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MAY 2005



Curtis Peebles Investigates the Case of the Vanishing X-15 Pilot

and **David Sivier** introduces us to The Victorian Charm of the Protong

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Incorporating MUFOB 135

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EDITORIAL NOTES

Recently a number of American ufologists have been arguing on the essential UFO UpDates discussion group and website that there is an unbridgable gap between the abduction experience and the contactee experience. One correspondent claimed that "overwhelmingly, abduction claims and contact claims are fundamentally unalike and come from quite different places (and mostly quite different people)". The claim is further made that the abduction phenomenon was unknown to ufologists in the 1960s: "The idea of abduction was not there in 'folk' or serious mainstream ufology in the early 1960s - as anyone who was there can attest".

The first generally accepted 'abduction' case, in the sense that is implied in the quotations above is held to be the Villas Boas case of 1957, which introduced the idea of alien impregnation to the UFO field - albeit a human male impregnating an alien female rather that the reverse, as is the case with more recent abductions. Earlier than this, however, is a case reported in 1958 of an unnamed man who, whilst with the US Army in Austria in 1951, was paralysed by an alien figure taken on board a landed craft, which then flew into space, arriving on Mars.

Although the story has little or no evidential value, it is significant for two reasons. One, that it was told at all, indicating that the idea of being kidnapped into flying saucers was around at the time, and secondly for its description of the alien creatures. They are described as large-headed, hairless, with big eyes, no nose, just two holes and a tiny slip mouth, white skin, no external ears, and a hand with three long fingers, all characteristics of later alien abductors. There were a number of significant differences as well: the eyes had multiple pupils like flies' eyes.

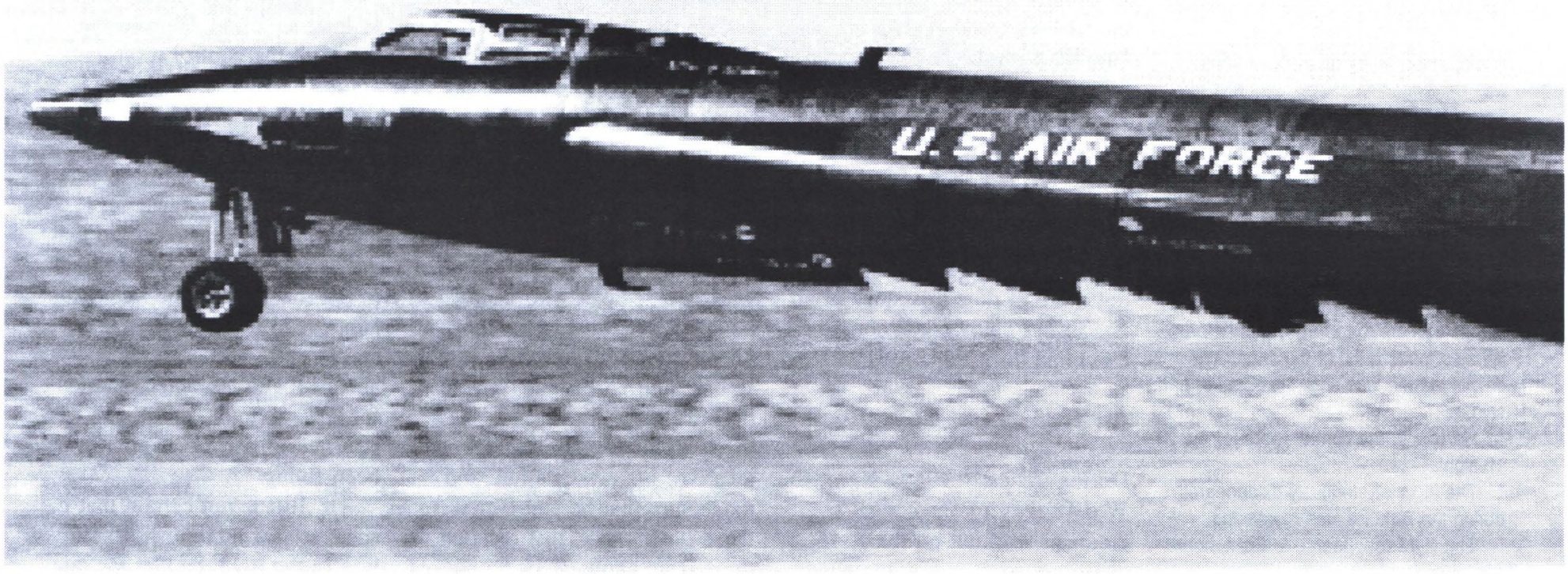
Another case from the 1950s which has little evidential value but is important for demonstrating that the UFO kidnap motif was circulating in the sub-culture of the time, is the Desvergers case. Whilst driving with a group of Boy Scouts near Palm Beach, Florida, 'Sonny' Desvergers saw lights falling into trees at the side of the road. Desvergers went off into the woods to investigate, whereupon one of the boys saw a ball of fire fall from the sky towards the scoutmaster, who was lost from view, and the boys ran away. Half an hour later he emerged and told police a story about being knocked unconscious by a flying saucer. In later months his story elaborated to include accounts of fighting with the saucer's occupants.
The case is controversial and includes some elements of physical evidence (burns and scorch marks), it also seems in some ways to foreshadow the Travis Walton abduction account. But even if it was a total hoax, the fact that elements of the abduction story were being imagined at that period demonstrates that the claim that "the idea of abduction was not there in 'folk' or serious mainstream ufology in the early 1960s" does not really hold water. Other cases described in Peter Rogerson's 'A Revisionist History of Abductions' (www.magonia.demon.co.uk/arc90/revis01.html) and Martin Kottmeyer's 'Entirely Unpredisposed' show clearly that the idea of abductions coexisted with the contactee era.

The contactee/abductee dichotomy is part of a broader dichotomy within the UFO field, both on the part of the percipients and the researchers: what Peter Rogerson has defined as the 'religious', contactee-oriented flying saucer myth, and the 'secular', scientific, quasi-military 'UFO' tradition. And it is this division between the attitudes of the researchers which is largely responsible for the contactee/abductee division which some researchers seem to have reduced to an Orwellian slogan of 'contactee - good; abductee -bad', and forced a division where none exists. One need only look at the strong contactee elements in the abductions reported by John Mack, and note the strange - one might almost say John Keel-ish - elements which are creeping into the stories emerging from the Budd Hopkins abduction factory, to see that there is little real difference between the abductees and the contactees.

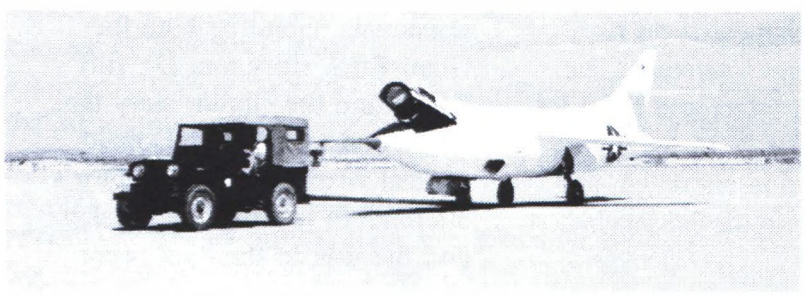
Maybe the only real difference is that in the 'fifties and early 'sixties people still had some faith in progress and the possibility of human development, and were prepared to believe that creatures capable of extraterrestrial travel would be our superiors not only intellectually but morally. Now, in an atmosphere of post-modern moral relativism, we're all as bad as each other, and it's pitifully naive to imagine that contact with an extraterrestrial civilization might be to our benefit. Contactee and abductee reports are not seperate and exclusive phenomena , but rather come from the same source are the same thing: a reflection of our own deepest thoughts, but reflected in the contrasting preoccupations of the era - and the investigators.

THE CASE OF THE VANISHING X-15 PILOT

CURTIS PEEBLES



The publication of Ann Druffel's book, *Firestorm: Dr. James M. McDonald's Fight For UFO Science*, was met with a mixed reception among believers and skeptics alike. The book gave an inside account of the highly respected atmospheric physicist's involvement with UFOs. At the same time, many readers objected to Druffel's attempts to include Roswell and MJ-12 in the account, as well as the book's technical and historical errors. McDonald's notebooks, in which he recorded his day-to-day activities, formed the basis of the book. These notebooks included summaries of numerous phone calls, notes on trips, events in his struggle with the University of Colorado UFO study, headed by Dr. Edward U. Condon, and McDonald's efforts to arrange congressional hearings on UFOs. [1]



In reading *Firestorm*, I was surprised to discover an account of a UFO incident involving an X-15 flight. I had long been interested in the history of this research aircraft. With a maximum altitude above 350,000 feet, the X-15 was the first attempt by the U.S. to build a vehicle able to reach the edge of space. I also knew of UFO sightings involving the X-15. I had not heard of this story, however, and was astonished by the alleged details of the case. This was not simply a claim that an X-15 pilot had seen a UFO, but rather that he had been abducted in flight. [2]

The story grew out of McDonald's involvement with the congressional UFO hearings. He was politically ambitious, and was skilled at influencing men of power. As a result McDonald stage managed the hearings, to the extent that he actually selected the five individuals who would testify. McDonald called them on July 8, 1968, to confirm they could be available. They were: Dr. Robert L. Hall, Dr. Robert M. Wood, Dr. Carl Sagan, Dr. Robert M.L. Baker, and Dr. J. Allen Hynek. [3]

Dr. Wood indicated there might be problems with his attending. (In fact Dr. Wood eventually had to bow out.) During the conversation, however, Wood told McDonald a remarkable abduction story. McDonald's handwritten text, as best as can be determined, read:

"Said heard of Gene May an X-15 pilot 5-8 years 15 min flight, yet came back 3 hours later. Said he was taken aboard UFO. Was examined by psychologist Edwards AFB Fellow at Vandenberg whom Bob knows, also knows Gene May. Douglas test pilot checking out X-15, 5-8 years [So I recounted Piccard. Urged he look for him...." [4]

Wood was the Deputy Director for Research and Development at the Douglas Missile and Space Division at the time of the conversation. The source of the abduction story was a colleague who worked at Vandenberg AFB. Wood considered him to be "very reliable." In *Firestorm*, Wood also said that his source knew May very well, who was described as having been involved with the X-15 program

1. Ann Druffel, *Firestorm Dr. James M. McDonald's Fight For UFO Science* (Columbus, North Carolina: Wild Flower Press, 2003).

2. Curtis Peebles, "Fireflies, dynamic pressure and the X-15 UFO sighting," *Magonia*, June 2002.

3. Druffel, *Firestorm*, p. 235-237, and Paul E. McCarthy, *Politicking And Paradigm Shifting James E. McDonald And The UFO Case Study*, PhD Thesis, University of Hawaii (December 1975), p. 186, 187.

4. McDonald notes on a conversation with Dr. Robert M. Wood, July 8, 1968. The "Piccard" mentioned in the notes is Don Piccard, who was a famous balloonist in the 1950s. It is not clear why McDonald was suggesting Wood try to find him.

5. Handwritten notes provided by Dr. Kenneth W. Iliff. In trying to recall the events of more than forty years before, Iliff also made a list of the important details that he was sure the speaker had said:
* He was in the control room for the X-15 flight.
* The X-15 mysteriously disappeared during the flight he was monitoring.
* The X-15 reappeared in flight, hours after it had disappeared.
* He was the first (and perhaps only) person to notice that the X-15 could not have stayed aloft for over 15 minutes.
* He also emphasized that the X-1, the first aircraft to fly Mach 1, was originally called the "XS-1" (for "experimental supersonic"). Iliff though that the speaker made such a big point of this, for no obvious reason, in order to establish his credibility. * Greenfield and Iliff satisfied themselves that he had at one time been stationed at Edwards. * He was selling a book at the Giant Rock convention.

6. Information on the details and air dates of these episodes was tracked down by Sue Henderson. When Dr. Iliff was asked about these shows, he said that in the 1960s he had been a regular viewer of these programs, and that if the Giant Rock story had any similarities to these episodes, he would have recognized it.

7. Dennis R. Jenkins, Tony R. Landis, *Hypersonic The Story of the North American X-15* (North Branch, Minnesota: Speciality Press, 2002), p. 124, 125, 127, 247.

for several years. From the date of the conversation, and Wood's account, the abduction supposedly took place between 1960 and 1963. Although McDonald made a note of the story for future reference, he apparently never followed up on the case of the vanishing X-15 pilot.

Initially, the X-15 abduction story was nothing more than an amusing anecdote. The flaws in the tale were apparent to anyone familiar with the X-15 program. I told several individuals the story. They all recognized the flaws, and were amused by the story. Then, during a conversation, I mentioned the tale to a retired X-15 engineer, and was surprised to learn that Wood's account was not the first time this story of an X-15 pilot being taken aboard a UFO had been told.

An Engineer at Giant Rock

During the early 1960s, Kenneth W. Iliff was a young NASA engineer working on the X-15 project at what was then called the NASA Flight Research Center (now the Dryden Flight Research Center). He would subsequently have a forty-year career with NASA, earned a PhD, and retiring as the Chief Scientist at Dryden. The NASA facility was a relatively short distance from Giant Rock, where annual UFO conventions were held. These events attracted the interest of some of the NASA engineers, and they made the pilgrimage to the site. Iliff went to Giant Rock in two consecutive years. As best he can remember after four decades, these were in 1963 and 1964. Both times he was accompanied by Lowell Greenfield, who was a fellow NASA engineer.

Iliff recalled that Giant Rock was at the end of a long and poorly-maintained dirt road. Parking was somewhat disorganized, and several light aeroplanes had landed at the dirt airstrip. The crowd numbered at least several hundred in Iliff's estimation. Most were UFO believers, many with family members. However, there were a significant number of people who were merely curious, and who, like Iliff, did not have strong opinions about UFOs. There were also quite a few "promoters," as Iliff called them, selling various UFO items, such as books that they had written and published. George Van Tassel, who organized the yearly conventions, was asking for large donations of over $100 to complete the "Integratron." (This was a significant sum in the early 1960s.) The money was also to be used to buy a road grader. Iliff recalled that the Integratron was described as duplicating the "jawbone of the ass" in the Bible.

The Giant Rock conventions were legendary because of the speakers recounting their UFO adventures, and Iliff and Greenfield attended several of their presentations, which were given in a large tent. The account which Iliff most vividly recalled was by a speaker who claimed to have been involved with the X-15 program for the past several years, and that he was on active duty with the Air Force at Edwards AFB. Greenfield was aware of his presentation, and made sure that he and Iliff were there for his talk. Iliff recalled there were about 70 or 80 people on hand. As with the other speakers, he had books for sale at the back of the tent.

The main part of his talk dealt with his experiences during an X-15 flight. The man said that he had been in the NASA control room, with an important function to perform. His story was that on this particular flight, the X-15 had been successfully launched from the B-52, fired its engine, and began the initial part of the flight plan. Suddenly, all communication with the X-15 and its pilot were lost, including telemetry, voice transmissions, and radar tracking. The X-15 had vanished without any warning.

A search operation was immediately launched, the speaker said, using both the regular chase planes and additional aircraft. Despite the search, no trace of the X-15 or its pilot could be found. Everyone at Edwards was very shocked and despondent. The speaker then said that after a long period of time, several hours as Iliff recalled, the X-15 suddenly reappeared on its planned flight trajectory. The aircraft was intact and the pilot was fine. The X-15 made its normal landing approach, and touched down on the lakebed at Edwards.

The speaker said that everybody involved in the control room and the search operation were elated at the safe landing, and that an impromptu celebration began. It was at this point that the speaker pointed out to the other people in the control room that something extraordinary had occurred. The X-15 could not fly for more than 15 minutes, and there was no way that it could have stayed aloft for as long as it had. He said the others in the control room abruptly realized that he was right.

He claimed that all the participants were sworn to secrecy about what had happened. The speaker said that, despite the security oath, he had to tell the truth about what had happened on the flight. The X-15 and its pilot had been taken aboard a UFO intact, examined for several hours, and then returned to where the aircraft had been flying.

Dr. Iliff is not certain that the speaker said that the X-15 story was in the book he had for sale at the back of the tent. This was Iliff's impression, however. He recalled later, "I was so shocked by his bald-faced lie that I left immediately and did not actually open the book."

After returning to the Flight Research Center, both Iliff and Greenfield told the story to co-workers, and they enjoyed "many good chuckles." It was clear to all that the incident never happened. Some checking was done to see if the person ever had actually been at Edwards or had been associated with the X-15. Dr. Iliff's recollection was that he had said that he was an officer, but after so many years he cannot be sure. Iliff also cannot now recall his name, or the name of his book. Iliff does recall that he and Greenfield were able to find some evidence that the person had been stationed at Edwards at one time. Iliff pointed out that this did not mean he ever had had any official capacity with the X-15 program. [5]

There remain a number of unknowns regarding both the Giant Rock story that Dr. Iliff heard, and the similar story that Dr. Wood told Dr. McDonald several years later. The author's attempts to identify the speaker and the title of the book were

unsuccessful. Another open issue is the development of the story. By the early 1960s the idea that flying saucers were responsible for the disappearances of aircraft and their crews was already part of flying saucer mythology. The implications were that these disappearances were indications of the aliens' hostile intent, and that the abductions were carried out to gain samples of both human technology and humans themselves. There were no claims that individuals or aircraft which had "disappeared" ever came back, however.

The "survivor story" of the X-15 pilot has more to do with traditional melodrama than early flying saucer mythology. Given this, another possibility is that it was influenced by popular culture. The 1960s was a golden age of television science fiction. Shows such as *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits*, and *Star Trek* were in first run at this time. All three programs had an episode with elements similar to the X-15 abduction story, but any direct connection is, at best, tentative.

In *The Twilight Zone* episode "And When the Sky Opened," the X-20 and its three man crew were put into orbit, but disappeared from radar for 24 hours. After landing, each of the crewmen disappears one by one, with not even the memory of their existence or that of the X-20 remaining. The only hint of aliens is in the final narration, which says that "something or someone took them somewhere." The episode was first telecast on December 11, 1959. *The Outer Limits* had an episode involving the X-15 as a plot element, titled "The Premonition." In the story, the X-15, its pilot, and his wife are caught in a time warp. There is no hint that aliens are involved. A bigger problem with this being an inspiration for the abduction story is that the episode was first telecast on January 9, 1965. This was after Iliff recalls attending the Giant Rock convention.

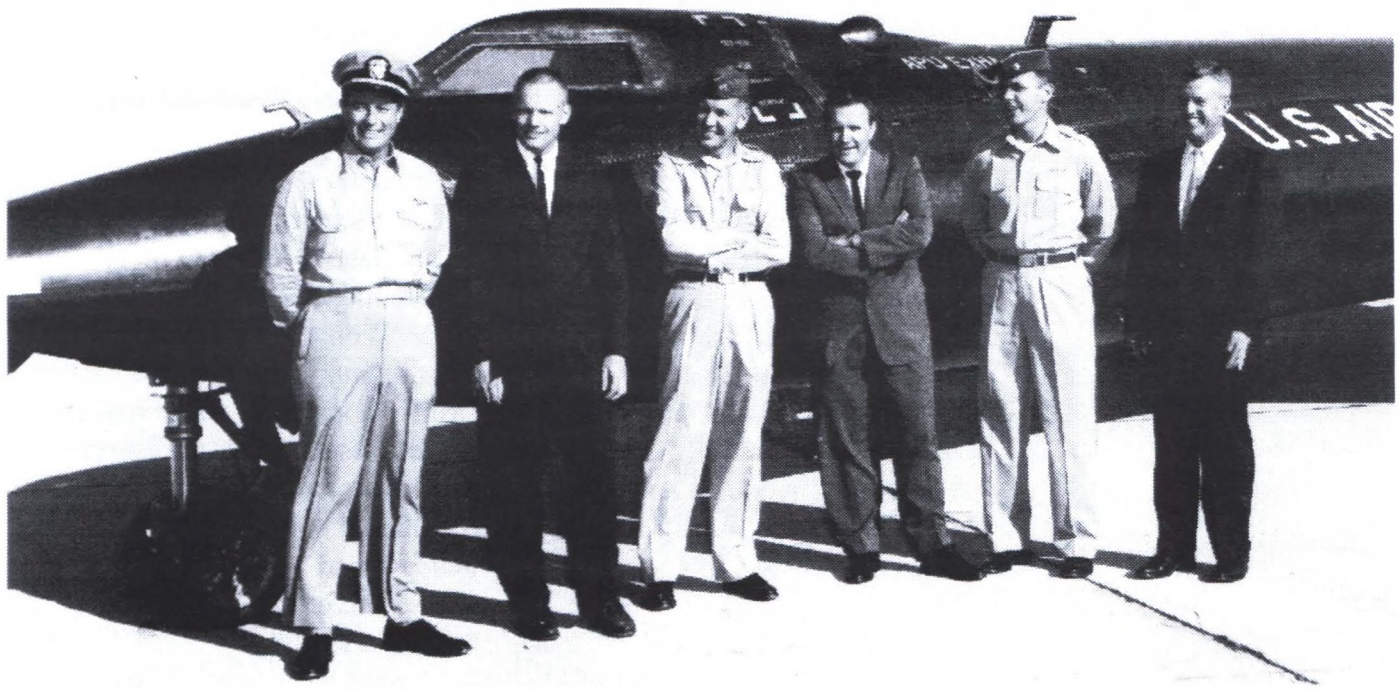
The closest match is the "Tomorrow is Yesterday" episode of *Star Trek*. The *Enterprise* travels back in time to the 20th century, and is intercepted by an F-104. The aircraft is damaged during the encounter, and its pilot is then beamed aboard. However, there is the same problem in timing, as this *Star Trek* episode was not telecast until January 26, 1967. Again, this is several years too late. [6]

Another possibility is that the story was based on the events of a real X-15 flight, which was then embellished with a bogus UFO encounter. There was an X-15 flight during which the control room abruptly lost all telemetry, voice transmissions, and radar tracking data from the vehicle. The X-15 seemed to have vanished. It was eight minutes before a chase plane pilot spotted the X-15 as it made an emergency landing on Mud Lake. No flying saucers were involved in the incident, however. Capt. William J. Knight had experienced a failure of both Auxiliary Power Units (APUs), which supplied electrical and hydraulic power to the vehicle. This failure was caused by electrical arcing from an experiment, which overloaded the APUs and caused them to drop off line. This caused all radio and radar contact to be lost with the control room. With only an emergency battery still working, and little control over the X-15, Knight was able to restart one of the APUs, and land successfully on Mud Lake.

The circumstances of Knight's X-15 flight were similar to those told by the speaker at Giant Rock (but without aliens). The possibility that this was the original source of the abduction story has the same problem as *The Outer Limits* and *Star Trek* episodes. The X-15 flight took place on June 29, 1967. When Dr. Iliff was specifically asked if this could have been the inspiration for the story, he said that the flight took place long after he had heard the story. [7]

A final unknown in the case of the vanishing X-15 pilot was how Gene May's name became involved in it. Dr. Iliff said that he was "90 percent sure" that the speaker did not name the pilot involved in the alleged incident. Iliff was completely certain that if the speaker had mentioned Gene May, he would have remembered it. In Dr. Wood's account, however, the pilot was specifically identified as Douglas test pilot Gene May.

Ultimately, the story is a minor issue. It did not play a role in the development of the flying saucer myth. The story also does not seem to have been repeated in any later publication. Yet, it is a tale which has value. The importance of the story is not due to the narrative itself, but rather in what it says about the believers' views of what represents evidence, and how this is weighed.



The first X-15 pilots. From left to right they are: Forrest Peterson (Navy), Neil Armstrong (NASA), Robert Rushworth (Air Force), John McKay (NASA), Robert White (Air Force), Joe Walker (NASA)

"Truth" vs. the Facts

The Gene May abduction story makes clear the role of the "sighting" in the flying saucer myth. In the 1940s and 1950s, when the belief system originated, Air Force reports and documents from other agencies were classified. As a result, the sighting reports collected by the believers were the only evidence available. These testimonials of what the witnesses had seen and experienced had to be judged on subjective grounds, such as the witnesses' status, perceived

8. In September 1998, I attended a historical seminar on the U-2 overflight program. The speakers included a former CIA U-2 pilot, CIA, Air Force, and Lockheed personnel involved with the program, and a retired Colonel of the Soviet Air Defense Forces.

9. "Conspiracy? Kecksburg UFO" The History Channel, March 6, 2005. In the show, a scientific paper was noted in which the path of the object was calculated from a pair of photographs. The photos and calculations not only showed the sighting was of a meteor, but also allowed its orbit to be calculated. This scientific evidence was dismissed by the believers, as it contradicted the 40-year-old eyewitness accounts.

10. "Re: UFO Whistleblowers & Special Access Programs," Tue, 22 Feb 2005 12:59:07 -1000, http://www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/updates/2005/feb/m23-014.shtml "SAP/CAPs" stands for "Special Access Programs/Controlled Access Programs."? "ETV" is "Extraterrestrial Vehicle," while "EBE" is "?Extraterrestrial Biological Entity."

11. P.J., "Exopolitical review of Peter Jennings' Primetime TV show 'Seeing is Believing,'" http://exopolitics.blogs.com/exopolitics/2005/03/exopolitical_re.html.

reliability, and "sincerity." Those sightings judged to be "real" flying saucers were then collected, and published in the believers' books as "proof" that flying saucers were interplanetary spaceships. This was the standard format of the flying saucer books published beginning in the 1950s, and continuing into the 1970s.

When documentary evidence indicated that the sighting was in error, did not occur as described, or was totally false, it was ignored or dismissed by the believers. If proof was lacking, the writers could claim that this was because of the "cover-up" by the Air Force. The cover-up also meant that believers also had an excuse for not fully investigating a sighting. The Air Force had removed all the evidence, and silenced all the witnesses. As a result, there was no use in making follow-up investigations of a report.

Both of these effects can be seen in the case of the vanishing X-15 pilot. Dr. Wood was told the story of Gene May's abduction by a colleague at Vandenberg AFB. Dr. Wood judged the source to be "very reliable," as he said that he knew Gene May well. Dr. Wood was employed by Douglas, as was May. Dr. Wood could have followed up the abduction story by making a phone call to company headquarters, and asking about May's involvement with the X-15 program. He could have also called the NASA Flight Research Center or Edwards AFB, and inquired about any records of May's X-15 flights. Dr. Wood, it appears, did none of these things. He simply accepted the source's account, and told Dr. McDonald about it.

More than half a century after the birth of the flying saucer myth, both the world and beliefs about flying saucers are very different. The UFO related documents in the Blue Book files, as well as those of the FBI, CIA, NSA, and other government agencies, are now available. The Freedom of Information Act has been in effect for some thirty years, while the 25-year rule allows anyone to simply ask for the release of old classified material. The end of the Cold War also means that many subjects once considered too sensitive to be discussed can now be openly talked about, by both sides. [8]

The same fundamental changes are also true of the flying saucer myth. In the mid to late 1970s, the traditional mythology began to be replaced by stories of crashed saucers, cattle mutilations, underground bases, secret treaties, reverse-engineered alien technology, abductions and hybrids, disinformation, free energy, and the whistleblowers. The Roswell incident became the centre of the flying saucer belief system, while the Air Force cover up was replaced by MJ-12 and the secret government. Dr. Wood himself was representative of this change, as he is now one of the primary supporters of the bogus MJ-12 documents.

Despite this fundamental change in the mythology, for the believers, the eyewitness is still the primary evidence. Indeed, in many cases, it is the only acceptable evidence. If the eyewitnesses are contradicted by scientific analysis, historical records, or other factual evidence, it is the eyewitnesses who should be believed. The "truth" of the sighting is thus preserved in the face of mere facts. Such sighting reports thus become a secular version of religious miracle stories. [9]

This mindset continues over three decades after Dr. Wood told Dr. McDonald about the X-15 abduction. When Druffel was researching her book, she talked to Dr. Wood. He provided more information about the case, but Druffel apparently never made any efforts to check the story. Again, it seems, the source was considered very reliable, the incident had been covered up, and so there was no point in further research.

A possible reason for the uncritical acceptance of such eyewitness accounts was made clear in unguarded comments by several figures involved in "exopolitics." The first of these was by Dr. Michael Salla, during a debate on the UFO Updates web site regarding the validity of Robert Lazar's claims of seeing captured alien flying saucers. In a reply to a posting by Dr. Bruce Maccabee, Dr. Salla wrote:

"How can we find out what's going on with SAP/CAPs if we ignore the very whistleblowers telling us what's happening because we can't confirm their school records or some other arbitrary criterion a parsimonious researcher stipulates as a necessary condition? One might think they are doing 'good science' by raising the evidentiary bar up high that only watertight whistleblower testimonies make it over the hurdle. In the process, you eliminate witnesses like Lazar, and all you have left are those like former FAA Air Chief John Callahan with some records of radar sightings of fast moving UFOs around a Japanese Jumbo jet, and evidence that the government didn't want the FAA seriously investigating this. If that's the sort of hard evidence with credible whistleblower testimony that will be universally accepted, then this field of UFO research will grow very very slowly, lose innovative researchers, capable of understanding what's going on in the SAPs/CAPs dealing with ETV/EBE research, and become increasingly irrelevant to the general public who seek answers to what is happening." [10]

The implication of Salla's posting seemed to be that all the "good" witnesses had no evidence to back up their tales. In contrast, all the witnesses who could document who they are and what they saw could only provide "run of the mill" sightings which were little different from those collected a half century ago.

An even more damning admission was in an essay posted on the web site of Alfred Lambremont Webre, J.D., M.Ed. (Canada), who describes himself as "...an author, futurist, lawyer (member of the District of Columbia Bar), peace advocate, environmental activist, space activist and is known as the founding father of exopolitics." The essay, titled, "Exopolitical review of Peter Jennings' Primetime TV show 'Seeing is Believing'," was written by "PJ, Exopolitics Advisor and Researcher." In the essay, "PJ" notes that the special "deframed" the Roswell claims (i.e. accepted that the debris was from a Mogul balloon). He then wrote:

"Without Roswell or other such crashes, there is little evidence or logic to validate the issue of a secret government." [11]

Here, the implications were

even more far reaching. A case can be made that without Roswell, not only claims of a secret government, but the whole basis for the exopolitics myth no longer exists. Moreover, popular ufology itself for the past three decades also becomes nothing more than an ever expanding spiral of fantasy, delusions, mistakes, hoaxes, and wishful thinking. This spiral also brings us back to the Gene May abduction story.

The Life and Times of Gene May

Looking back on the story he had heard at Giant Rock, Dr. Iliff commented that, "I was astonished that any one would tell such an absolute lie when it was easy to check his assertions." When the X-15 program started in 1954, it was simply the latest in a series of research aircraft. This changed with the launch of the first satellite, Sputnik I, by the Soviet Union on October 4, 1957. In the post-Sputnik political environment, the X-15 became "America's first spaceship," and the program engineers found themselves working in a fishbowl of press attention. The rollout of the first X-15 on October 15, 1958 was a press event. On hand were Vice President Richard M. Nixon, senior Air Force, NASA, and North American Aviation officials, as well as X-15 pilots A. Scott Crossfield (North American), Capt. Robert White (Air Force) and Joe Walker (NASA). [12]

When X-15 flights began in June of 1959, the press was on hand at Edwards AFB to report the events. In addition to newspaper and television coverage, there were also books published during the early 1960s on the program. One of these was *X-15 Diary*, written by Richard Tregaskis. Published in 1961, the book describes Tregaskis' day-by-day, first-hand observations and experiences covering the X-15. He had access to the pilots, engineers, and other personnel. He described the goals, achievements, and problems they experienced. [13]

This was a remarkable degree of access for a reporter, but it highlighted the fact that the X-15 program was being conducted in the open. The flight plans, flight transcripts, pilot debriefings, flight maps, and other internal documents for each flight were unclassified. As Dr. Iliff later noted, only some of the aeronautical data from the flights was actually classified at the time. This material has subsequently been declassified; there are no classifications or export control restrictions on X-15 program information.

In the years since the X-15 program ended in 1968, additional books have been published. These include X-15 pilot Milton O. Thompson's book *At The Edge Of Space*, as well as Robert Godwin's *X-15 The NASA Mission Reports*, and Dennis R. Jenkins and Tony R. Landis' *Hypersonic: The Story of the North American X-15*. These and the other later books on the X-15 also include flight logs of its 199 missions. These provide such information as dates, pilot names, as well as the speeds and altitudes reached by the X-15 for each flight. *Hypersonic* lists not only this information, but also the names of the B-52 pilots and launch panel operators, the chase plane pilots, and the NASA I ground controller for each X-15 flight.

Had Dr. Wood, Druffel or the readers of *Firestorm* checked any of these sources, they would have discovered that Gene May is never once mentioned in any of them as having any connection with the X-15 program. May never appeared at any press conferences; he never gave a speech or interview, never flew a chase plane, was never aboard the B-52 launch aircraft, never served as NASA I, and never, ever, flew the X-15.

Gene May was born on September 28, 1904, less that a year after the first powered flights by the Wright Brothers. May subsequently became an experienced airline pilot. May then joined Douglas Aircraft Co. as a test pilot in 1941. Over the next five years, he test flew the A-20, A-26, and XB-42 light bombers, the AD-1 Navy attack aircraft, the C-74 and C-54 military transports, and the DC-6 airliner. [14] He had a reputation of being able to note the subtle features of an aircraft's behaviour, and then communicate this to the engineers in terms they could understand. He also had the wisdom to know when to back off. By the late 1940s, he had accumulated some 10,000 hours of flight time.

May was then selected as the test pilot for the Douglas D-558-I Skystreak. This was a Navy-sponsored jet-powered research aircraft designed to fly at speeds approaching Mach 1. May was now 42 years old, and a grandfather. In all, he made a total of 121 flights in the Skystreak, including the aeroplane's only supersonic flight, on September 29, 1948. This was the day after his 44th birthday.

He was also involved in the initial test flights of the Douglas D-558-II Skyrocket. This aircraft used both a jet engine and a rocket engine, and was designed to fly above Mach 1. Although both aircraft shared the same designation, they were completely different designs. The Skystreak had straight wings and a stubby, cylindrical fuselage. The Skyrocket had an elongated bullet-shaped fuselage with swept-back wings, tail and stabilizers. May made a total of 133 flights in the Skyrocket. His last test flight was made on December 1, 1949, in a D-558-II.

Accounts vary as to why May, who was then 45-years old, left flight testing. The popular consensus was that he failed his flight physical, and was removed from the program. Another suggestion made was that May had done a great many very dangerous things while at Douglas, and he felt that his luck had about run out. May continued to work for Douglas Aircraft Co. for several more years. He was named the Chief of Flight Operations at Douglas' Tulsa Oklahoma plant, where B-47s were being built under license from Boeing. According to a magazine article, May was checked out in the B-47 in 1951. However, this did not apparently involve any test work, but rather was simply a check ride in an aircraft.

May left Douglas in about 1953, becoming a vice president at Superior Cutter Co., which made cutting tools. In 1957, May was working at R.J.Polk. He left Polk in about 1959 and returned to flying as a pilot for Alamo Airways in Las Vegas. He died on December 5, 1966, aged 62.

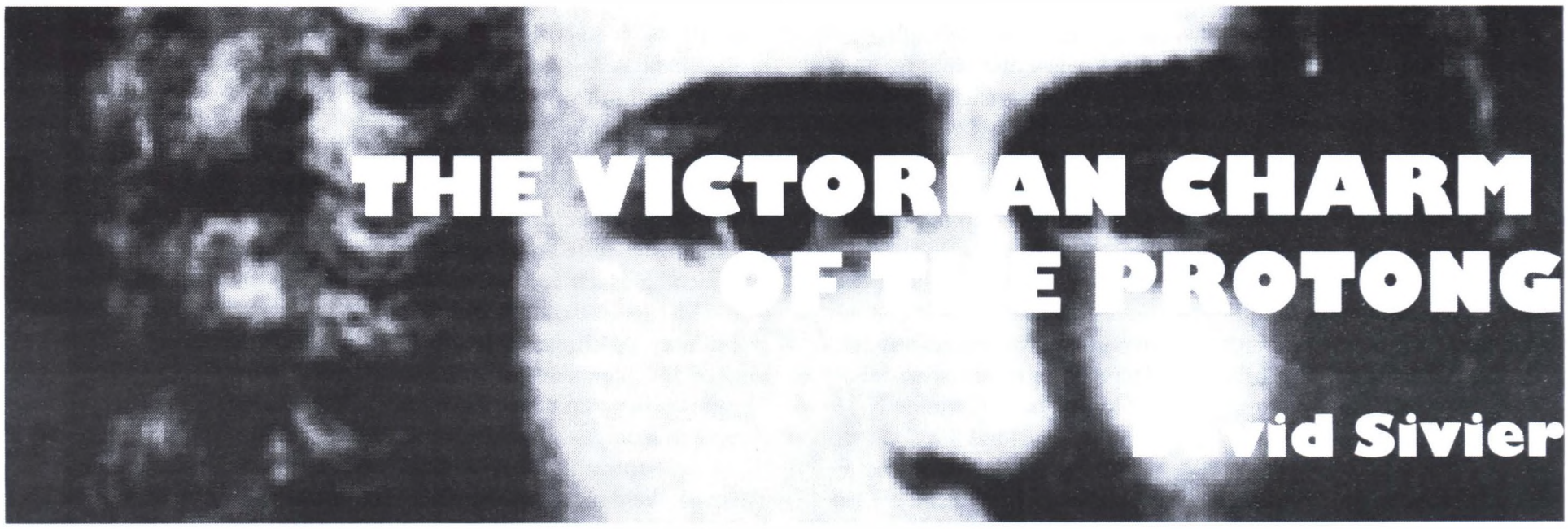
12. "X-15 Stars In Roll-Out, Then Goes To Work," *Los Angeles Skywriter* (October 24, 1958) p.3. This is the newsletter for North American's L.A. facility.

13. Richard Tregaskis, *X-15 Diary The Story of America's First Space Ship* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1961). Tregaskis was also the author of the book *Guadalcanal Diary*. Other books on the X-15 published in the early 1960s were X-15 pilot Scott Crossfield's *Always Another Dawn*, Jules Bergman's *Ninety Seconds to Space*, and Myron Gubitz's *Rocketship X-15*.

14. This alone should have been a giveaway that the Gene May abduction story was false. May had been a Douglas test pilot. The X-15 was built by North American Aviation.

15. Scott Libis, *Douglas D-558-1 Skystreak* (Simi Valley, California: Naval Fighters Number fifty-six, 2001) p. 34, 35, 44-46. Additional information provided by Scott Libis. While Gene May was born in 1904, the actual X-15 pilots were born some two decades later. Scott Crossfield and Joe Walker, for example, were both born in 1921, John McKay and Forrest Peterson in 1922, and Robert White in 1924. Neil Armstrong and Bill Dana were the youngest X-15 pilots, both being born in 1930.

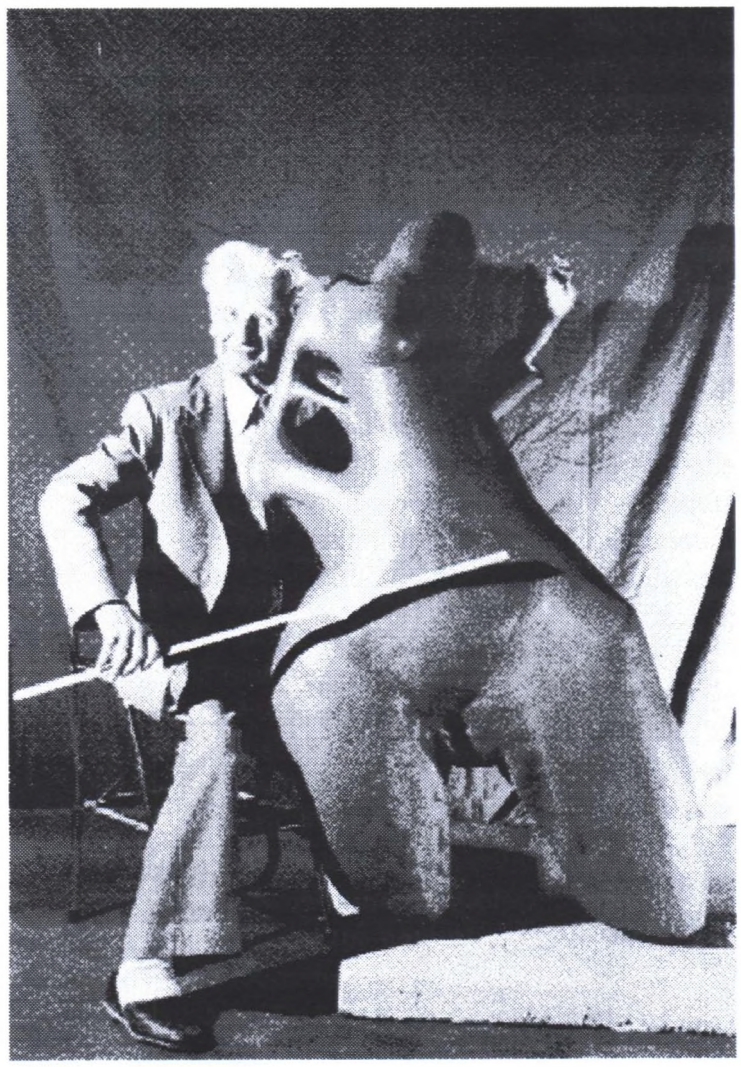
Curtis Peebles is an aerospace historian, specializing in the Cold War era. Among his books is *"Watch The Skies!"* which details the evolution of beliefs about flying saucers.



THE VICTORIAN CHARM OF THE PROTONG

David Sivier

One of the strangest responses to the religious furore surrounding the release of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* in 2004 was that of veteran fringe writer, Stan Gooch. While other writers and academics feared that the graphic depiction of Christ's suffering would provoke a further rise in violent anti-Semitism amid a resurgence of extreme Right wing political groups in Europe, and the renewed intifada in the Arab world, Gooch took the opportunity of the film's release to expound his own, very personal theory that Christianity owed its origins to a secret lunar cult.



Stanislaus Szukalsky, a Polish nationalist and founder of the 'Horned Heart' patriotic movement, believed that the Protong were an archaic, prehuman race from which modern humans were partially descended

'Why,' he asked rather tetchily, 'do people not understand that far from being what it is claimed to be, the story of Christ is simply a garbled version of the ancient Moon religion's chief ceremony? In this ceremony, the Sun ("the King for a Year") is sacrificed by the Moon on the last day of the year – his genitals are removed (hence the "spear in the side") and the still clearer "spear through both thighs" of the Fisher King to turn him into a menstruating woman, the blood then drunk and the testicles eaten. (This, of course, is why Catholics eat the body of Christ and drink His blood during Mass.) However, the Moon graciously resurrects the Sun so that life on Earth may continue.' [1]

As proof of this remarkable assertion, Gooch goes further and states that 'the cross is the symbol for the Moon in *all* pre-Christian cultures worldwide ... Christ dies on the cross on Friday 13th. Friday is the day of the Moon goddess, Freya.

'And He is resurrected on Monday, which is again Moon-day. Christ and his 12 disciples constitute a coven of 13. The only 13 which exists in nature (or anywhere else) is the 13 New Moons/Full Moons that occur in each alternate year. The date of Easter (of the sacrifice and resurrection) is of course still today determined by the Moon, which is why Easter is a moveable feast.' [2]

Of course the simple answer to why his theory is not accepted is because it is utter rubbish from start to finish. While there were cults that practiced castration and allegations of human sacrifice committed by others in the ancient world, no cult that combined the two is recorded to have existed. The priests of Cybele castrated themselves, but did not do so as part of a cult of human sacrifice, and did not engage in cannibalism. Indeed, far from being intended to cause their deaths, the castration marked the worshippers' entry into their new lives as the goddess' priests. The allegation is even more incredible, and potentially dangerous, when applied to the 1st century Judaism out of which Christianity grew. Despite the weird and depraved sacrificial mixing of semen and menstrual blood by some libertarian Christian Gnostic sects, such as the Cainites, such acts were viewed as abominations in the wider Judaeo-Christian world. [3] It is true that some historians following the Christian apologist Justin Martyr have tentatively suggested that the Roman accusation of orgiastic sex and cannibalism directed at Christians may have come from the activities of some of these sects, such as the Marcionites. [4] Pliny, on the other hand, despite his willingness to execute Christians on the emperor's orders, found that there was no substance behind the rumour, only 'a depraved and immodest superstition'. [5]

Furthermore, the allegations of human sacrifice in Christianity at this time, before the religion was completely separate from Judaism, could be seen as substantiating the 'Blood Libel' rumours of the ritual sacrifice of gentiles which have produced so much vicious anti-Semitism ever since they first appeared at the court of Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria c. 125-96 B.C. [6]

In the case of Christianity, most scholars believe that the allegations of cannibal 'thyestean feasts' arose through a Roman misunderstanding of the nature of

Eucharist, with some Romans believing that the Christians dipped the host in the blood of sacrificed child. [7]

Despite being totally wrong historically, the theory of Christianity's lunar origins nevertheless is a good example of the concerns of a certain part of the fringe archaeology/ secret history movement, and in particular its origins in outmoded, Victorian views of the origins of religion. In fact, Gooch's view of the origin of Christianity is part of his wider attempt to trace the origins of modern religious and political systems in the racial difference between Neanderthal and modern Homo Sapiens. In his 1989 book, *Cities of Dreams: When Women Ruled the Earth*, he stated his case that the Neanderthals were creative left-handed, pacifist, socialist, matriarchal vegetarians whose religion was centred around the worship of the Moon, in contrast with the Cro Magnons, who were patriarchal, violent, right-handed, destructive and capitalistic. Intermarriage between the two produced modern humanity, with the different political and religious beliefs being determined by the relative expression of the Neanderthal or Cro Magnon heritage in various individuals.

Thus, left-handers, according to Gooch, have more Neanderthal heritage, and are thus more likely to be anti-capitalist political leftists. As proof of this, he cites Osama bin Laden, Ayman Zawahiri and Suleiman Abu Ghaith as prominent left-handers, as well as the statistic that left-handedness in China, which 'just happens to be a Communist state' is almost double that of Europe. Thus 'the present world crisis, our political system itself, and the vast majority of our social problems all arise from the fact that we, modern humans, are an unstable hybrid cross between predominantly left-handed Neanderthal man and the right-handed Cro-Magnon, and all possess two sets of opposing instincts.' [8]

Other fringe writers, such as Stanislaus Szukalsky, would have concurred. A Polish nationalist and founder of the 'Horned Heart' patriotic movement, Szukalsky similarly believed that an archaic, prehuman race from which modern humans were partially descended also shared communistic inclinations. Rather than the idealised paragons of antediluvian virtue envisaged by Gooch, however, these were subhuman creatures of violence and depravity. It was their racial heritage that was responsible for the cruelty and criminality in the modern human character. Szukalsky's views, however, were no doubt moulded by his country's experience during the post-War years. Newly liberated from both Germany and Russia, the country was nevertheless subject to political instability and armed incursions from its former eastern master after the Revolution when the nascent Soviet Union attempted to spread Communism by force.

Similar views of the origin of Communist criminal depravity in a prehuman racial heritage informed the views of many of German Pagan sects whose vehement anti-Semitism made them precursors of the Nazis. Despite the substantial difference in outlook between Szukalsky and the leaders of the *Volkisch* neo-pagan sects in Wilhelmine Germany, his view of the Protong as the prehuman originator of evil is of a type with Lanz von Liebenfels' *Buhlzwerge*, subhuman pygmies, which the ancients had reared for perverted sexual pleasure. For Liebenfels, Christ's passion was a garbled account of attempts by these pygmies to rape and corrupt Him on the urging of Satanic bestiality cults devoted to racial interbreeding. [9]

Liebenfels' own political views were diametrically opposed to Gooch's. A rabidly anti-Semitic German Nationalist, whose views may have exerted an influence on the young Adolf Hitler, Liebenfels was resolutely behind the hierarchical, capitalist world, which Communism sought to overthrow. Nevertheless, both Liebenfels and Gooch's views of the Passion are similar, rejecting the literal meaning of the narrative in favour of an allegorical interpretation of sexual violence.

Liebenfels' interpretation of the Passion narrative, however, lacks the cannibalism of Gooch's. Yet this is also present in the 19th century attempt to establish the anthropological origin of religion, though this time in Freud's discussion of the origin of religion in the Oedipal struggles of the early human community expressed in the murder of a Biblical figure, though this time Moses, rather than Christ. In his *Autobiography*, Freud declared that the *ur*-human *paterfamilias* had seized all the tribe's women for himself. As a result, his sons banded together against him to kill and devour him. However, as their father was also their ideal, they were ridden with guilt, and so enacted rituals to expiate them of their sin. The result of this was the ritual murder, not of Jesus, but of Moses by his Jewish followers. [10]

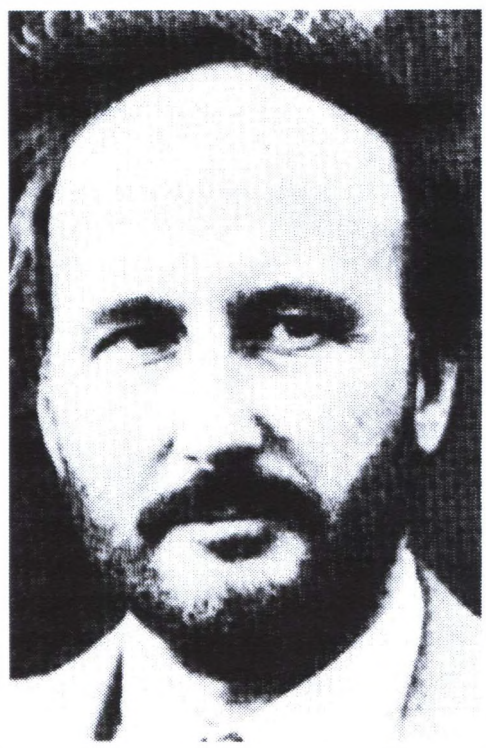
Where Freud got this bizarre idea of Moses' ritual murder is a mystery. The Bible makes no mention of a murder at all. In it, God simply summons Moses to die on Mt. Nebo, because he had broken faith with the Almighty and did not revere Him as holy in Meribathkadesh. [11] Moses complied, dying in full view of the Promised Land, which he was forbidden to enter. There is no mention of any killing by Moses followers, who, far from being filled with hate, spent thirty days in morning for their prophet. [12]

The Talmud and extrabiblical Jewish legend also makes no mention of Moses being murdered either. There, the short Biblical account of the prophet's death is supplemented with a longer account of his refusal to die, and the refusal of various angels sent by the Lord to take his soul, until at last the Lord lures his soul out of his body with a kiss. Again, Moses' death is the cause for great mourning, not just of Israel, but also of the whole of creation.

[13] The Roman Jewish historian, Josephus too makes no mention of any murder, but describes instead Moses being called to die by God, and giving a lengthy sermon stressing the nation's duty to God and describing the constitution and laws revealed to him by the Almighty before ascending the mountain where he was due to die. Again, rather than being murdered, Moses' death is the subject of extreme sorrow for his people. Josephus' account differs from that of the Bible and the Talmud in having the prophet disappearing from under a cloud, which settled over him while still in conversation with the patriarchs Eleazar and Joshua. [14] Freud thus appears to have confused Moses

1. Stan Gooch, 'Moon Religion', Fortean Times 185, July 2004, p. 75.
2. Ibid.
3. See, for example, Christ's condemnation of such practices according to the *Pistis Sophia*, cited in 'The Orgy', in A. Nataf, The Occult, Chambers, Edinburgh 1991, p. 70.
4. J. B. Russell, Witchcraft in the Middle Ages, Comell University Press, Ithaca 1972, p. 90.
5. T. Barnes, 'Pagan Perceptions of Christianity', in I. Hazlett, ed., Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to AD 600, SPCK, London 1991, p. 90.
6. J.B. Russell, Witchcraft, p. 89.
7. J.B. Russell, Witchcraft, p. 89.
8. Stan Gooch, 'Sinister Sinstrades' in Fortean Times 155, February 2002, p.; 54.
9. N. Goodrick-Clarke, The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi Ideology, London, I.B. Tauris, 1992, p. 96.
10. Alister McGrath, The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modem World, London, Rider 2004, pp. 72-3.
11. Eyre and Spottiswoode Study Bible, Deuteronomy 32, 48-52.
12. Op. cit., Deuteronomy 34, 1-8.
13. A.S. Rappoport, Ancient Israel: Myths and Legends, London, The Mystic Press 1987, pp. 343-362.
14. Flavius Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews, William Wiston, trans., London, Charles Griffin, pp. 95-103.

Stan Gooch



death with the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, which was a revolt against Moses and Aaron's authority. [15] This ends not with Moses' murder, however, but with Korah and the leaders of the revolt being swallowed alive by the earth down to Sheol, the Hebrew underworld, and their followers consumed by fire. The overwhelming impression by Freud's account of Moses' death as a ritual sacrifice by the people of Israel is of a deliberate misreading of the text in order to make it conform to his theory.



Hiram Abiff and King Solomon

Unfortunately, this certainly was not the last time this was done.

Nor has the fascination with the murder of Biblical figures abated over the past 100 years. While Freud's theory of the ritual murder of Moses has become one of the lesser-known and obscure parts of his psychoanalytical system, other writers on religion have since moved on to Hiram Abif, the architect of Solomon's Temple in Masonic legend, who was similarly murdered by his followers, in this case, the other workmen. Such a work is Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas' *The Hiram Key* of 1996, which similarly made spurious claims about the origins of religion, including the statement that the secret scrolls of Christ were buried under Roslyn Chapel, and claiming that the mummy of the pharaoh Seqenenre Tao II was the body of Hiram Abif himself. [16] Freud's theory of the cause of Moses' putative murder in the enactment of Oedipal conflicts with his people could also be applied to the story of the murder of Hiram Abif, though as yet it doesn't appear that anyone has actually done so. Clearly religious murder and secret religious history continue to hold a lurid interest for modern, as well as Victorian readers.

Regardless of the precise theory anthropological or psychological theory underpinning Szukalski's, Liebenfels' and Gooch's views of the nature of prehistoric humanity and the origins of religion and capitalism and Communism, all are strongly informed by the racial and anthropological theories of the 19th century. Although these have been discredited by later research carried out in the 20th century, they persisted long enough for their influence still to be felt in the modern occult and Fortean fringe. Even when these theories are presented from a liberal perspective, as in Gooch's attempts to rescue the Neanderthals from their image of savage brutality, they still present considerable dangers because of their biologistic readings of historical and cultural events. Apart from challenging the racist basis of such theorising, it's also instructive to analyse these theories to reveal just how far 19th century views of primitive humanity and its religion even in today's far more liberal occult and fringe religious milieu.

Underpinning Freud's theory of the psychological origin of religion, however, was the nascent anthropology of the Victorian era, which itself was informed by that age's faith in progress from primitive barbarism to modern, technological, European civilisation. Freud was particularly influenced by studies such as W. Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* of 1898, which argued that sacred acts and cults were the essence of religion, rather than doctrines or beliefs. [17]

Liebenfels was similarly influenced by contemporary anthropology, with one article for citing more than a hundred references to academic studies in anthropology, palaeontology and mythology. [18] The major influence on Liebenfels' thinking, however, seems to have been a flagstone at Heiligenkreuz Abbey, where he had been a Cistercian monk, showing a nobleman trampling upon a strange monster, which Liebenfels interpreted as an allegorical representation of the struggle with the subhuman evil present in the world. [19]

Although Freud's historical account of the origins of religion has been discredited, while Liebenfels, despite his erudition, was never more than an eccentric fringe thinker, whose ideas have similarly been thoroughly discredited because of their genocidal racism, they nevertheless shared their basis in evolutionary theory with more mainstream anthropological speculation. The founders of sociology in France and Britain, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, were firm believers in the progress of human civilisation from out of savagery. Indeed, it was Herbert Spencer who coined the phrase 'the survival of the fittest' as a staunch supporter of Darwinism. [20] As a result, 19th century anthropology was infused from its birth with what Boleslaw Malinowski described as 'enthusiastic evolutionism'. [21]

Both Comte and Spencer attempted to fit the development of religion into their schema of social and biological progress. For Comte, the earliest and most primitive form of religion was animism, when early humanity invested the natural world around them with supernatural presences and powers in order to explain it. For Spencer, this *ur*-religion was the belief in ghosts and ancestral spirits. The great Victorian anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, viewed by one modern scholar, Jacques Waardenburg, as 'the actual founder of anthropology as the science of man and his culture', [22] further refined this view so that the belief in a soul, rather than ghosts, was the origin of religion. It was Tylor who coined the term 'animism' to describe the belief that animals, plants and inanimate objects possessed souls as well humans.

William Robertson Smith, who influenced Freud's theory of religion and who has been described by the anthropologist Mary Douglas as the real father of anthropology, [23] rather than Tylor.

differed from his predecessors in viewing totemism as the origin of human religion. Smith's views were influenced by his experiences when he visited the Bedouin in North Africa. In the totemic stage of society, he believed, each clan or savage kin-group considered itself related to its totem. Although the totem could be any creature or object, usually it was some kind of animal. When this sacred animal was sacrificed, its flesh and blood, if eaten, united the worshippers with the sacrificial victim. It was this totemism, which was at the heart of modern Christian Holy Communion. It is a view, which is clearly related, if not actually ancestral, to Gooch's view that Christian Holy Communion is based on a real human sacrifice, whose body and blood was indeed eaten. [24]

These rationalist, evolutionary accounts of the origin of religion remained influential into the 20th century. An edition of Smith's *Religion of the Semites* was published in 1927, while Freud's account of the psychological origins of religion, where 'respect and fear of the Old Man and the emotional reaction of the primitive savage to older, protective women, exaggerated in dreams and enriched by mental play, formed a large part in the beginnings of primitive religion and in the conception of gods and goddesses', was incorporated into H.G. Wells' own account of the origin of religion. [25] Later in the century shamanism, rather than animism or totemism, was viewed as the origin of religion, or at least the oldest religious system. Archaeological evidence suggested that it was at least 20.000 years old, meaning that it '"was the world's oldest profession" ...Shamans were probably the first storytellers, healers, priests, magicians, dramatists, and so on, who explained the world and related it to the cosmos.' [26] In the view of some researchers, the transition to priesthood occurred when humanity found it increasingly difficult to enter the dissociative states necessary for the shamanic experience, and when the shamans' powers were eroded as they came under the sway of the leaders of the emergent states. Thus, instead of the original, ecstatic experience, priests and diviners used set rituals and procedures instead to bring about the miracles and mystical communion with the gods or ancestors, or to produce religious phenomena and attitudes agreeable to their secular masters. [27] For many in the New Age milieu, it is the apparent extreme antiquity of shamanism, as well as the freedom it offers for direct mystical communion with the numinous, unmediated by the strictures of an organised, dogmatic priesthood or oppressive state structure, that validates shamanism as a contemporary religious path.

A similar attitude also underpins much of the current interest in ritual magic, with adherents and adepts similarly stressing the experience of communion with transcendent powers outside of the restrictions imposed by religion as an important element in its attraction. Although not stressed to the same extent as shamanism, magic has similarly been viewed as the ultimate origin of religion, most famously by Sir James George Frazer in his *The Golden Bough*. Like Inglis, Frazer believed the transition to religion occurred when the magic failed to work, though as a rationalist he viewed this as the growing awareness of emerging civilisations that magic could not explain and control the world satisfactorily. [28]

Frazer was influenced in his view of magic as the origin of religion by the philosopher G.W.F. Hegel.

Although Hegel's theory of the emergence of the historical process through the dialectic of thesis-antithesis-synthesis is best known through the left-wing, materialist version propounded by Marx, Hegel himself was a practising Lutheran. The dialectical process of the human journey mirrored the operation of the divine mind. Magic and fetishism were the origins of human religion, a *Naturreligion* in which no duality was perceived between nature and spirit. This *ur*-religion had become obsolete in advanced societies, particularly those of Western Europe, through the process of antithesis, which separated spirit from its original, unformed self, so giving rise to Persian dualism. Eventually, however, the highest stage of the process, the synthesis, was achieved in revealed religion, particularly that of European Christianity. [29]

Hegelianism formed the conceptual basis of Marx's concept of the progress of human society, though he also drew many of his ideas from anthropology. Particularly influential in this regard was Lewis Henry Morgan, whose study of the Iroquois Indians was published in 1851 and which has been hailed as 'the first modern ethnographic study of a native people'. [30] It was Morgan, taking his lead from Spencer, who proposed that society developed from savagery, through barbarism to civilisation, and identified each stage with a particular technological or social advance. For many Marxist intellectuals, and those influenced by them, the earliest stage of human society was marked by a primitive communism which the growing diversity of function and division of labour and roles in more advanced societies had destroyed, but which would be restored again after the dialectical process had advanced through capitalism and its successor, socialism, to the idyllic true communism of the post-revolutionary world order.

Marxist anthropologists have paid particular attention to hunter-gatherer societies where no one is dependent on others for the weapons that are the sole means of production. [31] It is no accident that radical western socialists, such as London's mayor, Ken Livingstone, in an interview with the Sunday Express in the mid-80s, hearkened back to the primitive communism of the Palaeolithic as a golden age. Despite the Soviet regime's persecution of shamanism alongside other expressions of religious belief and practice incompatible with its militantly atheist ideology, and the view of Marxist anthropologists that magicians, by their specialist knowledge, make the workers dependent on them and so exploit them, [32] it is probably no accident that many of those interested in shamanism tend towards the political left in their beliefs, and have a similar nostalgia for the lost utopia of Stone Age society.

Such attitudes can be traced further back, of course, to Rousseau [right] and Diderot's idealisation of the Noble Savage,

16. P. Henry, 'The Hiram Key', Fortean Times no. 192, November 1996, p. 60.
17. Alister McGrath, The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modem World, London, Rider 2004, pp. 72.
18. Goodrick-Clarke, Nazism, p. 93.
19. Goodrick-Clarke, op. cit., pp. 91-2.
20. C. Bennet, In Search of the Sacred: Anthropology and the Study of Religions, London, Cassell 1996, p. 29
21. Bennet, op. cit., p. 36.
22. Bennet, op. cit., p. 34.
23. Bennet, op. cit., p. 41.
24. Bennet, op. cit., p. 42.
25. H.G. Wells, A Short History of the World, Watts & Co, London 1934, p. 37.
26. 'Shamanism' in R.E. Guiley, Harper's Encyclopedia of Mystical and Paranormal Experience, HarperCollins, New York 1991, p. 540.
27. B. Inglis, Natural and Supernatural: A History of the Paranormal from Earliest Times to 1914, Prism, Bridport 1992, pp. 43-5.
28. Bennet, op. cit., p. 39.
29. Bennet, op. cit., p. 25.
30. Bennet, op. cit., p. 31.
31. 'Marxist Anthropology', in C. Cook, ed., Pears Cyclopaedia, 95th edition, Pelham, London 1986, p. F61.
32. Ibid, p. F61.



33. I. Hodder, 'Women and Men at Catalhoyuk', Scientific American Special Edition: Mysteries of the Ancient Ones, vol. 15, no. 1, 2005, p. 36.34. J.F. White, A Brief History of Christian Worship, Abingdon Press, Nashville 1993, p. 63.

35. 'Friday the Thirteenth', in J. Simpson and S. Roud, A Dictionary of English Folklore, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, p. 136.

36. R.M. Dorson, 'The Eclipse of Solar Mythology', in A. Dundes, The Study of Folklore, University of California at Berkeley, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs 1965, p. 61.

37. Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', pp. 62-3.

38. Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', p. 64.

39. Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', p. 69.

40. G.W. Cox, An Introduction to the Science of Comparative Mythology and Folklore, 1881, cited in Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', p. 72.

41. Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', pp. 72-3.

42. Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', p. 61.

43. A. Lang, Myth, Ritual and Religion, vol. 2, p. 196, cited in Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', p. 67.

44. Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', p. 83.

45. E. Rose, A Razor for a Goat, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1989, pp. 158-9.

46. E.B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, cited in Bennet, op. cit., p. 35.

47. Review of S. Gooch, City of Dreams, Aulis, London 1995, in Fortean Times no. 85, February/March 1996, p. 61.

48. M. Jay, 'Caves of the Sun: The Origin of Mythology', Fortean Times, no. 117, December 1998, p. 56.

49. N. Rooney, 'Shadows from a Celtic Twilight', in Fortean Times, no. 178, December 2003, p. 60.

and especially Tahiti, as terrestrial paradises of primitive communism and sexual freedom, free from the repression, hypocrisy and corruption of aristocratic Europe. Although they too praised the natives as enjoying a natural religion in harmony with humanity's own nature, the post-modern Neo-Pagan movement has as much in common with Hegel's view of magic as it does with the Noble Savage of the *philosophes*. For Rousseau and Diderot, the natural religion was something like European deism, which posited a distant creator, but denied that He took any further action to interfere with His creation. It was an intellectual faith, which lacked the Romantic involvement with the miraculous, which is at the heart of a belief in magic.

Modern Neo-Paganism's debt to 19th century anthropology is also demonstrated in its concern with ancient matriarchies, which worshipped goddesses, rather than male gods, and where the mediators of female divine power were queens and priestesses. Although in the 20th century this view of early global culture and religion has been most strongly propounded by Marija Gimbutas, of UCLA, whose book, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* has been particularly influential, the idea itself goes back to Johan Backhofen in the 19th century. Backhofen, a Swiss jurist, believed that all societies passed through a matriarchal phase, though he termed it *Mutterrecht* – mother-right- rather than matriarchy. It was an enormously influential view, being taken up, amongst others, by Sigmund Freud and the archaeologists V. Gorden Childe and Jacques Cauvin. [33] Hence Gooch's theory of primitive Neanderthal matriarchy, and his statement that Christ's Passion is a mythological treatment of human sacrifice performed by a lunar cult, identified in much modern Neo-Pagan literature, though not explicitly stated in Gooch's account of Christ's Passion, as the religion of a moon goddess.

Apart from the demonstrably erroneous nature of the claim that the Passion narrative represents human sacrifice in a real, historic lunar cult, is the highly questionable nature of the proof adduced for it. The theory takes as proof facts, or rather factoids, widely separated in space and time from the centre of the Passion narrative in 1st century Palestine. For example, there is the statement that Christ was crucified on Friday 13th. Friday has indeed always traditionally been the date of Christ's crucifixion, and the belief that it occurred on the 13th is a common piece of contemporary folklore, though it probably arose to explain why Friday 13th is considered unlucky. It's unlikely, however, that Christ was crucified on a 13th, as the Jewish Passover, during which the events of the Passion unfolded, begins on the 14th of Nisan. [34] Although Friday was declared a day of penance for Christians by the medieval church, and there was a concomitant fear that it was unlucky, the particular fear of Friday 13th is actually no older than the 20th century. In fact the superstition surrounding the supposedly unlucky nature of the number 13 dates only from the 17th century, when it was felt unlucky for the 13 people to be present at a meal. [35] Similarly, Freya was a goddess worshipped by the ancient Germans, not Semites, and Friday and related terms such as Freitag were used only by the Germanic peoples of Northern Europe. To the Romans, the day was *dies Veneris*, Venus' Day, while the Hebrew term was different again. Similarly, for Christians, Christ was resurrected on Sunday, not Monday, as the theory states, though because of its place as the day after Easter Day, Monday was declared a holiday by the medieval church.

As for the argument that the 13 disciples represented the 13 months of the lunar year, this, and the assertion that Christ's Passion represented the death of the sun, is also reminiscent of yet another 19th century anthropological theory to account for the origins of religion, Max Muller's Solar Mythology. Friedrich Max Muller was one of Victorian Britain's most brilliant Sanskrit scholars and students of Indian religion. A trenchant critic of Tylor's theory that fetishism was the origin of human religion and anthropological evolutionism, he considered instead that sun worship was the primal religion of humanity. He came to this view through his study of the Vedas, particularly of Agni, the god of fire, and tentatively applied his theory of religions origins in a solar cult to the other, savage, societies found elsewhere in the world. [36]

Muller arrived at his theory of solar origins through his grounding in Sanskrit philology, and he attempted to explain the violent, sensual, ignoble and generally barbarous behaviour of the Greek gods through tracing their origins in the gods of the Vedas, the oldest literature of the Indo-European peoples. For Muller, the mythopoeic conceptions of the gods occurred before the rise of civilisation, before human language could convey abstract notions, so that Dyaus, the supreme god in the Veda, could be understood also as meaning sky, sun, air, dawn, light and brightness, while a number of other words, with different associations, could also indicate the sun. [37]

These linguistic associations led Muller to an allegorical interpretation of the Greek myths. For example, the story of Chronos, Zeus' father, devouring his children before being forced to vomit the younger god's siblings back up actually stood for the sky devouring and then releasing the clouds. [38] Nor was the solar cult confined to the Indo-European peoples. Muller later expanded his theory to various extra-European peoples, tracing the origin of various Indian, Polynesian and African peoples back to an alleged solar cult through an analysis of the languages of the tales themselves and the etymology of the terms used for the various gods. [39]

Muller's pupil, Sir George William Cox, pushed the theory even further, viewing the Indo-European myths as allegories of the contest between sun and night, and comparing the Homeric epics thus interpreted with Christianity: '"The story of the sun starting in weakness and ending in victory, waging a long warfare against darkness, clouds and storms, and scattering them all in the end, is the story of all patient self-sacrifice, of all Christian devotion."' [40]

Unlike Gooch, however, he did not believe that there was ever a human reality at the heart of these myths, and viewed such heroes as Grettir, King Arthur, Sigurd, William Tell, Roland, Beowulf,

Hamlet and the Biblical patriarch David as purely mythological figures representing the sun. [41]

Muller's intellectual opponent with whom he carried on a lively controversy over the origins of human mythology was Andrew Lang, a former Oxford graduate and supporter of the ethnological, rather than philological, origins of mythology and folklore. Lang's 1887 *Myth, Ritual and Religion* amassed considerable anthropological information to show that primitive peoples everywhere had similar myths, legends, and customs, and that elements of these had survived in modern peasant lore and the Classical Greek myths. [42] Lang never denied that solar, lunar and star cults and myths existed, but that they had independent origins in the animist stage of human culture. As for the bloody acts committed in fairy tales and legends, Lang viewed these purely as storytelling formulae: '"It is almost as necessary for a young god or hero to slay monsters as for a young lady to be presented at court; and we may hesitate to explain all these legends of an useful feat of courage as nature myths."'[43]

In the end, Lang's view of the origins of religion and mythology prevailed, partly due to the immense influence of his *Myth, Ritual and Religion* but largely due to the establishment of the Folklore Society, whose members favoured and who wrote steadily and voluminously to support the evolutionary origin of myth. [44]

As for Christ and His disciples forming a coven of 13, this is merely the reading back into Christianity of the religious perceptions that led to the view that witchcraft covens always had 13 members in the first place. In fact 13, representing the total number of Christ and his 12 apostles was considered the ideal number of friars in a community, and the same model was adopted for the number of suffragans under archbishop and monks in a monastery. It has therefore been suggested that the choice of 13 for the number of witches in a coven was therefore made as a deliberate inversion of the Christian norm. [45] The Middle Ages viewed witchcraft as a satanic parody and inversion of God's church and the natural order, and the reputed ideal membership of 13 for a coven was a further parody, in line with the blasphemies of the Black Mass, of the ideal membership of Christ's fellowship with the Apostles and orthodox Christian religious communities.

In the case of the Grail legend and the Fisher King, although some historians have suggested that the central motif of this story – a genitally wounded king – does indeed come from ancient myth, its ultimate source is Brythonic Celtic, not Semitic. If it does have a mythological origin, then it one from Celtic myth, which has been Christianised to fit the dominant religious culture of Europe at the time. Again, the legend is late, appearing in the 12th century with Chretien de Troyes, who was writing chivalrous fiction. Despite the religious elements, and the claims to be based in history, the legend of the Fisher King appeared 1200 years after the rise of Christianity and was never a part of the religion, however enormously influential it may have been as secular literature.

It is possible to go on and list more of the factual errors, inconsistencies and anachronisms in Gooch's argument, though this would be missing the deeper, and more important point. At its heart is the assumption that modern folklore represents survivals of lore and knowledge of deep antiquity, and the related belief that humanity passes through a fixed stage of civilisation, inherited from Morgan and the other 19th century anthropologists, of which contemporary primitive, or pre-industrial societies, are survivals.

This view was explicitly stated by Tylor himself in his *Primitive Culture* of 1871, in which he wrote, 'Survivals are processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out which the newer has been evolved.' [46] The reliance on outmoded anthropological theories of mythology as sources for its view of the Neanderthals in *City of Dreams* was one of the major criticisms made of the book when it was reissued in 1996. [47]

In fact, Gooch is not the only contemporary writer to be convinced that contemporary myths and legends are the remnants of a much older, Stone Age religious system. Adrian Bailey in 1998 advanced the view in his book, *Caves of the Sun: The Origin of Mythology*, that the original prehistoric religion was a solar cult, which also influenced the Neanderthal cult of the bear through the sun's apparent retreat in winter into caves in the earth. The book was again heavily dependent on 19th century anthropology and dismissive of the psychological and 20th century interpretations of the origins of religion. [48] John Grigsby, in his *Warriors of the Wasteland* of 2003, advanced the theory that the original pre-Indo-European, Neolithic religion was that of a dying and rising man/god, which was usurped by the intrusive solar cult. Although Grigsby similarly brought a wealth of information to



The legend of the Fisher King appeared 1200 years after the rise of Christianity and was never a part of the religion, however enormously influential it may have been as secular literature.

50. Bennet, op. cit., p. 65.
51. Bennet, op. cit., p. 71.
52. Bennet, op. cit., p. 37.
53. Dorson, 'Solar Mythology', p. 68.
54. S. Baring-Gould, 'A Satire on German Mythologists', in P. Vansittart, Voices: 1870-1914, Jonathan Cape, London 1983, pp. 126-9.
55. R. Hutton, The Shamans of Siberia, The Isle of Avalon Press, Glastonbury 1993, p. 14.
56. Hutton, op. cit., p.9.
57. S. Mithen, 'Symbolic Humans Started Here', reviewing J.L. Arsuaga, The Neanderthal's Necklace, John Wiley & Sons 2003, in Fortean Times, no. 170, May 2003, p. 61.
58. See, for example, the BBC Horizon programme broadcast January/February 2005 which attempted to reconstruct the Neanderthals and their lifestyle from fossil remains.
59. See the BBC Horizon programme, above.

Perhaps some of the best-know images of the 'Noble Savage' come from Paul Gaugin's paintings of Polynesian islanders.



bear on his subject, his thesis was nevertheless criticised for its reliance on the 19th century theories of Frazer, among others, for its conceptual framework. [49]

In fact, the notion that contemporary pre-industrial cultures are survivals from an ancient state of human culture has effectively been challenged by developments in anthropology during the 20th century.

Particularly instrumental in attacking the unidirectional development of cultures through specific phases were Boleslaw Malinowski and Franz Boas. Malinowski based his anthropological theories on his experience of fieldwork amongst the peoples of the Trobriand Islands. Here, he developed a functionalist view of society, considering that no matter how strange a custom or practice was, it survived because it fulfilled a contemporary purpose. 'Savages aren't half-rational or irrational, but do things because they work. Customs survive not as throw-backs but because they fulfil some function.' [50] It's a view that the probably the great majority of contemporary occultists and New Agers, sharing the belief in the efficacy of magic, would endorse. Nevertheless, it challenges the tendency in some circles to view extra-European cultures as irrational, in contrast to the post-Enlightenment rationalism of contemporary European culture. There are elements of this view in Surrealism, for example.

Although the Surrealists ardently championed the rights of indigenous and subordinate colonial people against the oppression of European imperialism in the Caribbean, French Indo-China and elsewhere, their espousal of the art of primitive, tribal cultures such as those of Black Africa was predicated by the notion that they were much in touch with their subconscious, and by implication, more irrational, than Europeans.

The greatest challenge to the unidirectional view of cultural progress, however, came from Franz Boas. Boas' fieldwork amongst the Kwakiutl peoples of the American north-west coast led him to attack the doctrine that society moved from a matrilineal to a patrilineal organisation, and the theory of totemism as the origins of human religion. He believed that the positing of a uniform scheme of human development overlooked the uniqueness of individual human cultures. Instead of there being a general sequence of cultural stages amongst humanity, there was instead 'a tendency of diverse customs and beliefs to converge towards similar forms, and a development of customs in divergent direction.' [51]

As a German Jew, he was bitterly opposed to the biological reductionism of the Nazis and the racial interpretation of history, which he saw, along with eugenics, as irremediably dangerous. His book, *The Mind of Primitive Man* was burned in Nazi Germany and unpopular amongst supporters of apartheid and segregation in the United States because of its assertion that there were no pure races, that racial intermixing did not lead to degeneration, and that Blacks would be perfectly able to fulfil their duties as citizens alongside Whites if the legal restrictions against them were lifted. His views have thus been immensely influential in challenging the racist assumptions of White superiority towards other cultures characteristic of 19th century anthropology. While his anti-racism is praiseworthy, his emphasis on each culture's autonomy, and demand that anthropologists should not make value judgements about the societies they studied, unfortunately has led to the extremes of postmodern cultural relativism in which practices or beliefs which are untrue or repellent are nevertheless defended and declared valid because of their part in a particular culture. Hence the postmodern view that relegates science to the position of only one of a number of possible interpretations of the universe, none more true than the others.

Attempts to posit totemism and shamanism as the origin of human religion have similar been questioned because of their coexistence with apparently more sophisticated forms of religious experience. Tylor himself recognised that primitive peoples, 'alongside their magic, ghosts, totems, worshipful stones ... have a very much better God than most races a good deal higher in civilisation.' [52] It's a sentiment with which many of today's occultists would no doubt agree, contrasting the apparent benevolence of primitive religion with the cruelties of Western institutional faiths, particularly Christianity. Nevertheless, it does undermine the claim that totemism is somehow a more primitive, primal form of human religious experience.

The idea of Christ's passion as a mythological treatment of real, primal human totemic sacrifice similarly becomes untenable. Although the consumption of Christ's body and blood in the transubstantiated bread and wine of the mass certainly performs some of the functions of the consumption of a totemic sacrificial victim in promoting a social and spiritual solidarity amongst members of the congregation, this does not mean by any means that a real, human sacrifice was necessarily performed and consumed, beyond the theological view of Christ's crucifixion as a paschal sacrifice before God, though this certainly would not have been the intention of the Roman and Judaean authorities responsible for it. Furthermore, people do adopt creatures and objects as symbols

for themselves, as in mascots and on coats of arms, without these creatures ever being personally consumed by them. Muller himself pointed to his friend, Abeken, whose name meant 'small ape' and who therefore had a small ape on his coat of arms, as the possible possessor of a totemic ancestor. He joked, however, that although he had never actually seen him eating an ape, it was probably due to a matter of taste. [53]

Of course, attempts to shoehorn all forms of religion into the pattern of a solar myth, is also open to abuse. It was satirised even during its high point in the 19th century. Sabine Baring-Gould, for example, illustrated its excesses with an essay, originally produced by a French ecclesiastic, which mischievously attempted to prove that Napoleon was the sun god, citing linguistic, historical and figurative parallels with the myth of Apollo. [54]

Similarly, the arguments for the antiquity of shamanism have also been questioned, with scholars pointing out that the Palaeolithic cave paintings of dancing male figures with animal heads could equally be gods, and that the argument for the universality of shamanism across the globe is weakened by the fact that there is not even a commonly agreed definition of the term. [55] Furthermore, as with totemism, shamanism also exists alongside organised religion in some of the societies in which it is found. [56]

Modern anthropology's rejection of the theory of a uniform, primitive Cro-Magnon culture based on communism, matriarchy and goddess-worship undoubtedly explains why Gooch has looked yet further back into the Palaeolithic, to the Neanderthals, for his utopia. The sheer scantiness of the evidence and its amibiguity makes them an ideal *tabula rasa*, on to which contemporary scholars can project their own views of their nature.

Much still remains conjectural and the subject of debate. For example, although there are finds of Neanderthal burials, complete with flowers and a sprinkling of red ochre on the dead, as well as jewellery of animal teeth, to suggest that they had a symbolic culture, and so were not the subhuman creatures of earlier views, this view is hotly contested. Its opponents argue that these practices only emerged after the Neanderthals came into contact with the Cro Magnons, and so were simply copying their practices without truly understanding them, rather than inventing them for themselves. [57] At present though, recent findings regarding the Neanderthals tend to disprove some of Gooch's theories. For example, the greater muscular development on Neanderthal skeleton's right arms suggests they were right, rather than left handed, using that arm to wield the spear in a stabbing motion suitable for hunting animals amongst woodland, rather than throwing them. [58] On the other hand, analysis of Palaeolithic handprints suggest that the Cro Magnons, by contrast, had a far greater proportion of left-handers than today. Analysis of the chemical composition of Neanderthal bones similarly suggests that they were almost exclusively carnivorous. [59] If true, these findings prove the exact reverse of some of Gooch's own view of the Neanderthals.

Aside from these specific points, most anthropologists and historians today, following Franz Boas, would baulk at seeing a racial, biological origin for political institutions, and it is mistaken to project distinctly 20th century political structures far back into prehistory, long before these political philosophies and social organisations had arisen. As for the specific examples of left-handers' political inclinations today, there are serious problems with these.

Although there is considerable interest in the apparently different cognitive and social skills developed by left and right handers, with the genetic differences between the two being wider than those of human races, it's problematic whether any of the individuals Gooch cites as left-handers can be described as socialist. Radical Islam of the type promoted by Osama bin Laden strongly rejects the present world order and the dominance of America as an oppressive infidel power, but it also vehemently rejects atheist communism and secular socialism.

In Revolutionary Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini abolished political parties from a belief that they were divisive, and that 'all Muslims should be brothers'. In some respects, particularly urban planning, the insistence on restricting legislation solely to what can be expressly supported by the Qu'ran has meant that some Iranian policies resemble the laissez-faire economic policies of the Victorian West, rather than the state interventionism of revolutionary Communist regimes. Supporters of the Iranian Revolution vehemently denounced comparisons of the revolutionary regime with Western political movements, particularly Fascism, and it's almost certain that bin Laden and the others in al-Qaeda would also reject comparisons with Socialism, Communism or other Western philosophies for the same reason.



Modern anthropology's rejection of the theory of a uniform, primitive Cro-Magnon culture based on communism, matriarchy and goddess-worship undoubtedly explains why Gooch has looked yet further back into the Palaeolithic, to the Neanderthals, for his utopia.

As for China being a Communist country, this is also problematic. Although China is a one-party state whose official ideology is revolutionary Marxism, in practice the country follows capitalist economics. As with the other countries of the former Communist bloc, it's problematic whether Communism in China can outlive the increasingly aging members of the ruling party. In any case, most scholars would point to distinct, obvious political and social causes for the rise of Communism in China, such as the political and economic chaos and corruption of the Kuomintang, rather than crude biological determinism.

Beyond the errors and inadequacies of the theory of Christ's Passion as the central

ritual of a prehistoric lunar cult. rather more profound points can be made generally about fringe religious history and its methods of proof and investigation. The first point is that much fringe speculation. despite its wide ranging use of facts. rather than opening up new ground, really does little more than attempt to propound and defend earlier, discredited theories. Just as the above theory recapitulates elements of Victorian notions of the origins of human religion and society, so Ron Pearson's theories of the subatomic origin of the spirit world relies on a rejection of Einstein's theory of relativity in favour of a revived insistence of the existence of the ether. Secondly, global assumptions of a universal religious cult in antiquity are almost certainly wrong.

Any assumptions regarding the nature of a historical event, including its religion, requires as proof directly relevant facts to support it. In the case of the above theory of Christ's passion, this would ideally be Roman, Greek or Jewish eyewitness reports that such a sacrifice did indeed occur, rather than inference from unrelated myths or legends recorded thousands of years later and further north. There also has to be an awareness of the wider history and origins of the events investigated. and a clear distinction between causes and effects. In the above example. this means an awareness that the belief that witches' covens had a membership of 13 was based on the total number of Christ and His disciples, rather than vice versa. Furthermore, any allegorical interpretation of a myth or legend requires high standards of proof directly relevant to the subject of study.

It is immensely easy, simply by a judicious choice of numbers and mythology, to prove an allegorical meaning behind just about any subject one chooses, as Sabine Baring-Gould's apparent proof that Napoleon was really Apollo clearly demonstrates. In general, unless there is direct evidence that the subject of study was considered allegorical at the time, or consciously used in such a context, allegorical interpretations of specific historical events are probably best avoided.

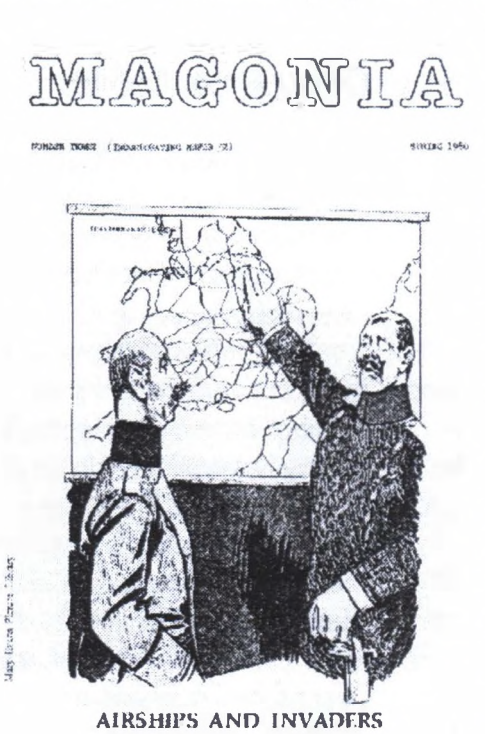
It also needs stating that when propounding a particular interpretation of history, the researcher needs to consider the academic history of the subject being discussed, and the origins and history of the ideas surrounding it. Professional academic historians, for example, consider previous treatments of their subject in their monographs, and history courses in higher education teach historiography – the theories and philosophies of historical interpretation, and how these have changed over time-as an integral part of the history course, as these may profoundly affect the treatment of a particular historical event or person, including the type of evidence accepted to support the historian's view of their subject.

The most important point, however, is that biologistic assumptions of the origins of culture or political organisation and views are both wrong, and have been the basis of brutality, oppression and genocide. No matter how well meant, even by liberals keen to rescue their subjects from the images of savagery, like those, which have been characteristic of the treatment of the Neanderthals, such theories should be strenuously rejected.

The recent history of archaeology has shown how there is a place for fringe theorising, and that when this is done well it can make a valuable contribution to the understanding of its subjects. Archaeoastronomy, despite its origins in fringe archaeological speculation, is now academically respectable, and Paul Devereaux's theories on the Stone Age use of sound to create altered states of consciousness amongst worshippers at sacred sites has similarly been well received, at least in some quarters of academia. To be accepted by academia, however, researchers in the mystical and occult fringe need to adhere to the same rigorous standards of proof and approach, some of whose characteristics are outlined above, that academics use to assess the value of their own views and theories. Unfortunately, with the current furore over the *Da Vinci Code* spawning a plethora of ever wilder pseudo-historical religious speculation, we may have to wait a long time for that.

25 YEARS AGO

The sight of two officers of the German High Command planning the invasion of Scunthorpe greeted subscribers when they received the Spring 1980 issue of Magonia (no.3). The doctored image introduced the pride of North Lincolnshire, Nigel Watson's, article on the 1909 and 1913 airship flaps, which were seen at the time as a portent of growing German military power. Nigel went on to develop this theme in a series of articles, booklets and ultimately an authoritative book on the various airship panics in Britain and elsewhere.



AIRSHIPS AND INVADERS
Background to a social panic

Jenny Randles reported on a case 'In a Wallasey Garden' which, as she lived in Wallasey at the time, was pretty much in her back-yard. Like many cases, the reported UFO turned out to be the very small tip of an iceberg of paranormal and psychic experiences dating back to when the 84-year-old percipient was just eight. The percipient in this case was described by Jenny as: "... something of a 'loner'. She does not seem to relate to her neighbours ... in her early life she lived in remote parts of Wales and Ireland, including a lonely rock off the coast of Ireland" In this she seems to mirror the case of 'Norman Harrison' described by Nigel Watson in the article 'Stranger in the City' in MUFOB New Series 14.

Don't forget that there's more to Magonia than this magazine. There's also Magonia Supplement, edited by John Harney, available on paper (to the favoured few!) and on-line, and a website with an archive of articles from 35 years of publication. Log on to

www.magonia.demon.co.uk

There is now a second website with historic UFO magazines from the 1960s, a picture gallery and in-depth case studies:

www.magonia.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk

And if you live in London, or are passing through, don't forget that you are always welcome at our regular monthly get-togethers on the first Sunday of each month at the Railway pub in Putney (just across the street from Putney Station) from 7.30 onwards.

Adjustment of address.

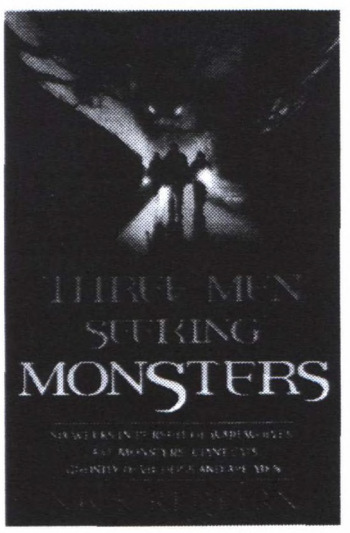
Not quite a change of address, but we'd like to ask subscribers, exchange magazines and correspondents in future to omit the John Dee Cottage' part of our address. We're sorry to drop the old guy, but because of the re-numbering of properties it is likely to cause confusion. Note that the most important part of the Magonia address, 5 James Terrace, remains unaltered

BOOK REVIEWS

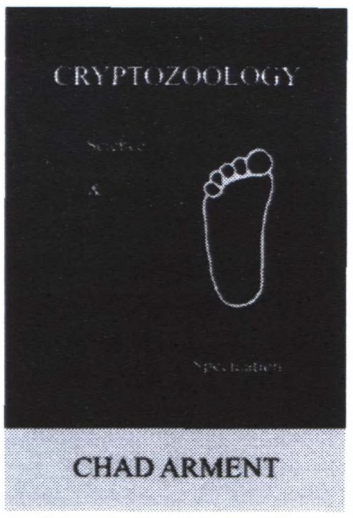


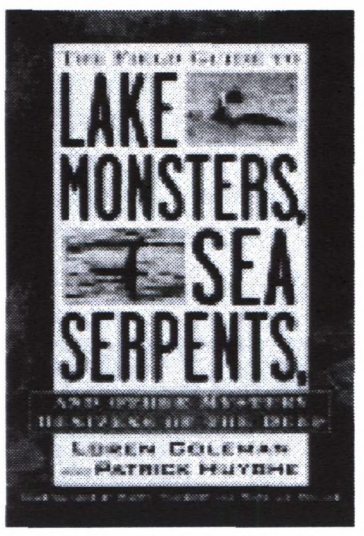
- **J. Robert Alley.** ***Raincoast Sasquatch: the bigfoot/ sasquatch records of Southern Alaska, coast of British Columbia and Northern Washington from Puget Sound to Yakutat.*** **Hancock House, 2003. $14.95.**
- **Chad Arment.** ***Cryptozoology: Science and Speculation*** **Coachwich Publications, 2004. £12.95**
- **Ronan Coghlan.** ***A Dictionary of Cryptozoology.*** **Xiphes Books, 2004. £14.99**
- **Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe.** ***The Field Guide to Lake Monsters, Sea Serpents and other Mystery Denizens of the Deep,*** **illustrated by Harry Trombore and Mark Lee Rollins. Jeremy P Tarcher/Penguin, 2003. $16.95.**
- **Linda S Godrey.** ***The Beast of Bray Road: trailing Wisconsin's Werewolf.*** **Prairie Oak Press, 2003. $16.95.**
- **Nick Redfern.** ***Three Men Seeking Monsters: six weeks in pursuit of werewolves, lake monsters, giant cats, ghostly devil dogs and ape men.*** **Paraview Pocket Books, 2004.** $14.00.

Just as ufology has become divided between those who are searching for the real physical phenomenon or phenomena which they believe underlie UFO reports, and those who mainly interested in the folklore and social meaning of these narratives, so cryptozoology has become divided between those seeking for real "paws and pelts" animals, and those whose interest is more in creatures of the imagination. All positions on this subject are represented here.



Chet Arment's approach is clear, he is looking for real animals, following in the footsteps of earlier generations of naturalists who found creatures like the gorilla and the okapi by searching for animals by examining "eye witness testimony" and traditional stories, a technique he calls ethnobiology. The first half of his book is clear attempt to situate cryptozoology as a "real" science, and to separate it from paranormal and mysterian speculation. Yet the moment we come to his accounts of lesser known cryptids, many taken from old newspapers and books, we are plunged into a world of folklore. These accounts ,some of he admits were hoaxes, include a girl stolen away by a giant eagle (perhaps one of the ancestors of the Oliver Larch/Thomas story), a "gorilla" in Pennsylvania in the 1920's, the worst and baddest snake of them all, the legend of the stoneclads, tales of the fierce naked bear, or of tales of modern mermaids. Its hard not to see these stories as metaphors of the essential wildest of the world. Of course it might be argued that similar roles have been played by say gorillas and wolves, where there is indeed a real animal, though one whose behaviour is often farm removed from the folk image.





Coleman and Huyghe, and Alley make equal paws and plets claims for their particular beasts. However where Arment quotes original sources at length, these two books use summaries. Coleman and Huyghe follow the standard "field guide" approach, with a few representative accounts to build up their illustrated portraits of their self produced classification scheme. Here on sees some accounts which look very much as if they refer to real animals, often based on individual sightings rather removed from popular traditions. But once again, as we come to the more obviously "popular" and emotive lake monsters that position changes. It doesn't take much of a boggle factor to imagine that there might be loads of undiscovered denizens of the deep, dark oceans, but when it comes to lakes and rivers the situation changes. The list of lakes with monsters is just too large, look at the list for the Irish Republic for example. Some are from fairly large lakes, but others are in what can be little more than outsized ponds. Its as if monsters were being reported from the Manchester Ship Canal or Sale Water Park. Furthermore the witness descriptions from one lake are often contradictory.

While Arment's or C and H 's way of presenting accounts makes for easy reading, Alley's classic technique for bombarding with one account after another in continuous text overwhelms rather than instructs. Again the emphasis is very much on sasquatch as a real paws and pelts animal. Like ufology however there is the perpetual dearth of truly unambiguous physical evidence, what evidence there is tends to be either inconclusive, and there are the stories where people find good evidence like a body, but there is always some reason why it cannot be collected. So there is not one road kill, no old bones, no unambiguous hair, no bigfoot ever wanders into town to rummage through the dumps like the bears do, no wounded baby bigfoot adopted as a pet, nothing on the every increasing number of camcorders, webcams, mobile phone cams. No one would say these things have to be common, but to never ever happen is very strange.

What is apparent is that there is a tendency to interpret all sorts of ambiguous experiences, such as strange noises in the night, or a car being pelted with stones as bigfoot events. The stone pelting for example is the sort of thing which might equally likely have been blamed on poltergeists. There is also, in this account, the

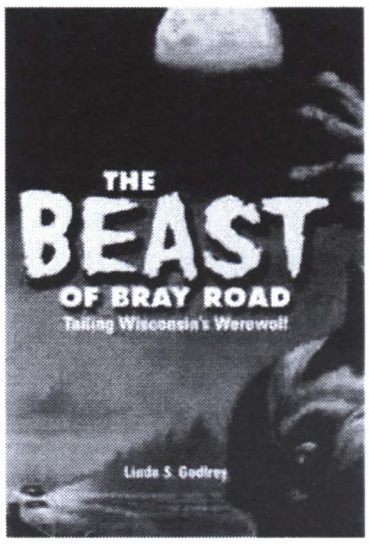
All reviews by Peter Rogerson, except where stated

suspicion that some of the stories have been rather edited to remove some of the more fantastic or paranormal elements, for example Alley quotes the alleged bigfoot vocalisations recorded by Adrian Berry in 1972, but omits the aura of the paranormal and general weirdness which surrounded that story.

A very different interpretation of cryptozoology is provided by Ronan Coghlan's dictionary, which lists just about every conceivable kind of mystery animal going, along with quite a few inconceivable ones. All that seems to be missing from this dictionary are Gef the Talking Mongoose and Spring Heel Jack. Again, while a minority of the strange creatures listed here may indeed be genuine paws and pelts animals uncatalogued by official science, others are clearly inhabitants of the goblin universe of the human imagination. Some of them are strange hybrids, perhaps leading to speculation that the brain stores images bits of animal anatomy separately, and these somehow have to be assembled together correctly in order to create a mental image of a whole animal, and that sometimes this process goes wrong, with the result that we can "see" these bizarre hybrids.



But these hybrids are also cultural symbols, representing disorder, chaos and sin, just as deformed babies were so perceived in the renaisance. Drawings of these babies often show fantastic features, which no real fetus however malformed could show, again hinting at some of the processes by which modern accounts of impossible wonders are generated.. Many of the other creatures of cryptozoology seem to be euhemised mythical beasts symbolising the forces of wild nature, or the primal chaos monsters, the defeat of which signifies the imposition of order on the universe. The various hairy hominids and wild men represent the fear that one can fall out of human civilisation back into the instinctive realm of the "purely animal. The human imagination can go to darker places than wild nature, stone clad and flint heart seem to symbolise a negation of being itself, freezing life out of everything. Some of the nameless "things" in science fiction get close to this, but perhaps the nearest equivalents in the modern imagination would perhaps be that of a walking glacier of solid hydrogen, or the idea that some high energy experiment gone wrong will collapse the vacuum state and create a hole in being which will swallow up everything.



On a lighter note there are the creatures of whimsy, such as the many strange North American beasts enumerated here, the products of the local tall story, liars and Ananias clubs which were part of the social scene in pre cinema America. Judging by some of the more recent stories listed here, this art is still alive and well in High Schools, and not just in the States.

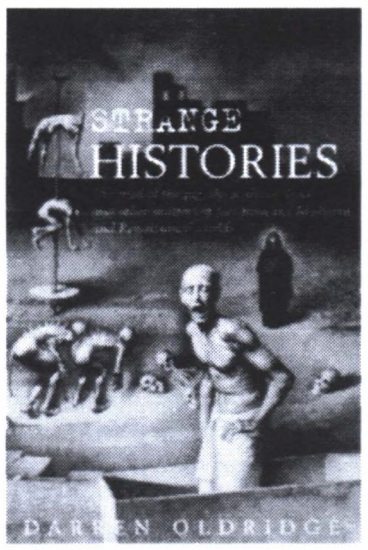
Surely not even the most dedicated paws and pelts cryptozoologist will insist that hairy hominids in Britain are real animals, yet several are mentioned here, walking the road from Manchester to Sheffield, patrolling the back streets of Todmorden, or inhabiting a small patch of woodland between Rhos on Sea and Llandudno, but such are featured here, with a British Hominid Research Society to investigate them.

Such creatures, and even stranger are the central enigmas at the heart of Nick Redfern's account of his adventures with Jonathan Downes, rumoured to be the world's only human-sofa hybrid, and his goth sidekick Richard Freeman. The result is something like Buffy the Vampire Slayer played by the cast of the Young Ones. In this often hilarious account, our intrepid trio go off in search of strange beasts and even stranger people, such as the doctor who has sinister cellar in which some even more sinister creature may be kept, a mad old witch who warns them to beware of the boggarts, and a guy who is being persecuted by some of the nastier demons from Buffy. Whether any of this exists outside their own imagination, fuelled partially by an intake of mind altering substances of various degrees of legality is anyone's guess. Redfern seems to at least half believe in the boggarts, which the mad old witch tells him are super tulpas dreamed up by 9 old druids and which feed on human fear. This comes from her arcane knowledge, gleaned no doubt from her reading the special copy, bound in human skin,. of "Ye Olde Bokes of Chas Forte" wherein the idea of elementals feeding on human fear gets its first telling.

If Arment, Coleman and company are the respectable face of cryptozoology, then Downes is perhaps one its wildest, weirdest and least respectable faces, and you might suspect that such truly weird things only happen in the presence of such as he. Indeed Redfern seems to think that having escaped to America in pursuit of lurve, all this is behind him. Linda Godfrey's book might cause him to rethink. For surely the upright walking dog headed thing of Elkhorn, Wisconsin is as boggarty as you can get, and one suspects very much indeed that its paws and pelt will be very hard to find indeed. Yet the people who reported it are, presumably as sincere as any bigfoot witness on the Pacific Coast,. Godfrey herself suspects a psycho-social interpretation, suggesting it is the product of misperception of a variety of animals, though she amuses herself by speculating if bipedal canids could have evolved.

The Wisconsin werewolf has not been reported for soem time, but it is rumoured that he his heading towards Canby Minnesota, accompanied by the Beast of Knob Noster, the Brentford Griffin (which has its own entry in Coghlan's dictionary), the Terrible Orme of Urmston, and maybe the Giant Rat of Sumatra to liven up those too-respectable bars and teach the local bigfoot how to party

- **Darren Oldridge. *Strange Histories: the trial of the pig, the walking dead, and other matters of fact from the Medieval and Renaissance worlds.* Routledge, 2005. £ 18.99.**



Do trials of wild animals or of people by ordeal seem strange to you? Or what about burning heretics at the stake while counting the number of angels on a pinhead, or fretting about walking corpses or the unfriendly neighbourhood witch, to say nothing of that werewolf round the corner? Hoping that the undecayed saint in the local church will save you from the coals of hell? This book argues that these, to us, impossibly outré ideas made perfect sense in the theological world view of the middle ages and early modern period. The beliefs which underpinned them were an absolute given of the time, facts as certain as the sun rising next morning.

Rather than laugh at the strangeness of the past, Oldridge suggests we should examine our own preconceptions and willingness to jump to conclusions, and try to imagine what aspects of our lives, beliefs and values will seem just as strange in a few centuries time. Already the world of only 50 years ago can look extraordinarily dated.

Books on any of the topics covered in Magonia are always welcome for review, either in the pages of *Magonia*, in the *Magonia Supplement*, or on our website. Please send them to the address shown on page two.

- **Greg Bishop. *Project Beta: the story of Paul Bennewitz, national security and the creation of a modern UFO myth.* Paraview/Pocket, 2005 $14.00.**

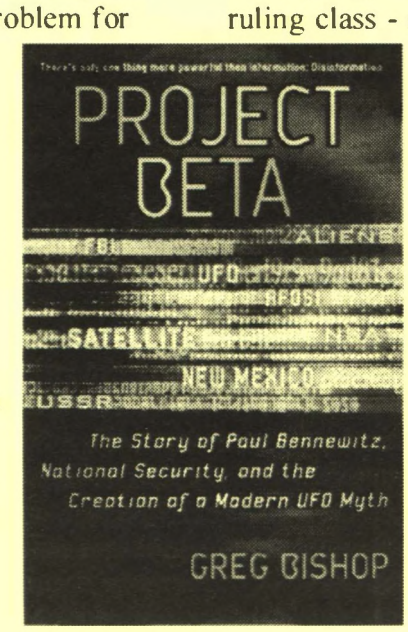
This is the story, or perhaps one should a say, a story of the one of the murkiest episodes in the murky world of US ufology. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Paul Bennewitz, a physicist and businessman from Albuquerque, New Mexico, became involved in some of the weirder fringes of ufology. This began when he started dealing with an alleged abductee, Myrna Hansen. In those days, before Budd Hopkins had told ufologists what the right UFO abduction scenario was, pretty much anything went, and Ms Hansen's story featured tales of cattle multiation, human body parts and other things no longer ufologically correct.

Somewhere along the line Bennewitz got the idea that Ms Hansen was being controlled by the aliens, and that he had found a way to intercept these signals. Only, the story goes, these signals were not from mind-controlling aliens at all, but were in fact the result of accidental eavesdropping on some oh-so-secret government project. Indeed Bennewitz in his blundering about and taking photographs here and there, was in danger of exposing more than one little Cold War secret.

What to do about this? One thing would have been to approach Bennewitz and advise him that what he was uncovering had nothing to do with ETs but everything to do with more prosaic matters of national security, and to please, on his honour as a patriot, keep quiet. However, either because they reckoned that hr was too far gone already to be amenable to reason, or just because, being spies, all that was just too mundane for them, they decided on another course of action. Bennewitz was teetering on the edge, half nuts already, why not just push him over the edge?

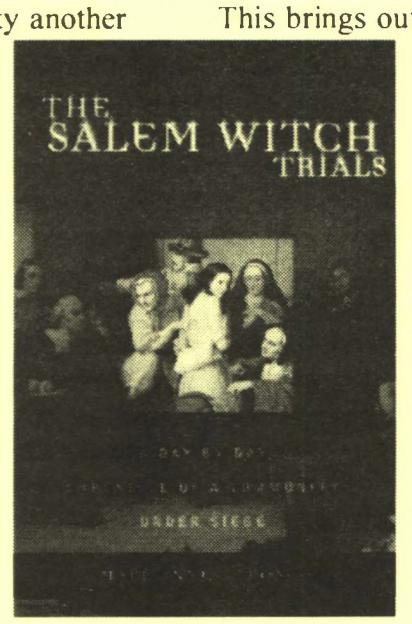
So a guy called Richard Doty is sent in to befriend him, and other agents monitor him. The secrecy guys also get ufologist William Moore on line. Heaven forbid that Moore does his part for nasty old dollars, no no, he is doing this so that he can monitor what the government is up to. The spooks then set up Bennewitz with some sort of fake equipment which is primed to tell an incredible Z-movie script involving double dealing aliens and women and God and such like things. After a year or so of this the poor old chump finally went completely nuts and was sent away to the funny farm for a while, and wisely dropped ufology on his release. Meanwhile Doty and chums, who used names like Falcon and Condor, moved on to gullible TV producer Linda Moulton Howe who specialised in TV programmes featuring mutilated cattle, and seem to have had some hand in the MJ12 hoax, and the wild tales told by Lear and Cooper. All this comes to light when Moore confesses at a MUFON conference, with the result that ufologists run out in tears and nearly throw chairs at him.

That's roughly the story that Bishop tells. The problem for your humble book reviewer is that there appears to no way of knowing whether, or what part of this story is true, or whether it is just another smokescreen. It seems to depend on the testimony of self-confessed liars such as Moore and Doty, and the suspicion must remain that the grand conspiracy might have been a freelance job by these two and a couple of mates for no other reason than the fun of messing with ufologists heads, and when things get out of control saying that you were working for the secret state on some terribly important mission might be a way of salvaging your conscience.



Of course, on this occasion Moore and Doty might actually be telling the truth, in which case one can ask whether Bennewitz was the first victim of such a sting. Greg Bishop only very lightly touches on this, with a tantalising mention of Gulf Breeze and the perhaps rather convenient Mr Ed photos, endorsed by by Navy physicist Bruce Macabee; of course Brucie may well have just been a gullible guy, entranced by the Eds, or a greedy one entranced by the advance, but one wonders.

One can also wonder about Betty and Barney Hill. People you just know the FBI would have been trailing (a mixed race, politically active couple in 1961, come on!). Was Betty another character they knew they could send over the edge with a gentle push? Then there was anti-nuclear activist, environmental campaigner and supporter of many a radical cause, James Macdonald, a guy who looked like a small-town bank manger and not anything like a long haired hippy, the sort of person who could perhaps have added gravitas and respectability to some pretty unpopular - to the ruling class - causes. Feeding his interest in ufology might have seemed a very convenient way to keep him out of mischief. Then there are the quite extraordinary steps taken by the British and American authorities to promote the Rendlesham UFO story.



Of course, when you are in this hall of mirrors, believe nothing, trust no-one area anything seems possible, I mean there are times I wonder how Rimmer can afford the luxury yacht, private jet and apartment in LA on a librarian's salary.

Or I could be in on the act too, you know, while pursuing some entirely non UFO-related research, I might have come across the secret of secrets, which if I revealed it, would mean you would all have to be shot. Or maybe I really wouldn't want to give such a coup to terrorists the world over.

Be it ever so dark, it happened during the cold war. Or not.

- **Marilynne K Roach. *Salem Witch Trials: a day by day chronicle of a community under siege.* Taylor Trade, 2004 $22.95.**

This is by far the most detailed examination of the Salem witch hunting outbreak yet published. Roach eschews explanatory systems and analysis in favour of the raw data of day to day events. This brings out the utter strangeness of the hallucinatory experiences which underlay the epidemic, and their similarity of more modern forms of hallucinatory outbreak. Salem emerges not from some top down conspiracy, but explodes out of the stresses and tensions of life in a closed, face to face society in times of war and siege. Witchcraft functioned to some extent as an explanation for both the circumstances and brute unfairness of daily reality, the cattle that died, the death of children, unwanted illness, military and political failure etc., and for anomalous personal experiences. In the latter a wide variety of folk beliefs about separable souls which could haunt their neighbours, vengeful ghosts demanding justice, magic potions and herbs etc. are all drawn in.

To explain this Roach draws on the concepts of psychogenic illness and hysteria, though of course, grand hysteria itself is a problematic and possibly socially constructed notion. Another way of explaining the behaviour of the accusers is that was a form of theatre using currently accepted ideas of how 'bewitched' people should behave, and forms of altered states of consciousness produced by altered breathing etc. Such performances can lead to reversals in role, in which those at the bottom of the heap in a patriarchal society can gain power and prestige. This however sets off a contagion of anxiety driven hallucinatory experiences.

Readers will note that similar groups of teenage girls were involved in the start of Spiritualism, and tend to be the focus of a range of anomalous claims from Marian apparitions to poltergeist outbreaks. The similarities to modern UFO flaps etc. are also obvious.

THE PELICAN WRITES

El pelícano es fuerte en sus apreciaciones pero muy razonable



The Pelican finds it hard to imagine why such an evidently spurious subject as ufology still exists even though it has no coherent subject matter or data. The hollowness and falseness of the UFO "mystery" should be exposed for all to see. This is necessary in the interests of reason and sanity, and for the common good. The Pelican discussed some of the absurd beliefs and fantasies of the "Serious Ufologists" in his previous column and this time has decided to take a look at the theories.There are two basic theories - apart from the carpet-chewing, head-banging ones, about which The Pelican can only shake his head sadly - and these are the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) and the psychosocial hypothesis (PSH).

One of the most ardent opponents of the PSH is Jerome Clark, as most of our readers must be well aware. To him the PSH "... is itself a psychosocial response to the UFO phenomenon, a nontechnical nonthreatening model of the phenomenon suitable to its English majors [apparently not army officers, but graduates who have taken English as their main subject], librarians, Jungians, and counterculturists who are its principal proponents." This is from an article titled "Psychosocialbabble". (1)

His argument is based on the undeniable fact that much of the writing on the PSH is highly speculative, contains many factual errors, and makes unwarranted assumptions about people who report UFO experiences. However, the PSH is not a single, clearly defined theory, but merely the idea that the UFO is a social reality rather than a physical reality. It is generally accepted that most UFO reports are misidentifications of aircraft, balloons or natural phenomena, and some are hoaxes. So, those who favour the PSH would explain the tendency of some people to regard moving lights in the sky as being something strange, rather than just passing aircraft, as being caused by popular interest and belief that we are being visited by beings from other planets. Of course, sightings of unusual aerial objects or phenomena have been reported sporadically through the ages, but when the terms "flying saucer" then the more serious and official "UFO" were coined to describe them, many people tended to assume that there was a special class of aerial objects, having many things in common, which were called UFOs, just as there were classes of things called birds, clouds and aircraft.

This, of course, is the fundamental error made by proponents of the ETH, to suppose that there are reports of genuine or "true" UFOs which, by careful investigation, can be separated from the mass of mistaken observations, or even hoaxes. The general position of PSH proponents, on the other hand, is that there are no "true" UFOs, so far as can be ascertained, and that almost all can be explained if sufficient, reliable information is available. When interesting cases are investigated and solved, it is found that there is a wide variety of explanations, so that they have little in common with one another, apart from having puzzled witnesses and incompetent investigators.

To paraphrase Clark, in the article referred to above (as well as in numerous other articles and postings to UFO UpDates), while PSH proponents sit in their armchairs spouting meaningless jargon and waffle, the Serious Ufologists are busy studying the evidence:

" ... it seems clear that even a more persuasively argued psychosocial model (of a sort yet to be articulated) is not going to help us with much of ufology's most interesting questions, those that are the field's very raison d'etre, namely the ones that relate to such issues as physical and instrumented evidence, multiple witnesses, and the sorts of cases dealt with in, for one recent instance, Hall's book [*Uninvited Guests*] (and, for that matter, in Menzel's and Klass's books; the debunkers worth paying attention to have always understood that they have to do more than wave hands at the evidence)."

Yes, but where is the physical and instrumental evidence that points unequivocally to exotic explanations for UFO incidents? Why does it always look so unimpressive when subjected to examination by disinterested experts? As for multiple witnesses, there are often many of them for events which are easily explained, as unusual aircraft or bolides, for example. Why is it, though, that in the seemingly more puzzling cases, the investigators often seem to be unable to interview the "multiple witnesses" or obtain statements from them? The classic Trindade case is probably one of the most notorious of these.

Clark continues: "Reading the psychosocial literature, however, one would think that the case for the reality of UFOs consists of Adamski-like contactee tales (more plausibly accounted for as hoaxes than as the products of exotic psychological processes) and anecdotes about men in black. It is difficult for those outside the psychosocial belief system to understand what states of consciousness, altered or otherwise, have to do - to mention two instances of many hundreds that any informed ufologist could reel off the top of his head - with the Trans-en-Provence CE2 or the Roswell case ... "

Notice here the strange implication that hoaxing does not involve "exotic" psychological processes. The Pelican does not know what an exotic psychological process is, as distinct from just a psychological process. It seems to imply that hoaxing is quite normal, in which case lots of "true" UFOs are actually hoaxes.

This brings us to the really amusing bit, Trans-en-Provence as the sort of solid, nuts-and-bolts case that the Serious Ufologist, as opposed to the skeptibunking, klasskurtzian, pelicanist PSH proponent, likes to get to grips with. When Clark's article was written, the Trans-en-Provence case had already been exposed as a crude hoax. There was only one witness, and the case had been incompetently investigated. However, to certain American ufologists it had already become a "classic", for some unfathomable reason, and it is recorded as such in their ufological bumper fun books. The Pelican invites you to tease them about it if you want a bit of harmless fun.

Note

1. Jerome Clark, 'Psycho-socialbabble", *International UFO Reporter*, **15**, 3, May/June 1990, also available on www.virtually strange.net/ufo/updates/1998/may/m18-031.shtml