the local newspaper pages for days. The whole thing ended unceremoniously as an attention grabber in a publicity campaign when two drive-in cinemas in Mobile screened the film *Bigfoot*. Newspaper ads tried to whet the appetite of



moviegoers with the still fresh wolf woman scare: "You've heard the hoax about the wolf woman of Mobile... Now you can see what happens when an unknown creature really exists!"<sup>4</sup> Curiously, the newspaper and police chief Davis never mentioned the possibility of a hoax or an April Fool's Day joke.

But before Mobile's wolf woman, there had been others of her ilk that emerged out of a primordial darkness to haunt the habitats of man. In May 1961, for instance, something very strange came crawling straight out of Compton. Local police admitted they had been "deluged" by rumours of "a bizarre child-eating monster" or "ogre" that was prowling the streets of the southern California city: "Several who have called during the past two days say rumours have been circulating that the creature has devoured at least four children and has attacked many others." According to Compton's residents, the creature had the body of a dog and the face of a woman. As in the case of Mobile's wolf woman, investigators were unable to detect where or why the scare had started. Perhaps children watching a horror film or reading a horror story had triggered the panic, they speculated.<sup>5</sup>

A columnist suggested that the monster was a werewolf, noting that nearby Palo Verde had been haunted for a number of years by an apparition believed by some to be such a creature. The Palo Verde phantom predator scare had begun in 1957 when a buck rabbit and a pet goat were found with their necks broken. Since then a 'something' with sharp claws and fangs occasionally attacked domestic animals, the writer pointed out, jokingly suggesting that an 'uturuncu', or were-jaguar, was at bay.<sup>6</sup>

But there are accounts even

older than the Mobile wolf woman and Compton ogre panics. In 1943, "something big, black and hairy" was terrorising Palo Alto, California, and environs. Deputy Sheriff Nicholas Rose said that six reputable persons had reported to him seeing "a hairy thing with a man's head and a wolf's body" wandering its lonely country roads. Sometimes the creature had jumped out at passing cars. Rose said: "I'm doing my best to stop the werewolf rumours, but I sure would like to meet whatever is scaring the people." He believed the monster was either a prankster or a large animal.<sup>7</sup> Science quickly came to the rescue, subduing the rampant werewolf hysteria. A Professor Ira L Wiggins, director of Stanford's Museum of Natural History, solemnly declared that "there just isn't such an animal".<sup>8</sup>

The Palo Alto werewolf disappeared from the newspaper pages and into thin air. The "strange monstrosity" that roamed the Colorado hills in 1905 suffered a similar fate. Several people had seen it at different times in the neighbourhood of Wildhorse, some two miles west of the city of Buena Vista. One time a "prominent ranchwoman" was driving slowly down the road across the Arkansas River when her horse suddenly shied and she was almost thrown from her rig. "She was horrified to see, a few feet ahead of her and in the middle of the road, the monstrosity. It was about the size and build of a full-grown greyhound and of drab colour, its glistening sides being covered with black spots as large as silver dollars. It had a long, smooth tail and the woman declares it had an almost human face, and a bristling red mustache ornamented the proper place upon its physiognomy. The eyes were close together and deep set and its ears stood erect... It

stood erect on its hind feet..." Its screams so frightened the horse that it bolted away. Hunting parties were formed, but they could not find the creature.<sup>9</sup>

The unpleasant apparition that inspired Charlie Cooke to immediately pack his things and leave his property in Henrico County, Virginia, in 1903 was very much like the wolf woman of Mobile. Cooke said a "fearful apparition of a ghost - a giant dog with a white woman's head" had been visiting his premises for several nights around 10 o'clock: "A ghost, which takes the shape of a dog with a woman's head. It gets into the yard and scatters the milk pans and the woodpile, uttering the while most horrible noises. Upon some occasions it comes up to the door and rattles the knob..." An old woman who was living in the house with Cooke affirmed that everything he told about the ghost was "absolutely correct".<sup>10</sup>

The oldest account unearthed so far of a doglike monster with a human face or head comes from Harrisonville, Missouri. One night in 1864, Judson K Mason was crossing the street on his way home from a neighbour when he saw "something in the roadway which to this day he cannot explain what it was. He says it had the body of a dog with a human head and face attached... He yelled at the apparition and kicked at it, when the 'thing' turned its head and with a fearful, terrible look in its eyes looked him straight in the face." Mason ran back to his neighbour's house for help, but when he returned to the spot with his neighbour, the monster was nowhere to be seen. Mason told of his unbelievable encounter decades later, and all these years, he admitted he had never been able to solve the mystery as to 'what kind of being that 'ghost' was.'<sup>11</sup>

What the creatures in these

stories represent is indeed a mystery. They deviate from the traditional image of the werewolf as a humanoid figure with a wolf's head, although they sometimes emerge in areas that harbour traditions of werewolf sightings. Are they cultural hallucinations, paranormal phantoms or chimerical artefacts born in the pressure cookers of social panics? Or do they belong to the zooforn regions of cryptozoology?

Perhaps these stories connect to even older and different fields, for instance that of teratology, as some accounts may indicate. In 1905, William Rutherford of Smithfield, Virginia, told how he had seen "a very small pup, with the exact form of a dog's body, and an excellent form of a man's head with all the features that go to make up the modern mulatto. The teeth, eyes, nose and mouth have a striking resemblance to the human face, and is seemingly endowed with reasoning faculties, appearing to notice especially, the conversations that are carried on by many visitors. The dog is not expected to live, as each day he seems to grow weaker..."<sup>12</sup>

Tales such as these precede their ghostly counterparts listed here. In 1866, a number of American newspapers published an account from Richmond that, although painful to read because of its virulent racism, does serve as an example of how old that forgotten tradition actually is: "It will be remembered that we published a statement to the effect that a negro woman living near Chimbozaro had been delivered of a litter of puppies. We now learn that these animals have human heads and canine bodies..." It ends by briefly remarking that in 1826, "a negro woman named Sally Ham was the mother of three creatures such as we have described above, but they all died soon after their birth."<sup>13</sup>

## NOTES

1 'Is 'Wolf Woman' Skulking Around The City? Various Area Persons Claim Seeing Creature', *Mobile Register*, Mobile, AL, 8 April 1971. For the 1930s monster scare, see: Theo Pajmans, 'The Pre-War Monster Panics of 1938', **FT337-30-31**.

2 'Wolf Woman Is No Cause For Panic', *Mobile Register*, 10 April 1971.

3 'Kiwans Club Hears Dan Davis', *Mobile Register*, 23 April 1971.

4 *Mobile Register*, 29 & 30 April 1971.

5 'Rumors Of Ogre Pour Into Police', *Press-Telegram*, Long Beach, CA, 4 May 1961.

6 Bob Wells, 'Eye Opener. Werewolves on Prowl', *Press-Telegram*, 5 May 1961.

7 Palo Alto Has Werewolf Scare', *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles, CA, 12 May 1943; 'Werewolf Plagues Doubting Deputy', *Billings Gazette*, Billings, MT, 13 May 1943; 'Were-Wolf Terror Grips Palo Alto as 'Hairy Thing' Roams', *Nevada State Journal*, Reno, NV, 13 May 1943.

8 'Flashes of Life in the U.S.', *The Independent Record*, Helena, MT, 18

May 1943.

9 'Dog With Human Face. Strange Monstrosity Seen by Many Persons in Colorado Hills', *Arkansas City Daily Traveler*, Arkansas City, KS, 17 June 1905. The account was published in a number of American newspapers.

10 'A Woman's Head On A Dog's Body', *The Times Dispatch*, Richmond, VA, 10 April 1903.

11 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, St. Louis, MO, 2 June 1889. Fortean researcher Kay Coggin unearthed this account.

12 'Wonderful Dog Has Human Face', *Morning Herald*, Lexington, KY, 28 Oct 1905.

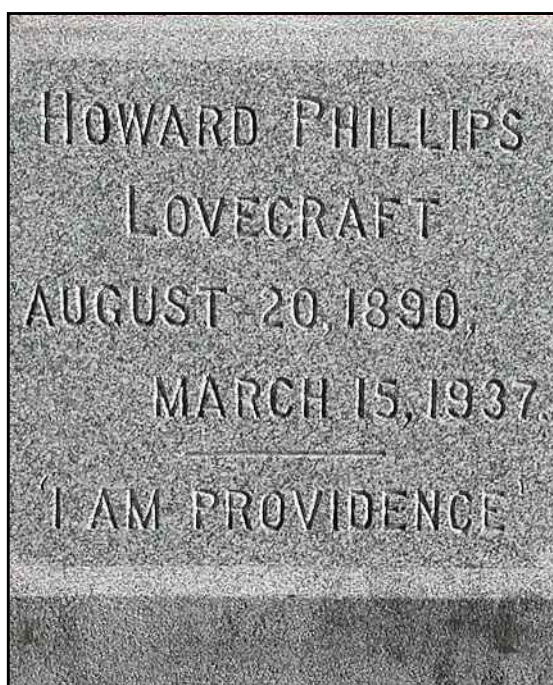
13 'Strange Occurrence in Richmond', *The Wilmington Herald*, Wilmington, NC, 5 Jan 1866. Quoting the *Richmond Examiner*.

# HP Lovecraft and the horror of history

The weird tales of HP Lovecraft reveal a man whose relationship to history was both complex and contradictory. **JAMES HOLLOWAY** explores the way that Lovecraft's fictions articulated racist fears, cosmic horror and a warning to the archæologically curious...

**O**n 14 March 1937, in Jane Brown Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island, HP Lovecraft lay dying of intestinal cancer. Helpless to do anything about his condition, he had been recording his symptoms in his diary, but for days now had been too weak to hold a pencil. Looking back on his life, Lovecraft cannot have felt much sense of accomplishment. The scion of a wealthy New England family, he had lived most of his life in precarious poverty, failing to scratch out a living through writing and unable to hold down any other kind of job. Much of his work had never been published, and what had appeared either in cheap pulp magazines or in micro-press editions printed by friends. He can hardly have thought that his literary legacy would outlive him, unless perhaps in the shape of one of the young writers he had spent so much of his time encouraging. In the early hours of 15 March, he finally died. He was 46 years old.

Lovecraft would have been surprised – pleasantly, one hopes – to learn that his writing did outlive him. Thanks to the devotion of fans and protégés, his stories survived. The post-war fantasy and science fiction boom saw his popularity grow, although critics still ignored him. Even more surprisingly, the late 20th century saw a simultaneous critical re-evaluation and surge in popularity for the once-obscure writer. Today, Lovecraft is both better-known and more acceptable to the literary elite than he could ever have imagined. His creations appear in works by other authors, as well as films, games, toys and more. He has been embraced not only by authors and critics, but also by philosophers, who find his sense of human irrelevance more relevant than ever. “Somehow, against all odds,” Carl H Sederholm and Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock observe, Lovecraft “has become a 21st-century star.”



LEFT: H P Lovecraft's grave in Swan Point Cemetery, Providence, Rhode Island.

*He posits that archæological knowledge could destroy mankind*

The several dozen stories and novellas that make up Lovecraft's slim body of work are varied, ranging from fantastic adventures to Gothic horror tales to stories that meld horror and science fiction. Many of them are concerned, as Lovecraft was, with history. They often feature an investigation that culminates in a deeply unwelcome revelation; this can be a revelation either about the history of humanity and the world, or a revelation

about the personal history or heritage of the protagonist.

The tentacles of Lovecraft's influence even wind their way into supposedly non-fictional accounts of humanity's history. Jason Colavito has suggested that Lovecraft's stories, which often feature the influence of alien beings in Earth's early history, were a major influence on the “ancient astronauts” school of alternative archæology. But while most readers seem to find the theories of writers like Erich von Däniken exciting and intriguing, Lovecraft assumed that people would react rather differently to these ideas.

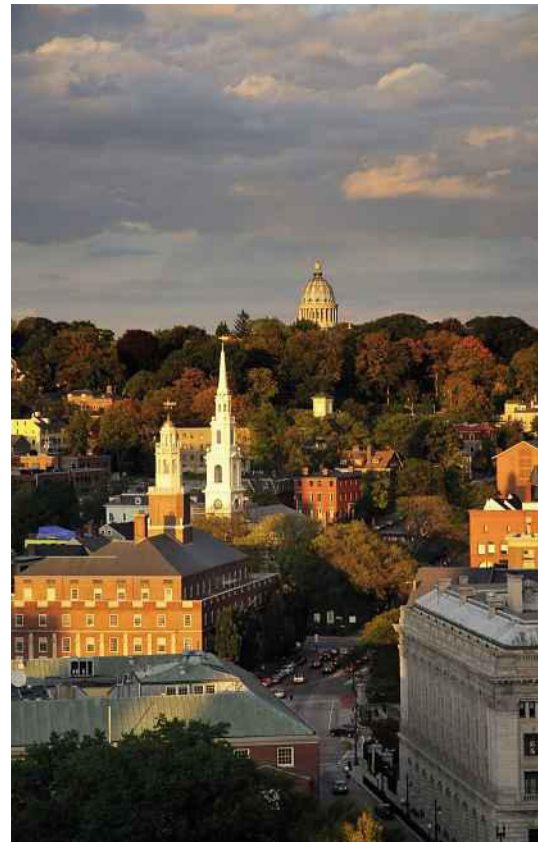
After all, Lovecraft's fiction – and, as we will see, his personal writing – isn't exactly optimistic about the benefits of discovering the truth. In story after story, Lovecraft posits

that archæological, historical or scientific investigation could well destroy mankind. Was he right?

## PRICELESS ILLUSIONS

When most people think of Lovecraft, they think of the details of his monsters: tentacles, membranes, ichor. Enjoyable though this is, it was never, to Lovecraft's mind, the key element of his horror fiction. Instead, his writings reveal someone fascinated not only with history but with his relationship to it. His fascination drew him in two seemingly contradictory directions: on the one hand, he perceived human experience as meaningless in the face of the vast scale of cosmic time. On the other, he was practically obsessed with history and the idea of historical continuity. For Lovecraft, history was both the foundation of a culture's sense of identity and a merciless force that revealed that identity for the fraud it was.





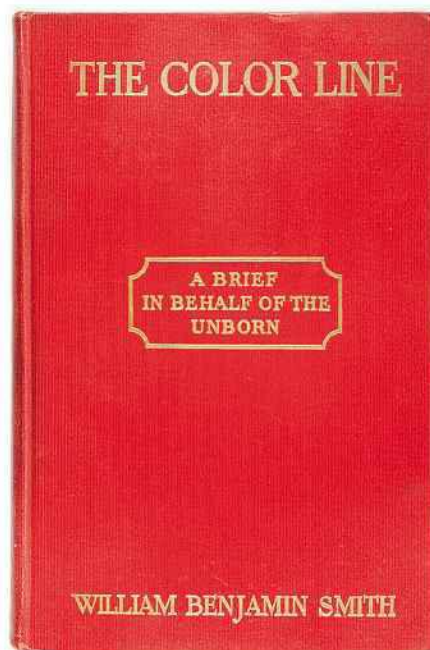
CHRIS CHARLESWORTH / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

**ABOVE LEFT:** Lovecraft photographed in 1930. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The anchor of tradition:— HPL’s beloved Providence, a source of pragmatic localism and a shield against a devastating sense of “lostness” in time. **BELOW:** Lovecraft’s ideas about history were bound up with his often contradictory beliefs about race.

This contradictory view can be seen in Lovecraft’s letters. He was fascinated by, and often bragged about, both the antiquity of his native New England and its families, and the ancestral roots of his own Phillips family in particular. He regarded this as something of a personal quirk, writing that his love for the “ancient and permanent” was one of the fundamental parts of his character, together with love of “the strange and fantastic” and “scientific truth and abstract logick”. The affectation of spelling was a common one in Lovecraft’s writing: “verily,” he once wrote, “I ought to be wearing a powdered wig and knee-breeches.” Lovecraft enjoyed poking fun at himself as a fossil, but, to him, a connection to history was vital for individuals and for civilisation as a whole. “Take a man away from the fields and groves which bred him – or which moulded the lives of his forefathers – and you cut off his sources of power altogether,” he wrote in a 1927 letter. When Lovecraft’s protagonist Randolph Carter goes looking for a magical city in “The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath”, he finds that this wondrous place is actually built from the memories of his own childhood home.

Lovecraft’s sense of history was associated with his racist views: he was only 14 years old when he wrote a poem inspired by William Benjamin Smith’s 1905 book *The Color Line*, which argued that the American Civil War had been a failure because African Americans, being naturally inferior, could not survive freedom. When World War

## *Lovecraft’s sense of history was associated with his racist views*



I broke out, Lovecraft’s sense that racial identity was destiny led him to worry about America’s prospects: “Racial factors are also against us,” he wrote in 1917. “The enemy has the preponderance of superior blood.” Like many of his contemporaries, Lovecraft was impressed by the work of Oswald Spengler, whose 1918 *The Decline of the West* told a mystical, pessimistic story of the impending fall of European civilisation.

These views might seem strange for a man who thought of himself as a nihilist. After all, Lovecraft also wrote that “the emotions of the past were derived from experiences, beliefs, customs, living conditions, historic backgrounds, horizons, &c., &c., so different from our own, that it is simply silly to fancy we can duplicate them...” He even appeared to acknowledge that a rational view of culture precluded his own heartfelt racism. “As for the Semitic culture,” he wrote to Frank Belknap Long in 1926, “it is not for us to say one word either for or against it, in an absolute sense. We do not feel its impulses, and can never know its essence.” In another letter to Long, he claimed that “I have freely declared myself at all times (like everybody else in his respective way) a mere product of my background, & do not consider the values of that background as at all applicable to outsiders.”

How can these two views be reconciled? With difficulty: and it’s this difficulty that lies at the heart of Lovecraftian archæology. He tried to reconcile these views himself: “...‘good’ is a relative & variable quality,

depending on ancestry, chronology, geography, nationality, & individual temperament. Amidst this variability there is *only one anchor of fixity* which we can seize upon as the working pseudo-standard of 'values' which we need in order to feel settled & contented – & that anchor is *tradition*, the potent emotional legacy bequeathed to us by the massed experience of our ancestors, individual or national, biological or cultural. Tradition means nothing cosmically, but it means everything locally & pragmatically because we have nothing else to shield us from a devastating sense of 'lostness' in endless time & space." Similarly, he wrote to Helen Sully in 1934 that "we must save *all that we can*, lest we find ourselves adrift in an alien world with no memories or guideposts or points of reference to give us the priceless illusions of direction, interest and significance amidst the cosmic chaos."

The idea of historical continuity as a "priceless illusion" shows Lovecraft attempting to square the circle, simultaneously acknowledging that his own sense of cultural superiority was unfounded while desperately clinging to it to provide a sense of validation. On the one hand, he revelled in his genteel New England heritage; on the other hand, he knew, in the clear-thinking, scientific part of his mind, that there was nothing about that heritage that really made him special or superior. How could he think there was, confronted

every day with the evidence of his own irrelevance?

History is a vital source of identity and continuity. History is an illusion. History helps us feel that we belong – but we don't. In his fiction, Lovecraft would pick ceaselessly at this uncomfortable scab.

### ARCHAEOLOGY AND IDENTITY

The idea that history and archaeology give a sense of purpose and continuity was hardly some particular obsession of Lovecraft's. Archaeology has a long and chequered history when it comes to issues of national identity. Although modern archaeologists might like to see themselves as objective investigators of the past, the discipline has often served to reinforce a sense of shared identity by creating national myths or providing images that represent a culture's history. The practice of validating identities by appeals to the distant past has very old roots: Icelandic writer Snorri Sturluson insisted that the pre-Christian Norse gods were really heroes from the *Iliad*, for instance, while the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath cited Scotland's Scythian heritage in support of its claim to independence. Later historians and archaeologists cut down (mostly) on the mythological references but continued to use ancient history to validate modern cultures. In England, historians like Sharon Turner insisted that "our language, our government and our laws display our Gothic ancestors in every part". History

and archaeology played an important role in establishing national identities in the emerging nations of Europe; tales of Viking heroes helped to define a new sense of Norwegian national identity, for instance. It wasn't simple national myth-making, either; archaeologists ignored or denigrated the achievements of enemy or colonised cultures. Nineteenth-century white Americans hypothesised a race of vanished giants to avoid attributing the massive earthworks of the Mound Builder culture to Native Americans.

Today, archaeologists, at least those in the English-speaking world, tend to view this kind of nationalist archaeology as disreputable – at best, a simplistic product for the popular market and, at worst, something akin to the 'pseudoarchaeology' that argues for ancient races of giants or aliens building the pyramids. Indeed, the two strands sometimes blend together: the famous 'Bosnian Pyramid' (see FT212:20) is an example of an alternative archaeological find that clearly helps to advocate a sense of national importance for a nation with a troubled historical identity. But archaeology as a way of bolstering national myths has not always been a fringe pursuit; indeed, for much of the discipline's history this approach was comfortably inside the mainstream. This was definitely true in Lovecraft's time. The Nazis funded and supported a politically driven archaeology that sought to create a certain image of



ABOVE: Archaeology in the service of national identity: A pop culture vision of the Nazis' politically driven research in Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

MOVIESTORE COLLECTION LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



ABOVE LEFT: The Halsey House, 140 Prospect Street, Providence, the model for the Ward house in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. BELOW: Steps down to the Dreamlands in Lovecraft's Randolph Carter stories – an archæological (and very Jungian) metaphor for the descent into the realms of the unconscious.

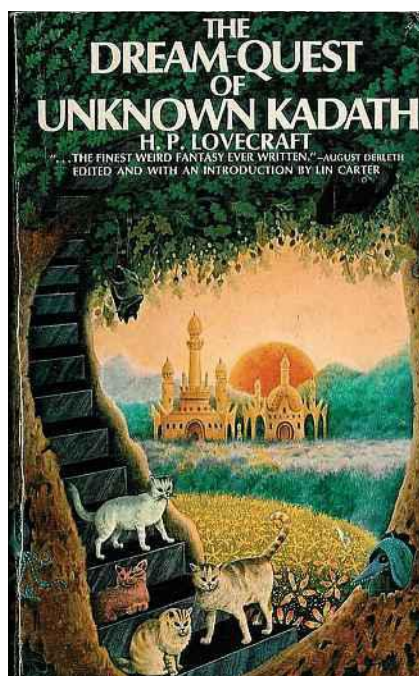
the German state and people, but it wasn't completely divorced from pre-1933 German archæology; indeed, it was merely a more extreme version of a commonly-held view (see FT196:32-39).

It's no surprise, then, that Lovecraft shared this common view of history as something that gave both society as a whole and individuals within it a sense of purpose. But Lovecraft also saw that modern science and rational thought threatened that "priceless illusion," and the theme appears clearly in his fiction. In many of his stories, he takes this illusion-shattering and makes it intensely personal for his protagonists.

### GOING UNDERGROUND

Like many authors, Lovecraft included characters in his fiction who represent idealised versions of himself: characters like Randolph Carter or the scholarly protagonists of "The Dunwich Horror" are bookish, genteel New Englanders like Lovecraft, but wealthier, tougher, more successful, more decisive or more conventionally heroic. Perhaps unusually for authorial avatars, though, these super-Lovecrafts are inevitably cast in the role of victims. And one of the ways in which they are victimised is the destruction of their sense of historical continuity. This theme runs through Lovecraft's work during the period in which he created what French novelist Michel Houellebecq, the author of a study of Lovecraft, calls the "great texts", the foundational works of the Cthulhu Mythos,

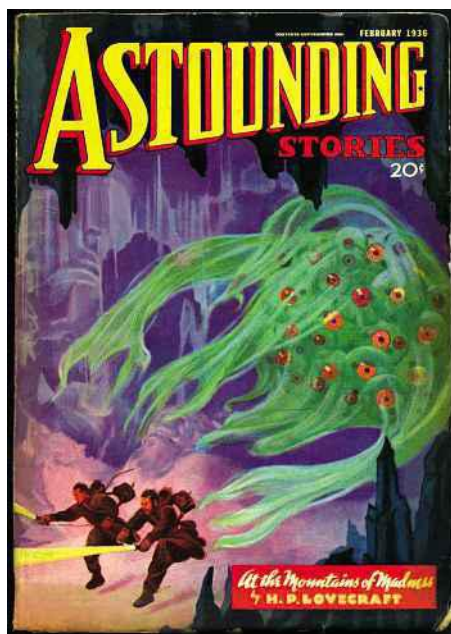
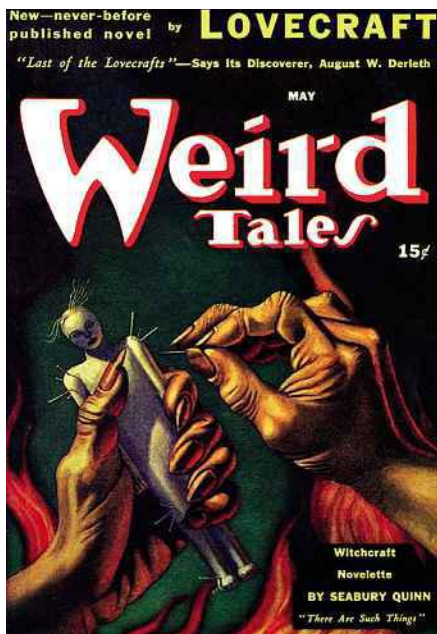
## *Bringing the past into the present can be a very dangerous act*



which appeared between 1926 and 1934.

It's particularly interesting to look at Lovecraft's view of the past in light of archæology, especially archæology as it is portrayed in the media. In reality, archæology is a complex discipline that involves a wide range of different types of investigation. In the media, though – and in most of our imaginations – it means digging up the past. In his 2007 book *From Stonehenge to Las Vegas*, Cornelius Holtorf argued that archæology is fundamentally a metaphor: archæologists dig up the past from underground. This process is closely associated with all the other ways in which we see underground (or underwater) environments as metaphors.

This multifaceted archæological/underground metaphor runs through many of Lovecraft's stories, so it's worth looking at in a little detail. Archæologists in popular culture are frequently compared to detectives, piecing together (literally) clues that reveal the answers to mysteries of the past. What they dig up is from the past, of course, but it's also often dead; and underground is the underworld, the land of the dead. The subterranean world is one of secrets: when people want to hide from the authorities, they 'go underground'. And when we want to research or investigate something, even if it's just using the Internet to look something up, we say we're going to 'do some digging'. The underground world is the unconscious, as well, and the land of dreams; in Lovecraft's Dreamlands stories,



ABOVE LEFT: *Weird Tales*, May 1941, saw the posthumous publication of the first part of “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward”. ABOVE CENTRE: *Astounding Stories*, February 1936, showcased “At the Mountains of Madness”. ABOVE RIGHT: “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” featured on the cover of *Weird Tales* in May 1942.

the entrance to the land of dreams is in an underground cavern reached by descending a flight of 70 steps.

Finally, of course, what archaeologists dig up from the past is dangerous: *there are some things better left buried*. Bringing the past into the present, the dead to life or the secrets of the unconscious into the light can be a very dangerous act. These themes appear over and over again in Lovecraft’s stories, and in the popular mythology that grew up around them after his death. But although these are common themes in stories about the past, Lovecraft’s fiction presents them with some important differences.

#### FOUR STORIES

Written in 1923, “The Rats in the Walls” was published in 1924. Like Lovecraft, the narrator of the story is an American of English descent. He returns to England to reclaim his family’s ancestral home, Exham Priory, and becomes obsessed with the sound of rats running through the walls, scurrying endlessly downward. When he explores the lower levels of the house, he discovers ancient ruins that reveal his family’s monstrous history – and, indeed, begins to regress into past lives until he reaches a primitive, animalistic state.

Holtorf’s archaeological metaphor is on full view here: as the narrator goes further and further underground, he descends through layers of older and older strata, not only going further into the house’s – and by extension his family’s – history but further into the unconscious mind. But the tension in Lovecraft’s view of history is revealed here: discovering the truth of his family’s history destroys him.

Lovecraft wrote “The Case of Charles

Dexter Ward” in 1927, although it was not published until after his death. Its eponymous protagonist is an apparent escapee from a mental institution. Ward has been obsessed with his distant ancestor, Joseph Curwen, a reputed sorcerer. As Ward’s family doctor investigates, he discovers that Ward studied magic in order to resurrect Curwen, who eventually killed him and assumed his identity.

Historical obsession leads to an unsettling discovery in another Lovecraft story, but in “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward”, the metaphor is starkly obvious. Ward literally brings his own past back to life, only to discover that it has no use for him and destroys him.

Although “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” is one of Lovecraft’s most famous stories, it was not widely published before his death. Written in 1931, it was printed in 1936 in a small edition of only 200 copies. It tells the story of a visitor to a sinister New England town who learns that the inhabitants are not truly human. Over generations, they have interbred with monsters, creating hybrid creatures. After escaping, the narrator learns that he himself is descended from the inhabitants of the town. As with “Rats,” the tale focuses on a character who is fascinated by history, at first by the art and architecture of the town and eventually by the origin of its degeneracy. By pursuing that interest, however, he learns an historical fact that completely annihilates his sense of his own identity.

Written in 1931 and published in 1936, “At the Mountains of Madness” is one of the most sweeping, and most influential, expressions of Lovecraft’s historical theme. The story features a team of scientists who unearth the bodies of alien creatures frozen

in the Antarctic ice. The excavated creatures return to life and kill the scientists who dug them up. In investigating the killings, the protagonists discover an ancient city built by these aliens and learn the true history of the Earth – including the fact that these ancient beings created mankind, possibly as a joke.

Although these stories vary in their treatment of historical themes, they share some basic similarities: the historical investigation is structured as a mystery, but the revelation at the end of the mystery is profoundly negative. In each of these stories, the revelation has something to do with *history*, either the history of a character (as in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, “The Rats in the Walls” or *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*) or of humanity as a whole, as in “At the Mountains of Madness”). These are some of the most notable examples, but there are many others: “The Facts in the Case of Arthur Jermyn,” “The Shadow Out of Time” and others all share this theme. In each case, the character’s descent into horror is marked by an annihilation of the character’s sense of history: *if your history isn’t what you thought it was*, Lovecraft seems to say, *then you’re not who you thought you were*.

Although the archaeological metaphor runs through it, Lovecraft’s concept of the terror of archaeology isn’t the same as the conventional archaeological horror story. Traditional narratives of dangerous archaeology are more about hubris and punishment. Consider the curse of Tutankhamun, for instance (see FT136:40-43), and the vengeful mummy films of the 1930s onwards. In these stories, supernatural powers punish archaeologists for their arrogance in disturbing the resting places of ancient civilisations. In keeping with the archaeological metaphor,



**ABOVE:** Lord Caernarvon, his daughter Lady Evelyn Herbert, and archæologist Howard Carter outside the tomb of Tutankhamun, Valley of the Kings, Egypt, 1922. **BELOW:** The hubris of archæologists, disturbing the rest of ancient civilisations, was the basis for a cycle of vengeful mummy movies in the 1930s.

the act of excavating something from the past is analogous to bringing it back to life. Mummy curse stories (or their non-Egyptian analogues in films like *The Runestone*) criticise archæologists for their materialism and hubris; they even express an uncomfortable scepticism about imperialism. What they don't do, for the most part, is threaten the fundamental identity of their victims. Indeed, even when they present a shocking revelation (such as the fact that magic exists), it's seldom the point of the story.

In Lovecraft's world, it's history and archæology *themselves* that are threatening. Dig too deeply, and you might unearth a monster – but worse, you might unearth the knowledge that you yourself are a monster and always have been.

### DISSOCIATED FRAGMENTS

In Lovecraft's fiction, knowledge of the secrets that underlie human history is a terrifying, destructive force. In reality, of course, there are many people who claim to have just such knowledge. But the terrifying destructiveness hasn't emerged. As long as there has been an archæological orthodoxy, there have been people who rebelled against it. Alternative archæologies have always been in the business of telling people that their histories aren't what they think they are, but for the most part these revelations are presented as fascinating, compelling and mysterious rather than horrifying.

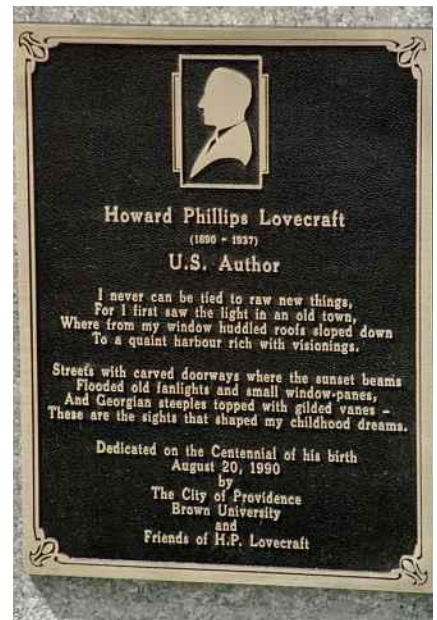
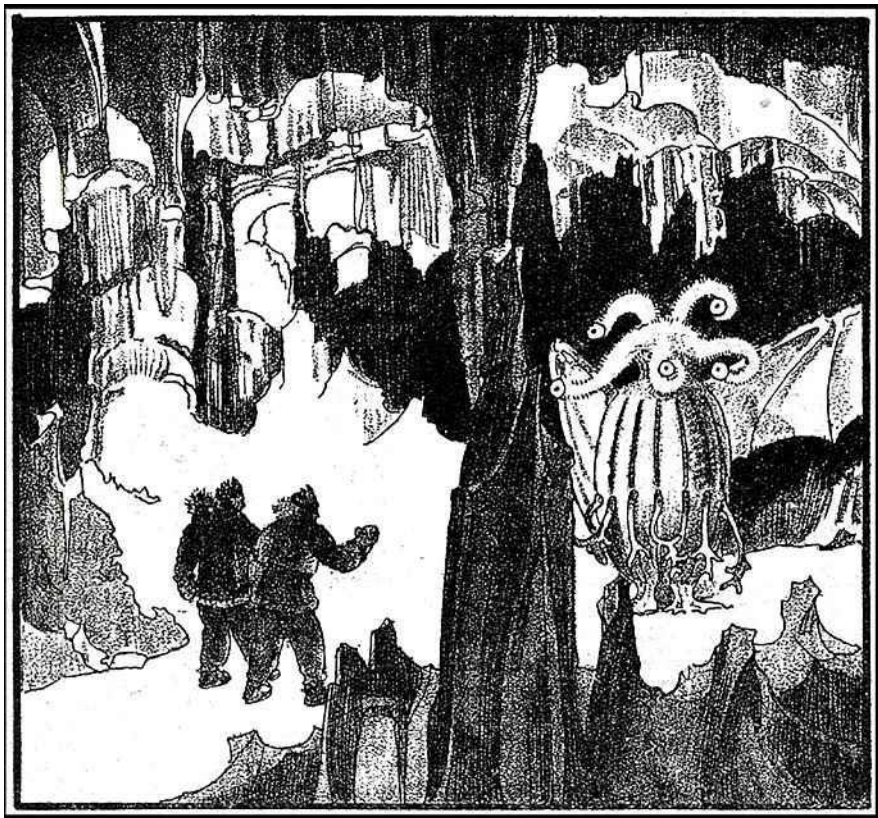
*Dig too deeply and you might unearth the knowledge that you are a monster*



This may be because people who accept these revelations tend to be strongly predisposed to believe in them. For example, alternative archæology often portrays itself as a reaction against a rationalist consensus. Many of the writers who spread the story of the curse of Tutankhamun in the wake of the death of Lord Caernarvon, for instance, were committed spiritualists or other believers in the paranormal for whom Egypt held a special significance. Although it's always hard to judge the impact of the tale, most readers seem to have taken it in a spirit of curious interest. Did anyone who didn't previously believe in magic and curses begin to believe in them as a result of Caernarvon's death?

The result is an interesting contrast. At a first glance, a story like the curse of Tutankhamun should be just as existentially terrifying as any Lovecraftian revelation. The idea that an Egyptian king could lash out across millennia to punish transgressors is every bit as terrifying a violation of the natural order as any of Lovecraft's horrors. But historically there is little evidence that people reacted to it in that way. Presumably, those who were invested in a rational conception of the Universe didn't believe the story, while those did believe it already believed in a magical world. Most people probably engaged with the story only casually and didn't have strong views about its veracity. Nobody's worldview was shattered.





ABOVE: "I first saw the light in an old town"; history and the sense of place as shaping and consoling forces in Lovecraft verses on a plaque in Providence. LEFT: The cosmic terror afforded by the vistas of pre-human history opened up in "At the Mountains of Madness".

Alternatively, it may be that many people welcome the shattering of historical identity. This seems contrary to how Lovecraft portrayed these revelations in his fiction. It all depends, however, on the role historically validated identity plays in the individual's emotional life. Lovecraft grew up and was educated (or educated himself) in a milieu where orthodox history validated his position at the top of the social order. Indeed, as many have pointed out, Lovecraft's position as a white, New England gentleman was all he had going for him given his lack of financial, academic or (in his own eyes) artistic success.

But this understanding of history's anchoring force depends on the specific role Lovecraft inhabited. For many people, the role history placed on them was not supporting but restrictive; and once again, orthodox history played a part in enforcing this. Mainstream history of the 1920s and 1930s overlooked the experiences of women, ignored the achievements of non-European cultures, and even claimed that particularly impressive feats of architecture in Africa or the Americas had to be the work of Europeans. For Lovecraft, and perhaps for many of his initial readers, the idea of their history being threatened was terrifying. But it's not hard to see how some found it liberating. Queer readings of stories like "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" reflect this: Lovecraft expects the reader to find the story of a protagonist discovering that he is a despised other horrifying, and doubly horrifying because the narrator *embraces* the change. We can

easily envision an alternative reading of the transformation, one in which the new "inhuman" identity represents an escape from an unwelcome historically enforced one. Perhaps discoveries that violate an established historical identity are more welcome to some than others.

Perhaps, in fact, it's the restoration of a sense of narrative significance that makes alternative archaeologies so appealing. Alternative theories can give voices to communities ignored by the historical establishment. Afrocentrism is an example of this type of inspirational alternative. Afrocentrist historians have often been criticised for historical errors, but for many readers their writings provided a sense of historical identity not found in mainstream history (which was also, of course, committing an historical error by neglecting African history; sometimes it's historical fantasy all the way down).

Lovecraft scholars have often suggested that the all-powerful alien "gods" of the Cthulhu Mythos are just stand-ins for a heartless Universe in which humans in general and we in particular don't matter. When Lovecraft was writing, this was still a relatively new concept, one to which humanity was struggling to adjust. Most historians, especially those in the popular press, were still celebrating the "priceless illusions" that meant so much to Lovecraft, but which he could clearly see were doomed. Modern historians and archaeologists, at least in the post-war West, have shied away from the kind of matter-of-fact nationalism that was so common in

Lovecraft's day. Instead, they view history as a complex network of causes and national identity as a fluid, permeable thing, constantly redefined. When academics call something a "social construct," they don't necessarily *mean* "priceless illusion," but that's what many seem to hear.

If Cthulhu and his otherworldly kin represent a Universe that stubbornly resists our attempts to impose meaning on it, then the position of history and its alternatives may be reversed. History told Lovecraft that he fitted in, that people like him ruled by right, and that his culture, although perhaps imperilled, was noble and just. He was smart enough to see through this story, and his monsters tell us something about what he saw behind it. Modern archaeologists and historians, though, seem – at least in principle – to embrace Lovecraft's slippery, uncaring sense of the world. If the shocking revelations are coming from the former defenders of the cosmic order, we may all be, like Randolph Carter, looking in strange places for our priceless illusions.

For more on HP Lovecraft, see also Daniel Harms, "Dreamer of the Dark", FT184:32-40; Roger Luckhurst, "Lovecraft Resurgent", FT304:54-55; David Hambling, "File under 'science fiction'", FT304:56-57.

✦ JAMES HOLLOWAY is a teacher, writer and podcaster, specialising in history and archaeology, especially the early mediæval period and the public role of archaeology. He is currently writing a mediæval setting book for the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game.

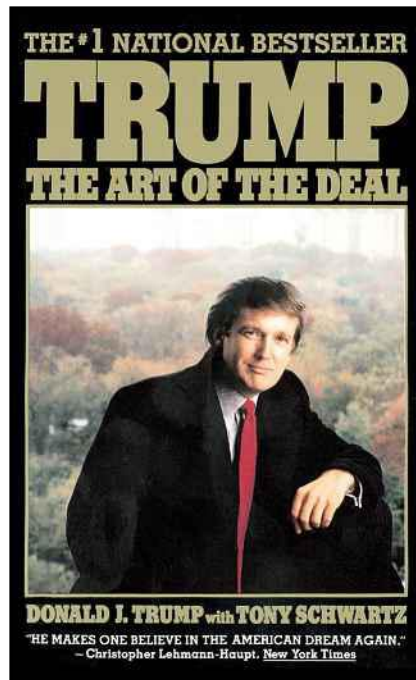
# Donald Trump: The Mind Magician

GARY LACHMAN asks: did positive thinking put Donald Trump in the White House? Are the alt-right practising a form of chaos magic? And what did a cartoon frog have to do with it?

When the world woke up to the fact that billionaire Donald J Trump had become the 45th president of the United States, having won the 8 November 2016 presidential election in a surprise upset, political pundits scrambled to make sense of how it could have happened. White middle-class dissatisfaction, Hillary Clinton's bad reputation, and Russian interference were some of the reasons offered for what seemed a truly unexpected development. Yet while many shook their heads in disbelief, I suspect that at least one person was a little less surprised.

Throughout his campaign Trump had announced with numbing consistency that he was "a winner". For those who know him, this was standard procedure. As more than one intimate has pointed out, winning is important for Trump. In fact, we can say that it is practically the *only* important thing for him. He admits as much in his self-help book, *The Art of the Deal*, which is designed to make its readers winners too. "I'm the first to admit that I am very competitive and that I'll do nearly anything within legal bounds to win," he writes.<sup>1</sup> Those who know Trump would agree with this. Some might even suggest that, on occasion, he wouldn't be averse to stretching those legal bounds just a bit if that's what it took to ensure victory.

We might think that such an attitude is appropriate and even effective in a business context – but surely politics is something else? Yet here too, Trump's need to win, and his unswerving certainty that he will, seemed to do the trick. The positive self-image he radiates seems to prime him for success, and the assurance that he will succeed seems a factor in bringing that success about. For one thing, it can carry many others along with him. "People may not always think big themselves," he tells us, "but they can still get very excited by those who do."<sup>2</sup> Trump is one of those who do. From Trump Tower and his aborted plans to erect the tallest building in the world, to the Mother of All Bombs that he dropped



*Through the power  
of the mind alone,  
we can 'make  
things happen'*

on Afghanistan on 13 April 2017 (see FT354:26), there's no doubt that the Donald thinks big and excites lots of people.<sup>3</sup>

What is the source of Trump's triumphant self-confidence? Narcissism, megalomania, egomania, selfishness, immaturity, and other psychological and characterological flaws have been rolled out to account for Trump's unshakable optimism and adamant self-belief. To be sure, these traits and others find their place in his psychological profile. But one other factor that has received less attention may have had more influence

LEFT: Trump's 1987 bestseller, *The Art of the Deal*. RIGHT: The President focuses his powers.

on shaping his winning personality than anything else. According to some reports, Trump's at times ruthless belief in his own powers and abilities may lie in his interest in an obscure and somewhat 'magical' philosophy known as New Thought, Mental Science, or, as it is sometimes also called, 'the power of positive thinking.'

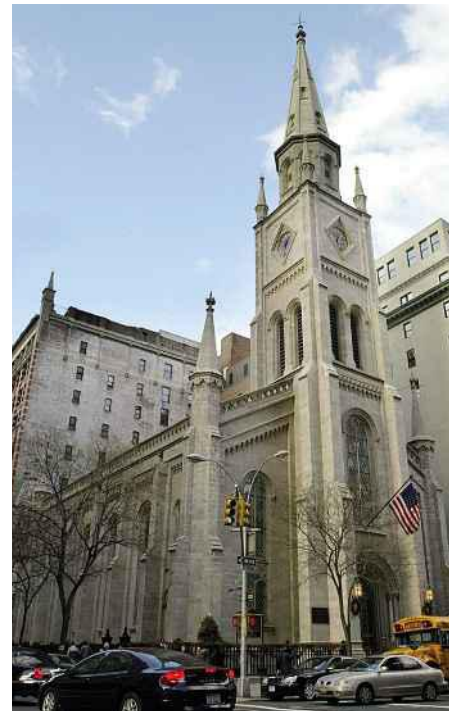
Variants of this teaching abound, but the fundamental idea they all share is that thought is *causative*; that, through the power of the mind alone, we can 'make things happen.' If that isn't magic I don't know what is.

## THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

Donald Trump's introduction to positive thinking came from the man who popularised the phrase and, aptly enough, became a great success through it. The Reverend Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1993), who wrote the 1952 bestselling hit *The Power of Positive Thinking*, acted as a mentor to Trump. For many years, Trump attended Peale's sermons at the Marble Collegiate Church on 29th Street and Fifth Avenue in New York City. He had begun listening to Peale while still a boy; both of his parents were followers and friends of Peale. According to Fred Trump, Donald's father, there was "nobody else like Peale". Trump later attended Peale's sermons as an adult, and two of his weddings took place at the church. For Trump, Peale was a "great preacher and a great public speaker", and his oratory was so uplifting that after one sermon Trump felt so inspired that he admitted that he could have "sat there for another hour".<sup>4</sup> For someone not known for having a long attention span, this is endorsement indeed.

Trump's admiration for Peale was returned. In 1983, to congratulate him on the opening of Trump Tower, Peale wrote to Trump, telling him he was "America's greatest builder". Peale was impressed by successful self-promoters and was charmed





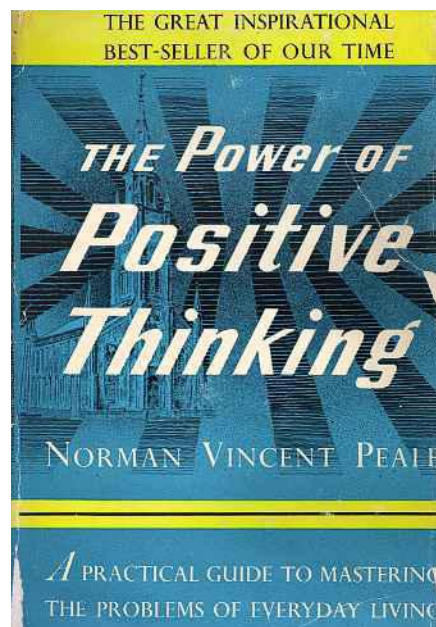
**ABOVE:** Trump's mentor, positive thinking guru Norman Vincent Peale. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Marble Collegiate Church, New York City, where Trump would go to see Peale preach. **BELOW:** Peale's 1952 book *The Power of Positive Thinking* stayed at the top of the New York Times bestseller list for an impressive 98 weeks.

by Trump after seeing him on television. Peale died in 1993, so he wouldn't have known of Trump's subsequent political success. But given that Peale, a staunch Republican, consoled Richard Nixon after he lost the 1960 US presidential election to John F Kennedy and again during the Watergate scandal, and that Ronald Regan was another friend and devotee, we can imagine how he would have felt. Trump's election, one suspects, would have given new meaning to Peale's calling him "America's greatest builder".

What did Trump hear at Peale's sermons? Most likely something like this: "Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Self-confidence leads to self-realization and successful achievement. Believe in yourself and release your inner powers. Formulate and stamp indelibly on your mind a mental picture of yourself as succeeding."<sup>5</sup>

It was this message of success that hit home for Trump and made him, as he said, Peale's "greatest student".<sup>6</sup> As Gwenda Blair, a biographer of the Trump family, remarked in a podcast, Trump's obsession with winning has its roots in the advice he absorbed at Peale's sermons. That winning was *everything* was drummed into him each Sunday. As Blair said: "Success above all. That's a very Norman Vincent Peale notion."

Peale must have listened to his own advice. When *The Power of Positive Thinking* appeared it went to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list and stayed there for 98 weeks. It made Peale a wealthy man and is still a healthy seller in the self-help and self-improvement market today, finding thousands of new readers every year. Yet while Peale's uplifting sermons were



## Trump's obsession with winning has its roots in Peale's sermons

couched in an earnest, hearty, optimistic Christian rhetoric, the roots of positive thinking reach down into something that many Christians might not find that positive.

### FAITH FORCE

Peale was steeped in the literature of New Thought and was an avid reader of such classic writers in the genre as Ernest Holmes, Charles Fillmore and Napoleon Hill, who flourished in the early part of the 20th century. Each told his readers that an ardent wish, sincerely held and visualised with intent, would, through the power of the mind alone, become a reality (Rhoda Byrne's *The Secret* repeated this message a few years back, to great success). Napoleon Hill even insisted that one could "think and grow rich" – a formula that seemed to work, as Hill's book of that name became a huge bestseller. The power of thought, each of these writers believed, could overcome any obstacle. Peale absorbed this doctrine, repackaged it, and transmitted it to a new generation.

The phrase "new thought" itself reaches back to Ralph Waldo Emerson, leader of the 19th century American Transcendentalist school, which took as its guides the philosophy of German Idealism and the wisdom of East, in the form of the teachings of the Upanishads. It also had roots in the magical tradition of Hermeticism. All three affirm that mind has primacy over matter, that thought, not the physical world, is the fundamental reality. As the great sage Hermes Trismegistus discovers during his mystical revelation, recorded in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, "within God everything lies in imagination." This is an affirmation that runs throughout the history of New Thought.

Another famous American, the philosopher and psychologist William James, sang the praises of New Thought in his classic work *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James even applied 'mind cure'

techniques – as New Thought was then called – to himself in order to overcome a nervous disorder. He was so convinced of their effectiveness that he successfully lobbied against state legislation designed to curb the availability of these ideas.

Peale too made use of New Thought techniques, scrupulously following Ernest Holmes's admonitions in *Creative Mind and Success* in order to overcome a debilitating shyness and inferiority complex. That Peale went on to become a national radio, television, and newspaper personality suggests that Holmes did him good, and Peale wanted to pass on the benefit to others. As the historian of New Thought, Mitch Horowitz, points out, Peale “reprocessed mind-power teachings through scriptural language and lessons.”<sup>7</sup> Through tapping into the ‘universal vibration’ and becoming ‘in tune with the infinite’ – central objectives of New Thought, then and now – via the power of positive thinking, Peale assured his readers and parishioners that no sincerely desired wish would be denied them.

Peale's method for realising wishes was what he called “prayer power”, a kind of ‘faith force’ that can be concentrated like a laser beam. It works through a three-step process, in which we “prayerize”, “picturize”, and “actualize” our aim. If we perform these steps with sufficient intent, the goal is practically assured.

To ‘prayerize’ means keeping our wish constantly in mind, “talking it over with God”, as Peale says, meditating on it night and day until we reach what he calls God's “Presence”. I should point out that Peale cautions that our aims must be realisable, not impossible ones. We can want a

promotion or pay rise, but not a weekend in Atlantis or eternal youth. We then ‘picturize’ our wish as vividly, intently and as often as possible, assuming that it has already come to pass, letting this conviction sink down into the unconscious. To ‘actualize’ means that we then wait for results, confident they will appear. “Go about your business on the assumption that what you have affirmed and visualized is true,” Peale tells us. “Affirm it, visualize it, believe it, and it will actualize itself.”<sup>8</sup>

### THE BIG I AM

Critics of Peale's positive thinking, who saw it as occultism in Christian clothing, would have been confirmed in their suspicions if they knew how similar Peale's approach was to that of another New Thought advocate, who also employed biblical rhetoric but whose magical proclivities were much more up front. Neville Goddard (1905-1972), author of the New Thought classics *At Your Command, Your Faith is Your Fortune* and others (published simply under the name of ‘Neville’), had a far racier background than the sober, clean-living Peale. Born to a British family in Barbados in 1905, he came to the mystic path after a career on the stage. An interest in spiritualism and the Rosicrucians turned into a true occult vocation when he met an Ethiopian rabbi named Abdullah, who told him he had been waiting for him for some time. Abdullah taught him Hebrew, scripture, numerology and metaphysics, and introduced him to the mystic power of “I AM”. This was the ability to reach a level of being so fundamental that it precluded any particular predicate. Neville equated it with the ground of all existence, the “I AM THAT I AM” of Exodus

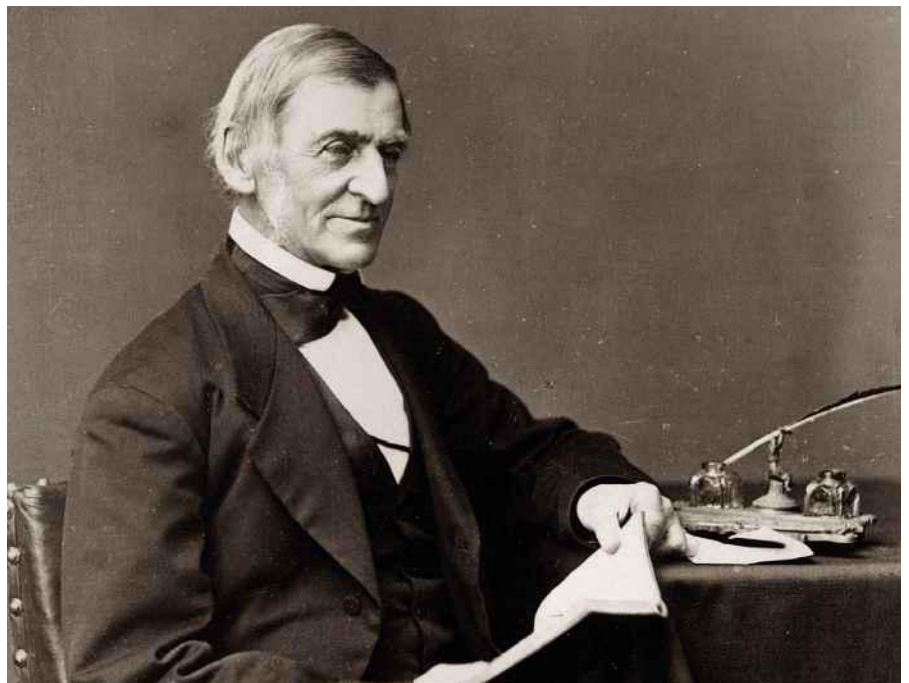
3:14. This was the “unconditioned awareness of one's being” that shared in the creative power of the Deity.

As did Peale, Neville taught that we could direct this power to the fulfilment of any wish, provided we followed his own three-step procedure. This involves first withdrawing attention from the outer world and, through deep relaxation, sinking into the primal reality, the “I AM”, that lies deep within us. This is the equivalent of Peale's ‘prayerizing’ within God's ‘Presence’. Next, we must generate an enthusiasm for our aim, an excitement that imbues our visualisation of it with life and clarity – Peale's ‘picturizing’. And then we assume with perfect certainty that what we want to happen already has – for, as with Peale, it *has*, and we are merely awaiting word of it.

Neville illustrated the power of ‘I AM’ when he conjured a ticket to Barbados to visit his family for Christmas when he was practically penniless. Abdullah advised Neville that he create the feeling in himself that he was *already there*. Neville ‘picturized’ the warm sun, the ocean breeze, the sights and sounds of his family, and entered a state similar to that of a lucid dream, with everything in high definition clarity. After doing this for several days, just before the last ship sailed, Neville received a letter from a brother he hadn't heard from in years. Enclosed was \$50 and a steamship ticket for Barbados.

### THE AMPHIBIAN SIGIL

Knowing that the current president of the United States follows a philosophy based on the mind's power to create reality may give us pause for thought. After all, the greatest lesson Norman Vincent Peale



ABOVE LEFT: Neville Goddard penned a number of New Thought titles under the pen name of ‘Neville’. ABOVE RIGHT: In many ways, the currents of New Thought can be traced back to the primacy of mind and the notion of the imagination as God found in the Transcendentalist writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

OTTO HERSCHAN / GETTY IMAGES



ABOVE LEFT: Pepe the Frog appears on a banner held by a Trump supporter. ABOVE RIGHT: Alt-right founder Richard Spencer: "We willed Donald Trump into office."

taught his greatest student is that facts don't matter, only one's *attitude* toward them does, an outlook seemingly designed for our 'post-truth', 'alternative fact' era. As the psychologist Karl Menninger, whom Peale quotes, writes: "Attitudes are more important than facts." It's a dictum that President Trump seems to have taken to heart. But the story doesn't stop there.

One of the strangest things to follow Trump's surprise victory took place at the annual meeting of the ultraconservative National Policy Institute in Washington, DC, soon after the election. Richard Spencer, head of the NPI and founder of the alternative-right, a new far right movement that had backed Trump, opened the meeting with a bang. "Hail Trump, hail our people, hail our victory!" Spencer declared. "We willed Donald Trump into office, we made this dream a reality!"<sup>9</sup> It was, Spencer said, their "victory of the will". If that didn't raise eyebrows, the enthusiastic Nazi salutes Spencer's audience offered him in return certainly did.

Amidst the media rumbling about Spencer's victory cheer, one story caught my eye. Harv Bishop, a New Thought blogger, was struck by Spencer's claim to have *willed* Trump into office, and his belief that he and his fellow alt-righters had made their *dream come true*. Such objectives, Bishop knew, were right up New Thought's alley. Was it possible? Were people on the alt-right using New Thought techniques – generally employed for innocuous purposes – in order to actualise their intention of putting Trump into office? *Was* he in office because they had done so? Did a positive thinking presidential

candidate get a "mind magic turbocharge" that helped him secure victory?<sup>10</sup>

But what was even stranger was *how* Spencer and co supposedly did the trick, if they did. It seems they used 'meme magic', a particularly up-to-date online technique, that required the services of a certain frog (see FT365:54-55). As Richard Dawkins, who coined the term, tells us, 'memes' are cultural units, like biological genes. They are symbols, images, phrases, behaviours, practically anything that gets picked up, imitated, and disseminated throughout the population. For us the meme in question is Pepe the Frog. Starting out as a harmless slacker amphibian, the creation of cartoonist Matt Furie, Pepe was drawn to the dark side and adopted by the alt-right as their mascot. Pepe became a symbol of the resentment much disaffected youth felt toward the politically correct Democrat 'establishment' and of the smug self-assurance with which, many felt, they ran their campaign. But if we are to believe Harv Bishop, Pepe became something more.

As images of Pepe flooded the net, posted by alt-righters and other pro-Trumpers, he took on a kind of magical character. Appearing as part of Trump's entourage, as one of the 'Deplorables', and even as Trump himself, victorious as president, Pepe became the symbol and carrier of the alt-right's 'dream': that Trump win the election. He was transformed from feckless amphibian to magically charged hyper-sigil, employed not by one but by many 'magicians'. The idea was that if enough posts reached the web with a strong enough intention, then what happened on the Internet would also happen in the 'real world'. Their dream would come true.

## INTO THE SYNCHROMYSTIC

That such a thing might happen seems to have a precedent. We can say meme magic started when online addicts posting on 4chan and other imageboard sites recognised some odd coincidences between their 'lulz' and the 'real world'. A favourite thread was 'Baneposting', with reference to the Batman film *The Dark Knight Rises*. They seemed obsessed with the opening when Bane, the villain, ostensibly being flown to prison, is really in charge, and arranges his escape, sending the aircraft plummeting. Odd similarities between this scene and the tragic crash of the German Wings flight 9525 in 2015 seemed to appear. A town near the crash site in the French Alps was called Bain. One of the crash investigators was named "Bruce Robin." Bruce Wayne is Batman's secret identity and Robin is Batman's sidekick. Bane crashes the plane and it appears that the German Wings pilot did the same. There were other similarities, but you get the idea.

This phenomenon was christened 'synchronism' and it is related to the eerie Slenderman craze that was also based on the idea that something on the net had somehow bled into 'real life' (see FT305:55, 317:30-37). Synchronism is really an online rethread of CG Jung's notion of 'synchronicity' (see FT171:42-47), his term for 'meaningful coincidence', when something in the mind is paralleled by something in the outer world, with no causal connection, but a deeply meaningful one that prevents us from dismissing it as 'mere coincidence'. If we substitute the Internet for the mind, we have synchronism.

When it seemed that their posts were

getting a strange kind of ‘approval’, Pepeists began to feel that something truly odd was happening. Posts were anonymous, but users received an eight-digit number for each one. The odd thing was that many posts about Pepe or Trump would get double, triple, or even quadruple digits. Users began to bet that they’d get a ‘dub’ or a ‘trip’. It seemed that *something* was acknowledging their efforts – and letting them know that it approved.

Who – or what – could that be? One candidate was an ancient Egyptian frog-headed deity named Kek, whose avatar many users began to recognise in Pepe. As one website put it, Pepe is “the modern-day avatar of an ancient Egyptian deity accidentally resurrected by online imageboard culture”.<sup>11</sup> The odd thing is that Kek’s name was known before he was. Tired of using ‘LOL’ to show they found something funny, 4chan users had taken up ‘KEK’ in its place. Where did KEK come from? It started as a mistranslation of LOL found on the *World of Warcraft* video game – oddly enough this involved the Korean language. When gamers wanted to write LOL it came out as KEK. So, they decided to go for it, and when one of Trump’s tweets tickled them, they burst out kekking.

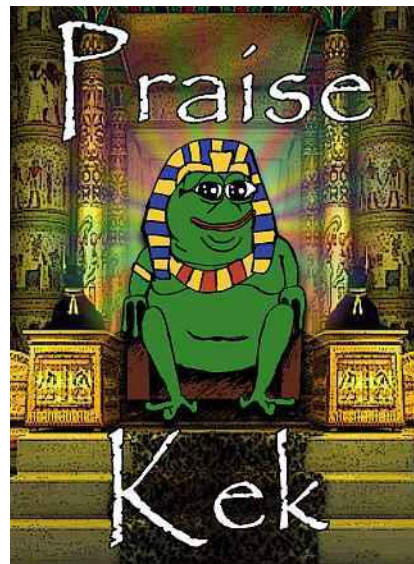
But when it was discovered that Kek is the name of an Egyptian frog-headed god, everything went up a level. Because what is Kek the god of? Chaos, of course. What’s so striking about this is that if you asked people to choose one word to characterise Trump’s presidency so far, many would plump for ‘chaos’.

Meme magic is considered an offshoot of ‘chaos magic’. Unlike traditional magic, chaos magic rejects the standard procedure and takes a more imaginative, DIY approach, relying on the magician’s creativity and initiative. Instead of bothering with incense and candles, the chaos magician uses whatever is at hand, more or less following the principle of ‘found art’, which plucks something out of one context and puts it another – and, *voilà*, it’s ‘art’. In the early days of chaos magic, what was at hand was old school stuff: books, TV, movies and so on. The eight-pointed ‘chaos star’ came from Michael Moorcock’s ‘Eternal Champion’ series of novels. Rituals using PJ Harvey records and fridge magnets were concocted. You get the idea. Today what is at hand are the memes on the net.

## PRIMAL CHAOS

The more I thought about this, the more it struck me that Trump’s style, his character, his MO, was not that different from that of a magician – in fact, a chaos magician. Doubtless he has never heard the term, but it struck me that in some odd way, Trump seemed to have a natural talent for it. If for chaos magic, reality becomes a ‘playground,’ a make-believe world that ‘chaoticians’ temporarily take for real – as many books on chaos magic suggest – then

## One candidate was a frog-headed ancient Egyptian deity named Kek



Trump’s outrageous pronouncements give the impression that for him, reality is a kind of playground too, an amusement park he shares with other products of postmodernism. Chaos magic wants to break out of our “existing cognitive habits” and make the “creative leap beyond what is already known”,<sup>12</sup> which seems not that different from our post-truth world, and Trump’s rejection of facts in favour of attitude. There are even similarities between chaos magic and positive thinking. Both start with a clear ‘statement of intent’. Both work by reaching the “*deep certainty* that one’s sorcery *will* yield the desired result.”<sup>13</sup> That is, both work by convincing us that our desire has *already come about*.

And both are ‘results driven’, focused on ‘making things happen’, in having some effect on the ‘real world’. (One chaos magic text is called *The Book of Results*.) In many ways even the language is similar, Peale’s ‘realizable wish’ paralleled by chaos magic’s ‘achievable reality’; that is, an aim that is quite ‘doable’ and paradoxically doesn’t require a miracle.<sup>14</sup>

In saying this I am not suggesting that chaos magicians approve or are even aware of these apparent similarities. Most likely not. But the similarities seem to be there nonetheless. Others seem to suggest an affinity too, like the idea of creating a ‘glamour’ around oneself, and of saying ‘outrageous things’ in order to increase your ‘personal power’, two chaos magic techniques that seem to come naturally to Trump. But at this point in my investigation other things

LEFT: Pepe completes his online synchronomystical transmutation into the Egyptian deity Kek.

began to fit into place.

One was the speech given by Steve Bannon to conservative members of the Vatican, reported by the *New York Times*, in which he referred to the Italian far right esoteric thinker Julius Evola, a hero of the alt-right and an exponent of a form of ‘mind magic’ himself, through which he tried to influence Mussolini (see FT191:40-45).<sup>15</sup> And when I saw that Bannon namechecked Evola when alluding to the Russian esoteric geopolitical thinker Alexandr Dugin (see FT349:48-51), himself a devotee of Evola, chaos magic and ‘mind magic’, and whose ideas have reached Vladimir Putin, I knew I had to widen my brief.

I did. The result is my book, *Dark Star Rising: Magick and Power in the Age of Trump*. It starts with what I’ve written here and follows the trail of what appears to be a strange ‘occult politics’ that has entered the mainstream political world, in the US, Europe and Russia. To say this article is but the tip of an iceberg would be a cliché, but – to mix my metaphors – the rabbit hole you’ve peeked into here does go a long way down.

## NOTES

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◆ GARY LACHMAN is a regular contributor to FT. A founding member of Blondie, he is the author of numerous books on esoteric subjects. His latest is *Dark Star Rising: Magick and Power in the Age of Trump*, published by TarcherPerigree, RRP £12.99.

# The Furred Reich

**SD TUCKER** explores the strange life of Savitri Devi, the noted feminazi and ultimate cat-lady who tried to make a religion out of Nazism and a god of the Führer, and finds that she has since become something of a cult political figure herself.

The humorist Alan Coren was once asked to suggest a title for his new book. He chose to call it *Golfing for Cats* and proposed a large swastika be placed on the cover, on the grounds that, even though his text had nothing whatsoever to do with any of these topics, books about cats, Nazis or golf always sold well. Try telling that to Savitri Devi, author of the 1965 fable *Long-Whiskers and the Two-Legged Goddess: Or, the True Story of a "Most Objectionable Nazi" and Half-a-Dozen Cats*, which, in spite of its subject matter, did not sell as well as Coren might have anticipated. Perhaps this was because the messages it contained were deemed unsuitable for the children at whom the book was apparently aimed: that the Nazis were right, that cats were better than humans, and that one of Hitler's main war-aims was to improve living conditions for animals across occupied Europe.

The book's chief character, the 'Two-Legged Goddess' and 'Most Objectionable Nazi' of the title, was named Heliodora, meaning 'Gift of the Sun', a thinly disguised version of Devi herself, whose name meant 'Sun-Ray Goddess' in Sanskrit. However, due to the unjustifiable persecution of loyal Nazis in the post-WWII world, Devi felt it necessary to change the name of "every person and every animal in this story", for "obvious reasons"; she didn't want them to end up hanging from Allied nooses, as at Nuremberg, or being drowned in a canal.<sup>1</sup> The book opens with a charming image of a dozen cats gathered around Heliodora in her sparsely furnished room in India, where she sits cross-legged on a mat before a blown-up photograph of Adolf Hitler doing what he does best – being kind to animals. Adolf is sweetly feeding a baby deer, thus proving him "the Friend of Creatures and exponent of everlasting Wisdom". So wise is the Führer that Heliodora worships Him as a god: "Fresh pink lotuses lay in a round, flat, painted earthen vessel at the foot of the picture, and three sticks of incense were burning before it, fixed in holes at the top of a brass burner, with the shape of the sacred sign 'Aum'."<sup>2</sup> As the real-life Devi also sanctified photos of Hitler in this way,<sup>3</sup> we can see how the story was based on actual facts – or the facts as Devi saw them.



LEFT: Devi in April 1980, New Delhi, India, where she and her cats lived between 1973 and 1981.

## All cats are fleshly embodiments of the Ideal Platonic Cat-Soul

### PUSS IN JACKBOOTS

Surprisingly, Devi expects her infant readers to have a basic grasp of the theory of Platonic Forms, proclaiming what she sees as "the intangible Essence of Catdom" shining present in every cat she meets. Each cat "expresses more faithfully the Self of his species" or "divine collective Soul" of Catdom than most woefully imperfect humans ever could in relation to the Ideal Soul of their own species – that of the pure Aryan race.<sup>4</sup> The classic example was the English, who had rejected Germany's hand of friendship and fought their fellow Aryans instead. For this, Heliodora decides the entire English race must be exterminated – until she is told otherwise by a cat. Visiting London post-1945, Heliodora enters into a psychic mind-meld with a pet

cat called Sandy, who restores her "sincere consciousness of the oneness of the Nordic race, in spite of all the horrors of recent fratricidal war". Like many animals in children's books, Sandy can talk; unlike most such animals, what Sandy wants to talk about most is the infamy of the Jews: "Prrr, prrr, prrr... One day [the English] shall wake up from their delusion, turn against their bad shepherds [the Jews], and help the people of their own blood to build up a new Europe... in which we creatures will all be happy... for they are good people at heart, good people like Aryans generally are, taken as a whole. Prrr, prrr, prrr... The proof of it is that they have taken such good care of me! Prrrrrrrr..." This argument proves persuasive to Heliodora ("O Cat, you are right," agreed at last the tough old racialist"). The English, as a nation of pet-lovers, should be spared genocide when, some happy day, the Third Reich rises again.<sup>5</sup> Given that the book purports to be based on a true story, you can make of this episode what you will.

Again, unusually for a children's book – if it really is one – Devi's yarn features a graphic description of cat sex. Encountering a fine young female feline in a Calcutta slum, a male cat called Long-Whiskers "overcame her faked resistance and possessed her" in order to "fulfil the purpose which the Divine Cat had assigned to them from all eternity... [to] carry Catdom a generation further [and] secure its everlastingness" – much as the Nazis planned to do with the Aryan race. Apparently, this union was quite a pussy-trembler: "Their individualities ceased for a while to exist, and in him, the Eternal He-Cat, Creator and Lord of Everything, and in her the co-eternal, sphinx-like, dark Feline Mother, Lady of All Life, once more mingled their opposite polarities and took consciousness of their double Godhead, as they had been doing for millions and millions of years. And once more the divine spark – the Creative Lightning – flashed through their furry bodies, and the daily miracle took place: there was life in the

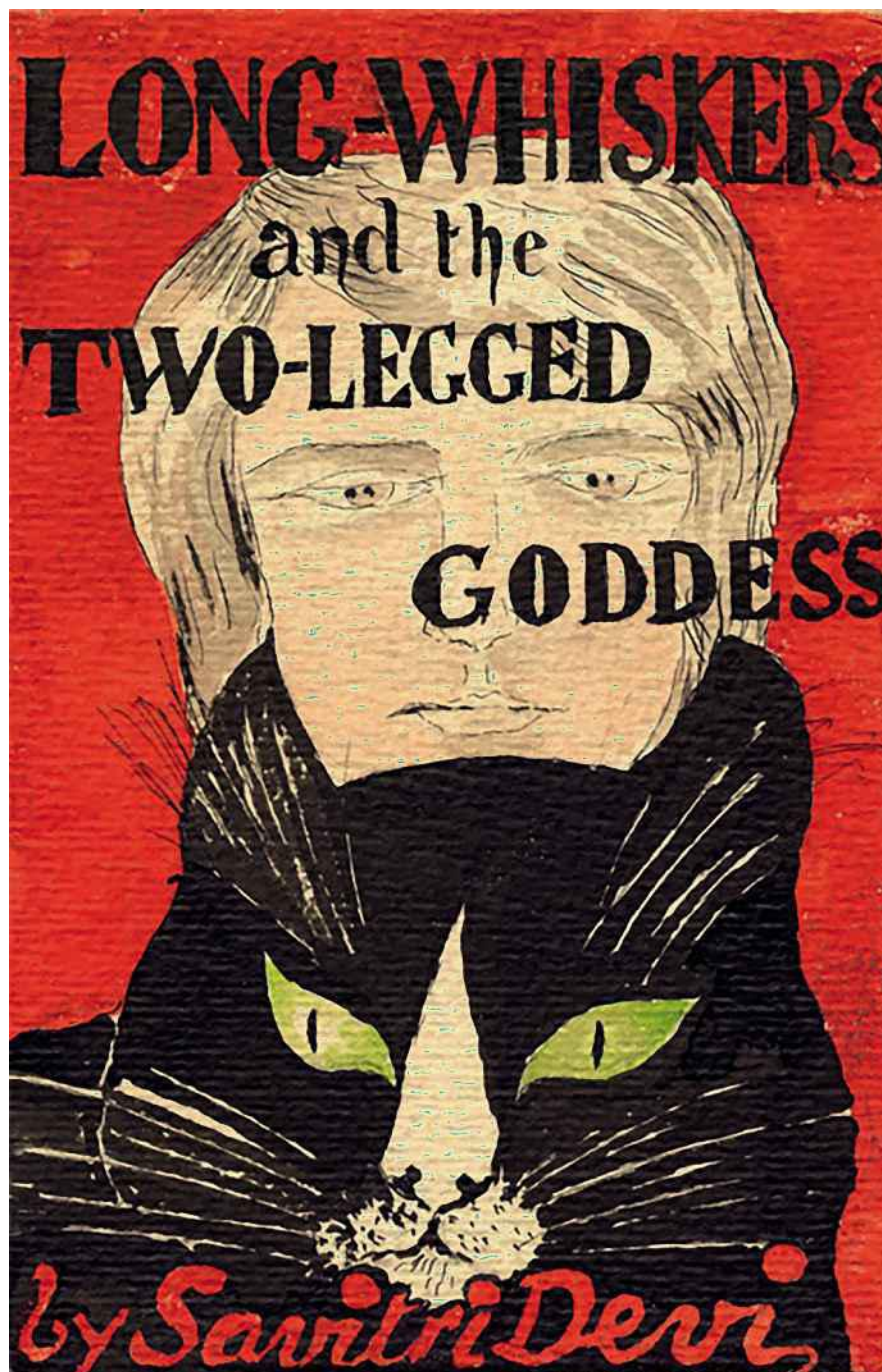


female's womb.”<sup>6</sup> This is not simply an attempt at writing Mills & Boon for animal-lovers; it contains important philosophical points. As the individual kittens sired via Long-Whiskers' lightning-infused sperm are direct replicas of “the Eternal He-Cat”, this means all cats are merely temporary, fleshly embodiments of the Ideal Platonic Cat-Soul – including Long-Whiskers himself, who is later reincarnated in Sandy's body in London. As perfectly embodied aspects of the same shared noble soul, all cats are reincarnated time and again, just like certain ultra-perfect Germans, who are likewise direct embodiments of the Ideal Platonic Aryan Soul – most notably Adolf Hitler.

### THE CAT CAME BACK (REPEATEDLY)

Devi's tale continues with a unique account of an out-of-body experience written from the perspective of a dying cat, namely Sandy, who is then reborn in Iran, where he is flattened by a car. The book ends with Heliadora gazing wistfully into the night sky and realising that cats are not only embodiments of the Ideal Cat-Soul, but also, on a higher level, of the impersonal Godhead which suffuses the entire Universe – as is Hitler. Hitler and cats, as flawless expressions of their respective Platonic archetypes, are really one and the same thing, God Himself; which must explain all those cats who look like Hitler on the Internet. “Thou shinest in them: *Thou art they!*” prays Heliadora to the stars. When she worships the photo of Adolf feeding a deer, Heliadora is really worshipping God in human form and also, simultaneously, the life-giving Sun. The Sun-like Hitler, not Jesus, is the true Light of the World, through which the Aryan Godhead shines, and the Godhead can never die. Just as Sandy will always return from beyond the pet cemetery, so will the Divine Führer who was not simply a fascist dictator but “the messenger of the Soul of Starry Space”. In religious terms, Adolf had an esoteric (hidden) as well as an exoteric (surface) nature, as did Nazism itself.<sup>7</sup> As Devi once argued: “National Socialism will rise again because it is true to Cosmic Reality, and because that which is true does not pass.”<sup>8</sup>

Heliadora is convinced that white Nordic folk, being more in touch with Nature and God, would never mistreat animals. As proof, she cites the case of “the hero, Horst Wessel”, the ‘martyred’ Nazi stormtrooper, who “was a great cat-lover”, as had been proven to Heliadora when she met his aunt one day and was shown a photo of him surrounded by cute kittens. Furthermore, she had been out for coffee with one of the Brownshirt thugs responsible for *Kristallnacht*, who assured her “quite emphatically” that, whilst they might have beaten up lots of Jews and destroyed their property on the dismal night in question, they had “never molested any cats, dogs or



TOP: *Long-Whiskers and the Two-Legged Goddess* book cover, hand-painted by Savitri Devi.  
 ABOVE: Black Velvet in Savitri's lap, Emsdetten, Norway, 1955.

COURTESY OF THE SAVITRI DEVI ARCHIVE / WWW.SAVITRIDEVI.ORG



ABOVE: Devi with Black Velvet, 1955. ABOVE: Long-Whiskers, from the book *Long-Whiskers and the Two-Legged Goddess*. BELOW: A young Devi in 1925.

other beasts just because they happened to belong to Jews”.<sup>9</sup> Yes, there was a real affinity between Nazis and cats of all kinds; “the dream-like vision” of the Master-Race which Hitler wanted the Germans to become stood in direct parallel to the ultimate cat-lords of the animal kingdom, “those four-legged kings of the jungle” the lions, who were “as beautiful on their level” as blonde, blue-eyed Nazi supermen of the future were on theirs. As this was the case, the Nazis had commendably banned vivisection upon animals in Germany... and replaced it with live medical experiments on people instead.<sup>10</sup> Heliodora genuinely thinks this is one of the finest achievements of Nazism and fantasises that, when Hitler returns, she will be placed in charge of a special concentration camp “of her dreams”, in which “two-legged mammals... who believe that ‘man’ is everything and other creatures nothing” will be eliminated.<sup>11</sup> Heliodora believes in animal rights, but not human ones. The post-war world is a topsy-turvy one in which democracy rules over dictatorship, Nazis are called criminals instead of heroes, and abattoirs are full of animals, not people. This was a true Dark Age – that of *kali yuga*.

### HEIL HINDU HITLER!

Who was this mad old cat lady? Born Maximiani Portas in 1905 to an English mother and a French father of Greek-Italian ancestry, she travelled to India in 1932, where the avowed pagan identified closely with Hinduism and changed her name to Savitri Devi. This may seem surprising, but in the lunatic Nazi theorising of the day it was presumed the Aryan race might well have originated in India, an early home of the swastika ‘sun-wheel’ symbol (see

## History does not progress in a line but an eternally repeating cycle



FT175:30-39, 196:32-39). The Indian caste-system also held appeal for those who, like Devi, saw in it parallels with restrictive Nazi racial laws. A National Socialist from 1929 onwards, Devi spied for Japan during World War II, becoming involved with the

nationalist Hindutva movement, which argued that India was an inherently Hindu country in which colonialists, Christians and Muslims had no true place, as elaborated in her 1936 book *A Warning to the Hindus*. Today, the Hindutva movement is actually in power in the shape of PM Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist BJP Party, showing that not all the political causes Devi adopted were lost ones.

One of the Hindu nationalists Devi met was Srimat Swami Satyananda, who was also interested in Hitler due to his adoption of the swastika and championing of Aryanism. Satyananda told Devi of his theory that Hitler was really an incarnation, or avatar, of the Hindu god Vishnu, descended to Earth to restore order to a chaotic world. Under such influences, throughout WWII Devi developed a demented personal philosophy derived from the old Hindu idea of the Cycle of the Ages, with the aim of proving that Nazism was not really a political (exoteric) movement, but a secret (esoteric) religious one. According to Hinduism, history does not progress in a straight line but an eternally-repeating cycle like that of the seasons. We once enjoyed a perfect spring or summer-like Golden Age, but by the time of WWII had entered into a wintry Dark Age termed the *kali yuga*, an age of inversion in which all true values were reversed – as with live medical experiments taking place on cats, not humans. “Any healthy cat,” Devi once argued, was worth much more than a “degenerate human bastard”, but *kali yuga* forces had obscured this truth.<sup>12</sup> Devi saw tell-tale signs of *kali yuga* in everything from the disgraceful proliferation of hospitals, which only served to keep worthless sick folk alive, to the truly shocking sight of black men

driving motorcars.<sup>13</sup> On a wider level, Jews controlled the world, not Aryans, commerce and materialism ruled, not religion and spirituality, and the races, instead of remaining pure, were becoming ever more mixed and diluted.

### BRING ME SUNSHINE

Reading up on Traditionalist writers like René Guénon and Julius Evola (see Gary Lachman, “Musolini’s Mystic”, FT191:40-45),<sup>14</sup> who also spoke of the need to combat *kali yuga*, by the time of Nazi defeat Devi had developed the notion there were three types of notable men in existence. ‘Men In Time’ were great and ruthless leaders like Genghis Khan, who raped, killed and plundered for their own material gain within a materialist *kali yuga*. Such figures possessed the power of lightning, letting them swiftly conquer nations like human thunderbolts. ‘Men Above Time’ were otherworldly sages who transcended the *kali yuga* via spiritual means like occultism and meditation. They possessed the power of the Sun, whose light enabled them to see through the shoddy stage-set of this world and perceive the eternal archetypes (like that of Perfect Catdom) which lay behind it. ‘Men Against Time’ possessed powers of both Sun and lightning, and tried to conquer the world in the name of dispelling the *kali yuga* and bringing a return to cosmic springtime, allowing the rebirth of a new Golden Age. Men Against Time were incarnations of Vishnu, and the greatest so far had been his ninth avatar, Adolf Hitler, who enjoyed powers both of exoteric lightning, with his doctrine of *blitzkrieg* or ‘lightning warfare’, and of esoteric Sun, as with his swastika sunwheel emblem (perhaps his nine lives up to this point also signified his innate affinity with cats). Hitler may have been beaten in 1945 but, argued Devi, his defeat was really victory in disguise. Hitler had sacrificed his own life and deliberately lost his brave war against the Allies in the material world only in order to push it into a state of exceptional crisis, like undermining a bridge so it would soon collapse. In the invisible world, Hitler had already won, simply awaiting rebirth as the final, tenth incarnation of Vishnu, a figure known as ‘Kalki the Destructor’ who would play a role in history rather akin to that of the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man in *Ghostbusters*, another potentially world-shattering avatar with very white skin.

In her 1958 text *The Lightning and the Sun*, Devi argued that destruction by Hitler Reborn was a far greater prospect for humanity than continued rule by the victorious forces of Jew-controlled pseudo-democratic capitalism because, in their crazed quest for money, our rootless plutocratic rulers would eventually ruin the entire planet through industrialisation and overpopulation until no life whatsoever could be supported on it, whereas Kalki/Hitler would just kill billions of people and then leave an unpolluted Earth to be

inhabited by a few Nazi Aryan supermen, living in harmony with lots and lots of lovely cats and other animals. You’ve got to be cruel to be kind – and Hitler was the kindest man in history. For Devi, his only flaw lay in his not having committed “more substantial violences, more complete exterminations”. Given that, at Hitler’s birth, the stars had formed “a definite pattern marking the return to Earth of Him who comes back”, we might have expected more from this avatar. But then, Hitler was actually a uniting force; Vishnu’s Aryan Race-Soul chose to be reborn in Braunau-am-Inn on the Austrian border so he could reunite the nation with its nearby Fatherland. However, Hitler initially wished to do this peacefully and, contrary to popular belief, did his best to prevent WWII, not start it. “Nobody wanted peace more than Adolf Hitler,” said Devi, not from any lily-livered “humanitarian prejudices”,

but due to his desire to restore balance to the Universe. Hitler’s original purity of intention could be seen in his reputed vegetarianism and in the way that, “as a young man, nay, a very attractive one”, he refused all offers of sex, preferring to direct “the sacred flame of Life” within his sun-and-lightning-infused testicles into sacred avenues instead. But then the Jews and English had declared war on him, and ruined everything. And, if you think this all happened the other way around, then that is because *you too* have been corrupted by the inverted forces of *kali yuga* into seeing history upside-down.<sup>15</sup>

But if the Divine Adolf is supposed to return... where is he? He did not reappear within Savitri Devi’s lifetime. In 1948, Devi was imprisoned in Germany for distributing 6,000 handbills detailing Hitler’s impending reappearance: “Our Führer is alive, and will soon come back, with power unheard of.



TOP: Devi photographed in the early 1940s, probably in Calcutta.

COURTESY OF THE SAVITRI DEVI ARCHIVE / WWW.SAVITRIDEVI.ORG



**ABOVE LEFT:** Devi's favourite Hitler photo. **ABOVE CENTRE:** Devi and friends at a British National Party camp on the estate of Andrew Fountaine, BNP president, at Narford Hall, Norfolk, 1961. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A New Order memorial service for Devi. Her ashes were placed alongside those of Rockwell in the New Order's Valhalla.

Resist our persecutors! Hope and wait. Heil Hitler!" But still He did not come. However, jail allowed Devi to act as a martyr, saying prayers to Shiva whilst holding a locket containing Hitler's image to her breast, and forming close relationships (allegedly of a lesbian nature) with imprisoned female concentration-camp wardens.<sup>16</sup> The 1950s and 1960s saw her mixing with various other Hitler-worshippers, before in 1970 she went to live with Nazi sympathiser Françoise Dior, niece of the fashionista, from whose home she was allegedly later expelled due to her refusal to take a bath. From here Devi returned to India; here she lived once more amongst cats, who, being better than humans, clearly didn't mind the smell as much. Her books were initially underground *samizdat*-type arrangements, but in the late 1960s extracts appeared in the US neo-Nazi magazine *National Socialist World*, to much fringe acclaim, and when she died in 1982 her ashes were stored in the 'Valhalla' of the neo-Nazi 'New Order' organisation in Wisconsin, reputedly next to those of former American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell, who himself believed he had undergone certain mystical Nazi-related experiences, meeting with Hitler in his dreams. However, Devi's ashes have since imitated the life-cycle of the phoenix, and, anticipating the return of her beloved God-Führer, the Nazi priestess has now made a startling political comeback herself...

### OUR FRIENDS ELECTRIC

In 1905 a book called *Theo-Zoology* was published by the Austrian racial theorist Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (see FT218:32-39). Lanz's idea was that Aryans had once been gods on Earth who were partially electronic in nature and had possessed anti-gravity

## Bestiality-related pregnancies led to a subsequent loss of electronic powers

powers, psychic abilities, three eyes, and the capacity to emit beams of light and fire from their bodies. Sadly, the female descendents of this early Aryan super-race also possessed dirty minds, which they could only satisfy by obsessively mating with then-extant races of humanoid reptiles with big bones in their penises, named 'dinosaur-hominids', and bands of well-hung midget half-monkeys termed 'love-pygmyies'. Subsequent bestiality-related pregnancies led to profound racial degeneration and loss of electronic powers, with the weakened Aryan race "today dying the sodomistic death" all across Europe. The historic "quite strange preference" of Aryan females for such "so-called 'interesting men'" had to be terminated, argued Lanz, otherwise we would "make the entire world into a big brothel in which everything revolves around penises and pussies"; which would be "silly". The solution was to ban white women from sleeping with any "pleasure-apes" and "sodomistic monsters" – by which Lanz meant Jews, Slavs, and other modern products of ancient bestiality – and pass laws allowing them only to mate with their fellow Aryans. Furthermore, the remaining monkey-men "must be exterminated in a gentle way" via castration and sterilisation; although Lanz later changed his mind,

arguing they should be exploited as slave-labour, incinerated, or resettled *en masse* on Madagascar. Via a programme of selective breeding, in which white German women were locked in convents and forced to bear multiple children to the noblest Aryan menfolk, the German people would gradually recapture their ancient godly nature, siring a breed of holy electronic knights intended to conquer the world. "We *were* electric, we *will* be electric!" was Lanz's unlikely promise.<sup>17</sup>

Lanz and his followers were responding to pressing demographic trends of the time, fearing ethnic Germans like themselves were at imminent risk of being subsumed by teeming animalistic *untermenschen* within the polyglot Austro-Hungarian Empire. This was how Adolf Hitler had written about the multi-ethnic Vienna of his youth: "I found the racial conglomeration of the Imperial capital disgusting, this whole medley of Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Serbs and Croats... The city seemed the very embodiment of racial infamy." Vienna had traditionally been dominated by ethnic Germans, but between 1860 and 1900 the city's population increased threefold, substantially due to immigration. In talking about dinosaurs and monkeys shagging humans, Lanz was drawing a bizarre occult parallel with what he saw as the German race being swallowed into racial chaos via miscegenation. Under such specific historical circumstances, what should have been an exceedingly fringe idea ended up being read about by thousands of people who shared such basic racial worries – including, allegedly, Hitler himself, a supposed Lanz reader. In the later Third Reich, racial 'sub-humans' really were incinerated and enslaved, marriage-laws passed to ensure the 'purity of the race', and *lebensborn*

programmes akin to Lanz's notion of sex-convents initiated. Madagascar was even considered as a potential location for resettling German Jews. The Nazis did not believe in love-apes themselves, but it has been plausibly argued that cults like Lanz's helped lay the ground in preparing Germans for the racial pseudo-science that eventually led to Auschwitz.<sup>18</sup>

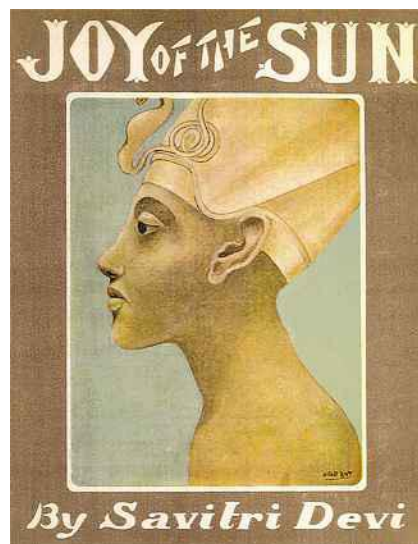
The contemporary relevance of all this was spotted by the scholar of occult Nazism Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke in his 2002 book *Black Sun*, in which he argued that "Multicultural [Western] societies face a similar challenge today... the United States and most European nations are facing a demographic shift against their historic native stocks. The resulting issue of white identity recapitulates the dilemma of Austrian Germans fearing a loss of influence in the old Habsburg Empire." It was Goodrick-Clarke's contention that, as a result, we would soon be seeing an upsurge in the number of neo-Nazis who used floridly delusional occult symbolism as a means of protesting against mass immigration and rampant liberal overreach, just as Lanz did. According to Goodrick-Clarke: "We cannot know what the future holds for Western multicultural societies, but the experiment did not fare well in Austria-Hungary... From the retrospective viewpoint of... [future decades] ... Aryan cults and esoteric Nazism may be documented as early symptoms of major divisive changes in our present-day Western democracies."<sup>19</sup> Given certain recent events, it appears Goodrick-Clarke was correct.

### THERE WON'T ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND

Already described by Goodrick-Clarke in 2002 as "an Evita-figure for opponents of multi-racial democracy",<sup>20</sup> Savitri Devi's cult is now spreading rapidly across the online world, particularly in terms of her teaching that the *kali yuga*, as an age of inversion, was one in which 'democracy' was truly a disguised dictatorship of liberal, Jew-controlled internationalist elites, enabling traditionally Aryan nations to be flooded with inferior foreigners, just as, in Hitler's eyes, the Vienna of his youth had been. Most notably, Devi's rhetoric has seen her adopted as a figurehead by the American alt-right, whose staunchly anti-immigration views mirror her own. This is how Devi once described the likely future fate of England, which foolishly "chose to listen to her Jewish misleaders" in fighting Germany instead of joining it: "She shall die – not the glorious death on the battlefield, but the slow, nauseating death through blood-mixture and all manner of vice. Within less than 300 years to come – unless there be a miracle [i.e. Hitler's return] – there shall be no more England. My [English] mother's compatriots... will have given way before teeming millions of mongrels (a hotch-potch of Jamaicans, Africans, Pakistanis, Jews and

degenerate Englishwomen) with nothing in common with their forefathers... The few remaining pure-blooded English Aryans... [will be] foreigners in the land of their ancestors."<sup>21</sup> Or, in other words, "Jews are going to replace us". Sound familiar?

Online, Devi's philosophy has been turned into a parodic fake religion dubbed 'Esoteric Kekism' ('KEK' being an alternate form of 'LOL') by the alt-right, in which humorous memes about Devi, Hitler and Vishnu are spread, hoping to rid Nazism of



TOP: *Joy of the Sun* was a 1942 children's book about Akhenaten published in Calcutta in 1942. ABOVE: Savitri Devi photographed in Lyons, France, in 1961; note the swastika earrings.

its taboo status, making esoteric fascism look cool and funny. Meanwhile, the US alt-right's offline leader, Richard Spencer, has made headlines for calling the white race "Children of the Sun", a concept apparently gleaned directly from Devi and Evola. America, he has said, truly belongs to these superior white Sun-children, but it has been stolen from them by other races, with the election of Donald Trump the first step in taking it back. The lying fake-news media pundits who had criticised Trump during his election campaign were, Spencer has implied, nothing but "soulless golem" – monsters created by Jews.<sup>22</sup> When you see the alt-right chanting "Jews will not replace us!" in reference to an imaginary Israelite plan to substitute the white European and American population with blacks and Muslims, you can see Goodrick-Clarke's warnings coming true before your eyes; Europe is indeed undergoing a massive demographic sea-change, but it has nothing to do with the Jews, many of whom are now actually fleeing countries like France due to rising anti-Semitism, much of which has been blindly imported from abroad. So, just as Lanz's mad ideas about dino-sex anticipated widespread fears about the eclipsing of traditional native populations by immigrants years before these very same worries were expressed in more comprehensible terms by the Nazis,

COURTESY OF THE SAVITRI DEVI ARCHIVE / WWW.SAVITRIDEVI.ORG



ABOVE: 'Bannon the Barbarian' has been linked to Devi. BELOW: Aleksandr Dugin; trapped in *kali yuga*.

so Savitri Devi's loony allegations about Jews destroying the white race via *kali yuga* methods now sound like direct harbingers of the 'Jews will not replace us' crowd, even if most who chant such words have never heard of her.

### CYCLING DOWNHILL

Another American political figure sometimes linked to Devi is Steve Bannon, Donald Trump's former White House Chief Strategist, and the driving force behind Trump's successful election campaign (although Trump implausibly now denies this). However, I think the link is a bit overblown. Bannon may be a nationalist, but he is no Far Right racist or occultist and has dismissed Richard Spencer as a "freak" and a "goober". A well-read man who spent over a decade engaged in a comparative study of world religions, he has read his Guénon and Evola and once mentioned the latter briefly in a 2014 speech. But this doesn't mean he is a full-blown disciple of Devi *et al* as some have implied. Bannon's biographer Joshua Green has called him "more synthesist than strict adherent", ploughing through Traditionalist books and picking out the bits he likes whilst discarding those he doesn't. He has explicitly rejected Evola's mystical anti-Semitic views on race, for instance, whilst taking note of his ideas about blowing up certain parts of civil society to force social change – "draining the Washington swamp", as Trump would say. Even so, 'Bannon the Barbarian', as he calls himself, certainly thinks we are in the midst of some *kali yuga*-like "new Dark Age", in which true values are being inverted. "We shouldn't be running a victory-lap every time some sort of traditional value gets undercut," he has argued. Looking around him, Bannon sees unelected transnationalists usurping elected national governments, thereby

## Europe is a post-modern hologram created by liberal post-humans



thwarting the will of the West's people and their desire to maintain their customary ways of life.

Bannon is unquestionably a cultural pessimist who foresees some great crisis looming on the West's horizon, as can be seen in his love for a 1997 book, *The Fourth Turning*, in which two amateur historians, William Strauss and Neil Howe, argue that every society goes through an inevitable (non-occult) cycle of growth, flourishing, decay and collapse, akin to the cycle of the

seasons. Apparently, each full cycle lasts for 80 years, the span of a human life, or 'sæculum', and the West, after glorious rebirth in the aftermath of WWII, should now brace itself for the arrival of winter. Reportedly, Bannon views the financial crash of 2008 as being the 'hinge' upon which the new winter will turn. Strauss and Howe's theory is like a version of the Hindu Cycle of Ages on fast-forward, and Howe, like Bannon, has spoken of the need for "creative destruction" to occur in the West, saying that "there has to be a period in which we tear down everything that is no longer functional." Viewed like this, there is a sense in which President Trump could be viewed as another 'Man Against Time', come to rip down the old order of political correctness, rampant globalisation and the overregulation of internal financial markets, hoping to replace it with something new (or, looked at cyclically, with something old which America has since lost).<sup>23</sup> So, you can see there is a loose parallel between Trump and Bannon's original (now somewhat thwarted) programme for office and Devi's ideas – but all this really means is that Bannon doesn't see society as an expression of infinite progress along an endlessly straight line, and that cycles of cultural decline sometimes have to be forcibly reversed by wilfully disruptive figures like The Donald. Clearly, millions of voters agreed.

### NO SUCH THING AS SOCIETY

Bannon's rough counterpart in Russia, Aleksandr Dugin, 'Putin's Rasputin', also seems fixated upon the idea of the West being trapped in the mud of *kali yuga* (see FT349:48–51). In a 2014 interview with German publication *Der Spiegel*, Dugin professed to "love the roots of German culture", but complained that "they do not exist anymore" within the realm of fallen modernity. Instead, "Germany is today a kind of counter-Germany", in which all traditional values have been inverted. According to Dugin: "In the liberal postmodernist West... democracy today is understood as the rule of the minority" – that is, of liberal elites. Because the ordinary masses are looked down on by such people, argued Dugin, and their desires treated with contempt, voters would eventually "lean towards populism, socialism or fascism", as indeed they have since done. Dugin sees excessive Western celebration of diversity as a clear sign of *kali yuga*, which ordinary people do not want. Rejected by most European intellectuals, Dugin has travelled across the EU speaking to ordinary folk instead – "taxi-drivers, Bavarian farmers, Romanian students, French chambermaids" – few of whom appeared interested in the finer nuances of current identity politics. Dugin professed to "love" Europe, which is why he told his interviewer he was so "frightened" that one day the continent would disappear

completely, perhaps up its own fundament. “I see it dies,” he lamented.<sup>24</sup>

Echoing Devi’s concerns, in his book *The Fourth Political Theory* Dugin argues that through the excessive worship of selfhood, as expressed via state-enforced ‘cults’ of diversity and human rights, the Europe we see around us is no longer Europe at all, but a metaphorical post-modern hologram created by a race of liberal post-humans, in which reality itself has been deliberately turned upside-down. However: “In the course of the gradual liberation of man from all that which is not himself [i.e. the traditional ‘restrictive’ values of his own people] ... one must sooner or later free a man from his own self.” The ultimate result of this ‘anything goes’ attitude will be “the fact of the Apocalypse” in which society, free of all social boundaries, dissolves away into the complete chaos of non-existence – a bleak extension of the theories of Edmund Burke (see FT361:48–51). With excessive freedom and no common roots or values, the human self becomes a balkanised chaos; a shapeshifter like modern liberal man has no inherent form to call his own, existing only as a series of temporary masks with no true face beneath. If endless ‘tolerance’ is now the West’s only true value,

then in effect that means we have no real values at all. The central political question of our age, argues Dugin, is really “Hamlet’s eternal question” – “To be or not to be?” At the moment, he implies, the increasingly atomised West has chosen the latter, much as Savitri Devi once predicted.<sup>25</sup>

### PROGRESSIVE DECLINE

Some of Devi’s modern fans are extremely unpleasant, and others actively nuts. However, it’s obvious that some of her ideas are finding a reflection in mainstream opinion today. If you strip the *kali yuga* of its esoteric Hindu elements and reduce it simply to a metaphor, namely an ‘Age of Inversion’, then all you have to do is open a newspaper (for maximum effect, I suggest the *Daily Mail*) to see that in the eyes of many people, traditional moral, social and biological norms are being turned upside-down in the name of ‘progress’. For critics of this kind of ‘progress’, then, it is not irrational to believe that this is indeed an age of inversion – and you don’t need to be a weird, occult neo-Nazi to hold such views. The cranks who worship Savitri Devi are full of dangerous nonsense, particularly about Jews, but, as implied by Dugin and Bannon, some of their central criticisms of

society are likely shared by many millions (perhaps even a majority) of ordinary people in the West. In our massively multicultural cities there will inevitably be some disillusioned folk who start talking about London, Marseilles or Malmö in the way that Hitler and Lanz did about late-Habsburg Vienna. Honest concern about the unprecedented demographic and cultural upheaval which the West is currently undergoing is both legitimate and increasingly common, and it would be tremendously stupid of governments not to pay it heed in a reasonable manner; otherwise, the genuinely extreme views of rabid anti-Semites like Devi, and the less overtly odd Far Right figures of whom she acts as an early-warning sign, may gain even more traction, as forecast by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke.

This, apparently, is what progress looks like – in the Dark Age of the *kali yuga*, we should expect no less.

◆ SD TUCKER is an FT regular and the author of such fortean books as *Space Oddities, Forgotten Science, Great British Eccentrics, The Hidden Folk, and Paranormal Merseyside*. His latest, *False Economies*, is available now from Amberley Publishing.

### NOTES

General unreferenced information about Devi is taken from Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun*, New York University Press, 2002, pp88-106

1 Savitri Devi, *Long-Whiskers and the Two-Legged Goddess*, 1965, p7 .

2 Devi, 1965, p16.

3 Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p99.

4 Devi, 1965, p91. Plato theorised that somewhere in the immaterial realm lurked ‘Ideal Forms’, perfect archetypes or blueprints from which all physical things like cats and humans drew their shape, albeit in an imperfect way, like flawed tracings of original artworks.

5 Devi, 1965, pp61-62.

6 Devi, 1965, p37.

7 Devi, 1965, pp134-136.

8 Savitri Devi, *The Lightning and the Sun*, Temple Press, 1958, p.322

9 Devi, 1965, pp93-94.

10 Devi, 1965, pp7-8, 26. The Nazis did pass various animal-rights laws.

11 Devi, 1965, pp130-131.

12 Devi, 1958, p263.

13 Devi, 1958, pp420–421; Hospital-hating Devi would surely despair at the existence of a 2017 Indian soap-opera, *Savitri Devi College and Hospital*, which according to Wikipedia is “a medical-drama and callous doctors-based TV serial” in which the titular Devi lies comatose in “the restricted area” of the aforesaid medical establishment whilst her daughter is disgracefully “forced to marry Vikrant Chavla, who is mentally abnormal”. This *sounds* like some kind of allegory for Devi’s thought, but the

use of her name appears coincidental.

14 You can tell Devi was influenced by Guénon, as she uses the term “reign of quantity”, the title of one of his books. Guénon felt the modern world privileged quantity over quality, for example in pumping out shoddy mass-produced goods rather than valuing the work of individual artisans. Devi applied this idea to human beings themselves, decrying overpopulation of the world by ‘inferior races’ and supposedly ‘worthless’ beings like the disabled and the brainwashed sheep-like masses who had proved so open to both consumerism and Communism: “One has to realise that, throughout a Time-Cycle... the number of human beings increases all over the world, while their quality decreases no less alarmingly... Any Time-Cycle could be briefly and picturesquely described as man’s passage from the Garden of Eden into a huge international slum.” (Devi, 1958, pp264) Her thought can be seen as an attempt to project the philosophical ideas of Traditionalism onto Nazism, hoping to give it a veneer of spiritual respectability so as to facilitate its transformation into a racist religion rather than a political movement. Evola himself arguably tried something similar with Italian fascism.

15 Devi, 1958, pp23, 216, 225, 234, 269-270.

16 Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, pp98-100.

17 Andrew Norman, *Hitler: Dictator or Puppet?*, Pen & Sword, 2011, pp55, 69-74; Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, IB Tauris, 2009, pp93-99; Lanz’s fantasies were also detailed in his magazine *Ostara*, with its alleged circulation of

500,000, so they must have been fairly well known.

18 Goodrick-Clarke, 2009, pp7-16; Eric Kurlander, *Hitler’s Monsters*, Yale University Press, 2017, pp20-22.

19 Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, pp2, 306.

20 Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p106.

21 [www.savitridevi.org/serrano\\_letter\\_1.html](http://www.savitridevi.org/serrano_letter_1.html).

22 [www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-41757047](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-41757047); [www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/us/alt-right-salutes-donald-trump.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/us/alt-right-salutes-donald-trump.html); [www.ibtimes.co.uk/savitri-devi-strange-story-how-hindu-hitler-worshiper-became-alt-right-icon-1608413](http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/savitri-devi-strange-story-how-hindu-hitler-worshiper-became-alt-right-icon-1608413); <https://scroll.in/article/823142/bulletins/98/todays-youngsters-could-be-the-most-independent-generation-of-old-people-yet>. All those online memes about Trump being a God-Emperor come from the alt-right, too. This raises the fascinating prospect that Trump may have an esoteric as well as an exoteric side to him. Julius Evola felt that royal families once had a holy aspect, being embodiments of gods, but that weedy modern *kali yuga* leaders now lacked this, and to Devi herself, “the capacity to reflect the divine was closely linked with man’s race” (*The Lightning and the Sun*, 1958, p5). Acclaiming Trump as God-Emperor – something his fellow Man Against Time Vladimir Putin has also been depicted as – could be seen as another humorous/sinister acclamation of political attempts to reverse the march of time, then. In fact, the alt-right were beaten to worshipping Trump as god by a New York recluse named Ray Crabtree, who in 1988 declared Trump to be a “God-sent entity”, like Ronald Reagan, crowning him ‘Emperor of the New

World Order’. Trump’s finances being then-perilous, Crabtree organised a ‘Trump Fund’, asking citizens to donate money to the Holy Emperor (“all cheques must be made out to Donald Trump”) to fund a tilt at the presidency. Crabtree composed a “symphonic poem” for piano in Trump’s honour and tried to hold a series of fund-raising concerts-cum-picnics in Central Park, dubbed ‘Trump-Splash-Feasts’, until the local authorities stopped him, even though he intended to invite “heads of every state” to give Donald all their money. (See Donna Kossy, *Kooks*, Feral House, 1994, pp155-157).

23 [www.vanityfair.com/news/2017/07/the-strange-origins-of-steve-bannons-nationalist-fantasia](http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2017/07/the-strange-origins-of-steve-bannons-nationalist-fantasia); [www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/world/europe/bannon-vatican-julius-evola-fascism.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/world/europe/bannon-vatican-julius-evola-fascism.html); [www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/20/stephen-bannon-fourth-turning-generation-theory-215053](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/20/stephen-bannon-fourth-turning-generation-theory-215053); [www.nytimes.com/2017/04/08/us/politics/stephen-bannon-book-fourth-turning.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/08/us/politics/stephen-bannon-book-fourth-turning.html); [www.nytimes.com/2017/04/08/us/politics/bannon-fourth-turning.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/08/us/politics/bannon-fourth-turning.html).

24 [www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-128101577.html](http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-128101577.html)

25 Aleksandr Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, Arkos, 2012, pp14, 27, 150-151, 183, 200. According to René Guénon, “if everyone understood what the modern world really is, it would immediately cease to exist”, just like in *The Matrix*, because “its existence... is purely negative; it exists only by the negation of traditional and suprahuman truth.” Cited in Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, OUP, 2004, p28.

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## The haunted factory

**RAY NEWMAN** grew up in the shadow of the British Cellophane factory in Bridgwater, Somerset, and heard stories of its ghosts. Thirty years on, he decided to find out more.

The factory opened in 1937 as a joint project between the French firm that owned the rights to the process for mass-manufacturing cellulose film and British textile company Courtaulds. It was built on fields next to Sydenham House, a 16<sup>th</sup> century mansion with its own stock of strange tales, as recounted in Berta Lawrence's 1973 book *Somerset Legends*. The Duke of Monmouth, she wrote, haunts a bedroom where he is said to have stayed before the Battle of Sedgemoor in July 1685. The room overlooked an oak tree, and some years later a member of the Perceval family was lifted by "some invisible spirit out of the chamber beyond his window-bars and, by levitation, set in the oak's branches".<sup>1</sup> The house was used by Courtaulds for corporate hospitality and, beyond the security boundary, hidden behind foliage, attained semi-legendary status among local children. I was taken to the garden once as a child and found it unsettling – the perfect setting for a timeslip.

I spent most of my childhood living within five minutes' walk of the factory and its famous stink – it was often called 'Smellophane' – and my father worked there in the 1970s and 1980s, as did the parents of many of my peers. The first person to tell me a ghost story about it was my childhood best friend, whose father worked in the section dedicated to producing non-woven synthetic fabrics. I asked my friend if he remembered what he'd told me all those years ago and his reply was as follows: "Late one night, Dad saw someone

### Somerset—home of "Cellophane" film



In one of the most modern factories in the country, built on a site of 84 acres, "Cellophane" film—the modern wrapping medium—is produced. Here a large number of employees, nearly all of them drawn from the town of Bridgwater, work under ideal conditions. No less than

ten clubs are provided for them, including football, swimming, etc., to ensure healthy and regular recreation. Day and night this great organization works to serve you... works to protect you... to bring you your foods, cigarettes and practically everything you buy as clean pure and fresh as the day they were made, thanks to the protective qualities of "Cellophane" film—the ideal transparent wrapping.

\* Owners of the Royalty, "Pack Mark" Cellophane and Manufacture of "Cellophane" brand of Cellulose Film.

in a checked shirt at the end of the production line. There wouldn't have been many people about at that time, so he went to investigate – but the person had gone and the only door nearby was locked. The bloke couldn't have gone anywhere else. It turned out someone from the other shift had died in just that spot (drowned in a cooling tank or dragged under the rollers) and had been wearing the same clothes as the figure Dad saw".

As an eight-year-old I'd simply enjoyed shuddering at this story but I find myself wondering today if my friend's father – quite a joker – might have been teasing him. My friend thinks not: "Mum said he was absolutely convinced at the time and quite shaken."

I also remember a variant of this 'drowned in a vat' tale told by another school contemporary: a figure spotted on a high gantry, then apparently falling from the edge into a tank; emergency services called, the vessel drained, but no body found.

I asked my own father if he'd ever found working on the site unnerving. He talked about the general twitchiness of factory life, especially working nights, practically alone in vast, echoing spaces, and the long stretches of boredom between bouts of strenuous labour. But as to specifics, he said: "The only experience I had was of something that passed through a corridor. It might have been that somebody opened a door and it was a cold chill or something... It was weird. It wasn't something I saw, just felt."

My younger brother suggested I get in touch with a friend of his who worked on the site in its final years, who wrote: "One of the machines there, called C2, killed a guy back the 1970s and it was definitely creepy in that area. He was pulled into a huge heated steamrolling press. There was no reverse mechanism and the firemen had to sledgehammer the machine apart to peel him out."

My dad had a similar story from British Cellophane – strangely similar, you might say – about an operator who got cocky while threading a length of film through the moving parts of a machine. He was pulled into the workings and then, when the machine reached full speed, it "tore his limb right from his shoulder – vroom! He dropped dead." My suspicion is that these were scare stories, garbled and embellished as they spread, perhaps intended to reinforce the importance of safety procedures, or merely to wind up new recruits. The arm-ripping incident my father recounted of

course happened 'a few years' before he joined the firm, like all good urban legends.

It's hard to prove that something didn't happen but I can say that I have not been able to find any record of any events like these in newspapers, even though relatively less gruesome accidents at the factory were reported. A painter died during construction of the plant;<sup>2</sup> a laboratory apprentice fell from a landing stage with no barrier and later died;<sup>3</sup> a foreman dropped dead while walking along a gantry;<sup>4</sup> and Raymond Culverwell set a legal precedent when a truck crushed his leg: being late back from his tea break, the Court of Appeal ruled, he was not entitled to compensation.<sup>5</sup> Gruesome incidents at other industrial sites were frequently covered, so the press were clearly interested.

My father has his own explanation, simultaneously more down-to-earth and scarier than any ghost: the factory, he says, was often dense with chemical fumes and he would frequently find himself wading in pools of toluene, a liquid solvent known to cause hallucinations. It's easy to see how that might combine with the disorientation of shift work, and those grim tales, to generate unease. Though none of that explains how Perceval got into the oak tree.

#### NOTES

- 1 pp119-120.
- 2 'Bridgwater Painter Killed', *Western Daily Press*, 15 May 1936.
- 3 'Bridgwater Lad's Death', *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 28 October 1944.
- 4 'Sudden Deaths at Bridgwater', *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 26 October 1946.
- 5 "No" to the Man Who Took Too Long At Tea', *Daily Mirror*, 19 Nov 1965.

◆ RAY NEWMAN is an award-winning writer on the subject of beer and pubs, and has co-written two books on the subject under the pseudonym 'Ray Bailey'.

## The real mystery of dowsing

**IAN H MACHELL** argues that the 'ideomotor effect' can't explain dowsing – and suggests you try it out for yourself...

The letter from David Hambling [FT366:75] refers to the 'ideomotor effect', more correctly called the ideomotor response (IMR), or Carpenter effect, in which tiny, unconscious, reflex, muscular responses to previously obtained knowledge might cause dowsing reactions. It's a common misconception that's even appeared in the journal of the British Society of Dowsers several times. Incidentally, I prefer the term 'subconscious' to 'unconscious' in this context, since I've never known of anyone being able to dowse when they're unconscious!

There are many reasons why IMR cannot explain dowsing. For example, it doesn't account for entirely different muscle groups reacting differently to the huge variety of dowsing implements held in different ways. Some are held loosely between finger and thumb; some are lightly balanced in the palm of a hand; some are gripped tightly under tension; and some are designed to work without being in contact with the dowser at all. The most common implements are right-angled L-rods, forked Y-rods and pendulums.

Everyone who's actually tried dowsing knows that an external, as-yet unidentified, force or energy causes dowsing reactions. That's the real mystery of dowsing. This force can be felt tugging pendulums from side to side and often making Y-rods flip up or down so strongly that the dowser can't stop them moving. Even if you don't think you can dowse, you can easily prove that the force exists. Try this:

Place a non-magnetic object like a pen, pencil, knife, fork,



LEFT: Joyce Prosser water divining, circa 1930.

stick, etc., on a clear table. Make a pendulum from something small, light and non-magnetic with a hole in the middle, like a ring (a plain gold one works well for most people), or a washer, etc., by passing a 10in (25cm) or so length of thin cotton (or a single hair, if you have one long enough!) through the hole in the middle. Hold the cotton/hair lightly, near both ends, between the index finger and thumb of one hand and dangle the pendulum over the object. Sit on a chair so you can rest the elbow of that arm on the table about 12in (30cm) from the object. Keep your other hand well away.

Some trial and error may be needed for the strongest reaction, since it varies from person to person. I suggest starting with a

### *I urge readers to try some pendulum experiments*

gap of about 1in (2.5cm) between the pendulum and the object and about 4in (10cm) for the length of the cotton/hair from the pendulum to your finger and thumb. Make sure the pendulum hangs slightly nearer to one end of the object than the other.

After a short while, the pendulum should start to swing to and fro along the length of the object. The swing will gradually increase to a couple of inches

each side of the vertical. You will actually be able to *feel* the pendulum being gently tugged, alternately towards one end of the object and then to the other, by some external force.

It's important not to hold the pendulum exactly over the middle of the object, or the tug to one end will be as strong as the tug to the other – so they'll cancel out and your pendulum won't move at all. And relax, so your arm, wrist and fingers are not tensed. Otherwise, you'll be more likely, instinctively or subconsciously, to counteract any movement the pendulum tries to make and, again, fail to get a reaction. For the same reason, don't attempt to hold the pendulum still; just let it dangle and 'do its own thing'.

Once you've felt for yourself these forces tugging at your pendulum, you'll know for certain that they exist and that IMR definitely does not explain dowsing reactions. And you will also have mastered one of the basic steps of physical dowsing! By the way, your pendulum should circle clockwise over one end of the object and anticlockwise over the other end, as if the object is polarised. Now try holding your pendulum over the upturned palm of your free hand. You'll feel it being tugged around faster and faster in ever-increasing circles until, for many people, the cotton/hair is almost horizontal.

IMR cannot explain the mental aspects of dowsing either. Experienced dowsers can determine the depths, directions, flow rates and potability of underground streams, as well as the depths, directions and any faults in buried pipes, cables, etc., which have never been mapped and never been visited previously by the dowsers. Hence they can't have any subconscious knowledge of the target objects.



And IMR doesn't explain map dowsing ('dowsing-at-a-distance'). That's holding a pendulum over a map, or even free-hand sketch, of the area involved which has been provided by someone else, sometimes on the other side of the world, in order to locate missing objects, people, pets, vehicles, buried ruins, artefacts, precious metals, oil, minerals, etc. Again, good dowsers can do this without ever having had any previous contact with either their target or its location or the provider of the map/sketch; so they cannot possibly have gained any prior knowledge which they could have retained subconsciously.

Some more examples of the mental aspects of dowsing are: healing; detecting Earth's natural energies; question and answer techniques; reacting to images visualised and projected by other people; and detecting objects' residual dowsable energy ('ghosts?') left behind long after they've moved elsewhere.

In my experience, tiny muscular twitches *can* occur – but they happen when the dowsing implement *starts* to move. They're just a slight tensing; an involuntary, autonomic, reflex reaction to the implement's movements. Indeed, some people are so sensitive to – and initially so surprised by – these movements that they instinctively counteract them to try to keep their implement still – and then they wonder why they can't dowse!

The IMR explanation is therefore back-to-front. Involuntary twitches don't cause dowsing reactions; it's the dowsing implement's movement that can cause a reflex response in the dowser. It's no different to your leg twitching when a rubber hammer strikes your knee to check your reflexes. And reflex responses do *not* rely on subconscious information, which contradicts the IMR explanation yet again. (This could apply to people using Ouija boards, too; as also mentioned in David Hambling's letter.)

Dowsing is a fascinating subject. It encompasses far more than water divining. Fortean



ABOVE: The Society of Dowser at Backwoods, Lindfield, Sussex, dowsing in the countryside in June 1934.

J. A. HAMPTON / TOPICAL PRESS AGENCY / GETTY IMAGES

should try it; it could open up a whole new outlook on life. It's easy enough for most people to learn the basics, too. Eighty per cent of those I've taught to dowse (including the late Dr Lyall Watson of *Supernature* fame) have obtained correct physical reactions with one or two implements after only a few minutes' instruction. Admittedly, though, the mental aspects of dowsing take longer to master, since they need concentration and practice.

I've mentioned ghosts, so try this with your pendulum. After the object has been in the same place for a while, move it well away from the table. Then dangle your pendulum over the table where it used to be and you should see it swing to and fro – as well as circulating clockwise over where one end was and anticlockwise over where the other end was – as if it's still there.

Congratulations: you've just found a ghost! It gradually fades away, even though the memory of its previous location on the table can remain in the dowser's subconscious for ages! This is yet another argument against IMR:

if muscles do twitch in response to subconscious information, then the dowsing reaction should occur for as long as the memory exists in the dowser and should not fade after a few minutes. And absolutely everything not only emits and absorbs this dowsable energy (whatever it is) but also leaves ghosts behind: objects, people, animals, plants, stones, etc. Think about the implications!

Dowsers can also detect the affinity between things, even of different materials, which have been in contact for a long time. Try this, too: if your object was something like a ballpoint pen, dismantle it and place its components into two groups about a foot apart. Hold your pendulum over anywhere along a line between them. It should start to swing back and forth from one group to the other as if they're still linked to each other. Then move one group farther away – to the far side of the room, then into the next room, and so on. Your pendulum should continue to swing along a line between the two groups. You'll be surprised by how far apart, and for how long, they remain apparently interconnected by

their dowsable energy.

Dowsing seems to transcend space and time. Information can be gained virtually instantly from target objects, irrespective of how far away they are. It's as if dowsers somehow 'tune in' to an 'energy field' of some kind being emitted by their targets, a bit like a radio receiver tuning in to a broadcast. Yet the strength of this dowsable energy decays far less with increasing distance than the inverse square law decay rate of electromagnetism or gravity, so it can't be related to either of those two basic forces of Nature, or 'fundamental interactions'. However, it could be similar in principle to the equally mysterious 'quantum entanglement' of subatomic particles and clouds of thousands of rubidium atoms – so it might explain telepathy, too.

Give dowsing a go, fortians! I urge readers to try the pendulum experiments described above and provide some feedback if you 'feel the force'.

◆ IAN H MACHELL has retired after a career in telecoms and IT management and is currently writing a book on cosmology.

THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE PRESENTS

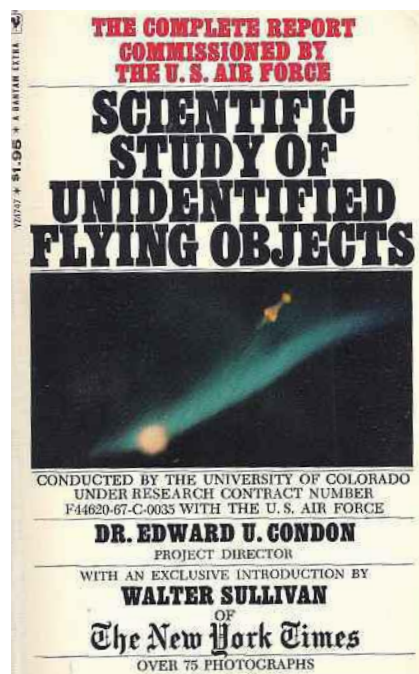
# BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

## 35. SITTING ON THE LID OF SAUCERDOM

There are, in a certain sense, at least two "Condon Reports". First is the one that was actually printed, to which we mainly address ourselves here. The second is a kind of spook, shadow version, which exists in a certain branch of ufological mythology as a fraud upon the public. Reading the actual report tends to dissolve this perception, which was propagated, with unnerving success, by a handful of obsessively energetic believers in the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH). We deal with them as best we can, without writing a history book – fascinating as that would be. The report also had a history, involving the US Air Force's discomfort at being the official, and much-abused, face of flying saucers, a secret committee or two, and fearsome lobbying for Congressional hearings. All this too we have to pass over. But from the mid-1960s, there was much discussion in official circles of how an independent university-based study might put the subject to bed, and so let the Air Force off its hook. The upshot was the Condon Committee, and the Condon Report, whose 50th birthday occurs later this year.

The US Air Force did not find it easy to persuade an academic institution to take on its proposed study. Eventually, the University of Colorado at Boulder agreed to accept the work. The contract both protected and demanded the university's scientific integrity: "The work will be conducted under conditions of strictest objectivity by investigators who, as carefully as can be determined, have no predilections or preconceived positions on the UFO question. This is essential if the public, the Congress, the Executive and the scientific community are to have confidence in the study." The Air Force announced the agreement on 7 October 1966. The project director – whose reluctance too had to be overcome – was to be Dr Edward Uhlher Condon. The project would be co-ordinated by Assistant Dean Robert Low.

In many ways, Professor Condon was an ideal choice. His scientific credentials were beyond reproach: he had contributed to the development of radar and the atomic bomb and had written the standard textbook on atomic spectra. In the early 1950s his recommendation that the Atomic Energy Commission be put under civilian control was accepted. For this, he apparently inspired the enmity of Richard Nixon, and was attacked by the House Un-American Activities Committee as a follower of "a new revolutionary movement" – by which it seems they meant the sedition represented by quantum mechanics – and had his security clearances revoked. Surviving



this onslaught, in 1958 he accused the US Government of misrepresenting the effects of nuclear fallout. Condon was no yes-man, and had no need to prove his integrity.

He also had a well-developed sense of the ridiculous. Among believers, Condon's reputation for objectivity evaporated as word spread of his irreverence – which extended to practical jokes. One prank led to a reception committee representing the governor of Utah, complete with

brass band, waiting several hours at the Bonneville Salt Flats racetrack for a telepathically predicted UFO landing.

Contrary to the agreement with the Air Force, several members of Condon's team were already predisposed to accept the ETH. Chief among them were psychologist Dr David Saunders, electrical engineer Dr Norman E Levine, and Mary Lou Armstrong, the project's administrative secretary. They were also close to Donald Keyhoe, who broadly supported the study and provided it with case material from NICAP regional investigators. When on 27 September 1967 the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that Condon was "disenchanted" with UFOs and was unimpressed by NICAP's contributions to the study, Keyhoe withdrew NICAP's support.

At this point, atmospheric physicist Dr James McDonald, another disciple of Keyhoe, became central to the way the Condon investigation would be perceived in the future. McDonald had hoped to join the project but was not invited to do so. To compensate, and some would say to meddle, he had maintained excellent contacts with the ETHers on its staff. As a result, he had been made privy to an internal memo, written in August 1966 by Robert Low. In McDonald's and Saunders's eyes, it appeared to compromise the integrity of the whole enterprise. McDonald was characterised by *Watch the Skies!* author Curtis Peebles as "an angry, aggressive, driven, manipulative and ambitious individual". One can see how such a picture could be drawn from his subsequent behaviour toward Condon, imperfect as he too may have been. McDonald learned of the crisis between Condon and his staff from Saunders, and in January 1968 wrote to Low, complaining about all aspects of the project. In the course of his harangue, he quoted Low's memo back at him.

Musing on whether the University of Colorado would be well-advised to take on the UFO study, Low had presented the opinions of colleagues who were for and against taking it on, and finally gave his own view: "Our study would be conducted almost exclusively by nonbelievers who, although they couldn't possibly prove a

negative result, could and probably would add an impressive body of evidence that there is no reality to the observations. The trick would be, I think, to describe the project so that, to the public, it would appear a totally objective study but, to the scientific community, would present the image of a group of nonbelievers trying their best to be objective but having an almost zero expectation of finding a saucer."

Low suggested the study should emphasise psychological aspects of UFO reports, not "the old question of the physical reality of the saucers"; that approach might at least produce some worthwhile scholarly papers and successfully project "the image we want to present to the scientific community".

However, Low's memo was concerned solely with the light in which scientists and academics would view the university if it accepted the Air Force contract. Over and over he uses terms like "image" and "present". It was not about the way the project would actually be run. The word "trick", in this context, is clearly used in the sense of technique, manner or mode (of presentation) – in other words, "the way round the 'image' problem". It was not used to imply deception, sham, deceit, shenanigans or fraud. But that's the misleading sense that generations of wiseacre ufologists have promulgated ever since.

The memo was never more than a rumination on the University of Colorado and its standing in scientific circles. Condon himself had never heard of it until McDonald quoted it to Low. But its assessment, and the factionalism that divided Condon's staff, make clear that the USAF's demand for the "strictest objectivity by investigators who... have no predilections or preconceived positions on the UFO question" was, in reality, impossible to fulfil. Some kind of tension was bound to plague such a project, because there could hardly have existed a soul in the land who did not have an opinion of some kind about flying saucers. Condon certainly could have deployed both his sense of humour and his scientific gifts more diplomatically and more constructively, to persuade rather than to confront or mock (or more often, simply ignore) the beliefs abroad among his team.

The *Final Report of the Scientific Study of Unidentified Objects* as presented to the USAF occupied three bound volumes and 1,465 pages. Two paperback editions were published, both stretching to nearly 1,000 pages.

One of the ritual lamentations of ufologists down the ages has been that Condon's assessment of the UFO phenomenon, which led the report off under the title "Conclusions and Recommendations", bore little or no relation to the overwhelming evidence of a real mystery that appeared in the

"BOOKS ARE LIKE  
MIRRORS:  
IF A FOOL  
LOOKS IN, YOU  
CANNOT EXPECT  
A GENIUS TO  
LOOK OUT."

*J.K. Rowling*

following pages. Condon wrote: "The emphasis of this study has been on attempting to learn from UFO reports anything that could be considered as adding to scientific knowledge. Our general conclusion is that nothing has come from the study of UFOs in the past 21 years that has added to scientific knowledge. Careful consideration of the record as it is available to us leads us to conclude that further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby."

The key words here are "science" and "scientific". Condon proceeded to write, in characteristically urbane and articulate style, an essay on the workings of what philosopher Michael Polanyi was to call "the republic of science" – the regulation of scientific discovery by scientists. He drew the logical, and liberal, conclusion: that if scientists thought the report's findings were wrong, and had ideas for more accurate studies, "such ideas should be supported.... each individual case ought to be carefully considered on its own merits."

Condon said that it was his team's task to investigate "curious entities distinguished by lack of knowledge of what they are, rather than in terms of what they are known to be." This was a reversal, in principle, of the starting point accepted by almost every endeavour to increase scientific knowledge. Nonetheless, the quality, depth and integrity of the analyses conducted, from modern UFO experiences and UFOs in history, through plasma physics and the "natural philosophy" of flying saucers, surpasses anything that the ufological community had produced at that time, and most of what it has had to offer since. But that was all too subtle for the ufologists. Their objection to Condon's conclusion was based on the sighting reports – or rather, on the final assessments of the reports. More than half the cases the Condon study considered, in detail or in passing, could be called "unexplained". A more conservative estimate would put the "unknowns"

in the Condon Report at about one in three cases. This was far higher than the Blue Book rate (which between 1947 and 1969 averaged 5.5 per cent and, if one removed the anomalous figures for 1952, sank to 3.58 per cent), and far higher too than the civilian investigators' groups regularly achieved. The ufological outrage at Condon is usually – not always – inspired by the flawed supposition that what is not explicable in the reports is extraterrestrial. But this does not follow. Even so, it was at least a tactical error by Condon not to anticipate the believers' reaction. His report would have been stronger if (as one committee had suggested) his team had examined 100 well-documented cases. If these had been "best cases" as advised by NICAP, APRO and Blue Book, he would have deflected yet more criticism.

Donald Menzel and Ernest Taves (in *The UFO Enigma*, 1977) had a sharper objection to the proportion of unknowns. All of them, they thought, were explicable, although "some are indeed so trivial as to scarcely warrant the attempt". And in 28 crisply argued pages they demolished the 23 reports listed overtly as unexplained in the study. Not all are as finally dismissable as these arch-sceptics would have us believe. But it is worth mentioning that their solution to one "classic" (still being recycled in the UFO literature), the radar/visual reported from an RB-47 reconnaissance aircraft near Biloxi, Mississippi, in 1957, was accepted by the crew of the plane as correct. They note that Nick Mariana, photographer of the celebrated Great Falls, Montana, UFOs (see Case #10) was a journalism graduate and "publicity-minded", and find it remarkable that the two USAF jets in the air at the time of the sighting detected no UFOs. They disposed effectively too of several claimed sightings by astronauts that Condon's team had failed to explain.

The Condon report was a landmark in ufology. Its most careful arguments were, sadly, ignored for the most part for the sake of some ill-founded gibing and scoffing, but it ended the USAF's official, overt interest in flying saucers. On 17 December 1969, Secretary of the Air Force Robert C Seamans Jr announced the closure of Blue Book.

The reaction of ufologists was almost one of relief. NICAP said, as if Condon had never issued his report: "UFOs can now be given the serious scientific attention they require, free from military considerations." The organisation also thought that the Air Force decision opened the way for "a fresh look at the UFO problem". Indeed, it did. The 1970s would see a free-for-all among ufologists vying for the most intriguing way to account for the phenomenon.

Daniel S Gillmor (ed.) *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*, Bantam 1969.

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## Who plans this organised chaos?

This gripping political analysis of Donald Trump, whose election has brought post-truth chaos to the White House, draws analogies between the US Alt-Right and chaos magick... and Kali Yuga looms.

### Dark Star Rising

Magick and Power in the Age of Trump

Gary Lachman

Tarcher Perigee 2018

Pb, 228pp, notes, ind, £13.99, ISBN 9780143132066

With this timely new title, occult scholar Gary Lachman has accidentally written a book whose ideal target audience is me.

As FT365:54-55's taster showed, it deals with the role Internet meme-based chaos magick may have played in Donald Trump's election, something then related back to the similarly esoteric political chicanery of Aleksandr Dugin and Vladislav Surkov over in Russia. (Lachman has drawn on my own articles in FT346-349.) I had idly considered writing a book on similar subjects myself, but Lachman has beaten me to it, and I'm glad he did, as now I don't have to bother reading *The Art of the Deal*.

This was Trump's best-selling 1980s business self-help title, which Lachman sees as occupying an interface between 'you can do it!'-type books, and the more arcane notion of creating *tulpa*-like thought-forms; it is proposed Trump himself may be one. Basically, such quack texts claim you can wish yourself rich or powerful. Think of Noel Edmonds's weird 'Cosmic Ordering Service', but performed by angry young men frequenting 4chan and summoning up The Donald, rather than Noel requesting a post-*House Party* career-boost from the Universe like Alan Partridge gone mad. The idea is that, by spreading pro-Trump memes like Pepe the Frog online, alt-right folk like Richard Spencer (who boasted "we made this dream reality"

following Trump's victory) have used the Internet just as a chaos magician uses the astral plane, "as a kind of psychic ether that can transmit their willed intentions... without any apparent causal relation", a sort of willed synchronicity. With "post modern swastikas" like Pepe, meme-magicians seek to 'nudge' an inherently unstable reality their way via web-based means.

Lachman explains his idea – which he admits may best be considered a metaphor – with clarity and detail, although some of the initial potted biographies of positive-thinking gurus veer a bit away from his main topic. When he does discuss Trump, though, he makes a fascinating and well-developed case, and his capsule history of chaos magick and its punk-style origins in 1970s Stoke Newington is compelling too (I liked his tale of the chaos magicians dispelling demons via the DIY chant "Fuck off, you bastards!"; not quite Cornelius Agrippa). The relationship between Steve Bannon, Aleksandr Dugin and various Traditionalist authors like Julius Evola also comes into this strange brew.

You won't get political analysis this exciting on *Newsnight*, and I found the book to be an enjoyable, thought-provoking read which I have no hesitation in recommending.

One quibble. This is no polemic, but Lachman does clearly dislike Trump (fair enough), viewing him as the ultimate source of post-truth chaos in himself, intended by meme-magicians to lay the ground for a bright New Order. But an alternative view is possible. When Trump risibly claims the crowd at his

*"Meme magicians seek to 'nudge' an unstable reality their way via web-based means"*

inauguration was the biggest ever, in spite of clear evidence to the contrary, this strikes me as directly akin to Barack Obama equally risibly claiming the latest Islamist terror incident has nothing to do with Islam, even though it self-evidently does. Both represent almost Gnostic-level rejections of demonstrable physical reality. Trump is portrayed as bringing such post-truth chaos to the West, but, whilst his White House is indeed a frequent shambles, I would say that chaos was already here in a wider sense, as competing versions of everything from justice to gender jostle for ascendancy. As Dugin implies (in Lachman's précis), the final victory of Western liberal capitalism might be "one vast shopping mall with not only goods but realities on sale." Dugin's symbol, the eight-pointed Star of Chaos – the titular 'Dark Star Rising' – seems a diagram for how to use such forces to help destroy the West.

The centre of our star cannot hold, being torn apart by directly opposed strands of toxic identity-politics, so all Russia has to do is help give it a nudge. But in a more cohesive society, without such pre-existing fissures, there would be fewer such cracks to widen. Take Canadian PM Justin Trudeau's infamous novelty socks – one pro-gay, the other pro-Islam – but how can these

two compute when surveys show so many Western-based Muslims disapprove of homosexuality? Are these Schrödinger's socks, symbolic of a society being forced to co-exist uneasily in two directly contradictory states simultaneously? How does Trudeau reconcile such opposites? By not thinking about them, presumably – lack of observation being the only way in which the illusion of the cat's two mutually contradictory states could be maintained in the old thought-experiment. Such fissiparous sanctimony is easy for malicious actors to blow apart. Perhaps we're the ones destroying ourselves, and Putin and Dugin are just giving the rotten tower a final push – a la Julius Evola. The West has been governed by lies for a long time now, and to me Trump is the logical *reductio ad absurdum* conclusion of this process,

a comical post-truth Mephistopheles conjured up accidentally, as much by the Left as the Right.

Examining the references, I see Lachman and I have been reading many of the same books, but reaching somewhat opposite conclusions in places – precisely the kind of unbridgeable social split Russia seeks to exploit. So, we're all doomed to dissolve in *Kali Yuga*; and this book makes a great fist of explaining why, albeit from a slightly incomplete perspective, certain aspects of which I personally disagree with (although you, of course, might not). But I still greatly liked it. It is well-researched, well-written and full of interest.

I will give it a Five Star rating, if that doesn't sound too populist.

SD Tucker

★★★★★



# They're not moon burns

All the *Close Encounters* completist could possibly need. One wonders, though, what Jack Nicholson would have brought to the lead role...

## Close Encounters of the Third Kind

The Ultimate Visual History

Michael Klasterin

Titan Books 2017

Hb, 192pp, illus, £40.00, ISBN 9781785657283

When Spielberg was a teenager, he brought his fascination with UFOs to the screen in an 8mm film called *Firelight*. Using family and friends, he shot the story of missing people and pets linked to the investigation of mysterious lights in the sky near his home in Phoenix, Arizona, on a \$500 budget. It was shown for one night only at a local theatre to a sell-out audience, making it Spielberg's first taste of success as a filmmaker.

UFOs continued to fire his imagination in 'A Meeting of Minds', the outline of a Watergate-inspired plot about an officer discovering that the government is hiding the existence of extraterrestrials from the public. Under the new working title of 'Watch the Skies', the project was turned down by Twentieth Century Fox, who were already producing a science fiction film – *Star Wars*, directed by George Lucas. Fortunately, Columbia Pictures was intrigued enough to back it at the end of 1973.

Work on the project slowed in the following year when Spielberg took over directing *Jaws*. A script by Paul Schrader strayed too far from Spielberg's vision, and a second draft by John Hill lacked imagination. Spielberg had to write the screenplay in 1975 while editing *Jaws*. The project was retitled *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, inspired by the classification scheme outlined in Dr J Allen Hynek's 1972 book *The UFO Experience*. In his foreword, Spielberg says that the Watergate theme had become overused. He was

impressed by NBC anchorman John Chancellor's view that if UFOs were real, Nixon would have told the press the aliens are here to distract from his crimes.

With *Jaws* becoming the top grossing film of all time, Columbia green-lighted *CE3K* despite worries about the budget, which quickly escalated from its \$3 million estimate. (The total bill was \$20 million).

Part One of this book provides the origins of the film and how the cast, crew and production staff was put together. Spielberg had hoped Steve McQueen would play Roy Neary, but because the part required him to cry on screen, he refused it. Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman and Jack Nicholson were also considered before *Jaws* star Richard Dreyfuss was picked as the normal Joe dazed by UFOs invading his life. He succeeded in getting François Truffaut to play Claude Lacombe, who was based on ufologist Jacques Vallée.

Spielberg was still working on the script during preproduction, and for three weeks screenwriter Jerry Belson helped add depth and humour to some of the film's characters. Only days before shooting, Matthew Robbins and Hal Barwood helped tweak the script and added the scene where Jillian Guiler's son is abducted by the aliens.

Part Two details the location shooting in a dirigible hangar at Brookley Air Force Base, which was used for the scenes at the landing site and the Devil's Tower mountain.

Part Three covers how Douglas Trumbull used his special effects genius to add the magical UFOs and spaceships to the live footage combined with model work by Gregory Jein, which included a four-foot-high model of the Mothership. A hundred detailed matte



paintings by Matthew Yurichich were also superimposed on the footage to fill in details of land and skyscapes.

One of the biggest problems for Spielberg, which Stanley Kubrick also experienced in making *2001: A Space Odyssey*, was creating convincing extraterrestrials. Production designer Joe Alves made grey-type aliens, as recorded by Hynek, with large bulbous heads and almond-shaped eyes. Make-up artist Frank Griffen made them into masks, and Tom and Ellis Burman produced multiple versions for close-ups and wide-angle shots. Girls from a ballet school in the Mobile area were filmed walking and flying out of the mothership wearing them. In postproduction, puppet master Bob Baker created the long-limbed alien who emerges from the craft, and special effects expert Carlo Rambaldi created a mechanical alien for scenes where it exchanges hand gestures with Lacombe.

Spielberg felt the film was not as he had envisioned it, and in 1980 Columbia agreed to fund a 'Special Edition', with the proviso that it included scenes inside the mothership. He cut a few scenes from the original film to make it more focused. This did well at the box office as a re-release, but many thought tinkering with his masterpiece was unnecessary. For the 1997 'Collector's Edition' DVD, Spielberg cut all the interior scenes, showing that he agreed that they added nothing to the original film.

The book includes a fantastic selection of photographs, illustrations, concept art and sketches made during the production of the movie, and even includes inserts of notes and sketches. The only shame is that it does not include a bibliography or index.

Nigel Watson  
★★★★★

## Poltergeists

Alan Gauld & AD Cornell

White Crow Books 2017

Pb, 405pp, illus, indices, refs, £16.99, ISBN 9781786770394

A welcome reissue of this comprehensive 1979 study of poltergeist cases. The first half surveys 500 accounts from around the world, the earliest from sixth-century Italy. The authors caution that natural explanations or trickery must be considered: waterhammers and other noises in pipes, wind in chimneys or through TV aerials, even mating hedgehogs – all have generated reports of supposed polts. Ten chapters focus on different themes – polts and witches, destructive polts, polts and the dead... This half concludes with very useful tables analysing the 500 case reports. Specific phenomena – movement of small or large objects, fires, knocks and raps, assaults, offensive odours, the appearance of small animals or human-like figures, groans, voices, apparent communication – all collated by type, with their frequency expressed as a percentage, and further sorted by country, witnesses' sex or age, duration, whether diurnal or nocturnal, etc.

The second half features the authors' personal investigations, followed by theoretical discussions of possible forces (electromagnetic waves? Underground water?) responsible for polt phenomena. It concludes with an exploration as to whether poltergeists represent the living or the dead – or indeed, whether they are sentient.

A 36-page appendix chronologically lists the 500 analysed cases, together with their source, followed by indices of places and of names.

A must-have reference work for the psychic investigator.

Christopher Josiffe

★★★★★

## Haunted

On Ghosts, Witches, Zombies, and Other Monsters of the Natural and Supernatural Worlds

Leo Brady

Yale University Press 2017

Hb, 306pp, illus, notes, ind, \$30.00, ISBN 9780300203806

One of Leo Brady's first statements resonated with me: "Two linked impulses moved me to write *Haunted*... The first





is to connect elements in a culture without recourse to a hierarchy of high and low.” This move from a concept of high and low culture is important. Too often genres such as horror are sidelined from mainstream culture (I’m thinking of the tension between ‘literary fiction’ and horror). By analysing horror as a historically situated subject related to wider events, Braudy goes into more depth than many books on the subject. As you might expect, this is not a light book and covers a lot of ground, particularly in relating the rise of horror as a literary and cinematic form to changes in religion, a subject he returns to later when he considers their differences and similarities.

He begins with the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami of 1755, and the debates it led to. Braudy explores the surrounding psychological, scientific and religious controversies, and the rise of Gnosticism bringing the discussion back to the emergence of gothic literature. He links the various sides of the theological arguments of the time to the way early forms of gothic literature saw young female protagonists threatened by hidden forces.

It’s in these connections that Braudy excels, for example pointing out how birther conspiracies about Barack Obama’s citizenship draw on folk tales of the fear of changelings.

Most of the book is focused not on monsters, but why they gained such prominence and such vitality. He divides the creatures up into four categories: monsters from nature; created monsters; monsters from within; and monsters from the past. By doing this, Braudy argues, that family resemblances can be traced as their portrayal adapts to historical and cultural context. He also discusses the detective, who with his striving for order and reason is an antonym to the monster’s movement toward disorder and chaos, as well as the detective’s relationship to the re-establishment of Enlightenment use of natural explanations.

While I’d recommend *Haunted* as an excellent exploration

of the development of horror, there are specific discussions and topics that will appeal to the foratean. He talks about the birth of the monster of Ravenna in 1512 (and how this was placed in the cultural context of God’s displeasure), mesmerism and how the marginalisation of women in a male-dominated society was turned into a source of power, and how vampirism can be seen as an alternative religion.

*Haunted* is well worth picking up. It is not a light read, and I don’t mean that as a criticism. Braudy interrogates his subject with depth and consideration, taking his time rather than just skimming the surface.

I’m going to finish with two of my favourite quotes from the book. “What is honorifically called ritual in religion bears a close resemblance to what is less respectfully referred to as genre in the arts” and “Like ritual genre creates a community of viewers with similar and overlapping experiences.

But unlike prayer or other religious rituals, genres cannot merely be repeated endlessly and expect the same responses from their audience. A variety of originality has to be present for the genre work to be more long lasting than others that may closely resemble it.”

Braudy has created an exploration of horror that has originality and insight.

Steve Toase

★★★★★

## Prisoner of Infinity

UFOs, Social Engineering, and the Psychology of Fragmentation

Jason Horsley

Aeon Books 2018

Pb, 328pp, £14.99, ISBN 9781911597056

*Prisoner of Infinity* began in May 2013 as an online art installation, ‘Crucial Fictions’, and reached its final form in January 2017. Long before its start (though not the author’s longstanding awareness of these issues), the dismantling of societal infrastructure’s “core coherence” had been underway. The value of Horsley’s insight and careful articulation lies not only in his capacity for tracking, analysing and flagging potential dangers, but in charging them with meaning. “It’s not possible

to really investigate the UFO,” he notes, “without winding up knee-deep in epistemological and psychological waters.” That statement describes what’s absent in most ufological esoterica: relevance.

“[*Prisoner of Infinity*] is also,” Horsley continues, “for anyone interested in how beliefs are created [...] influence our perceptions and shape the narratives that engender our beliefs. [...] It delves into the experience and psychology of one high-profile ‘experiencer,’ not in order to undermine his work but in order to reach a proper understanding of the phenomena being observed – by observing closely the observer himself. Yet, as the author of this exploration, I am also the observer who must be observed... since it is only fair to place my own psychology under the same microscope as I am placing Strieber.”

Horsley’s chronicling of events in his past goes beyond this statement of purpose; nowhere in the literature will one find a more comprehensive, balanced evaluation of Whitley Strieber’s confounding (and frequently contradictory) oeuvre.

‘Part I: Passport to Manchuria’ covers – among other matters – de-eroticised spirituality, trauma as psychism and agent of evolution, child abuse and fragmentation, quasi-memories, Donald Kalsched’s Jungian model of dissociation and the self-care system applied to Strieber’s “shattered mirror of expectation” and alien intervention, his alleged ties to US intelligence, The Process Church, and similarities to the late Carlos Castaneda.

‘Part II: Crucial Fictions’ explores the theories of Julian Jaynes (of *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*), alien abduction and MK ULTRA, military psy ops, Kurtzweil, von Neumann and the so-called Singularity, transhumanism, Harman’s New Freemasonry, the trap of transcendental knowledge, black-ops and mind control, ritual sexual abuse, the ultimate motivation of the illumineers, and more.

The Afterword, ‘Update: one fiction to rule them (UFO Disclosure Plan 2017)’ assesses

the questionable John Podesta, and Strieber’s claims – via an audio series on his *Unknown Country* website – of channelling his late wife Anne. But the bonus

is the Appendix: ‘Delivering the Poison Secret: A Review of Whitley Strieber & Jeffrey Kripal’s *The Super Natural*’, with copious notes and references. Whether Strieber – complicitly or not – was/is being exploited by “traumatogenic agencies,” Horsley demonstrates that delving into, and manipulating, mass consciousness will never end until that most unidentified object of all – the human soul – is at last identified.

*Prisoner of Infinity* is the most important study of social/mythological engineering/UFOs/Strieber’s continuum, and Horsley’s relentless – yet empathetic – intelligence strips out the annoying nonsense that’s tainted these subjects since the ‘heady’ days of Adamski, Bower’s *Operation Mind Control*, the late Jim Keith’s more lucid material and Cannon’s *The Controllers*. An incredible, mind-blowing exploration.

William Grabowski

★★★★★

## This Isle is Full of Monsters

Shakespeare’s Audiences and the Supernatural

Jon Kaneko-James

Beul Athris Publishing 2018

Pb, 200pp, refs, ind, £9.99, ISBN9780995778412

The supernatural was part of everyday life for all strata of society in Shakespeare’s time: Queen Elizabeth had a personal astrologer and housewives “saved their pennies to buy talismans from magicians”. (Well chosen quotes from *The Witch of Edmonton* show that being female, old and poor was dangerous: “A witch? Who is not.” This nice little book stresses that believers were a product of their time (which it analyses in an accessible way) not less intelligent than us post-Enlightenment types. And the tales of witches and the con artists who profited from them are terrific.

Val Stevenson

★★★★★

# Rhapsody in blue(stones)

This parson's egg of a book by an accomplished writer displays insight, but also ignores much recent research and needed some fact-checking

## The Stonehenge Bluestones

Brian John

Greencroft Books 2018

Pb, 256pp, £15.00, ISBN 9780905559940

Brian John, best known for his well-researched and highly readable 18th century Welsh bodice-ripping 'Angel Mountain Saga' novels, is an accomplished and successful writer of fiction. Indeed, Martha, his heroine, could front a feminist riposte to *Poldark*, substituting Pembrokeshire for Cornwall. He also has been a long-standing, often quite lonely, proponent of the theory that glaciers dumped the Stonehenge bluestones close to their present location. This slim paperback is his follow-up to *The Bluestone Enigma* (2008) and is a better and more focused book. Mostly, this is due to an extraordinary number of new excavations within Stonehenge and its landscape in the last decade, and to the better characterisation of the rocks of Pembrokeshire that constitute the bluestones. Scores of journal and popular articles have resulted, including a couple from John and co-workers as well as the almost yearly Stonehenge Christmas round-up annual. This output has largely been the work of professional archaeologists and of geologists, in particular the two informally known as 'the pet rock boys', whose precise identification and provenancing of some of the bluestone orthostats and their debitage resulted in the recognition and excavation of two probable quarry sites at Craig Rhosyfelin and Carn Goedog in the northern slopes of the Preseli Hills.



John will have none of this. He critically – *very* critically – recounts all these endeavours and discusses his counter-interpretations of these pivotal quarry sites. Indeed, most of the book is depressingly negative, countering almost all the research of the 21st century and exploding many (long

abandoned) archaeological Stonehenge transport 'myths'. There are too few pages devoted to his own contribution beyond his interpretation of the quarry sites (important, if correct) and frequent mentions of his Preseli ramblings. Discussion of glaciers and their works occupies less than a fifth of the pages of a book whose central premise is that glaciers dumped 40 to 80 random erratics on or near Salisbury Plain.

The evidence for his own theory is slight and includes rumours (unfound rocks in hedges, whispered hints about wells) and discredited antiquarian remarks (lost and found twinned Altar Stones). Blackfoot Native American folk tales are given equal weight to excavation reports and detailed laboratory analyses. 'Facts' are used inconsistently; the notable lack of bluestones outside the Stonehenge Landscape (true) is used to argue that bluestones were not special and revered (may well be true), hence it was unlikely they would have been anthropogenically moved from South Wales. In later pages vast numbers of bluestones (1,300+) (untrue and a continued misreading of the literature) from Silbury Hill 'show' erratic bluestones were widespread on Salisbury Plain. Why is this important? It is the lack of any undisputed erratics in Salisbury Plain or within its sediments that shreds John's mono-

thesis, making it scientifically extraordinary but not as astonishing as his suggestion that Glastonbury folk [*sic*] followed a train of solitary erratics (westwards, north-westwards?) until they ran out of puff and abandoned building Stonehenge. This is moving towards New Age tractor-beam country.

The text is an easy read and was possibly a little too easy to write. One great danger found in self-published books is that there has been no external editorial board to suggest moderating the tone and keeping the text focused, to clear all the copyrights, to check the facts (he has confused the identity of the non-sarsen sandstones throughout the book) and, indeed, check some of the exaggeration; but above all to remind the author to "kill your darlings" (and perhaps in this book be more sparing of the use of bold type for key words and phrases. Random bold type in this sort of book is, like patriotism, a last refuge and never a counter or substitute for good arguments).

Finally, John spends some time discussing the philosophy of 'evidence'. William of Occam's razor is honed and Hitchens's razor ("What can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence") is sharpened, and waved in the faces of the archaeologists, but in the end whose blood is on the tracks? The great irony of this book is that, for most people with any knowledge of Stonehenge, the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age and the glacial history of Britain, Hitchens's razor demands this book, despite the excellent figures and the passionate text, be set aside, left unread. That would be a pity, for even a false prophet has insights.

Rob Ixer

★★★★★

## Crow

Boria Sax

Reaktion Books 2017

Pb, 184pp, illus, ind, bib, £9.99, ISBN 9781780238425

In the sixth edition of *Crow* (2003), part of Reaktion Books' excellent 'Animal' series, Boria Sax takes a refreshingly



straightforward, mostly up-to-date look at these commonplace birds that, from Gilgamesh to van Gogh, have been a source of enchantment and wonder.

"Crows are among the most ubiquitous of birds," observes Sax, "yet without being in the least exotic, they manage to remain mysterious." Indeed, following a brief introduction that discusses the characteristics of various species of the genus *corvus* (jackdaws, ravens and rooks) and types (American, hooded and carrion), as well as recent advances in our comprehension of crows' remarkable intelligence and complex social life, the majority of Sax's book concerns how crows have been depicted in myth, folklore, religion and art.

Chapters are organised around specific cultures, periods or locales, from ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, to the European Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Romantic eras, to Native American and Asiatic depictions. The concluding chapters consider the scarecrow as locus for human-crow interaction, and 20th and 21st century representations in art and literature.

Also included are a timeline of all major natural and historical events, and a bibliography.

The illustrations are regrettably on the small side and in black and white, an unfortunate result of the book's design.

In a work clocking in at a mere 184 pages, Sax cannot hope to be exhaustive, yet he manages to include many of the most salient and evocative portrayals of these remarkable creatures. Throughout, Sax uncovers plenty of obscure yet stimulating bits of cultural history to interest foretans and armchair historians.

Eric Hoffman

★★★★★



# The SF and fantasy round-up

David V Barrett discovers Lucifer in a north London dole queue and otherworldly children falling from the sky, as well as a welcome selection of criticism from the great Ursula K Le Guin...

## Assassin's Fate

Robin Hobb

HarperVoyager 2018

Pb, 853pp, £8.99, ISBN 9780007444281

## Lucifer by Moonlight

Patrice Chaplin

Clairview 2018

Pb, 56pp, £10.99, ISBN 9781905570911

## Spare and Found Parts

Sarah Maria Griffin

Titan Books 2018

Pb, 407pp, £8.99, ISBN 9781785657054

## Beneath the Sugar Sky

Seanan McGuire

Tor 2018

Hb, 176pp, \$17.99, ISBN 97801765393586

## Dreams Must Explain Themselves

Ursula K LeGuin

Gollancz 2018

Pb, 388pp, £18.99, ISBN 9781473205949

## The Greenwood Faun

Nina Antonia

Egaeus Press 2017 limited edition of 420

Hb, 180pp, £32, ISBN 9780993527876

It's over 20 years since Robin Hobb wrote *Assassin's Apprentice*, the first novel in what would become five linked trilogies, including novels about livenesships, sentient ships made from the cocoons of dragons. Fitz, the bastard son of a prince, who trained as an assassin in

the early books, and the Fool, his pale childhood friend who has numerous identities, male and female, set out to wreak vengeance on the city of Clerres for kidnapping and killing Fitz's young daughter Bee. But Bee is alive, being taken to Clerres in fulfilment of ancient dream prophecies.

Hobb's novels have always been way beyond most genre fantasy novels in being utterly believable, beautifully written and brilliantly plotted; *Assassin's Fate* is more brutal and more heart-rending than most.

But almost no novel, however good, needs to be 853 pages long; when Robin Hobb wrote as Megan Lindholm, her novels were a third the length and just as rich and satisfying.

*Lucifer by Moonlight* is a fictional spin-off from Patrice Chaplin's semi-autobiographical books about her researches and discoveries around the border of Catalunya and France. Lucifer, thrown out of heaven millennia ago, hangs out in north London with no-hopers in the dole queue; he goes by the name Luc, or as a fur-wrapped streetgirl called Lucie Fur. At a lecture on how Lucifer has been misrepresented in popular culture, he causes a disturbance by protesting about some of the things said about him.

It's a fascinating story, told with Chaplin's usual wit, and nicely illustrated in colour – but £10.99 for a 56-page novella is pushing it more than a bit.

In a post-apocalyptic Ireland teenager Nell Crane lives with her father, who makes biomechanical limbs for those born without them. She's a geek; she far prefers to spend her time creating intricate devices than hanging out with boys. She's reached the

age where she has to make a contribution to society – so why not defy convention and make her own mechanical companion?

Astonishingly, *Spare and Found Parts*, a compelling coming-of-age tale, is Sarah Maria Griffin's first novel.

*Beneath the Sugar Sky*, the third book in a young adult series by Seanan McGuire, is strikingly original.

Eleanor West's Home for Wayward Children provides a safe place for young teenagers who, in a new twist on the word "wayward", "fall through the cracks in the world where they were born". They've lived in other worlds, some very different from our own; they've come back, and small wonder they're confused, disturbed, unhappy.

A Japanese girl falls out of the sky into the school pond, and demands to see her mother, Sumi – who had been at the school not long before, as a girl, and had died, but had somehow lived on in Confection, a world made of cake, and had a daughter. But the daughter is beginning to fade away as the fact that her mother died before she was conceived begins to catch up with her... The students dig up Sumi's skeleton and go to visit the Lord of the Dead to try to reunite it with the part of her that wasn't bones – numerous classical tropes here – before heading to Sumi and her daughter's world of Confection.

This is a truly bizarre tale that makes *Alice's Adventures* look almost prosaic. If this is what today's teenagers are getting to read (complete with the words "fuck" and "vagina"), there's hope for the world. (But which one?)

Ursula K LeGuin was not only a great SF writer (*The Left Hand*

*of Darkness* must rank in any Top Twenty of SF novels) but a fine critic. *Dreams Must Explain Themselves*, published just after her recent death, is a selection for a British audience from four previous books of essays, talks, reviews and introductions to her own books. To quote from one speech: "Fantasists... may be talking as seriously as any sociologist – and a good deal more directly – about human life as it is lived, as it might be lived, and as it ought to be lived. For after all, as great scientists have said and as all children know, it is above all by the imagination that we achieve perception, and compassion and hope."

Nina Antonia's *The Greenwood Faun* is a beautiful piece of work: an illustrated cloth cover, gold-blocked, with a naked young woman lying in the arms of Pan; floral Victorian endpapers; and late-19th/early-20th century illustrations in the text.

The text itself is strange and convoluted. Lucian Taylor, the character in Arthur Machen's novel *The Hill of Dreams*, writes a novel, *The Greenwood Faun*, then dies. It's privately published in just 10 copies, which end up with a bookseller and his family. Everyone who reads the book is affected deeply, from Connie, the dreamy, otherworldly son of the bookseller to the unpleasant Giles, who married Connie's sister Violet.

Connie is accompanied on his night wanderings around London by the ghost of the alcoholic poet Lionel Johnson, whose main claim to fame was introducing his friend Oscar Wilde to his cousin Lord Alfred Douglas. There's a lunatic asylum; there are Pagan rituals in the woods. All fascinating stuff – but this physically lovely book is marred by careless copy-editing.

SEND REVIEW DISCS TO: FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD, UK.

## The young ones

An impressive blending of fairytale imagery and dreamlike atmospherics with a story inspired by a real-life Mafia kidnapping adds up to one of the year's most unexpectedly pleasing films



### Sicilian Ghost Story

Dir Fabio Grassadonia & Antonio Piazza, Italy 2017  
On UK release from 3 August

A story of young love and how it can endure through the most harrowing circumstances. Luna (Julia Jedlikowska) is in the first tentative stages of a relationship with dishy classmate Giuseppe (Gaetano Fernandez). Then one evening, Giuseppe disappears without a trace. No one – certainly no adult – seems to be particularly interested in this turn of events, except Luna, who determines to find her boyfriend.

The film is told as two linked narratives: one follows Luna's investigation and the other examines what has happened to Giuseppe. Often this device can have the effect of splitting a film's power, the risk being that one strand is more gripping or interesting than the other. Not here though; in fact, it's a great strength, mirroring as it does the film's overall approach, which is to set up a number of dualities which power the story.

For instance, youth is set up in opposition to adulthood. The youngsters have energy, commitment and passion

### Luna and Giuseppe display an affinity with birds and animals

whereas the adults are lethargic, uninterested and passive. In particular, authority figures are shown to be unworthy of respect due to their ineffectual nature or lack of compassion: Luna's mother is borderline sociopathic, while the police officer whose help Luna tries to enlist is merely annoyed by her pleas. Others are simply criminals. Only her father, a diabetic, displays any warmth.

Similarly, the film sets up the natural world in opposition to the violent interventions of humankind, which debase it. Luna and Giuseppe are closely identified with the elements, especially water, and display an affinity with birds and animals. There is one exception, a fierce black dog, which is presumably there to demonstrate that even nature has a dark side.

As much as it is a gripping thriller, *Sicilian Ghost Story* is also an engaging coming-of-age

drama. Jedlikowska gives a nuanced performance as a young girl barely out of childhood who is beginning to experience the joy and pain of the adult world. By turns sullen and charming, deliriously happy and utterly bereft, Luna is not an easy part, especially for an actress whom I believe is making her feature film debut.

This film reminded me of several others while retaining an originality and haunting atmosphere of its own. There is a touch of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* about it, particularly in the early stages and with respect to its dreamlike atmosphere and hints of magic realism. It also reminded me of *Atonement* in the sense of the imagination being used to correct injustices.

In this age of overstatement, boorishness and bombast it is a relief to see evidence of film-makers out there who can make films on a personal level that resonate far beyond that, so I can highly recommend this film, which on top of all its other qualities has an excellent score by Soap&Skin.

Daniel King



### The Apparition

Dir Xavier Giannoli, France 2018  
On UK release from 3 August

French director Xavier Giannoli has long been unsure of his stance regarding faith and religion on a personal level, something that has influenced his work since *In the Beginning*, and his latest effort is no exception. In *The Apparition*, Vincent Lindon plays PTSD-ridden war journalist Jacques, who is asked to join an investigation into the veracity of claims of a divine apparition in a small French village, where a young woman named Anna claims to have seen the Virgin Mary. As we follow Jacques's progress, we also follow the way he becomes acquainted with the nature of Canonical investigations in and of themselves. This cleverly allows the film to avoid the cardinal cinematic sin of exposition dumping; thus, just as the seasoned journalist Jacques is a novice in terms of Canonical procedure, any viewer unfamiliar with this sort of investigation learns about it as Jacques does, making the pacing of the film deeply intertwined with Jacques's character arc in particular.

It should also be made clear that *The Apparition* is not a bloodcurdling horror film in the vein of *The Exorcist*, nor is it silly or sensationalist like *The Da Vinci Code*. Instead, it is a thoughtful and realistic film that takes its time to tell its story, just as Jacques takes his time to fully investigate Anna's case. Being a pensive and ethereal piece, the film builds a world that is realistic, uncertain and devoid of the sensationalism one would usually find in a film dealing with matters of religious faith. The visuals further establish the mood, featuring soft colour tones and calm settings, further elevated by the inimitable music of Arvo Part. As the plot slowly and ambiguously – but surely



– unfolds, the question of the validity of Anna’s claims, as well as her secretive behaviour, ensures a lingering sense of mystery. Startling, yet sombre revelations emerge along the way, and other players enter and exit the picture, just as they would in an actual investigation, but the film never loses sight of Jacques and Anna’s stories as its focal point. For some, the pacing of the film may be a hindrance; however, for those who are happy to sit for two and a half hours and let a minimalist, yet powerful, story unfold before them, *The Apparition* will be the answer to their prayers.

Leyla Mikkelsen



## The First Purge

Dir Gerard McMurray, US 2018

On UK release from 4 July

Since the 1980s, several horror franchises have come and gone, churning out increasingly disposable sequels on their path towards obscurity, and James DeMonaco’s *The Purge* franchise fits this bill nicely. Being both poorly directed and poorly written, the film hamfistedly bombards the viewer with social commentary as the violence escalates. While this has always been the formula for this franchise, the current political climate means there’s enough real-world horror unfolding to render the commentary offered by *The First Purge* more sensationalist and insincere than usual.

Arguably, the effort to diversify the cast is one of the few good things about the film, but the setting in which these characters find themselves is more cynical than clever. While watching Klan members get their comeuppance at the hands of African-Americans is always immensely satisfying to watch, there are few other strong villains among the participants of this first ‘purge’ event, just as the evil masterminds on the government side are too one-dimensional to be menacing. While *The First Purge* has a few redeemable moments, it’s exactly what you have come to expect from this sort of horror cinema, and one can only hope that this is another franchise that will soon be purged from the world of cinema.

Leyla Mikkelsen



## Hotel Artemis

Dir Drew Pearce, US 2018

On UK release from 20 July

When the first John Wick film was released, alongside its stunning action set pieces it also introduced a secretive criminal society ruled by elaborate codes of conduct. While this world would be explored further in *John Wick: Chapter 2*, the focus of the *John Wick* films has always been on the stunt choreography first and foremost.

*Hotel Artemis* can be viewed as the other side of the *John Wick* coin, as it deals with the inner workings of a fictional world inhabited by assassins, arms dealers, organised crime bosses and small-time crooks; but rather than a string of action-packed showdowns, this film centres on their (unarmed) interactions as clients of a underground hospital. Jodie Foster runs the show as an agoraphobic nurse with a dubious past, and Dave Bautista assists her as possibly the bulkiest orderly to ever grace the silver screen.

The film does a good job at world-building, successfully establishing both the physical setting of the hotel as well as the practical circumstances responsible for its inhabitants’ plight. This is not least thanks to its charismatic roster of talent, boasting names such as Jeff Goldblum, Sterling K Brown and Sofia Boutella, and they make the most of what they have been given. However, *Hotel Artemis* does not give them that much to work with, as the film is so focused on its retaining its sense of mystery that it mostly neglects fleshing out the characters beyond the superficial level. A few secrets are uncovered here and there, but the film is ultimately so lacking in suspense that very little momentum is built up, resulting in this feeling surprisingly long for a film with modest 94-minute runtime.

Thus, while the film’s premise is interesting enough in and of itself to merit a viewing, its execution of said premise unfortunately favours style over substance. It ends up being an inoffensive but also rather forgettable story about the inner workings of the seedy underbelly of a big city in the near future.

Leyla Mikkelsen



## SHORTS

### IMAGES

Arrow Video, £9.99 (DVD)

Robert Altman’s schizophrenia thriller is brilliant, simply because it has the balls to tell the story schizophrenically. Susannah York is a troubled children’s writer who screams when her husband kisses her. We have no idea why, until she runs to the bathroom and we see a completely different man rushing after her. Some critics of the time hated it, arguing that stories of madness must be told logically. Idiots. Watching *Images* is like spending 90 minutes having VR mental illness – which is scary, thought provoking and raises your empathy levels for those with mental health issues. Plus, there’s an amazing POV switcheroo in the early part of the film. It’s one of the most astonishing storytelling choices I’ve ever seen in a movie. **Rev Peter Laws** ★★★★★

### TERRIFIER

Signature Entertainment, £5.99 (DVD)

This is one of those films that comes with the caveat that if you don’t suffer from coulrophobia, there isn’t much to get worked up about. The straightforward plot sees a couple of girls on their way home from a night out encounter an admittedly pretty creepy clown and become targets of his murderous rampage. There is an enjoyable lack of pretension as the film veers from almost-tense stalk sequence to gory death and back again. The cast acquit themselves pretty well and there are one or two moments which might raise a smile or a wince, particularly the bloody practical effects. More time building suspense instead of relying on cheap jump scares would have been welcome, but this is a fairly enjoyable bit of brainless bloodletting.

**Martin Parsons** ★★★★★

### LEGEND OF THE MOUNTAIN

Eureka Entertainment, £14.99 (Dual Format)

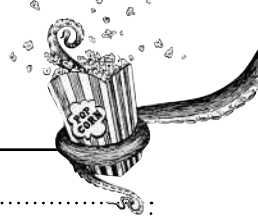
A scholar is sent to transcribe a Buddhist text which potentially grants power over the dead but finds himself distracted by a number of strange and mysterious figures in King Hu’s overlong, bitty but beautifully diverting 1979 film. It takes its time to get going, and doesn’t exactly hurry once it does, pausing to expand on characters’ back stories and unafraid of a good long nature montage. The mix of light horror, comedy and action works well, at times feeling like a precursor to some of the *jiangshi* films that would come out of Hong Kong a few years later. It’s easy to get caught up in the bizarre goings-on, and some of the shots are impossibly gorgeous. Ultimately, it’s a cyclical meditation on the dangers and virtues of wisdom, but you’ll likely be too distracted by the brilliant wide-angle sunsets and flying witchy ghosts to think about any of it too hard.

**MP** ★★★★★

### STRANGLER

Eureka Entertainment, £14.99 (Dual Format)

A Hungarian thriller in the mould of *Zodiac* or *Memories of Murder* (which it resembles very closely at times), *Strangled* is set over a decade in the 50s and 60s and tells the real-life story of a spate of murders which occurred in a small town. There is some really good acting, especially from the killer. Director Árpád Sopsits structures some excellent suspenseful sequences, in particular a nail-biting attack by a railway line. There are some memorably nasty moments too, but overall the film is a little too tidy and a tad too self-righteous. Exploring the corrupt socialist regime in Hungary at the time, the film points out that a monstrous system always allows the real monsters to hide in plain sight, but the portrayal of the justice system here is more worthy than worrying. **MP** ★★★★★



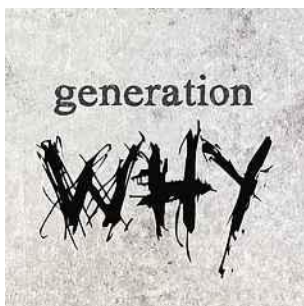
## SOUNDS PECULIAR BRIAN J ROBB PRESENTS THE FORTLEAN TIMES PODCAST COLUMN

As a medium, podcasts have been enjoying something of a boom over the past few years. The democratisation of quality media production through high-specification computer equipment has allowed a plethora of previously marginalised voices their own access to what were once quaintly called ‘the airwaves’.

In the past, broadcasting (reaching a wide audience from a single source) was heavily regulated and controlled, mainly through frequency scarcity: only those authorised or licensed to have access to the airwaves were allowed to broadcast. In UK terms that, initially, meant the BBC, with commercial stations coming along in the 1960s.

In terms of radio, there have been amateurs since the invention of the medium, reaching a crescendo with the offshore ‘pirate’ pop stations of the 1960s that ultimately led to the BBC launching Radio 1. For the longest time, Radio 4 (or NPR in the US) has been the default home of quality ‘spoken word’ content, whether that was drama, current affairs, or documentary radio.

Now, anyone with a microphone and an iPad, laptop, or computer and the right software can produce a decent podcast and launch their work onto a waiting world. Not all of them are good, while many are far better than you might expect, sometimes surpassing the productions of ‘legitimate’ broadcasters like the BBC or NPR. When it comes to fortean topics, there are a host of podcasts out there, ranging from the polished and compelling to the amateurish and downright weird. SOUNDS PECULIAR is your insider guide to the best of the current podcasts dealing with fortean topics: all you have to do is sit back and listen...



**Podcast:** The Generation Why Podcast  
**thegenerationwhypodcast.com/**  
**Host:** Aaron Habel, Justin Evans  
**Episode Count:** 270+  
**Format:** Conversation  
**Established:** June 2012  
**Frequency:** Weekly  
**Topics:** Unsolved murders, controversies, mysteries, conspiracies, and true crime

According to their website, on the Generation Why Podcast: “Two friends, Aaron and Justin, discuss theories and share their opinions on unsolved murders, controversies, mysteries, conspiracies, and true crime.” While true crime stories and mysteries are the mainstay of the podcast, there is more than enough that could be classed as fortean to make it well worth a listen. Episodes before the end of 2014 are available at genwhypod.com, some of them free (although donations are encouraged),

some as paid-for ‘premium episodes’. At the time of writing, instalments from around episode 80 onwards were available free; one of the earliest of these is titled ‘Vaccination Fears’, which points to the scope of the show beyond just true crime.

Some of these early episodes, when Evans and Haber were still finding their feet, include such topics as the JFK assassination (#8), 9/11 truthers (#14), the Moon landing ‘hoax’ (#37), Roswell (#39), Amityville (#45), and the lost colony of Roanoke (#57). These are interspersed between ‘true crime’ episodes dealing with such infamous cases as those of cult leader David Koresh, Amanda Knox, Ted Bundy, and Oscar Pistorius.

Inevitably, there are episodes where true crime meets forteana – the most obvious example being the still unsolved Jack the Ripper murders. Several episodes deal with the case, including ‘Jack the Ripper and the Whitechapel Murders’ (#59), a follow-up with the optimistic title of ‘Jack the Ripper Identified?’ (#87), and a third entry, ‘Ripper Confidential’ (#254). An entire episode is devoted to the Dyatlov Pass Incident (#92), laid out in clear and accessible terms by the co-hosts, who

deliver the information on each topic discussed in a very clear manner, presented as a simple, yet informed, conversation between them. It’s a no-nonsense approach, from a softly sceptical (with a ‘c’, rather than a ‘k’) point of view.

Stories where unsolved mysteries meet unsolved true crime are especially good, as in the case of Elisa Lam, a 21-year-old Canadian student who died in mysterious circumstances in the notorious Cecil Hotel in Los Angeles. Missing for almost two weeks, her body was found in the water tank on the hotel roof – it was only investigated after residents complained about the ‘weird taste’ of the water. A strange CCTV video emerged of Lam acting oddly in a lift. There was enough of a mystery already to make the case interesting, but the added fact that the story involved the Cecil Hotel made it more attractive to true crime aficionados. Built in 1924, the Cecil was trendy for a while in the 1940s, before becoming a ‘skid row’ destination for long-term and transient residents. The hotel has such a reputation for violence and self-harm that it became known as ‘The Suicide’ rather than The Cecil. The Black Dahlia, Elizabeth Short, was supposed to have frequented

the hotel bar in the days before her murder in January 1947. The most notorious later Cecil residents were serial killers Richard Ramirez, dubbed the ‘night stalker’, and the Austrian killer Jack Unterweger.

Aaron and Justin discuss the case in some detail, laying out the timeline and filling in the background of both Lam and the hotel, including a discussion of whether being on or off her bipolar and depression medication had anything to do with her death. While they discuss the widespread speculation about the weirdness of the case, including its resemblance to the movie *Dark Water* (2005), the Generation Why guys are more interested in facts that can be proven than weirdness for weirdness sake.

Another good example is their Bermuda Triangle Mystery episode (#132), which focuses on what can factually be established about Flight 19, the training flight of five Avenger planes that disappeared together in December 1945. They discuss the details of the incident, speculate a little, but offer some grounded explanations of what may have happened. The tight focus on one case or subject ensures things stay accessible and keeps the length of each podcast down to around an hour.

**Strengths:** The easy-going yet informative chat between Justin and Aaron is welcoming.

**Weaknesses:** Few, but their occasional attempts at humour can fall flat.

**Recommended Episodes:** The Bell Witch (#62); Bigfoot (#79); Dyatlov Pass Incident (#92); The Warrens & the Paranormal (#117); Loch Ness Monster (#121); The Enfield Poltergeist (#151); The Philadelphia Experiment (#168).

**Verdict:** Accessible and informative, the Generation Why podcast extends beyond its true crime focus to cover many fortean topics.

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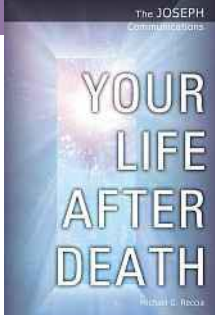
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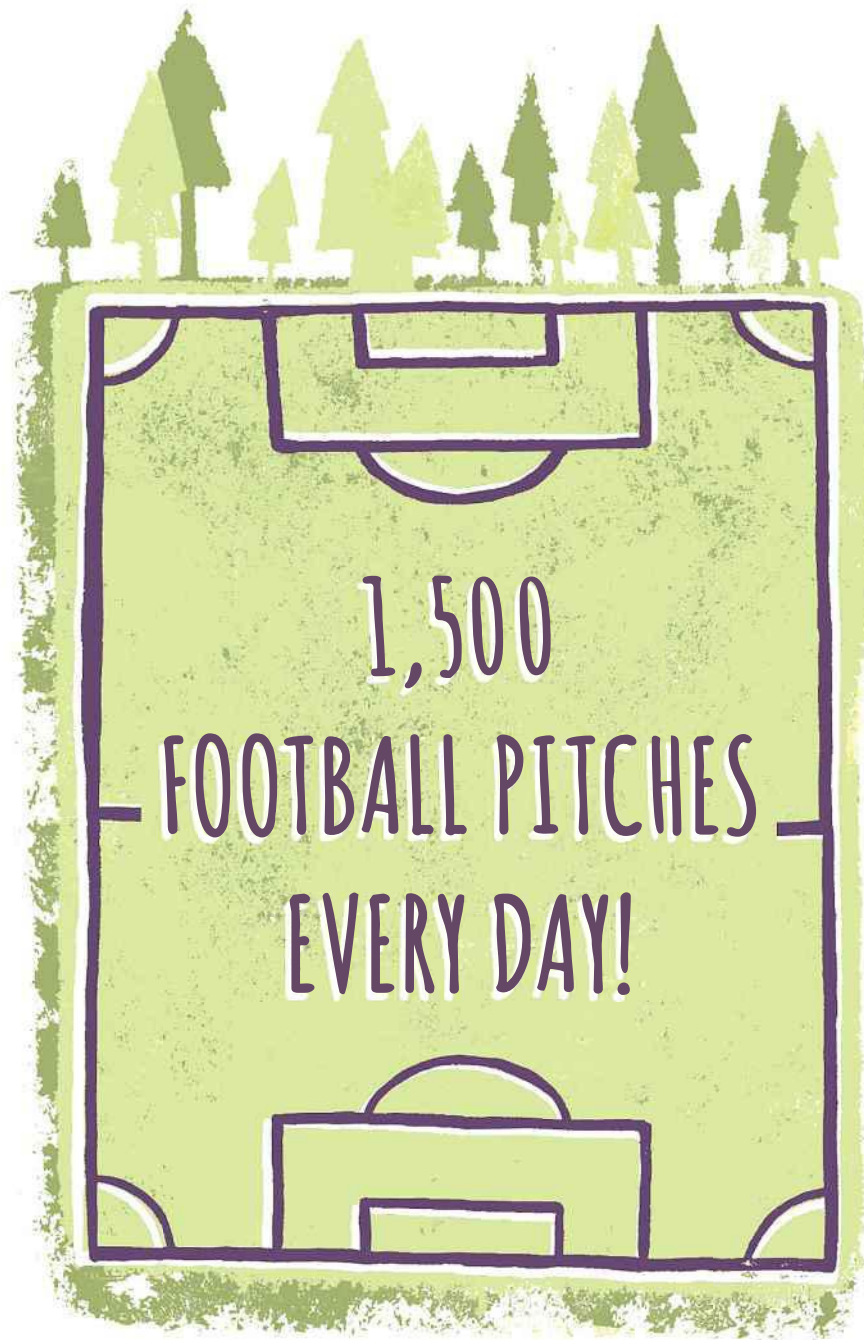


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# LETTERS

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## His-story

I read Barry Baldwin's exploration of ancient treatments of mass or royal deaths [FT367:15] with interest, but thought it important to point out a caveat regarding the deaths of the likes of Sulla and Galerius. The ends of such men are often recorded by their enemies or those they have persecuted; the veracity of the accounts must be suspect. As Michael Evans points out in his excellent work *The Death of Kings: Royal Deaths in Medieval England*, the mediæval Church was not above getting posthumous revenge – via the chronicles – on those kings who failed to show sufficient “pious zeal” in life. Evans uses the examples of the contemporary recording of the deaths of Williams I and II and of Henry II (all kings with a somewhat less than subservient attitude to the Church) amongst others to argue that many of the more gruesome and salacious stories are rehashes with little basis in objective reality: morality tales in fact.

The very concept of history as an objective and unbiased account of past events (in so far as such a thing is possible) is a post mediæval idea. If you want to see partiality in action just read Walsingham's *Chronicle of the reign of Richard II*. It is highly unlikely that the ancient world was more even-handed; so, were Sulla and Herod eaten alive by lice in scenes reminiscent of the scarab beetle attacks in *The Mummy* and *The Mummy Returns*? It's possible, but far more likely that – once they were safely dead – these men suffered a form of assassination their enemies neither had the strength nor the courage to enact in life.

**Tom Hodgson-Jones**  
Potters Bar, Hertfordshire

*Barry Baldwin responds: “Thanks to Tom Hodgson-Jones for his sensible observations on these ancient gruesome deaths. There's no quarrel between us; I quite agree about exaggerated hostile reports. The point of my Classical Corners is to report what was anciently said and thought about topics under discussion. It's worth scouring modern medical diagnoses. Galerius is thought to have died from bowel*

## SIMULACRA CORNER



### Cloud man

Jason Law photographed this cloud man at North Ballachulish near Fort William in Scotland on 13 May 2018.

*We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP or to sieveking@forteanimes.com.*

*cancer, aggravated by Fournier's Gangrene. Herod's death has been attributed to chronic kidney failure aggravated by gangrene; Lyme Disease has also been touted. Sulla is thought to have had a ruptured gastric ulcer, causing worm infestation. And so on. Both Tom and I might have quoted Fort (Books, p.970), “The unknown disease is antiquated sensationalism.”*

## Faust and foremost

I was disappointed that Jan Svankmeyer's adaptation of Faust didn't make it into “The many faces of Mephistopheles” by Steve Toase [FT366:54-55]. It is awesome – homunculi in jars, magic circles, iambic pentameter, the whole ball of animated clay. Faust is introduced as a Polish Everyman who is lured into the World of the Magician by a seeming cult handing out maps. Having fol-

lowed the map to an abandoned theatre, our man dresses up as the Mage and starts reading himself into a marionette performance of the play, with eerie Svankmeyer Stop Motion Flourishes.

**James Wright**  
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex

In addition to the depictions of Mephistopheles noted by Steve Toase, it's worth mentioning that in Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus* (1947) there's a seedy, degenerate shape-shifter who speaks the old German of Luther's Bible. It is an appropriate personification of Nazi Germany.

**Bob Emery**  
Albany, New York

## New World apes

It would be remarkable (and admirably fortean) if apes were among the Peruvian geoglyphs described in the Archaeology

column [FT367:14]. Apart from humans, no apes inhabit the Americas.

**Dr P G Swindells**  
Wolverhampton, West Midlands

*Editor's note: the reference to “apes and a whale” was added to Paul Devereux's text at editorial stage. It quoted a report from Deutsche Welle, and should have given pause for thought. It seems someone made a mistaken interpretation. Apologies!*

## A load of hot air

In the Mythconception on “useless buttons” at traffic lights [FT352:21], Mat Coward asks: “Which other buttons, which we are invited to press during our daily rounds, don't really do anything?” My submission would be for the “air recirculation” button on most modern cars fitted with air-conditioning. I understand what it's supposed to do: shut the vents that allow air from outside into the car, and re-circulate the air already inside the car. The advantage is that in hot weather, it makes the car cooler more quickly by cooling air that's already been (being?) cooled rather than cooling “hotter” air from outside.

But does it actually make a difference? It clearly doesn't cut off the air intake completely, otherwise we'd suffocate... and I don't notice any difference between how quick the car cools down in hot weather if I use it or I don't. Also, you're supposed to be able to use it in the winter too! Same theory: the partly warmed air warms more quickly when circulated, against fresh cold air coming in and being warmed... but is it really true, or does it just function when the A/C button is on too? Just how much actual air is being recirculated against outside air coming in?

**James Watson**  
Chelmsford, Essex

## Male dominance

I am fascinated by synæsthesia and read with interest about the Nepalese girl who could ‘smell’ colour [FT364:28]. The report went on to say that synæsthetes tended to be predominantly female,

# LETTERS

then listed eight famous people diagnosed with the condition, six of whom were male! I don't doubt the assertion that this is a particularly female-related condition – but rather suggest that this apparent contradiction is just further evidence of male dominance in the arts and entertainment industry.

**Simon Besson**  
*Manchester*

## Library legionaries

Anna Jesson's letter recounting an alleged sighting of a ghostly Roman legion [FT367:73] is interesting. However, I question the writer's assertion that the account isn't "a friend of a friend thing"; she states that the incident happened to "a colleague of my colleague" whose name she cannot remember. Even if she could remember the name, to me the tale falls firmly in the realm of FOAF. If she had heard the account directly from her colleague's colleague that would of course be a different matter – regardless of whether or not she could remember the colleague's name.

**Graham Mullins**  
*Orpington, Kent*

## Jackie Gleason

Brian Robb's article on Gleason, Nixon and the aliens [FT366:30-36] was great for tea and an interesting read. One can't help, though, looking for the weakest

link in the chain. When it gets to the account of Nixon – without any secret service whatsoever – motoring up to Gleason's home and then both of them tootling off to a classified base where they view alien remains, commonsense goes haywire. The bemused entrance guard simply tugged his forelock but filed no report that POTUS was on the premises; Jackie and Dickie seemingly wandered around on their lonesome opening unlocked doors, looking at cadavers and spaceship remains; no S.S. minutes have ever surfaced noting Tricky Dick's absence for several hours; no details about mass sackings for such multiple security breaches; no nothing except for a couple of second-hand newspaper articles, both of which can be linked to book release publicity.

The core of the story is that Jackie saw some alien remains – but there are so many weak (and invisible, and impossible) links in that part of the chain that it is not credible at all; which makes the whole shebang pretty much just a story about a rich comedian who was interested in aliens.

**Robert T Walker**  
*Wagga Wagga, New South Wales*

## Time dilation

Jenny Randles asserts: "Accident victims, such as those in car crashes, [perceive] time stretching out... There are no such accounts from horse and cart accidents" [FT359:31]. I dispute her conclusion that "varying perception of time postdates our ability to travel fast". I myself have experienced time "slowing", and often people describing accidents or witnessing traumatic occurrences refer to "that moment when time stands still". I have frequently heard accounts featuring the phrase "when everything goes into slow motion" – pertaining to accidents involving, for example:

garden machinery, carpentry tools, agricultural pursuits, ladders, slipping on hard surfaces, or during meals or washing up. I have also had first-hand accounts of this just as rioting or military assaults commence.

I myself and many people I know have felt this effect in relation to situations where the sensation of everything slowing meant I or they were uncharacteristically calm and focused in peril, and were able to escape/minimise damage, or administer vital first aid. Time resuming normal pace, and shock/recognition of the severity of the situation, was always delayed. Recent examples: a horse panicked, threw a rider and bolted whilst tethered to four others on a busy main road. Myself and a tree surgeon with others on the verge had the distinct impression of time slowing and thus being able to contain the animals and prevent carnage.

An acquaintance felt "time slow remarkably" and felt "as if underwater" upon a serious (manual) saw injury. Many people report an almost identical experience just prior to fits, fainting and seizures. Individuals imbibing substances including legal and illegal highs or alcohol, or those suffering sleep deprivation, may experience this time distortion and memory loss. Observe the very recently injured or regular opiate users and their slowed gait, gestures and speech for some time after exposure to shock or drugs; whether they feel it or not they will usually have delayed responses and slur.

• Women in labour regularly feel time fluctuates. And on the tangent of women in labour ["Premature babies" FT353:74], it is difficult to precisely date conception/pregnancy or predict 'due' dates. No woman I know has ever been in labour on their due date unless forcibly drugged and induced. The majority of births appear to be premature babies. The longest I have known a child arrive overdue was nearing 10 months. In her books about midwifery, Jennifer Worth details a Spanish mother in fog-bound east London salvaging

a dangerously premature baby against the odds with breast milk, warmth, and undivided attention.

Many couples who married prior to (and even after) widespread contraceptive availability in Britain did so due to pressure from family, peers and society upon suspecting/discovering a pregnancy. Few people reveal conception early, usually waiting past the two-three month deadline; less than three months and the pregnancy is at great risk, also invisible or easily disguised. Banns and marriages seemingly went ahead respectably prior to reproduction. All that needed explaining away was the abrupt appearance of the baby six or seven months after marriage – hence many children and relatives being convinced the birth was premature, and a persistent, still common, misapprehension as to the appropriate size and weight of many babies carried full term.

**Lucy Brown**  
*Pilton, Somerset*

## Witch hunt motives

Matt Salusbury's feature on witchcraft sceptics [FT367:40-44] had me wondering. What happened to the property and possessions of witches – confiscated by the state, perhaps? And were any aristocrats accused of witchcraft? I suspect that persecutions like these were an excuse to take possession of worldly goods rather like the persecution of Jews, where property is confiscated and debts wiped out.

**James Wilkins**  
*Southampton, Hampshire*

*Matt Salusbury replies: "I didn't really look into the "confiscation of property" aspect of the witch persecutions. Many witches in England were accused after "refusing charity" from the well-to-do residents of their community, at a time when the poor relief was being formalised by legislation. Many witches were destitute old widows with little by way of property to seize. It seems that some of the suspected witches targeted by Matthew Hopkins were thought to be Royalist sympathisers, or at least the neighbours of suspected Royalists, so there was some sort of sneaky targeting of Royalists*



TONY HUSBAND



going on in the witchcraft trials, at a time when an open purge of Royalists might have led to open rebellion. (Hopkins is known to have used the “Rosicrucian cypher” code employed by Parliamentary spies, and is believed to have met with Parliamentary commanders on at least one occasion.) There were certainly some local feuds that escalated into accusations of witchcraft – the Reverend John Lowes of Brandeston, Suffolk, hanged after being brought to trial by Hopkins, seems to have been caught up in a feud between High Church (Anglicans) and Low Church (Puritans).

## Night Mail

I was interested to read Keith Davies’s letter regarding ‘Night Mail’ aeroplanes [FT363:72]. I’m not sure the notion of propeller-driven Royal Mail aviation services is in fact a foaftale, as he suggests. Royal Mail awards contracts for specific routes (typically for five years) to an assortment of airlines, not necessarily UK-owned, operating out of various British aerodromes. Such services use a variety of planes, including recently BAe ATPs and SAAB 340s, both twin-engined propeller types. I can confirm that back in 1986 there was definitely a plane operating in and out of Liverpool Speke (as it was then called) that was actually painted in Royal Mail colours. It was flown by Manx Airlines. I don’t know if any such services were ever flown by the aircraft type mentioned in the letter (Shorts Skyvan), but the Manx aeroplane I saw regularly was a very similar but larger Shorts 360, again a twin-engined turboprop, and an easy misidentification to make. There really are dedicated prop-driven mail aeroplanes trundling up and down the country in the wee small hours. It’s somehow a comforting thought!

**Simon Ramshaw**  
Woodham, Surrey

Royal Mail transported post in the 1970s using an Embraer EMB 110 Bandeirante aircraft, which was a 21-passenger turboprop. I worked for Royal Mail during the



## Do you recognise them?

I found this photo the other day inside a second-hand book – *The Irish Witch* by Dennis Wheatley (1975 edition). I wonder if anyone can identify the woman or the two men. It appears to have been taken at a talk or conference, and I wondered if they might be witches, mediums, writers on witchcraft – or even relatives of Dennis Wheatley. The only clue I have is that the photo was processed at Ilford.

**Ross Smith**, *By email*

1970s and recall that the service was run by Air Ecosse, from Aberdeen to various cities in the north of England. At some point the aircraft flew with Royal Mail “Datapost” livery. I think the flights were extended to more southerly airports in the following decade.

**David Sutton**  
(not FT’s Editor) *By email*

## Longest-staying patient

I noted the report on James Morris, thought to be Britain’s longest-staying patient, when he died last May after 54 years at West Moffat Hospital [FT366:25]. In fact I know of a case where the patient’s stay was certainly more than 60 years, and possibly more than 70 years.

I was employed as Liverpool Health Authority’s Information & Research Officer at the time of the Toxteth Riots in July 1981. Famously, Princes Park Hospital was caught up in the riots and had to be evacuated. It was a long-stay geriatric hospital with just under 100 beds. In the circumstances, all of the 90+

elderly patients (I think that they were all female) were urgently relocated to any available hospital bed in the area; we even had the bizarre situation where two geriatric patients ended up occupying beds in Alder Hey Children’s Hospital!

As I was responsible for the Health Authority’s official statistics, I tracked and reported on what had happened to these patients. Technically, all the patients were treated as having been “discharged from Princes Park Hospital”, even though they had been transferred to other hospitals in the same Health Authority; it was how hospital activity was recorded in those days. One of the statistics that I had to calculate was the “Average Length of Stay” which involved adding up all the individual lengths of stay of patients discharged in the year and then dividing by the number of patients discharged. Unsurprisingly, long-stay geriatric patients have longer lengths of stay than most other categories of patient, but I recall that the figure calculated for Princes Park Hospital in the wake of the evacuation was abnormally high. I found

that there was a female patient who had been there for around 70 years, give or take. (As this event happened 37 years ago, I cannot guarantee accurately remembering the specific minute details, but I am certain of the main facts). I think that she was about 88, but of course all geriatric patients were at least 65 on admission.

I asked the Head Nurse about the patient. It transpired that she had been admitted in her late teens around the time of WWI. Between 1885 and 1948 the hospital served as the Liverpool Home for Incurables, and then as the Home for Invalid Women until 1969, when it became the geriatric hospital. The Head Nurse didn’t know the reason for the patient’s original admission, but we can infer that she was admitted for some “incurable” condition, and then remained whilst the use of the facilities evolved. Over the years, I have often thought that this would be a case suitable for investigation/research, but I suspect that all of the relevant records are long gone.

**Rob Gandy**  
*By email*

# IT HAPPENED TO ME...

First-hand accounts from FT readers and browsers of [www.forteantimes.com](http://www.forteantimes.com)

## Tasmanian lights

In January 2017, I had been hunting for the Tasmanian Wolf with my friend Mike Williams. On our way back to Launceston we stopped for the night with some of Mike's friends. The couple had a small goat farm close to Bronte Lagoon [in the geographical centre of Tasmania]. Mike told me that weird lights were seen around their farm and in the small woods that separated the farm from the lagoon. He had witnessed these before and the couple had told him that they appeared most nights except during rain.

On that evening we ventured out after dark to look for them. After a while a small white light appeared over the chicken coop. It was about the size of a grape and seemed to hang in mid-air. The light blinked out, but another reappeared in the woods. We entered the woods and approached the light. Others lit up and as many as four were visible at any given time. They would wink out and then appear in another location. Some seemed to be in the branches of trees, some at the base of trees and others hanging in mid-air. When approached, they winked out and reappeared further away in the woods. They were not glow-worms or fireflies, both of which I have seen before.

Mike and I decided to visit the lake to see if there was a light source that could explain the phenomenon. At the lake there was a small lighthouse, but its beam didn't reach the farm or woods, both of which were at a higher elevation. At the far side of the lake we saw a red, spherical light about the size and shape of a football, floating in mid-air in the woods. When we returned to the farm the couple told us that they too had seen the football-shaped light, but they thought it was orange rather than red. The lights disappeared soon after. The couple said that one of the lights had once been seen close to a window above a flower box.

## Optical phenomena

These silent, static images – drawn immediately from memory – appeared in my left eye. The 'floating man' in late 2017, lasted only three blinks. The small black dog, on 21 January 2018,



lasted about 10 blinks. A subsequent visit to the ophthalmologist found nothing amiss with my retina. My psychiatrist suggests hypnagogic hallucination. Would readers care to speculate?

**Leslie Vinson**  
Tucson, Arizona



In the morning the plants were dead and withered.

**Richard Freeman**  
Centre for Fortean Zoology,  
Exeter

## Pink balls

Peter Brookesmith's UFO column 'Going mental' [FT359:30] had a photograph of what appears to be a large red/pink Moon with three alien spacecraft. He describes tongue-in-cheek how aliens may be trying to contact earthlings, and how earthlings may be able to communicate, through telepathy, lights in the sky, or automatic writing. Apparently Deanna Jaxine Stinson in California had the urge to take a photograph of the sky, although she did not see the lights at the time. It would seem that she can psychically tell when there is a portal in the sky, and has actually taken a photograph of a portal.

In the 1960s in the early hours of the morning, I was with my first husband coming back from a gig – he was a jazz musician. We were just coming out of the Dartford tunnel (before the Dartford Crossing was built) and in the sky we saw a huge pink ball, about the size of the Moon. It was definitely not the Moon, as it appeared to be revolving. It was the colour known as 'shocking pink'. We got out of the car and stared at this thing for a few minutes. Then, whoosh, it shot away at great speed, far faster than any man-made aircraft

was capable of. Then in the 1970s I was with my father in Norwood, south London, when about 10pm I saw the same thing, and pointed it out to my father. Again we stood and stared at this 'shocking pink' object for a few minutes. This time it was static, before shooting away at great speed. One second it was there, the next it was gone.

It is strange that I have had the same experience twice, 10 years or so apart. I have always thought that I had witnessed an alien spacecraft, but had not heard of a UFO looking like that. On studying the photograph again, I have come to the conclusion that the pink globe could be a mother ship, and the three lights in the sky are satellite spacecraft, sent out to assess the area, collect information, or communicate. Have any readers seen anything like this, or does anyone have a logical explanation?

**Jenni Kemp**  
Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire

## Aerial jellyfish

One day last summer – clear and bright with only a slight haze – I decided to spend some time in the back garden of my house in Cardiff. After a time I got up to go inside, but something – an intuitive feeling of some kind – drew my gaze out over the marshes beyond the back hedge. My vision seemed strangely heightened, sharper and more vivid. Almost immedi-

ately I saw two large objects not too far above the horizon; they were in focus with some distant trees, so I guessed a range of less than half a mile. They resembled double-ended quartz crystals lying flat, but inside they swam with faint multi-coloured lights, like luminous jellyfish. The objects moved by sliding quickly along their own horizontal planes and then suddenly changing altitude, which reminded me of two fish dancing around each other. After maybe 10 seconds, I felt – again, I'm unsure how – that they sensed I could see them, and they quickly vanished by fading before my eyes, as if they'd shifted to a higher level of perception. I've no idea what they were.

**Matt Hopkins**  
Cardiff

## Weirdness Down Under

The mysterious yellow mist in the English Channel last August [FT359:22] reminded me of an incident back in 1978 when I was a passenger in a big rig just outside the gold-mining colonial town of Ballarat in Victoria, Australia. It was a sunny day on the main highway from Sydney to Melbourne when the driver and I noticed a black mist climb over an old Chinese stone wall rolling down the hill towards the road and stopping the truck dead

as it enveloped us! About 20 minutes later, the truckie got his rig started again, but dropped me off, because of how 'weird' it all was... But it was just another 'normal' day for me.

I'd just been thrown out of Australia's infamous pseudo-religious cult in Goulburn, New South Wales, known as the "Byron Bay Love Gurus" consisting of "Alistah", his 10 wives and 63-plus kids. I had experienced my first and only UFO sighting whilst on the commune. I ended up working in Moora, Western Australia, where I shot at an African lion in a wheatfield – the locals called it the "Moora lion". On my way to Western Australia, I was nearly picked up by the Truro murderer because my long hippie hair confused him; and on my way back to Sydney, in 1979, I camped out under the stars at Balladonia, the very night Skylab II crashed all around me.

**Joe Gale**  
By email

## Cine re-run?

One line in Alan Murdie's column "The Romans in Britain: Part One" [FT364:18-20] stood out for me: "Images drawn from the cinema and media are aiding and abetting the creation and experiences of Roman soldiers in York and other places". This was enough to make me rethink my ideas about what I really saw during a ghostly encounter I had almost 20 years ago. It involved the 1970 film version of *Wuthering Heights*, and what I believe to have been a hallucinatory image of the actor Anna Calder-Marshall. Let me explain.

It happened in May 1999, when I was working a nightshift in a Hampshire nursing home. At around 8.30pm, while walking from the kitchen, I briefly saw in the corner of my eye the image of a young girl in a long white dress running in the opposite direction from me, further up the corridor. I turned to look, but it was too late: the figure had turned a corner. As I ventured up the corridor, there was no one to be seen. Afterwards, I recalled how the figure's motion was jerky, like the projected image of a Super 8mm film, where the frame rate does not match real time. I was aware that oth-

ers had witnessed unexplained phenomena at the same spot, such as the sound of a child crying. On another occasion a resident's electric shaver was found switched on, with no one in the room to activate it.

From the long white dress, I assumed that I had seen the ghost of a girl from the Victorian/Edwardian era. Researching at the local reference library, I discovered that in the 1950s there was a house on the site of the nursing home. The first floor of the house was on the same level as the corridor where I had seen the ghost-girl, but I could find no evidence in the census records of a young girl resident in the premises at any time from the Victorian period to the 1990s.

Fast forward to 2004: I got to the bottom of the mystery, or so I thought, through a chance encounter with someone who knew something about the last residents of the house before it was torn down in the mid-1990s. I was told that an elderly couple occupied the premises, and once took care of their granddaughter while her mother

endured a serious illness, which was eventually to claim her life. I was told that during her mother's illness, the daughter was well cared for and loved by the grandparents, to the point where their house became almost home from home for her. No doubt she became attached to the place. Shortly after her mother's death, the young girl was diagnosed with leukaemia and succumbed to this in 1991.

Because of this story, I believed that the ghost I witnessed was of this girl; that is until earlier this year, after viewing the Blu-ray of the 1970 movie *Wuthering Heights*. When I first saw this movie on TV in 1989, one image became ingrained in my mind. It was during the scene at 1:40.02 where Heathcliff (Timothy Dalton) watches the ghost of Catherine Earnshaw (Anna Calder-Marshall) running away from him towards Hindley Earnshaw's farmhouse. The ghost is wearing a white dress. I believe that the reason the image became so embedded in my mind was that, for me, it conveyed a powerful sense of how a ghost might indeed appear, in

reality: the ethereal figure, running in an abstract, out-of-time motion. When I re-encountered this sequence, I realised she looked exactly like the ghost-girl in the nursing home – the position of the figure, the white dress, the out-of-time running motion. Then, when I later read Alan Murdie's column, I felt the mystery was resolved.

I'm not saying that I absolutely did not see a ghost. After all, in 1970, Anna Calder-Marshall was hardly the age of the young child I gained an impression of in 1999; but I do believe that I underwent a hallucinatory experience at the nursing home, where somehow that implanted cine-image came to the fore, causing me to believe that I was seeing the ghost of a young girl. And yet, a girl did live on the former premises and did die prematurely, so was that what I saw?

**Ed Hodson**  
Winchester, Hampshire

## Hummadruz

One night in the summer of 1985 when I was living in South Oxfordshire I had been visiting my girlfriend in the village of Letcombe Regis and was cycling back home to Wantage, a journey of approx 2.5 miles, which for the most part was on country lanes alongside open fields. It was around 2am on a very warm night, the sky was clear and the air was still... apart from the incessant low droning sound that seemed to be coming from all around. The journey probably only took about a quarter of an hour, but it seemed like an hour.

Throughout the entire ride I was aware of the low-pitch hum. It was impossible to ascertain where it was coming from, and it felt all the more sinister because I saw no one else (not unusual at that hour, of course) and no other traffic save for a lone police car as I entered Wantage. Part of me wanted to flag down the police car and ask the two policemen inside if they could hear the drone too and if they knew what it was, but I found the whole situation so surreal and thought, probably irrationally, that somehow the authorities might be implicated.

**Gavin Lloyd Wilson**  
Glandwr, Pembrokeshire

## Forest of Dean fairy

About six years ago, I awoke from a summer's afternoon nap in my sitting room. Lined up against my big picture window were several houseplants in full display of their seasonal fullness and colour. Whilst 'coming to', I witnessed probably hundreds of gleaming golden dots or wee orbs dancing up and down. I watched them for some minutes, then said "Hello". They stopped, lingered, then in twos and threes gradually disappeared.

Decades before, whilst staying with a daughter who had delivered her latest baby in the spring, I went for a walk in the nearby woods, part of the Forest of Dean. I walked through the gate leading into the area, some of which was planted with conifers, but the path took me through an avenue of oaks. I paused at a spot to look for a fallen bough to assist my balance. Beside a tree, looking at me most intently, was a small male figure, about the size of a five-year-old. His attire blended with the colour of his surroundings. We seemed locked in together, me in wonder and him in complete control. My eyes averted for a second, then he was gone – I say gone, but I felt he was still there. I lingered a minute or two, then continued walking. On returning home, I enjoyed the blue of the woodland flowers, their scent and a robin who accompanied me singing and tweeting almost to my daughter's door.

**Margaret Coles**  
By email



JONATHAN BILLINGER / NOVEMBER MORNING, FOREST OF DEAN, 4 / CC BY-SA 2.0

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# WHY FORTEAN?



**FORTEAN TIMES** is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an

intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

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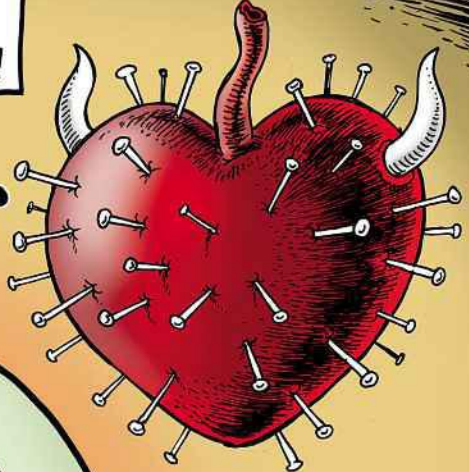
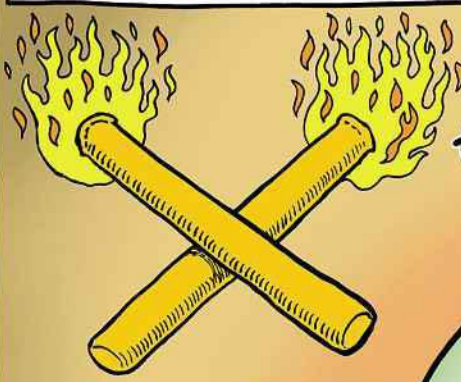
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(More on PINEL in part 3)

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ON SALE 16 AUGUST 2018

# STRANGE DEATHS

## UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

A middle-aged woman from western Japan died of a tick-borne disease caused by a bite from a stray cat, reported to be the first mammal-to-human transmission of its kind in the world. The woman, in her 50s, was bitten by the sick stray cat in the summer of 2016 as she tried to take it for treatment at a veterinary hospital. She died 10 days later, with tests subsequently showing she had been infected with Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (SFTS). The disease, most commonly found in central Asia and China, is transmitted by bites from a certain type of virus-carrying tick. Because the woman's body showed no sign of tick bites, the virus must have been transmitted by the cat, which most likely suffered from the tick-borne disease. SFTS is relatively new in Japan, where the first infection was confirmed in 2013. Since then, there have been 266 cases involving humans, 57 fatal. Until now, it was thought that only a direct bite from a tick could cause human infection. *D.Telegraph, 26 July 2017.*

A couple died within minutes of each other after collapsing in their garden on 18 June 2017, the hottest day of the year (around 28°C/82°F). Tony Williams MBE, 86, a former county councillor, and his wife Faith, 87, were found lying face down outside their house in Welsh St Donats, Vale of Glamorgan, South Wales. At Cardiff Coroner's Court in November, Ruth Williams described her parents as "teenage sweethearts". The coroner ruled that Mr Williams fell on the driveway and his wife went to help him, before falling herself. *D.Mail, 23 June; Metro, 3 Nov 2017.*

Olga Perkovic and her seven-year-old son Aaron Goodstein were returning home to Kirkland, northern California, on 4 March after they had been skiing when a massive block of snow fell from a roof just feet from the front door of their mountain home, fatally burying them under about 3ft (90cm) of the white stuff. *[AP] 7 Mar 2018.*

A 16-day-old baby boy was sleeping beside his mother under a mosquito net at home in the eastern Indian state of Odisha on 30 March when he was snatched by a rhesus macaque monkey. The mother woke to see the monkey carrying the child away but was not quick enough to get him back. The police launched a frantic search, but the infant was discovered drowned in a neighbour's well in Talabasta village two

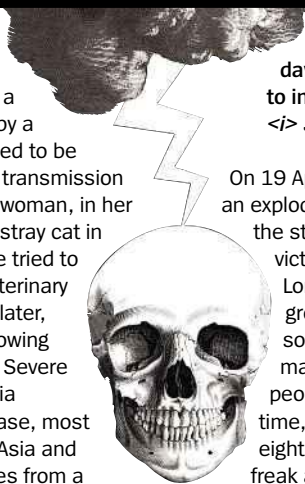
days later. There were no marks to indicate he had been attacked. *<i> 3 April 2018.*

On 19 April, a Frenchman was killed by an exploding petanque ball. It seems the steel ball was on the 31-year-old victim's barbeque in his garden – Lord alone knows why. The ball grew so hot it exploded, with some of the shrapnel hitting the man in the head. At least five people were in the garden at the time, including three children aged eight to 10. None was hurt. The freak accident took place in Boulou, near France's border with Spain. No one else is ever thought to have been killed by an exploding petanque ball. *D.Mail, 21 April 2018.*

A Thai woman fatally stabbed her younger boyfriend in what she claimed was a test of his mystic power. Somkid Changsalak, 41, was arrested at her house in Tambon Ban Mor, Prom Buri district, Thailand, not long after the death of Saneh Wongdee, 38. Somkid claimed that Saneh wanted her to test his mystic power, which he reportedly claimed had made his skin cut-proof. She said she used a 10in (25cm)-long knife and stabbed him once in the back, but it proved fatal. Police did not believe her account and charged her with murder. *The Nation (Thailand), 18 April 2018.*

Rosangela Almeida dos Santos, 37, was pronounced dead in the town of Riachao das Neves in the northeast of Brazil on 28 January. She had been admitted to hospital with severe fatigue, where she had two cardiac arrests and "died" from septic shock. She was buried the next day, but locals raised the alarm on 9 February after hearing screams from her grave.

Around 500 people packed into the Senhora Santana cemetery to see the wooden coffin unearthed and the lid removed. Some asked for an ambulance as the woman's feet were allegedly still warm. Her body had turned around and cotton wool that had been in her ears and nostrils had come out. She had wounds on her hands and forehead. Nails around the coffin lid we pushed up and there were scratches and blood on the inside. Local Natalina Silva said she heard banging from the grave. "I thought kids were playing a joke," she said. "Then I heard her groan twice." She had been in the ground for 11 days. *Sun, independent.co.uk, 17 Feb 2018.*





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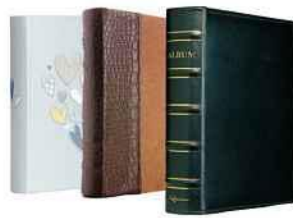
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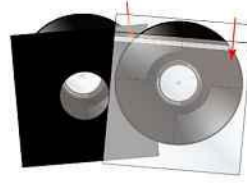
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