



Interpreting  
contemporary  
vision and  
belief

November  
2005



In this illustration by the nineteenth century Danish artist J. T. Lundbye, a knight escapes from the Little People, who try to abduct him into the elf-hill, rising on beams of light behind them. Does it remind you of anything?



For more folklore/UFO links read **DAVID SIVIER** on "Indexing the Machine Elves." In the folktale, the knight escapes on his horse. He might not have been so lucky in a car, as **MARTIN KOTTMEYER** explains in "Engine Stoppers".



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**EDITOR**

**JOHN RIMMER**

*magonia@demon.co.uk*

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

**John Hamey**

*magonia@hameyj.freemove.co.uk*

**REVIEWS EDITOR**

**Peter Rogerson**

*peter.rogerson3@btinternet.com*

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*All correspondence, subscriptions and exchange magazines should be sent to the Editor:*

**John Rimmer**

**5 James Terrace**

**Mortlake Churchyard**

**London, SW14 8HB**

**United Kingdom**

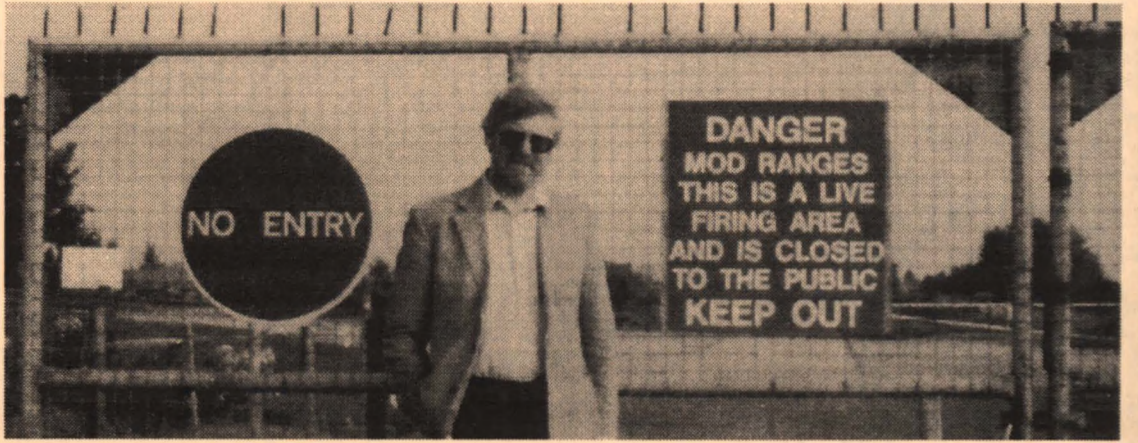
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# EDITORIAL NOTES



Our friend and contributor The Pelican has recently made a stirring call to "make ufology history". He is not predicting the much-vaunted 'death of ufology', as ufology itself seems to renew itself every few years as a new generation comes along and starts painfully ignoring the lessons of the past. UFO cases which were once respectfully dead and buried are dug up by a new set of eager believers and their remains hung out on display, rather like farmers used to hang up dead carrion to discourage predators from their fields. However, the decaying UFO cases seem to encourage, rather than discourage, further deprecations.

No, The Pelican is calling for an active campaign to persuade people to stop thinking of ufology as a science or proto-science. It's clear that ufology is not a science, and the few attempts that have been made to erect some sort of scientific apparatus around it have either been inept shams or the few really serious ones have attracted so little interest from the 'UFO community' that they have died through boredom and neglect.

We must ask, is ufology necessary? Are the subjects, events, reports, comments and speculation that currently constitute ufology serving any purpose by sheltering under the one heading? Sections of the subject are already being prised away and receiving a greater depth of study elsewhere, usually over the screams of the ufologists, who regard ownership of the subject more important than understanding it. Examples of this are Persinger with his brain-wave experiments and Deveraux with his study of the earth lights phenomena, who have both been demonised as 'sceptics'. In fact what they have been doing is splitting ufology into its component parts, and making a closer examination of the parts that most interest them.

One part of historical ufology which is receiving closer attention is that part which looks at what reports of supposed anomalous events can tell us about the nature of perception, and again people venturing into this area attract cries of 'skeptibunker', 'pelicanist' and other playground insults.

Another component which is being dragged away from the 'ufological community' is the role that government secret projects have had on the development of the UFO story. There have always been conspiracy theorists who believe that the US government is in league with the aliens, or that UFOs originate from a secret colony of Nazi scientists in Antarctica, or some combination of the two. But recently some researchers have started looking at

specifics. An example of this is Nick Redfern's controversial claims that the Roswell event was the result of secret and extremely unpleasant experiments by the US into high-altitude survival. Although Redfern's thesis is based largely on second-hand sources, it should not be rejected out-of-hand. In Magonia 89, Peter Rogerson comments: "[The theory] will gain in stature if other people, particularly outside ufology, indicate they have heard similar tales and can provide evidence of this ... At the same time we should be aware of the danger of dropping critical guard just because this story does not involve ET ..."

Interestingly Redfern's book seems to have puzzled ufologists in America. One the one hand it supports their favourite theory of a government UFO cover-up, but for all the wrong reasons – he claims they're using UFOs to cover up the non-ET secret!

The view of most 'serious' ufologists is that ufology is a 'proto-science'. They point out the reality of the experience, which not even the psychosocial proponents deny, but then move on to announce the 'actual existing' physical reality of the UFO. This leads to the odd situation where they accept that the more puzzling UFO events are descriptions of a 'structured physical object' performing manoeuvres that are impossible for any present-day craft from this planet.

But they do not then come to the inevitable conclusion that they must be from another planet: they simply state that time will tell. In a generation or so, all the nasty sceptics will have died off and scientists of the 21st (or is it 22nd, they're not terribly clear) century will solve the problem, and ask each other how could earlier scientists have been so stupid as not to realise how important UFOs were. So these ufologists see their present role as being data gatherers for the future. The funny thing is, this is exactly what the psychic researchers have been doing for the past century or more, and, quite honestly, we're still waiting.

No, I don't think ufology is dead, but it is history. I had thought of saying that it has served a purpose in drawing attention to a range of interesting phenomena which were worthy of study, but I don't think it's even done that; it's more true to say that it has alighted on interesting phenomena and events that were already mostly quite well understood, and then, by lumping them together and mixing them up with a load of barmy ideas, turned them into facets of the entertainment industry, rather than the world of science.

# ENGINE STOPPERS

## Martin Kottmeyer

**M**achines fail in the presence of UFOs. Car motors stall out. Lights dim and go out. Radios fill with static. Televisions display interference. Major electrical grids have even been known to black-out in the presence of UFOs. Such claims of interaction with the physical environment - often referred to as electromagnetic effects - have at times been felt by Ufologists to be one of the most compelling proofs that UFOs must be real in a material sense. Such claims can not be reduced to hallucination. And it is an effect that has been seen in literally hundreds of cases and hardly dismissible as the occasional random accident.

among the set of claims that "have proven themselves both persistent and consistent on a global basis—and are a challenge to science. Any future solution to the growing worldwide UFO enigma will have to deal directly with [them]" (Story, 2001 "Fawcett Repetitions" entry)

In 1981, Mark Rodeghier published a catalogue 441 EM events associated with vehicle failures. He calculated this as roughly 1.5% of the UFOCAT pool of cases. His chronology includes one from as early as 1909 involving the temporary failure of a motorcycle headlamp. Two cases are listed in the 1940s, but involved testimony from 1957 & 1968. There are surprisingly few cases in the 1952 wave - two

In a 1985 review of 1278 case questionnaires, George D. Fawcett reported 370 instances of "Electromagnetic interference reports caused by UFOs on compasses, plane and car motors, headlights, house-lights, searchlights, radar beams, radios, TV & other communication devices, etc." and 37 instances of power failures attributed to UFO appearances."

(Fawcett, 1985) He feels it belongs

- a stalled car prior to a tall monster encounter and a radio dying inside a car that remains running while witnesses watch an "air blimp." Neither really involves a saucer! Such effects become more strongly tied to UFOs in the French wave of 1954, when nearly 2 dozen E.M. cases surface. Databases list sporadic incidents for 1955 and 1956, but they appear to involve backdating, i.e the testimony is given years later. The Levelland flap of 1957 spawns nearly 3 dozen instances of E.M. interference. Thereafter, it is seems a constant presence in American UFO cases.

It's been suggested that the car stop phenomenon could be an answer to the problem of finding a consistent pattern to real UFO cases. One Ufologist, for example, wrote that car stops "present a very homogenous set of features" and could be brought before scientists as something for focused study. Treat them exclusively and apart from the distractions of the wider and wilder population of UFO beliefs. Maybe something would come from this that would impress the scientific community. (Randles, 2001) Scientists however have their doubts. Some may remember the doubts of the Condon Commission. For example, these that appeared in 1967 in *Newsweek*:

"Condon and Low have even asked the automobile industry to help out. 'There have been upwards of 100 cases,' Condon

reports, 'in which witnesses say that UFOs have stalled their cars and interfered with radios.' In one case a UFO reportedly stopped the gasoline-powered engine of a tractor while a diesel engine nearby, which does not rely on electrical spark to burn its fuel - continued to operate. Condon has discussed these cases with Donald Hooven, a vice president of Ford motor Co. and an expert on automotive electrical systems. A preliminary finding: nothing less than an electrical force 400,000 times greater than the earth's magnetic field will stall a car."

Such fields, it was felt, would alter the magnetic signature of the metal bodies of automobiles in ways determinably different from those unexposed to such high kilogauss fields. They checked but found no evidence of changes. A more detailed consideration of the E.M. effects cases in the study tended to suggest alternative interpretations.

In the January 1967 Richmond, Indiana incident [case 12], a professional secretary was driving on a rural road near her home at 2 a.m. in the morning. The landscape seemed brighter than could be accounted for by her headlights so she turned them low, then off, and discovered a luminous body over her car. It remained over her car ten or fifteen minutes. During the encounter, the accelerator would not function and she felt she was not steering the car. Afterwards she reported four malfunctions



**I propose that there is a larger story that needs to be told to give us a better understanding of how this idea that UFOs interfere with machines became part of the culture of UFO beliefs**

not steering the car. Afterwards she reported four malfunctions which investigators looked into. 1) The radio was weak and full of static. It turned out the antenna had broken off. 2) The speedometer read low. This was because of sticky lubricant in the speedometer cable and a broken die cast that increased bearing friction. 3) The battery did not charge properly and the ammeter read correctly. The fan belt was loose, thus the generator did not deliver enough charge to keep the battery up. 4) The oil gauge was stuck at maximum. This happened because corrosion near the transmitter element leaked electricity. Commenting on these malfunctions, the investigators state they "were found to be the results of gradual wear and deterioration except the broken radio antenna which was inconclusive." They also note that the date she gave for the UFO experience was almost certainly incorrect because she remembered bright moonlight but the moon would have been low and in the last quarter stage. (Gillmore)

In the November 1967 Elsinore, California incident [case 39], a businessman is driving through fog at about four in the morning in the middle of nowhere when his car, its lights, and its radio all go dead. A break in the fog revealed a hazy, reddish saucer that wobbled as it went by. After a minute and a half it is gone and his car came back to life. NICAP looked the car over and discovered afterwards the clock had stopped, some paint was loose, stereo-tapes in the car had lost some fidelity, and optical distortions could be seen on the back window. The Condon group did not contest these observations but made some interesting comments. The paint was thin in the area it was loose and it had the appearance of being "the result of corrosion." The window distortion was identical to that of a car in a used car lot. Most fascinating was the failure of the clock. The clock was spring-driven and is only wound up by electricity. Interference with the electrical system of the car would not have stopped the clock at the time of the encounter. The witness was quite vague about certain aspects of the sighting, notably he could not be sure which section of highway the encounter happened on, which meant no firm sight-line could be

established. This subverted any sort of analysis that could confirm or deny the anomalous nature of the saucer.

Another fact guaranteed to diminish scientific enthusiasm for E.M. effect cases is the troubling fact that vehicle interference claims occur in conjunction with reports solved as misperceptions. Consider the findings of Allan Hendry. In one case the owner of a 1967 Lincoln Continental attributes the draining of a car battery to a star. He saw the star for about twenty minutes. Though he was able to start his car immediately after the sighting, the car went completely dead at his next destination. "In all the ten years" he owned it; he had never had trouble with it before. (Hendry, 1979, pp. 76-7)

In one complex case involving three adult witnesses, street lights dimmed and brightened beneath a hovering saucer "as if it were sucking energy from them." There were also barking dogs, beeping noises, and the witness felt drained of energy and a sensation of going into a trance. The saucer is eventually proven to be the crescent moon! In another case, a couple has to have their telephone wires replaced from problems that resulted from a saucer that hovered over their house for an hour and forty-five minutes after it followed their car home. It was Venus! Hendry had over twenty E.M. cases in his study involving things like radio and TV interference and blackouts where the UFO was soluble in mundane terms. (Hendry, 1979, chapter 6)

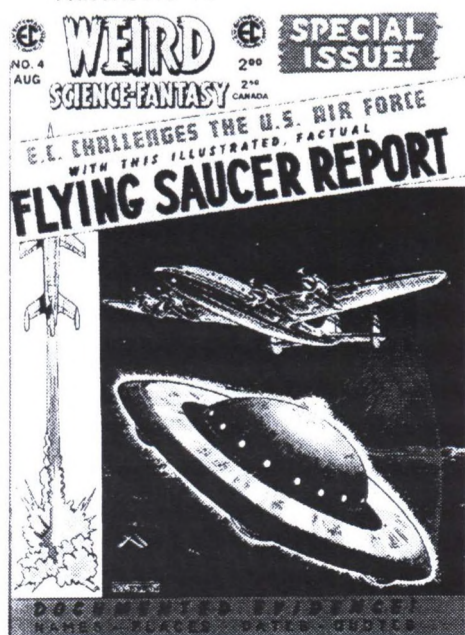
In the infamous Antonio Serena encounter of 22 February 1977, there is a claim that as a UFO came closer, the car lights began to fail and the engine experienced ignition problems. One of the children became violently sick. Subsequently, however, it is learned that problems with the car resulted from the car battery having been run dry. Investigation determined the UFO was almost certainly Venus. (Ridpath, 1986)

Scientists could also object that the homogeneity of car stop cases gets a bit clumpy when you take a closer look. While half of Rodeghier's cases involve a general failure of the engine and electrical system, one quarter involves the engine alone. Sometimes only the headlights fail. Sometimes only the radio fails. Sometimes headlights and

radio fail without any engine problems. And while lore usually indicates vehicle interference is a temporary effect - the car re-starts after an encounter - thirty cases are known to involve permanent failure of automobile components.

Another specific incident worth mentioning is the 24 October 1968 Minot AFB incident where there is radio transmission failure in a plane on instrument-guided approach. After about 4 minutes they can transmit again and the controller and pilot wonder if an UFO about a mile and a half from him could have been the cause of the radio troubles. The pilot remarks, "I don't know, but that's exactly when they started." Though tempting to blame things on the UFO, the wrinkle is that you have a plane full of complicated electronics and this was the only problem noted. The engines continued to run. The radio still received the controller's tower transmissions. The transponder functioned, allowing the tower to see the plane on radar. As Randle noted, it could have been nothing more than a short or a loose wire somewhere. (Kevin Randle, 1999, pp. 63, 68)

This point can be generalized by pointing to a study of aircraft malfunctions blamed on nearby UFOs. (Haines & Weinstein, 2001) A table on severity of effects noted that of 33 incidents in which the relevant information is provided, 31 involved only one sub-system. Only two incidents claimed multiple malfunctions involving three or more sub-systems. (Haines & Weinstein, 2001: Table 7) Just one - 23/3/1955 - involved nine separate subsystems - an anonymous six sentence account of flight instruction gone wrong over the Ryuku Islands. The pilot reports the UFO was looking him over when the engine sputtered and all his instruments failed. He dove to escape its influence, but it followed him down. Curiously, it is nearly the shortest narrative in the case catalogue and leaves many unanswered questions like whether a mechanic looked the plane over afterwards. Most of the malfunctions in this study involved either the radio or compass. Elsewhere Haines has reported finding only 9 cases of aeroplane engine malfunction in the totality of UFO history - a notably small figure particularly considering they are spread over 5 decades. (Haines, 1992; Table 12)



Far be it from me to discourage Ufologists from taking their problem to hardened scientists, but you don't have to be a cynic to sense they are not going to come back with an enthusiastic verdict that alien spacecraft with huge magnetic fields can be the only or the best explanation.

There has not been much written about this phenomenon in psychosocial circles. There has been the occasional observation that we've seen similar things in fiction. The items cited have been Koestler's 1933 play *Twilight Bar* (Vallee, 1988), Bernard Newman 1948 novel *The Flying Saucer* (Vallee, 1988), and the movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. (Moffitt, 2004) An old case of a horse-drawn cart being brought to a stop in the presence of fairies has also been brought up as an early analogy. (Clark & Coleman, 1975) The armies of Egypt being stopped by God in Exodus have also been thought relevant somehow. (Downing, 1968) Maybe.

I propose there is a larger backstory that needs to be told to give us a better understanding of how this idea that UFOs interfere with machines became part of the culture of UFO beliefs.

When electricity started to be used to power lights and devices among the general populace, writers quickly began to toy with the idea that if you could interfere with electricity you could create some dramatic consequences. In February 1898, for example, a story appeared in *Cosmopolitan* about an invention called the "electricity canceller." The inventor uses it in a minor plot to take down an extortionist. The story was called "The Great Electronic Trust" and was penned by a minor author named Francis Lynde. (Bleiler, 1990; entry #1382)

In March 1906, a story appears in *Argosy* by one Guy Chase Hazzard that exploits the ancient fears of comets by suggesting that comets might be able to somehow make the world's electricity disappear. "Forty-One Nights of Mystery" describes the chaos of civilization collapsing as lights fail and motors stop running. Mobs riot as all manifestations of electricity cease. When the comet recedes, electricity returns and civilization re-builds. (Bleiler, 1990; entry #1078)

A couple years later, a story called "The Planet Juggler" by J.

George Frederick appears in the November 1908 of *All-Story* that combines extraterrestrial menace with superior invention. A rogue scientist from Canopus threatens to drop the earth into the sun if our supply of gold isn't sent to him. To prove he means business he first cuts off electricity in the area of New York, then he nudges the earth from its orbit. (Bleiler, 1990; entry #817)

In 1910, we see two stories that put this power in the hands of mad scientists. Stewart Edward White's "The Sign at Six" [*Popular Magazine* October 15-November 15, 1910] demonstrates an apparatus that nullifies waves of various sorts, canceling electricity, sound, light, and even heat. (Bleiler, 1990; entry #2372) In William Harold Durham's "The Current Locker" [*Blue Book*, May 1910] a young man demands the government to release his father and him pardon of a bank robbery he has been falsely accused of. If they don't comply, he threatens to shut off the world's electricity with his little radium box. (Bleiler, 1990; entry #638)

An anonymous story appearing in the October 20, 1917 *Popular Magazine* puts an apparatus that destroys electricity in the hands of a robber baron, soon to be "His Eminence, the Devil." His plan is to stop electricity several times to create panics and then set up insurance plans against future stoppages - an interesting capitalistic twist. (Bleiler, 1990; entry 1383)

Up to this point, these stories of electrical menace were pinned on little more than sheer linguistic fiat. There was a vague notion perhaps that since light and energy were wave phenomena so you can nullify them by waves of similar frequency, but opposite value. At some point, the work of Tesla to build machines that transmit energy through the air introduced an empirical datum. One of his experiments set in Colorado Springs was said to have burned out the dynamo at the El Paso Electric Company, blacking out the entire city it supplied. The power station manager was reportedly livid and insisted that Tesla pay for the repair of the damage. Tesla pushed his concept of energy transmission under the name of 'teleforce' and he sometimes suggested the possibility it could be turned into some sort of death ray. (Nova, 2004)

In July 1934, Tesla, then 78, gave an interview in which he alleged he had invented a weapon that could "kill without a trace" It could bring down a fleet of 10,000 enemy airplanes at a distance of 250 miles from a defending nation's border and will cause armies of millions to drop dead in their tracks." ['Tesla, at 78, Bares New Death Beam' *New York Times*, July 11, 1938] In a 1940 interview ['Death-Ray for Planes' *New York Times*, September 22, 1940] he reiterated this claim that his 'teleforce' ray could destroy aircraft 250 miles away. The beam consisted of 4 separate inventions, two of which had been actually tested. (Kanon, 1997)

Hugo Gernsback, the father of science fiction culture, picked up on the possibilities inherent in Tesla's work. In the August 1918 issue of his magazine *Electrical Experimenter*, he pens 'The Magnetic Storm.' Tesla's lab manager, 'Why?'-Sparks has a brilliant idea for ending the war. Soon German phones, planes, and automobiles will not function. Germany's army is paralysed and the war is soon over. 'Why' had set up an enormous magnetic field by stretching wires along the front. It overloads electrical equipment and burns them out. The French equipment is unaffected by the storm. They are protected by a metal shield.

The end of the First World War presumably rendered the idea suddenly irrelevant and there is initially no exploitation of the idea for several years. Super-weapon fantasies in the post WWI period tended to focus on weapons that left few survivors. (I.F. Clarke, 1966) The next tale of interest to us appears in the April 1925 issue of *Weird Tales*. In Edward Hades' 'The Electronic Plague'. Cars all around New York stall and the lights go out. An old Professor, tired of honking horns and jazz music deploys the Gnash electronic force to put a "stop to this damned age of machinery which I loathe." Flipping the switch, the Professor was rendered unconscious as an unfortunate side effect. The narrator turns it back on. (Bleiler, 1998; entry #968)

The concept resurfaces as a weapon of war in 1929 in Louis Buswell 'Clouds of Death' [*Amazing Stories*, June 1929] An enemy nation attacks money-squandering America with a ray

**In Edward Hades' 'The Electronic Plague', cars all around New York stall and the lights go out. An old Professor, tired of honking horns and jazz music deploys the Gnash electronic force to put a "stop to this damned age of machinery which I loathe."**



**The 1930s would see an array of films about devices designed to stop machines. Such devices become ultimate machines which give their possessor control over all other machines, and freedom from the nearly apocalyptic sense of a total loss of human control, the surrender of sovereignty to**

that kills gasoline engines. A man-powered little plane saves the day. Bleiler, 1998; entry #174] In Victor MacClure's 'The Ark of the Covenant' [*Air Wonder Stories*, July-October 1929] a fellow styled as The Master, in league with high-minded social reformers, rules with gigantic super-dirigibles armed with sleep gas, atomic power, the transmutation of metals, and a motor-stopping ray. They convert the president to peace and an ark is provided for policing purposes. This one is fairly easily recognized as based on the writings of H.G. Wells. (Bleiler, 1998; entry #917)

A couple issues later in the same pulp, J.W. Ruff 'The Phantom of Galon' [*Air Wonder Stories* December 1929] stars a cruel air pirate armed with a fast ship, a paralysis ray, and an engine-stopping ray. The hero develops an engine drawing electrostatic energy from the air to hunt him down and seek revenge for abducting his fiancée. (Bleiler, 1998; entry 1230)

Over the next few years, engine-stopping rays appear in the arsenals of several power-hungry individuals working with names like The Thunderer, The Master, The Masked Emperor of Urania, The King of the World, The Invisible Emperor, Boris Colin, and Saranoff. This is the pulp era and mad scientists in secret hideouts around the world were turning up distorting the marvels of science to evil ends. Some of them were erstwhile attempts at creating futuristic utopias far away from the corruptions of the present world. But some want to take over the world.

The Thunderer, for example, turns out to be the airship of a mad eugenicist who wants to run the world like a stud farm. From his airship, he is able to control the weather and he is protected from attack because he can short-circuit gasoline engines. The hero builds a super-plane with electrical shielding that enables him to catch up with the airship and end his reign of terror. [A.H. Johnson 'The Thunderer' *Air Wonder Stories* January 1930] (Bleiler 1998; entry #666] At least a dozen tales of engine-stopping rays wielded by cunning earthfolks appeared in 1930-2.

This ability is simultaneously becoming associated with aliens. In December 1929, *Weird Tales* published Francis Flagg's 'The

Dancer in the Crystal.' It tells the story of a future civilization that runs on Tesla's teleforce. A meteorite is found and in it are two crystals. One is opened and a pillar of energy leaps into the sky which absorbs all the power being broadcast. Planes crash, trains stop, cities fall into darkness. The other crystal is opened and joins with the prior energy being and together they leave. The soil remains barren at the site of the dance. An effect seemingly analogous to that found in certain UFO cases a couple generations later. (Bleiler, 1998; entry #774)

That same month, *Science Wonder Stories* started running David Keller's 'The Conquerors] It opens with radio dying in a 5 state region and a message warns that planes should not fly over the area. When they do, their engines die. An ambassador for The Conquerors - a three foot being with an enormous head - tells the president these states should be evacuated. A thick mist that rots and erodes things covers the area and evacuation proceeds despite resistance. The dwarves branched off from humanity 100,000 years ago and developed their intellect unhindered in caves free from humanity's violence. Yes, Grays with rays, in 1929! (Keller, 1929)

In 1933 Arthur Koestler writes his play *Twilight Bar* (1933). "The lights go suddenly out. A huge luminous body passes over the sky with a hissing sound. The lights go on again. The party sits as if frozen in their previous attitudes" One man in fact was stopped in mid-sentence and resumes the sentence as the light comes back on. This seems more than a bit reminiscent of the 'switching off' of people seen decades later in Budd Hopkins' abduction researches. (Koestler, 1945, p. 19) A pair of beings come forth and warn everyone that mankind has three days to mend its ways or be destroyed. This is so a superior race could move in. A warning needs to be inserted here that Koestler's play was never performed or published before 1945 and he admits to rewriting it slightly in 1944, so one must resist drawing any inferences that it had any cultural influence between 1933 and 1945. Needless to add, Vallee's singling out Koestler as a precursor to UFO em-fx was a distinctly highbrow choice. (Vallee, 1988, p. 167.) While Koestler was a world-famous intellectual, most of

the people toying with engine-stopper ideas are pulpsters cranking out transient literature for mass audiences.

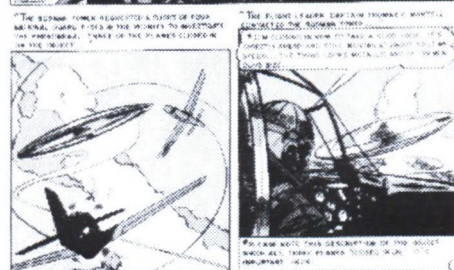
In October 1934, *Wonder Stories* publishes a story by the Binder brothers - Otto and Earl - titled 'The Thieves of Isot'. In it, beams from Plutonians kill an engine of an airship exploring a polar region. The aliens are mining resources on our planet. (Bleiler, 1998; entry #83) Though a minor story, it is interesting to remember that one of these authors would four decades later write some mass market flying saucer books. (Schelley, 2003) In *What We Really Know About Flying Saucers*, Otto includes a chapter titled "Electromagnetic Wizardry" which lists instances of UFOs interfering with plane engines and other electronic devices. He accepts the possibility that "Only beams of energy delicately controlled can blink out a light and leave a radio working by the proper selection of interfering waves." This made better sense of the inhomogeneity of effects than some blindly acting natural force-field. (Binder, 1967)

It is not long after the ascendance of engine-stoppers in the pulps that it begins to appear in movies and movie serials. I cite as authority a film historian with a comprehensive background of Thirties cinema, J. P. Telotte:

"At the same time, Claire's conception of a machine that could halt the tumult of everyday reality seems particularly prescient for the development of this genre, and especially its troubled construction of the technological. For the 1930s would see an array of works that moved in an at least superficially similar direction, films about fantastic rays, about devices designed to stop machines, about anti-machine machines, as it were. Such a device becomes another sort of ultimate machine, one which would give its possessor control over all other machines, and thus a sense of freedom from one of its central anxieties of the period: the nearly apocalyptic sense of a total loss of human control, the surrender of sovereignty to the machine. The narratives of the works like *Shadow of the Eagle* (1932), *The Mystery Squadron* (1933), *Air Hawk* (1935), *The Fighting Marines* (1935), *The Ghost Patrol* (1936), *Ace Drummond* (1936), *Flight to*

### THE MANTELL-GODMAN CASE

PROJECT SAUCER CASE NUMBER 33  
THE PROJECT SAUCER BEING IN HAND TO THE MANTELL-GODMAN CASE AT THE FLYING DISC SOCIETY IN NEW YORK. THE DISC IS BEING EXAMINED BY THE SAUCER SOCIETY. THE DISC IS BEING EXAMINED BY SEVERAL MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ENGINEERS.



*Fame* (1938), and *Q-Planes* (1939), among others, would turn on the fight against these ray-projecting devices that literally rendered planes or other machinery inoperable." - Telotte, 1999.

Of this bunch, we will single out *Ghost Patrol* (1936) to add that it has been described as "one of several Science Fiction Westerns made in the wake of *The Phantom Empire* (1935). It was based on an original story by Mascot script editor, Wyndham Gittens. A character named Ingraham is the inventor of a super ray that causes internal combustion engines to cease working. He is held captive by Miller and Oakman who uses his ray to bring down mail planes..." (Hardy, 1984)

A landmark is reached in 1935 when the concept reaches a cultural high water mark in rumours reported in the *New York Times*. Here we shall provide some clippings and quotes giving the precise language:

*Sunday, June 2, 1935, section 2, page 1, column 5.*

*Marconi Working on New Invention. Mussolini and High Officers of Army See Demonstration of Latest Product. By Arnaldo Cortesi*

Rome, June 1 - The curiosity caused by a communique stating that Premiere Mussolini and high army officers had attended a demonstration by Senator Guglielmo Marconi of an invention made by him has been increased by an admission by the inventor of the wireless. The Senator says he has been working of late on a line of research totally unconnected with ultra-short-wave and microwave experiments to which he had dedicated the last few years. No information has been made available, concerning the nature of his latest invention. It is said to be a military secret and as such will not be divulged for the present.

*War Ray May Be His Work*  
Some newspapers abroad have published in this connection reports that Senator Marconi had directed a new wireless ray against motor cars passing on a road near Rome, causing their engines to stop. The inventor denied this report. It is noted, however, that he denied having directed a ray against passing motor cars and not that he had invented or was working on the

invention of a ray capable of stopping internal combustion engines. The denial does not, therefore, completely rule out the possibility that this is the research on which he is engaged. It is pointed out that this problem has already been solved in theory. The spark plugs of internal combustion engines are a miniature sending and receiving wireless stations, as every one knows who has had on occasion to note the way in which passing automobiles sometimes interfere with short wave radio reception.

*Distance Gives Problem*

By emitting a series of impulses of a suitable wave length it should be possible to stop an engine, experts say, but the difficulty is to emit impulses of sufficient intensity to stop engines at considerable distances.

There is nothing for the present, however, to indicate that this is the problem on which senator Marconi is working. Some persons are inclined to think he is working on television. The undoubted military character of his work seems to rule out that guess.

*August 29, 1935, page 2:*

*Marconi to Join Italian Forces in Ethiopia; Likely to Direct Communications Service*

Mr. Marconi arrived in Rome, where he is supposed to be conducting experiments with micro waves, seeking to perfect a way to cut off the ignition systems of airplanes in flight. Asked about these experiments he replied, "I have nothing to say."

*August 30, 1935, p. 16, column 4: Rays Against Planes*

Signor Marconi was asked about rumors that he has been experimenting with short-wave devices for paralyzing airplane motors in flight and replied that he had nothing to say. He is not the only man to have his name associated with an anti-airplane death ray. The claim that such a weapon is already available was made not long ago in France. But while it is easy to understand why a Frenchman should be anxious to work out a defense against air attacks, the reason is not so apparent in the case of Mr. Marconi. He cannot be thinking of Ethiopia because Haile Selassie has no airplanes to speak of. It is Addis Ababa that needs a good practical death ray for use against Italian airplanes. Two hundred bombing planes left Naples for east Africa in one day.

*September 1, 1935, section IX, page 7, column 2: "Americans Think They Could Armor Planes Against Radio 'Death Ray'"*

Since it was announced that Senatore Guglielmo Marconi is experimenting with a so-called "death ray" to halt airplanes and motor cars by ultra-short-wave radio flashes, inquiry among American radio experts reveals an inclination to look upon the idea as fantastic.

To stop a motor, they explain, radio would have to interfere with the electrical system of the machine. Americans see no reason why the mechanism whether in plane or automobile, cannot be shielded from extraneous power: therefore, in reverse, the ignition system of the motor can be armored against radio impulses.

A radio wave carries an infinitesimal amount of energy, and engineers are at a loss to understand how it might paralyze a motor or engine. And even if it could do the trick, the power is so feeble that the mechanism of a plane should be easily guarded from the invisible beam flashed to silence it according to radio technicians. The plane has an added advantage in that the higher it is in the air the less effective a radio beam might be, since it weakens rapidly as the distance from the transmitter increases.

While Americans admit their skepticism, they do so mindful of Marconi's admonition when he visited in the United States two years ago that nothing in wireless should be labeled impossible. He smilingly recalled how mathematical wizards in 1900 insisted and 'proved' that radio waves could never travel much beyond 165 miles, that the curvature of the earth was the barrier to long distance wireless. But in 1901 Marconi intercepted the first transatlantic signal. It is dangerous to put limitations on radio waves. His experience of 40 years in wireless substantiates his contention. Scientific boundaries have vanished as he pushed across new frontiers. Reports from Italy indicate he refused to divulge how he hopes to "knock planes out of the air."

*Dr. Goldsmith's Opinion:* "We know that radio sets in airplanes are easily shielded against the noises generated by the motor's ignition systems," said Dr. A.N. Goldsmith, consulting radio engineer and former president of the Institute of Radio engineers. "This shielding permits reception

Otto Binder, *What We Really Know About Flying Saucers* Fawcett Gold Medal, 1967, p. 75.

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Paul Dickson, *Sputnik: The Shock of the Century* Berkley, 2001, p. 115.

Barry Downing, *The Bible and Flying Saucers*, J.B. Lippincott, 1968, pp. 90-3.

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Richard Haines, "Fifty-Six Aircraft Pilot Sightings Involving Electromagnetic Effects" MUFON 1992 UFO Symposium Proceedings, pages 101-129. archived at <http://nicap.dabsol.co.uk/92apsiee.htm>.

Richard Haines & Dominique Weinstein, "A Preliminary Study of Sixty Four Pilot Sighting Reports Involving Alleged Electromagnetic Effects on Aircraft Systems" National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena website, May 15, 2001

<http://www.narcap.org/REPORTS/Emcarm.htm>.

Manly Palmer Hall, "The Case of the Flying Saucers" 12pp lecture notes, 2 July 1950. The copy of Hall's lecture I have is printed from a webpage accessed August 1998 titled "A 1950 Lecture on UFOs by Brother Manly P. Hall" when it appeared on the Blue Brethren website. It is no longer present on the Web.

Phil Hardy *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction Movies* Woodbury Press, 1984.

of weak communication signals arriving over hundreds of miles without interference from the plane's motors and the same shield should be a good buffer against all other radio waves designed to affect the ignition and thus stop the flight.

Dr. Frank B. Jewett, president of the Bell telephone Laboratories, said that while he knows nothing of the system being developed by Marconi, the report from abroad "sounds fantastic" in the light of present radio knowledge.

"Assuming that such a thing is possible with planes using modern airplane motors," said Dr. Jewett, "it should be easy to shield them against such an attack."

*September 17, 1935; page 16, column 6: "Marconi Ray is Tested to Halt Armies in Field"*

Genoa, Italy Sept. 16. Reports that recent military maneuvers demonstrate that armies can be stopped by wireless rays developed by Senator Guglielmo Marconi led to questioning today of the inventor on the subject on the eve of his departure for South America.

Such reports greatly exaggerate the facts," he said. "It is true certain tests were made during the maneuvers. I was not present and in the circumstances you cannot expect me to say what was proved. I can only state that my work still is in the experimental stage and everything so far published is guess work. I regret some speculation published in English newspapers because they are based on false assumptions and expose me to criticism from other scientists."

Senator Marconi said he expected to go to Eritrea on his return from Brazil next month.

*November 1, 1935; p. 12, column 3 Italian Plea Made by Marconi on Air: Invention of Anti-Plane Device Denied [paragraph 2]*

Introducing his remarks, he scouted reports that he had an invention to stop airplane motors, saying, "If you are eager to hear from me something about an alleged new invention by which I could stop motor engines at great distances or do worse tricks than that, then let me reassure you at once that you may fly to your heart's content as there will be no stopping you - for the present, at any rate."

Though Marconi's denial is slightly ambiguous and allows the interpretation he expects to succeed in creating an engine-

stopper ray in the future, this was either wishful thinking or reflects a desire to let people think he is doing important and dangerous work. Whatever the reason, I take it as a given that this ray work never developed to the creation of a practical working device. However, the potential reality of engine-stopper rays was now firmly implanted in the population. The cachet of the Marconi rumours guaranteed that it would ferment in the collective imagination and yield still more intoxicating fantasies.

R.V. Jones provides the next episode of our story:

"The years before 1939 were full of stories of an engine-stopping ray. As I heard the story in 1937 or 1938 it was that an English family on holiday in Germany would be travelling in a car when its engine would suddenly fail, invariably on a country road, and usually at the edge of a wood. A German sentry would then step out of the trees and tell them there were special tests in progress and that they would be unable to proceed. Some time later he would come back and tell them that it was all for them to start the engine again and the engine would immediately fire and they were able to drive off.

"By this time I was becoming concerned with intelligence and one of my tasks was to ascertain the truth about the mysterious rays. At about the same time someone thought that it was a pity that the Germans should have a monopoly in the story and a parallel story was deliberately spread, hinting that we, too, had a ray. Within a short time we in Intelligence were flooded with similar events in England. We were astonished at the circumstantial detail that the public had added. In one instance, said to have occurred on Salisbury Plain, it was no ordinary family that was in the car, but a family of Quakers - and Quakers were well known for telling the truth

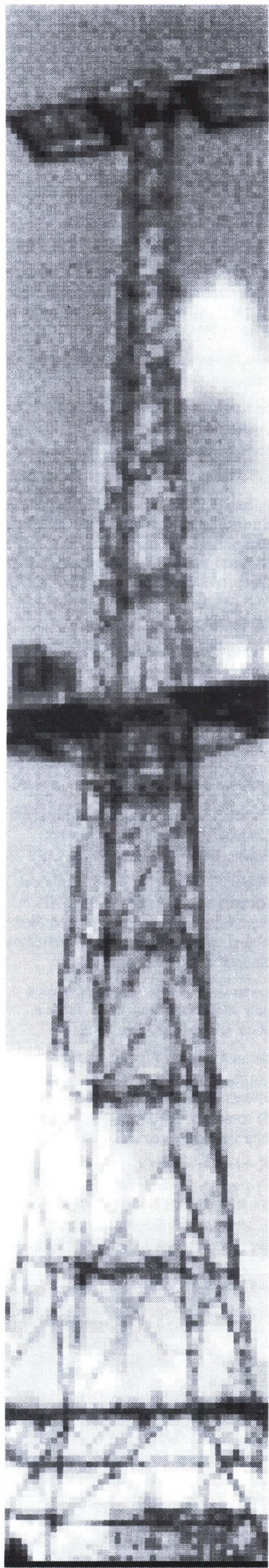
"Eventually, I got to the bottom of the story. The places most mentioned in Germany were the regions around the Brocken in the Harz and the Feldberg near Frankfurt. These were the sites of the first two television towers in Germany. A Jewish radio announcer at Frankfurt who escaped to this country was at first puzzled when I told him the story and then, with a chuckle, he told me that he could see how it

had happened. In the days before the television transmitters had been erected, the engineers made field strength surveys, but these surveys were rendered difficult by interference from the engines of motor vehicles. Under the authoritarian regime such as that of the Nazis it was simple to eliminate this trouble by stopping all cars around the survey receiver for the period of the test. Sentries, who were probably provided by the German Air Force, were posted on the roads, and at the appointed hour would emerge and stop all vehicles. At the end of the test they would then give the drivers permission to proceed. It only required a simple transposition in the story as subsequently told by a driver for the vehicle to have stopped before the sentry appeared, giving rise to a two-year chase after the truth. - [R.V. Jones, 1968]

Another tale told of the period has more uncertain provenance but sounds chronologically plausible as set by the writer:

"From a reliable source, the son of a late member of the United States Department of the Interior who was on a secret intelligence assignment in Germany in the summer of 1939, an event of the highest strangeness befell the city of Essen. During the traffic rush hour everything mechanical and electrical stopped - cars, buses, streetcars, motorcycles, clocks. His father, who was there, recalled that during the peak of the frustration, which lasted ten minutes, not one car was able to blow its horn! The answer seemed obvious at the time - a test maneuver of Hitler's secret weapon! The German newspapers did not report the incident, but the information describing the effects of the suspect weapon was conveyed to the proper sources in Washington. Of course, time has proved the Germans did not possess a weapon of this great magnitude, for the war would have ended less favorably for the Allies." - [Stringfield, 1977]

At least one other ufologist shows awareness of these war rumors, but inevitably takes them without the necessary salt. In the September 1977 *Saga UFO Report*, John Keel has an article titled 'VLF - Marconi's Space Age Weapon' (pp. 13-14) that alleges Marconi used Very Long Frequency waves in his experiments that caused cars to stall. He alleges similar mass stalling of autos occurred in



Germany in 1930 and in a 1941 incident when a 15-year old stumbled upon the secret. Marconi was unable to focus these waves and the antenna system is too large for easy transport. Keel alleges VLF signals carry strange chattering voices and other strange sounds due to sunspots and aurora borealis and rocket launches. They can also cause electric meters to run wild and create bills of thousands of dollars. He alleges sinister forces could use VLF waves to blow all fuses in Russia. The sources used for his article are not volunteered and thus can not be checked. That we are dealing with recycled rumor and misinformed speculation is hard to avoid here.

As we roll up to the beginning of the saucer era we should provide more of the fictional backdrop building up in the culture.

*Sky Racket* (1937): Several mail planes have been shot out of the air and their cargo stolen. The pilots disappear. "The government dispatches two-fisted pilot Eric Lane to determine exactly what is going on. You know that Marion and Eric are going to cross paths. Nonetheless they do so in the most ingenious way! Pilot and socialite are fated to find themselves neck-deep in intrigue as they tussle with a gang of cutthroat crooks which has been employing a state-of-the-art gadget to jam the engines of the planes and force them down." [Video Yesteryear catalog 1998.]

*Murder in the Air* (1940) starring Ronald Reagan involves plot of a weapon called an inertia projector that paralyzes electric currents at their source thus stopping and destroying objects. It stops a spy plane in mid-air - it catches fire and blows up. (Rogin, 1987)

*The Crimson Ghost* (1946) is described as a serial where the villain intends to conquer the world with a "cyclotrode, a counter-atomic device that short-circuited all electrical currents in its vicinity when switched on." I don't know if this includes vehicles. (Hardy, 1984)

And returning briefly to extraterrestrial precursors we need to remember Harold Sherman wrote a story titled 'The Green Man' that appeared in the October 1946 issue of Ray Palmer's *Amazing Stories* magazine. In Chapter one you can read, "The car motor suddenly coughed, sputtered and stopped... He

fussed with the starter but the motor wouldn't respond." A big silver cigar descends with a musical humming whir. A white-robed figure steps out. The motorist indicates his car won't start. "Yes, I know...I observed you as I was nearing the earth and a little ray from my aerial vessel stopped your motor." The alien gets in the back seat and the Professor gets in. "The motor instantly responded, "Oh, good heavens! He *is* from the planet Talamaya!" (Sherman, 1979)

Now we are in 1947 and the start of the flying saucer era. There isn't much involving electromagnetic effects, yet there are important elements of the story coming into play already. During the press frenzy, a news story dated July 6, 1947 recalls that saucers might be related to the foo-fighter rumors of the Second World War. It mentions "Intelligence officers believed at that time that the balls might be radar-controlled objects sent up to foul ignition systems or baffle Allied radar networks." It was well enough distributed for Keyhoe to catch wind of it and include in his first saucer book. (Keyhoe, 1950)

The following day - 7 July 1947 - six 'plate-like objects' hovered over a power line in the Hollywood, CA area at 3:10 p.m. They are small, stationary, and not too high (Bloecher, 1967, p. 1-11; case #637) they are accompanied by some radio static. The possibility of coronal discharge springs to mind as a likely explanation for both the objects and the static.

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, a Fred Johnson comes forward to testify that he may have seen the same objects as Arnold when he was on Mount Adams. However, Johnson didn't see quite as many as he did. Arnold saw nine. Johnson saw only 6 or 7. And while Arnold emphasized he could see no tails on the saucers, Johnson reported seeing "an object in the tail end" that "looked like a big hand of a clock shifting from side to side." (Gross, 1982) In concert with this side-to-side motion, he observed that the needle on the magnetic compass he happened to be holding also waved side to side. One could debate the value of this report. Technically speaking, neither Arnold nor Johnson reported properly circular objects. Both potentially have mundane explanations. (Kottmeyer 1997) More, no vehi-

cles stop or instruments malfunction during their sightings. Suffice to say; in the fullness of time, it contributed to a body of opinion that saucers were propelled by magnetic drives. These drives, in turn, would be blamed for creating em-fx.

One could perhaps fairly omit the 23 July 1947 tale of John Jensen as not 'really' an em-fx case, but some details begs consideration. He is flying in a plane when he sees light flashing off what he first thinks is a high-altitude aircraft. The engine on his plane coughs and sputters. Despite some throttling however it dies. The nose doesn't dip but remains rigidly level. Shortly, he is alarmed to read zero on his air speed indicator. Jensen feels an electric-like sensation and senses he is being closely watched and examined. Looking outside he sees a saucer with portholes along its edge, not unlike an oceanic steamer. It seems structurally strong and it intuitively "a super-intelligence not of this planet." After further inspection by the craft, he senses an urge to restart the engine. He snaps on the magnetos and the motor bursts back to life. (Wilkins, 1967/54) The full version feels like a distant parallel to *Murder in the Air* peppered with Fortean spices. It is unclear if anybody ever bothered to investigate it, but to my ear it reads like a blatant fiction, not an authentically experienced incident.

In 1948 one of the first flying saucer books reaches print: Bernard Newman's spy novel *The Flying Saucer*. It already has engine-stopper rays in its pages. Yet this is not offered as part of a real alien invasion but a fraudulent one engineered by scientists using secret technology spun off from the recent war. It deliberately plays off the Marconi rumours: "For years scientists have known how to stop an engine, by interference with its electrical processes, by means of the emission of a charge, or 'ray.' The difficulty was that a huge and complicated apparatus was necessary, and that its range was short: thus much simpler means were available - putting a bullet through it, for example. Now Drummond had much simplified the apparatus and had improved its power. According to atmospheric conditions, it was effective at from ten to twenty miles range."

Allan Hendry, *The UFO Handbook* Doubleday/Dolphin, 1979.

R.V. Jones, "The Natural Philosophy of Flying Saucers" in Daniel S. Gillmore, ed. *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects* Bantam Books, 1968, Appendix V; pp. 923-4.

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Martin Kottmeyer, "Bruce Gentry, Serial Filler" *Magonia Monthly Supplement* #18 August 1999; pp.1-2.

Martin Kottmeyer "Resolving Arnold - Part 2 - Guess Again" *The REALL News*, 5, #7 July 1997; pp. 1, 5-9.

Coral E. Lorenzen *Flying Saucers: The Startling Evidence of the Invasion from Outer Space* Signet, 1966, pp. 153, 157-8. See also p. 196-7 for more of this being a weapon

John Moffitt, *Picturing Extraterrestrials: Alien Images in Modern Mass Culture* Prometheus Books, 2003, p. 330.

Bernard Newman, *The Flying Saucer*, MacMillan, 1950, pp. 253-8.

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Michael Rogin *Ronald Reagan, the Movie* University of California, 1987 pp. 1-3.

Antonio Rullán, "Levelland Sightings of 1957" published 18 October 1999, revised 26 March 2000; [www.temporaldoorway.com/ufo/guestpapers/levelland/index.htm](http://www.temporaldoorway.com/ufo/guestpapers/levelland/index.htm)

Bill Schelly, *Words of Wonder: The Life and Times of Otto Binder*, Hamster Press, 2003.

Harold Sherman *The Green Man and His Return*, Amherst Press, 1979, pp. 10-14.

**A major landmark occurred during 1957 that locked in engine-stopping as a property of UFOs. The tipping point in the sudden ascendance of the trait was a cluster of reports that happened in Levelland, Texas on the evening of**

This results in plane crashes and the stopping of a convoy of trucks and jeeps, including, weirdly, those with diesel engines. Readers of Rodeghier's book will note that diesels are also stopped in 'real' UFO reports. It should be observed that these engine-stopper rays do not emanate from saucers per se, but metal towers attributed to aliens that are fakery. Though Jacques Vallée alleges in his writings that Newman's book is the first ever reference to UFO effects on car ignition systems, I trust the reader can work out the problematic nature of that assertion by this point. More, this is less a matter of 'coincidence,' than shared cultural heritage. One probably should *not* indulge in "unlimited speculation" to account for it. (Vallée, 1988)

Films quickly combine engine-stopper rays to flying saucers via both strands of the tradition; mad scientists and aliens. In *Bruce Gentry: Daredevil of the Skies* (1949) flying discs are described as superweapons to be used in the destruction of the Panama Canal and the conquest of North and South America. As the disc approaches a plane flown by Gentry, the instruments "go crazy" and start to smoke. He has to bail and the disc homes in on the plane and blows it up like an aerial torpedo. It is never explicitly stated the disc causes the instruments to go crazy but the connection seems implied. We eventually learn the discs result not from aliens but a mad criminal who calls himself The Recorder. (Kottmeyer, 1999)

In the film classic *Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), a handsome alien named Klaatu lands in Washington D.C. in a great flying saucer. An Einstein-like scientist suggests to him the value of making a demonstration that would prove his power without killing people. He interferes with all electrical power on earth except in hospitals and aircraft. This makes human civilization stand still for one hour. Some may fairly wonder why this didn't create vehicle-stopping saucer cases in the ensuing flap of 1952. At least a couple things stand in the way. One: we don't see this happening while the saucer is in flight. Two: it happens over the whole planet. This is something that clearly won't spontaneously happen in real life as simple single-car malfunctions could.

There is one other answer. Not

only did contactees borrow such things as zipperless jumpsuits and warnings to stop nuclear technology from this film; one actually *did* have the chutzpah to borrow the titular plot device. George van Tassel reports one his Space Brothers, named – I kid you not – Knut – claimed the ability "to shut down everything electrical on earth" with what he calls his Jullifer.

The serial *Blackhawk*, chapter 6 (1952), introduces a scientist who has harnessed "the destructive force of the electronic combustion ray." It is an invisible ray that travels at three times the speed of light and is attracted to a target device made of a secret metal. It utilizes compressed static electricity. "At full power it could level an entire city." In the serial it only destroys a chair. When pointed at Blackhawk and a colleague it induces a state of suspended animation. Later, spies from the old country point it at a plane flown by Blackhawk and the electronics catch fire, the engine sputters, and Blackhawk has to bail out. Oddly, this time Blackhawk and his colleague forget to go into suspended animation. A robot disc, recycled from Bruce Gentry, flies in a later chapter, but there is no direct association to the new ray. Clearly we are back in the mad scientist tradition.

George Pal's 1953 production of *War of the Worlds* is tangentially relevant. When the invader Martians arrive on Earth a nearby town experiences black-outs on both the electrical and phone grids. Hearing aids and watches also stop. In this instance there are hints that this is less a weapon being wielded than side effects of a powerful field. A scientist seeing the stopped watch asks for a pin. It leaps at one of the pocket-watches. One of the writers clearly did their homework for this is a set-up for a later moment when the main character infers the Martians levitate above the landscape using magnetic flux. A field strong enough to hold up tank-like vehicles the size portrayed would certainly fry power grids over a large area and cause metal objects to become highly magnetized like those watches.

*Devil Girl from Mars* is a fairly minor alien invasion film, but it is notable as having both the car and telephone of nearby witnesses go out upon the touchdown of a huge craft from Mars. This was a

British production. The presence of a companion robot to the lady pilot pretty clearly points to inspiration by *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, thus the role of the engine-stopping in that film being the root of this manifestation is a logical possibility. What is unclear is whether engine-stopper cases in the French Wave of 1954 might have served as a likelier source of the scene. In America the film was released 27 April 1955, but there is little information here to pin down when it was made and shown in Britain. I think the possibility of precedents from the French wave must be taken seriously, but it is not a critical matter given all the other precursor material.

I confess that while it would be lovely to suggest how it is that em-fx first frequented France in their 1954 *Martian Panic*; I didn't study the matter. My interest was more geared to the American situation. I have my reasons for supposing the 1954 French affair had no connection to the ascendance of the idea in America in 1957. While *Devil Girl from Mars* fascinates as an early film manifestation of the engine-stopping ray and part of a decades-long evolving concept, there are compelling reasons to deny its relevance to the start of the rumor complex in the American saucer mythos. It is not a missing link, but part of a side branch.

An equally fascinating bit of trivia appears in a 2 July 1950 lecture by Manly P. Hall. Hall was an interesting figure in the tradition of magick and in 1950 he penned a meditation on the emerging saucer controversy. There is prescient passage about four-fifths of the way in towards the end: "But their construction, their formation, the way they operate suggest they have one of several possibilities, either they are going to be used for the distribution of rays or some natural force that could be the focal point, possibly some means of short-circuiting motors, or affecting or attacking various mechanized devices..." - (Hall, 1950)

Now the curious bit is that Hall wasn't thinking of saucers as aliens in this line, he believed them to be earthly spycraft. He absolutely had not seen anything in existing reports suggesting this linkage. Nobody anywhere had yet reported this effect. It might have resulted from that foo-fighter



connection suggested in 1947, but Hall surely had not seen Keyhoe's re-use of the article since his book was several days away from general release when he wrote this.

It is tempting to regard Manly Hall's speculation as uniquely prescient. The first time I read it that was my reaction. But I've come to realize its importance is actually as a show of anticipation. The linkage of engine-stoppers to saucers was a progression that is not merely something we can say post hoc *should* have been expected; it actually *was* expected.

I feel I should emphasize that Hall's lecture was probably heard at most by a tiny handful of people in 1950 and remained a lost bit of esoterica for decades. It is fascinating not because of any potential influence it had – I feel the possibility of that is surely zero – but because it demonstrates the idea that saucers could stall engines could easily have taken flight as early as this date if the right set of circumstances had come along. Obviously though they did not. In the United States, the right circumstances did not take place until 1957.

While ufologists will quibble and quarrel over whether there is a significant presence of em-fx in the first decade of saucer history, it is beyond dispute that a major landmark occurred during 1957 that locked in engine-stopping as a property of UFOs. The tipping point in the sudden ascendance of the trait was a cluster of reports that happened in Levelland, Texas on the evening of November 2-3. The story has been told many times in the literature. It has even been regarded as one of the ten best UFO cases. (Story, 1981). Peter Rogerson's "Levelland: The Last Redoubt" on the *Magonia* site reviews several versions. Antonio Rullán's paper provides an in-depth dissection of the evidential issues from a critical historian's stance and should be regarded as an essential forerunner to understanding what follows. My account will focus in on what I regard as the elements of most relevance.

The first, most important and best attested, part of the Levelland incidents involved a farm-hand named Paul Saucedo who had a companion Joe Salaz with him while driving a small truck along Route 116. A yellow-white light raised out of a nearby field, passed directly overhead accompanied by a sound like

thunder and a rush of wind. The truck rocked from the blast and he felt heat from the object. It was torpedo-shaped, like a rocket, and its length reached around 200 feet. He felt it must have going 600 to 800 miles per hour. The engine and headlights on the truck failed as the object approached. As it departed, the headlights came back on and he found he could start the truck without difficulty.

There are troubles with Saucedo's account that are often overlooked by saucer buffs. The first is that Saucedo did not report a flying saucer. In the Air Force file on Levelland he described his impression was that it was "an electronically controlled rocket." He offers no opinion of it being of alien origin. Second, he reported the object "had a yellow flame coming out of the rear and white smoke surrounding the flame." These points seem more consistent with jet or rocket propulsion and so the object was likelier regarded as a manifestation of earth technology than one of extraterrestrial origin. Given the smoke and flame, we are clearly not dealing with the sort of elegant magnetic drive that floats saucers over landscapes suggested in other cases e.g. Betty and Barney Hill, Father Gill, and Exeter.

It has been suggested that a minor tornado would account for such things as the rocket-shape [= a ropey funnel], white smoke [= debris cloud along the ground], and the rocking of the truck and rush of wind. An upward pulse of lightning in or behind the funnel would round out the description and account for the thunder. It should also be noted that electrical and luminous effects are sometimes observed in nocturnal tornadoes. They can look different from normal lightning, for example flashes having a shape more like a broad sword than a slim bolt. (Corliss, 1974)

The real killswitch in the ETH version though is a finding most accounts fail to include. Investigation revealed Saucedo's truck had stalled because a repairman had worked on the distributor rotor the prior day. One piece of the old rotor had not been removed and it had wedged between the distributor points. This caused the electrical system to become inoperative. (Randle, 1999, p. 25) The one Ufologist to take notice of this killer detail – Kevin Randle – somewhat blindly complains that this can't explain

the Levelland incidents because there are several other reports of automotive failure and obviously they can't all involve broken rotors. This, however, is wielding Occam's Razor with the blunt edge on the skin. It is unambiguously certain no extraterrestrial forces are involved in Saucedo's case. The fact that it was in the shop the day before allows no wiggle room for re-interpretation. Since we know there can't be any physical relationship between the sighting and the failure of the engine in the first case, it would be a ridiculously unlikely coincidence that the subsequent reports are correctly explained by engine-stopper rays or cosmically-powered magnetic fields either. Parsimony dictates these are copycat reports in *some* sense.

The scenario possibly runs something like this. Not yet knowing the real reason for why Saucedo's truck failed, a rumor races through the community that the old Marconi rumours of engine-stopper rays are true and that they appeared on a secret device seen in the immediate area. Enhancing both the credibility and shock of the rumour is the fact that the Soviet Union had in the past month recently sent up two Sputnik satellites. They were widely recognized as an advance in ballistic missile technology and reinforced the concern that Soviets could strike anywhere on Earth.

More closely relevant to this situation, the Associated Press had recently reported that a Schenectady, New York doctor claimed the initial Sputnik was somehow opening his garage door. Similar reports quickly followed all across the nation. Though some of these copycats were clearly jokey-types looking to get their names in the papers, there were legitimate people like a hurricane researcher in Florida named John M. Williams whose garage door was alleged to have been opened three times by Sputnik. (Dickson, 2003) In this atmosphere of fear and gossip about long-distance electronic mischief, a report of an electronic rocket stopping a car has obvious resonance and imminent plausibility.

In the hours that follow, any car failure becomes fair game for speculation that Saucedo's Sputnik-y/UFO is around and any nearby light becomes the probable cause. In an area of at least 10,000 people, a few people

Ronald Story, UFOs and the Limits of Science William Morrow, 1981, pp. 155-9.

Ronald Story, Encyclopedia of Extraterrestrial Encounters New American Library, 2001, pp. 306-8.

Leonard Stringfield, Situation Red: The UFO Siege Fawcett Crest, 1977, pp. 94-5.

J.P. Telotte A Distant Technology: Science Fiction and the Machine Age Wesleyan

University Press, 1999, pp. 78-9.

UFO Evidence website, accessed April 2005, "Electromagnetic Effects" & "Vehicle Interference Cases: Key Articles, Documents, & Resources" pages describe and link several papers cataloging / analyzing em-effects: <http://www.ufoevidence.org/topics/emeffects.htm>

<http://www.ufoevidence.org/topics/vehicleinterference.htm>

"U.S. Air Force Report on the Levelland Case" the Ufologist 1, #6 (Palatka, FL) October-November 1992; pp. 13-14. This was part of a special issue with 25pp. devoted to "Looking Back at Levelland"

Jacques Vallee, Dimensions: A Casebook of Alien Contact Contemporary Books, 1988, pp. 167-8.

Harold Wilkins, Flying Saucers on the Attack Ace Books, 1967, 1954, pp. 70-1.

**I**f we take into consideration the foo-fighters' study of planes in World War II and the later close-range observation of cars, it seemed a weapon had been devised to disable propulsion systems, and that the weapon was being tested on different types of vehicles under various conditions.

having any sort of automotive electronics failure in the same night is plausible by sheer random chance. When it happens, the victim looks around and any brilliant light is a potential UFO and target for blame. Additionally, it is highly plausible a fraction of these reports are merely yarn-spinning or exaggerating things for personal enjoyment. As Antonio Rullán observed in his reanalysis of the case, four of the witnesses were never interviewed and are known only via single phone calls to A.J. Fowler on the night of the event - James Long, Jim Wheeler, Jose Alvarez, and Frank Williams. Under such circumstances assessing their sincerity or reliability is problematic. (Rullán, 1999) Ronald Martin, an 18-year truck driver, was interviewed by one journalist from the *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, but not by the Air Force or police. Rullán cites a Civilian Saucer Intelligence rumor indicating this person could not have been where he said under the circumstances described - thus, his claim is a probable hoax.

The Air Force report brings up matters of ball lightning and electrical storms in the area as possible sources of the various events, but there are lines that suggest they may have sensed psychosocial factors may have been more important. The report notes that ATIC denied that ball lightning was a major factor in the Levelland incident. They preferred that it may have been triggered by an electrical storm and: "The storm stimulated the populace into a high level of excitement. The excitement reflected itself in their reactions to ordinary circumstances, and resulted in the inflation of the stories of some of the witnesses concerning their experiences." - (U.S. Air Force Report, 1957)

Rullán has also shown there are irreconcilable incongruities seen among the gathered testimony. Shapes: torpedo, loaf of bread, ball. Sizes: ranging from under 30 feet to over 200 feet. Colors: blue, white, orange. Motions: horizontal motion versus vertically dropping versus vertical ascent versus hovering. Sounds: "like thunder" versus no mention of any. Two see it blinking on and off, but others don't. Given such differences it seems doubtful that one object was responsible for all the descriptions. (Rullán, 1999; "Searching for Patterns" section) More likely, these involved

opportunistic-present objects over-interpreted in the heat of the moment and copycats who got Saucedo's central concern of failed engines & lights right, but the finer details of the local sputnik/saucer wrong.

In the first category, Sheriff Weir Clem's UFO is described in the AF report on the Levelland incidents as a streak of light that lasted two seconds. This sounds ideal to be a meteor and the trajectory - south to west - would be consistent with one streaking away from the radiant of the Taurid meteor shower. It normally peaks on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Newell Wright's account is also in this category. Nobody disputes Wright was a credible witness. Basically he sees a light with some shape to it - egg-shaped or like a loaf of bread. The light was bright enough to be reflected across the width of the two-lane road he was driving. Wright said there were heavy clouds and light rain falling at the time of the encounter. While he now believes he may have seen the object for 4 or 5 seconds; originally he thought it lasted 4 or 5 minutes. If seconds, this suggests the lightning plasma idea is plausible. Historical investigation usually however favours the earliest testimony. If minutes, we are likelier confronted with the possibility this is a low distant airplane landing light seen below the leading edge of the cloud deck. The Air Force probably didn't appreciate the local character of the low clouds as weather records later indicated. They may have took Wright's account of low clouds as involving the whole sky and so discounted this possibility of a plane being visible. One needs to remember that from the perspective of the observer the plane can be much higher than the cloud deck, while its angular altitude still is below the angle of the leading edge of the low clouds. The bread loaf shape is also better accounted for by lights on a distant plane.

Given the light rain, the road had to be wet and highly reflective. This fits the glow spanning the whole width of the road. The car's problems are consistent with water fouling the distributor or spark plug wires. As the car stands still, the heat of the engine dries the distributor and wiring and allows the motor to restart. The water would likeliest have splashed up from a puddle

on the road. I have driven cars in the past that behaved that way in rainy weather myself. Wet electronics makes better sense of the car restarting. A massive field of force would more likely irreversibly fry things such as the generator than temporarily futz with it.

We would not have heard of Wright's car problem had it not been that Saucedo's tale made the papers. Wright initially thought little of misadventure with the car, but his parents urged him to come forward to the authorities. A day later he discussed it with the professor of Electrical Engineering he worked part-time for at Texas Tech and became satisfied his sighting was ball lightning. This may account for his later feeling the event was much shorter than he reported. He indicated people were disappointed that he thought it was some sort of natural phenomenon, but depending on his sensibilities it may have been better than the alternatives (i.e. being thought a saucer nut or being thought an incompetent observer/reasoner)

It is noteworthy that A.J. Fowler, the police officer who gathered most of corroborative testimony, stated recently he has always believed and still believes the object involved was something the Air Force was experimenting with. (Rullán, 1999: The Extraterrestrial Spaceship Hypothesis" section) Thus, there was a believer in the secret weapon strand of UFO belief who was playing an important role in building the significance of this premiere case of engine-stopping saucers.

It bears repeating that skeptics object that a different pattern of effects should have been seen if a massive field of magnetic forces was involved. You wouldn't get just a few reports of engines dying. You would get massive electronics failures - hundreds of fried radio components, city-wide blackouts, large areas of magnetized metals e.g. magnetized road signs and bridges and railroad tracks. And this problem is symptomatic not just of the Levelland case, but electromagnetic-effects cases generally. If you had a large, clearly defined area of massive electronic disruption, scientists would be compelled to believe something real and dangerous had happened. The problems reported in the UFO literature always look more consistent with the entropy



of the everyday, modern world.

Levelland, Texas catapulted to national attention after word of the UFO-generated car failures hit the papers. Journalists quickly labeled the UFOs in the incidents Whatniks. They doubtless sensed there was a cause and effect relationship between the Sputnik crisis then uppermost in public consciousness and this outbreak of technological mayhem. (Girard, 1989) The word added a jargon-y cachet on the reports and guaranteed slang-froids would try to work the tales into their gossip of the day. As UFO reports massed up in the glare of the dawn of the Space Age, it surprised few people that this new wrinkle in saucer phenomena caught on. Nearly 3 dozen em-fx reports surfaced during the 1957 Flap, according to Rodeghier's case catalogue. Undermining the idea this was a new development in terrestrial secret weapons is the fact that the reports quickly spread to places as far flung as Canada, Alaska, Ohio, Louisiana, New Hampshire and Brazil. Had they stayed within range of a single base of operations, the plausibility of the idea might have been maintained. The ETH might be regarded as a better fit to wide distribution, but the choice of targets remains hard to understand – cops, taxi drivers, milk delivery men, housewives, and a grain buyer.

While the flap in its entirety was smaller than the 1952 Flap, its peak day – November 6 – actually had Blue Book receiving more reports than any single day in its history. Arguably, this intense burst may reflect the personal vulnerability that car owners felt over the possibility that the Soviets might have a way of taking away their freedom in a way that mattered most to Americans. The flap dissipated much quicker than the 1952 affair accounting for a smaller volume when totaled at the end of the month. There are a number of possibilities for the brevity: an outbreak of 'Take me to your leader' jokes, some silly alien dog-napping stories, a contactee who was quickly shown to have a police record. Maybe it was something else. Though the flap was brief, the rumour about engine-stopping did not die.

Over the years that followed, hundreds of Levelland-style engine-stopping UFO encounters were reported, albeit never again in such density as in November

1957. Ufologists pondered their significance according their own rules of engagement. Some blamed them on massive fields of force – usually magnetic or, dodgier, cosmic energy. A few though echoed back to the pulp tradition of engine-stoppers as super-weapons. The finest example is this discussion in the Lorenzen's mass paperback *Flying Saucers: the Startling Evidence of the Invasion from Outer Space* (1966):

"Mr. Lorenzen was the first to suggest, in all seriousness, that if we take into consideration the foo-fighters' study of planes in the latter part of World War II the later close-range observation of cars by the UFO, it would appear that a weapon had been devised to disable their propulsion systems, and that the weapon was being tested on different types of vehicles under various conditions, weather included.

"In a short paper titled *UFO Weapons - Comments on the Technical Aspects Involved*, Dr. Fontes set out to establish a few facts and establish their probable meaning. This dissertation is quoted here in part: The evidence at hand indicates that UFOs possess means of creating in the ignition systems of automobile and aircraft internal combustion engines secondary currents powerful enough to destroy the synchronization of spark-plug action and thus stall the engines; that they can interfere at will with radio transmitters and receivers, electric-current generators, batteries, telephone lines, and, generally, with all electrical circuits; and that these "electric effects" are not merely side effects of the powerful electromagnetic fields that exist around UFOs, but the result of purposeful interference of a weapon used as a means of defence or attack." - (Lorenzen, 1966)

The ghost of the Marconi rumours had yet to find its resting in peace. By the Seventies, though, the weapon-of-the-future idea faded. The Lorenzens scaled down the import of engine-stoppers to a mere convenience in helping aliens examine humans at leisure. Engine-stoppers, they suggested, enabled aliens to abduct and explore human bodies and minds by stopping cars so they could retrieve their occupants. Even in this, the trait gradually faded in

relevance as abductions moved more and more into bedrooms.

EM- effects are slowly disappearing from the UFO culture. Whitley Strieber's *Confirmation* documentary (1999) was lucky enough to find one case to re-construct involving police cars, but it is distinct rarity these days. My impression is that not one in a thousand of the reports in the NUFORC database involves engine-stopping. It is also notable how discussions of em-fx in recent writings rarely mention electronics failures of any vehicles from the 1980s or 90s. One factor that likely contributes to this decline has been the progressive improvement of automobile electronics. Back in the 50s and 60s I



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personally experienced the frustration of several times having to re-adjust the spark gap of distributors in our cars and trucks when engines began to run rough and stall. Mechanical friction would wear away the mechanism that opened the spark gap till they failed to create a spark. Sometime in the 70s, the spring-loaded gap was replaced by a solid-state unit that no longer wore down mechanically. There is nothing inside distributors to adjust any more. This alone probably lowered the rate of engine failures across the nation by a couple orders of magnitude.

Em-fx in other devices, of course, still are a commonplace especially it seems in devices researchers set up to capture evidence of Grays in abduction cases. Once in a while we see the odd variant like the case of an electronic wheelchair disabled in the presence of an UFO. It may be worth mentioning there are

quite a few claims in the UFO literature of breakdowns having nothing to do with electronics at all. It would require some sort of pan-entropic accelerator to cover all the odd problems blamed on UFOs over the expanse of UFO history from fires to sexual dysfunctions. This would stray beyond the present story, however, and require a book to deal with. So, let's draw the line here and sum up.

The ability of UFOs to disable car engines has traceable roots in a large literature of future science fantasies and war rumours. I hope future historians will especially take on board the realization that the Levelland classic is not related to *The Day the Earth Stood Still* as has been suggested

from time to time. Rather it is based in rumours about terrestrial secret weapons developments. Ufologists may think that gathering these reports for scientists will have some practical outcome down the road (*UFO Evidence*, 2005; Cashman, 2004; Orion, 1997), if only in the matter of enhancing public safety. The drift of the evidence to date shows no hint that will ever happen. The papers presented in recent years are notably sterile in being able to offer any physical mechanism that can act in a manner consistent both with the limited nature of the effects seen in reports and a superior technological cause.

However, as one of the psychosocial school, I do thank all of those who did the spadework in gathering all those stories. You may not regard this history lesson as of any practical benefit, but, all the same, it was one well worth telling.

# David Sivier: INDEXING THE MACHINE ELVES FAIRYTALE MOTIFS IN UFO NARRATIVES

**O**ne of the most fascinating developments in folklore has been its extension to include UFOs and abduction accounts. Since the rise of the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis (ETH) much of the argument surrounding them has occurred within the domain of the physical and psychological sciences, examining the question of whether or not they can be considered as visiting alien craft, or, as Carl Jung posited instead, they are 'a modern myth of things seen in the sky'.<sup>1</sup> It is a debate whose basis in the hard sciences is epitomised in the title of Carl Sagan's and Thornton Page's book, *UFOs - A Scientific Debate*.<sup>2</sup>

However, scholars from the soft sciences - anthropology and sociology - and humanities, like history, have also been involved, stressing the need for the social and psychological phenomena subsumed under the UFO rubric to be investigated in their proper cultural, political-economic and historical contexts, something not always done or possible in the hard scientific discussions of UFOs. [3] Since the 1970s however, folklorists have also been involved in the debate,

treating the memorates and narratives of UFOs and alien encounters as a variety of modern folklore. Foremost amongst these researchers have been Linda Degh, whose 1977 paper, 'UFOs and how folklorists should study them', [4] attempted to formulate a folkloristic approach to UFOs, and Thomas Eddie Bullard, and Peter Rojcewicz, who have been studying the phenomenon as folklore since writing their Ph.D dissertations, 'Mysteries in the Eye of the Beholder: UFOs and their Correlates as a Folkloric Theme Past and Present', and 'The Boundaries of Orthodoxy: A Folkloric Look at the UFO Phenomenon.' [5]

Although this folkloric approach to UFOs appeared as early as 1950, with the publication of Howard Peckham's

paper, 'Flying Saucers as Folklore', the real inspiration behind this were two Fortean authors, John Keel and Jacques Vallée, and their books *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse* and *Passport to Magonia*. [6] Central to their approach was the view that "the modern, global belief in flying saucers and their occupants is identical to an earlier belief in the fairy-faith. The entities described as the pilots of the craft are indistinguishable from the elves, sylphs, and loons of the Middle Ages." [7] Although writing from the point of view of a believer in the objective reality of the UFO phenomenon, though not that of the ETH, Vallée made his basis in folklore clear in his book's very subtitle: *From Folklore to Flying Saucers*. [8] To demonstrate the similarities between the diminutive fairies of tradition, and the equally diminutive others of the UFO myth, Vallée cites Evans Wentz's collection of stories of encounters with fairies from the Aran Islands. [9] The parallels and choice of source are not accidental, for one of Evans Wentz's informants, when asked where he thought the fairies came from, replied, 'they are a big race who come from the planets'. [10] The informant here, however, came not from Aran but County Sligo, and added that this was merely his own opinion. As a result of this interest in UFO encounters by academic folklorists, examination of the UFO myth has become a respectable part of academic teaching on folklore courses at a number of institutions around the

world, such as at the University of Washington. A talk on UFO abduction reports was included in the module, 'Continuity in Tradition', during the autumn 2004 term, for example. [11]

Beyond structuralist attempts to map out the central motifs and sequence of UFO encounters, such as Eddie Bullard's dissection of the Abduction experience and John Harney's analysis of the motifs informing the Crash Retrieval myth, [12] is the deeper problem of whether, if UFO encounters really are fairy narratives in a postmodern, technological guise, they can be related to the classic motifs of traditional fairy narratives in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, or E. Baughman's similar index for British and American folklore, the *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America*.

Although the relationship between fairy lore and UFO narratives is so well established among folklorists and psycho-social ufologists investigating the psychological and sociological background and possible causes of the phenomenon as to be something of a truism, comparison of such UFO narrative motifs with the indexed entries for traditional fairy lore may put such relationships into stark, unambiguous relief, and stimulate further debate into the causes of the occurrence, or transference of such traditional motifs into the new folkloric domain of UFOs. Certainly, very many of the motifs from traditional lore are present. For

1. C.G. Jung, *UFOs - A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, (Princeton, Bollingen 1991).

2. S. Sagan, and T. Page, eds., *UFOs - A Scientific Debate*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press 1972).

3. R. Cook, 'Anthropology and UFOs: An Introduction', Centre for Anthropology, <http://home.uchicago.edu/~ryancooklanthufo.htm>.

4. L. Degh, 'UFOs and How to Study Them', *Fabula* 18, (1977), pp. 242-8.

5. T.E. Bullard, *Mysteries in the Eye of the Beholder: UFOs and their Correlates as a Folkloric Theme Past and Present*, Ph. D dissertation, (Indiana, Indiana University 1982); P. Rojcewicz, *The Boundaries of Orthodoxy: A Folkloric Look at the UFO Phenomenon*, Ph. D. dissertation, (Indiana, University of Indiana 1984).

6. H. Peckham, 'Flying Saucers as Folklore', *Hoosier Folklore* 9, (1950), pp. 103-7; J. Keel, *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse*, (London, Abacus 1973); J. Vallee, *Passport to Magonia: From Folklore to Flying Saucers*, (Chicago, Henry Refinery Company 1969).

example, the common, CEI sighting of a UFO as a travelling light is clearly related, if not identical to E 530.1 - Ghostlike lights. [13] Nevertheless, there is a problem in using the Stith Thompson and E. Baughman indexes because of the changing character of the societies from which the legends were collected and their motifs catalogued. Although French scholars such as Gabriel Vicaire were exploring the notion of urban folklore as early as 1886 and a decade earlier, in practice folklore was largely collected from lower-class and relatively uneducated rural communities, considered to be static, untainted by urban sophistication, and thus likely to preserve archaic remnants of ancient lore. [14] In contrast, the new folklore of flying saucers emerged in self-consciously modern, urban, technological cultures, whose imagery of machines and high technology defined the phenomenon.

The dichotomy between the two cultures is not absolute, however. Despite the rapid expansion of towns and industry during the 19th century, parts of the United Kingdom remained largely rural into the early 20th century, and folklorists were collecting traditional material from these agricultural areas up to the 1960s, though some of the material cited in their works may date from much earlier. The same is true of the United States, of course, and the Appalachians in particular have attracted interest since the days of Child as the repository of British folk traditions in an isolated, rural American society. It should come as no surprise then, that amongst the space-suited humanoids reported in these encounters are more traditionally folkloric types, such as the 'goblins' that assaulted the Sutton family in Kelly-Hopkinsville, Kentucky. [15] To explore the relationship between the rural folktale types recorded in the Stith Thompson and E. Baughman indexes and their translation into the technological folktale of the UFO, a sample of the fairy and supernatural motifs recorded in the folktales of two British rural areas, Somerset and Orkney and Shetland have been selected, as roughly representative of the type of rural, British society whose legendary lore was also transplanted into the New

World by the early British settlers in the 17th century.

It is possible to criticise this selection on a number of criteria. For example, it is possible that the UFO encounter narrative contains folkloric elements derived from the traditions of other areas in the United Kingdom which are strictly confined to these regions, and do not appear in those of the above samples. Furthermore, although the United States is an Anglophone country, its ethnic constitution has always been very diverse, including members of African and Asian nations, as well as other European peoples such as French, Germans, Swedes, Dutch and Spanish, as well as the indigenous First Nations. As a result, American folklore contains a diverse and culturally mixed range of motifs and imagery, complicated further by the fact that many of the early Contactees such as George King, the founder of the Aetherius Society, and George Adamski, were interested in oriental mysticism. As a result, there may be a marked oriental influence and parallels in UFO folklore, particularly the abduction experience. [16]

In fact, it is possible to list a number of the attributes of UFOs and their occupants and the corresponding motif in traditional fairy lore. These include:

Size: Fairies, and many UFO aliens, including the classic 'Greys', are smaller than adult men. A good example of the fairy features of some UFO entities are those reported from the Imjarvi Encounter in Finland, which were 90 cm (35") tall and with conical, though metallic helmets: Motif F 239.4.2. [17]

The grey skin colour of the now stereotypical alien abductors is mirrored in E 422.2.3, grey as the colour of returning dead. [18] This, however, is just one example of the way traditional motifs associated with the dead have also been assimilated into modern UFO lore, and some UFO encounters are far more like traditional hauntings than encounters with flesh and blood extraterrestrial entities. A particularly good example of this is the 'ghost that wore a spacesuit', whose disembodied head and shoulders appeared before a British NCO at Dalakia barracks in 1968. [19] This points to another, common motif in

fairylore, that amongst the fairies are human dead. [20]

Other, less common forms of the aliens also have their counterparts in traditional lore. The birdlike alien encountered by Betty Andreasson during her encounter is strikingly reminiscent of E 211.3: speaking bird. [21]

Alien behaviour too shows a marked continuity with fairy traditions. Motif F 261 - dancing fairies, can be seen in the report of two silver-suited entities dancing in the middle of the road reported by Mr. and Mrs Donathan in 1973. [22]

Related to the dancing motif are fairy rings on the grass, F 261, traditionally produced by the fairies during their revels, and to which Crop circles or 'UFO nests' can be assimilated. [23]

The courtship and marriage of particular, favoured humans by extraterrestrials, such as that Elizabeth Klarer are similar to F 300: marriage with fairy. [24]

The secret underground bases occupied by Greys and their collaborators in government, the military and industry have their prototypes in the traditional motifs F 721.1: underground passages; and is of the same type as F 211: Fairies live in hollow knolls. [25] The location of the underground alien bases as the source of valuable secret technology can be seen as being related to N 511: treasure in ground, particularly N 512 - treasure in underground chamber; F342: Fairies give people money; and F 244: fairy treasure. [26]

This may also be assimilated to the supposed biotechnological and genetic secrets held and revealed by the Greys with the rise of the information economy and genetic prospecting in the late 20th century. The strange, animal-human hybrids, products of the aliens' genetic engineering campaigns that populated these underground bases can be assimilated to E 423 - revenants in the form of animals, and E 291.2.1: ghost guards treasure. [27] The government's permission of the aliens to abduct and experiment on humans in return for technological favours is of a type as B 11.10 - human beings sacrificed to dragon, particularly as the aliens receiving these victims are frequently described as reptoids. [28] The association of such artificial hybrids with the aliens recalls motifs G 225 -

7. J. Vallee, cited in P. Cousineau, *UFOs: A Manual for the Millennium*, (New York, HarperCollins 1995), p. 151.

8. Vallee, *Magonia*.

9. P. Cousineau, *UFOs*, p. 152.

10. E. Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in the Celtic Countries*, (Oxford, OUP 1911), p. 53; cited in K. Briggs, *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1967), p. 172.

11. Scandinavian/Comparative Lit 331: Folk Narratives at University of Washington, at <http://courses.Washington.edu/folklore/Scand331>.

12. J. Harney, 'UFO Crash Retrievals - A Developing Myth', in *Magonia* 5 8, (1997), pp. 6-9.

13. K. Palmer, *The Folklore of Somerset*, (London, Batsford 1976), p. 176.

14. J.-B. Renard, 'Old Contemporary Legends: 19th-Century French Folklore Studies Revisited', *Foaltale News* 32, (1994), p. 1; 'Folklore (the Word)', in J. Simpson, and S. Roud, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore*, (Oxford, OUP 2000), p. 130.

15. 'Kelly-Hopkinsville' in J. Spencer, *UFOs - The Definitive Casebook. Sightings, Abductions and Close Encounters*, (London, Hamlyn 1991), p.38; 'Bulletproof Goblins' in A. Baker, *True Life Encounters: Alien Sightings*, (London, Millennium 1997), pp.88-91.

16. D. Sivier, 'Paradise of the Grey Peri: A Literary Speculation on Some Oriental Elements in the Abduction Experience', in *Magonia* 69, (1999), pp. 8-12.

17. 'Imjarvi Encounter', in Spencer, *Casebook*, p. 98; E.W. Marwick, *The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland*, (London, B.T. Batsford 1975), p. 210. 18. Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 175.

19. 'The Ghost that Wore a Spacesuit', Baker, *Sightings*, pp. 94-5.

20. Briggs, *Fairies*, pp. 58-65.

21. Betty Andreasson', Spencer, *Casebook*, p. 51; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 209.

22. 'Flutter/Danathan', Spencer, *Casebook*, p. 61; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 210.

23. Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 176.

24. 'Elizabeth Klarer', Spencer, *Casebook*, pp. 146-7; J. and A. Spencer, *True Life Encounters: Alien Contact*, (London, Millennium 1998), pp. 93-4; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 210.

25. Baker, *Sightings*, pp. 204-19; Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 176; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 210;

26. Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 212; Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 178; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 210; Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 176; Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 176.

27. Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 210, Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 175.



28. Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 209.

29. Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 177.

30. Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 210.

31. Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 210.

32. J. and C. Bord, *Life Beyond Planet Earth? Man's Contacts with Space People*, (London, Grafton 1992), p. 93; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 211.

33. 'Joe Simonton's Pancakes', Baker, *Sightings*, pp. 73-6; 'Joe Simonton' in Spencer, *Casebook*, p. 42; J. Keel, *The Mothman Prophecies*, (Liburne, IllumiNet Press 1991), p. 158

34. Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 176; Palmer, *Somerset*, p. 176; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 209.

35. Baker, *Sightings*, pp. 66-71; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 211; J. and A. Spencer, *Fifty Years of UFOs: From Distant Sightings to Close Encounters*, (London, Boxtree 1997), pp. 141-2; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 211.

36. Baker, *Sightings*, pp. 268-72; Cousineau, *Manual*, pp. 137-9; 'Kathryn Howard', Spencer, *Casebook*, pp. 94-5; J. Spencer, *Perspectives: A Radical Examination of the Alien Abduction Phenomenon*, (London, Futura 1989), pp. 130-144; Marwick, *Orkney and Shetland*, p. 210.

37. Spencer, *Casebook*, pp. 181-4.

38. J. Rimmer, 'The UFO as an Anti-Scientific Symbol', *Merseyside UFO Bulletin* 2, (1969), p. 4.

39. F.L. Baum, 'The Master Key', in C. Wilkins, *The Mammoth Book of Classic Fantasy*, (London, Robinson 1981), pp. 345-434; J. Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible*, (London, William Heineman 2004), pp. 181, 184 & 185.

40. J. Cohen, and I. Stewart, *Evolving the Alien: The Science of Extraterrestrial Life - What Does an Alien Look Like*, (London, Ebury Press 2002), pp. 170-186.

41. W. G. Walter, *The Neurophysiological Aspects of Hallucinations and Illusory Experience*, (London, Society for Psychical Research 1960), p. 6; B. Meheust, *Science Fiction et Soucoupes Volantes*, (Paris, Mercure de France 1978).

42. L. Picknett, and C. Prince, *The Stargate Conspiracy: Revealing the Truth behind Extraterrestrial Contact, Military Intelligence and the Mysteries of Ancient Egypt*, (London, Little, Brown and Company 1999), p. 272.

43. Picknett and Prince, *Stargate*, p. 280, 283.

44. Bord, *Planet Earth*, pp. 179-184.

45. Davies, O., *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press 1999), p. 294.

46. Davies, *Witchcraft*, p. 295.

47. J.M. Golby, and A.W. Purdue, *The Civilisation of the Crowd: Popular Culture in England 1750-1900*, (Stroud, Alan Sutton Publishing 1999), p. 128.

animals as servants of witches, and G 265.7 - witch controls actions of animals. [29]

The abduction of humans by the ufonauts can be compared with F 322: fairies steal man's wife; and the substitution of an android or simulacrum for the woman during her sojourn aboard the spacecraft a form of F 322.1(a) stick left as substitute for stolen woman. [30]

The hybrid children resulting from human-alien crossbreeding are a version of F 305: offspring of mortal and fairy. [31]

Episodes of missing time, or the experiences of Contactees such as Mario Restier, who was taken by people from Orion to their home world, a sojourn which lasted four months, but to him only seemed like three days, are related to F 377: Supernatural lapse of time in fairyland. [32]

Away from the benefits of alien treasure and technology given to the military and industrial complex, individual humans have also received presents of pancakes, such as those given to Joe Simonton by the 3.65m (5ft) tall occupants of the UFO he encountered at Eagle River in Wisconsin in 1961; and odd stones, like the 'moon potatoes' produced by Howard Menger, and to the TV presenter Clive Anderson by two Ufologists on British television. [33] These are modern counterparts of F 340: Gifts from fairies, and has obvious, though possibly superficial links with F 809 - fabulous or miraculous rocks and stones, particularly D 931: magic stone. [34]

Less benignly, the cattle mutilation phenomenon ascribed to cruel experiments by the alien visitors are clearly a version of F 366 - fairies harm cattle, though the repeated abduction of the human parents of hybrid children to hold and nurse their offspring aboard the alien can be seen as versions of type F372: Fairies take human nurse. [35]

Researchers have also explored the complex relationship and the apparent similarity between the alien abduction phenomenon and the Near Death Experience, which also raises the possibility that those alien abductions in which the abductee returns bearing a spiritual message for humanity, such as that of Kathryn Howard, are a variety of E 377: return from the dead to teach the living.

[36]

Despite these similarities and continuity however, there are also profound differences, which reflect the shift from traditional, paternalistic agricultural society to the mass, industrial society of mid- and late 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism, and changing gender roles and expectations. For example, the abducted spouse used for breeding purposes may be a husband as well as a wife, as in the notorious Villas-Boas case of 1957, while the abduction of the adult parents of both sexes to hold and nurse their alien babies reflects the disappearance of the children's nurse as a common fixture of the middle class family in the mid-20th century. [37]

The identification of the government and big business as the beneficiary of the various Faustian pacts made with malign and predatory alien civilisations like the Greys, rather than individual people, reflects the tensions engendered in the mass society of the 20th century. Governments are seen not only as actively working against the best interests of their citizens, but also as keeping the benefits of alien contact to themselves, so that the abduction mythology in this respect almost acts as a lurid symbolic form of the Marxist theory of surplus labour, where industry and the government expropriate the fruits of working class labour for themselves.

Regarding the mechanism by which such traditional, rural lore became transferred and embodied in the imagery of the new, technological society, there are a number of conduits that may be identified as such. For example, the traditional and literary fairy story gained renewed vigour during and after the industrial revolution as a reaction to the mechanistic values of technological society, in a manner which prefigured John Rimmer's later identification of the use of the UFO as an antitechnological symbol in the 20th century. [38] Moreover, in popular literature and entertainment of the day, Science Fictional themes could rub shoulders with ghosts and other exotic or supernatural beings in literature and on the stage. Thus, Frank L. Baum could include a Demon of Electricity amongst the fantastic characters in his novel, *The Master Key*, and the Edwardian stage magician,

John Nevil Maskelyne, as well as the matinee demonstrations of stage magic, also staged a full-length play based on Edward Bulwer Lytton's proto-SF novel, *The Coming Race*. [39] Scholars examining the appearance of the fictional aliens that populate much modern SF have pointed to the strong influence of the culturally iconic figures of traditional nursery lore about animals in defining these aliens' characteristics, and suggested that the UFO aliens now encounters by modern experiencers are comparative to the supernatural creatures of incubi, succubi, witches and ghouls that haunted the imagination of previous ages. [40] This is very much to be expected, as it has long been recognised by neurologists that the content of the hallucinations suffered by severe epileptics and schizophrenics are influenced by the cultural and personal background of the sufferer, including traditional myths and folklore, and also literature, thus supporting the contention of researchers such as Bertrand Meheust that literary SF also plays a powerful role in the construction of UFO aliens. [41]

At the level of esoteric religion, during the 19th and early 20th century too an increasing number of Spiritualist, Theosophical and Masonic intellectuals and mystics began turning to outer space as the source of their mystical communications. For example, Charles Stansfield Jones, one of the most important disciples of the British occultist and self-appointed 'Great Beast', Alistair Crowley, considered that Aiwass, the entity, which communicated the Book of the Law to his mentor, was an extraterrestrial, rather than merely discarnate entity. [42] For the Theosophical writer Alice A. Bailey, writing in 1922, human evolution was directed by 'intelligent forces of nature' on the 'inner planes of the Solar System', with the 'influences which produce self-consciousness in men' relayed to Earth via Saturn from a Masonic lodge on Sirius, which focused 'the energy of thought' from a distant cosmic centre. [43] In the 18th century, the Swedish mystic August Swedenborg visited inhabited alien worlds during his astral voyages, Allan Kardec during the compilation of his *Spirits' Book*

for received messages from the spirit world informing him that other planets than ours were inhabited, while Sherman Denton and 'Helene Smith' (Catherine Elise Muller) both recounted their memories of astral journey to Mars. In 1926 the veteran psychic investigator, Harry Price, sat with a medium, Mrs. St John James, who channelled messages from a Martian civilisation. [44] Thus, at a popular and elite level the extraterrestrials were linked and imagined as mystical entities, an view which may well have trickled down to influence Evans Wentz's informant from County Sligo.



Additionally, rural tradition itself remained far more vigorous than has previously been considered. Far from being a static, timeless environment, everything changed the rural villager during the 19th century. The railways brought greater communications, agricultural insurance meant that disease and crop or cattle failure no longer meant instant famine, while greater mechanisation and the centralisation of milk, butter and cheese production in commercial dairies rather than cottage butteries, and the replacement of a barter economy by a general store, meant that the face to face society which generated much of the tensions resulting in accusations of witchcraft simply ceased to exist. Owen Davies' study of the persistence of the belief in witchcraft after the Witchcraft Act in 1736 has demonstrated that belief in witchcraft remained strong amongst rural Britons into the early 20th century, long after the upper and middle classes had rejected such superstition. In his analysis, the belief in witchcraft declined because there was no longer a compelling economic and social need to identify witches as the causes of misfortune. [45]

Indeed, for Davies the persistence of astrology, UFO abductions and belief in psychic powers in the late 20th century forces scholars to re-evaluate the image of the past as a unique locus of irrationality and superstition. Rather than British society moving from a state of supernatural credulity to scientific rationality, irrational beliefs have merely been translated into different forms, as many people now feel bounded by the universe, rather than the limits of the immediate parish. [46] It is a conclusion which comparison of the common motifs in traditional ghost and fairy lore, and that of the UFO myth, bears

out, and is very much line with the introduction of industrial and mechanical imagery in other traditional tales during the course of the 19th century.

For example, *The Steam-Loom Weaver*, a comic ballad of the 1830s recounting the romance between an engine driver and a female steam loom weaver, was based on an earlier ballad of 1804, when cotton weaving was a domestic industry. In this version, the heroine works in her own home, and the lusty hero is an itinerant worker who visits her in order to repair it. The mechanisation of the lovers' respective occupations reflects the industrial society that had developed in the 30 years or so since its first publication. [47] It thus appears that fairy beliefs acted very similarly, persisting despite the lack of a compelling social need for them into the 20th century, until that need emerged in the late 1940s with the reaction against the technological horror of mechanised warfare, and for a plausible explanation, or framework for experiencing the new, enigmatic objects seen in the sky, whence they were translated into the new, legendary forms of alien contact and abduction.

## 25 YEARS AGO

**MAGONIA** 40p  
5  
1980



The autumn, 1980 issue of *Magonia* featured the beginning of a series by our sorely-missed friend and colleague, Roger Sandell, in which he looked at the world of conspiracy theorising "from conspirators to contactees". In the first part he looked at the growth of the idea of a world conspiracy above and controlling the normal human social orders and means of government Beginning with a reaction to the French Revolution

and the Enlightenment, these ran, via the Protocols of Zion, to the wide range of contemporary conspiracy theories, which Roger was to cover in the subsequent parts of this series.

UFOIN Investigator Les Maisey reported on the case of a Mr. Edward Gardner (pseudonym) whose life seemed to have been a continuous round of weird and disturbing experiences, including out-of-body experiences, ghostly visitations, demonic entities and poltergeist disturbances, amongst many others, as well as the odd incident which might or might not have been considered a UFO. In introducing this article, I made a point which I have repeated elsewhere, and bears repeating now: "Even if [these experiences have] no objective foundation, or even if [they] are a total fabrication by the 'percipient', [they are] important as a study of an apparently increasingly common psychological syndrome. In a context such as this, such labels as 'hoax' are largely irrelevant"

Elsewhere, Peter Rogerson' monumental INTCAT ground on through the 1960s, with the usual range of cases from a leprechaun in Berkshire to the Eugenio Siragusa telepathic contact in Italy, and an obscure little case in New England involving a couple called Betty and Barney Hill. I wonder whatever happened to them?

Our previous offer of **back issues** of *Magonia* and MUFOB proved very popular, and we have already run out of some numbers, so if you're still interested, write or email us first to check what's available. Meanwhile, in our move from 5 James Terrace to 5 James Terrace (far too complicated to explain) we have uncovered a supply of the totally prehistoric Merseyside UFO Bulletin which we can now offer to you, all at £2.00, post paid. (£1.50 for each additional copy)

MUFOB

Vol. 2, No. 6, November 1969: Looking back on the 60s; forward to the 70s

Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1970: ETH, a Look at the Alternatives

Vol. 3, No. 2, April 1970: Arthur Shuttlewood - "Great Truths"

Vol. 3, No. 3, June 1970: Death and Life of British Ufology

Vol. 3, No. 5, November 1970: Techniques for UFO Photographers

Vol. 3, No. 6, December 1970: UFOs, Alive and Well in Fairyland; Hoaxes.

Vol. 4, No. 2, June 1971: Ubatuba, Physical Evidence? The Sun Maiden

Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer 1971: John Keel Under Fire from Alan Sharp

Vol. 4, No. 6, Winter 1971: The Charlton Crater, ufological self-deception.,

Vol. 5, No. 2, 1972: New Directions for UFO Research

Vol. 6, No. 5, April 1974: 'The Phantom Helicopter'; INTCAT Part 6



# BOOK REVIEWS

ALL REVIEWS BY PETER ROGERSON, EXCEPT WHERE SIGNED OTHERWISE

**Bill Chalker. *Hair of the alien: DNA and other forensic evidence of alien abduction.* Paraview Pocket Books, 2005. \$14.00.**

This is what purports to be the full story of Peter Khoury and his alleged alien hair. For those who don't know this story, Peter Khoury is an Australian abductee who claimed that while off work with a head injury received during an assault at work, came home after driving his wife to work one day in July 1992 and fell asleep. He was woken up with a strange naked blonde woman crouching on his chest, and another Asian-looking woman in the room. The blonde dragged his head towards her breast, whereupon he bit her nipple off, which didn't seem to hurt her, but miffed the two so much that they promptly vanished. All of this seems to have taken place in some kind of out of the body experience in which Khoury viewed himself from outside. Feeling that something rubbery was in his mouth, Khoury got up for a drink of water, after which he went to the toilet, found urinating painful. Unrolling his foreskin he found a hair tightly wrapped around his penis. He carefully removed this and placed in a plastic sachet bag in his office.

He seems to have kept this sample for years, telling some people about it in late August 1992 and Bill Chalker, whom he had known since 1993, about this incident almost exactly four years later in July 1996. At some time in 1998 Chalker came into contact with an "invisible college" of biochemists, and in late 1998 and early 1999 they undertook a study of the mitochondrial (mt) DNA.

These results have proved to be controversial, but the one absolute certainty which emerged, assuming that the analysis was valid, was that this was not alien. There was not a trace of exotic organic compound which was not quite DNA, or even DNA having no genetic relationship to any terrestrial organism. No, what this examination showed was that the hair was human. What was unusual about it was that a blonde, apparently European, hair had a Mt DNA profile of a minority Chinese line. The so called expert biochemists make much of this, arguing that the possessor of such a profile must be a dark haired "Mongolian Chinese". This doesn't follow at

all, MtDNA only traces one genealogical line, that of your mother's mother's mother's mother's mother, back many generations. Now it is not unknown for someone with one European parent and one Asian to have fair hair. If the last Chinese ancestor was say a 4x great-grandmother, there she would be contributing 1/64 of the gene line. If all your other 4x great-grandparents were fair haired, then odds on so are you. Of course the last Chinese ancestor could have been a 6, 8, 10, 20, 30, 50 great-grandmother, still her MtDNA would be preserved though her genes were making next to no general contribution.

For example though both Princess Diana and her son Prince William are both fair, there are grounds for believing their MtDNA will be Indian

To add to the confusion the 'invisible college' claimed later to have undertaken a second test. Whereas the first test was taken from the hair shaft, this next was done on a sample from the soft hair root. This is claimed to show MtDNA from an Irish/Gaelic/Basque background. Clearly people can't have two mothers so there is something very dodgy here. Explanations might include that this is a composite hair from a wig made

of human hair, that one or both samples are contaminated, that the root sample is actually nuclear and not MtDNA, that there is something wrong with the whole study procedure. Only if all these were eliminated would more exotic possibilities, such as a very rare example of leaked paternal MtDNA (of which a case has been reported in the medical literature), or someone with a hair transplant.

If the actual MtDNA sample is indeed Irish. Scots or whatever and the Asian profile is due to contamination or misreading, then the mystery disappears, as there are plenty of Australians with such a background. The presence of Asian strains in MtDNA and Y chromosomes from people in Scandinavia has also been reported.

Of course one way to clarify all of this is for the hair to be independently tested. There are a growing number of laboratories which undertake DNA genealogy who would be just the organisations to do this. Independent study of the procedures used by "the invisible college" would also be needed.

The reader might wonder what to make of all this. Initially, like most people I had assumed that the claim was that the hair was a pubic hair acquired during sexual intercourse, and that if that was demonstrated Khoury's story might be a confused memory of a real sexual encounter, possibly with sex workers. This raised the predictable howl of protest when I raised it on UFO Updates. This is becoming rather academic however, for also on updates I got from Chalker the revelation that this was assumed to a head hair (much easier to come by than a pubic one), they really hadn't eliminated a hair from wig, and most astonishing of all they had

not conducted any tests to determine whether this was female or male hair!!

A revelation in this book makes this even more academic, because it now transpires that in about April-May 1992 Khoury had told another version of his story to two Australian ufologists, in this

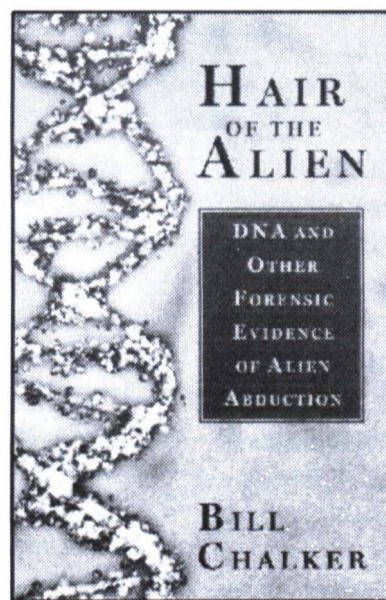
case the event dated back to about November 1991, the Asian woman was the one straggling him etc. Faced with this, Chalker twists all ways to try and avoid the obvious conclusion, eventually suggesting that this is a separate event which Khoury had somehow forgotten.

At this point we should perhaps have a little time line:

1. c. November 1991: First date of the claimed meeting with the two women.

2. November 1991: PK turns up at the inaugural meeting of UFOR(NSW). He tells about an alleged 1988 abduction (which seems to be a classic example of sleep paralysis) He becomes their abduction expert but finds them sceptical.

3. March 17 1992: His sister in law is murdered, allegedly by a



lover who committed suicide.

4. c. Mid April 1992: He gives an interview about alleged 1991 experience.

5. May 13 1992: He receives severe head injuries in a brawl at work (PK was a construction worker).

6. July 23 1992: Second date for encounter with women, and allegedly finds hair.

7. August 13 1992: He allegedly tells wife about the incident.

8. September 1992: He tells Jamie Leonard, a colleague in the UFO.

9. October 1992: Bud Hopkins visits

10. December 6 1992: Khoury and Leonard set up a support group.

11. Feb 28 1993: He tells support group about hair, gets little support

12. c. April 1993: Leonard leaves support group, claiming unhealthy dynamics, Khoury resigns a year later.

The reader will note it is at this point that Khoury enters the orbit of Bill Chalker though it is not for another three years until he reveals the story about the hair and that this is not analysed until 1998/9.

One of the arguments which believers in Khoury come up with is how to explain how this hair got wrapped around Khoury's penis. There is no real reason to answer this, because there is no actual evidence that this hair was ever there, only Khoury's assertion that it was. There seems little actual proof that the supposed hair seen by Leonard in 1992 was the same as that analysed in 1998/9, there is simply no unbroken provenance at all. It looks as though Khoury changed his story to fit round a sample he got hold of. There might be some evidence that this really is a composite, because Khoury's story included a reference to a second smaller hair, maybe a backup story if inconsistencies were found in the story, which due to the credulity of the investigators was never needed?

The most generous interpretation of this story might be that Khoury had some sort of genuine extraordinary experiences centred around sleep paralysis and hypnopompic hallucinations and had got hold of the hair to provide evidence against his

critics in the local UFO group. I am not entirely convinced that this is necessarily the whole story however.

Despite Chalker's claim that he has the backing of an 'invisible college' of credentialed and published scientists, evidence for this is hard to come by. The so called scientific report is an absurd document. Clearly there are parts which are of a technical nature I'm not qualified to comment on, but the strange use of language, the lack of understanding of the difference between mt and nuclear DNA, and above all the ridiculous anti-evolutionary posturing and ancient astronaut style speculation are suggestive of someone either fundamentally ignorant, or

someone pursuing some personal agenda. At first thought, this looks like a classical creationist agenda, but I am not sure that a fundamentalist Christian would endorse the actual details. It looks more like some curious UFO related cult; the interest in genetics and aliens seeding humans sounds rather like the

Raelians, while the ancient astronaut speculations suggest the Sitchinists. This will remain speculation so long as these people hide behind anonymity. It seems reasonable to work on the assumption that those who hide behind anonymity are those with something to hide.

Needless to say any suggestion that stories like this need to be rigorously and critically investigated using the techniques of private detectives or investigative reporters meets with the expected howls of derision by Chalker and fellow ufologists whose childlike credulity over this case are painful to behold. In this subject failure to work under the maxims believe nothing, trust no-one and keep your wallet tightly shut can only lead to absurdity.

I have not comment on the other wonder stories with which this book is padded out, because they add nothing much to the corpus of wonder stories we already possess. One story however of a contactee cum-

abductee from 1971, would, if the notes made about it could be proved to come from 1971 show how contactees were transforming themselves into abductees and that some of the modern motifs of baby farming were present at an earlier time.

**Richard Webster. *The secret of Bryn Estyn: the making of a modern witch hunt*. The Orwell Press, 2005. £25.00.**

Long time readers of Magonia or at least those whose memories go back 15 or 16 years will recall the articles by Roger Sandell and others, which were among the first to expose the myth of organised satanic abuse of children. Since the discrediting of these satanic abuse legends, the

focus of moral panics about child abuse became focused on children's homes. These stories appeared on the first sight to be much more credible. After all some child abusers did work in children's homes, and have pleaded guilty to the fact and these homes in

general were total institutions, rather cut off from the outside world. Through the 1990s allegations of such abuse multiplied.

Like many people I rather took it for granted that those convicted were indeed guilty and that a real scandal existed. Richard Webster however has argued that these cases like the satanic abuse scares were almost literal witch hunts. By focusing on one of the founding cases, that of the Bryn Estyn home and its satellites in Wales, Webster seeks to show how this panic was generated. For Webster the panic begins with just one central character, a female care worker who was having problems with her superiors and co-workers, and who began to make a series of damaging allegations. Webster seeks to show that these allegations changed over time, and grew in the repeated telling. This whistle blower's story became the centre of an investigation by the *Independent on Sunday*, which

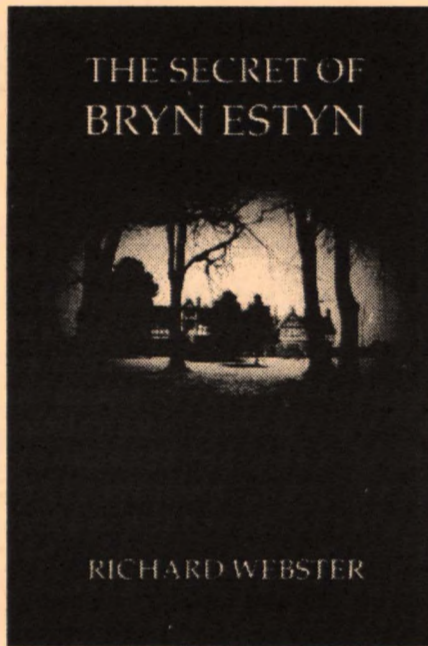
Webster holds to be particularly flawed.

The panic really got going when police started what are known as 'trawling' operations, in complete reversal to normal police procedure which starts with a crime and seeks to find out who committed it. In these cases the police started with someone accused or suspected of being an abuser and began to appeal for witnesses to come forward, using highly suggestive questions, of the "we know Mr Figgis was a child abuser, were you one of his victims?" kind. The accusers were not themselves children, as all these events were said to have happened years before; they were adults often with multiple problems, addictions and criminal convictions. In many cases even so, they seem to have provided such testimony only after some considerable pressure and being bribed with offers of substantial compensation. The result was that though in most cases there was no actual evidence, as opposed to assertion, that any crime had been committed at all, men were found guilty. Others - and here the parallels with the original witchcraft accusations are very close - accused colleagues to keep the heat off themselves. In some cases accusations were made by people who in actual fact had never even met the alleged perpetrator, their time at the home being different from his.

Of course a book reviewer cannot know whether Webster's version of events is the most correct one and the maxim of 'believe nothing and trust no-one' without much confirmatory evidence should apply with especial force here.

That being said, I doubt if any of these people really have been proven guilty beyond 'reasonable doubt' whatever that might mean, and it must surely be the case that Webster is right in saying that the normal legal assumption of innocent until proven guilty has been reversed here, those accused are assumed to be guilty unless they can actual prove they were innocent.

Again whatever the specifics of any one case, there is much in here of general interest on the role of whistle blowers, the presence of specific charismatic individuals at the centre of extraordinary allegations, the danger of invoking the 'bundle of sticks' argument or



assuring stories provide proof of anything and the ease with which people can make quite sincere sounding claims about things which turn out could not actually have happened.

Webster locates the particular fantasies discussed here as being rooted deep within western Christian culture, the idea of secret conspiracy committing the worst imaginable crime, those supposed to be protectors are secret destroyers (note the similarity with those women wrongly accused of smothering or shaking their babies to death). Child abuse has become the worst imaginable crime, because to a society with few shared values, children have become the last refuge of the sacred. In the case of the 'children in care' there are deep conflicts, for these are same youngsters usually demonised as young thugs, tearaways, junkies and hoodies. There are conflicts in how to raise young people, particularly across the generations. And beyond that there is the core witchcraft belief which constantly resurfaces in one terrible form after another, the belief that all the pain, heartache and suffering in the world is caused by the terrible 'others', and if only we could wipe these creatures from the face of the earth, all would be well.

**Peter Lamont. *The First Psychic: the peculiar mystery of a notorious Victorian wizard.* Little Brown, 2005. £16.99.**

The notorious wizard in Lamont's book is Daniel Home the medium. Lamont here tries for a balanced biography, avoiding what he sees as the one sided presentations of earlier biographers. These have either been by spiritualists presenting Home as a heroic figure possessing marvellous powers, or sceptics portraying him as a dyed in the wool villain and obvious fraud. Lamont notes that both sides have the habit of ignoring inconvenient facts.

That being said it is not clear how much Lamont has managed to add to the story, because Home remains an elusive character, known mainly through his own writings and those of his friends and enemies.

What has always emerged has been that Home in some ways was a surprisingly modern character, a media personality, famous for being famous as much

as anything else. Like a good number of modern 'celebrities' Home tried to get out of the box he had been placed in, trying his hand at acting, sculpting, reporting and so on. He even had a period in which he thought about being a monk, the 19th century equivalent of the drying-out clinic. Like many modern pop idols he was sexually ambiguous, he was star among the ladies, married an aristocratic Russian teenager, and for a time was the toy boy of an ageing widow but his relationship with two young Victorian men about town Adare and Lindsay was distinctly homoerotic. It was these two who were witnesses to some of his most amazing feats, such as the famous Ashley House levitation.

Like a rock star Home rose into the highest aristocratic circles; the rich and famous wanted to know him because he was the in thing. Others such as Robert Browning and a Dr Carpenter hated him with a vengeance, often going beyond the bounds of reason in their loathing.

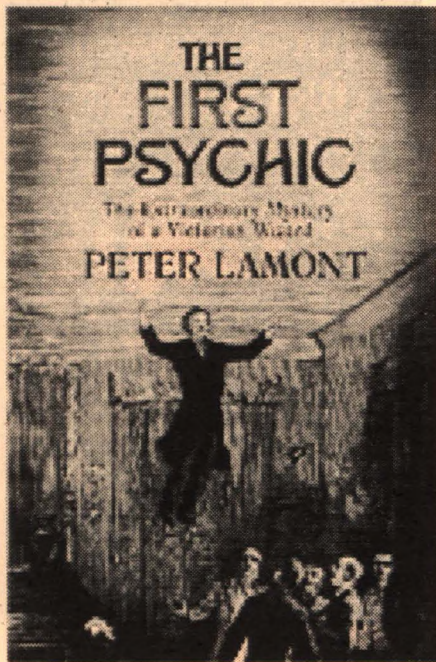
Was Home genuine? Here Lamont hedges, but finally suggests that he was indeed a charlatan whose methods of cheating were never found out, and that there is little good evidence that he was ever detected in fraud. Lamont concedes that in a way if Home were a charlatan it is almost as mysterious as if he were a genuine psychic. How could all those apparently sane people have been convinced that he hadn't cheated, could they all be wrong, and if so was does that say about eyewitness testimony for anything? But to say he was a genuine psychic doesn't get us any further forward either, for there is no definition of what 'psychic' means, or how any paranormal force operates. Either way there is an impenetrably mystery. Perhaps Home was the trickster, shaking people out of conventional ways of looking at the world.

He was scientifically tested by the likes of William Crookes, an

eminent scientist, but then Crookes also endorsed the young and pretty Florrie Cook and her remarkably look-alike materialisation Katie King. Was Crookes in on the act or just so bowled over by that he couldn't think straight? Who knows?

There are perhaps hints of what is going on which Lamont doesn't pick up on. Firstly, Home's life as the permanently unwell outsider, the lonely child living a world of his own imagination, pushed out by his parents to live with some sort of aunt. His father claimed to be and perhaps was the illegitimate son of the 10th Earl of Home (an ancestor of the former Tory Prime Minister), something else which might have set Daniel apart from his fellows.

There is a sense of a part being acted, maybe this is someone who never knew who he really was and therefore could take on many roles. Perhaps his performances were part of some sort of play reality, the séances places and times where boundaries could be broken down, and even the Empress of



France's dress played with by unseen hands. Perhaps there is something in the psychology of small, interdependent groups that we really don't quite understand. Perhaps some people can persuade those around them to believe anything, for example the British press a few months ago was full of the story of a guy who had persuaded several quite sane and educated people that he was a spy, and had taken over their lives for years at a time, keeping them almost prisoners by convincing them that their lives were in danger. Compared with that, convincing people they had seen miracles in the half light of a séance room doesn't seem all that difficult.

**Simon Danser. *Myths of Reality.* Alternative Albion, 2005. £12.95.** *Myths of Reality* is a nice introduction to social constructionist theory. That is what we take as common-place knowledge, our reality, is actually shaped by

culturally formed myths and assumptions, a position somewhat similar to a situationist world view, but generally academically and without the situ sense of fun. As a way of explaining the world it makes sense, but social constructionism is too often is promoted in the shrill, ugly language of post-modernism. Mr Danser avoids this and covers this counter-intuitive, but challenging theory in a clear and concise style. Common assumptions behind the accepted 'laws' of science, commerce, identity and language are tackled in a lively style, and from a decidedly radical-Left perspective

Over enthusiastic application of this view can be taken to extremes, and Mr Danser does tend to overstate the social-constructionist thesis at times, e.g. 'Eating is always a ritual, a re-enactment of profound cultural concepts'. Familiarity with social-constructionist theory should be essential for anyone taking a Fortean approach to reality, or anyone who is questions the world view put out by global media and political-industrial interests but who hasn't fallen prey to conspiracy theories, (which I suspect describes most *Magonia* readers). Indeed, much of Fort's writing could be interpreted as a proto-social constructionist argument. And the argument as to whether UFOs are culturally transmitted myths, or entities whose existence is denied because they challenge the myths of science, is a key Magonic debate.

But, although *Fortean Times* is cited a few times, *Myths of Reality* is not specially directed at *Magonia* / *Fortean Times* interests, though other books from this press (*Explore Folklore*, *Explore Mythology*, both by Bob Trubshaw, and *Explore Shamanism* by Alby Stone, and *Stonehenge* by Andy Worthington) look of particular interest to the *Magonia* reader.

Some references to contemporary films, TV series, e.g. *The Matrix* and *The Office*, will cause *Myths of Reality* to rapidly date, but if you want a good introduction to a theoretical approach to the world, which is, after all, essentially Fortean, then *Myths of Reality* is a very good accessible guide, with full references.

John Rowe

