



MUMMY DEAREST

INDONESIA'S ISLAND
OF THE LIVING DEAD

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+ GUILLERMO DEL TORO
ON CRIMSON PEAK

Crazy Love

PUZZLING PERVERSIONS AND
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CHARLY TRIBALLEAU / AFP / BETTY IMAGES



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Guillermo del Toro described his recent film *Crimson Peak* as a “classic Gothic Romance”, a genre that has been consigned to oblivion for nearly four decades. But what is Gothic Romance, what makes it different from horror and why did it fall into obscurity? **MARIA J PEREZ CUERVO** dons her best nightie and goes in search of answers...

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FORTEAN TIMES is produced for Dennis Publishing by Wild Talents Ltd. Postal address: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD.

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PUBLISHED BY DENNIS PUBLISHING,
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 London W1T 4JD, UK
 Tel: 020 7907 6000

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PRINTED BY POLESTAR BICESTER

DISTRIBUTION
 Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide by Seymour Distribution Ltd.
 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
 Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
 Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk
Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 788 1272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES
 12 issues: UK £39.98; EU £47.50

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$89.99. Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434. Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA. US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 500, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA. REST OF THE WORLD £55; US \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR
FINANCE DIRECTOR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
COMPANY FOUNDER

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Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
 Circulation 17,024 (Jan-Dec 2011)
 Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
 © Fortean Times: JANUARY 2016

editorial

Writers and readers

DREAMING OF MANDERLEY

Many of us of a certain age will remember when the shelves of WH Smith and the book racks at airports and hotels were filled with paperbacks whose covers showed nightgown-clad women running away from looming mansions or holding aloft candelabras as they descended gloomy, oversized staircases. They've since been displaced by waves of bonk-busters, bondage-busters, chick-lit and *Twilight*-y paranormal romances, but Gothic Romance was a hugely popular genre for many years. It's also, as our cover story demonstrates, one with fascinating roots in earlier female writing – from Ann Radcliffe to the Brontës to Louisa May Alcott – and in the structures of mythology to boot.

Unsurprisingly, this literary subgenre has largely been disparaged, written off – like other non-realistic forms – as feminised and thus beneath serious critical notice. Cinema has produced its own crop of Gothic Romances – most notably Hitchcock's Oscar-winning adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, starring the luminous Joan Fontaine as probably the most sympathetically observed heroine the misogynist maestro ever put on screen. More recently, Guillermo del Toro laboured long and hard to bring his own love letter to Gothic Romance, *Crimson Peak*, to fruition, and he kindly found the time to talk to us about his long involvement with the genre and the difficulties of reviving it. Gothic Romance certainly has a fascinating history, one worthy of investigation and appreciation; whether it has a future is another matter.



JUST YOUR AVERAGE FORTEAN?

Online market research/polling company YouGov is making the results of its large-scale consumer surveys available online. You can search for brands, bands, groups, products, political affiliations and, of course, magazines. Search for 'Fortean Times' and the website generates a 'YouGovProfile' based on the 70-odd FT readers in the database.

So, we know what sort of people you are, it would seem: Cat loving, middle-class, female lefties aged over 40 from Scotland, Wales and East Anglia, your heads stuck in books about the arts, science and culture (when you're not going to exhibitions or buying and flogging stuff on eBay) and presumably sustaining the odd injury from all that rugby you're so fond of. You're thoughtful, clever and geeky, although on occasion a bit neurotic, alienated and diffident. You read the *Guardian*, spend 50 hours a week online and don't watch a lot of

telly (making an exception for *Father Ted* and *The X-Files*). Your taste in music is surprising: Rammstein, the Cure and Tom Waits. You shop at Tesco and H&M, stuff yourself with Ben & Jerry's ice cream and wash it down with a few pints of Greene King IPA, before staggering home to catch up with Googlebox on BBC Iplayer or stick on a DVD of *Pan's Labyrinth* or *Quatermass and the Pit*.

We get the feeling that digging into the data a bit more – you can register for the 'professional version' – might provide more useful and nuanced results, even with such a small sample size; on the basis of this profile, though, you all sound a bit weird to be honest...
https://yougov.co.uk/opi/profiles/lite/#/Fortean_Times/demographics.

ERRATA

FT336: A prominent and embarrassing howler displayed boldly on the cover of our January edition. Anyone who hails from Staffordshire – or who had

read Rob Gandy's excellent article – would know that the Abbot's Bromley Horn Dance takes place each year in East Staffordshire and certainly not in Shropshire as our cover had it. Martin Jenkins wrote in to point this out, as did a great many of our followers on Twitter and Facebook. We offered a grovelling public apology to all Horn Dancers and the good folk of East Staffordshire on social media, and do so again here. File this one under 'too obvious for us to notice'.

FT336:22: Further geographical confusion, this time in an account of the flash-freezing of hundreds of herring in a Norwegian bay that left reader David Soltesz confused. The text refers to the island of Lovund, the picture caption to Vorlund. While there is a Norwegian oilfield called Volund out in the North Sea, there is no such place in Norway itself, and the correct location of the fish-freeze was Lovund.

David Sutton
 DAVID R. SUTTON

Bob Rickard
 BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
 PAUL SIEVEKING



Why fortean?

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

SEE PAGE 78

VOTED NUMBER ONE FILM AT FRIGHT FEST ★★★★★

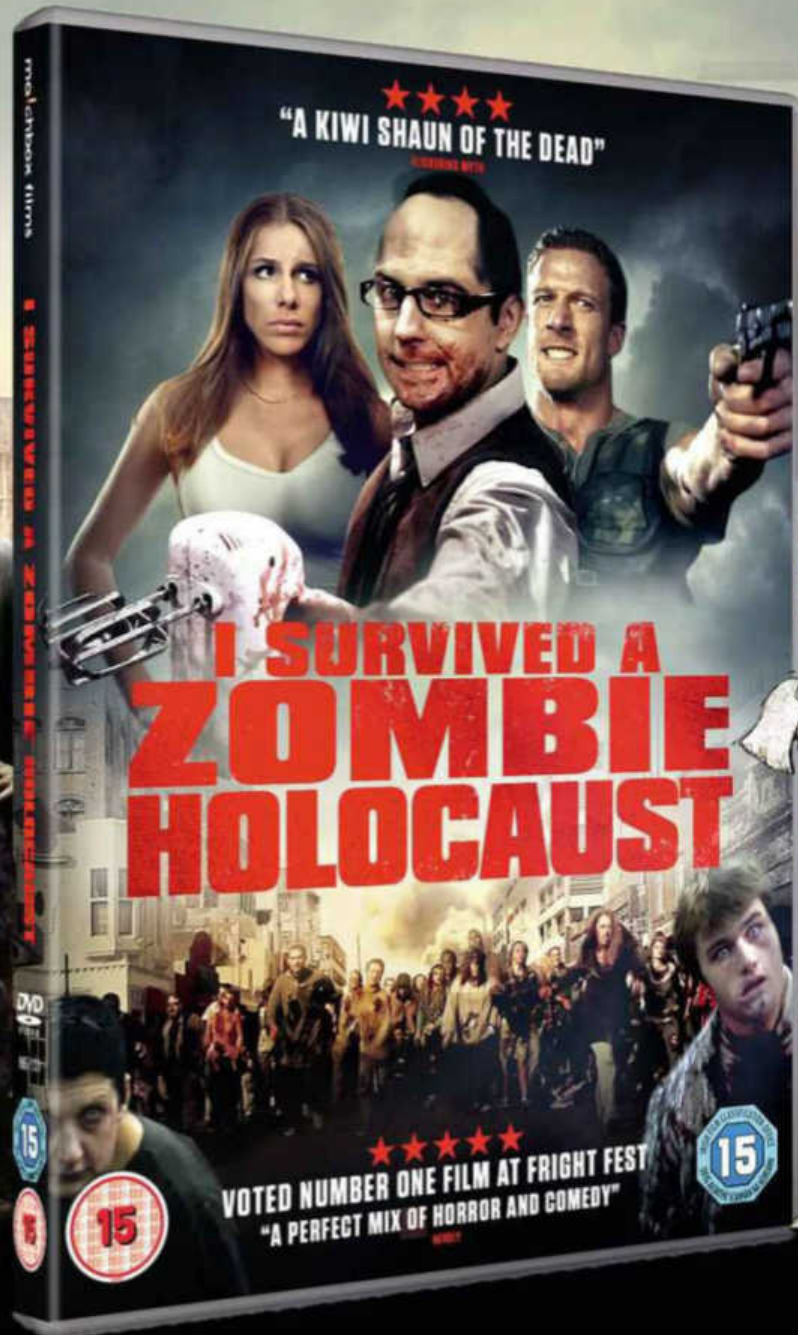
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strangedays

Israel's groovy mystery

Ancient ritual object, gilded foot massager or German New Age gizmo?

Sometime last summer, a suspicious package was found by a maintenance worker inside a building at an unidentified Jerusalem cemetery that serves as an important archaeological site yielding remains from the Roman, Byzantine, and Crusader periods. In accordance with security protocol, the maintenance worker alerted the police, who carried out a controlled explosion within the building to eliminate any possible threat from the package. The damage caused to the structure revealed a 19lb (8.6kg) object resembling a giant gilded rolling pin with eight grooves. Once it was deemed safe, police gave it to the robbery prevention unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). Amir Ganor, the head of the unit, joked that he thought it had been left here by extraterrestrials. For six months, Ganor and his team tried to figure out what it was. They learned from a jeweller that it is coated in 24-carat gold, and from an X-ray that it is solid metal. The IAA was mystified: was it an ancient ritual object? ("Ritual object" is traditional archaeological code for "Your guess is as good as ours").

On 22 December, the IAA passed the puzzle over to "the wisdom of the masses" on Facebook. After hundreds of suggestions – including foot massager, cattle insemination instrument, huge honey dipper, dough-rolling implement, currency maker, meat tenderiser, and cultic object used in the Temple – the right answer was provided by an Italian man named Micah Barak. It is a gilded "Isis Beamer", one of a range of "energetic protection" devices designed to ensure energy



ABOVE: The Israeli Antiquities Authority asked Facebook to help identify the object.

"The pharaohs used to wear one half of an Isis Beamer"

harmony in "your home, [at] your PC workstation and when travelling." Named after the Egyptian goddess of medicine, magic, and nature (rather than al-Baghdadi's mad murderers), it is intended for use by naturopaths and healers. It "can create a protective field of the type generated by spirit energies or meditation".

The Isis Beamer is sold online by the German firm Weber Bio-Energie-Systeme & Umwelt-Technologien. Eckhard Weber, who claims to have created the Isis Beamer, said: "The pharaohs used to wear one half of an Isis Beamer as a crown, so to speak, and it enabled them to receive supreme inspiration. [...] The

Isis Beamers are active around the clock. They can create a protective field of the type generated by spirit energies or meditation. However, such a field needs constant renewal. Before I had completed the first Isis Beamer and had it ready to wear as a pendant, I had meditated for a long time. After the Isis Orgone Beamer, I wanted to be able to offer a small portable device. The right inspiration arose from a crop circle motif. This was the shape I wanted to combine with the grooves. Then I added Sacred Geometry. Sacred Geometry describes what is behind physical existence. Crystals, metals and organic cells can all be derived from particular geometric bodies. Within physical existence, everything is based on just five bodies which are also called platonic bodies [...] I started out by distributing some prototypes of the Isis Beamer to various people, and the feedback I received was consistently positive. I would say that this happened because they deliver the results that their

shape encourages us to expect. In addition, there is a seven-page test survey issued by the Hagalis Institute, which states that the Isis Beamer is able to provide a protective shield against the influence of emissions from mobile phones."

"Orgone", of course, was the name given by maverick alienist Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) to etheric energy (life energy, Odic Force, chi/qi, etc.), the subtle, universal energy of life that exists everywhere and in all things. Reich himself said it was the equivalent of God. The original orgone accumulators were large boxes in which the patient or subject would sit.

Weber's company claims to have sold more than 50,000 Isis Beamers, which they began producing in the 1990s. The "Feng Shui devices" come in various sizes from 7.23cm (3in) long to 43.38cm (17in). Made of gold-plated brass, they range in price from £48 for the smaller, personal models, to a whopping £772 for use in "larger buildings exposed to a high dose of radiation". Ideal for "industrial halls, administration buildings, schools, furniture stores etc.," this top-of-the-range model "may harmonize even extremely strong geopathic and electromagnetic radiation fields."

So it's a New Age gizmo, but one mystery remains: who left it at the cemetery, and why? "We hope that those responsible... will contact us and inform us why it was buried in an ancient structure and to whom of the dead they wished to give positive energy," said Ganor. A spokesperson for Weber said that whoever left it "probably had the intention that the positive effects of the Beamer should contribute and support the peace process in Israel." Well, hope springs eternal, innit?

Jerusalem Post online, 22 Dec; Times of Israel, Christian Science Monitor (online), D.Mail, 23 Dec 2015; phantomsandmonsters.com, 11 Jan 2016.



**FROM THE
XXX FILES**
More puzzling
perversions and
strange sexual
practices
PAGE 8



**LOCAL
HAUNTS**
The ghost-
ridden inns and
chuchyards of
Bishop's Stortford
PAGE 20



**YOU PUT A
SPELL ON ME**
Exploring the
world of the
thoroughly
modern witch
PAGE 24

The Conspirasphere

NOEL ROONEY fixes a beady eye on the militia takeover of a federal building on an Oregon nature reserve and ponders public perceptions of protest...

The militia takeover of a federal building in Burns, Oregon, USA, has provoked a lot of online reaction (certainly more so than in the mainstream media, which seem intent on ignoring the matter altogether). In the – eternally optimistic – ‘this is it’ section of the religious right wing, it is seen variously as the start of the civil war many right-wing ‘patriots’ have been waiting for, or the beginning of the Apocalypse itself. There are dark mutterings about a federal colonisation of the whole area to exploit reserves of natural gas, silver and even arsenic (marketable how, one wonders) and so stave off the looming economic crash predicted by many in the right-wing Christian community and further abroad.

Ammon Bundy (below), the ringleader of the group, is carrying on something of a family tradition; he is the son of Cliven Bundy, who last year was involved in an armed stand-off with police and National Guards. The building, in the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (‘Malheur’ could be read as ‘bad time’, an ominous portent, perhaps?), is usually unoccupied, and is not exactly a government hub; nonetheless, some commentators are gleefully predicting another Waco.

The action is ostensibly in support of Dwight and Steven Hammond, father-and-son ranchers who were recently convicted of arson on federal property; the Hammonds’ lawyer has publicly stated that the Hammonds do not wish to associate themselves or their case with the protest, however. They aren’t the only ones backing away from Bundy and his confederates: even members of the militia movement are reluctant to get involved. The Oath Keepers, a large militia umbrella organisation, has warned its members to stay away (although I have noticed a few Oath Keepers T-shirts and stickers among the protestors).

Other commentators have been openly contemptuous of the Bundy affair, and some have pointed out

that if these people were black, or Muslim, the media outcry would have been huge, and the ‘protestors’ would quickly have been labelled terrorists. The government’s reaction might also have been different; the softly, softly approach currently in place would likely not have been offered to Muslim activists, or armed black protestors.

One thing that struck me about Bundy et al’s public pronouncements is how they see themselves as radicals rather than extremists. They claim to be upholding the US Constitution, and reclaiming the state for the people; when you are occupying a government building and pointing your guns at the police, that might seem a delicately paradoxical form of propriety. But then this is a conceptual irony common to marginal or extremist groups, and to many conspiracy theorists; the outliers see themselves as the super-norm, and are confused at the lack of popular support for their causes or their actions. It also reminds me that extremist groups, particularly religious extremists, resemble each other more than they resemble the mainstream of their own faiths. That’s to say, Christian extremists are far more similar to Muslim extremists than they are to mainstream Christians. Moreover, religious fundamentalists are very partial to conspiracy theories, even those that would seem to contradict articles of their own faith; and that characteristic is shared across religious divides.

I’ll write more about the patriot movement and its origins at some point; it’s a fascinatingly (and occasionally dangerously) eldritch corner of the Conspirasphere.

www.prisonplanet.com/why-the-feds-wont-crack-down-on-the-oregon-standoff-for-now.html;
<http://beforeitsnews.com/alternative/2016/01/full-story-on-whats-going-on-in-oregon-militia-take-over-malheur-national-wildlife-refuge-in-protest-to-hammond-family-persecution-video-and-much-more-3270328.html>



EXTRA! EXTRA!

**FT’S FAVOURITE HEADLINES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

**Brain surgeon makes
cut for top book prize**

D.Telegraph, 19 Nov 2014

**Manchester hedgehog
999 call irresponsible,
say police**

BBC News, 23 Dec 2014

**Shefford cafe's singing
polar bear probed
over noise**

BBC News, 15 Dec 2014

**Vegetables force emergency
landing of jet in Shannon**

Irish Times, 16 Dec 2014

**Man bit dog then
died in One Stop**

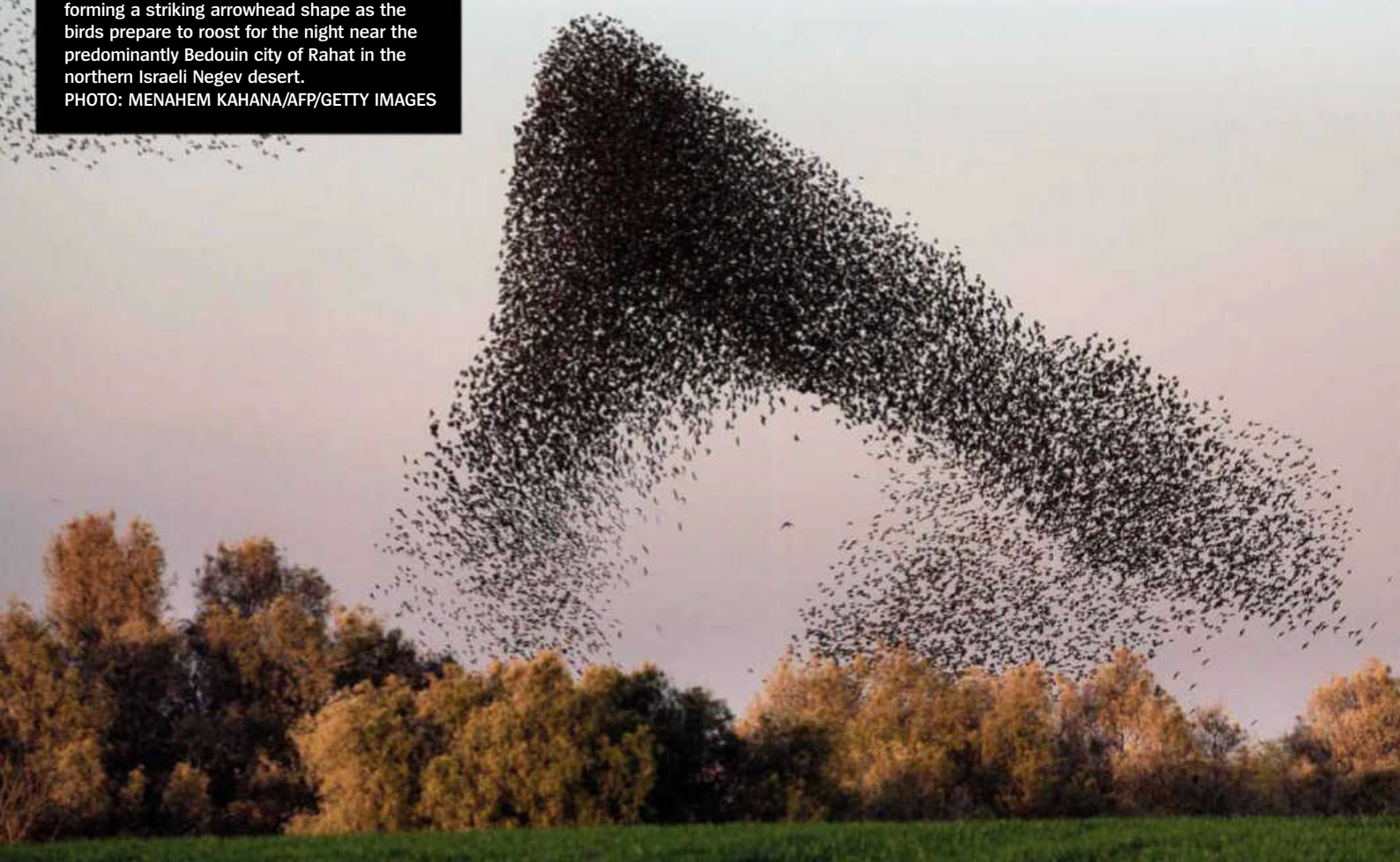
Cambridge News, 17 Dec 2014



Brighton Argus, 13 Dec 2014

AERIAL ART

A massive murmuration of starlings is seen forming a striking arrowhead shape as the birds prepare to roost for the night near the predominantly Bedouin city of Rahat in the northern Israeli Negev desert.
PHOTO: MENAHEM KAHANA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



TAPIR TALENT

A Brazilian tapir spreads paint on a canvas in the Cerza Zoological Parc, Hermival-les-Vaux, northwestern France. The tapirs created the paintings to celebrate World Tapir Day on 27 April 2015. The zoo planned to sell the animal artworks, with proceeds going toward the species' conservation.
PHOTO: CHARLY TRIBALLEAU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



DOUBLE-TAKE

This seven-week-old skewbald foal appears to be two horses in one, as the white hair on its neck and shoulder makes the perfect profile of a horse. The pattern is such a work of art that the foal's owners at Fyling Hall School in Fylinthorpe, North Yorkshire, have named it Da Vinci, or Vinny for short. *D.Telegraph, 18 July 2015.*
PHOTO: ROSS PARRY/SWNS GROUP



COLOSSAL CRAB

This aerial picture taken on 24 September 2015 above the Knokke-Heist beach shows an art installation by photographer Wim Tellier entitled "Time" and depicting a giant crab.
PHOTO: DAVID STOCKMAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

SIDELINES...

COSMIC JOKER STRIKES

A 19-year-old youth was arrested on 4 December for trespassing and resisting arrest after entering a secure area of the Budweiser Brewery in St Louis, Missouri, and having an altercation with security personnel. His name was... Bud Weisser (yes, really). The Gang of Fort is reminded of Robert Hershey, who drowned in a vat of chocolate in Pennsylvania in 1974 [FT31:37]. (Hershey's is the largest chocolate manufacturer in North America.) *Fox2now (St Louis), 4 Dec 2015.*

TIT FOR CAT

Two women in Götaland, Sweden, have been banned from keeping pets after one admitted breastfeeding her cat. The pair also wheeled their cats around in pushchairs, spoon-fed them in highchairs and gave them dummies to suck. *Sun, 5 Dec 2015.*

FRANKENVIRUS

French researchers have discovered a 30,000-year-old giant virus in the Siberian permafrost. To qualify as a giant, a virus has to be longer than half a micron, a thousandth of a millimetre. *Mollivirus sibericum* ("soft virus from Siberia") comes in at 0.6 microns. It is the fourth type of prehistoric virus found since 2003. Before researchers attempt its reanimation, they will verify that it cannot cause animal or human disease. These ancient viruses are not only bigger, but far more complex genetically than most viruses circulating today. *Phys.org, 8 Sept 2015.*



MARTIN ROSS

Wilder shores of love

More obscure objects of desire from our bulging sex files



ABOVE: The unidentified man caught on CCTV having sex with a Porsche. BELOW: The children's slide in Stoke Green Park that Christopher Johnson found so arousing.

- Ralph Bishop, 53, was found by police with his trousers around his ankles "interfering" with a tractor parked in a field outside Saxmundham in Suffolk. He was arrested on suspicion of outraging public decency, and admitted to having had sex with around 450 tractors all over the Suffolk countryside. When officers searched his terraced home they found a collection of more than 5,000 tractor images on his laptop. The photos showed Bishop had a special desire for John Deere and Massey Ferguson tractors, particularly green ones. Alas, this story by "Hugh Dunnett" in the *Suffolk Gazette* (20 Oct 2015) was too good to be true – literally. It's a satirical news site. *D.Star, 21 Oct 2015.* However, vehicles are sometimes objects of lust, as chronicled in these pages: a 20-year-old was erotically obsessed with his Austin Metro [FT73:14], and Edward Smith of Washington allegedly had sex with 700 cars [FT240:22, 331:10].

- Jackie Walker, 66, and her 15-year-old granddaughter, looking out of a bedroom window at 1:30am one night in late November, witnessed a naked



man sitting under a street lamp and trying to have sex with the tow bar of a camper van. He lowered himself onto the metal tow ball of the vehicle on a busy residential street in Newquay, Cornwall. Mrs Walker called the police, who let the man off with a formal warning, as it was his first offence. *Plymouth Herald (online), 4 Dec 2015.*

- An unidentified man was caught on CCTV on 10 May 2015, copulating with a Porsche somewhere in Thailand. After trying to go doggy style in the tailpipe he backs off, clutching his groin – maybe he burned his goolies on the hot tailpipe. He then moves to the front, sticks

his rod in the grill of the hot rod, and starts working it. It must have been awhile since he satisfied his auto-erotic needs, as he comes pretty quickly. Finally, in post-coital afterglow, he returns to the back to lie down and cuddle the car. *Coconuts Bangkok, 11 May 2015.*

- A sex pest addicted to guzzling petrol was freed from jail and went straight to a garage for a gallon of unleaded. Robert Stephens, 23, from Oxford, was nicked on the forecourt after defying an ASBO banning him. He previously got six months after being lewd to schoolgirls. *Sun, 13 May 2015.*

- Christopher Johnson, 46, was caught simulating sex with a playground slide in Stoke Green Park, Coventry, at 10.45pm on 18 August. Magistrates heard the parking attendant had a previous conviction for a similar offence in July 2014, when he undressed and performed a sex act on top of a slide in a different park in the city. He was banned for three years from any location with a slide. He was also fined and will undergo an 18-month sex offender treatment programme. "It's always been a fetish of mine," he told the *Sun*. "I wanted to feel the metal, lie on it and get turned on. I made the mistake of taking it into the public. The Devil got the better of me – I had eight or nine drinks." (*London Eve. Standard (online), 22 Sept; Sun, 22+23 Sept 2015.*)

- A 33-year-old man was walking down a road in Kwazakhele township in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, on 5 May 2015 when a black BMW stopped and three women in their 30s asked him for directions. As he was telling them which way to go, one of them pulled out a gun and forced him to get in the car. They drove about 300 miles (480km), fondling him in the back seat,



GIANLUIGI GUERGINA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

but unsurprisingly he was not turned on. Mncedi Mbombo, a police spokesman, said: "They parked and fondled him. They gave him something to drink before they raped him – liquid from a bottle. This got him aroused quickly though he was still scared and didn't want to have sex." The women allegedly each had their way with him then put his semen into plastic bags, which they placed in a cool box before they let him out of the car and sped off. When he complained to the police, the officers on duty mocked him. An investigation into the alleged rape was opened, but the man could not remember the car's number plate. "This is really confusing to us because we have never heard of such a thing before," said Mncedi Mbombo. The Gang of Fort, however, recalls an identical assault in (if memory serves) Zimbabwe – but the report currently eludes us. *Times, Independent, Sun, 8 May 2015.*

- In September, South African police arrested a 58-year-old Dane, subsequently named as Peter Frederikson, after finding 21 pieces of women's genitalia stored in plastic bags in a freezer at his house in Bloemfontein, where he owns a gun shop. Police also discovered anaesthetic and surgical implements. One of his victims alerted the police, who have appealed for others to come forward. At the time of the report, it was not known if the body parts were from 21 different women, how the man committed the 'assaults', or if the women were dead or alive. According to an interview last summer, Frederikson said his interest in circumcision started 20 years ago when he met the notorious 'penis doctor' Jørn Ege. Frederikson has apparently been on the run from the Danish police for several years. He fled the country after he was sentenced to six months in prison in 2010 for illegal weapons possession. *[AP] 19 Sept; cphpost.dk, 21 Sept 2015.*

- In July 2015, hundreds of phallic sex toys were found hanging from power lines across Portland, Oregon. Well, it makes a change from trainers. The large



white and bright orange dildos appeared to have been strung together in pairs. A spokesman for public utility Portland General Electric said he did not believe the rubber products posed a fire hazard. "You could spot them in several intersections and you could see all sorts of reactions to them," said Lucila Cejas Epple. "Some would blush, others would laugh, and most would take photos." *[R] 13 July 2015.*

- "Finland is the last bastion of bestiality, where a person can legally have sex with an animal, as long as the animal is not harmed," said Minna Ruotsalo of the Ministry of Agriculture, talking to reporters in Helsinki. "Finland legalised bestiality in 1971 because it was thought that criminalising the act was not the right way to deal with people who might suffer from mental illness, or who are simply lonely. It was



MARICOPA COUNTY SHERIFFS' OFFICE

TOP: Peter Frederikson appears in court; don't ask what's in the plastic bags. ABOVE: Michael Crawford and the miniature horse that trapped him in a police sting.

also permitted in Denmark until this year, but Denmark did not want to be the last Nordic country to allow bestiality, and there was a suspicion that animal brothels were operating, so they have now criminalised it. In Finland we want to promote legislation founded on respect for the intrinsic value of an animal, but a person can engage in sexual intercourse with an animal as long as it cannot be proved that the animal has been treated too roughly or cruelly." *Yle News (Finland), 14 July 2015.*

- There were 105 cases of the maltreatment of horses in Switzerland in 2014 – 10 per cent of which involved people having sex with them, an increase on previous years. There are an estimated 110,000 horses living on 18,000 Swiss farms. Experts estimate that 10,000 Swiss people (gender unspecified) are "predisposed" to zoophilia. The number of unreported horse abuse cases is probably much higher than reported, given that so many people in the country are involved with equestrian activities. *New York Post (online), 27 Nov 2015.*

- A man who flew across the US to have sex with a miniature horse was arrested after being caught in a sting. Michael Crawford (no, not that one) allegedly organised the rendezvous online with a sheriff's deputy posing as the horse's owner. The deputy picked up Crawford, 68, at Phoenix airport, took him to see two horses and then arrested him on bestiality charges. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 7 July 2015.*

SIDELINES...

WOO WOO WOOKEY

Security guard Stephen Wheeler, 45, lasted eight days at Wookey Hole (a cave in Somerset), patrolling the new chamber 20 with his Rottweiler Sherman. The dog refused to enter the chamber while Wheeler felt he was being watched and his torch batteries would suddenly go flat. "You would hear noises but no one was there," he said. Three days after he left, thieves kicked in the entrance door and stole £400 cash and a charity box. *Metro, 29 Oct 2015.*

SHELL SHOCK

A perfectly spherical hen's egg sold for £480 on eBay in aid of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust. Kim Broughton, 44, found one of her hens – now renamed Ping Pong – had laid the round egg in her garden in Latchington, Essex, on 17 February – Pancake Day. *Sunday Telegraph, 1 Mar 2015..*

INVADED BY BEARS

Throughout September, the inhabitants of Luchegorsk (pop: 20,000) in the far east of Russia, close to the Chinese border, were afraid to open their doors as 36 Asian black bears roamed the streets, with reports of two men being wounded. Several bears stormed two beehives and ate all the honey. Authorities had to shoot at least two of them. The invasion was blamed on a lack of food in local forests. *D.Mail, 4 Sept; Guardian, 5 Sept 2015.*

BLOOD RAIN

Last autumn, residents of several villages in northwest Spain noticed that their water had turned a gory shade of red. Speculation blamed everything from contaminants dropped from aeroplanes to biblical plagues, but research at the University of Salamanca showed the tint was caused by microscopic freshwater algae called *Hæmatococcus pluvialis*. These produce a red pigment when stressed – but are virtually absent from that part of Spain, so probably hitchhiked there on the wind. Bacteria in the Chromatiaceæ family may have caused similarly blood-red water in a Texas lake in 2011. *Livescience.com, 12 Nov 2015.*

SIDELINES...

ALCHEMICAL VANDAL

The summit stone of Scafell Pike in the Lake District, at 3,209ft (978m) England's highest peak, has been defaced by verses from *The Emerald Tablet of Thoth*. This ancient philosophical text, supposedly by Hermes Trismegistus, was first documented in a seventh or eighth century Arabic book. The graffiti artist added "Richard Bennett 2015". The National Trust will try to erase the text. *D.Telegraph, 31 Oct 2015.*

CAT EATER

"The meat of a cat is pleasant and easy to digest," said Martin Buhlmann, 72, on Swiss TV. "It tastes better than rabbit. It is as ethical as sushi or seafood." Eating cats and dogs remains legal in Switzerland, despite frequent protests by animal lovers. There is even a recipe for kittens with thyme and rosemary. *D.Mail, 3 Nov 2015.*

FUSSY EATER

The carnivorous pitcher plant *Sarracenia* has shown itself to be a natural enemy of the bee-killing Asian hornets (*Vespa velutina nigrithorax*) spreading across Europe since 2004. Romaric Perrocheau, head of a botanical garden in Nantes, western France, found a *Sarracenia* stem full of dead hornets. The selective trap appears to be a European adaptation, as Asian hornets do not exist in *Sarracenia*'s native Massachusetts. Crucially, the plant poses no threat to bees or wasps. *BBC News, 10 Aug 2015.*

NO SEX PLEASE

A court in Tours, France, set a European precedent last August by granting a 64-year-old the right to register as "gender neutral". The unnamed person was born with both male and female genital organs. Some 1.7 per cent of babies have this condition, but doctors normally operate straight after birth and pronounce the child a girl or boy. *D.Telegraph, 15 Oct 2015.*

MEDICAL BAG

IS WI-FI KILLING US SOFTLY, OR IS EHS JUST THE TINFOIL HAT OF OUR GADGET-RIDDEN TIMES?



ABOVE: Marine Richard has chosen a reclusive existence – with no electricity – in the mountains of southwest France.

BELOW: One of the characters in *Breaking Bad* spin-off *Better Call Saul* is an EHS sufferer with a protective 'space blanket'.

ELECTROMAGNETIC HYPERSENSITIVITY

• Last June, a court in Toulouse awarded a disability grant to a woman claiming to suffer from a debilitating allergy to electromagnetic radiation from everyday gadgets such as cellphones. The applicant, Marine Richard, 39, hailed the ruling as a 'breakthrough' for people afflicted by electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS). The condition is not recognised as a medical disorder in most countries, including France, but sufferers insist that exposure to mobile phones, wi-fi routers, televisions and other gadgets cause them anything from mild discomfort to life-ruining disability. Scientific studies have found no evidence linking electromagnetic exposure to the symptoms – tingling, headaches, fatigue, nausea, or palpitations.

Richard, a former radio documentary producer, has opted for a reclusive life in the mountains of southwest France, in a renovated barn without electricity, and drinking water from the well. The Toulouse court decided she can claim a disability allowance – about 800 euros (£600) per month for an adult – for

"It was like a deep burning sensation in my face and jaw"

a period of three years. The ruling accepted that her symptoms prevented her from working, but stopped short of recognising EHS as an illness. Her lawyer Alice Terrasse said the ruling could set a legal precedent for "thousands of people" concerned.

Sarah Dacre of the charity

Electrosensitivity UK says that four per cent of Britons (about 2,500,000 people) are severely affected by EHS, a number set to rise as we rely increasingly on gadgets. The World Health Organisation lists EHS as a condition, but in 2005 declared that there is "no scientific basis" for linking the symptoms to electromagnetic exposure. Sweden and Germany have, however, classified it as an occupational disease. Double-blind scientific trials, where neither the patient nor researcher was aware whether they had been exposed to electromagnetic waves, have generally found no





link to the symptoms, and many experts ascribe the condition to a phobia. Some believe EHS might be triggered by the so-called 'nocebo' effect – the placebo effect in reverse – when people feel unwell because they believe they have been exposed to something harmful. In one study, just watching a documentary about EHS led people to feel unwell. [AFP] 26 Aug 2015.

• “Brain fog. That’s my worst problem,” said Suzanne Hoyt. Nothing prepared her for the rush of symptoms that she suddenly developed after she installed wi-fi throughout her New York apartment. “Headaches, perspiration, pain in my jaws and my heart. It’s like physical expansion of the heart. I started to be very uncomfortable, and I didn’t know what it was. It was like a deep burning sensation in my face, in my nose, my jaw.”

Dr David Carpenter, an environmental scientist, said the scientific link between wi-fi and health was clearly emerging. “There is a body of evidence that is strong. It’s not 100 per cent understood, but it’s strong evidence that this is a real syndrome that causes real harm to real people.” He said that it is a significant problem for about five per cent of the US population, many of whom have no idea that wi-fi is to blame. CBS News (NY), 20 May 2015.

• In the United States, an entire community – the ‘electrosensitives’ – share tips on how to cure themselves, and have clustered in the small town of Green Bank, West Virginia, where wi-fi is outlawed to prevent interference with the National Radio Astronomy Observatory. The TV show *Better Call Saul*, a spin-off of *Breaking Bad*, depicts one of its characters as a recluse with EHS, who wraps himself in a space blanket to ward off mobile phone signals. The tinfoil hat trope – now a metaphor for conspiracy theorists in general [FT334:5] – goes back at least to 1927, when the hero of a short story by Julian Huxley claimed that “caps of metal foil” could block the effect of mind control. D.Telegraph, 2 Dec 2015.



ABOVE: Jackie Lindsey in her “demented beekeeper” protective suit.

• EHS has left Peter Lloyd, 42, confined to the sofa in his Cardiff home. All electrical equipment gives the ex-fitness instructor a headache, so he uses candles, and a gas cooker to heat water for washing. Western Mail, 17 Oct; Sun, 18 Oct 2014.

• Stephanie Russell, 72, another EHS sufferer, has painted four coats of anti-radiation paint on both the inside and outside of her home in Steyning, West Sussex, in an attempt to keep out radiation from neighbours’ wi-fi and passing mobile users. She first felt ill when living near a phone mast a decade ago. Visitors are not allowed to bring any electronic devices inside her house as she says their signals cause her head to pulse. D.Mail, 22 Oct 2014.

• Jackie Lindsey, 50, lives as a recluse in rural Wimborne, Dorset. She claims she started suffering from EHS eight years ago and gets shooting pains in the eyes, vertigo, rashes and cardiac arrhythmia if exposed to power sources. She can’t watch TV and uses candles for light and gas for cooking. She can’t use a telephone landline because the magnetic fields leave her deaf. Even someone using a mobile phone near her might bring on an anaphylactic shock. To go shopping

she wears a protective suit that makes her look like “a demented beekeeper”. Sun, D.Express, 4 July 2015.

• Jenny Fry, 15, hanged herself after her life was made a misery by EHS, according to her mother Debra at an inquest on 30 November 2015. Jenny was found in woodland near her home in Chadlington, Oxfordshire, on 11 June after texting a friend saying she intended to kill herself. Mrs Fry said her daughter suffered from tiredness, headaches and bladder problems as a result of wi-fi connections at Chipping Norton School. She had started showing signs of EHS in November 2012; the closer she was to a wireless router, the worse she felt. Mrs Fry removed the wi-fi from the family home, but Jenny continued to be ill at school in certain areas. Mrs Fry then attempted to persuade the head teacher of wi-fi’s dangers, but he remained sceptical. The inquest also heard that Jenny previously spoke of suicidal thoughts in November 2014 following the death of close friend Tom Boomer. D.Telegraph, 1 Dec 2015.

For more on electromagnetic hypersensitivity, see George Binning’s “Friends aren’t electric” FT292:38-40, and also FT86:16, 132:20, 142:14, 224:10, 292:38-40.

SIDELINES...

PORCINE PRODIGIES

Yang Jinliang, a resident of Tianjin in China, adopted a piglet with two heads and three ears after he spotted it near Yufo Temple in Xinkou town. Back in 2013, a two-headed, three-eyed piglet was found in Nanchang, Jiangxi province. Even earlier, a piglet with two mouths and two noses was born to a mixed-breed mother pig in Yunlin, Taiwan. shanghai-ist.com, 29 Aug 2015.

HEART LAID TO REST

The heart of Queen Marie of Romania, granddaughter of Queen Victoria and wife of King Ferdinand I, is to be laid to rest in a palace in the Carpathian Mountains. Enclosed in a small silver casket, it will lie on a plinth behind the couch on which she passed away on 18 July 1938. She had wanted her heart to be placed in a specially built chapel in Balci on the Black Sea, but the region was returned to Bulgaria in 1940 and the royal family was forced to move the heart. (Queensland) Courier-Mail, 26 Sept 2015.

THEY’LL GO FAR

Two five-year-old Russian boys dug their way out of their kindergarten in the city of Magnitogorsk in the Urals region and walked 2km (1.2 miles) to a car showroom, intending to buy a Jaguar sports car (though they had no money). A female driver noticed the unaccompanied boys and drove them to a police station. They had prepared their escape for several days, digging a hole under a fence using spades from the sand pit. [AFP] Komsomolskaya Pravda, 8 Sept 2015.



MARTIN ROSS



CURSED HOUSE

Rapper 50 Cent, who declared himself bankrupt last July, owns a 53-room Connecticut mansion he bought from Mike Tyson, who got rid of it when he went bankrupt in 2003. Tyson bought it from a Lithuanian import-exporter facing bankruptcy, who in turn bought it from the bank that foreclosed on it when the original owner, Benjamin Sisti, got nine years for fraud after his real estate empire declared bankruptcy. This takes us back to the building's construction in 1985: four bankrupt owners on the trot. *Guardian*, 16 July 2015.

DAESH WIPE

Kate Black, 36, has started a business selling Daesh (ISIS) logo lavatory paper in Sligo, Ireland. *Sun*, 11 Dec 2015.

SPACE SCOTCH

Whisky sent into space has returned with "a different set of smoky flavours that I have not encountered here on Earth before," according to its creator, Dr Bill Lumsden. A vial of unmaturing malt from the Ardbeg Distillery on the Scottish island of Islay was sent to the International Space Station in October 2011, along with particles of charred oak. Another vial of the same whisky was kept on terra firma for comparison. The experiment was designed to investigate how micro-gravity affects terpenes, compounds that give flavour to foods and alcohol. *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, 7 Sept 2015.



MARTIN ROSS

The Unobtainium Files

Syrian jihadists attempt to procure legendary red mercury

In January 2014, a Syrian fixer calling himself Abu Omar met a jihadist commander in Tal Abyad, a Syrian town near the Turkish border taken over by Daesh (ISIS) a few days earlier. The commander, a former cigarette vendor known as Timsah (Arabic for 'crocodile'), was the area's new security chief. Daesh command in Mosul had instructed him to procure red mercury. Precious and rare, exceptionally dangerous and exorbitantly expensive, its properties unmatched by any compound known to science, red mercury is the stuff of doomsday daydreams. According to well-travelled tales, a suitcase-sized red mercury device could create the city-flattening blast of a nuclear bomb.

The Crocodile offered up to £2,800,000 (plus a £70,000 bonus) for each unit of red mercury matching that shown in photographs he sent to Abu Omar via WhatsApp. These showed an oblong object the size of a hot dog bun, apparently made of injection-moulded plastic, with a hole at each end. It was the exact likeness of an object that in 2013 the Cihan News Agency in Turkey had called a red mercury rocket warhead. In that case, three men were arrested near Kayseri, central Turkey. Night footage showed officials in protective suits approaching a van. The presenter declared that the seized rocket component "was examined by six different institutions, including the Turkish Energy Authority, all of which found that it contained red mercury. The liquid can cause large explosions and is worth \$1 million per litre. It is used for intercontinental rocket systems and hydrogen bombs."

Abu Omar claimed he had witnessed the testing of a red mercury sample in the Syrian border town of Ras-al-ain in 2013.



LEFT: Another fake sample of red mercury, this one supposedly found in Iraq.

He recalled that his cousin, a fighter for Jabat al-Nusra, (an al-Qaeda affiliate) had told him that Nusra fighters had taken red mercury warheads from a now-defunct rebel group, Ghuraba al-Sham, which the jihadists had overpowered in 2013, executing its leaders. He tracked down his cousin near the front lines outside Latakia to arrange a purchase, but the transaction was scuppered when the cousin suspected the customer was Daesh, sworn enemy of Jabat al-Nusra. The sole source for this tale is Abu Omar, talking to journalist CJ Chivers in Turkey.

"Red mercury has a red colour, and there is mercury that has the colour of dark blood, and there is green mercury, which is used for sexual enhancement, and silver mercury is used for medical purposes," said Hafi al-Safi, an unaffiliated small-time smuggler, talking to Chivers in a café by the Syrian-Turkish border. "The most expensive type is called Blood of the Slaves, which is the darkest type. Magicians use it to summon djinn." In southern Africa it is believed that red mercury can be found in military munitions, particularly land mines, which has led to several deaths. In 2013, for instance, six people were killed near Harare, Zimbabwe, by a blast in the home of a faith healer. They had been trying to

take a tank mine apart for the red mercury.

In June 2015, Turkish news agencies reported that a pair of Georgians carrying red mercury had been arrested. Abu Omar said that Kurdish groups opposing Daesh had been buying red mercury, and that an associate had managed to obtain some, only to be arrested in Ankara before he could unload it. Also in June, the

Crocodile contacted Abu Omar via WhatsApp to inquire about progress in his quest for red mercury, but not long afterwards Tal Abyad fell to the Kurds and the Crocodile fell silent.

The legend of red mercury began in about 1977; initially, it was called 'red' because it came from the Soviet Union. Rumours of its powers gained extra traction following the USSR collapse, when the Kremlin's arms programme was in disarray. The elusive stuff became the black market's marvellous elixir. It could do almost anything a shady client might need: guide missiles, shield objects from radar, equip a rogue state with fearsome weapons – even prolong life like the Philosophers' Stone. It would turn up in tales of smuggling mafias, but any samples seized have invariably turned out to be fake, sometimes something as simple as ordinary mercury mixed with brick dust. But the legend of red mercury's potency lives on – while it's not nuclear, it's evidently viral. *Int. New York Times*, 21 Nov 2015.

For FT's reports on red mercury by Paul Sieveking (1993), Joyanta Acherjee (1999), David Hambling (2003) and Patrick Harpur (2007), see FT69:44-45, 127:32-35, 178:14, 215:20, 220:58-59.



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EARTHQUAKE LIGHTS

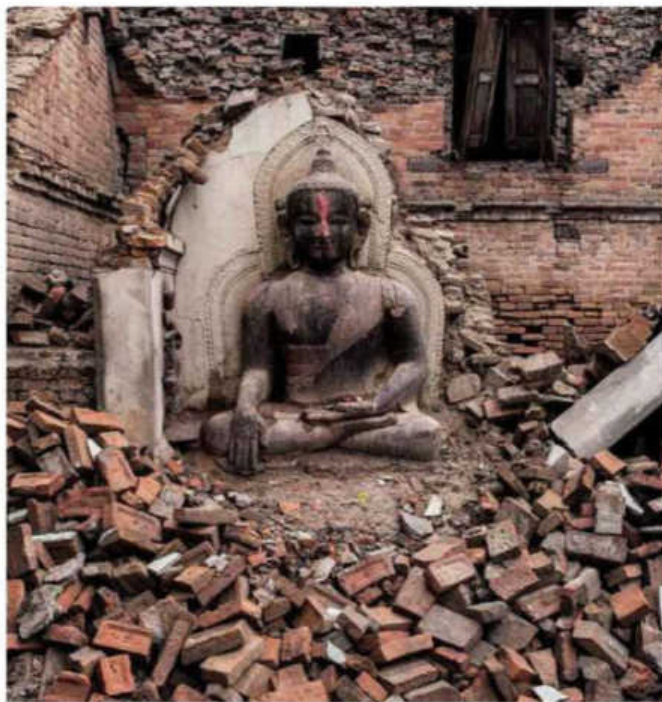
Earthquake lights have been observed for millennia, but what produces them remains a mystery. **DAVID HAMBLING** suggests the answer might be an important one.

Earthquake lights date back to at least 373 BC, when Seneca wrote of the cities of Helice and Buris being destroyed by an earthquake accompanied by “immense columns of fire”. Their form varies; they may resemble ball lightning, pillars of blue light, lightning striking upwards, or simply a weird aurora. As unexplained phenomena go, they are as tantalising as the UFOs that they sometimes resemble; there is no way to tell when or where they will appear. But now science may be getting a handle on how the lights work.

In previous decades, researchers could only investigate the phenomenon by interviewing witnesses after the event. This was a challenge, given that the witnesses by definition had just experienced an earthquake. The stories were hard to corroborate, and earthquake lights were viewed as a folk myth (along with various reports of odd animal behaviour). The lights were not photographed until a Japanese quake in 1968. Now that CCTV is ubiquitous, there is plenty of footage of lights before, during and after earthquakes. A quick trawl of YouTube turns up many examples and the phenomenon is generally accepted and sometimes termed “co-seismic luminescence”.

The most obvious explanation for the lights is some electrical effect associated with the earthquake. This ionises the air and can create either a glow resembling the St Elmo’s Fire seen at sea, or actual lightning. An October 2015 study by the Taiwanese National University of conditions around more than 300 quakes showed that conventional lightning was statistically far more common in an area during the three weeks preceding a quake.

The problem is not that there is no mechanism for quakes to make electricity, but that there are too many possibilities. Piezoelectricity is created when some types of rock are fractured, such as quartz. As far back as 1960 a team at the University of Colorado performed lab tests with



ABOVE: A new study has shown that there was a rise in the total number of electrons in the ionosphere (TEC) a few days before the Nepal earthquakes of 2015.

blocks of quartz-bearing granite. They showed that when a sample of rock was stressed enough to produce microfractures, there was no visible light but there was a detectable radio emission. Similar emissions were detected by several radio telescopes prior to the great Chilean quake of the same year, coinciding with sightings of lights.

However, there may be other effects at work. A team at San Jose University released a paper last year on “Pre-Earthquake Magnetic Pulses”. They note that very long wavelength pulses pass through the Earth’s crust, and that their source can be triangulated to points of stress deep underground. They created a model in which a volume of rock acts as an electric diode, allowing current to flow when it is under stress. This matched the observed pulses and their conclusion was that, rather than piezoelectricity, unknown “geophysical semiconductor processes” were at work that turned bedrock into a giant battery.

Others have been looking at

triboelectricity, an effect familiar to most people: that crackle of static electricity you get when you comb your hair or stroke a cat. It is produced by friction and was discovered by Thales of Miletus 2,600 years ago, but its workings are still not fully understood. Troy Shinbrot and colleagues at Rutgers University, New Jersey, set out to explore whether triboelectricity could produce earthquake lights using a tub of flour. They ended up with more than they bargained for. “We took a tupperware container filled with flour, tipped it back and forth until cracks appeared, and it produced 200 volts of charge,” Shinbrot told the 2014 American Physical Society meeting in Denver. The problem is that triboelectricity is only supposed to occur when different materials are in contact – like a plastic comb in your hair. Particles made of the same material are not supposed to generate triboelectricity. “There isn’t a mechanism I know that can explain this. It seems to be new physics.”

The team’s paper, “Self-sustaining charging of identical

colliding particles”, suggests a feedback mechanism so that any electric field is quickly magnified. If the same principle works on a geological scale during earthquakes, it could easily produce millions of volts over a large area, potentially enough to create the phenomenon reported as earthquake lights.

Still another possibility is that the stick-slip of rocks rubbing together may be affecting the crystal lattices that make up the rocks. Again, computer modelling has shown how this could result in large electrical currents running up from the ground as electrons – or more accurately electron holes in the lattice – are displaced.

While their cause is still unknown, and it may be that there are several different effects at work, earthquake lights do seem to be electrical. That raises the possibility that rather than looking for lights, earthquakes might be predicted on the basis of the electrical anomalies that accompany them. This can be done by monitoring the total number of electrons (TEC) in Earth’s ionosphere. This is affected by any unusual electrical activity, and shows up in the impact it has on GPS signals. The readings on a stationary GPS receiver move around a few metres according to the ebb and flow of TEC.

A new study by a team at Chapman University in California has shown there was a rise in TEC before the two Nepal quakes in 2015, close to the epicentre. In both cases the effect peaked just a few days before the quake, presumably as the rocks groaned and shifted before slipping.

However, this falls short of providing reliable earthquake detection. Another recent paper from a team at the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology in L’Aquila, Italy, questions how easily TEC can be correlated with earthquakes. In particular, they note that all of the studies so far have only identified anomalous TEC patterns in hindsight. Nobody has actually succeeded in predicting an earthquake this way.

So, while the scientists refine their models and look for better ways of measuring the effects, the appearance of sudden, unexplained light phenomena may still be the best indication that it is time to head for the hills.



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ARCHAEOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING presents our round-up of archaeological discoveries, including a collection of Iron Age chimæras unearthed in Dorset and new evidence that we've been eating bread for longer than we thought.

MONSTER MASH-UPS

Ancient Mediterranean cultures spliced different animals together to form fantastical mythical beasts, such as the half-lion, half-goat chimæra or the half-lion, half-eagle griffin. Now the discovery of a series of animal skeletons at a 32,000m² (344,500ft²) site at North West Farm near Winterborne Kingston in Dorset raises the possibility that Iron Age Britons had hybrid-animal monster myths similar to those of the ancient Greeks, Mesopotamians and Egyptians.

The bones appear to have been deliberately rearranged in order to create hybrid beasts. These include: a cow with horse's legs; a horse with a cow's horn protruding from its forehead, creating a type of unicorn; a cow's femur with a horse's hoof; and a sheep with two heads – its own somewhat fragmentary one and, protruding from its rear end, that of a bull. It's not known whether the animals were stitched together or not, because no string or sinew has survived. The archaeologists – led by Miles Russell and Paul Cheetham of Bournemouth University – have also discovered a series of bizarre pairings of different animals and animal parts, including two examples of a jawless cow skull paired with a horse's lower jaw, and a complete dog with three cow mandibles radiating from it. One arrangement involved a human skeleton: a young woman appears to have been sacrificed – there was an indication that her throat had been slit – before being buried face down on a bed of cattle, sheep, dog and horse bones, carefully sorted to mirror the bones of the dead woman: the animals' skull fragments formed the surface her head rested on, while the animals' leg bones formed the surface her legs rested on.

Other burials included five additional horse heads, 15 more cow heads, three complete pigs and three more complete dogs. Most of the 'hybrid-style', 'mix-and-match' and other sacrificed animals at the site were found in pits under the entrances to houses. These were apparently dug to store food such as grain in the cool chalk. It's likely that all the sacrifices were made in the late first century BC when the settlement was being gradually abandoned. They are thought to have been part of decommissioning rituals, probably carried out at the moment a house ceased to be lived in – although this sounds over-speculative.

Partial excavation and a geophysical survey last May showed that the settlement



LEFT AND BELOW: A horse skull paired with the bones of a cow, and a sheep with two extra legs.



consisted of 150 to 200 roundhouses and flourished from around 100 BC to 10 BC. Each roundhouse, which probably had wattle-and-daub walls and a thatched roof, was between 35ft and 50ft (11m and 15m) in diameter. The inhabitants, who had been in the region since about 400 BC, either merged with ancient Dorset's Durotriges tribe, or were supplanted by them. Whatever the case, the archaeologists have named the site Durolopolis, after the tribe. There was evidence of industrial activity – metalworking (including iron, lead and copper smelting), pottery making and textile manufacturing.

"Our investigations at the site suggest that life there was peaceful and prosperous," said Dr Russell. "Although the settlement was relatively large, there appears to have been no defensive palisade or ramparts. The sacrifice of so many animals and the unusual treatment of their bones is likely to shed totally new light on Iron Age belief systems – and may suggest that the Ancient Britons had beliefs or mythologies which involved hybridised animals, just as the ancient Greeks had". *D.Mail (online), 13 July; livescience.com, 20 July; Independent (online), 22 July 2015.*

ANCIENT AGRICULTURE

An analysis of starch grains on an ancient stone grinding tool from southern Italy

shows that hunter-gatherers ate oats 32,000 years ago – way before farming took root. The Palaeolithic people ground up wild oats to form flour, which they may have boiled or baked into a simple flatbread, according to Marta Mariotti Lippi of the University of Florence, who made the discovery. They also seem to have heated the grains before grinding them, perhaps to dry them out in the colder climate of the time. This would also have made the grain easier

to grind and longer-lasting. This multi-stage process would have been time-consuming but beneficial. The grain is nutritionally valuable, and turning it into flour would have been a good way to transport it, which was important for Palaeolithic nomads. This is another example of the advances made by the Gravettian culture, which produced technology, artwork and elaborate burial systems during the Upper Palaeolithic. *New Scientist (online), 8 Sept 2015.*

- Until now, archaeologists believed that organised agriculture, including animal husbandry and crop cultivation, began in the Middle East around 10,000 BC, but analysis of plant remains from a hunter-gatherer settlement on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel, known as Ohalo II, indicates plant cultivation around 21,000 BC – 11,000 years earlier. Dr Ehud Weiss of Bar-Ilan University and his colleagues examined about 150,000 plant specimens at the site and noticed evidence not only of domestic-type wheat and barley, but also of 13 species of weeds known to flourish in cultivated, single-crop fields.

"The plant remains from the site were unusually well preserved because of being charred and then covered by sediment and water, which sealed them in low-oxygen conditions," said Dr Weiss. The site – the earliest example of small-scale cultivation found anywhere in the world – also yielded flint sickle blades that were probably used for harvesting cereal plants. A grinding slab set firmly on a hut floor, a stone tool from which microscopic cereal starch granules were extracted, as well as a unique distribution pattern of seeds around this tool, provided additional, unequivocal evidence that cereal grains were brought into the hut and processed into flour. *eurekaalert.org, 23 July; huffingtonpost.com, 25 July 2015.*

CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

“Scrambling, shrieking, swearing, someone shouting...” – Fort, *Had to Go Somewhere* (short story, 1910 Magazine; cf. Jim Steinmeyer, *Charles Fort: The Man Who Invented The Supernatural*, 2008, p.107).

Classical coprolalia encompassed mild and coarse. Polytheism provided a generous helping of gods to invoke. One character in Plautus’s *Bacchides* managed 15 deities plus “And all the other gods as well,” prompting an onlooker to exclaim, “Boy, can he swear!”

Aulus Gellius (*Attic Nights*, 2nd-century AD) maintained Roman women never swore by Hercules or men by Castor. Perhaps inappropriate for the ‘weaker sex’ to invoke the macho god of strength? Castor’s name (suggesting ‘chaste’) suited women, so probably too sissy for the lads.

One oath, *Edepol* (‘By Pollux’) was acceptably cross gender – Pollux, but no Dog’s Bollocks – anticipating Mencken’s “bootleg profanity”, (‘Golly’, ‘Goshdarn’, ‘Gorblimey’), the hope being the gods will not recognise themselves in such substitutions, a principle evident in the Greek ‘Go to the Crows’ in lieu of ‘Go to Hell’; cf. the Roman variant (thanks to crucifixion) ‘Go Hang on the Cross’.

Cretan king Rhadamanthus outlawed divine imprecations, replacing with ‘By the Dog’, ‘By the Goose’, and sundry other zoological zappers. The canine curse was a favourite of Socrates, apparently unique to him. Many had their private idioms. In Plautus’s *The Little Carthaginian*, a character invokes painters Apelles and Zeuxis – like saying ‘By Picasso’ or ‘By Hockney’.

‘Hound’ and ‘Dog’ as curses entered English c.1000 and 1325. In ancient British war comics and films, Germans were forever crying *Schweinehund!* Classical examples range from Homer to Petronius. Apart from denoting the lowest throw at dice, ‘dog’ was also slang for ‘prick’, hence ample scope for *double-entendre*. ‘Goose’ had no ancient erotic pedigree – Shakespeare brought this paltry poultry into *Henry VI, Part I* (1591) to denote



a poxed whore – a tart remark.

Unlike Martial and Pompeian graffiti, no ‘four-letter words’ in Petronius, doubtless as unrealistic as their absence from *Corrie* (at least when I used to watch it), though who knows what secret scatology lurked behind Bet Lynch’s “Chuffed to Little Mint Balls”? When a character says “The cold sucks”, he takes refuge in Greek. Given this, such permitted expressions as “Not worth your own piss” and “He had Jupiter by the balls” obviously had little or no shock value.

Another character abuses fellow-guests as (e.g.) ‘Claypot’, ‘Washleather’, ‘Curly-Headed Onion’. Most connote stupidity. Compare these from G Hughes’s list of 63 (*Swearing*, 1991): ‘Addlepate’, ‘Airhead’, ‘Berk’, ‘Fruit-Cake’, ‘Spaz’, ‘Twit’, ‘Zipalid’.

Ethnic slurs abounded. Cappadocians were proverbial idiots. The Roman “Let Apella the Jew believe that” is our “Tell it to the Marines.” Horace asks, “You want me to fart in the faces of the circumcised Jews?” An English favourite might be Jerome’s lambasting rival theologian Pelagius as “You Scottish Porridge-Eater”.

You’d be wrong to expect little borbology from the (officially, at least) pious Byzantine. Effing and blinding extend beyond lampoons to works of scholarship – would enliven

dreary modern academic prose. Lucian was denounced by commentators in 39 terms of abuse, ranging from ‘Moron’ to ‘Boy-Buggerer’. The favourite Byzantine technique was to build up a dizzying long compound of insulting adjectives, a trick inherited from Aristophanes, e.g.:

“Bull-father, moon-struck son of a goat” (12th-century Tzetzets on a rival scholar).

“You enema-nurtured shit-eater” (St. Symeon Metaphrastes).

“You fabricator of filthy books, Cheating Innkeeper, Sodomiser of Strumpets” (Leo the Philosopher).

“O stammer-speaking, very stammering, always stammering mouth” (same Leo, trouncing a student – couldn’t get away with that in modern namby-pamby pedagogy).

Seems right, though tame, that when Theodore Roosevelt wished to abuse Woodrow Wilson, best he could come up with was “You Byzantine Logothete!” (*Penguin Book of Insults*, 1980).

Over in England, ‘Flying’ (competitive insults) was popular from Bede to Shakespeare (generous examples in Hughes). A classical procedure, exemplified in Horace (*Satires* 1. 5) and Virgil (*Eclogue* 3) where shepherds hurl around accusations of bestiality – ‘Sheep-shagger’ has a long history.

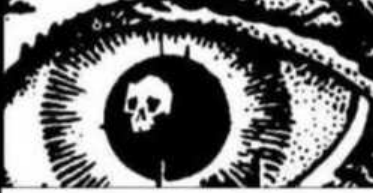
Sensitive readers stop here. The ancients un-Britishly did not call each other ‘Wankers’ – a little-mentioned activity. But ‘You Prick’ was a favourite, from Catullus’s poetry to courtroom hecklers to anonymous rhyparography (“Eat shit, you pricks!). Catullus alliteratively dubbed a rival’s historical writings “shitty sheets of scrap-paper”, Martial somebody’s poems “Fit for a shit”. Cicero dubbed the Senate ‘shit’, the electorate ‘Romulus’s dung-heap’.

A citizen’s complaint against American comedian George Carlin’s 1975 wireless litany of “The Big Six” – Cock, Cunt, Fart, Fuck, Piss, Shit – was upheld by the Supreme Court, not altogether a bad thing if you favour the adage, “Censorship is the mother of linguistic invention.”

The Lonely Planet Phrase Book (1999) claimed most Brits can’t make a sentence without participial use of the F-word; cf. Orwell’s *Down and Out in London and Paris* (ch32). In Latin, *Futuo* (Fuck) and *Cunnus* (Cunt) were primary literary obscenities. Oddly or not, they were not used expletively. ‘Fucking Hell’ would be *Futuens Orcus*, but no such locution exists. No reason why not, but its absence from Pompeian graffiti looks decisive. Did Roman youths never shout *Futue Off!* at each other on Saturday nights? Same thing with *Cunnus*, save a graffito aimed at a male homosexual. Otherwise, Romans were not squeamish about calling each other ‘Buggerer’, ‘Cocksucker’. ‘Cunt-licker’, while Martial rattles on about *poppysmata cunni* (Cunt-Farts).

Cule (You Arsehole) was also avoided, anal invective being mainly the preserve of Priapus in his *Worzel Gummidge* role, threatening trespassers “I’ll ram you through your arseholes,” etc. – cf. WH Parker’s *Priapea* (1988) for umpteen others – Arse gratia artis?

(Another oldie but goodie is Robert Graves’s *The Future of Swearing and Improper Language*, 1936)



GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE welcomes a new local ghost history focusing on one Hertfordshire town



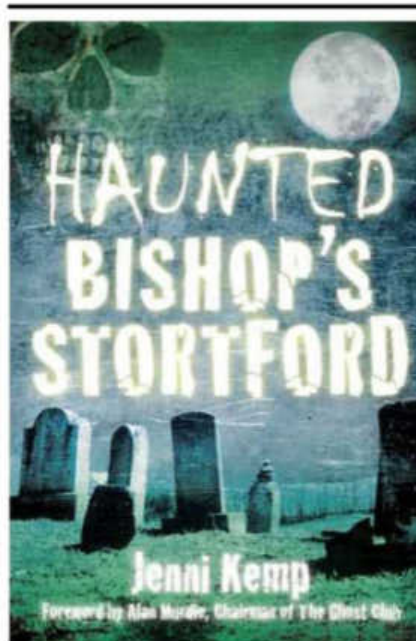
ALL PHOTOS COURTESY THE HISTORY PRESS

ABOVE: The George Hotel, Bishop's Stortford (now in part a branch of Prezzo), has at least two ghosts, as well as a cupboard unopened for 200 years.

It is nearly a century since antiquarian Howard Bayley wrote: "It is, however, an Englishman's peculiarity that possessing perhaps the most interesting history and some of the most fascinating relics in the world, he is either too modest or too dull to take account of them." (*Archaic England*, 1919).

I often think of Bayley's words (cited by Janet and Colin Bord in their classic *Mysterious Britain*, 1972) reflecting how for the most part we go about blissfully unaware of the multiple layers of history, meaning and supernatural belief that surround us at all times and in all places, not only across England but throughout the whole of the British Isles. Since the 19th century generations of folklorists and psychic investigators have gallantly tried to prove Bayley wrong, at least as concerns the collection of ghost stories. Some towns and cities seem to have a rich harvest with certain famous locations – such as the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Grass Market in Edinburgh, Glamis Castle, Berry Pomeroy Castle in Devon and Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire – routinely featuring in ghostly guides and gazetteers many times since the Victorian era. John Ingram's *The Haunted Homes and Family Traditions of Great Britain* (1884) tells many of the same stories as Peter Underwood's *Gazetteer of British Ghosts* (1973). Recounting such classic tales becomes the tradition

THIS BLANK SPOT ON THE GHOSTLY MAP HAS BEEN ADDRESSED



itself, each generation enjoying them and occasionally adding to them.

In the last four decades, hundreds of pamphlets, booklets and more latterly entire books documenting local ghosts have issued from small presses. Whilst some are guides written for tourists and visitors, these works are usually highly individualistic, produced by lone authors laboriously and unstintingly cataloguing the hauntings of their immediate area, acting wholly independently of any research body, almost under the slogan 'local ghosts, for local people'. This is a fortunate development since no *Domesday* or *Pevsner* style guide is possible for Britain. Not only does the UK have surplus ghosts for one country, it has enough to fill a continent.

Great Britain is also the most continuously mapped area on Earth, thanks to two centuries of the Ordnance Survey, and even the most cursory attempt to plot ghost sightings soon shows no even distribution. Often reports seemed to be concentrated in relatively small pockets – not necessarily dependent upon population density – whilst large swathes of the map seem almost wholly bereft of hauntings. Some people have speculated about certain areas being 'window areas', more prone to ghosts than others. However, the relative absence of ghost stories in particular places may simply reflect the absence of anyone making the effort to record them.

Just until recently Bishop's Stortford in

Hertfordshire was one such location, omitted from all major ghost hunting guidebooks and gazetteers. Even in Hertfordshire folklore, the town was conspicuously absent, with the most diligent searches of county libraries and newspapers turning up a small handful of reports at the beginning of the 21st century.

But fortunately, this blank spot on the ghostly map has been addressed with the appearance of *Haunted Bishop's Stortford* published in October 2015 by local artist Jenni Kemp, to which I was privileged to provide a foreword. It demonstrates just how common ghostly experiences are in Britain today and how they embedded into the fabric of community life and shows what you may find if you set about investigating your own locality.

Personally, I had long suspected there must be ghosts awaiting discovery in Bishop's Stortford, a historic town just 45 minutes by train from the capital. As a child I had been told by the husband of my mother's cousin of his own experience seeing the ghost of a woman in their house along London Road, early one morning in 1948 or 1949. He was sure it was the previous owner who gassed herself in the kitchen. She only appeared once or twice, being treated simply as a matter of fact, rather than any cause of fear or worry.

Paul Theroux remarked in his book *Kingdom By The Sea* (1984), penned following three months hiking around the entire UK coastline, that every seaside town seemed to have pleasure gardens, a putting green, a war memorial, a fish and chip shop, a rock and candyfloss shop, a bingo hall, an amusement arcade, various pubs, maybe a theatre and a Chinese restaurant called the Golden Palace (or similar). And so it proves with ghosts. Bishop's Stortford illustrates what every haunted town should possess and may be found through diligent local enquiries.

A phantom coach and horses heads down Church Road, while St Michael's Church in Apton Road has a mysterious black shape



ABOVE: Author and artist Jenni Kemp, chronicler of the town's ghostly lore.

and a woman in an old-fashioned dress in its churchyard. Ghostly soldiers and a Captain Winter from the beginning of the 19th century haunt the grounds of Windmill House.

A labyrinth of tunnels supposedly runs beneath the town and many buildings above are troubled by phantom footsteps. One example was those heard after the refurbishment of the Alliance and Leicester Building Society at No 32 Potter Street. Police summoned out found nothing but mysterious scratch marks in the wallpaper. Builders attempting renovations were scared by poltergeist effects. Sounds of some unknown person walking, together with the sensation of a presence are, of course, the most ubiquitous of manifestations throughout the UK.

Many places claim a Grey Lady, and Bishop's Stortford is no exception, some rumours holding her to be a former nun who committed suicide and who now

frequents many parts of the town. Glimpsed most recently in 2013, she serves as a useful scapegoat for all manner of diverse manifestations, with Jenni Kemp remarking that: "It would seem that the Grey Lady is blamed for any ghostly activity" – even causing two pubs to suffer fires on the same night in 1987!

Ghosts often manifest in hotels and taverns, and the George Hotel possesses a cupboard not opened for 200 years, a male phantom in the cellar and a ghostly woman murdered by a burglar. A happy Victorian girl skips through the bar of The Black Lion, and spectral knockings and rappings are heard in the small bar in The Star. Meanwhile The Cock at Hockerill, once frequented by Charles II and Nell Gwynn and later Dick Turpin, has Civil War spectres, and provides the connoisseur of haunted inns with all one could wish in historic and ghostly associations.

The only thing there seems to be a shortage of is Black Dog sightings (which are very regional), but Jenni Kemp herself had an unnerving encounter in Thorley Lane one sunny autumnal afternoon, preceded by what Jenni Randles has dubbed an 'Oz factor moment'. Jenni had been listening to the calls of rooks and other wild birds when "suddenly the noise stopped and all was deathly quiet. Utter silence." Suddenly from behind her there came a rushing sound and looking round she saw "what I can only describe as a body of black air – a dark mass – like a shapeless cloak flapping in the wind, speed past me and fly round the corner towards the cottage known as Crows Croft." Jenni got the impression that this was something malign. With the rushing wind, it reminds me of an account from Holywell Row, Suffolk, carried in *Ghosts and Witches* (1954) by James Wentworth Day. A Mr TW Morley described locals seeing a huge, dark form passing them, which seemed to say "Don't fear me, fear my follower!" followed by a blast of wind. In 2004, I met a direct descendent of Mr Morley, who confirmed this as one of his grandfather's



ABOVE: St Michael's Church; home to a mysterious black shape and a phantom lady in an old-fashioned dress.

stories (though merely repeating it does not amount to any corroboration).

Villages near Bishop's Stortford have some anniversary ghosts. Five phantom monks appear at Braughing at five-yearly intervals and are next due to walk on 10 May 2016; and a prostitute murdered in 1907 is rumoured to walk the streets of Standon on 12 September every year.

These are just some of the ghosts logged in *Haunted Bishop's Stortford*; what is clear is such stories go back decades in the area, with innumerable parallels throughout the British Isles.

Among the charms of history and its puzzling lessons is the realisation that regardless of just how much variation there is between regions, the basic patterns of human behaviour do not change over time. Neither do ghosts. If nothing else, the experience of apparitions can be taken as a metaphor for the lesson of history itself, illustrating that although everything is completely different in the past, nothing really changes. In the stories behind the characters who become ghosts we can identify our all-too-human selves, and we share the same alarmed reactions as our ancestors when their phantoms return. However great the changes in thought, technology and social organisation and in how we live, work and play, each generation undergoes the same cyclic processes of birth, growth, aging, death and renewal with the same capacities for pain and pleasure. Each generation has its opportunities for self-assertion and faces its own choices between good and evil and between temptation and transcendence. The context changes but the fundamentals of the human condition everywhere remain the same, accompanied by the same essential belief in the return of the dead.

Whether one sees Bishop's Stortford as a backdrop upon which fantasies are being projected or containing many active portals to a world beyond this one, the unconscious mind of human beings seems to be at work. For sceptics, the unconscious or subliminal mental processes may be blamed for all reports of ghostly activity. The writer RC Finucane in *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (1982) theorised that ghosts were psychosocial hallucinations. Yet no one has got the slightest idea how a psychosocial hallucination operates or, in particular, achieves the physical effects of knocking a picture off the wall or moving furniture, a rather impressive result for a mere hallucination to achieve...

From a paranormal perspective, a good case for ghost experiences being linked with the unconscious mind can also be made. Many ghost experiences occur at night when perceptions of the uncanny seem to rise up, and are often linked with dreaming states. The mental states of individuals seem to influence the sighting of apparitions; when individuals see a ghost they are usually not thinking about anything in particular, let alone ghosts, whilst would-be ghost hunters seldom ever report seeing apparitions when participating in an investigation.

Whatever one's stance, an unconscious



ABOVE AND LEFT: Bishop's Stortford is rich in haunted inns. The Star is noted for its spectral knockings and rappings, while a happy Victorian girl runs through the bar of the Black Lion.

resistance can also be detected in the reactions to ghostly phenomena, on the part of both sceptics and believers. It ranges from an avoidance of haunted places altogether to a blanket denial of the existence of anything anomalous. GNM Tyrrell argued this in his philosophical work *Homo Faber* (1951). "Sometimes the paranormal is accepted fairly easily, as when, for example, tradition supports it or when it becomes habitual, as in the case of the perennially haunted house. In such cases, the phenomena are too persistent to be denied, so they are drawn into the everyday world, and so far as possible normalised." For believers, there is an instinctive presumption that spirits of the dead are at work, exemplified in the ready adoption of an anonymous Grey Lady, a once-living human being, being present.

For sceptics, reactions vary from outright denial to the gullible acceptance of any explanation whatsoever, provided it functions in restoring normality to the situation. Both believers and sceptics often seem accepting of explanations for experiences on the flimsiest of evidence or reasoning. Tyrrell summarised these responses to the paranormal as follows: "When one comes to think of it, to deny, to flee from and to normalize are three ways of *escaping* from the paranormal."

But there is no escaping it. Just six weeks after the publication of her book, Jenni Kemp received details of yet more active hauntings. The Grey Lady has been reported in Castle Gardens, disappearing into a hedge. A group of phantoms have been reported wandering across the A120 near the St Michael's Mead roundabout about 10pm, appearing in

silhouette, with no distinguishing features. They move into the wooded area without a path.

A house near the corner of Oriole Way is troubled by poltergeist phenomena blamed upon the spirit of an airman whose parachute became entangled in a chestnut tree that formerly stood on the site. On Sunday mornings children's laughter has been heard in a shop in South Street. And – very close to home – Jenni and a neighbour have been puzzled by hearing nocturnal voices echoing along their road, a cul-de-sac (Jenni Kemp, pers. comm., 10 Dec 2015).

Even if we cannot explain the reports of local ghosts, we can understand their perennial appeal. What our closest ghost stories do is connect us with our immediate localities and the processes which shaped and formed them, and thus with those who have gone before us. Despite the claim that ghost stories are escapist literature, being told that we are stepping into a haunted house provides a most direct impression of locality. Whether one is a sceptic or a believer, the emotional reactions attending the claim a place is 'haunted' leads to a heightening of awareness and perception of time and place. Such stories can sharpen and focus our subjective sense both of ourselves and our mortal situation. Indeed, one theory of psychic occurrences is that they are actually designed to catch our attention, to wake us up into higher states of awareness.

Amid the gaudy minimalism of the global village it is all too easy to be distracted by stories from far away concerning the antics of people we will never meet. By contrast, local ghosts provide a closer experience and engagement with our present moment, which can only be a good thing.

Haunted Bishop's Stortford by Jenni Kemp (ISBN 9780750964128) is available from The History Press, RRP £9.99

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SPIDER SPOTLIGHT

Out-of-place arachnids hitch rides on bananas and camper vans; plus idiots vs spiders and a UK rarity back from the brink

• In mid-November, two primary schools were forced to close for a week after they became infested with false widow spiders (*Steatoda nobilis*). Hundreds of pupils who attend Osmani and Thomas Buxton primary schools in Tower Hamlets, east London, were told to stay away until pest controllers tackled the outbreak. The species is thought to have arrived in the UK at Torquay, Devon, sometime before 1879, hitching a ride with bananas from Madeira or the Canary Islands. For more than a century false widows were confined to the far south-west, but are spreading north as winters become milder; there were two sightings in northern Scotland last year. The arachnid is about the size of a 50p coin and is the most dangerous of the 12 species of biting spider known in Britain (though not routinely deadly like your actual black widow spider). Symptoms can include severe swelling, chest pains and tingling fingers, with the severity depending on the amount of venom injected. *Guardian, D.Mail, 14 Nov 2015.*

• A false widow spider bit Amelia Nielsen, 13, on her cheek as she slept at home in Bradford in late October. She awoke to find two painful puncture marks and was taken to hospital when her cheek swelled to the size of a golf ball. She was diagnosed with life-threatening cellulitis, a deep skin infection. A month earlier, Courtney Mates, 20, went into anaphylactic shock after being bitten by a black widow in Chelmsford, but was saved by medics. *Sun, D.Mail, 24 Oct 2015.*

• Sunil Dade, 33, was bitten by a false widow about two days after Ms Nielsen. He had just gathered washing from the line in his family's back garden in Greenford, west London, when a pain like a thunderbolt tore through him from the back of his head, sending him screaming indoors. It was only when his brother pointed to a dead spider on his sweatshirt that he realised



LEFT: A false widow spider photographed by Martin Cooper in his conservatory in Ipswich.

he had been bitten. He squeezed out as much poison as he could, but a huge section of skin turned black around the bite, covering the full width of his neck and measuring more than 6in (15cm) from top to bottom. More than a week later, the blackened skin had peeled off, but the area was still red-raw and made turning his head difficult. *D.Mail, 26 Oct 2015.*

• Spiders featured quite a lot in the news during 2015. On 5 June an Aldi supermarket in Hinkley, Leicestershire, was closed after a nest of the world's deadliest spider was found in a bunch of bananas. A family that had bought the fruit found spider eggs as they unpacked their shopping and called police before fleeing their home. Wildlife experts identified the eggs as those of the Brazilian wandering spider (genus *Phoneutria*), but were unable to find an adult, leading to fears it could still be in the supermarket. A search of several hours failed to find it (or them), so the store reopened. Another cocoon of Brazilian wandering spider eggs was found on bananas bought at an Iceland store in Devon last November. The venom from these spiders can kill in two hours. It can also cause painful four-hour erections and is being studied as a potential cure for erectile dysfunction. *D.Telegraph, 6 June; Sun, 19 Nov 2015.*

• In August, a genuine (not false) black widow spider that hitched a 5,000-mile (8,000km) transatlantic

ride in a Volkswagen camper van 11 months earlier was discovered by a mechanic washing the vehicle at a garage in Strensham near Worcester. It was taken to an alarmed tank at Stratford Butterfly Farm. *<i> 27 Aug 2015.*

• Barrister Jonathon Hogg, 40, from Camden, north London, was flying from Doha to South Africa with Qatar Airways last June when he was bitten by a brown recluse spider (*Loxosceles reclusa*) – also known as the fiddleback or violin spider. “The pain was like nothing I’ve been through,” he said. “By the time I got to hospital my leg was bursting open, there was pus, it was black. They told me if I had been any later I would have lost my leg or even died.” Surgeons had to cut away a large part of his leg where the venom had eaten the flesh. He was left with a gaping hole on the front of his shin. He spent a month in hospital in South Africa, undergoing three operations and a skin graft from his thigh. *D.Mail, Metro, 30 Sept 2015.*

• An arachnophobic motorist saw a spider on his fuel tank as he went to fill up at a petrol station in Center Line, Michigan, and decided to use a lighter to remove the offending critter. Flames quickly enveloped the petrol pump (and presumably the spider). The idiot redeemed himself to some extent by swiftly putting out the fire with an extinguisher. *Guardian, 28 Sept 2015.*

• An assistant prosecutor in West Virginia was suspended in November after pulling out a gun and threatening to shoot fake spiders scattered around the office as Hallowe’en decorations. Prosecuting lawyer John Bennett said Chris White informed other employees that he was “deathly afraid of spiders” before threatening to shoot. He added that White assured him the gun was not loaded. The suspension came several weeks after the incident because employees were still upset. *Irish Independent, 3 Nov 2015.*

• Maningrida, a small remote town 300 miles (480km) east of Darwin in Australia, was no place for arachnophobes last June, when more than 25,000 venomous tarantulas suddenly appeared. Dr Robert Raven studies the species, first identified in 2006, and was mystified by the plague, saying he normally finds only two or three hundred in one spot. Their bite is not fatal, but can cause hours of vomiting. *D.Mirror, 26 June 2015.*

• The fen raft spider, the UK’s largest spider, which can grow as big as the palm of a hand and is able to eat small fish, was at risk of extinction as recently as 2010, but is now believed to number in the thousands following work to introduce them to parts of Norfolk and Suffolk. The semi-aquatic spiders, which live in ditches and pools in wetlands, can lay up to 700 eggs in a single sac, although very few survive. They raise their young in crystal-like “nursery webs”, which conservationists count to monitor their numbers. At an RSPB site near Strumpshaw Fen in the Norfolk Broads, where the spiders were introduced in 2012, 480 nursery webs were counted in 2015, up from 184 the year before. No need to worry though – they are harmless to humans. *D.Telegraph, Sun, 31 Oct 2015.*

A^Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden

AN EXTRA-HORNY RHINOCEROS

Of the five species of rhinoceros alive today, two of them (the great Indian and the Javan) each typically sports one horn, and the other three (the Sumatran, African white, and African black) each typically sports two. Very rarely, however, exceptions to this rule arise, and one such exception has lately been encountered and photographed in Namibia's Etosha National Park by 73-year-old Jim Gibson. Eschewing its species' normal two-horn condition (and also its taxonomic name), the adult black rhino *Diceros bicornis* (translating as 'two-horned two-horned') in question also bears a slender but distinctive, forward-curving third horn, sprouting from the centre of its brow. Its extra horn would not cause this rhinoceros any discomfort; and if resulting from a non-genetic developmental abnormality occurring when the rhino was a foetus, it would not be inherited by any of its offspring. If caused by a mutant gene, however, it could be inherited – this latter situation probably explaining why triple-horned black rhinos were once quite common around Zambia's Lake Young.

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3380358/Mutant-black-rhinoceros-THREE-horns-Extremely-rare-animal-spotted-Namibia-bizarre-defect.html 31 Dec 2015.

NESSIE ASCENDANT

It was not so long ago that Nessie seekers were beginning to fear that Scotland's most famous mystery beast was no more (always assuming, of course, that she had ever existed), due to the dearth in recent years of noteworthy reports. In December 2015, however, Gary Campbell, Keeper of the Official Loch Ness Monster Sightings Register, was delighted to announce that 2015 had been a 'vintage' year for such reports. Needless to say, many claimed sightings *are* reported each year, but as Campbell points out, the vast majority can be readily explained and are therefore eliminated from consideration for addition to the register, but in 2015 the register had formally accepted no fewer than five as being unexplained by normal phenomena, the most for 13 years. www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/invermess/773587/more-sightings-of-loch-ness-monster-in-2015-than-anytime-in-last-ten-years/ 8 Dec 2015.

A BLENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

In 1986, veteran cryptozoologist Dr Bernard Heuvelmans was honoured by the naming after him of a new species of marine blenny,



ABOVE: The three-horned black rhino snapped by Jim Gibson. BELOW: The Caneva blenny has lost its cryptozoological connection. RIGHT: A fairy penguin.

Lipophrys heuvelmansii, by French ichthyologist Dr François Charoussset, based upon two sampled specimens of this small fish caught in the Adriatic Sea off Croatia. Sadly, however, it would now appear that this honour has been rescinded for taxonomic reasons. In a recently published paper, a team of researchers headed by Italian marine ecologist Francesco Tiralongo compared one of those two specimens with a male specimen of the closely related Caneva blenny *Microlipophrys caneveae* sampled in Italy's Tyrrhenian Sea, and could not find any taxonomically significant differences between them. Consequently, because *M. caneveae* was formally named and described way back in 1880, and as the two species are apparently conspecific, the team has recommended that *L. heuvelmansii* should be considered hereafter to be merely a junior synonym of *M. caneveae*, with the two *L. heuvelmansii* specimens being deemed to be nothing more than mature males of *M. caneveae*. RIP Heuvelmans's blenny. *Naturalista Siciliano*, series 4, vol 39 (2): 97-103 (2015).

PENGUIN SPLITTING

When visiting Australia and New Zealand in 2006, I not only saw dozens of fairy (aka little blue) penguins *Eudyptula minor* coming ashore one night on Philip Island, off Melbourne, Australia, but also spied a single one on Tiritiri Matangi, the famous island bird sanctuary off Auckland, New Zealand. At the time, I had no idea that courtesy of that lone latter bird I'd encountered a then-unrecognised separate species, because traditionally these tiny penguins have all been thought to belong to one and the same species throughout their Antipodean distribution range.



In December 2015, however, a team of researchers from New Zealand's University of Otago and Australia's University of Tasmania publicly announced that the principal New Zealand contingent of *E. minor* was very different genetically from those in Australia. Moreover, the two geographical groups have different calls too, with females responding preferentially to the calls of males from their own geographical region, an excellent mechanism for reproductive separation, leading in turn to speciation. The Australian fairy penguin has accordingly been dubbed *E. novae-hollandiae*, with *E. minor* being retained as the name for New Zealand's species. Interestingly, a small colony of Australian fairy penguins has been found in Otago, genetic analyses confirming that these Otago birds are indeed members of the Australian species rather than of the New Zealand species found elsewhere in this dual-island country – another unexpected discovery, and one that means that New Zealand is now home to two separate, non-interacting species of fairy penguin. www.sciencecodex.com/researchers-find-that-australian-and-new-zealand-little-penguins-are-distinct-species-171790 14 Dec 2015.

SPECIAL REPORT

THE DISCOVERY OF WITCHES

REV PETER LAWS reports from ASSAP's 'Seriously Bewitched' conference

The lady at the counter hands me my Maltesers and I ask a quick question. "What do you think about witchcraft?" She chuckles. "Witches aren't real. I don't believe in them". I smile, and wish my contactless debit card over the machine, like a wand. "But you've been serving them all morning".

And she has. We're in the cafeteria of Goldsmith's College in London, waiting for a conference to start. There are some 200 people milling about in here – fortune-tellers, sceptics, folklorists. One guy, a PHD student in chemistry, says he isn't sure why he's here – he just spotted the ad in FT and answered the call. But many of the rest here today are 'practitioners'.

The woman at the counter isn't scared by this discovery of witches; she's bemused. I've trekked across London on a chilly November morning for the latest conference run by ASSAP (The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena), who have been "investigating the weird seriously (and the seriously weird) since 1981". Today's conference, 'Seriously Bewitched', has seven speakers lined up to share a variety of perspectives on witchcraft ancient and modern.

We shuffle into the lecture room, where I sit right at the front. There's a brief introduction but then it's straight into the first main speaker: Deborah Hyde, editor of *Sceptic Magazine*. The famous witch trials of the 15th and 16th centuries didn't just spring out of a vacuum she tells us, before laying out the historical context that led to the witch mania. It's a breakneck romp through earlier centuries, charting the Church's growing love of demarcation. Non-



TOP: Dr Helen Cornish. ABOVE LEFT: Charmaine Sonnexe. ABOVE RIGHT: Ethan Doyle White. OPPOSITE PAGE: Bekie Bird.

Christians weren't just different; they were labelled with ominous sounding names like 'infidels' or 'heathen' (meaning a heath dweller, someone who doesn't belong.) From the Crusades and the Albigensian Heresy to the Inquisition, Hyde paints a chilling picture of an eagerness to find, name, punish and destroy heresy. And if the infidels happened to be fellow Christians, so be it. Hyde sets a scene of religious paranoia and corporate greed – the perfect seedbed for the later witch trials to grow from.

Then it's Christian Jensen Romer, whose view of the witch trials is fascinating and controversial. The witch-hunts are usually blamed on backward, religious zealots. Romer

disagrees: it was the scientists that did it. Through a mixture of history and humour, he rattles off the academic credentials of the witch-hunt's architects, like the president of Harvard, Increase Mather, and his father Cotton, both well-respected intellectuals. The elaborate witch tests were science gone mad, not faith, Romer argues and he frequently mentions the many local clerics who were against them. He ends by warning the witches present to stay away from the science focused ASSAP members. It's a funny, thought-provoking session.

Next up is PhD student Ethan Doyle White, who asks why anybody in the 20th century would want to own the negative label of witch? The woman who

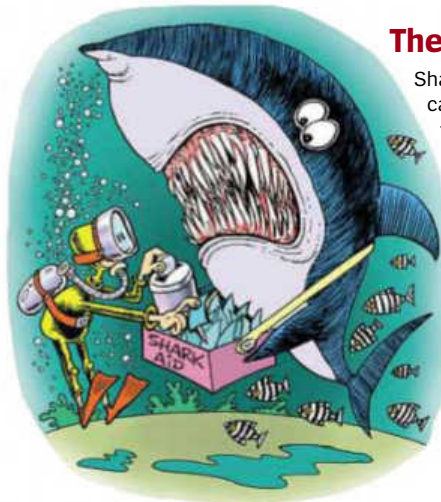
served me earlier is probably asking herself the exact same question. He answers by saying how timely the witch idea is for our modern age. For a start, it offers the chance of magic and enchantment (a rare commodity in an increasingly rational society). But the witch is a potent symbol too, one that 1960s feminists and other marginalised groups appropriated as a vivid, countercultural hero figure. Victimised and abused, witches either didn't possess, or simply ignored, the traditional requirements of power; even the hook-nosed hag had the power to challenge and terrify authority. The point about gender gives us the most awkward moment of the day, which comes during question time. White says he wouldn't want to speak for feminists since he's a man. It's a passing comment, but grumbles instantly ripple from a few rows back. "Why can't you speak for women?" Another chips in: "Yeah... why can't you be a feminist? What are you saying by that?" It's a knee-jerk accusation of sexism that's undeserved. White handles it well, expressing his obvious support of equality. But it's when he says: "I'm just here to talk about witches," that most of the lecture hall applauds. Everyone breathes again, and hexes are avoided. Though, as I later discovered, hexes aren't really a thing for witches, anyway.

So far the speakers have painted broad sweeps of witch history. In contrast, Dr Helen Cornish zeroes in on a single Cornish example. Legend says that Joan Whyte was a witch who suffered even more indignity in death than life. Not only was her skeleton once whipped out to spice up a séance, but in the 1960s she went on display in the Museum of Witchcraft in Boscastle. Decades later, sensitive visitors said Joan's spirit didn't like being gawped at. She needed rest. People started dreaming of her. Her coffin lid would sometimes close itself – a spectral sign of retreat. She finally got her wish and was re-buried in 1999, her tombstone reading: "No Longer Abused". The fact that there's no real evidence that Joan

97: CANCER-FREE SHARKS

The myth

Sharks don't get cancer, because of their unique immune systems. Or possibly because the cartilage of which their skeletons are composed prevents the development of tumours. Or maybe just because they are so mighty.



The "truth"

Sharks do get cancer, and scientists have known that since at least 1908. The people who don't know it – or prefer not to remember it – are those who make great fortunes selling shark cartilage as a health supplement, to prevent or cure cancer in humans. There is no evidence to suggest it works as a medicine, and lots of evidence that it doesn't, but belief in its magical powers contributes to the 100 million sharks per annum thought to be killed by humans. So far, shark experts have recorded cancerous tumours in 23 species of shark; the more they search for cancerous sharks, the more they find them. As a popular myth, the cancer-free shark seems to have been born in 1992, with the publication of a bestselling book, *Sharks don't get cancer*, loosely inspired by some then current, and properly tentative, research findings. It was written by an American entrepreneur – who subsequently set up his own business manufacturing shark cartilage pills, and wrote a sequel: *Sharks still don't get cancer*. But they did, and they still do.

Sources

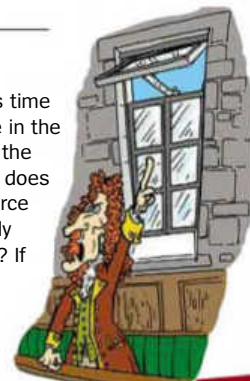
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Disclaimer

Can millions of cartilage customers around the world really be so wrong? If you know why they're not, do glide menacingly over to FT's letters page and let us know.

Mythchaser

It's well known that during Isaac Newton's time as a Member of Parliament he only spoke in the chamber once – and that was to request the closing of a window. It's well known... but does anyone actually have a contemporary source for it, or is it just a nice story, ceremonially passed on from biographer to biographer? If the latter, where did it start?



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Whyte even existed, let alone was a witch, divides the audience. Was this just a random skeleton or a real, boney-fide sorceress? "Does it matter?" asks Cornish, who throws out quite the philosophical poser. What defines historical existence? Is it only flesh and blood? Or does something become real enough once it lives in people's minds and influences entire communities? "Stories are history", Cornish says, and wonders if people are too "bewitched by the promise of knowable history". I chat to some sceptics over coffee afterwards. They aren't convinced by this history's-what-you-make-it idea; but a witch tells me it's her favourite session of the day.

We head back for another PhD student, Charmaine Sonnex, who has studied the 'rules' of spell work. Spells mustn't harm anybody; they can't be cast without the recipient's permission; and if a spell is selfish or 'me'-focused, it's always inappropriate. Considering I'd prayed like mad that morning that my novel would get published, it makes me wonder whether witchcraft might be a fair bit more altruistic than Christianity. Sonnex makes me realise I'd make a crappy witch. Her small sample of eight participants isn't exactly representative of witchcraft as a whole, but a mention of her current study sparks much interest. She's charting the

real world effect of spells on participants. *FT* readers will be eager to hear, and analyse, those results, no doubt.

The most personal talk of the day comes from Bekie Bird, who shares her experiences of being a modern day witch. She talks of her cats and jokes about the need to co-ordinate a familiar's fur with clothing. But her talk isn't just fluff. There's depth about her upbringing – she was an avid Dennis Wheatley reader at eight. She says she always uses second-hand crystals out of respect for Mother Earth, which prompts a questioner to ask if crystals created in the lab work as well natural ones. Bird's not sure, but reckons probably not. A man behind me nods in eager agreement. It's a welcome session this, putting a practical, real-world face on a subject that's been academic up till now. Bird also mentions a spell she cast to get someone annoying out of her life. It sent them all the way to New Zealand, in fact; not a hex, but not purely others-focused either. Perhaps there's hope for me yet. And she buys her candles in Ikea. Bird's session teaches me something vital about witches, pagans and druids. They're as normal as they are unique.

Rounding out the day, we have folklorist Mark Norman, who contrasts traditional witchcraft of the past with that of the present. In the past, the local witch or 'cunning' person offered the 'service' of spell casting. She made a living from it, and in terms of advertising the village witch had it easy. You'd find her in the first house past the oak tree, near the crooked part of the stream. These days, witches aren't locally prominent. So, like most things, the craft has gone online. Perhaps there's a gap in the market for a site called 'Witch Advisor', Norman suggests.

After a packed day, it's wine time and a chance to laugh and chat about all we've heard. But mostly it's laughter as sceptics, Christians, chemists and high priests hang out and drink together. Witches are seriously real and seriously fascinating; and, thankfully, seriously generous with the red...



NECROLOG

When a Jewish identical twin, separated from his brother after birth, eventually met his anti-Semitic sibling, the result was a classic study in nature versus nurture...



ABOVE: Identical twins Jack Yufe (left) and Oskar Stöhr (right), reunited in later life.

JACK YUFE

Jack Yufe was one of a pair of identical twins, separated soon after birth, who later became a celebrated case study in the nature versus nurture debate. Jack was born in 1933 in Port of Spain, Trinidad, where his Jewish father Josef had emigrated in 1929 from Romania. On the voyage over, Josef fell in love with a fellow passenger, a German Catholic named Elizabeth Stöhr, known as Liesel. Two years later the couple had a daughter, Sonja, and two years after that they had twin boys. Jack was named for the boxer Jack Sharkey; Oskar for one of Liesel's relatives. Six months after the twins were born, Liesel, fed up with Josef's womanising and heavy drinking, scooped up Sonja and the more sensitive, fussy Oskar and returned to the Sudetenland in Germany. There Liesel's mother changed Oskar's last name to Stöhr, had him baptised a Catholic and reared him when Liesel took a job as a nursemaid in Milan.

A strict Catholic and a harsh disciplinarian, Liesel's mother made it clear to Oskar, when he asked her to explain what a Jew was, that he was never to repeat that word again. He was beaten for the slightest transgression, always told to mind his manners and to be 'proper' in front of company. Toward the end of the war, like so many German children, he joined the Hitler Youth – either

for self-preservation or through ardour for National Socialism (accounts differ). Meanwhile in Trinidad, Jack enjoyed a relatively carefree upbringing, playing on the beach, swimming in the ocean, and enjoying sports – becoming a champion rower. However, he experienced his own brand of isolation, being Jewish (although secular) and white in predominantly black and Indian Trinidad, where the main religions were Christianity and Hinduism. Aged 15, he went to live in Venezuela with an aunt who had endured Dachau concentration camp, the only European relative of his father who had survived the Holocaust. The following year, at her urging, he moved to the fledgling state of Israel where he worked on a kibbutz, served as a flagship sergeant in the Israeli navy, and married an American, Ona Hirsch, who urged him to make contact with his German family.

In 1954 Jack was invited by his father to join him in San Diego, California. He and Ona agreed, breaking the journey in Germany, where they met Oskar and stayed with him for a week. The twins did not get on, partly because they were so disconcertingly similar, but also because they could communicate only in Yiddish; Jack had no German and Oskar no English, though they spoke with the same rhythm and at an identical

rate. At their first meeting they arrived wearing near-identical white sports jackets, shirts, and wire-rimmed spectacles. Jack's clothes had been bought in Israel, Oskar's in Germany. "I said, 'Oskar, you are wearing the same shirt and same glasses. Why?'" Jack recalled in a BBC documentary in 1999. "He said to me, 'Why are you wearing the same thing that I am?'"

While the men noticed some similarities – they both

liked to drink, had hot tempers, and walked with the same gait – it was their stark political and religious differences that drove them apart. In San Ysidro, California, Jack built a successful business selling jeans and work boots to farmworkers from the back of his van. He eventually opened a store, El Progreso, and went to work every day until he was 80. Oskar meanwhile became a coal miner and welder in the Ruhr, where he married and had two children. The twins did not see each other again for 25 years.

In early 1979, Ona showed Jack a magazine article about the "Jim Twins," a pair of Ohio twins separated at five weeks who were each named Jim by their respective adoptive parents and didn't meet again until they were 39. Both Jim Springer and Jim Lewis grew up with adoptive brothers called Larry; at school both liked maths and hated spelling; and as boys both owned dogs called Troy. Both had married women called Linda, divorced and then married 'Betty's'. Their first sons were named, respectively, James Alan and James Allan. Both families had taken their holidays for years at the same small beach in St Petersburg, Florida – driving there in Chevrolets – and had somehow not bumped into each other.

Both men had worked as attendants at filling stations, and for the same hamburger chain, and

part time as deputy sheriffs. They had both taken up carpentry and technical drawing as hobbies. They were compulsive nail-biters; shared the same sleeping problems, smoking and drinking habits; and used the same slang words. At the age of 18, both started having tension headaches, which always began in the afternoon, then turned into migraines. Both stopped having them at the same age, then they started again for a time before stopping for good. It had never been thought that such a complicated migraine pattern could be 'programmed' by heredity. Moreover, both men had confirmed or suspected heart attacks, had developed hæmorrhoids, and had put on 10lb (4.5kg) at the same time in their lives and then lost it again. After they met, their families noted similarities in speech patterns, mannerisms and posture [FT30:18].

The two Jims had become the first subjects of a landmark study of twins set up by the University of Minnesota in 1979. Jack was intrigued and thought he and Oskar should participate. Overseen by the psychologist Thomas Bouchard, the study involved testing some 60 pairs of identical twins brought up separately for shared traits. During the subsequent two decades, Bouchard's team studied 137 pairs of twins, 81 identical and 56 fraternal. Bouchard's data set was unlikely ever to be equalled because modern adoption agencies no longer separate twins. The stigma attached to illegitimacy has almost disappeared, removing one reason why babies were 'put up' for adoption.

To Jack's surprise, Oskar agreed to make the trip to the United States. When they met at the airport in Minneapolis, both wore the same wire-rimmed rectangular glasses rounded at the corners, the same quirky blue shirts with epaulets and four pockets on the front. Both had short clipped moustaches and a number of rubber bands on their wrists. Their receding hairlines matched.

As Bouchard recalled, despite their very different upbringings, Jack and Oskar showed "unsettling

similarities in their temperament and way of doing things” and had a lot more in common than the sets of fraternal twins brought up together who were also subjects of the Minnesota study. Both read magazines back to front and the endings of books first. Both washed their hands and flushed the lavatory both before and after using it, wore tight bathing trunks, and had a habit of fidgeting with things like rubber bands and paperclips. Both used the fourth (ring) finger when scratching their heads, loved spicy food and dipped buttered toast into their coffee. They both preferred to dine alone in restaurants because they liked to read over meals. Before eating they would clear the tables of all extraneous items. Both wrapped tape around pens and pencils to get a better grip. They also shared the bizarre habit of sneezing explosively in public to get attention, or just for a laugh.

Jack admitted at first that the similarities with Oskar irritated and ‘unnerved’ him, making him feel as if his individuality had been taken away. However, as the study progressed, the two men came to care deeply for one another. Not everything was written in their genes. Jack and Oskar never agreed on Middle Eastern politics; Nancy Segal, Bouchard’s co-researcher, described them as having an “extraordinary love-hate relationship... They were repelled and fascinated by each other.” While they both recalled, as children, being haunted by nightmares that they might one day meet as enemies on the battlefield, they got on better after agreeing to avoid topics such as war or religion. Jack recalled Oskar saying to him: “If we had been switched, I would have been the Jew, and you would have been the Nazi.” When Oskar died of lung cancer in 1997, Jack was devastated but didn’t attend the funeral because he looked so much like his brother he feared it would disturb the family. Jack is survived by his second wife, Ruth (née Vega), and by a son and three daughters. (See *Indivisible by Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins*, 2005, by Nancy L Segal.)

Jack Yufe, identical twin, born Port of Spain, Trinidad 16 Jan 1933; died (from stomach cancer) San Diego, California 9 Nov 2015, aged 82.

PAUL SIEVEKING



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

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

INNER SERPENTS

One of the most extraordinary folklore universals is the belief that animals live within us. Yes, yes, of course, animals do live within us. I have just finished deworming one of my children and can, with shaking hands, swear to that. But there is a belief, which Italian folklorist Davide Ermacora has now traced back deep into antiquity, that snakes (and in some cases frogs, toads and lizards) have, from time to time, taken up residence in the human body.

Let’s play along for a second with the Franconian peasant or the Roman pleb who is convinced that a snake (the most common body animal) is whirling around inside him. First, how did it get there? There are two common explanations: either the unfortunate drank some water with eggs in (which later hatched), or he slept with his mouth open. Second, how did he know it was there? Symptoms included him feeling it bite or thrash around inside, his needing more food (because the snake eats its host’s food) or less food (because there is no room for food as the snake grows bigger). Third, how does the snake survive in the human body? This is an awkward question given the acid content of the stomach. But in pre-scientific societies, the body was seen as a fairly open space (particularly in the case of women). It is notable how a snake (to continue with the

example) might enter through the mouth, and then exit through the vagina or the anus with very little thought given to intervening organs. Fourth, how do you get the snake out? Well, there are various techniques; however, my personal favourite is to abstain from food for three or four days and wait for the

snake to starve: then hang your possessed body (the parallels with exorcism are striking) upside down over a bowl of milk. Snakes love milk, second only to wine, and, hungry from its fast, your resident serpent will slide out of the mouth to partake. That’s when someone has to grab the little bugger before he can make his way back in. Sound silly? We have examples of 19th-century

doctors taking these reports seriously and we have cases, often tragic ones, of people believing they had resident snakes well into the 20th century in Europe and the Americas.

The final question must be *why* people believed these things. Here there are two obvious possibilities. Perhaps the snake became an explanation for cancer or other wasting diseases: the snake eats your food and your body starts to diminish. The occasional sighting of parasites in faeces and saliva might have convinced people that a resident snake was credible. Alternatively, we have confusion with the ancient idea that the human soul can take the form of an animal when it leaves the body.

Simon Young writes on folklore and history and runs www.fairyist.com



the UFO files

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UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANGLES RE-EXAMINES BRITAIN'S BIGGEST AND MOST CONTROVERSIAL UFO CASE 35 YEARS ON

RENDLESHAM FOREST GENESIS: PART TWO

As we saw last month, space junk, fireballs and 'comets' filled the sky above Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, on Christmas night 1980. To astronomers, this was just debris entering our atmosphere and burning up – yet the two biggest events saw witnesses describe physiological sensations such as static charge and hair standing on end. So was there more to these phenomena than just space junk?

I spent a lot of time seeking a link with Cobra Mist, a 1970s covert research project located at Orford Ness – just beyond the forest, and home to the lighthouse many sceptics believe was the UFO chased by US airmen (see **FT204:32-39**). However, John Burroughs, one of those men, told me categorically in 1989 that he had regularly picnicked in those woods and seen that light. It was not what he chased. Cobra Mist was an American OTH (Over the Horizon) radar experiment (one of countless cutting-edge science projects set up around Rendlesham after radar itself was first developed here in the late 1930s). This OTH radar sent powerful beams into the upper atmosphere to detect aircraft and missiles well beyond the curvature of the Earth. This sort of distance stymies basic radar, with its modest tracking capacity, but with superfast missiles posing a new threat, such short



ABOVE: Orford Ness, Suffolk. The lighthouse is believed by some sceptics to be the source of the 1980 UFO encounters. **BELOW:** Orford Ness was home to numerous secret research projects over the years.

distance tracking would offer no warning; seeing much further was vital. The high-energy beams at Orford Ness were intended to track rocket launches from Plesetsk, the Russian base from which Cosmos 749 was launched in 1980.

Sadly, it never worked properly. The Soviet Union was aware of the project and is believed to have tried to jam it. The very high intensity arrays at Orford had issues with possible side effects such as coronal arcing and were regarded by some locals as having led to all sorts of problems: causing car engines to stall, interfering with coastal village TV signals, making people ill and forming green 'blobs' rising into the sky – all

long before the Rendlesham case.

No wonder some thought that the 'comets' of 25/26 December might have terrestrial origins, despite the opinions of astronomers. For years, locals feared potentially dangerous goings-on in their midst. Indeed, older folk even remembered the complete evacuation of a coastal village near Hollesley that had occurred because of what was said to be top-secret weapons research.

One of the most interesting events occurred at Sizewell beach at 6.55pm on 24 February 1975 and was documented by BUFORA long before the goings-on at Rendlesham. It involved local postman Thomas Meyer, 62, walking his Dalmatian north of the forest near the then eight-year-old Sizewell nuclear plant. Suddenly a greenish-yellow object like an overgrown pumpkin appeared from the sea and floated across the beach. It had a misty sheen and glowed like a cathode ray TV tube. The dog immediately covered behind its master in great distress.

Meyer himself said that he felt "a warm, tingling sensation on his skin" and that there was a pungent odour like "acid drops" left in the air, suggesting an ionising electrical field was around the UFO. The dog fled and was found a mile away by the Sizewell security fence, still shaking. Meyer himself fell ill and was off work for weeks following the episode; and BUFORA researcher Peter Johnson discovered that the nearby town of Leiston suffered unusual TV interference that evening.

I suspect a UAP (unexplained atmospheric phenomenon) was in the atmosphere that



AMANDA SLATER / CREATIVE COMMONS

HOFIUM / CREATIVE COMMONS

night, and the ionising effects are intriguing, given what was reported in Portugal and by the US airmen in Rendlesham. But was this a one-off natural phenomenon specific to the area or some odd side-effect of ongoing research?

The lighthouse keeper at Orford Ness told me about green glows seen coming up from under the water. And – again, years before Rendlesham – I interviewed one of the workers on the new Sizewell reactor who in the late 1960s and early 1970s saw various strange incidents that convinced his crew the site was haunted. A tingling energy field was felt in the air and power tools reportedly “came to life” when not plugged in. But I suspect something other than the supernatural. Indeed, I later investigated another case (in Cheshire) in which a high-tech company said that computer screens were turning on without being plugged in. Faults with high-power radar at a nearby aerospace plant seemed to be the cause.

We can infer from such evidence that an atmospheric energy field powerful enough to affect human physiology may occur as an experimental side-effect and may accidentally trigger UAPs. They might be akin to plasmas such as ball lightning. But where might they originate around Rendlesham?

The Cobra Mist programme closed on 30 June 1973, so that was not the answer – although secret papers mislaid by a scientist at Heathrow Airport discussed a more powerful project called Cold Witness earmarked to replace Cobra Mist. As far as I have managed to discover, this never happened – at least, not here. Instead, after being decommissioned, parts of the array were left in situ and the site was taken over by the Foreign Office; BBC radio broadcasts to Europe went out from here for years.

Similar Over the Horizon and energy beam experiments have been carried out elsewhere, with glowing lights being reported in the vicinity. It seems reasonable that anything bouncing strong beams off the atmosphere might from time to time produce ionising or electrical side-effects.

Does such speculation tie our puzzles together? This part of East Anglia has many tech communication sites, such as the BT research unit on the former Martlesham Heath USAF/RAF base (where one of the engineers first told us that the ‘comets in the sky’ that night could be important). Since 1969, this has engaged in many electronic innovations, and in 1982 Europe’s first satellite transmission system operated here. Then there is RAF Bawdsey where the first chain home radar base was created. By the 1980s it officially housed a ground-to-air missile facility. As we found in researching the case, getting onto the Bentwaters base was not hard, but getting past the armed guard at Bawdsey was impossible.

Questions like these were buzzing through my head as I tried to piece together what Brenda and Dot were hearing from locals. Suddenly my clues and their clues looked to be pointing in a similar



ABOVE: The beach at Sizewell was the scene of a bizarre UFO encounter in 1975, while the power station itself reportedly saw a host of strange incidents throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.

direction.

Then in late January 1981 (just a month after Rendlesham) I heard from Paul Begg, an East Anglia-based writer with an interest in all things fortan but no UFO experience. He and his wife had (like Brenda) met a man in a pub with a story to tell about events at a British radar base.

As well as talking to this man – a civilian radar officer at the joint civil/military facility RAF Watton (aka Eastern Radar) – I asked several others to help me study this intriguing story. One of these was one-time *FT* contributor Kevin McClure, who lived not far away. He had just published a great book (*Stars and Rumours of Stars*) about tales spreading during a UFO wave, so I thought he could offer a sceptical check given the confused manner in which stories were emerging from Rendlesham.

As the radar operator had requested that his identity be withheld, we called him David Potts. I re-established contact with him whilst writing this article to update his views. In the next part, you will see what this has revealed.

Happily, I kept a record of my 2 February 1981 conversations with ‘Potts’ and McClure. This is important, because Kevin’s interest proved short-lived – he was embarrassed that as the first researcher to talk to Potts he made a ‘dog’s breakfast’ (his words) of

it by not writing it up properly before losing his notes in a house move soon afterwards. Yet none of us then had the faintest notion that this bunch of disparate yarns would eventually morph into a world-famous UFO case – Kevin should not blame himself. By chance, I was in a position to see the broader picture. I wrote reports for BUFORA and gave an interview for the *London Evening Standard* in May 1981 – providing the first published record of the case.

In those early chats with us Potts filled in key gaps in the Rendlesham story and referred to a radar track picked up by another military operator that weekend. This cut across the coast near Lowestoft and was lost around the forest when dropping below radar coverage.

That part was entirely secondhand, but Potts himself witnessed the commotion when senior officers from Bentwaters had called Watton on the night of 27 December 1980 in panic to say their men were watching UFOs and – they believed - Watton *must* have them on radar. Potts was ordered to look, as were others, but nothing could be seen on their screens. However, Potts was struck by how urgently the USAF and MoD wanted access to their radar data because there had been a close encounter in the forest involving officers and personnel.

That day, Potts became the first independent witness I spoke to who could relate hard facts about the case. The same data did not emerge directly from US airmen for years. Yet such very specific evidence went on record on 2 February 1981 – just 37 days after the events – posing big questions about what the MoD and the USAF knew, and when exactly they knew it.

Next month, we will assess some of those questions, which could turn the whole long-running saga of Rendlesham Forest on its head...



ABOVE: Bloodhound surface-to-air missiles at RAF Bawdsey in the 1980s.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

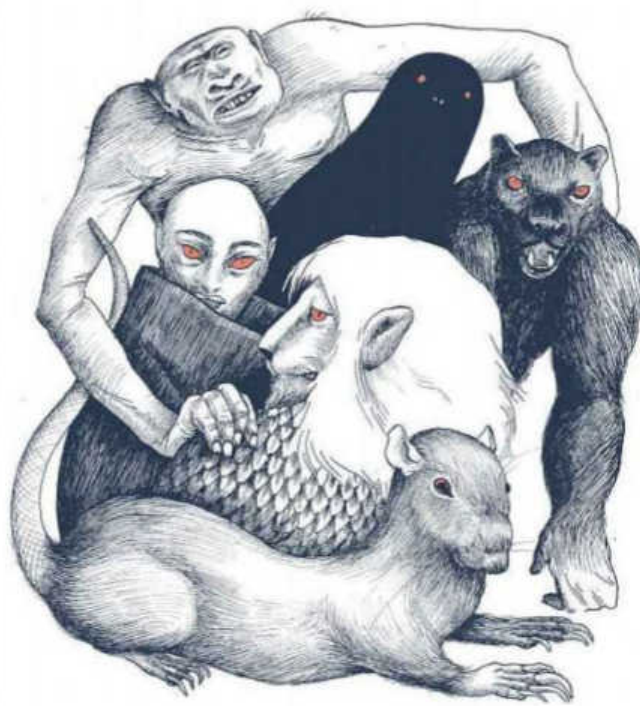
61 THE PRE-WAR MONSTER PANICS OF 1938

THEO PAIJMANS wonders whether racial tensions and rumblings of war gave birth to US monster flaps

The year of 1938 was a jittery one. In Europe, Germany had risen from its defeat two decades before and under Nazi rule had found a new and arrogant military pride; Chamberlain's attempts notwithstanding, Hitler's armies had begun to march and occupied the Sudetenland on 1 October. A month later, Jews in Germany and Austria would suffer an omen of what was to come during the *Kristallnacht*, the Night of Broken Glass, with over 1,000 synagogues burned and hundreds of Jews killed. The reports by foreign journalists in Germany horrified the world.

In America, far away from these rising tensions, as part of a Halloween series, the Columbia Broadcasting radio network aired 'War of the Worlds' on 30 October, directed and narrated by a then relatively unknown Orson Welles. It received mixed reviews;¹ and, as legend has it, it caused a mass panic because listeners didn't really understand that Welles's Martian invasion radio-play was fiction (see FT199:42-47). Other panics followed. Later that year, rumours of a vampire who had murdered a young girl in El Paso, New Mexico, surfaced around neighbouring Juarez, just over the Mexican border. An El Paso schoolteacher reported to the police that her pupils were greatly upset. When the incident was investigated, the blame was laid at the door of another radio-play called 'The Vampire' that had been broadcast recently.²

But the year had begun with a series of interlocking monster scares that specifically targeted the Afro-American communities in several states. In January and February 1938, an epidemic of monsters, as one newspaper put it, terrorised the Afro-American communities in the towns of Mobile, Alabama, Pensacola and



A story was told about a hunter who trailed the monster into the nearby swamp but returned speechless with fright and without his hunting dogs

Panama City, Florida and Rock Hill, South Carolina.

It began in Mobile, where in the last three weeks of January stories had started to emerge that a monster was roaming the alleys of the northern part of town. Descriptions varied. Some said it was "half man and half wolf"; others claimed it was like a dog but left tracks like those of a lion; and there were those who swore that the strange creature bore "a ring of white, phosphorescent hair" around its neck and had scales like a dinosaur.³ In the fear and confusion, the number and variety of the stories grew. One Henry Johnson emptied his gun at the monster, but the bullets just bounced off the creature's back, he claimed. What he had

seen, albeit in the darkness of night, was 6ft (1.8m) long, woolly and larger than a police dog. He further said it had a broad head and a ring of white fur, about 6in (15cm) wide, around its neck. The female residents of the area believed the monster to be the ghost of a woman who was killed by her unfaithful husband. There were those who thought the 'thing' might be a madman, and another wild story was told about a hunter who trailed the monster into the nearby swamp but returned, speechless with fright and without his hunting dogs.⁴

The situation in Mobile had become quite alarming, since residents of the areas where the monster had reportedly

been seen armed themselves to the teeth with pistols, shotguns, knives and razors. When RL Johnson claimed to see the monster one night and started firing at it, it signalled the beginning of a barrage of gunshots from other residents, shooting at anything that moved. "Guns roared throughout last night as the frantic negroes chased elusive 'things' up and down the Marmotte street district", one newspaper commented. It further remarked that, although the white populace of town was "amused" by the scare, it also complained of black servants worn out by sleepless nights caused by the monster rumours.⁵ A man named Walker claimed to have been bitten by the creature, a terrible thing that, according to him, was "eight feet [2.4m] long, looks like a seal and jumps like a kangaroo".⁶ Meanwhile, police and reporters tried to substantiate the rumours, but, as one newspaper admitted, without success. The "Monster of Marmotte Street" – so-called because of the area where it had been seen – was reported widely across the US. Others named it the "Frankenstein of Fisher's Alley", after another street it was said to stalk, but in the end, the protean terror that might have stepped from a Hollywood horror film suffered an ignominious end.

On a cold February night when the streets were blanketed by a grey fog, local fireman Charles Ardoyno looked in his yard to see his collie fighting with something he couldn't make out. He asked his wife to alert Jeanie Sullivan, who had a gun. When Sullivan arrived, a well-aimed shot from his rifle blasted the head off the creature. The monster, it turned out, was a large otter: "It measured about four feet [1.2m] in length and had much the appearance of a huge rat. The feet are armed with huge claws

and the animal was compact and muscular.”⁷ When the news spread, some 200 people visited Ardoyno’s house. That signalled the end of the infamous Monster of Marmotte Street, although the local newspaper noted that: “How the animal made its way into the south part of town or where it came from puzzled the authorities. The otter, a fur-bearing, meat-eating aquatic animal, is rarely seen and is never found far from swamps and creeks.”⁸ But it left a legacy. A week before the Mobile monster was shot, two Afro-American men in Rock Hill, South Carolina, told police there that “a fierce, fur-covered animal accosted them on a lonely, dimly-lit street...” Another reported that the beast had attacked him and “ripped off his clothing before he managed to escape its awful clutch. Police, who were without a theory as to the identity of the weird animal, also received a report that the African Udilacus had killed a large calf on the edge of this South Carolina town and eaten away much of the carcass.”⁹

Reports of the ‘Udilacus’ spread terror among the Afro-American residents of Rock Hill, and from the newspaper accounts we get the impression that this monster was something other than just an ordinary animal. Constable Carl Hovis, for instance, “reported he saw the shambling beast in a dark back alley and shot at it twice but failed to bring it down. Sam Watts, negro, said he was chased through a wooded area by the ‘varmint’ which made grunting noises”.

Police reported the mysterious monster had a particular aversion to dogs: “Two were found dead, apparently from strangulation, and a dozen were reported bitten, beaten and scratched in the Willow Brook section of town”.¹⁰ The monster seemed to have appeared out

of nowhere, and its end was equally puzzling: “The African Udilacus’, supposedly strange animal that attacked dogs and frightened men, today mysteriously disappeared and negroes reported the ‘thing’ had gone to visit the ‘monster of Marmotte Street’ which frightened the coloured section of Mobile, Ala.

“Others who claimed to know all about the Udilacus, but did not know where or how the name originated, said the Rock Hill monster had gone into hibernation for 10 years for it only appears once in a decade”.¹¹

Meanwhile in Pensacola, Florida, rumours had it that “Mobile’s terrible, night stalking monster” had descended on the town in forms variously reported as “a gorilla to a goon”. Motorcycle officers George White and CA Green pieced together a more elaborate description of the creature. They found out that it had “a head like a panther, a body like a gorilla, six legs, hands that drag the ground and it stands about four feet [1.2m] high. It leaves tracks like a huge grizzly bear and makes a noise like a foghorn. It is liable to attack from a storm sewer, from a rooftop or merely come sailing at its victim from the top of a tree”. Nobody, though, could be found who had actually seen the monster for himself: “You can hear reports of dozens who have seen it – but try and find one of them,” the local newspaper dryly observed, christening the monster the ‘Goon of Guillemard Street’ anyway. The Pensacola police stated that the scare was traceable to “a warning given some small offender who had haplessly come under the law’s heavy arm the other day. If he didn’t mend his ways, he was warned, the Mobile monster was coming over here and get him.”¹²

Not to be outdone, the Florida town of Panama City

became acquainted with a monster described as “10ft 7in (3.23m) in his shocking feet and his body moves a quarter of a block before his hands begin to follow. And what hands! He gives one the impression of having an octopus (sic) at the end of each wrist...”

The monster was introduced in the local newspaper by newspaperman Bill Pinney, who also coined the name ‘Harold the Horrible’. “That’s what we’ll call him”, Pinney wrote in his tongue-in-cheek account filled with over-the-top deeds attributed to the monster.¹³

Although Pinney may have meant it as a joke, it was at the expense of the Afro-American communities who had already been suffering from a prolonged history of psychological warfare, going back to the dark days of the Ku Klux Klan and Night Riders, a terrible threat that had not gone away. In August 1938 for instance, Afro-American citizens of the Florida community of Lakeland confronted the Klan during one of their white-hooded marches on Florida Avenue.¹⁴

Pinney had aimed his Creepypasta style creation at the Afro-Americans who lived in Shinetown, the black community of Panama City. Judging from Pinney’s hasty, if sarcastic, retraction three days later, they had become very upset:

“Harold the Horrible was hooley. Really there warn’t nothing to it. Not that a lot of people thought there was but this is in hope those who thought there was that there is not, has not been and will not be any ‘monsker’.

“Just how many people believed that any monster would visit Shinetown is not known. But it evidently was those who cannot read and who heard only from those who can.

“It really all started with fantastic stories in Mobile’s Harlem, where someone had

seen an animal. In Pensacola it was born in a city courtroom, where the presiding judge threatened something about having the Mobile ‘monster’ come to Pensacola to quiet things in the negro sections.

“We can’t think of anything either of those port cities have that Panama City hasn’t so we just decided to supply Shinetown with a ‘monsker’.

“Little did we realise that cooks of long good-standing would not show up for work or that the night spots of the local black belt would report a business ‘recession’.

“The whole thing was in good clean fun and we hope we are right when we say there isn’t any monster. At least we hope we don’t meet any going home one of these foggy nights.

“Careful investigation has shown there was no truth in the report the ‘monster’ visited Chipley and left half the body of a man on a stump in the woods near there after eating only part of his victim... So with the passing of Harold we hope this here ‘monsker’ foolishness is at an end”.¹⁵

Perhaps it was; there’s no further mention in the newspapers, but it is interesting to note that a monster scare that had started in Mobile, migrated to other Afro-American communities, even across state lines, reinforced by suggestions circulated by the predominantly white newspapers and a scare tactic by a Pensacola judge. Alabama’s Monster of Marmotte Street, Florida’s Goon of Guillemard Street and Harold the Horrible, and even South Carolina’s African Udilacus, may have been nothing more than a lost otter and a few forerunners of Creepypasta – but the fact that these otherwise harmless stories could grow into full-blown social panics is a clear indicator of the racial tensions that plagued a Divided States of America on the brink of WWII.

1 ‘Attack From Mars’, *New York Times*, New York, 2 Nov 1938.

2 ‘Radio Station Will Refute Vampire Fear’, *El Paso Herald Post*, 10 Dec 1938; ‘Vampire Man Rumor Traced To radio Play’, *Port Arthur News*, Texas, 12 Dec 1938.

3 ‘Page Sherlock! Baskervilles’ Hound Just a Pup Alongside Mysterious Monster of Marmotte’, *Dallas*

Morning News, Texas, 30 Jan 1938; ‘Mobile Negro Section Upset. Police Disarm Residents Who Fire Wildly After Report of Strange Creature’, *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, Illinois, 31 Jan 1938.

4 ‘Wide-Eyed Darkies Stalk Weird Scaly Monster’, *Delta Star*, Greenville, Mississippi, 30 Jan 1938.

5 *Ibid.*

6 ‘Lawd, Dar’ Dat Mobile Monster Ergin!’, *Delta Star*, 1 Feb 1938.

7 ‘Reign Of Monster Ended After Furious Battle With Collie Dog On Cedar Street’, *Mobile Register*, Alabama, 14 Feb 1938; ‘Harlem ‘Monster’ Shot By Fireman in Mobile’, *Daily Capital News*, Jefferson City, Missouri, 15 Feb 1938.

8 *Ibid.*

9 ‘Distant Relative Of Mobile’s Monster Reported’, *Delta Star*, 6 Feb 1938; ‘Gorilla-Like Beast Accosts Negro folk’, *Charleston Daily Mail*, West Virginia, 6 Feb 1938.

10 ‘Shambling Beast Terrorizes Town. Hairy Animal Reported In South Carolina Village’, *The Gleaner*, Kingston, Jamaica, 9 Feb 1938.

11 ‘African Udilacus

Departs Carolina After Wild Spree’, *Pulaski Southwest Times*, Virginia, 9 Feb 1938.

12 ‘Rumors Of Monster Flood city And Keep Darktown Quiet’, *Pensacola Journal*, Florida, 11 Feb 1938.

13 Bill Pinney, ‘Monsker Monstrosity May Mar Shinetown Merriment. Monkey-Mannered Manlike Myriapoda May Make Move Monday’, *Panama City News-*

Herald, Florida, 12 Feb 1938

14 www.lakelandgov.net/libraryspecialcollections/exhibits/african-american-experience-in-lakeland/people-events/kkk1938.

15 Bill Pinney, ‘Reporter Admits Harold Story Was Plain Hooley’, *Panama City News-Herald*, 15 Feb 1938.

The Return of Gothic Romance

Guillermo del Toro described his recent film *Crimson Peak* as a “classic Gothic Romance”, a subgenre that has been consigned to oblivion for nearly four decades. But what is Gothic Romance, what makes it different to horror and why did it fall into obscurity?

MARIA J PEREZ CUERVO dons her best nightie and goes in search of answers...

A woman in her nightie running away from an isolated manor house: the term “Gothic Romance” conjures up the image that appeared on the covers of thousands of 1960s paperbacks, often mocked by those who’d only bother with respectable literary fiction. Yet these novels, ubiquitous between the 1960s and the 1980s, are only the most recent manifestation of a genre that had been born two centuries earlier.

To trace its origins we must travel back to 1764, the year of publication of *The Castle of Otranto*, generally considered to be the first Gothic novel. In it, Horace Walpole introduced some of the elements that would define the genre: a seemingly supernatural irruption of the past; a sequence of shocking and macabre events; a sense of enclosure in an architectural space. But it was Ann Radcliffe who, with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), would be praised as “the original inventor” and “the founder of a class, or school”, in Walter Scott’s words.

Radcliffe was one of the most popular novelists of her time – Jane Austen famously satirised the obsession of young women with her novels in *Northanger Abbey* (1817). She reflected upon the genre in her 1826 essay “On the Supernatural in Poetry”, drawing a distinction between terror and horror that is still relevant today: for Radcliffe, terror was about suggestion, anticipation and imagined evils, whereas horror was explicit and



**RADCLIFFE DREW
A DISTINCTION
BETWEEN TERROR AND
HORROR THAT IS STILL
RELEVANT TODAY**

physical, and led to revulsion and shock. She used this analysis to typify her own works in opposition to those of her literary rival Matthew Lewis, of *The Monk* fame: while Lewis took pleasure in shocking his readers with explicit scenes, Radcliffe favoured terror for its ability to “expand... the soul”, making readers aware of their human limits and bringing them closer to the sublime.

Fifty years after the publication of *Udolpho*, the Brontës gave birth to what we now understand as Gothic Romance. In Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the tragic love story between Catherine and Heathcliff transcends boundaries thanks to the introduction of supernatural elements and Gothic imagery. In Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) the heroine tells her own coming-of-age story and faces a mystery as she struggles with the constraints of her life in an isolated manor house. Fascinated by supernatural tales since she was a child, Jane expresses herself in the language of Gothic.

None of these heroines are damsels in distress. They are complex individuals who don’t fit into society, the female embodiment of the Gothic Romantic, and accordingly, their heroes are Byronic: in *Jane Eyre*, Rochester, although repentant, carries the burden of a past sin; Heathcliff isn’t redeemed, and grows bitter and cruel after losing his true love. With the work of the

LEFT: An illustration from Ann Radcliffe’s seminal Gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.



John P. Poston



ABOVE LEFT: Daphne du Maurier, author of the key modern Gothic novel, 1938's *Rebecca*. ABOVE RIGHT: The book was quickly adapted and filmed by Alfred Hitchcock. BELOW: If any one title kickstarted the Gothic Romance paperback boom of the 1960s, it was Victoria Holt's *Mistress of Mellyn*.

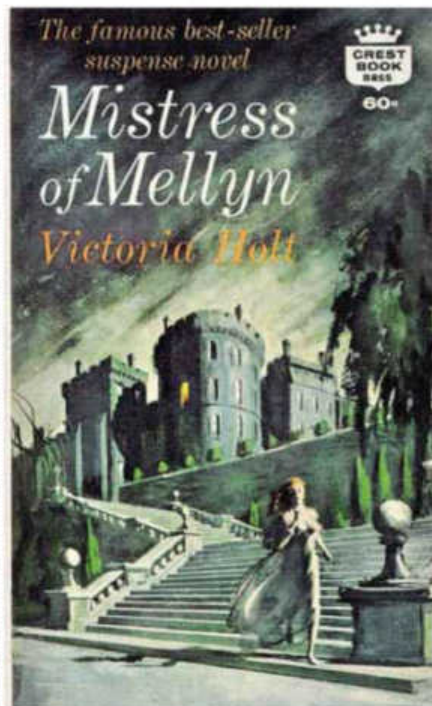
Brontës, the eerie English landscape became synonymous with the subgenre, and the manor house a symbol of entrapment.

REBECCA AND HER DAUGHTERS

Modern Gothic can't be understood without reference to *Rebecca* (1938), the hypnotic novel by Daphne du Maurier that draws on themes already present in Charlotte Brontë's work. Its film adaptation, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, was a popular sensation, winning the 1940 best picture Oscar and forever lingering in the collective imagination.

Du Maurier defined it as a study in jealousy, but the Gothic elements are inescapable. Its famous first line – "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" – introduces the proverbial Cornish estate and the supernatural atmosphere that runs through the story: a young, plain and naïve woman marries the older and much wealthier widower Maxim de Winter, but when they both move to Manderley he becomes a distant and brooding stranger. The house is haunted by the presence of Rebecca, Maxim's dead first wife, and seething behind its walls is a feeling of impending doom. The relationship between Maxim and Rebecca is presented as the ultimate mystery and the root of the protagonist's paranoia: unlike her, the first Mrs de Winter was charming, glamorous, seemingly perfect. Tormented by her thoughts of inadequacy and manipulated by the unnerving housekeeper, she almost commits suicide. When she finally discovers Rebecca's real nature, she also learns about her husband's past sins, darker than she'd imagined – so dark, in fact, that the Hollywood version had them tempered to comply with the moral guidelines of the Production Code.

After the success of the novel, Hollywood produced several films that explored Gothic themes from the perspective of a female character. As was the case with *Rebecca*, they were always directed by men, even though most of the original material had



GOthic ROMANCE NOVELS EXPLORED THE GENRE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE FEMALE GAZE

been written by women: William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* (1939) was the second film adaptation of Emily Brontë's novel; Jacques Tourneur's *I walked with a zombie* (1943) was a Caribbean-set reimagining of *Jane Eyre* that traded the madwoman in the attic for a zombified first wife, and it came out the same year as Robert Stevenson's *Jane Eyre*; Joseph

L Mankiewicz's *Dragonwyck* (1946) was based on the novel by the American Anya Seton.

Rebecca's daughters lay dormant for a couple of decades, until 1960, when *Mistress of Mellyn* by the then unknown author Victoria Holt became an overnight success. The plot was unabashedly modelled on du Maurier's work and *Jane Eyre*: a governess finds a position in an isolated Cornish mansion haunted by the dead wife of her mysterious and dashing employer. But was he responsible for her death?

The novel's atmospheric setting made readers wonder whether this was du Maurier hiding behind a pen name, but Holt's true identity only emerged several years after her debut: she was the prolific British author Eleanor Hibbert, who also penned historical romances under the names Jean Plaidy and Philippa Carr. Hibbert had been convinced by American agent Patricia Myrer to revive the Gothic genre, and adopted a pseudonym that would evoke a Victorian setting. It wasn't a coincidence that Gothic horror had just returned to the big screen via Hammer Films and its luridly coloured adaptations of Victorian horror classics. But this time it was more sexually suggestive than ever before. Christopher Lee's *Dracula*, marketed as "the terrifying lover who died... yet lived!" was closer in his appearance to a brooding Gothic hero than to the "tall old man" of Bram Stoker's imagination, and his portrayal was brimming with eroticism and a raw, virile energy that made the character seductive. These, however, weren't love stories, and *Dracula* wasn't portrayed as a sympathetic monster, but as a predator. Most importantly, they weren't told from a female point of view.

Although the Gothic was *en vogue* again, there seemed to be a hunger for a product that did explore the genre from the perspective of the female gaze. It was a time in which women were entering the paid workforce, fighting for equality, and struggling with sexual harassment. Gothic Romance novels provided escapism and a

quiet transgression: although anchored in a literary tradition, they were still suggestive of forbidden pleasures.

Soon the new paperbacks were everywhere, replicating the Gothic craze that had shaken the late 18th century. They quickly found their niche, a middle ground between pulp magazines and the more expensive hardbacks, ready for quick consumption. Holt became a household name, along with Mary Stewart and the Americans Phyllis A Whitney and Barbara Michaels. The paperbacks' covers, by veteran pulp artists such as Lou Marchetti or George Ziel, each depicted a young woman in jeopardy, with the suggestion of a menace encased in an architectural space – a concept also present in many of the titles: *Castle of Terror*, *Prisoner of the Manor*, *House of Shadows*.

Most were coming-of-age stories told from the point of view of a woman alone in the world and in financial dire straits, which forces her either to make a living for herself or marry a total stranger. Either choice will take her to a mansion, a castle or a manor inhabited by people who hide too many secrets, the most important of which is a plot to kill her. Joanna Russ's 1973 essay on the subgenre was named after its main trope: "Somebody's trying to kill me and I think it's my husband". Indeed, part of the page-turning qualities of these novels lay in their ability to keep the readers guessing whether the man whom the protagonist married, or the one who she feels strangely drawn to, is or isn't a murderer. The stories were dominated



by a sense of paranoia and anticipation, heightened by the first-person narrative. The endless repetition of the formula, and the lower quality of many of the works produced, inevitably caused the subgenre's downfall.

MONSTROUS DOMESTICITY

There is a tendency to interpret these novels as wish-fulfillments of the woman-nurturer: the belief that we enjoy reading them

because they perpetuate the fantasy that a wicked man can be redeemed by a woman in love. But the assumption that their popularity was a product of the intrinsic nurturing nature of a whole gender is condescending, to say the least.

As we've seen, women have played a pivotal role in the creation and development of the Gothic genre. Let's consider a fictional example: in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), Jo March is a devoted writer of lurid Gothic fiction, but she's convinced by her suitor, an older German intellectual, to abandon the genre. Jo obliges, and soon she is "rewarded" with the publication of her more realistic novel, one about "simple" and "lovely" characters inspired by her own domestic life. Even though Jo's aim had been to make a living for herself and to succeed as a writer, the resolution doesn't feel like a triumph, but a defeat. She abandons what she loves, following "sensible" advice that, naturally, comes from an older man. What's more worrying is that the episode seems to echo Alcott's career – she never liked *Little Women*, which she referred to as "moral pap for the young", and she privately confessed to preferring her earlier Gothic tales.

Jo March's disappointing character development reflects a constant: the belief that fantasy, in this case Gothic Romance, is creatively inferior to realism. The reason for these attacks is that the core of Gothic is distinctively anti-establishment, anarchic, and uncomfortable – particularly if it comes from the mind of a woman of child-bearing age. The Gothic heroine is curious (this is the very definition of Bluebeard's wife, of the woman who walks downstairs in her nightie, holding a candelabra in her hand – the trope



TOP: Prolific Gothic Romance author Phyllis A Whitney. CENTRE: Louisa May Alcott said she enjoyed writing her early Gothic tales more than *Little Women*, whose heroine Jo March is similarly encouraged to move away from the disreputable genre. ABOVE: Gothic cinema flourished in the 1940s with films like *Jane Eyre* (left) and *Dragonwyck* (right).

that embodies the genre), and curiosity, as Nabokov said, is “insubordination in its purest form”.

Historically, Gothic Romance was a way for women to explore, and vicariously enjoy, transgressive behaviour. Women were supposed to be nurturing angels naturally drawn to the domestic sphere, but they could rebel against this role and address their anxieties over domesticity through fiction. These novels explored the female process of leaving the family home behind, of becoming independent. But despite the decisive role of a male figure, the process didn't exactly unfold in conventional ways.

The house was a crucial element of the story, the vessel that contained the mystery. Gothic manors, however, are never safe havens. The way we've seen them depicted on the covers of 1960s paperbacks provides some visual clues: the single-lit window from one of the top levels is a merciless eye that watches the heroine's every movement; the half-opened window, the curtain flowing and the gallery of family portraits reveal the presence of an invisible threat and a history of horror contained within the walls of the house. Gothic manors turn into prisons, they oppress their inhabitants until they lose their sanity and commit atrocities. The families who inhabit them are haunted by an unspoken curse – a madwoman in the attic, a walled-up ancestor, an illegitimate heir buried on the



north side of the graveyard. These deviations from conventional domesticity provide a glimpse of the irrational.

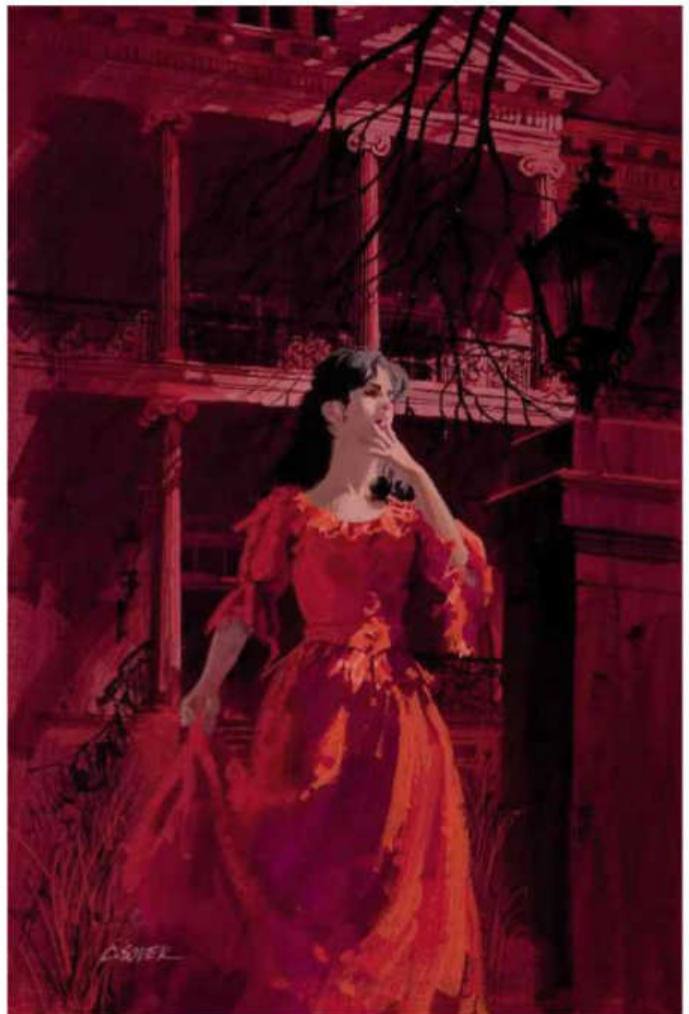
THE QUEEN OF HADES

The Gothic heroine manages to keep her respectable place in society while encountering, and somehow

participating in, the dark side. Her portal may still be a man, her husband or employer, but he is far from being a light character that fits well into society. Archetypically, Gothic Romance is rooted in the Greek myth of Persephone and Hades, an expression of fertility cults that go back to ancient Mesopotamia. Byronic heroes are variations on the archetype of the most feared god in Ancient Greece: Hades, the recluse, who lives an isolated life in the Underworld until he abducts the young maiden Persephone to be his consort. If a Gothic hero achieves redemption it is through love, which will put an end to his isolation.

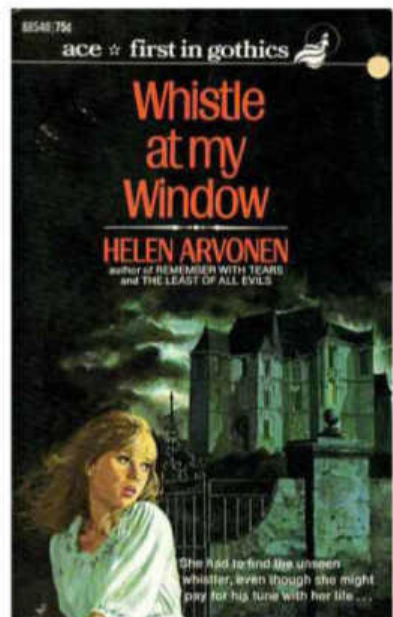
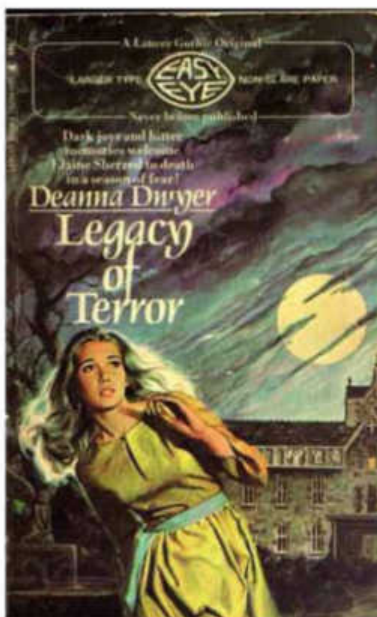
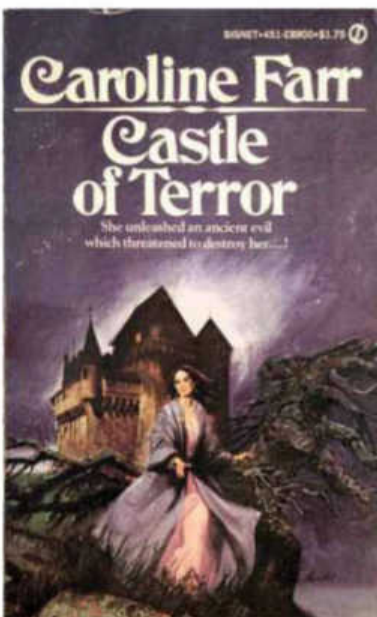
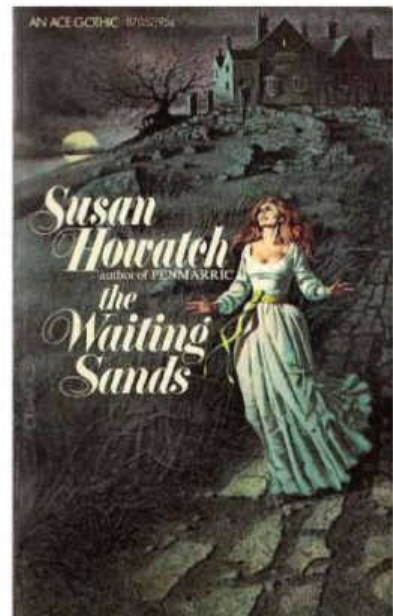
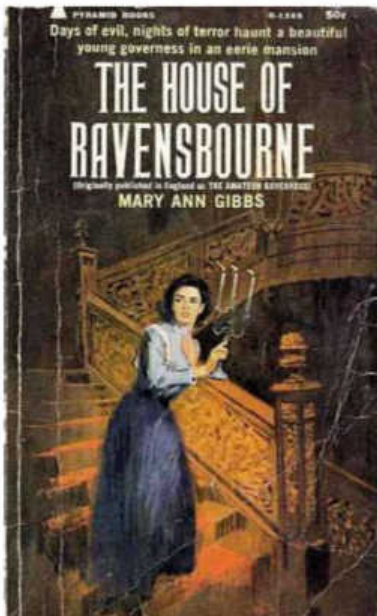
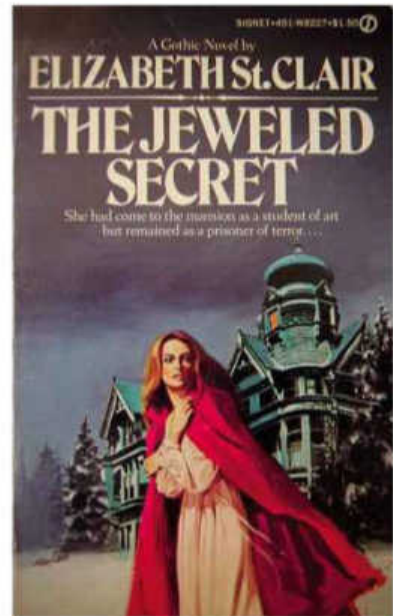
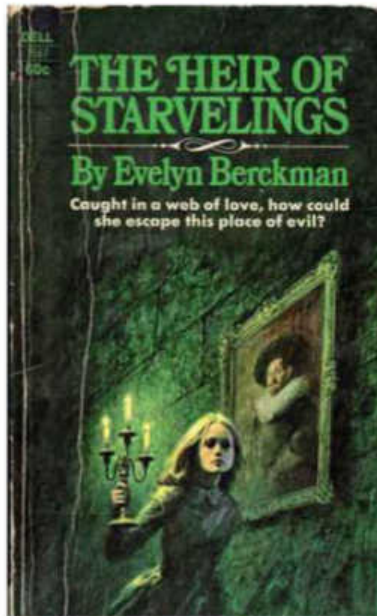
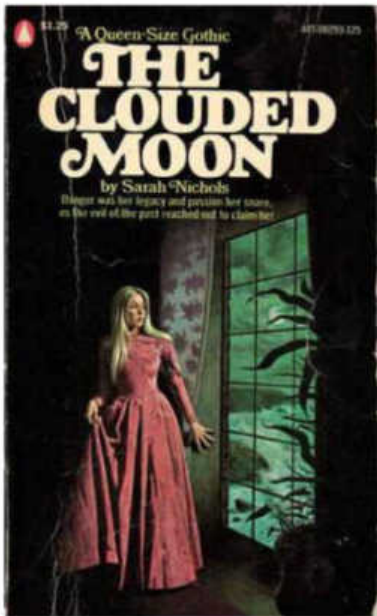
Like Persephone, the Gothic heroine may be kidnapped, incarcerated, or simply trapped. But, much like the reader, she is fascinated by the irrational, so it's her curiosity that drives all her actions. After a series of ordeals, she emerges as a more complex character, one that has left her innocence behind and has escaped conventional domesticity: a respectable husband, a legion of well-fed children, and utter boredom.

The ambiguous masculine figure was always the object of a dark sexual attraction, but eroticism remained an unspoken suggestion. All these heroines remained chaste. The rigid morals of a bygone era, a recurrent setting in modern Gothics, don't justify their choice – even contemporary



ABOVE: Three fine examples of cover artwork for Gothic Romance paperbacks of the 1960s. FACING PAGE: The visual formula was repeated from one book to the next.

IMAGES COURTESY OF HERITAGE AUCTIONS



GUILLERMO DEL TORO ON CRIMSON PEAK

GUILLERMO DEL TORO is a self-confessed fan of the Gothic Romance. MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO spoke to him about early influences and the pleasures and pains of reviving the genre on screen.

FT: You've spoken before about how important Gothic Romance is to you. What started your interest? What is it that fascinates you about it?

Guillermo del Toro: When I was a boy, my father won the national lottery and became – overnight – a wealthy man. He began acquiring the accoutrements of what he perceived as a baronial life, and chief amongst those was a wood-panelled home office/library. He basically never used it, so it became my playground. I read all these books that he had acquired for purely decorative purposes. I read an entire encyclopedia of art and another one about family health. He had also acquired a huge selection of 'youth classics', which included two books that became essential to me at that age: *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre*. I realised that the two books were, in an odd way, very similar: they were sort of emotional autobiographies of their authors. I was also very taken by the fact that they were both written by women but spoke deeply about the loneliness and outcast condition that I felt as a child.

Jane Eyre is, in my opinion, the touchstone of the Gothic genre. Of course Ann Radcliffe was immensely popular and gave birth to a lot of the tropes that we associate with the genre, but *Jane Eyre* has influenced works as disparate as *Rebecca*, *The Secret Garden*, *Great Expectations*, *Dragonwyck* and *I Walked With a Zombie*. It is a quintessential structure.

Just as fairy tales re-enact the process of discovery of the world for a child, Gothic is a rite-of-passage genre for young women blossoming into adulthood.

The Brontës were a fascinating family – even more so because they were so dramatically insular in many ways. They were almost a tribe: you can see how their personalities and works flow from one to the other, even although they are remarkably different.

Anyway, *Jane Eyre* led to Radcliffe in my literary quest, and then Radcliffe led me to discover Walpole, Lewis, Beckford, and so on...

Did your Catholic upbringing have something to do with your love of Gothic?

Of course! Something that's essential to the Gothic genre is the sensation of impending doom – which is somewhat similar to the burden of original sin. The ideas of Romantic love are usually entangled with



“GOTHIC IS A RITE-OF-PASSAGE GENRE FOR YOUNG WOMEN BLOSSOMING INTO ADULTHOOD”

repression and self-immolation. Melancholy is essential to the genre, and there is no more powerful sense of loss than that of having lost paradise!!

Gothic Romance doesn't seem to be as popular as it used to be. Why do you think this is?

As a recognisable genre perhaps it isn't, but you can feel its echoes in things like *Twilight* for sure. It's a genre that will always connect very strongly only with certain spirits – spirits of a melancholic disposition. Hence the tragic decision to market *Crimson Peak* as a horror film – which it is not; at least not in the way we understand the genre today.

In Gothic literature you can have manifestly supernatural elements, like the Bloody Nun in Lewis's *The Monk*, but a lot

of the time these elements are revealed to be of natural origin – always tied to sins of the past. I wanted both things in *Crimson Peak*: I wanted the ghosts... but I wanted them to be a representation of those sins and to become elements of dread, not fear. I wanted to make not a 'ghost story' but a story with ghosts in it, as the character of Edith says in the film.

Was the decision to make *Crimson Peak* female-centric due to your respect for the source novels?

Absolutely. But even more, it was about trying to honour how incredibly revolutionary the spirit of the Brontë sisters was to me as a kid, and the very spirit of Mary Shelley. These were not helpless damsels in distress. They were complex women of great character. I wanted to allow for more modern ideas to come into play within a very traditional genre structure. I wanted the ending to be entirely dependent on two incredibly strong female figures – opposites of one another.

I also wanted to suggest a Henry Jamesian clash between Europe and America. I wanted Edith to be a thoroughly modern girl, one who was more curious than afraid.

The house and the landscape are crucial elements in the genre. What did you want Allerdale Hall and its surroundings to represent in *Crimson Peak*, and how did you make use of them?

Essential to Gothic is the rooting of the sins of the past in a building – Otranto, Manderley, Dragonwyck – and the idea that the landscape has moulded the very souls of the characters. This was definitely true of the Brontës. The moors seep up into the spirits of the people that inhabit them and the edifices erected there weigh heavily upon their shoulders. They are monuments to the secrets and sins of the past – like the wedding banquet hall in *Great Expectations* or the murder mystery in *Rebecca*.





The mansion is a reservoir of cruelty – cruelty that has been passed from father to mother, and from mother to child, and then into a sociopathic career of murder for profit. To me, the most delicate spirit of that lineage was Thomas. He was the lamb to the slaughter, not Edith. Edith was raised strong – and very American – while Thomas dies for everyone’s sins. He is the focus of all this evil – him and his beautiful, silly dreams of machines and toys.

At any rate, we knew we needed to design that mansion to within an inch of its life and we did. It was one of the most painstakingly designed movies I have ever made and – without a doubt – the most beautiful. But I knew that in order to capture the heartbreak, you needed beauty.

The ghosts you’ve created are unique, more organic than ethereal. Why did you choose to present them that way?

I knew I wanted to use make-up effects rather than CGI (except with the free-floating ghost), so it was very elaborate process to shoot them. I actually built the sets around the apparitions – measured the corridors and designed their shapes to ‘enshrine’ the ghosts. I knew I wanted them to be red, which is a striking colour to represent the sins of the past, but that has led to some confusion. Some people have thought that they are all actually CGI, purely because the colour is so vivid and so eye-catching. Well, that, and the fact that nestled within them lies a CGI skeletal structure, and CGI ectoplasm surrounds them. But they were shot for real and in situ – not on a green screen or as elements of a composite.

Would you tackle the genre again?

I would love to, in one way... but doing *Crimson Peak* was very hard. It was a movie that was so personal, and so close to my heart, that it really took its pound of flesh – but maybe... Fortunately, I still have too many pounds of flesh left!

heroines conformed to the unspoken rule: that surrendering to lower passions before marriage could lead to perdition and death.

Remarkably, not all Gothic Romances have a conventionally happy ending. Occasionally, the male lead was revealed to be a villain – a murderer, a calculating rake, a con artist or a traitor. Even in those cases where he turned out to be just your regular Byronic hero, the happy ending is tainted by an ominous threat, an invisible menace that ties a knot in your stomach, a feeling akin to watching *Manderley* in flames from the arms of the eternally tortured Maxim de Winter.

We shouldn’t let the poor quality of some individual stories spoil our enjoyment of the genre. Even when they become formulaic and derivative, the subliminal idea is surprisingly subversive, and its suggestions are far more interesting than the impulse behind paranormal Romance, the subgenre that replaced Gothic Romance in public favour.

Although some paranormal Romance heroines may be sexually liberated, sassy and physically strong, their heroes – supernatural creatures like vampires or werewolves – are often presented as products of their circumstances, victims of a predatory nature that they can hardly control. Their efforts to behave “humanely” are inspired by the heroine. But, while the darkness of the Gothic hero stems from his own acts and their consequences, that of the supernatural creature is always extraneous. He is the recipient of a gift that separates him from other mortals, and, in this way, he can be interpreted as the dark version of the superhero, a dominant figure in contemporary pop culture. Both of them are spoilt children, the perfect poster idols for a generation which has grown up believing it is special.

RETURN OF THE REPRESSED

For several decades now, horror cinema has shifted its focus to new horizons: slasher, found footage, torture porn, shock horror – all based on visceral fear and visual representations of the fight or flight instinct; or, as Ann Radcliffe suggested, horror, as opposed to terror. The latter is still at work in psychological thrillers. But, associated with Romance and the feminine, seen as impractical and clichéd and therefore deemed inferior, Gothic Romance has been forgotten. In the process, horror has lost touch with its roots. Guillermo del Toro’s 2015 film *Crimson Peak* took eight years to complete, and del Toro admits that it wasn’t easy. It’s a film that swims against the tide – an ode to a lost genre that references its origins and that is undeniably concerned with the feminine in horror.

The role of the heroine has been updated: portrayed as an independent American

BELOW: Persephone abducted by Hades, the root myth of the Gothic Romance.

who aspires to become a Gothic author and takes Mary Shelley as her role model, Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska) isn’t an orphan, and has, in fact, a very good relationship with her father. After being swept off her feet by a dark, brooding stranger who seems to appreciate and understand her literary efforts, she starts a new life in Allerdale Hall, a mansion in rural Cumberland. It is there that she becomes entrapped: while in the house, not only is she unable to live her life independently, she is also unable to create. Unlike most Gothic heroines, Edith doesn’t repress her sexual desires: she cherishes them, and isn’t punished for surrendering to them.

Fittingly, it is also a woman that sits in the villain’s throne, a space usually reserved for male characters. But the villainess, we learn, is also a victim of her own imprisonment: the burden of domesticity and familial relationships has taken its toll. Unable to escape, she becomes a terrifying, knife-wielding monster, capable of brutal acts of violence. Allerdale Hall, the three-story haunted house that took seven months to build, is the real monster that suffocates those who inhabit it. The ghosts – organic, almost fleshy – serve as metaphors for this imprisonment, one that is extended to all eternity.

Crimson Peak merges explicit violence and grotesque, bloody apparitions with the atmosphere of entrapment, anxiety and paranoia that is part of what Kate Ferguson Ellis dubbed female Gothic. And by restoring the elements traditionally sidelined as feminine, it returns us to the true roots of horror. **FT**

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THE WELSH NEANDERTHALS

AMANDA REES sets off into the great Celtic desert in search of ancient racial survivals, mysterious megaliths, fairy folklore and one of the oddest byways of evolutionary science...

It was a dark October night towards the end of the last century, when an Oxford professor stepped into a quiet mid-Wales pub in search of ale and blood. Bryan Sykes was on a quest for genetic samples that would help him map the biological origins of the peoples of the British Isles. He wanted blood donors to supply him with the mitochondrial DNA and Y chromosomes that he could use to track the prehistoric migrations of early Britons – but he got more than he'd bargained for when a local drinker, hearing him enthusiastically describing his project to the people at the bar, beckoned him over and told him the strange tale of the twins of Tregaron.¹ In their cottage, high in the hills behind the ruined Cistercian monastery of Ystrad Fflur (Strata Florida), had lived these bachelor farmers – who also just happened to be Neanderthals.

It seemed that during the 1950s and 60s, these brothers would annually host the local schoolchildren for an afternoon treat of fizzy pop and cakes, while the teacher used them as living (pre)history exhibits in a lecture on evolution and human origins. Now, as Sykes himself acknowledged, the existence of a relict Neanderthal population, even in the wilds of West Wales, seemed inherently unlikely – so was this just a tale invented by the locals to tease the visiting Englishman? Or was there something more to this story of prehistoric peoples still living in the sparsely populated 'Green Desert' of mid-Wales?²

The answers to these questions lie in the history of race science, anthropology and prehistory in Britain during the first half of the 20th century. The science of craniometry, evolutionary theory and scientific fashion combine with the origin myths of Britain, the 'real' fairies of folklore and the men who built the megaliths in the work of one Herbert John Fleure, Gregynog Professor of Anthropology and Geography at the



IN THE COTTAGE LIVED THESE BACHELOR FARMERS WHO JUST HAPPENED TO BE NEANDERTHALS

University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. Over the course of his long life and career (1877-1969), Fleure was anxious, as his obituary recorded, "to make all available knowledge tributary to an elucidation of man's physical and cultural origins"³ – and his discovery of a very ancient strain of people in the hills of mid-Wales was a essential part of that endeavour.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE TEUTONIC RACE?

For many people, then as now, if there was one thing that they 'knew' about the early history of Britain, it was that the original inhabitants of the islands had been conquered by an incoming race that was physically very different from the indigenes. In the popular mind, this usually meant the post-Roman invasion of the tall, fair Angles, Saxons and Jutes, a Teutonic wave that swept across the islands, dominating, decimating and deporting the original short and dark 'Britons'. Antiquarians had excavated barrows and mounds, and had seen that some contained 'long' skulls, while others held the remains of 'broad-headed' people. This categorisation was based on the cranial (cephalic) index – the maximum width of the skull was multiplied by 100 and divided by its maximum length to arrive at a ratio where everything under a measurement of 75.9 was called 'dolichocephalic' (long-headed) and everything over 81.1, 'brachycephalic' (broad). Dolichocephalic folk seemed to be found at sites that were older and more remote than those of the broad-heads, apparently representing physical evidence that one population had indeed been replaced by another in the murky pre- and post-Roman years.

However, by the late 19th century, it was becoming plain that the history of humanity long pre-dated Rome. In the river beds and caves of France, stone tools were being found alongside the bones of extinct mammals; and in 1859, John Evans and Arthur Prestwich, men of considerable scholarly repute, assured British scientists that these tools were proof that humanity had a pre-history: man had been contemporary with mammoth.⁴ The

ABOVE: Professor Herbert John Fleure.

FACING PAGE: A photo of Fleure's 'Plynlymon type'.



abiding question was what that man had looked like, and, crucially, what relationship he bore to the current inhabitants of Britain. By the 1870s, scholars such as William Boyd Dawkins, the original excavator of Wookey Hole, were arguing that these patterns of Stone Age burials did in fact reflect the modern distribution of British races: the skulls of a tall, broad-headed race were found everywhere in Britain and Ireland that was worth conquering, while those of a short, long-headed people were confined to the remnants and far edges of the islands.⁵ For the late Victorians, these findings were really rather satisfactory. They confirmed that the ultimate ancestors of the English race had used their technological, physical and cultural superiority to banish the ancestors of the Celtic nations to the fringes – an early imperial triumph that the soldiers and administrators of Victoria’s empire were then bent on recreating on a global scale.

At the same time, John Beddoe, a doctor and amateur anthropologist, was concentrating on analysing the physical characteristics of the current population in an effort to map the distribution of the Saxon, Danish, Celtic or Frankish types – the intellectual ancestor of Bryan Sykes’s 20th century genetic survey. In the absence of any knowledge of DNA or blood groups, however, Beddoe based his classifications on



physical appearance, such as eye and hair colour, cephalic index, degree of chin or brow protuberance and so on. He argued that both the corporeal and mental characteristics of the different British races persisted coherently over time, supporting this claim by reference to the early chroniclers. He pointed out that Gerald of Wales, for example, had agreed with him that the Welsh possessed swarthy complexions, were bold in speech and had “no respect for their oaths, for the

promises, for the truth... they are always ready for perjury”.⁶ This rather bitter description may be explained by the fact that the Welsh National Eisteddfod Council had, some years earlier, ‘welshed’ on their promise to pay Beddoe 150 guineas in prize money.⁷ Even so, Beddoe acknowledged that other aspects of that nation’s psychological make-up were less unappealing. They were, for example, passionate about genealogies, a characteristic that was to make them very useful to other investigators of the evolution and origins of the British peoples – such as Herbert John Fleure.

“CONCENTRATED ESSENCES OF LOCALITY”

Fleure was intent on developing a new, more objective, way of studying race evolution in Britain, one that tied history to geography, and drew on folklore and local knowledge as much as it did on callipers and statistics. A Channel Islander by birth, who had spent much of his childhood as a near-invalid, he was offered a job at the University of Wales (Aberystwyth) in 1904. Employed initially as an assistant lecturer in zoology, geology and botany, he accepted only on condition that he was also allowed to pursue his interests in anthropology and geography.⁸ This interdisciplinary orientation grew out of his deep interest in evolution and his passionate



TOP: John Beddoe. ABOVE: The ruined door of Strata Florida Abbey; the Tregaron ‘neanderthal’ twins supposedly lived in a cottage in the hills above the site.



FIG. 1.—SAXON'S TYPE. FIG. 2.—DANISH'S TYPE.



FIG. 3 AND 4.—SAXON'S TYPE. (See type 1 (a) or 1 (b).)



FIG. 5 AND 6.—SAXON'S TYPE. (Probably one type 1 (a) or 1 (b).)
Reproductions from a series of illustrations labelled by Dr. J. Beddoe and his friend, Dr. Daines of Bristol and Aberystwyth, Newcastle Emlyn, Cardigan.
The illustrations depict members of one of the religious houses in Wales in the middle of the nineteenth century, and the series is being deposited in the collections at the Royal Anthropological Institute, through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. R. G. Hoare of Aberystwyth.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL TYPES IN WALES.



FIG. 7.—SAXON'S TYPE.



FIG. 8.—DANISH'S TYPE.



FIG. 9.—SAXON'S TYPE.



FIG. 10.—SAXON'S TYPE.



FIG. 11.—SAXON'S TYPE.



FIG. 12.—SAXON'S TYPE.

ABOVE: John Beddoe attempted to map the distribution of different racial types – Saxon, Danish, Celtic, Frankish and so on – among the current population of Britain by using physical characteristics.

belief that the physical and mental heritage of humankind had to be investigated as it emerged out of interaction with a complex and changing natural, social and cultural environment. As part of this project, he began his ground-breaking reappraisal of British physical anthropology in 1905, with a survey of the Welsh people. This pursuit was to occupy him, in collaboration with various institutes and different colleagues, until his death in 1969, and it was to bring him face-to-face with prehistory made flesh in mid-Wales.⁹ At the outset, he rejected both simplistic contrasts between the Celtic and the Teutonic race and the assumption that Welsh speakers represented the pre-British remnant driven to the isolate edges. “The groups speaking one and the same language,” he stressed towards the end of his career, “were never the less not of the same breed”.¹⁰ But not only did he disagree with the standard story of the all-conquering Saxon, he also rejected the strategies that previous scholars had used to study race. Archaeologists, he argued, had based their arguments on the skulls and bones retrieved from barrows, caves and graves – which were too few in number to provide a safe basis for generalisation. Anthropologists, in contrast, had made vast numbers of individual measurements of living heads and bodies, but had then aggregated those together in order to establish the ‘average’ characteristics of particular racial types. What this meant in practice was that individuals had been identified with a particular race, their measurements had been classified under that label, and then used to calculate the

‘typical’ characteristics of that race. In this way, they were in serious danger of themselves creating the object that they’d set out to study. People that looked Teutonic were treated as Teutonic in origin and used to show that Saxons were tall and blond – a seriously circular argument.

Fleure decided to adopt a different tack, one that reflected his firm belief that there was a deep and abiding relationship between human communities and the places where they lived.¹¹ Wales, he argued, was an excellent place to develop a new way of studying race history. Physically, its short, dark population appeared to be relatively homogenous, and yet the natives claimed to be able to ‘tell’ a person’s district of origin at a glance. Did such local types exist, Fleure asked? On what clues were such judgements based, and how did they relate to the categories used by anthropologists and archaeologists?

Additionally, apart from certain clearly defined areas, there had been little immigration into the country in modern times: most of the people they met would therefore be the products of families established in the area since time immemorial. Thus, as Fleure pointed out, the “individuals described for a locality will likely be, as it were, concentrated essences of that locality”.¹² Finally, the national fascination with genealogy meant that family histories were readily available for investigation. Serendipitously, Fleure thus had a field laboratory the size of Wales available to test his new approach to the study of racial history.

DISCOVERING ‘PLYNYMON MAN’

So what did he do? Like Sykes at the end of the century, he travelled around Wales, seeking volunteers to participate in his physiognomic mapping of the nation. Between 1905 and 1958, with pauses for two world wars, he and his co-workers measured almost anyone and everyone who would stand still for long enough. They preferred “the simple folk, as the more leisured classes of nearly everywhere are of very mixed descent”.¹³ They avoided foreigners (except in the border areas), those with obvious deformities/deficiencies, and, by and large, women. They recorded on file cards – now held in the archives of the Royal Anthropological Institution in London – the details of their subjects’ individual characters (height, head shape and cephalic index, zygomatic arch, degree of pigmentation, prominence of chin and so on), and while one measured, the other would note down the subject’s family history, with particular reference to the birthplace of all four grandparents.

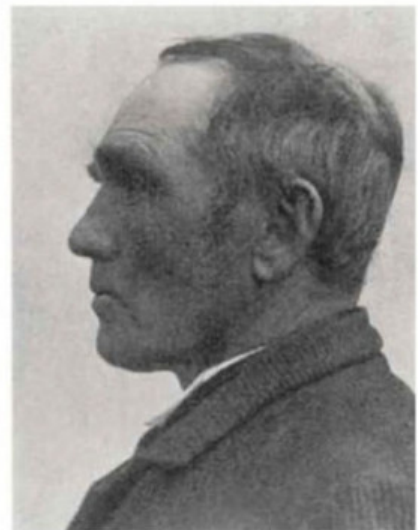
There was nothing novel about the type of information that Fleure was seeking. But what was unusual were the strategies he used to record and to display his data. In this pre-digital age, without the assistance of computers or spreadsheets, he developed a system of notation that meant that an individual subject’s unique composition of characteristics could be recorded typographically on a map. Particular symbols were held to represent specific shapes of skull and pigmentation, so that a combination of these symbols marked in a given place on the map could encapsulate the appearance and location of someone whose family had lived in that area for at least three generations. This meant two things. First, it made it possible to examine the distribution of any given physical trait individually: rather than treating race-types as pre-given composites of characters, Fleure’s map enabled him to see in what combination the characters naturally occurred. Second, the map showed him where in Wales clusters of any given character or combination of characters were to be found.

One point leapt out at him. While the vast majority of the Welshmen measured were dark dolichocephalics, there were definite clusters (‘nests’, in his parlance) of extreme long-headedness. The sparsely populated hills of Plynlymon and Mynydd Hiraethog in particular contained people with a “gabled narrow head of considerable length, with temporal hollows well marked and cheekbones strong and wide”,¹⁴ pronounced brow ridges and a prominent glabella (the area above the nose and between the eyebrows). It seemed that the standard Welsh characters of dark long-headedness were “intermingled in this remote refuge with survivors of some older type”. In fact, “the strong development of the glabella and the low receding forehead suggest in a way the Neanderthaloid”.¹⁵ And this was no chance or modern combination of characters: Beddoe’s collection of early photographs included two of men of this type, which Sir John Rhys, the first professor

of Celtic at Oxford and himself a native of the locality, identified as coming from Plynlymon. The area itself was distinctive; characterised by Fleure as the high moorland, it was isolated and sparsely populated with only one through-road. But its richness in “ridgeways... hut sites, tumuli, standing stones [and] earthworks”¹⁶ was evidence of its value to former human communities. In combination, this suggested to Fleure that he had identified a modern population with extremely archaic features, and one that seemed to have inhabited the same area for some considerable time. Could these be the forefathers of Sykes’s Neanderthals? Compellingly, Fleure found correspondences between the men of Plynlymon and the skulls identified by anthropologists and geologists as those of humans who had lived in the Upper Palaeolithic – in particular, the skulls that had been recently found by Henry-Marc Ami at Combe Capelle in Southern France. This, Fleure argued, was the ultimate ancient Briton, the racial type that had reached the islands in the very early post-glacial stage, even before they became islands, represented in the modern population by this ‘nest’ of Welsh moorland men.

MEGALITHS AND FAIRY FOLK

But that wasn’t all that Fleure’s map showed him. On the Welsh coast, he was able to identify another unusual group – a preponderance of dark broad-headed men, “often curiously associated with megaliths”,¹⁷ and strongly resembling a physical type said to be found all along the European shore, from South Italy to Ireland. These, he suggested, represented a later population of maritime peoples, approaching the British Isles from the west, probably sometime after the third millennium BC, perhaps in search of metals and precious stones. These were

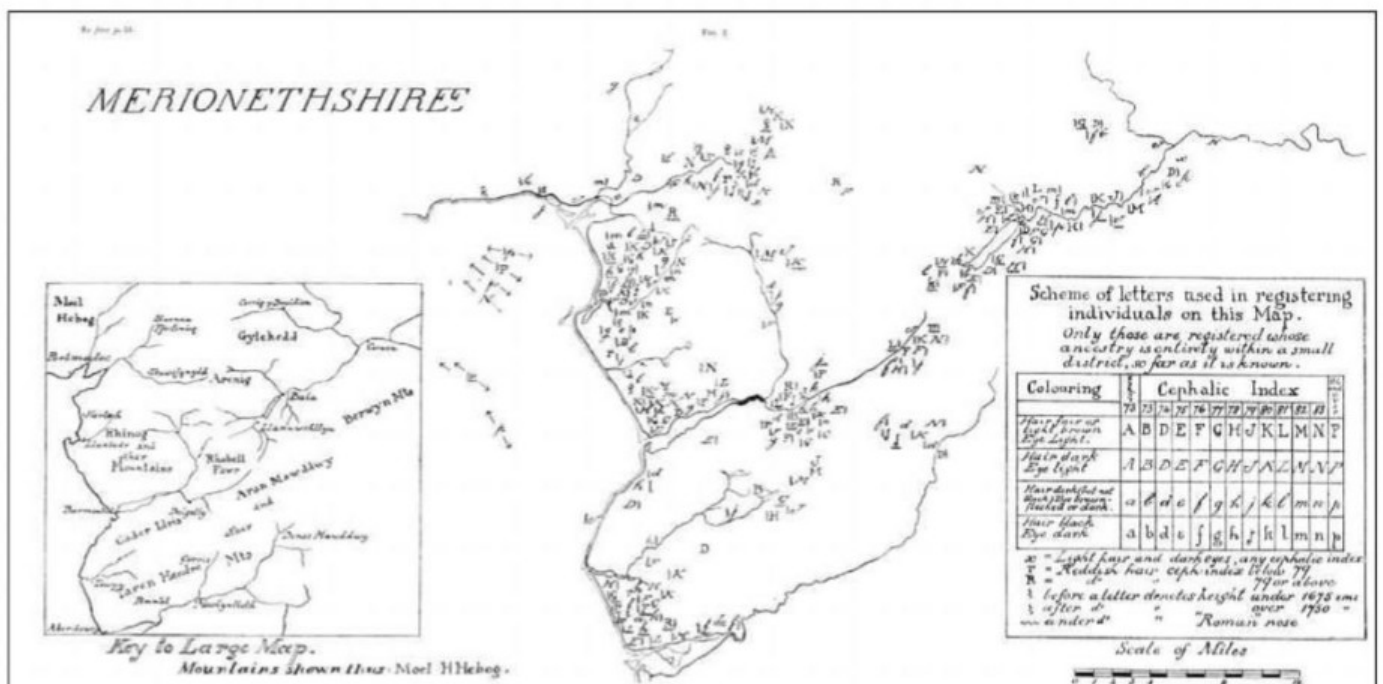


another variant on the Mediterranean/Iberian type – the short, dark haired people that were to become such an important element in both the Welsh and the British population. But neither they nor the later comers – the speakers of the Brythonic language that became Welsh – were able to replace the moorland folk in their hills.

Faced with these late Bronze/early Iron Age incomers, the people of the moors

responded by making “mystification a defence, as small communities have so often done”.¹⁸ Fleure noticed that “folk tales refer in many cases to the contrast between the valley-folk using iron and upland folk in a pre-iron stage of culture”, suggesting that here was the origin of the widespread folk belief in fairies. Fairy children (changelings), he realised, “are always described in such a way so to suggest that they were dark and that they were the children of the Upland Folk of our hypothesis”.¹⁹ Well-versed in herb lore and unwilling to use iron, fairies, Fleure concluded, “are transmutations of the indigenous moorland folk living from ancient times above the lowland oakwoods”.²⁰ Over time, he argued, the contrast between the valley and moorland folk diminished – but since life in the hills was bitterly hard, increased contact would lead to outward, not inward, migration. Even after the moors people learned to speak Welsh and attend

FLEURE BELIEVED THAT HERE WAS THE ORIGIN OF THE WIDESPREAD FOLK BELIEF IN FAIRIES



TOP: One of Fleure’s maps recording clusters and combinations of physical features across Wales. ABOVE: Fleure’s typical ‘Plynlymon Man’ (‘JJ’) from his 1916 article.



ABOVE: The high moorland of Wales's 'Green Desert' was home to the indigenous pre-iron 'Upland Folk' that Fleure believed were the probable basis of Welsh fairy lore.

chapel, "the moorland hamlets of the present day are still often in the hands of very old-established families, inclined to inbreeding"²¹ – and, crucially, still in possession of the archaic combination of physical features first seen in the late Palæolithic.

RACE AND THE HEALTH OF THE BODY POLITIC

Fleure – respected professor at the Universities of Wales and Manchester, Fellow of the Royal Society and president of many other learned associations – continued to publish on the physical anthropology and evolution of the British people until the end of his long life.²² In these books and papers, he continued to hammer home the conclusions he had reached some 40 years earlier – with perhaps a slightly greater emphasis in the post-war years on the pernicious nature of the Teutonic race-superiority myth. The core of the British population, he argued, was neither Celt nor Saxon. Instead, it was the dark long-headed Neolithic type first identified in Wales, the numbers of which he argued were actually increasing within the population. Something in that combination of characters meant that their possessors tolerated crowded, cramped urban conditions better than did the tall fair Nordics.

With a nod to the central planning that was characteristic of the post-war period – and to the employment of future generations of anthropologist-geographers – he argued that a wise government would encourage a great variety of human stock within its population, and would monitor their distribution carefully. Each variety would complement and compensate for the other's physical and mental strengths and weaknesses, and thus

strengthen national resilience in the face of future economic and medical emergency. Writing at a time when national surveys of the nation's health were beginning to become standard, he pointed out that judging individuals against some uniform standard of 'normality' was foolish: different racial types, by definition, would exhibit different physiques. What was normal for a child in moorland Wales was not necessarily so for one found on the fenlands of East Anglia. One wonders what he would have made of the modern obsession with BMI measurements. In this context, and at his insistence, in 1951 the Royal Anthropological Institute began a nation-wide survey of blood-group distributions, a project that was first taken over by the Nuffield Blood Group Centre and then by the Medical Research Council's Serological Population Genetics Laboratory – and would eventually feed into Bryan Sykes's genetic atlas of Britain, the survey with which this story began.

BROTHERS IN THE LAND

So where does all this leave Sykes and the tale of the Neanderthal twins of Tregaron? Clearly, Fleure did not believe he had identified a remnant Neanderthal population in mid-Wales – but equally clearly, he did believe that Palæolithic physical characteristics had persisted in the modern population of Plynlymon. It's extremely likely that the local population knew this: Fleure lived in and around Aberystwyth from 1897 until 1930, and continued to visit the area regularly until his death in 1969. As Sykes did decades later, his standard technique for finding subjects for his survey was to "visit a district, to make our purpose known by a lecture or other means, and to accept all men

who offered themselves for measurement".²³ It's hard to imagine him not mentioning his belief in the ancient origins of the locals in that lecture, not least to encourage people to put themselves forward. In a nation obsessed with history, who wouldn't want to know that their ancestors had been part of the landscape since time beyond mind? But the story that Sykes heard was very specific: sometime in the 1950s or 60s, there were two Neanderthal brothers who lived up in the hills above Ystrad Fflur, and annually regaled the schoolchildren of Tregaron with lemonade, cakes and evolution. So where did this story come from?

Asking local people (including the present writer's parents-in-law) about the existence of Neanderthals living in or near Strata Florida was an exercise in mutual bafflement. But the question did stir a vague memory for some of two brothers who had lived near Ponterwyd, a village about 13 or 14 miles from Ystrad Fflur. And wasn't there something about one of them having a funny-shaped head? According to Erwyd Howells, a local shepherd, poet and scholar, these brothers were the James brothers, the last of a family whose roots had grown deep in the local landscape. But the brothers had been forced out of their centuries-old farmhouse when the valley below was flooded to make the Nant-y-Moch reservoir in 1964. This eviction was not accompanied by the waves of violent anti-English protest that were provoked when the Welsh village of Tryweryn was drowned to make another reservoir for Liverpool in 1965. But it did attract the close attention of reporters and film-makers, who recorded and broadcast the removal of bodies from the little chapel's graveyard and the relocation of Iron Age cairns, as the James brothers were



ABOVE: One of the James brothers at Nant-y-Moch Farm – looking nothing like Fleure's 'Plynlymon type'.

forced out of their native hills.²⁴

And it seemed that the brothers had indeed at some point been in contact with Fleure. Erwyd Howells remembered the story: Fleure had measured the head of John James, and found that it was an absolutely typical example of certain local characteristics – so much so that it deserved to be on exhibit. Apparently a museum had offered James £200 for his head after death, an offer that was rescinded when cultural and scientific fashion turned away from both craniometry and the public exhibit of human remains – presumably to the great disappointment of this fiscally prudent man of Cardiganshire. Was this the (garbled) origin of the Neanderthal story? Certainly, Fleure was still actively conducting research at a time when he could have met the James brothers. But the pictures that exist of them look nothing

like the definitive image of the 'Plynlymon type' that Fleure described and included in his 1916 article – although, notably, they do resemble Beddoe's 'Cymro-Bronze' category.

However, when Fleure's 'type-picture' of Plynlymon Man was used again in a 1920 article,²⁵ the previously anonymous subject was now identified by his initials – 'JJ'. And by the time it appeared in his 1951 book, *The Natural History of Man in Britain*, as part of a series of pictures intended to illustrate the persistence of physical types over time (these also included Robert Burns as a typical dark-haired long-head and Charles Darwin as a member of the Beaker folk), the subject was described as one "J James from the Plynlymon district, showing features akin to those of a man of the later Palaeolithic". Was this a case of mistaken identity? The story of two brothers, forced out of their home in the

Plynlymon hills, in a move that foreshadowed a serious Anglo-Welsh conflict, becoming coincidentally confused with the efforts of a polymath scholar to chart the complexities of British racial (pre)history that lay behind the standard Saxon versus Celt story? Or was it made up out of whole cloth, by a Welsh drinker keen either to entertain himself at the expense of the visiting Englishmen, or in the hope that the visitor would reward him with the price of a pint?

Either way, what the story of the twins of Tregaron encapsulates is the abiding fascination that origin stories and accounts of the not-quite-human can evoke, as well as the diverse ways in which science responds to social need (and vice versa). The Bible no longer wholly satisfied late Victorians and Edwardians, who sought newer, more scientific explanations of human origins, while the neo-Elizabethans tried to use that science to make rational plans for the nation's future. Commercial DNA analysis (available by mail order, advertised wherever digital outlets exist) is merely the latest incarnation of the abiding concern with where we have come from and where and when – depending on our genetically measured susceptibility to any given disease – we are likely to go. But Herbert Fleure's work, for all that it is archaically expressed, is remarkable prescient in his insistence on the co-evolution of organism and environment, as well as his insistence on the need to take account of racial (ethnic) origin when assessing individual and national health – and it all came from the sparsely populated green desert of mountainous mid-Wales. There's a lot more than just sheep in those hills... **FT**

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AMANDA REES is a historian of science at the University of York, where she works on the histories of prehistory, of the future and of human/animal relationships. The part-work *The Unexplained* awakened her interest in weird stuff, and she has been an avid reader of *FT* ever since.

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ISLAND OF THE LIVING DEAD

PAUL KOUDOUNARIS travels to the Indonesian island of Sulawesi to meet the mummies of Tana Toraja and join a ritual celebrating the enduring bonds that link the living and the dead...

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

Crouched on an outcrop of rock above the village of Tondon on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, a woman began to wail a song of sorrow. It was a guttural cry and not quite human – something like a banshee call tinged with the yapping of a jackal. She was calling for her son Tandi, who was entombed in a grave carved out of the very stone on which she sat. Tandi had been dead for two decades, but his mother desperately needed to see him. He wanted a taste of milk, and to hear news of his surviving relatives; this much he had explained when his spirit last appeared to her in a dream.

The reunion would not be simple and it would not be quick, however, since it was governed by complex village protocol. Tandi was not the only person encased in the rock crypt, and absolutely no one could be removed until the elder of the village arrived. To do so beforehand was to violate a taboo and would require the sacrifice of a pig or buffalo in expiation. So for Tandi's mother, there was nothing left to do but wait and wail. When her son's casket finally emerged from its grave several hours later, the body was carefully unwrapped to reveal a rotted carcass covered in dirt and crawling with beetles, a sight that would drive most parents to tears. But Tandi's mother beheld instead the countenance of love. She pressed a carton of condensed milk to the rotting lips and began to tell of all that had passed since they had last spoken, as Tandi's brother and sister cradled his head.

It was a bizarre scene for an outsider, something that might be considered ghoulish to the point of revulsion. But here, in the province of Tana Toraja, it was an image of great beauty. And it was a scene that was about to be replayed over the following days in other villages lining the nearby mountains. This was the first day of the local *Ma'nene* celebration. *Nene* means ancestor, and the most literal translation of the term would be to call it an ancestor



AGUNG PARAMESWARA / GETTY IMAGES



TOP: A Torajan village gets ready for *Ma'nene*. ABOVE: The return of John Hans Tappi. FACING PAGE: Panggala Kappala is spruced up by his family.

vereneration festival, although such a prosaic translation sells the *Ma'nene* short, since it's probably the world's greatest ritual of bonding between the living and the dead. [For similar rituals, see "Awakening the dead in Madagascar" by Michael Griffin, FT55:47-49, 56:38-41]. It is a time when families remove their deceased relatives from their graves and look after whatever is left of their mummified bodies. The dead will be cleaned, usually by dusting with soft-bristled brushes, and often down to the genitals and anus, dressed in new clothes, and the remnants of their hair will be styled. And the two groups, separated by the gap of mortality, will once again share each other's company.

FAMILY REUNIONS

By the next morning, in and around the larger township of Bululangkan, more dead were being resurrected. The daughter of John Hans Tappi was on hand as her father's cadaver was stripped down to its withered flesh, fully cleaned, and re-robed – all to great fanfare – on the roof of a tomb facing the main road. A day later, the desiccated



corpse of Limbong Rara, who had died 30 years previously, was fitted into a new green dress by her grandsons. Meanwhile, a coffin was opened to reveal Panggala Kappala, who had died at the age of 90 in 2001, and was surrounded by an entire retinue of descendents, who took turns cutting away his dirty suit with scissors, carefully fitting him in a new one, and adjusting his glasses to fit the current dimensions of his deteriorated head.

At other tombs, dead infants were once again embraced by their mothers, and children had a chance to meet the great grandparents they never knew. The living delighted in these reunions, and might cry, laugh, or tell stories. Any needs of the deceased, passed on through dreams or visions, were attended to. Just as Tandi in Tondon wanted milk, others might have placed requests for certain garments or items to be placed with them, asked for family news or simply to see a relative whom they missed. Some of the corpses were even walked to and from the family home so that they could observe all the minutiae of the living world they had left behind.

To other cultures, this fixation on dealing directly with the dead is considered so excessively macabre that it has given rise to bizarre stories, including rumours about Tana Toraja being populated by zombies. A local teenager, who acknowledges he has seen a few zombie movies, is amused by such tales – but also points out that there is an ironic element of truth to them. “They’re not really dead here, not in the way you understand it. So it’s true: the dead live among us, and they can communicate with



THIS FIXATION ON DEALING DIRECTLY WITH THE DEAD HAS GIVEN RISE TO SOME BIZARRE STORIES

us. But here the dead don't attack the living – that's a comical notion. Tana Toraja is a place for the living dead, but they live with us as friends and loved ones.”

The connection between the two groups is so important to Torajan society that death is considered an inseparable and essential counterpart to life. A local term refers to the time shared by the living and the dead as a “rubber time”. Literally elastic, it is a time that moves not from past to future, but rather serves as an umbrella that unites both groups



ABOVE: Mummies are carefully removed from their tombs for the *Ma'nene*. TOP LEFT: Limbong Rara is fitted with a new green dress by her grandsons. TOP RIGHT: Panggala Ne'tinnggi, who died far away in the south of the Island, is welcomed back to his home by relatives, who leave offerings of cash and betel nuts on his body.



ABOVE: Tandi is unwrapped by his mother. He had appeared to her in a dream asking for milk and news of his living relatives. BELOW: John Hans Tappi, clean and dapper.

as part of a cycle of complementary parts in which creation derives from dissolution. They are opposed, but nevertheless form a single path, likened to the two halves of a split bamboo. The path of the living is conceived as *liling kairi* (ascending from right to left), and that of the dead as *liling kanan* (descending from left to right), and when combined they are unified as part of a continuous rotation.

COMING HOME

Essential to that cycle is the return home of the spirit, and this provides another important aspect of *Ma'nene*. The gravesite is considered an extension of the family dwelling, referred to locally as a “house of the ancestors”, or “the house where no fire is lit”. The desire to return upon death was traditionally so strong that locals were paranoid about travelling too far, in case one wound up in a place so remote that retrieval in the case of one’s illness and subsequent demise should prove impossible. The festival is thus a kind of homecoming for those who died far away. Bodies like that of Panggala Ne’tinggi of Bululangkan, who died far to the south in Makassar, are shipped to their villages from remote parts of the country and stored until *Ma'nene*, when they will be placed on view and officially welcomed back. In the case of Ne’tinggi, a crowd of relatives and friends gathers to see his corpse unveiled; laid out in front of them, they take turns placing offerings of cash, betel nuts and other things on his body, and these will all make their way back into his casket.

Typically the *Ma'nene* takes places in August, although there is no set date and no orthodoxy governing the proceedings. August is chosen simply for practical reasons:



by late summer, the rice crops have all been harvested and there is no work left in the fields, freeing people to deal with the time-consuming matter of their dead ancestors. It’s common for villages to celebrate the festival on a three-year cycle, although some may hold it more often, some less, and others not at all. A yearly meeting will be held to determine what, if anything, should be done about *Ma'nene*, and the decision is based upon the current attitude of the living, along with any messages or opinions which may have been received from the dead on the matter.

Since Torajans had typically preserved their dead with agents such as tea, oils, and fats, the most ancient mummies have by now deteriorated, leaving the oldest at perhaps 100 years or so. But the tradition of *Ma'nene*

is much older and is considered part of the *Aluk Todolo* (“Way of the Ancestors”), which represents the Torajans most prized traditions. Nowadays few people cling to native animistic religions, and most of the people bringing forth corpses in fact consider themselves to be Christians or Muslims, but when it comes to dealing with the dead, a person’s ostensible religious orientation is irrelevant since everyone defaults to the *Aluk Todolo*. These ancient rituals are still considered the best way to ensure that the dead are properly cared for and that the living receive the blessings that their ancestors can provide.

Panggala Ne’tinggi’s cousins understand this; as they view his corpse, they each in turn bend over and whisper to him. And they know he will reply – if not immediately, in time, perhaps in a dream or vision. This is a connection that they cannot turn away from. Nor would they ever want to, because to rupture the union between the living and dead would deprive both groups. “They are here with us and we are here with them,” one explains, turning from the coffin. “To ever change that would mean both groups lose something precious. This connection is the most important thing we have as a culture.” **FT**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



PAUL KOUDDOUNARIS is an art historian, author and photographer from Los Angeles. He is a leading expert in the history of bone-decorated shrines and religious structures and a regular contributor to *FT*.



AMERICAN PSYCHOS I END TIMES TEA PARTY

As the US prepares to choose a new leader in 2016's Presidential elections, **SD TUCKER** profiles some other recent American candidates for high office who almost make Donald Trump sound normal - well, almost...

Just occasionally, a claim emerges about a politician that is so lurid and unbelievable even Tom Watson might have trouble swallowing it. One recent such tale from America is an excellent case in point. According to a series of sensational slurs made during October 2015, a Libertarian Party candidate from Florida was openly accused of having sacrificed a goat to mysterious un-Christian gods and then slurping up its blood in a bizarre ritual. The strange thing about this particular modern-day witch-hunt, however, was that its target really was a follower of the Dark Arts.

Augustus Sol Invictus, 32, is a genuine candidate for the US Senate. His name, he says, means 'majestic unconquered Sun' in Latin, and seems to be taken from a cult given official status by the Roman Emperor Aurelian in AD 274. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is not the name he was given at birth, but it is now his actual legal moniker (Sol refuses to give his real birth-name; maybe it was embarrassingly silly). Mr Invictus is quite open about his act of goat-sacrifice, which, he says, took place following a rather intense period he had spent wandering through the Mojave Desert, fasting and praying. Spilling the animal's blood was meant to be a tribute to the Gods of the Wilderness, and an act of thanks for having survived his intense spiritual ordeal. His *chupacabras* moment might be a "quibble in the minds of most Americans," said Invictus, but, taking advantage of the admirable American right to freedom of religion, he saw no reason why he should not bleed a goat dry in the name of pagan-kind. He is, after all, a member of the Libertarian Party, and so believes in the concept of an individual's total legal and moral autonomy, just so long as he isn't doing any harm to others (except livestock).

That's an entirely respectable intellectual position, of course, which would have sat well with the likes of John Stuart Mill - but



LEFT: Augustus Sol Invictus, Senate candidate and sometime sacrificer of goats.

to be a genius who possessed not only amazing dress-sense and an incomparable command of the English language, but, just as impressively, owned "multiple computers & a personal library." Deeming all lawyers "nothing more than parasites" who "feed off others like worms", Sol called upon his peers to "look upon your lives and repent", then roamed away to meet the gods. Adrian Wyllie would have been quite happy if he had never returned. The Libertarian leader alleged that Invictus was too extreme even for Crowleyites, and had been expelled from the OTO following

other members' outrage at his love of "sadistically dismembering" goats, something Invictus hotly denied. Wyllie tried to get his nemesis thrown out of the Libertarians too, but his motion was defeated; the "fascist infiltrator bent on civil war" had won. Instead, it was Wyllie who ended up vacating his position, in an act of protest.

In terms of Invictus's actual political philosophy, he aims above all to stir people from their complacent slumber. Or, in his own words: "I do not want you to vote, so much as I want you to wake up. I want you to drop out and tune in. I want you to take LSD and practise sorcery. I want you to listen to rap music and black metal, to learn the law and break it deliberately, to find your own religion. I want you to learn the use of firearms and subject yourselves to rigorous physical training. I want you to treat your bodies as Holy Temples and to take your girlfriend to a strip-club so you can seduce a dancer in the back room. I want you to worship Nature and dance naked in the moonlight round the fire, screaming in ecstatic joy. I want you to revolt. Raise Hell. Break your limitations. Renounce your life and go into the Wilderness, [so] that God may speak to you of things to come". Or, in other words: "Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." Wonder if he ever tried

THE SACRIFICE TOOK PLACE AFTER A PERIOD WANDERING THE MOJAVE DESERT

not, apparently, with Adrian Wyllie, former Chairman of the Libertarian Party of Florida, who volubly objected to the nature of Invictus's views. "This guy has no place in the Libertarian Party," he announced, apparently unaware of what Libertarianism actually means. It seems that Invictus is a committed follower of everyone's favourite hedonistic goat-slaying occultist Aleister Crowley and his invented religion of Thelema. A one-time member of the Crowley-affiliated magickal group Ordo Templi Orientis, Invictus is also a qualified attorney who once founded his own law-firm. He quit the profession to become a temporary desert-wanderer back in April 2013, but not before making headlines with a valedictory e-mail addressed to former colleagues in which he allegedly claimed



ABOVE: Christine "I dated a teenage Warlock" O'Donnell. BELOW: Michele Bachmann awaits the Second Coming.

using that argument in an actual courtroom?

In Wylie's view, however, *Invictus* was in favour not of freedom but of fascism, and aimed to begin a second Civil War. *Invictus* disagreed. Yes, he admitted he had previously predicted that one day he would "disappear into the Wilderness [and] will return bearing Revolution or I will not return at all," but denied that this made him either a dissident or, as Wylie alleged, a neo-Nazi. Instead, he said that the government had *already* declared war on the American people, and that therefore: "We as citizens have the right to self-defence... [Voters] are the ones that [should] control the government, and not the other way around." The USA was now a mere tyranny, said *Invictus*, and this was made clear by the fact that he was currently under surveillance by the FBI. "One man can make a difference," he declared defiantly, like a latter-day Martin Luther King. I take it he wasn't going for the Tea Party vote...¹

NOT MY CUP OF TEA

Or was he? The Tea Party is a strange modern phenomenon in US politics. Not an actual standalone organisation, it began in 2009 as a grass-roots movement on the right of the Republican Party calling for lower taxes and less welfare spending, positions that have grabbed around 10 per cent of the US electorate. However, the movement has also sometimes been characterised as a kind of lunatic fringe, with many of its members seemingly holding extreme religious views and, just like Sol *Invictus*, suspecting that the Government might just be a tool of oppression and darkness.

Even the Tea Party's own members aren't safe from suspicion of being on the side of evil, however, as can be seen in the cautionary tale of one of the organisation's leading lights, Christine O'Donnell, a Sarah Palin clone whose abortive 2010 campaign for the Senate was derailed by a political witch-hunt of a literal kind: she was accused of being an



actual witch. The scandal stemmed from her earlier life as a hyper-conservative media commentator, namely a 1999 appearance on *Politically Incorrect*, hosted by the satirist Bill Maher. Here O'Donnell, then basically unknown, saw no harm in admitting to the fact that, whilst a teenager, she had gone out on a date with a teenage warlock. "I dabbled into witchcraft," she said. "I never joined a coven [but] I hung around people who were doing these things... One of my first dates with a witch was on a Satanic altar, and I didn't know it. I mean, there [was] a little blood there and stuff like that... We went to a movie and then had a little midnight picnic on a Satanic altar."

At the time, nobody cared. Come 2010, however, and with the Tea Party now helping fund her campaign, Maher rebroadcast O'Donnell's earlier comments, hoping to ruin her support amongst the religious right. In an attempt at damage-limitation, O'Donnell's campaign released a soft-focus video that opened with the immortal words: "I'm not a witch. I'm nothing you've heard. I'm *you*." Predictably, the mockery just increased. Worse, other old footage of O'Donnell

emerged, in which she discussed the role played by God in creating medical bills, and spoke of how American scientists had recently begun "cross-breeding humans and animals and coming up with mice with fully-functioning human brains". She should have asked for one herself. Evidence of O'Donnell condemning masturbation as a form of "adultery" did her little good either, nor did her claim to have heard the "audible" voice of God during a debate. The single word God imparted to her was "Credibility", apparently, which proves once and for all that some Americans really don't have a functioning sense of irony.²

GOING INTO RAPTURES

The Tea Party's Sarah Palin Mk III, meanwhile, is Michele Bachmann, who ran to be the Republican Presidential candidate in 2012. However, she withdrew from the race after making a series of embarrassing gaffes on the campaign-trail, the most amusing of which occurred during her visit to Waterloo, Iowa, where she professed her joy at being in the home-town of the great John Wayne. It was only later that journalists realised Waterloo was in fact the hometown of John Wayne *Gacy*, the infamous 'Killer Clown' who raped and then killed 33 teenage boys and young men in the 1970s.

Had Bachmann managed to seize the White House, then what would her policies have been? Very possibly she would have devoted most of her energy towards helping bring about the apocalypse currently stirring in the Middle East. "Jesus Christ's return is imminent. Is there anything more important to talk about?" she asked in one of a series of deeply alarming 2015 radio interviews. Bachmann's views about the looming End Times and their relation to US foreign policy appear inconsistent, however. On the one hand, she condemned President Obama's lukewarm relationship with Israel as something that would lead to America "reaping a whirlwind" and being potentially punished by God with "economic disasters [and] natural disasters". On the other hand, Obama's supine agreement with Iran, which may well allow it to develop nuclear weapons, did have one advantage; it would help destroy the world and pave the way for Jesus' return. "These are not fearful times, these are the most exciting days in history!" she proclaimed. "The Prophets longed to live in this day that you and I are privileged to live [surely die horribly?] in."

Bachmann's basic position is this. In Zechariah 12, a Biblical prophecy appears, declaring that one day "all the people of the Earth" will "be gathered together" against Israel, something which will make God "seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." This, says Bachmann, is in fact a reference to Obama's peace-deal with Iran, which has been backed up by other major world powers on the UN Security Council.

Seeing that Iran's leaders have openly talked of nuking Israel in the past, Bachmann views this as the first step towards Armageddon. Once Israel is gone, the world will follow, and the Rapture will begin. Eventually, God will destroy the "hedge of protection" he has placed over "pagan America" (a reference to gay marriage), and allow Iran to position its missiles in Cuba, leading to doomsday. Bizarrely, Bachmann seems to imply that Obama actually *wants* all this to occur. "We need to realise how close this clock is getting towards the midnight hour. Barack Obama is intent, it is his number one goal, to ensure that Iran has a nuclear weapon." Just imagine that – a country with a powerful cabal of irrational religious extremists who don't understand the difference between Church and State getting their hands on the bomb...³

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE

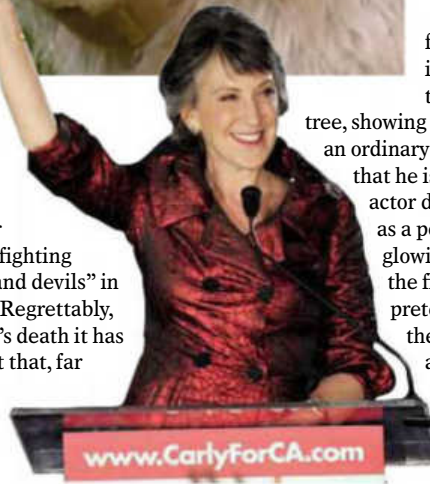
God is big business across the pond and it seems to have become almost obligatory for Presidential hopefuls to talk about their abiding love of Christ these days. In a televised debate for candidates broadcast on Fox News last August, for instance, one audience member wanted to know "if any of them have received a word from God on what they should do and take care of first". Nobody laughed, and all the participants answered in such a way as to make it clear they didn't think there was anything in the least bit unusual in discussing policy positions with Jehovah. None, though, openly admitted that God had said the word 'Credibility' to them.⁴

In a society where Christianity plays such a prominent public role there is one sure-fire way to get your opponent on the back foot – accuse them of Satanism. Either that or imply they might be a Muslim, a tactic tried out by many Tea Party-types in recent years. How many Americans realise, though, that they have actually already had a Muslim saint as their Commander-in-Chief? No, I don't mean Obama, as some conspiracy-nuts might have you believe. Instead, I refer to George W Bush. Bush Jr has been called many things down the years, but 'saintly' is not one of them – except in the view of (deep breath) Sheikh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Qubrusi al-Haqqani, a leading Sufi scholar who died in 2014, but not before using his religious



authority to bestow sainthood upon both Bush and his pal Tony Blair for their role in "fighting tyrants and evil and devils" in the Middle East. Regrettably, since al-Haqqani's death it has become apparent that, far from exorcising the demons of Islamic extremism, the dynamic duo had instead merely opened up a portal straight to Hell.⁵

Another US politician recently to have prised open a Hell-Mouth is Carly Fiorina, a one-time Republican candidate for the Senate who in 2010 cast a sinister spell and summoned up some livestock from the deepest bowels of Hades. Finding herself behind in the polls to rival candidate Tom Campbell, Fiorina did the only sensible thing possible and commissioned a filmed attack-ad implying that Campbell was not only fiscally suspect but also, perhaps more surprisingly, a demon sheep. Opening with shots of happy sheep grazing in a sunny field, the ad's voice-over first says that Americans like their public representatives to be examples of "purity" and "piety", people who are "wholesome, honourable [and] true believers". But was Tom Campbell a true believer? No. He was *evil*. Mocked as having placed himself up on a "pedestal, so high", Campbell is identified



BELOW: Carly Fiorina, mastermind of a video in which a rival candidate was shown as a demonic, red-eyed sheep.

as being one sheep in particular, which is raised up into the sky on a stone column. Then, in a genuinely laughable piece of animation, lightning strikes the pillar and the sheep falls to earth in a manner that can only be described as hilarious.

Cutting to live-action footage of real sheep grazing in a meadow, Tom Campbell then peers out from behind a tree, showing us his true form. Rather than an ordinary human politician, it seems that he is in fact an underemployed actor down on all fours and dressed as a possessed farm-animal with glowing red eyes. Shuffling across the floor, the malevolent Campbell pretends to be eating grass with the rest of his woolly breed whilst actually plotting to undermine the nation's finances. He is, it seems, Satan in sheep's clothing – or, as the ad itself has it: "FCINO: Fiscal Conservative In Name Only!"

possibly the worst acronym ever devised. This advert was created by Fred Davis, the same ad-exec who had earlier been behind Christine O'Donnell's counterproductive "I am not a witch" video. Do you ever get the feeling Davis might have wanted the Democrats to win these elections and not his actual clients?⁶ FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



SD TUCKER is a regular contributor to FT whose books are *Paranormal Merseyside*, *Terror of the Tokoloshe* and (forthcoming) *The Hidden Folk*. Currently writing a book about forgotten science, his *Great British Eccentrics* is available now from Amberley Publishing.

NOTES

1 www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/oct/6/augustus-sol-invictus-stirs-florida-senate-race-ta/; www.orlandoweekly.com/Blogs/archives/2015/10/02/libertarian-party-of-florida-chairman-resigns-accuses-candidate-of-goat-sacrifice-and-eugenics/; www.facebook.com/awyllie/posts/10206107179813330?pnref=story; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus_Sol_Invictus; [\[**2** \\[www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/20/christine-o-donnell-dabbled-witchcraft\\]\\(http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/20/christine-o-donnell-dabbled-witchcraft\\); \\[www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/05/christine-odonnell-witch-tv-ad\\]\\(http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/05/christine-odonnell-witch-tv-ad\\); \\[www.politico.com/story/2012/09/maher-says-sorry-to-witch-odonnell-080941\\]\\(http://www.politico.com/story/2012/09/maher-says-sorry-to-witch-odonnell-080941\\); \\[\\\[mistake/\\\]\\\(http://mistake/\\\); \\\[www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/09/27/christine-odonnell-craziest-quotes_n_718328.html\\\]\\\(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/09/27/christine-odonnell-craziest-quotes_n_718328.html\\\); \\\[prospect.org/article/god-my-campaign-strategist\\\]\\\(http://prospect.org/article/god-my-campaign-strategist\\\); \\\[www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/15/christine-odonnell-tea-party-interview\\\]\\\(http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/15/christine-odonnell-tea-party-interview\\\)\\]\\(http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/16/christine-odonnell-witch-ad-was-a-</p>
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<div data-bbox=\\)\]\(http://to-bring-a-second-civil-war.Thanks to Greg May and Matt Salusbury for bringing this story to FT's \(and thence my own\) attention.</p>
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3 *Times*, 16 Apr 2015; www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2008662/Michele-Bachmann-John-Wayne-Gacy-gaffe-Politician-mistakes-serial-killer-hero.html; [\[fulfilled-end-times-prophecy-iran-deal\]\(http://fulfilled-end-times-prophecy-iran-deal\); \[www.dailykos.com/story/2015/04/25/1379546-Michele-Bachmann-says-the-Rapture-is-coming-Rejoice#\]\(http://www.dailykos.com/story/2015/04/25/1379546-Michele-Bachmann-says-the-Rapture-is-coming-Rejoice#\); I have conflated quotes from two different radio interviews here. This kind of chiliastic thinking reminds me of some 1980s US evangelicals' belief that the large reddish birthmark on the head of the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was the Biblical 'Mark of the Beast'. Incidentally, John Wayne's parents \(but not the man himself\) did actually live in](http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/michele-bachman-obama-</p>
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Waterloo at one point, which to be fair to Bachmann *may* have been what she was referring to in her statement, albeit in a confused way.

4 *Times*, 14 Aug 2015

4 Obituary, *Times*, 23 July 2014

6 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demon_Sheep; the ad itself is online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wo_Ejfc5hW8

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8. ONE HORN ON WHICH TO PERCH THEM

“Aah – everyone loves a unicorn,” tenderly sighed the illustrious editor, on learning that this enigmatic and ambiguous animal was to be the next subject in this series. In contrast, the diminutive, bearded and ancient arch-sceptic and professional nuisance James Randi seems to have contracted a chronic allergy to unicorns: he mentions them in the subtitle to his 1980 book *Flim-Flam: Psychics, ESP, Unicorns and Other Delusions*, though they appear nowhere else in that questionable screed. By the way: to read a droll disassembly of some of the quaint assertions therein, look up <http://michaelprescott.freeservers.com/flim-flam-flummery-a-skeпти.html>. Randi has also said that homeopathy is “a unicorn” (i.e. ‘impossible’) and is reportedly fond of asking people what they would do if he claimed he kept a unicorn in his garden – which, someone said, merely invites the natural response “Jump over the wall and take a look at it!” We have previously hinted at our fondness for unicorns and remarked that they are, in our view, in a certain sense, indeed real. We’ll get back to that point. Meanwhile, our recommended indispensable volume for this issue, the late Professor Odell Shepard’s *The Lore of the Unicorn*, is an admirable instance of a generous, imaginative, witty and deeply researched approach to the species, which might serve as a model for any inquiry into any ‘mythical’ creature or person or event: unlike the book by the ineffable Mr Randi, who is invited to take his designated seat for the occasion. We hope that now and then he may be embarrassed enough to treat us to a nice twirl or two.

If you can answer the following questions –

- When and why do unicorn horns sweat?
- What happens *after* a unicorn swoons in a virgin’s lap?
- How long is a unicorn’s horn?
- What animal is the unicorn’s greatest enemy?
- What happened when Genghis Khan met a unicorn?
- Are there unicorns in China?

– then not only will you be a man, my son, but you won’t need this book or our suggested essential companion volume, Chris Lavers’s *The Natural History of Unicorns*. Lavers calls Shepard’s work “the definitive treatise” on the unicorn in English, and he should know.

Neither is exactly a believer in unicorns – indeed Prof Shepard could be called an early exponent of the psychosocial hypothesis: “Whether there is or is not an actual unicorn – and this is one of the questions upon which I shall merely quote the opinions of others – he cannot possibly be so fascinating or so important as the things men have dreamed and thought and written about him. A dream, if it is no more than that, of such great age and beauty as this of the unicorn, is far more

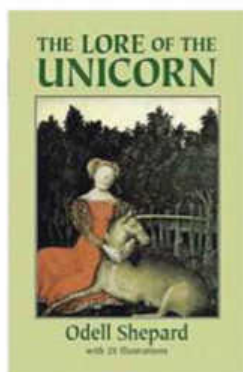
worthy of consideration than the question whether we shall have one species more or less in the Earth’s fauna. And the dream, at any rate, is an unquestionable fact, a phenomenon of the mind; it has grown like a tree, striking deep roots in thought and spreading huge boughs against our mental sky. This book about the unicorn is a minute contribution to the study of the only subject that deeply and permanently concerns us – human nature and the ways of human thought.”

In broad outline, Shepard’s is an historical approach, seeking the origins of the unicorn legend, and bringing it up to his present (1930). The history he uncovers, however, throws up so many questions, which he feels bound to try to answer, that this is something of a crooked highway with many an irresistible byway to explore. He starts with the earliest known literary reference to the unicorn, in the 25th surviving fragment of the *Indica* of the Greek physician Ctesias, written sometime after 398 BC, after he had spent 17 years in Persia. This says, in part: “There are in India certain wild asses which are as large as horses, and larger. Their bodies are white,

their heads dark red, and their eyes dark blue. They have a horn on the forehead which is about a foot and a half [45cm] in length. The dust filed from this horn is administered in a potion as a protection against deadly drugs. The base of this horn, for some two hands’-breadth above the brow, is pure white; the upper part is sharp and of a vivid crimson; and the remainder, or middle portion, is black... The animal is exceedingly swift and powerful, so that no creature, neither the horse nor any other, can overtake it”.

It is also, we learn from Claudius Aelianus (c. AD175–c.235), gentle toward all animals except its own kind, “and not only do the males fight naturally among themselves but [outside in the rutting season] they contend even against the females and push the contest to the death. The animal has great strength of body, and it is armed besides with an unconquerable horn. It seeks out the most deserted places and wanders there alone”. Aelianus seems to be the first to mention the unicorn’s ringed or spiral horn; whose length has grown by his account to a cubit and a half [about 2ft 3in/69cm]. This augmentation continued down the centuries, until mediæval writers had it up to 10ft [3m] or more, and then had to make the thing fractionally more plausible by saying that the horn flopped down (“like a turkey-cock’s comb” according to Rabelais) except when the unicorn was aroused for whatever reason.

During the second century BC, the *Septuagint*, Ptolemy II’s commissioned translation of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, was becoming better known, and therein we find mentions of an animal called *μονόκερος* – ‘one-horned’ – later translated *via* Latin as ‘unicorn’. This is a mighty beast, adduced by God to show poor suffering Job how powerless he is. Not quite the daintily ferocious creature of later legend. Trouble was, the learned scribes of Alexandria were unsure – as was everyone else – what the original Hebrew word (‘re’em’) meant, and made an intelligent guess with *monókeros*, which later was taken to signify a rhinoceros – because the rhino is large and notoriously grumpy, and (like the unicorn) its horn was reputed to have

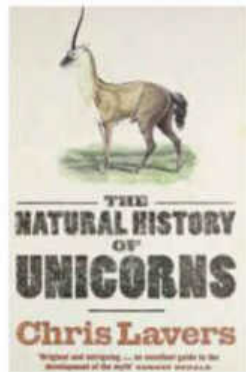




healing properties. Brilliant linguistic detective work in the middle of the 19th century by Sir Henry Rawlinson finally nailed the *re'em* down. It was the giant, albeit two-horned, auroch: Job might well have quailed. But by then a mutation of the biblical unicorn – the one we know as a kind of one-horned pony – had long since embedded itself in Christian tradition.

Shepard says wryly of the early Church: “The world of nature, seldom valued for its own sake by the typical Christian, was more and more regarded as a mere storehouse of edifying metaphors. What we should call facts were felt to be of little worth in comparison with the moral truths that alleged facts could be supposed to signify and it was considered that God had created the lower animals, particularly those that seemed to have no other use, solely for the moral and spiritual instruction of mankind.” Thus arose the mediæval bestiaries, whose ancestor was the *Physiologus*, compiled somewhere between the second and fourth centuries AD, and translated into Latin in about 700, whereafter it went viral, as we might say, across Europe and well beyond.

Among the lessons *Physiologus* teaches about such recognisable animals as the lion, pelican, fox and hedgehog, there are others on fabulous creatures such as the phoenix, the ant-lion (*not* the insect we know today), sirens (the same murderous temptresses featured in the *Odyssey*) and, of course, the unicorn. Shepard summarises: “He is a small animal, like a kid, but surprisingly fierce for his size, with one very sharp horn on his head, and no hunter is able to catch him by force. Yet there is a trick by which he is taken. Men lead a virgin to the place where he most resorts and leave her there alone. As soon as he sees this virgin he runs and lays his



head in her lap. She fondles him and he falls asleep. The hunters then approach and capture him and lead him to the palace of the king.”

Shepard spends many happy pages taking the bones out of this account, and is suitably sniffy about the “detestable role” of the virgin in this, particularly when the mediæval Church had decided that the virgin stood for (who else?) the Virgin Mary and the unicorn for Jesus. Yet odder, in this regard, are versions of the tale in which the unicorn is attracted by the fragrance that is, apparently, peculiar to virgins. The maiden then (if she is not already naked) exposes her breasts for the unicorn to stimulate with his lips, while she herself fondles him elsewhere. Made docile by these intimacies, the animal is then slaughtered by lurking hunters, i.e. sacrificed or martyred, somewhat like the Nazarene. As Shepard remarks, “the Christian interpretation put upon [the virgin-capture story]... seems to wrench it out of its natural course of development”, adding deadpan: “One feels that some of the supernal charm of chastity might be dispensed with if we could have a little

“IF YOU
CANNOT READ
ALL YOUR
BOOKS,
FONDLE
THEM.”

Winston S Churchill

more of the sense of fair play in its place.” In other words, the Christians made a bit of a hash of trying to bend the tale to their own purposes, and the roots of the story are most likely far older, wilder, and more complex than Christianity. Which sets Shepard off on a whole new hunt.

This takes us into Africa again and, with a smiling nod to Atlantis, to the Americas – where, uniquely, there seems to be no native tradition of the unicorn – then on to the Middle and Far East (in China he finds a unicorn tradition remarkably parallel to ours), to the Arctic, and back to Europe. We learn the source of the unicorn horns sold powdered as popular cures by apothecaries, and intact at vast expense to kings and princes by wily merchants. He explores the origin of the alexipharmacy – as Chris Lavers insists on calling its antidotal and prophylactic properties – of the unicorn’s horn: its most notable qualities were the ability to neutralise poisons, or detect them by sweating – useful for Renaissance nobles. He finds eight inspirations among known animals for the unicorn, eight tributaries to the great river of legend that entranced Europe until as late as the 19th century. The unicorn is real in the same way as Zeus or Athena or Damballa are. People believed in the unicorn, and acted on their beliefs – and why should they not? As Shepard puts it: “Here is a creature fearfully and wonderfully made... and one so credible, or rather so probable, in appearance as to make the hardest doubter feel that if there is no such animal then an excellent opportunity was overlooked in the process of creation. He seems to fill a gap in nature.”

We have just room to note that Chris Lavers’s work is by no means a rehash of Shepard’s: it is a fascinating complement to it. He criticises and refines some of Shepard’s ideas, and goes into greater detail on many aspects of the legend, adds another animal to the unicorn’s likely ancestry, and is riveting on latter-day hunts for a living unicorn. He is particularly good on the spectacular tenacity of Sir Harry Johnston, painter, diplomat, empire-expander and devotee of the unicorn, for whom the word ‘intrepid’ might have been coined. Truly there were men in those days. But for what happened to Ghengis Khan, you have to read Shepard. **FI**

Odell Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn*, Houghton Mifflin (Boston), George Allen & Unwin (London), 1930; reprinted by Avenel Books (New York), 1982. Also available as a free download (PDF) from www.globalgrey.co.uk, but cheapskates beware: the text neither reproduces nor transliterates Greek terms and quotations, and omits Shepard’s copious notes and illustrations.

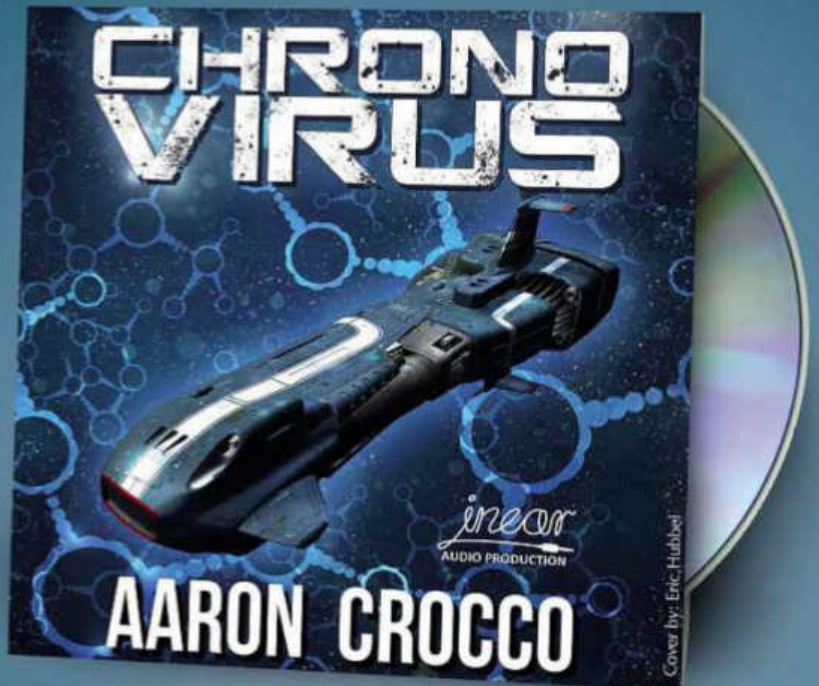
Chris Lavers, *The Natural History of Unicorns*, Granta (London), 2009.

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This month's books, films and games

reviews



Ancestors and their helpers

The lives of ordinary Japanese people, not the elite, are at the heart of the folklore of Tono, with little distinction made between the supernatural and natural realms



Folk Legends from Tono

Collected by Yanagita Kunio & Sasaki Kizen;
trans & ed: Ronald A Morse

Rowman & Littlefield 2015

Pb, 170pp, illus, ind, £18.95, ISBN 9781442248212

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.95

In modern Japan, traditional folklore is a big thing, not unsurprisingly, given that ancestor worship of *Kami*, ancestor spirits, is a foundation of its culture. It forms the basis of a lot of Manga; one only need to look at the work of the late, great Shigeru Mizuki, behind such work as *Gegege no Kitaro* and *Nonnonba*, to see its significance.

This collection of folk legends forms the second volume of Tono stories, or *monogatari*. It was released in Japan in 1935 as a supplement to the 1910 *Tales of Tono*. The tales in both books were collected by Sasaki Kizen, those presented in the first book being heavily rewritten by eminent folklorist Yanagita Kunio, in what he believed was an acceptable literary style. In the 1935 volume, the style of Sasaki Kizen was kept, giving it more of a true flavour of how these tales might have been told.

Yanagita Kunio is regarded as the founding father of Japanese folklore studies. He was a mentor of Sasaki Kizen, a native of Tono, who spent a lot of time gathering tales in the region. Their *Tono Monogatari* is one of the most important books in Japanese folklore. Yanagita was

attempting to preserve as much traditional culture as possible before it disappeared as a result of the government's efforts to eradicate traditional culture and old legends in favour of a more nationalistic cult and industrialisation. He also believed that much traditional Japanese lore focused on elites, ignoring the everyday life of ordinary people.

Sasaki Kizen's significance as a folklorist has only recently been recognised. A respiratory illness forced him to leave Tokyo and return to Tono, where he began collecting local folk tales. He died in 1933 at the relatively young age of 47, just before the second collection of *Tono Legends* came out, one he had been asked to put together. Nowadays, Sasaki is regarded as Japan's answer to the Grimms.

The experience of ordinary people certainly is at the heart of the Tono stories. Part of the appeal of the collection to modern Japanese is that it offers a window on how their immediate ancestors might have lived. It has been a major draw for visitors to Tono today, and the modern city is known as 'A City of Folklore', in part because of the *Tono Monogatari*. The collection is part of Japanese popular culture; Shigeru Mizuki produced his own version of it in 2010.

This is the first time the book has been translated into English. Ronald A Morse translated *The Legends of Tono* into English, to mark the 100th anniversary of it first being published. In translating the second volume, Morse had quite a task. In the original Japanese, the second book is a random hodge-podge of tales, not categorised in

"The supernatural is there as a fact of life, with a little bellyaching for authenticity"

any particular theme or order. There are 299 stories, and in preparing the text for English translation, Morse decided to organise them accordingly to his own "philosophy about the universality of human biology and evolutionary psychology".

He believes that as time passed, humans became 'hardwired' to their physical environment by creating social, psychological and religious schemas. Morse has arranged the 299 tales according to this, categorising them within an outward expanding set of 'concentric circles', from the individual to other social spheres. And he has done an excellent job; though the original Japanese collection has been likened by novelist Mishima Yukio to a well-ordered lumber house, it is probable that any English translation following the same arrangement might be confusing. Morse has also marked in his translation the order in which each tale is in the original text.

The translation captures the tone of how Japanese tales are told beautifully, following in the tradition of Lafcadio Hearn. The tales aren't changed to suit an accepted Western narrative, which would detract from them. They are highly evocative, bringing to mind a vivid picture of the people, villages and

otherworldly beings, the Yokai, featured in the tales. There is a certain closeness to the tales, perhaps in part due to the fact that some were told to Sasaki Kizen by the people who directly experienced the events. They are memorates of ordinary people, as opposed to the grand legends of Samurai warriors, lords and shoguns.

One striking aspect is the way in which the everyday and supernatural realms mix – there is no delineation of the type present in, for example, English folk stories of the same era, when much is made of the events about to be described as a true and accurate account.

In the Tono legends, as in much of Japanese society, the supernatural is there as a fact of life, with a little bellyaching for authenticity.

Here, we see bereaved family members fend off foxes masquerading as the ghost or Yurei of their recently deceased relatives. A family's maidservant becoming a Yokai serpent and abandoning her baby is just one of those things that happen. Mountain entities, or Tengu, offer to help families with chores such as gathering food or planting crops, in exchange for rice cakes or *sake*. Deities at local shrines step in to help people sort out problems, whilst their statues enjoy being played with by children.

Folk Legends of Tono is enjoyable, and should be in the collection of any serious folklore aficionado.

Mandy Collins

Fortean Times Verdict

A MUST-READ FOR THE SHELVES
OF ANY KEEN FOLKLORIST

9

Plug-in & play

Architecture is not immune from countercultural or science fiction tropes



Last Futures, Nature, Technology, and the End of Architecture

Douglas Murphy

Verso 2016

Hb, 240pp, £20.00, illus, bib, ind, ISBN 9781781689752

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00

In *Last Futures*, Douglas Murphy explores the role of modernist architecture in the mid- to late-20th century and subsequent reactions against it. This is an articulate and accessible book, with fortean themes woven through.

Murphy looks at the role of expos and world fairs in presenting aspirational futures. Events such as Expo 67 in Quebec presented architects' visions of a future to a wider audience. The fairs were mass entertainment attended by large numbers of visitors. He debates how the rise of multimedia moved people's attention away from the experiential nature of physical architecture to the flat architecture of what became cyberspace.

Murphy is very good at describing the rise in modernist architecture. From our position within the 21st century, it's easy to forget that architects such as Buckminster Fuller were attempting to divorce architecture from that of the 19th century, which some saw as having led to the devastating conflict of the first half of the 20th century.

Fortean themes running

through *Last Futures* may interest the more general reader. Murphy explores how particular forms of building, such as geodesic domes, transferred from the world of the expo into the counter-culture, leading to places like Drop City.

He looks at the rise of the apocalyptic Malthusian perspective within the environmental movement that spread into wider worldviews, as well as touching on the influence of charismatic individuals, and possible cults, with the failure of Biosphere2. Murphy also explores the influence of science fiction on architecture (for example the walking city, Arctic cities and space colonies). He also teases apart the use of this as a critique, a way to map failure by critics such as Robert Hughes.

Where Murphy's discussion is at its most fortean is in relation to dominant narratives. The narrative around modernist architecture – plug-in buildings, for example – was fluid until hinge moments around particular disasters and failures, and only became fixed later. The debate was much more open until well into the 1970s, following events like the Summerland Fire; however, it is now often perceived that failure was the only outcome.

There does seem to be a re-emergence of some ideas, such as Archigram's Plug In City, recently referred to in an Urban Think Tank exhibition, and it would have been interesting to read Murphy's take on this new generation of architecture. That aside, this is a nuanced study where Murphy becomes like the narrator in William Gibson's *Gernsback Continuum*, leading us around a visionary future that never reached its full potential. Highly recommended.

Steve Toase

Fortean Times Verdict

THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ITS LITERARY ANTECEDENTS

8

Fantastic Planets, Forbidden Zones, and Lost Continents

The 100 Greatest Science-Fiction Films

Douglas Brode

The University of Texas Press 2015

Hb, 448pp, illus, £20.99, ISBN 9780292739192

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.99



I spent much of my adolescence engrossed in books about horror and SF movies. Tomes from Alan Frank, Ed

Naha and Lorrimer Publications were surrogates for the films. In those pre-VHS days, I had to rely on re-runs on TV at unsocial hours, the NFT or the Scala.

Today, it's still useful to have a guide to the *terra incognita* of SF films. *Fantastic Planets, Forbidden Zones, and Lost Continents* meets this need admirably. To paraphrase Ben Kenobi, it helps with those first steps into a larger world.

Brode defines SF as "fantasy + technology". So, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Brazil*, for example, aren't in the top 100 because they "do not include any specific reference to science". For each of the 100 films, Brode lists credits, cast, most memorable line, background, trivia and so on.

For the record, Brode puts *Metropolis* first, *2001: A Space Odyssey* second, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* third, and the original *Star Wars* trilogy fourth. And there's the rub. Put two SF film buffs in a room and you'll get at least four (probably many more) versions of the top 100 movies. He regards *Dune* and *Rollerball* – which I know are flawed, but which I still enjoy and regard as 'bubbling under' my top 100 – as "highly ambitious films that promised much and delivered nil". Yet I feel the same about *2001* (I know it's a minority view) and the *Phantom Menace* (ranked 89 alongside the rest of the prequel trilogy). I'm with *Spaced*'s Tim Bisley on the *Phantom Menace*. More than 15 years later, I'm still not over it.

Lists and rankings are question of taste, culture and criteria. Because of this inherent subjectivity, I prefer to regard

Fantastic Planets as a '100 SF films to see before you die'. And from that perspective, Brode's done an admirable job in this well-written and engaging book. For neofans, it's an excellent starting place. For older fans, it's interesting to see old favourites in context against newer movies. *Fantastic Planets* is a welcome addition to any SF or film buffs bookshelf.

Mark Greener

Fortean Times Verdict

AN EXCELLENT FIRST STEP INTO A LARGER WORLD

8

The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales

Ed: Jack Zipes

Oxford University Press 2015

Hb, 720pp, illus, £35.00, ISBN 9780199689828

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £31.50



This deserves a place on the shelf of every lover of fantasy, next to the 2000 *Oxford Companion to Fairy*

Tales... oh, hang on – it's the same book. Some entries have been updated, and Marina Warner's work on the *Arabian Nights* is duly credited. Others haven't: Terry Pratchett has got no further than *Hogfather*.

Most the entries are for writers and other people, though there are panels on national fairytale traditions and the occasional nod to the media. Half the entries are for authors from the 20th century, a third from the 19th, and the rest are earlier, going back to Marie de France, c1160–1215. As you might imagine from a production team of 69 professors and two authors, the *Companion* is strongest on unreadable books. It has Carter and Le Guin and Pullman, but its real strengths lie in minor Victorian literature, obscure ethnic authors and complacent leftist critiques: the editorial board read them so you don't have to. There are flashes of humour. The inhabitants of Oz, you will be glad to know, "show no trace of class-consciousness", while *Alice in Wonderland* presents a "socio-political criticism of a fragmented bourgeois society". Alas, there is no entry for *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories*.

The net is cast wide: Sibelius

and Tennyson qualify, and so do *Watership Down* and *Brigadoon*. There are entries on ballet, television and Communist folktale films (a surprisingly prolific genre). What you don't get are entries on folktales told aloud by real people. The entry on 'Storytelling' say nothing about living storytellers. Zipes has given us a guide to the literary fairytale and its offspring in fantasy literature. If that's your cup of tea, then this book has everything you could want.

Jeremy Harte

Fortean Times Verdict

USEFUL – UNLESS YOU ALREADY HAVE IT OR ENJOY STORYTELLERS **6**

The Land of the Green Man

A Journey Through the Supernatural Landscapes of the British Isles

By Carolyne Larrington

18 Tauris 2015

Pb, 256pp, illus, notes, £20.00, ISBN 9781780769912

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00



The folklore of the British Isles is rich in fantastical beings. As well as the familiar goblins, dragons and werewolves, this enjoyable and highly recommended book introduces us to selkies, deer-women, witch-hares, water-horses, land-wights and many more.

Carolyne Larrington writes with academic authority, but in a light and accessible style. Unusually, there are references not only to archaic sources, but also to re-workings of the myths in modern fiction, film and television: Alan Garner, Irvine Welsh and *Shrek* all receive honourable mentions. Thankfully, this is not yet another 'encyclopædia'. Instead, the many featured beasts are grouped into themed chapters such as 'Gain & Lack' and 'Death & Loss'. 'Lust & Love' reveals that a surprisingly large variety of supernatural creatures are intent on having sex with humans, in what must be the ultimate cosplay experience.

Steve Marshall

Fortean Times Verdict

SEX, THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE GREAT BRITISH PUBLIC **8**

Police unicorns? Yup

Brilliant demonstration of why philosophy is still important – and why uniformed unicorns exist but the world doesn't



Why the World Does Not Exist

Markus Gabriel

Polity Press 2015

Hb, 239pp, £20.00, ISBN 9780745687568

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00

In dealing with most fortean subjects, we frequently come up with questions like "Do ghosts exist?" or "Does Nessie exist?" But do we really think enough about that word "exist"? What exactly does it mean, or do we mean by it? If it is traced back to its Latin roots, it means "to stand out". Does that help?

Leaving aside ghosts and Nessie, do unicorns exist? And here I will be precise: I am referring to unicorns wearing police uniforms, on the Moon. Or another question: does the World exist? According to Markus Gabriel, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bonn, the answer is yes to the unicorns, and no to the World – as evidenced by the forthright title to this book.

First we have to establish what is meant by "the World" here – not planet Earth, which evidently exists, but "the World" meaning the sum total of everything. Gabriel's delightfully paradoxical argument is that everything exists, unicorns and all, but Everything does not exist. To give the argument for this in very simple form: to say something exists means that it is part of the World; the World cannot be part of the World, therefore it cannot exist.

The author intends this book as an introduction to his own school of philosophy, which he calls "New Realism". In this he makes use of what he calls "fields

of sense". Sitting at my desk, I see a Bohemian perfume bottle; it appears in my field of vision, therefore it appears in a field of sense, therefore it exists. The police unicorns appear in my thinking, which is also a field of sense, therefore they also exist, but in a somewhat different context, where "context" is an important technical consideration. So Nessie exists, but the context is still subject to debate.

I am not a professional philosopher, and I don't know what holes a professional philosopher would poke in the author's arguments. Therefore I am reviewing this book as an interested layman, which is exactly the author's target audience. The book is written as an intelligent layman's guide to ontology. To take a difficult technical subject and render it in a form that is intelligible, yes, and readable for the non-specialist is a challenge that I am familiar with, and it is a pleasure to see a writer hit the spot so successfully. And all credit to the translator, too. The author is a dab hand at giving everyday examples to make his points clear (he has a fondness for popular culture as well), and he is witty without falling into that trap of faux jokiness that academics sometimes adopt when writing for the layman. He never talks down to the reader. And I have to admire anyone who describes Stephen Hawking in print as "highly overrated as a public intellectual".

"Ontology" is a wonderful word which you can think of as the

study of existing; but it is a great word to drop into any argument. Start a sentence with, "Of course, from an ontological perspective..." and you baffle your opponent, but no one can ever haul you up for misuse of the term. This book will also explain and give you guidance on some other choice terms like "hermeneutical constructivism" without ever being hard to follow.

I do have a few criticisms. It seems to me that there are aspects that could be explored more fully. The author makes a passing dismissive reference to the idea of multiple universes, but I don't see that these are incompatible with "New Realism" – since any universe appears in the fields of sense of its inhabitants. There are a few passages in the second half of the book that are heavier going than the rest, and the final chapter is too short, where a strong summing-up is needed. I do hate it when only an *index nominem* is provided. I could also mention that the unicorn on the book's cover has no police uniform ...

But these are relatively minor points. This is a book that brilliantly demonstrates why philosophy is still relevant. Anyone who thinks that deciding what exists and what doesn't is something to be left to scientists is in for a surprise. Strongly recommended.

Roger Musson

Fortean Times Verdict

A USEFUL AND CLEVER STUDY OF THE MEANING OF EXISTENCE **9**

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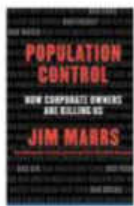
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You must die

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not after you – possibly



Population Control

How Corporate Owners Are Killing Us

Jim Marrs

William Morrow 2015

Hb, 384pp, notes, £16.99, ISBN 9780062359896

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £14.99

"They want you dead!" warns Jim Marrs in lectures to promote his new book *Population Control: How Corporate Owners Are Killing Us*, his brilliantly paranoid and exhaustively researched parapolitical blockbuster.

The former journalist has written bestselling books and articles on alternative subjects ranging from government conspiracies to UFOs and aliens, 9/11, telepathy and secret societies. His first book, *Crossfire* (sub-titled 'The Plot That Killed Kennedy'), was a source for Oliver Stone's film *JFK*.

In his new book, Marrs takes even the most sceptical readers through 23 chapters explaining why it isn't crazy to be paranoid about tap water or diet fizzy drinks. The first, ominously called 'Depopulation', details the bizarre Georgia Guidestones, a monument made from six granite slabs inscribed with eight modern and four ancient language scripts, including Babylonian, Classical Greek, Sanskrit and Egyptian hieroglyphs.

While some of the 10 guidelines sound reasonable, ("Avoid petty laws and useless officials"), the top one – "Maintain humanity under 500,000,000 in perpetual balance with nature" – is alarming. What about the rest of the over seven

billion people alive today, asks Marrs.

For this accomplished writer, the bad food, bad water and bad pharmaceuticals that seem to be a symptom of modern life, are no coincidence. Instead, these and other health-related problems are part of a deliberate plan to drastically reduce the world's population intermittently.

Marrs is not just another conspiracy theorist, however; unlike other writers in this genre of dystopian non-fiction, Marrs dares to answer the question of who the sinister 'They' who allegedly control the world actually are, and backs up his fantastic claims with detailed footnotes so his readers can decide for themselves.

He pays particular attention to what he calls the GOD Syndicate. He claims GOD – standing for Guns, Oil and Drugs – are the big three industries in the world today. For Marrs, the epidemic of mass shootings that has been sweeping the United States since the Columbine High School Massacre in 1999 is due not to the second amendment of America's Constitution, which guarantees Americans the right to "keep and bear arms", but instead a symptom of the irresponsible prescription of antidepressants and other mind-altering drugs to children and young adults in the United States.

Marrs's conspiratorial worldview is apparent in his writing. He is not a "coincidence theorist", as he calls sceptics of conspiracy theories in his lectures. His readers are left to decide for themselves whether corporate stupidity is due to simple human greed, or part of a conspiracy to cull the global population.

Richard Thomas

Fortean Times Verdict

WELL RESEARCHED, LEAVING YOU FREE TO DECIDE ITS TRUTH...

8

A Spy Among Friends

Philby and the Great Betrayal

Ben MacIntyre

Bloomsbury 2015

Pb, 354pp, £8.99, ISBN 9781408851784

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £8.54



Another book about Kim Philby? Yes, but this one examines the lives of Philby, Nicholas Elliott (another senior

MI6 officer) and James Jesus Angleton (CIA head of Counter-Intelligence). Philby survived as a Soviet spy for so long by betraying these two close friends.

Philby had attended the right schools; he and Elliot entered MI6 with the help of their fathers' friends. Where there are conflicting narratives, MacIntyre suggests which is closest to the truth. Did Philby jump in 1963 or was he pushed? Did MI6 allow him to escape? John Le Carré's afterword draws on his notes of a long 1986 conversation with Elliot.

The anecdotes alone are worth the entrance price. Elliott's great-uncle smoked himself to death after betting that he could smoke his own height in cheroots every day for three months. A fellow spy was "Trevor Wilson, who had formerly been a purchaser of skunk excrement in Abyssinia". When the head of a rival intelligence agency entered the Park Hotel ballroom in wartime Istanbul, the band would strike up 'Boo, Boo, Baby, I'm A Spy': "The things I know would make you stagger, / I'm ten per cent cloak and ninety per cent dagger". Graham Greene (MI6 agent during WWII) discovered a code block for 'eunuch'. He finally used it when unable to attend a meeting: he signalled back "Like the eunuch I can't come". Elliott took up dowsing and wanted MI6 to support his plan to recover Nazi treasure buried in the grounds of a Roman monastery. When Philby died, Elliott suggested that he be given a CMG; he would write an obituary note saying only: "My lips have hitherto been sealed but I can now reveal that Philby was one of the bravest men I have ever known", thereby suggesting that Philby had worked for the British all along. Sadly, the new-style MI6

did not do jokes. Elliott had the last laugh: he advised Thatcher on intelligence in the 1980s.

Páirc Ó Corráin

Fortean Times Verdict

WELL RESEARCHED STUDY OF UK SPYING, WITH GREAT ANECDOTES

8

Mad Mollie

Brooklyn's Supernatural 'Saint'

Sean Casteel

Inner Light Global Communications 2014

Pb, 191pp, illus., \$21.95, ISBN 9781606111888

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.50



Brooklyn resident Molly Fancher (1848–1916) was part 'fasting girl' and part 'sleeping prophet'.

From the age of 16, she allegedly endured periods of inedia that lasted for months, even years, remaining bedridden until she died 51 years later. For much of that time she was without sight, taste or smell and partly paralysed, but seemed able to sew and read with her eyes shut, and to prophesy to some extent. Against a backdrop of the rise of Spiritualism, Molly was regarded locally as a saint, and thousands visited her. Sceptics argued whether Molly was an hysteric, had multiple personalities or was a fraud. She died before doctors could investigate her claim not to have eaten for 14 years.

Here, Casteel and his publisher have done a great service in rescuing and reprinting an anonymous – at least the author's name could not be found – biography of Molly with an anthology of accounts by visitors, some famous in their day. Casteel has added articles on similar cases of 'fasting girls'; the psychic paintings of the Bangs Sisters; a 'talking' stove, Gef the Mongoose and the faces at Belmez; and stigmata, multiple personality and possession cases. Together, Casteel and Beckley argue that Molly's illness and starvation, whatever its origin, was an expression of female emancipation; a secular form of similar privations endured by female saints such as Catherine of Siena.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

VERY WELCOME REISSUE OF THE STORY OF A BROOKLYN CURIOSITY

9

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

The Bigfoot Book

Nick Redfern

Visible Ink 2016

Pb, 381pp, illus, bib, ind, £19.95, ISBN 9781578595617

Prolific, knowledgeable and a clear communicator, the ubiquitous Nick Redfern pilots this useful encyclopædia of most of the known cryptid primates. Over 200 entries, many illustrated, deal with the key documentary and physical evidence from historical and contemporary sources – including the important sightings and encounters; the hunters, investigators and researchers; and theories about what they are and how they might have survived and evolved – from all the countries and cultures in which hairy man-like creatures have been sighted, or imagined.

There have been similar compendia in the past, but this one is bang up-to-date. Newcomers to this complex topic would do well to start here.

Enochian Magic and The Higher Worlds

John DeSalvo

Destiny Books, 2015

Pb, 144pp, illus, ind, \$16.99, ISBN 9781620553015

In the 16th century, arguably one of the foremost Elizabethan scholars, Dr John Dee, and his accomplice Edward Kelley – the stereotypical wizards of their day – convinced royal courts and intellectuals that angels communicated with him via the ‘scrying’ trances of Kelley and in the symbolic “language of Creation” he called “Enochian”.

While Kelley had a shady past, Dee was respected as a leading mathematician, astronomer and astrologer, who specialised in occult philosophy and alchemy. He had one of the largest private libraries in England and championed global exploration and perfecting methods of navigation. After decades of research into Enochian, the communications ceased without Dee receiving the complete instructions for its use.

As DeSalvo explains, since Dee’s time magical groups have made many false claims for their rituals based upon Enochian angelic symbols.

Here, DeSalvo claims that after many years of his own magical and spiritual research, he has completed the system left unfinished by Dee and Kelley, a system he calls ‘Power Magic’.

A Rogue Like Me

Cedric Paul Foster

Book Guild Publishing 2015

Pb, 356pp, £19.99, ISBN 9781909984684

This anthology of 18 ‘short stories’ by Foster (an academic and novelist) dealing with a range of different types of supernatural experiences from haunting and ESP, experiences of evil, coincidences and luck, to a conflict with gypsy magic.

As intriguing as these “true stories” are, they are useless to forteans as they lack (deliberately) sources or other identification. In an interview elsewhere, Foster explains: “The impetus behind these short stories was their truth, they happened to real people [...] These facts are either gleaned from newspaper reports, old files, individuals’ accounts, or from direct, personal experience. It has to be made clear, of course, that there is no way of tracing the characters. These have other names and backgrounds, but the sequences of the stories and the events recorded in them have actually taken place in real life over the last 100 years.”

A Field Guide to Demons, Fairies, Fallen Angels and Other Subversive Spirits

Carol K Mack & Dinah Mack

Park Street Press 2014

Pb, 338pp, notes, bib, index, \$19.95, ISBN 9781594773426

In recent years we have seen a proliferation of so-called ‘field guides’ to various types of cryptozoological or mythical entities, and some of these sit rather

uneasily between being humorous and being a functional reference volume. This one inhabits the middle ground comfortably, being a well-written and eclectic in its sources (given at the back), but there is no telling which factoid came from where (unless you had the sources yourself, in which case why would you want this book?).

Great as a present to a young person to introduce the rich variety of entities in lore and legend, or to keep in the little room for browsing.

The Ghosts of Lincoln

Adam Selzer

Llewellyn Worldwide 2015

Pb, 330pp, notes, illus, \$15.99, ISBN 9780738741536

Among the American presidents, Lincoln is the most haunted. As Selzer sets out, not only did Lincoln suffer from morbid dreams, but he and his wife had an interest in spiritualism, allegedly even asking mediums to channel the Founding Fathers for advice. Add to that the many sightings of the ghosts of Lincoln and his assassin in the decades since their deaths.

Selzer has scoured the historical record as well as the archives of newspapers and spiritualist societies to flesh out this eerie connection with lots of new data. It seems the president and Booth, his killer, were *Macbeth* fans, and each had some doings with the play a few days before their fatal encounter: Booth played the cursed king, while it was Lincoln’s favourite reading on his last journey from Richmond to Washington.

Astrology in Ancient Mesopotamia

Michael Baigent

Bear & Co 2015

Pb, 245pp, notes, bib, ind, \$18.00, ISBN 9781591432210

One of the most exciting discoveries excavated from the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal’s royal library at Nineveh were a clutch of tablets

showing the development of Mesopotamian astrology, said to be the earliest evidence of a systematic ‘science’ which, by the time of the first dynasty as Babylon (c1900–1600 BC), had spawned a college of priestly specialists to interpret the movements of planets and stars as celestial omens.

Baigent presents a detailed and well-argued history of how modern astrology had its roots in the Babylonian and Assyrian empires and how, over time, its focus shifted from the king and state to the fate of ‘everyman’. On the way, this ‘science’, impregnated with Babylonian cosmology, came to Florence via Egypt, and played a significant role in the arts and science of the Renaissance.

This is a revised edition of the 1994 edition.

Necropolis: City Of The Dead

Mark Davis

Amberley Publishing 2015

Pb, 128pp, illus, £15.99, ISBN 9781445634852

In response to the decay and overcrowding of established cemeteries in Bradford, a new one was commissioned in 1849 and eventually opened in 1854.

The new Undercliff Cemetery was carefully designed, placing Conformist burials in consecrated ground on its west side, separated from Non-Conformist burials in unconsecrated plots on its smaller eastern side.

Over time, the whole cemetery became a prime example of Victorian style, with monuments ranging from the plain to the grandly baroque tombs of the rich, the famous and nobility. There is nothing particularly Fortean about this, or this book, except that it is a very well-designed and illustrated (mostly in colour) celebration of a period necropolis, complete with a history of its relationship to this Yorkshire city, and an account of some of its incumbents.

An excellent example of how to make local history verbally and visually interesting.

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.



The Survivalist

Dir Stephen Fingleton, UK 2015
On UK release from 12 February

The post-apocalyptic film as a genre is, ironically, wildly overpopulated. There's the classic 'zombie apocalypse', the 'too many people, not enough resources' version and the 'hardly any people, hardly any resources' variant. The *Survivalist* probably fits into that final category, but it's far grittier and bleaker than, say, the ostensibly similar TV series *Survivors*.

In a stylish and effective opening sequence we see a red line moving across the screen, as on a graph, to indicate world population growth through time. At a certain point, it is joined by a blue line indicating the level of world oil production. Eventually, the blue line peaks and drops off a cliff, over which the red line shortly follows. It's genuinely frightening to see that possibility, and just how dependent we are on a finite resource, made clear.

The titular character – his name is never given – ekes out a living in a tiny cabin deep in the woods, tending his meagre garden and never, ever letting his guard down. He does however display a level of resourcefulness that makes Ray Mears look like a weekend hippy. He has food, water, fuel, shelter and protection in the form of his shotgun and hunting knife. Obvi-

ously this in itself does not make for an exciting film and so two antagonists are introduced, turning up out of the blue one day and sending our hero (Martin McCann) into silent panic.

Kathryn (Olwyn Fouere) and her daughter Milja (Mia Goth, achingly hip model and former squeeze of Shia LaBeouf) first appeal to his generosity, then offer to trade goods; and when these methods have failed, they appeal to his libido. Thus they gradually inveigle themselves into his life, thereby providing the film with its narrative. Are these two women what they seem? What are their intentions? Does the *Survivalist* recognise what is going on? Is he using them or are they using him?

This is no comfortable, Terry Nation-style apocalypse: there's a distinct lack of Aran sweaters, peeling spuds and teaching the ruddy-faced kids in a makeshift school-room. The film presents a future, and clearly one that's not far off, of joyless, repetitive, backbreaking work. Our hero's cabin is not an idyllic rural hideaway: it's a small, dark, damp hovel. The film makes an enormous effort to de-romanticise what could easily have become a "cosy catastrophe", the term used by Brian Aldiss to describe the all too jolly post-apocalypse life envisioned by authors like John Wyndham and George R Stewart.

Writer-director Stephen Fingleton makes it crystal-clear how awful life on this level would actually be by vigorously rubbing the viewers nose in the reality. A fine intention, perhaps, but in practice it makes for some uncomfortable viewing. The explicitness and frequency of scenes of nudity and bodily functions in the end draw attention merely to themselves and risk obscuring the point they were presumably intended to make.

Fingleton takes a further risk in a film not packed with action by using very little dialogue. This pays off, though: the characters' personalities emerge slowly, and in a life consisting of incessant, repetitive drudgery, even the tiniest gesture of humanity shines like a beacon. The acting helps with this enormously of course: Martin McCann in particular is excellent, bringing a Michael Fassbender-like look, commitment and intensity to his monosyllabic role.

There are both overt and subtle indications that the tale could be regarded as a religious, specifically Christian, parable. Obviously many films have used images of burial, bleeding wounds, washing hands, pierced sides, fraternal guilt, birth and re-birth or salvation, but it's unusual for a movie to include them all. I suspect a second viewing would reveal more. On a more prosaic level, it still works as

a thriller – the action sequences, when they come, are tense, exciting and brutal – but somehow I think it was intended as more than that.
Daniel King

Fortean Times Verdict

NEITHER EASY NOR PLEASANT, BUT REWARDING

7

Little Girl Blue

Dir Amy Berg, US 2015
On UK release from 6 February

Janis Joplin is often described as the first female rock star. When she died from a heroin overdose on 4 October 1970, just 16 days after Jimi Hendrix, it shocked the world and sent her adoring legions of fans into mourning. As well as leaving behind an indelible mark on the musical landscape, Joplin's untimely demise guaranteed her entry into the fabled 27 Club, along with the aforementioned Hendrix, Brian Jones and Alan Wilson. They would soon be joined by the likes of Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain and, more recently, Amy Winehouse who, incidentally, regularly cited Joplin as an influence (see **FT280:57-59**).

This new documentary shines a spotlight on one of the most enigmatic and alluring talents of the late 20th century, exposing in candid detail, for perhaps the first time, the driving forces behind her breathtaking assault on popular culture: the small-town existence, the crushing loneliness, the lost loves, the drug abuse, the emotional vulnerabilities, the struggles with success, and how all these things dovetailed to make Joplin the icon she became. For all her talent, she often cut a lost, tragic figure, and she suffered greatly at the hands of others during her short life. One poignant example covered in the film is the time when, as a student, she was voted 'Ugliest man on campus'. To her eternal credit, Joplin took all this pain, processed it, and turned it into something positive. Talk about wearing your heart on your sleeve.

Little Girl Blue is written and directed by Emmy award-winner Amy Berg, who had been approached to make the film in 2007 by representatives of Joplin's estate impressed by Berg's *Deliver Us From Evil*, a film exploring the life and crimes of disgraced Catholic priest Oliver O'Grady. This effort

can only help build Berg's growing reputation, as she leaves no stone unturned in her attempts to summarise and quantify Joplin's success and lasting influence. This feat is achieved primarily through extensive interviews with family members, romantic interests, and musical collaborators, archive footage of Joplin wowing talk-show audiences, rarely heard personal correspondence and musings, and mesmerising live footage. In the words of Berg: "Janis is still a vessel for our collective pain – the raw, eloquent voice through which our suffering gets duly acknowledged and nakedly expressed. She lifts us up while caressing and accepting the pain that lives in each and every one of us."

Chris Saunders

Fortean Times Verdict

POIGNANT, REVEALING LOOK AT A UNIQUE TALENT

8

Downtime

Dir Christopher Barry, UK 1995
Koch Media, £14.99 (DVD)

Downtime is a low budget straight-to-video unofficial *Doctor Who* spin-off film from 1985.

The plot, in a sentence or two: New World University is a New Agey, computer-taught cult run by vice chancellor Victoria Waterfield (Deborah Watling), a former *Doctor's* companion, but secretly run by Professor Travers (Jack Watling), who turns out to be the Great Intelligence which plans to take over the world. The brainwashed students, all moving as one, are known as chillies. For some reason Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart (Nicholas Courtney) has an artefact that is binding the GI's power, and is being pursued by the University, the GI and UNIT, which also appears to have been infiltrated/corrupted, though that's never quite clear. Sarah Jane Smith (Elisabeth Sladen) turns up for five minutes at the beginning and five minutes at the end. And there are yetis. That's about it, really.

It's a sort-of sequel to two early DW stories, *The Abominable Snowman* (1967) and *The Web of Fear* (1968), which aficionados will recall were co-written by the later *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* author Henry Lincoln. Writer Marc Platt

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com; @revpeterlaws)

HOUSEBOUND

Dir Gerard Johnstone, UK 2015
Metrodome, £9.99 (DVD)

WE ARE STILL HERE

Dir Ted Geoghegan, US 2015
Studiocanal, £9.99 (DVD)

THE HOUSE ON PINE STREET

Dir Aaron and Austin Keeling, US 2015
Second Sight, £12.99 (DVD)

GHOST STORY

Dir John Irvin, US 1981
Second Sight, £12.99 (DVD), £14.99 (Blu-ray)

It's Spooks-a-Go-Go this month with a creepy crop of ghost movies on DVD and Blu-ray.

First up are two horrors fresh from film festival buzz. After she screws up an ATM robbery, a young hoodlum is court-ordered to stay for eight months in her mum's haunted house: a great riposte to the "why don't they just leave" complaint. *Housebound* is a cracking ride, packed with twists and full-on snort-laughs – like when the frizzy-haired mum looks proudly at her daughter's ankle monitor. "Gosh that's high tech! Aren't you lucky Kylie... having all that fancy technology on your foot!" Kylie rolls her eyes. It's a well made, unpredictable horror

thriller, and touching too.

Next is *We Are Still Here* – an unashamed homage to Italian horror maestro Lucio Fulci. Here, 1980s horror queen Barbara Crampton thinks the shuffling noises in her new house might be her dead son. The local townsfolk have other ideas. It's not as solid or inventive as *Housebound* but it's fun watching the filmmakers tick the Fulci boxes with such glee. Spooky town: got it. Weird Lovecraftian underbelly: present. All out gore-fest at the end: with pleasure. Plus Larry Fessenden's in it – an instant plus point.

The pea-green poster for *The House On Pine Street* is packed with glowing reviews. One critic even said they were 'shaking' while watching it. Hmmm. It's pretty good, displaying a subtle sensibility and some fortian angles, but too many times I had that distanced, 'out of body' feeling – the one where you *know* you're just watching actors reading lines. It's clearly scared a lot of people, though, and maybe you'll shake with fear too. Try it and see for yourself.

Finally, we crank up the budget for a beautifully shot retro release. *Ghost Story* was based on the hit novel by Peter Straub but it's quite its own beast. Fred Astaire and



three other Hollywood royals play brandy-swilling pensioners watching their backs for a threat from their past. Tonally, the film's schizophrenic. The subtle gothic hints are frequently punctuated by extreme Dick Miller jump scares, shoehorned in by Universal, who wanted to crank up the horror. Taken on its own terms, however, it's a classy, chilling ride and Alice Krige really is the quintessential creepy girlfriend. And who says horror from the past was more tasteful than today's? This nearly 40-year-old studio picture flashes way more naked flesh than the above new releases combined. Including that of Craig Wasson, whose butt-naked fall from a roof, face scrunched up like a chipmunk as his pubis hurtles toward the screen, is still making me chuckle even as I write this.



wrote one of the final Sylvester McCoy DW stories, *Ghost Light*, which many viewers found incomprehensible, while director Christopher Barry directed DW stories on and off from 1963 to 1979.

The Doctor doesn't appear in *Downtime*. The unofficial spin-off was made possible under some strange contractual loophole whereby *Doctor Who* characters and monsters could be licensed directly from the writers who had created them, without infringing BBC copyright. The Doctor himself couldn't be named, though there are a couple of very unsubtle references to him.

There's a dreadfully melodramatic (and yet dull) prologue when Victoria Waterfield goes to a Tibetan monastery in search of her dad and instead encounters Professor Travers/the GI. There are some clunky beach-hallucination scenes involving the Brigadier, a weird miscgenation between *The Prisoner* and *Monty Python* in feel. There's clumsy editing making for an awkward plot flow. There's a weak story with hackneyed dialogue and some very uncertain acting.

The extras are equally unimpressive. There's an interesting 8-minute piece on post-production of special effects; but the main one, "Behind the Lens", at 77 minutes somewhat longer than the film itself, is simply filming of filming, showing repeated takes of some scenes, with no commentary. There's only so much of pointing a camera at a film crew that one can take...

The only notable thing about this film – a product of the fan creations during the years when DW was off-air – is that it introduces the Brigadier's daughter, Kate Lethbridge-Stewart, who later becomes a character in the official *Doctor Who*.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

FOR DEDICATED WHOVIANS ONLY

3

Crimson Peak

Dir Guillermo del Toro, US 2015

Universal Pictures, £14.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska), an aspiring gothic author in early 20th century Buffalo, New York, meets baronet Sir Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston), who is seeking investment from her father. After Mr Cushing is mysteriously murdered,

Edith accepts Sir Thomas's marriage proposal and they move to Allerdale Hall, his isolated, crumbling manor in Cumberland. But something sinister oozes from the walls of the house: soon, Edith becomes aware of the shadows that haunt its corridors, and realises that Thomas's sister, Lady Lucille Sharpe (Jessica Chastain), may not entirely welcome her presence there.

In spite of its impressive collection of wraiths, *Crimson Peak* isn't a film about ghosts, and, as del Toro himself makes clear, it's not a horror film either. This wonderfully entertaining Gothic Romance shares some sensibilities with the director's most personal projects – *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth* – its mood created by the particular blend of dark fairy tale and Gothic imagination that has become his signature.

Although Hiddleston portrays Sir Thomas with an astounding mixture of charm, menace and vulnerability, the film is most definitely female-driven: Wasikowska's likable lead balances innocence, curiosity and strength; it is, however, Jessica Chastain who steals the show as the initially contained yet somewhat sinister Lucille. As the story unfolds, she delivers the film's most memorable moments, including its terrifying climax, which is violent and explicit.

Sumptuous, lavish and exquisitely detailed, the world of *Crimson Peak* manages to surpass even the colourful palettes of Roger Corman's *The Haunted Palace* (1963) and early Hammer classics. There's something predatory in Allerdale Hall, part haunted house, part museum of curiosities, a giant, voracious insect crouching in the snow, with the façade of a Gothic cathedral and blood running through its pipes. "There are parts of the house that are unsafe," warns Lucille Sharpe upon Edith's arrival, and it certainly feels that the threat is hiding in every room: it is the house that is the film's true monster, not the ghosts that inhabit it. Allerdale Hall – or, as we learn later in the film, *Crimson Peak* – deserves its place next to Manderley, Hill House and the House of Usher.

Maria J Pérez Cuervo

Fortean Times Verdict

THE GOTHIC ROMANCE GETS A WELCOME REVIVAL

8

SHORTS

THE GIFT

Lions Gate Home Entertainment, £12.99 (DVD), £14.99 (Blu-ray)



Jason Bateman, the affable comedy-drama regular, switches to full-dark mode for this unsettling horror thriller. He's Simon Callum, a successful businessman moving into a new home with his wife. They run into Gordo, an awkward, twitchy guy Simon knew at school. Simon's wife does the polite thing and invites him for dinner – from which point the tension starts and never lets up. The film works so well because it moves in directions you don't expect. There's humour, pathos and three killer performances; but it's the exploration of people's true characters that sticks in the mind long after the credits roll. *The Gift* is a neat little package, expertly wrapped. It's not perfect but I doubt many viewers will want to take it back for a refund. **REV PL 7/10**

THE STRANGER

Koch Media, £9.99 (DVD)



I've lost count of the number of 'Eli Roth Presents' movies, but the latest is Guillermo Amoedo's odd little film about a man who arrives in a small town, grieving for his dead ex-lover. When some local youths beat and stab him, he welcomes the thought of death. Then the townsfolk discover something unusual about his blood: it has the power to heal. This unconventional tale looks good and has plenty of atmosphere, but the drama doesn't quite grip as it might have. But if you're looking for a left-field take on a popular horror trope, you might find something to chew on here. **Rev PL 5/10**

BLOOD MOON

Studiocanal, £9.99 (DVD)



If you only see one British werewolf-western this year, make it this one. Assuming you can get past the fact that it was plainly shot not in the damp and miserable UK and that the largely British cast struggle with the accents, then there's plenty to enjoy. A bunch of strangers holed up in a ghost town are terrorised by a skinwalker, the shape-shifting monster of Native American legend. It's the interplay between the characters that makes it work. They sound like one-dimensional stock figures – mysterious gunslinger, greenhorn sheriff, saloon madam – but the script and acting are good enough to bring them to life. Not that they're alive for long, as the skinwalker makes short work of most of the cast in some gleefully gruesome scenes. This being low-budget stuff, the director wisely opts to keep the monster and transformation shots to a minimum. Good, gory fun. **DK 6/10**

NINA FOREVER

Studiocanal, £14.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)



Holly (Abigail Hardingham) is studying to be a paramedic when she falls for Rob (Cian Berry), still grieving for his girlfriend Nina who died in a car crash. When the two of them get it on, they discover that Nina may be dead, but she's not gone – and three in a bed is the order of the day. This British oddity is shot and directed with arty invention, but it's tonally uneven, veering between poignant, crude and silly. Imagine *Blithe Spirit* shorn of all wit but with lots of added blood, tits and shagging and you'll have a rough idea what you're in for. **DS 5/10**



EASTERN PROMISE

SLOVAKIAN SOUNDS THAT FUSE THE ANCIENT WITH THE MODERN ARE BEING BROUGHT TO THE FORE BY CZECH MUSIC DIRECT

At this remove, talking with Czechs and Slovaks you will inevitably hear comments that it was tragic when Czechoslovakia broke apart to become the Czech Republic and Slovakia on January 1, 1993, following the Velvet Revolution of November/December 1989, which saw off decades of Communist government.

Economics and politics aside, the Czechs did well with this arrangement. They got most of the culture, leaving the Slovaks to virtually start again. Here is the reason that makes Slovakian music, in all its forms, so interesting. For Laurence Lewis, of Czech Music Direct, Slovakian music has taken him on “a roller coaster musical learning curve”.

In the decade that Laurence, and in the formative years his late wife Helen, have run Czech Music Direct, they have sold music from eastern Europe over the internet through specialist dealers. They have created a catalogue of labels offering musical

history – from the earliest of music to cutting-edge contemporary sounds.

“There were the old state labels,” says Laurence, “now small indie labels are flourishing in Slovakia. The most important of these is Hevhetia, which is based in Košice, the second city of Slovakia. During 2013 Košice was a European Capital of Culture and will soon be a European City of Sport.”

Hevhetia now hosts more than 100 titles, including Bach and Beethoven by Miki Skuta, Slovakia’s leading classical pianist, as well as encouraging many genres of new music and musicians.

A recent Hevhetia release features singer Hanka Gregušová (left), who loves Afro-American music. She also found jazz in America, where she worked as a singing waitress. These elements fuse through



her album *Essence*, in which antique Slovakian folk music themes are reimagined for the 21st century with jazz and rock beats. It’s quite a production, with a backing line-up of

leading Slovakian jazz musicians and, on some tracks, a cimbalom band. Not exactly jazz or traditional folk, it’s these surprising elements that make *Essence* such a good listen.

There is also that surprise element in AMC Trio (pictured above), featuring pianist Peter Adamkovič, bassist Martin Marinčák and drummer Stanislav Cvanciger. They appear to be a classic jazz trio but that’s not what they play. Long ago they decided not to be an eastern European clone of a typical jazz trio playing the Great American Songbook. They play only their own compositions, which they write as a collective.

Over their several Hevhetia albums, AMC Trio follow a musical path that has brought them to a kind of jazz storytelling. Each number becomes a self-contained story, rather than a theme stated with various solos around it. AMC’s Hevhetia album *Waiting for a Wolf* invites listeners to spend a night under the stars waiting for a wolf to appear. It also has the heartbreaking number *She’s Leaving for Heaven*, dedicated to all those who have lost someone who is close to them.

This and other tracks from *Waiting for a Wolf* featured in AMC’s gig during the London Olympics, where they were part of the official Slovakian cultural programme. They have also played gigs at the Polish Jazz Café in Hammersmith and Band on the Wall in Manchester.

We still await the

Pressburger Klezmer Band to visit the UK. They are the longest-running klezmer band in Slovakia, taking their name from the original name of Slovakia’s capital, which is now called Bratislava. Jewish culture was obliterated during the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, and wasn’t encouraged by the communists. It is only in recent years that Jewish culture is gradually reviving in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Music plays an important role here, partly through the Pressburger Klezmer Band, as they bring back ancient melodies that the original klezmer musicians carried from village to village.

Today, you’re more likely to find the Pressburger Klezmer Band performing in concert halls than on village greens. It may still be fronted by that familiar klezmer clarinet sound but now there are many additional instruments, to which they have added jazz, rock and reggae beats.

Mit Libe, the Pressburger



Klezmer Band’s Hevhetia album (inset), features classics such as *Donna Donna*, *Oy*, *Abram* and the moving *Nign far Simon*, an original

klezmer song dedicated to the memory of Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005). Like the others mentioned, its music is, as Laurence Lewis says “there to be listened to and discovered”.

The CDs mentioned can be found at Czech Music Direct, visit czecheverything.co.uk. They can also be downloaded from your favourite online music store.



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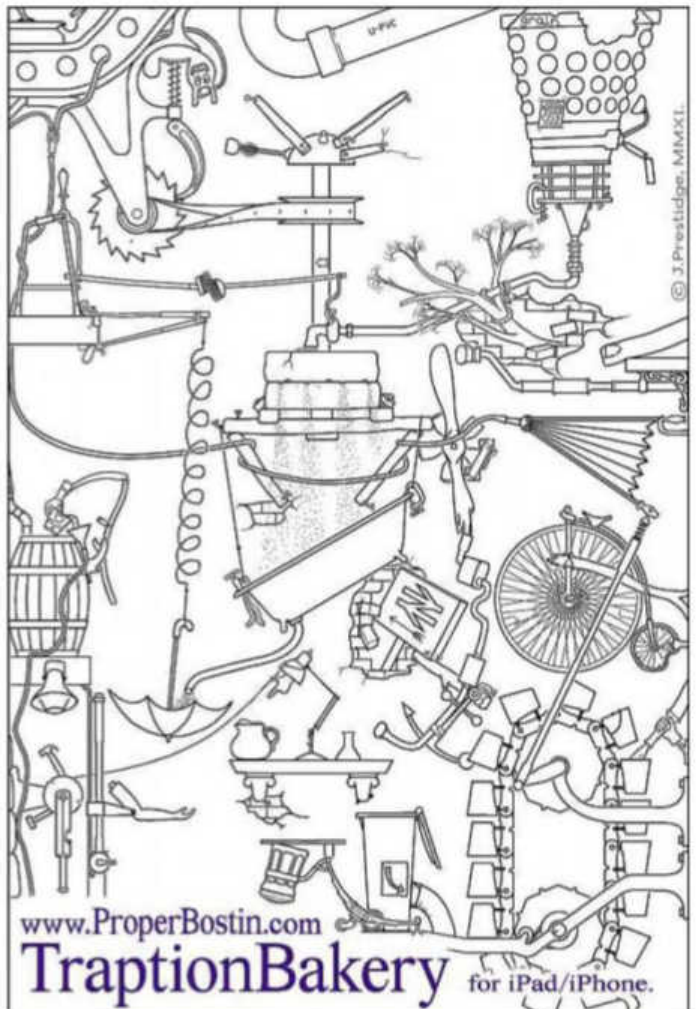
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Dear FT...

letters



Not fiction

In his review of my book *Chameleo* [FT336:64], Jay Rath states: "As soon as we're done with this rare opportunity to meet a Top Secret spy scientist – who's also a Freemason! – Guffey turns to fiction." Firstly, at no point in *Chameleo* do I state – or even imply – that Richard Schowengerdt, the aforementioned scientist, is a spy. Secondly, Rath follows this false statement by taking a quotation from *Chameleo* out of context to leave the impression that pages 243 to 264 of *Chamelio* are little more than fiction. *The Opposite of Foolproof* ("ostensibly a novel", as I say) is an entirely separate project – one that's not even finished yet – and could not possibly be confused with *Chameleo* by any reasonable reader. *Chameleo* is not partially fictional. Except for the various names that have been changed (a common literary device), the book and the blatantly unconstitutional gang-stalking phenomenon around which the narrative revolves are 100 per cent true.

Robert Guffey

By email

Fertility rite

The ancient farming manual *Geoponika* advises: "Burying a maiden's first sanitary towel in the field will save your crops" [Classical Corner, FT330:17]. This sounds like a garbled echo of rituals transferring a young girl's unused fertility to the crops. See Elizabeth Wayland Barber's *The Dancing Goddesses: Folklore, Archaeology, and the Origins of European Dance* (WW Norton, New York 2013). This excellent work deals with the fertility of young girls who have died unmarried and become angry, ghostly, spirit maidens: think of Harry Potter's Veela, and the wils of the ballet *Giselle*.

Jane Jones

Honiton, Devon

Jesty and cowpox

As David Hambling remarks [FT334:14], Edward Jenner

Simulacra corner



Amanda Ruddy photographed this fine cloud face from a train just outside Durham on 18 November 2015.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteanimes.com – and please tell us your postal address.

scientifically investigated the tradition that cowpox protected against smallpox. Jenner helped instigated the modern era of vaccines. But credit is also due to a Dorset farmer called Benjamin Jesty. Jesty noted that previous infection with cowpox protected his milkmaids when they cared for relatives with smallpox. So, in 1774 – 22 years before Jenner's experiments – Jesty inoculated his wife Elizabeth and his two young sons. He used Elizabeth's knitting needle to place cowpox material from a neighbour's infected cattle under their skin. (Jesty had already had cowpox.) Despite being exposed to several outbreaks of smallpox – the boys at least once deliberately by their father – they didn't contract the disfiguring, deadly disease. Jesty also inoculated several other people. So, Hammarsten and colleagues note, (*Trans Am Clin Climatol Assoc*

1979; 90:44-55) Jesty "observed the protection afforded milkmaids by the acquisition of cow pox; inoculated his wife and sons with cow pox material; proved that protection was provided by having the sons inoculated with small pox and exposing them to small pox; and used the technique in others".

Mark Greener

Cottenham, Cambridge

Chain letters

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a BBC TV programme called *That's Life*, with Esther Rantzen as the main presenter. One of the many consumer-welfare-related campaigns they mounted was an attempt to combat the huge number of chain letters that were around at the time. People were sent a letter that said if they didn't copy it and pass it on to 10/15/20/however

many people, then something dreadful would happen to them or their family, or financial ruin would descend upon them, or some other disaster would occur. So people did indeed pass on the letters. I can recall large numbers of them being pushed through our letterbox over the years – worried people wouldn't know who to distribute them to, so they would photocopy them and push one through each letterbox on a street. This went on until at least 1994 (the last one I can remember arriving, in a house I was sharing in Middlesex).

Anyway, *That's Life* strongly encouraged people to bin these tiresome letters, but if they were genuinely worried about disaster crashing down upon them, then they were asked to forward them to *That's Life* at the BBC, which would fulfil the requirement of passing the letter on, and then the BBC would destroy them.

My question is: Did anything dreadful happen to the people given the task of destroying the letters? I know it would be difficult to find this out. Also, I think one would need to define "something bad" happening; we all lose loved ones during our lives, financial crises occur anyway, and serious diseases strike most of us at some point too. It's difficult to link this with destroying a chain letter. Maybe some sort of time limit?

Lorna Stroup Nilsson

By email

Only connect...

On sciurine sociopathy [FT335:9], I've often wondered if your account from Chingford influenced Dom Joly's "gang of squirrels" in *Trigger Happy TV*, especially as Ulrich Magin, in an article about hoaxer Michael Born, had just mentioned "trigger-happy German hunters" [FT95:47]. Intriguingly, one René Joly later sued authorities for conspiring to conceal that he was from Mars [FT134:49].

Richard George

St Albans, Hertfordshire

Cave perils

Re dog-hating caves [FT332:73]: I believe the explanation for these is that carbon dioxide, being heavier than breathable air, gathers in hollows in the cave floor. Dogs, particularly small ones taken in by their owners, would be affected by the CO₂ but not taller humans. One experiment would be to take a small dog into one of the 'dog-hating' caves (or since it's a cave, a canary) and see if it faints when walking but revives when picked up. If done carefully this would involve no cruelty to dog or bird.

Margaret Pitcher

Waramanga, Australian Capital Territory

UFO attack in doubt

The Val Johnson UFO case (Minnesota 1979 – FT330:27) was covered by Philip Klass in his *UFOs, the Public Deceived* (Prometheus Books, 1983, chap.4). Klass doesn't consider the possibility of a time slip, even if he had heard of such a concept. However, he does make a convincing case for the "UFO attack" being a hoax – though what Johnson's motive could possibly have been is not explained.

Steve Yates

Erdington, Birmingham

Vinegar and real ale

Re the banning of vinegar in real ale pubs [Mythchaser FT335:23]: when I started (underage) drinking in pubs in the early 1960s, bar snacks were limited: plain crisps with a blue paper twist of salt; bags of salted peanuts; arrowroot biscuits; and pickled eggs and gherkins – both of which were of

course kept in brine. Some pubs would allow you to take in a bag of chips (that's deep fried potatoes for overseas readers) as long as you bought a pickled egg or gherkin to go with them. I remember once being asked to go outside and eat some chips that I had put vinegar on. When I asked why I was told that it was "well known that vinegar will make all the beer go flat". Indeed this seemed to be a generally accepted truth as I witnessed other people being asked to leave premises for that reason in several pubs on different occasions. This of course was at a time when pubs still had beer delivered in wooden barrels and all the pumps were manual.

It was not until the latter half of the 1960s after the 'invention' of the 'ploughman's lunch' that I saw pickled onions being served in pubs. Of course by then most pubs were getting their beer delivered in metal kegs and the pumps were 'gas operated', which led to a lot of older drinkers complaining that 'them new gassy beers just don't taste right'. I asked my 90-year-old sister, who had worked in a pub, if she had heard of this. She said that it was not something she was aware of, but then when she worked in the pub it was "during rationing and the only food we did was if an officer telephoned and ordered cheese on toast for lunchtime, never in the evening".

● To change the subject: as a child in the early 1950s I remember being told that if you killed a grey squirrel, you should cut off its tail and take it to a police station and they would give you one shilling and sixpence (7.5p) for it. This was accompanied with a strong warning not to kill red squirrels,

but it was OK to kill greys as they were just "tree rats" and therefore vermin. Was this ever true? About the reward I mean, not that greys are "tree rats".

Dean Smith

Chesham, Buckinghamshire

Obscure message

The article on the Kubrick conspiracies [FT332:32-36] reminded me of something seen long ago, easily strange enough to be in a dream. This was a message posted in several places on Manhattan streets by a method as ingenious as the message itself was absurd. The letters of the words had been cut through a rectangular strip of some heavy rubber or plastic material, which then was glued onto the road near the curb. Those words read: "Toynbee idea in Kubrick film 2001—resurrect dead on planet Jupiter." Why waste such an ingenious method on a silly message? Why not instead, something like "Beware, they are among us"?

Richard Porter

Denver, Colorado

Tripping witches

I read with great interest Simon Young's report on Tripping Witches and their hallucinogenic ointments [FT335:25]. I was reminded of an intriguing passage in the Rev Robert Kirk's *The Secret Commonwealth*; the first 'scientific' investigation of fairy phenomena, where the 17th century Scottish minister tells us that "witches have a sleepee ointment, that when applyd, troubles their fantasie, advancing it to have unusual figures and shapes, represented to it, as if it were a fit of Fanaticism Hyprocondriack Melancholly, or possession of some insinuating Spirit; raising the Soul beyond its common Strain." For Kirk, these ointments induced a kind of voluntary Second Sight (as distinct from genetic Second Sight), enabling people to see the fairies. That the ointment was 'sleepee' indicates that it may have been an opiate or a true narcotic.

According to Kirk, it was not just witches who knew about such mind-altering ointments. There are many folkloric accounts of such

ointments associated with child-birth and midwifery, and midwives are traditionally associated with the Otherworld of the fairies. Many old Scottish Highland tales tell of a human being, usually a midwife, called to attend a fairy birth, or of a doctor who is brought to an ill fairy. Somehow the person gets a drop of some liquid or ointment on one of their eyes. After this the person can close their normal eye and see fairyland through the single bewitched eye. Usually the fairies return and ruin the magical eye.

Robert Kirk writes of "a Woman taken out of her Child-bed, and having a liveing image of her substituted in her room, which resemblance decay'd, dy'd, and was buri'd, but the person stolen returning to her husband after two years space." The woman declares that she "perceiv'd little what they did in the spacious hous she lodg'd in; untill she annoynted one of her Eyes with a certain unctiōne that was by her, which they perceiving to have acquainted her with their actions, they fann'd her blind of that Eye with a puff of their breath; she found the place full of light without anie fountain or Lamp from wenc it did spring." Here we clearly have an 'unction or ointment' associated with childbirth that also acquaints us with the actions of the fairies. Kirk mentions other ointments which might "make things appear at a vast distance", or send one into a trance. This is a clear indication that Kirk was aware of such mind-altering substances, and that they were associated with the fairies. It should be remembered that in pre-modern times, anything that was weird, inexplicable, and in particular, magical, would be associated with the fairies, and this would include hallucinatory or psychedelic states. Jenny Randles writes about being "away with the fairies" in connection with what she terms "the Oz factor", also in this issue [FT335:27].

Another minister, Rev Dr Patrick Graham, in his *Sketches Descriptive of the Picturesque scenery of Perthshire*, has a slightly different version of this tale. He tells us that the woman learned how to make the magical potion from the fairies themselves, and he traces



knowledge of these substances back to the druids. In his *Fairy Tradition in Britain*, Lewis Spence (whose idiosyncratic politics are explored in FT332:48-50) tells us another fairy ointment tale that includes reference to an antidote to the ointment's enchantments. Again, it features a midwife, who is tricked into entering fairyland by a shape-shifting fairy lad. These stories highlight the belief that certain substances, known about for centuries, could transport one to fairyland, or facilitate Second Sight, and suggest that antidotes to their psychotropic effects were also known.

But why this link between midwives and psychoactive substances? Well, it is well known that extracts from the fungus ergot, which grows on rye and other grains, had been used by midwives for centuries to speed up contractions in childbirth until at least the 19th century, until its side-effects were deemed too dangerous for medicinal use. It is also well known that ergot contains lysergic acid, from which the Swiss chemist Albert Hoffmann first synthesised the powerful hallucinogen LSD in 1938, whilst researching ergot's specifically 'non-uterotonic' medicinal properties.

More on Robert Kirk, the fairies and altered states, amongst other things, can be found in my self-published book *Nemeton* (2010) (see <http://www.normanshaw.co.uk/nemeton.html>)

Dr Norman Shaw
Glenlyon, Perthshire

Seagulls

It may be a bit late to respond to the item 'Seagull Mystery' [FT270:12], but heck, time is just an illusion anyway. Just outside my window is a large lawn, surrounded by apartment blocks on all sides. From time to time, large flocks of seagulls congregate there at night, just as in Philip Milton's report. I've never thought about this as particularly mysterious – I'm a country boy, and well used to animals doing strange things – and I never took any notice of exactly when this happens. My guess is that something (insects, grubs or worms) comes out of the ground to be eaten by the birds.



Foam ball

I came upon this completely spherical piece of foam at the side of a stream in Perthshire after a spate. I have never seen foam form a perfect and stable sphere before. I watched it for some minutes and it didn't alter by a millimetre. Anomalous? Probably not!

Malvina Moray, By email

- A very Jungian coincidence for you: in about 2002 I was programming a Flash game for the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, which involved flying round in a helicopter and throwing stuff at targets on the ground (I will spare you the details). I was writing up the instructions for the game, and I had just reached the line "You get minus points for crushing a seagull". ("Crushing a seagull" is a stupid pun in Norwegian, and I will spare you the details of that too. Seagulls featured prominently in the game, and were of course not a legitimate target.) At the exact moment I finished the sentence, a seagull landed on my balcony. This is the *only* time in 18 years this has happened. Eat your heart out, Carl Gustav...

Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

The petrified giant

Some time ago there was correspondence about the fate of 'Patrick' the Irish Giant [FT215:75, 217:72]. Robin Simmons was keen to find any details of that figure's history; but the report of the Irish Giant's unceremonious filling of a bomb crater, related by Desmond Coakham, is now so queer as his

genesis.

The Irish Giant had been exhibited in Liverpool and Manchester prior to becoming the most curious item of railway left luggage. Before that, he had been exhibited in Dublin, and even earlier in county Antrim, where he was the sensation known as "the Causeway Giant". His creator was an Italian American immigrant called Giuseppe Fabricio Sala, a man whose outrageous career in hoaxing petrifications would span three continents and more than 20 years.

Back in 1869, Giuseppe Sala was one of the two men engaged by George Hull to carve none other than the Cardiff Giant [FT25:5], a petrified man described as "America's greatest hoax". Sala confessed in February 1870, going by the name of Henry Salle. He soon adopted the modus operandi that Hull employed to pass off the Cardiff Giant during a hoax of his own in New Hampshire, but the enterprise was swiftly rumbled by the authorities.

In early 1876 Sala fell in with a gang from Troy, New York State. The gang schemed to 'resurrect' bodies of the rich and famous and hold them to ransom. Sala had convinced the mysterious woman

who led and financed the gang that he could petrify bodies, and they included him in their plots. The gang sailed to London with the intention of abducting the body of the infamous American traitor Benedict Arnold from its English grave. They found the local bobbies too well informed and suspicious of the gang, so they split up after several weeks' trying to get at the burial plot. A certain Mr Dye or Dyer was one of the gang, and he accompanied Sala to Green Isle, north of Belfast, in May 1876. The first plan was to steal a statue of St Patrick and bury it on the property of Earl of Leitrim, later to dig up and pass off as "the true St Patrick". But Sala opted instead to carve a 12ft 2in (3.7m)-tall figure with many similarities to the Cardiff Giant, as one can see by putting photos of the two side by side. Sala claimed that he then left Ireland in June and left Dyer and another accomplice named Ford to carry on with the faked discovery of the giant at the farm of a paid patsy named Coleman. The pair claimed the hoax was the petrified body of legendary Finn MacCoul, the Causeway Giant, charging six-pence a view to what appear to be large and curious crowds, before crossing to England.

Back in America, Sala fell out with his femme fatale over money as the gang were planning to resurrect the body of Alexander T Stewart, a recently deceased New York retail store magnate. Stewart's body was stolen in late 1876 by persons unknown and never returned, although police discredited Sala's later accusations about the gang. Sala's trail of hoaxes weaved across the United States, but in 1889 he landed in Australia. There he carved one of his final hoaxes, named the "Marble Man of Orange" after the township where he operated a quarry and claimed the discovery. For a time in May and June of that year, Sala's Marble Man was the sensation of Sydney, and was the subject of question time in the colony's Legislative Assembly, later reported in the London *Times* in August of that year.

Mark McKenzie
Sydney, Australia

it happened to me...

First-hand accounts from *Fortean Times* readers and posters at forum.forteantimes.com



Through the wardrobe

Back in 1998, when I was seven or eight years old, my family and I lived in a Victorian building called the Old Rectory in Feltwell, Norfolk. At the time it had been converted into cheap flats, although I believe it has since been refurbished. We had been living there just shy of a year and I was asleep on the top of a bunk bed that I shared with my older sister. I have always been a very heavy sleeper and this night was no different, but I found myself waking suddenly with a feeling that someone was in the room. I sat upright and looked ahead at a built-in wardrobe at the end of the room just as a man walked through it, past where my sister and I were, and directly through the closed door on the left-hand side. This all happened very quickly and I was so shocked and scared that I found myself unable to cry out, until he reappeared walking through the door, directly at us (but as though we weren't there), and began to walk through the bunk bed at pillow height. I remember very vividly seeing the top of the man's head in my pillow, realised that he must be walking through my sister's head and began screaming hysterically. My sister dived out of bed and hit the light switch, at which point everything returned to normal. I remember being physically aware of a kind of mental snap, at the point it all ended. Naturally, my parents ran in to comfort me. (My mother had many experiences of similar events as a child, and was therefore quite sympathetic.) We moved not long afterwards.

This event has stayed with me ever since, and I find myself going through phases of certainty that I'd seen a ghost, to questioning whether I had actually suffered a 'night terror'

"I sat upright in bed and looked ahead at a built-in wardrobe just as a man walked through it..."

or waking dream. I am sure I'd never seen the man before; he was in his mid-20s, wearing a pinstripe suit but with unusually untidy hair, considering how well dressed he appeared to be. Have any other readers had strange experiences relating to this building or the village of Feltwell?

Michaela Pearson
Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk

Cloud of arrows

I am the artist behind the original Wychwood artwork including the 'Hobgoblin' beer labels. My father was born in Estonia and fought at the siege of Leningrad and the subsequent murderous battles as the Germans retreated westward from Narva. I knew this background as I grew up in my teens. Twice I pressed him for more details. The first time I was told in no certain terms *never* to ask him about it. A couple of years later he became very ill and it was obvious he hadn't got long to live and I took him for a drink. Over a pint I pressed him again. Within a minute all I could think was: "Christ, what have I done?"

Briefly, he had been in the Estonian army, they had been overrun by the Russians at the start of the war, and he had been given a

choice of fighting with them or being shot. At one time he had to dig his own grave. When Germany attacked Russia, he was forced into a 'destruction battalion' by the retreating Russians. He told of children being held by their feet and smashed into buildings until nothing remained. Women raped and crucified on trees and left for wolves. Women having their babies ripped out of them. It was terrible to listen to. Like most of the Estonians, he managed to escape this carnage and then fought for the Germans, at Leningrad among many other places, until he was able to surrender to the Americans at the end of the war. Within a week of this talk he was dead (1972) and for 20 years I got on with my life. Then in 1992 my mother received a letter from the Red Cross – my father's surviving relatives in Estonia had contacted us. We went over in June 1992 and were given a guided tour of the country and sites connected with my father's family. One of the sites was a beautifully tended graveyard where some of my relatives were buried.

I decided to go exploring and there was another part to this cemetery, totally different, as it was full of broken gravestones with twisted trees growing through them. A bit of a Hammer Horror landscape. I thought it might provide some interesting photos for my work so I set to composing a shot. As I looked through the viewfinder, a misty rain started to filter through the trees. It had been brilliantly sunny and I thought 'typical'. It took me a couple of seconds to realise that this rain had actually formed a silvery mass a couple of hundred yards away. It then started moving across the ground towards me. Lowering the camera, I watched as this silver river flowed towards me. It probably took about 10 seconds for the silver mist to reach me and amid my rising panic I realised the rain was in fact a stream of silver arrows flowing around me (fully fletched and sharp). It was like being in the middle of a languid, slow-moving stream, not of water but of arrows. After a few seconds I managed to look over to my relatives who I could see moving about in the sunlight a few hundred yards away. Regaining my composure, I looked over again to where this arrow river had emanated from. It had vanished, but as I looked it started to form again, and to flow towards me. This time my courage failed me and I was out of there!

That evening I related my experience and my aunt told me that it was a Jewish cemetery that had been desecrated during the war by Russian and German troops. She went on to relate their dreadful experiences. It is amazing that anybody survived that war in the East. When my aunt had finished, she turned to the woman who had acted as our interpreter, and asked her to tell us the story of her mother.

This is my final strange story. Her father, like

mine, had fought at Leningrad and when the Germans were pushed back, one of their many stands was at a place called Sinimae on the Narva front. It is known in Estonia as the 'Blue Hills', and in seven months of fighting 200,000 soldiers died. During this battle her mother had a premonition that something terrible had happened to her husband. This feeling persisted for weeks and she found herself setting off in search of him.

Walking for days, she eventually came across the battlefield of Sinimae. Coming across workers collecting the dead on carts, one of them saw her and exclaimed, "My dear, what are you doing here?" She told him of her premonition and the burial worker, unbelievably, reached into his pocket and pulled out her husband's wedding ring.

"He said you would come for this."
Apparently, he had come across her husband fatally wounded, and in his death throes had been adamant his wife would come. Among all those dead she was able to say her final goodbye.

Her father and mine were just two threads in a vast tapestry of blood and horror that was the Eastern Front. For myself, I will never forget what I saw in the Jewish Cemetery.

Ed Org
By email

Mount Katahdid Dream

My father, who has long since passed away, always loved to tell me that I am "part Indian" on his side of the family. He would say it was "some tribe from up North," maybe Canada, although he was not sure. After he died, I asked family members and they didn't know which tribe we are supposed to be related to, either; but I've always been interested in Native American culture, probably for that reason.

On a recent trip to Maine I enjoyed visiting a Native American museum, and my walk through was fascinating. I came to the end of the hallway and entered a room with a beautiful display of Mount Katahdin with the night sky and stars over the mountain. There was a recording playing of Native American music, a song with a rhythmic beat of drums, sung in a language I could not comprehend, yet I found myself enchanted, almost hypnotised while listening. I sat down and looked at the beautiful picture of Mount Katahdin, the sacred mountain of the people, and listened...

Suddenly I saw myself in another time and place. I was a young woman sitting with family members, grandfather, grandmother, younger brothers and sisters, friends. We sat in a circle, around a fire, and we were in a village under the night sky. The village was by a forest and near the sacred mountain. The elders told stories of long ago, stories of the ancestors. It was late fall, the air was cold and we wore furs. It was the time before things changed, the time before the white man, when the land

was still pure and untouched. The people got everything they needed from the land, and were happy...

Suddenly I was dragged back to reality when a member of our tour group came up behind me and started yapping about "how cool is the exhibit?" My vision faded away, but for a brief moment, it seemed so very real, as if I were really there. It was time to leave, but before I got up from the bench I noticed that next to me on the bench was a flyer with a printed translation of the song that played. The song said that "we will all meet again," grandfathers, grandmothers, brothers, sisters, "we will all meet again." I shed a tear for a world that was lost long ago and almost forgotten. I have read of shamanism and how the rhythmic beat of a drum can make a person's mind achieve a certain state, where they can perhaps see into another reality. I'll never really know: Was it a memory from a past life? Was I visited by my ancestors? Or was it some sort of dream? It doesn't really matter, but for a brief moment, it seemed real.

Rose Titus
Andover, Massachusetts

The night runner

Back in 1985, two friends and I had a summer job in Carmarthenshire, south-west Wales, working as casual labour in an ice cream factory. One evening as we were coming home from the pub after a bit of a lock-in, we heard someone running after us up the country road. As we turned to see who it might be, a man dressed entirely in black (trousers and roll neck sweater) and carrying a briefcase went jogging by. We joked that he was probably the Milk Tray man as he disappeared around the bend ahead of us. I think we were all a little bit spooked by the fact that here was a man, alone, in black, in the dark (it was quite late) running along a road past three teenagers without any word of acknowledgement. No "Alright lads?" or anything you might expect.

It got weirder as we too rounded the bend about 15 seconds behind him to see a car approaching from way up ahead illuminating the now straight road with nobody on it. As we continued, the roadside now visible, we stopped to look in the ditch to the left, wondering if the man had fallen down there. Nothing. The guy had vanished. Presently the car approaching went by and we knew he wasn't in that - it was too far ahead as we'd rounded the bend. I don't recall the road, just some country lane, but it was on the outskirts of a village called Kidwelly.

Carl Saville
By email

Shadow clown

Your article and letters about 'Shadow People' [FT274:76, 335:54-55, 72-73] have reminded me of an experience I had years ago. I was

about six years old and staying overnight with my aunt and grandparents. They had a two-bedroom house, so I shared my aunt's bed. The bed-head was on the same wall as the door, which was always left slightly ajar with the landing light left on. This created a patch of light on the wall and illuminated the room a little.

I awoke on this occasion, lying on my side facing the lit area on the wall, to see what I perceived to be the shadow of a Pierrot style clown - the sort that wears a pointy hat. He was tall, unmoving and felt real, but even at that age I knew him to be a shadow that shouldn't be there. I could hear my aunt on the phone downstairs in the hall so screamed for her. She either chose to ignore me (unlikely) - or I wasn't really screaming loudly enough (the shadow man blocked my screams?). It's a long time ago but I think that I just closed my eyes and hoped for the best. This experience is still very vivid in my mind's eye; I can recall him as I write. I believed him to be a clown because that is what I knew about - but other identities fit just as well.

Penny McHugh
By email

Round Sham Castle

One dark winter evening in the late 1970s I was walking near Sham Castle [a mid-18th century folly] above Bath when, in front of a line of trees, I saw something I can only describe as looking like a standing stone, about 10 to 12ft (3-3.5m) high. It was a milky-grey colour, seemingly transparent, although it appeared black set against the distant lights of the city. It was gliding smoothly in front of the trees, right to left, towards Sham Castle. I must have watched it for about a minute before it disappeared behind a ridge. Afterwards I was inclined to dismiss it as some sort of delusion. Then I happened on a book, *Ghosts of Bath*, which mentions the case of a retired major who reportedly saw something similar near Sham Castle while walking his dog back in the 1920s. He described it as "transparent, milky-coloured, looking like a hip bath, moving behind a low stone wall".

- Your features on shadow forms remind me of something that happened to my brother Chris back in the 1970s, dog-sitting for our not-long widowed Nan, who had gone out for the evening. As he was watching *Starsky and Hutch* in the lounge, the dog (a stumpy, grumpy corgi called Jason) started growling, hackles up. The door between the lounge and hallway had a glass pane fitted in the upper section, casting a square of light from the lounge unto the hall wall. In that square of light Chris said he could clearly see the silhouette of a man's head and shoulders. It remained stationary for a number of seconds before moving off.

Adrian Colston
Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire

JAN BONDESON presents more stories from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.



44. MYNHEER VAN KLAES, THE KING OF SMOKERS

In May 1872, the *Illustrated Police News* announced that one of the most eccentric characters in Holland had expired: Mynheer van Klaes, the celebrated King of Smokers. This gentleman had made a considerable fortune in the Indian linen trade, and settled down to spend his old age in a comfortable mansion he had erected for himself in Rotterdam. A handsome apartment in this house contained his Tobacco Museum, containing specimens of tobacco from all parts of the world – cigars, cigarettes and cigarillos of every description, as well as an enormous collection of pipes of every country and period, from those used by ancient barbarians to smoke hemp, to the splendid meerschaum and amber pipes, ornamented with carved figures and bands of gold, like those seen in the finest stores of Paris. The museum was open to visitors, to each of whom, after he had aired his knowledge on the subject of pipe-collecting, Mynheer van Klaes gave a pouch filled with tobacco and cigars, and a catalogue of the museum in a velvet cover.

A rotund, bald-headed figure, Mynheer van Klaes was seldom seen without his large Dutch pipe, at which he puffed incessantly. Since his consumption of schnapps, Genever (Dutch gin) and Dordrecht beer was also very considerable, many thought that van Klaes was not destined for a long and healthy life. But the sturdy Dutchman defied them all, living well into his 80s in his Rotterdam house, surrounded by a thick cloud of tobacco smoke. Every day, he smoked 150 grammes (5oz) of tobacco, and he died at the ripe old age of 98; consequently, if we assume that he began to smoke when he was 18 years old, he consumed in the course of his life 4,383kg (9,700lb) of tobacco. If this quantity of tobacco could be laid down in a continuous black line, it would extend 20 French leagues

(80km/50 miles).

When van Klaes felt death approaching, he summoned a notary and dictated his will. After he had bequeathed the greater part of his fortune to relatives, friends, and charities, he added: "I wish every smoker in the kingdom to be invited to my funeral in every way possible, by letter, circular, and advertisement. Every smoker who takes advantage of the invitation shall receive as a present 10lb (4.5kg) of tobacco, and two pipes on which shall be engraved my name, my crest, and the date of my death. The poor of the neighbourhood who accompany my bier shall receive every year on the anniversary of my death 10lb of tobacco and a cask of good beer. I make the condition that all those who assist at my funeral, if they wish to partake of the benefits of my will, must smoke without interruption during the entire ceremony. My body shall be placed in a coffin lined throughout with the wood of my old Havana cigar-boxes. At the foot of the coffin shall be placed a box of the French tobacco called 'caporal' and a package of our old Dutch tobacco. At my side place my favorite pipe and a box of matches... for one never knows what may happen. When the bier rests in the vault, all the persons in the funeral procession are requested to cast upon it the ashes of their pipes as they pass it on their departure from



the grounds."

If we are to believe a waggish writer in the *Daily Telegraph*, this bizarre funeral ceremony was carried out just as planned, and when the words "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" were intoned, all the mourners emptied their pipes over the coffin. Since there was not much interesting news in May 1872, the curious story of van Klaes spread like wildfire: many provincial newspapers in Britain abstracted it, often with some facetious comments of their own. The *IPN* was the only paper to publish the portrait of this prodigious smoker.

The story spread further to American, Australian and New Zealand papers, and got taller as it went along. Even the sombre *Lancet* quoted the case of van Klaes as a remarkable instance of the human system's tolerance of the excessive use of tobacco: the singular Dutchman had survived the fumes of more than four tons of this noxious weed! But when a monthly magazine for the tobacco trade, *Cope's Tobacco Plant*, made some inquiries in August 1872, they found that the story of the King of Smokers was pure fiction. An offer of a £100 reward to "any person or persons who shall accord such information as shall lead to the identification of Mynheer van Klaes, the Smoking King of Rotterdam, and establish the correctness of the history propounded by the *Daily Telegraph*" was never claimed. But *Cope's Tobacco Plant* was not a widely read periodical, and as a result, the rotund figure of the King of Smokers has never gone up in smoke. In fact, the spectre of Mynheer van Klaes is still alive and well, puffing away merrily in various ill-researched modern books and articles about the history of tobacco smoking. Although there is today a curious Pipe Museum at the Prinzengracht in Amsterdam, its custodians have no knowledge of their alleged predecessor van Klaes, and they express incredulity as to his very existence.

TOP: The Singular History of Mynheer van Klaes, from the *IPN*, 18 May 1872.

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By *Marian Ashcroft*

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Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: **1 FEB 2016**. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

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Why Fortean?



Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature

of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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PHENOMENOMIX

CHARLES WILLIAMS Pt.2

HUNT EMERSON AND KEVIN JACKSON

BY DAY, CHARLES WILLIAMS WAS A HARD-WORKING PUBLISHER...



BY NIGHT, A PARTICIPANT IN CEREMONIAL MAGIC!



A FEW OF HIS ENEMIES BRANDED HIM AS A SATANIST...



...BUT IN FACT HE ONLY PRACTICED THE WHITEST OF WHITE MAGIC!



HE HELPED TO EXORCISE A HAUNTED FLAT...



HE CURED PEOPLE OF ILLNESS, SADNESS AND FEAR BY TAKING ON THEIR PAINS AND DISTRESS...



IT'S TRUE THAT WILLIAMS WAS MILDLY SADISTIC! HE USED TO SPANK WILLING YOUNG LADIES, SOMETIMES WITH A RULER... SOMETIMES WITH A SWORD!



WELL-EVEN AN INKING NEEDS A HOBBY...



HE THOUGHT THE DEVIL WAS ALWAYS NEAR US, AND HIS OCCULT NOVELS EXPLORE THIS BELIEF! HE WROTE SPOOKY FICTION ABOUT THE TAROT...



...ABOUT GOODIES AND BADDIES HUNTING THE HOLY GRAIL...



...AND ABOUT GIANT MYSTICAL BEASTS MATERIALISING IN A SLEEPY ENGLISH VILLAGE!



CHARLES WILLIAMS DIED AT THE END OF WORLD WAR TWO, AND HIS MAGIC SWORD WAS BURIED IN THE GARDEN OF HIS HOUSE! THE HOUSE WAS BUILT OVER BY OXFORD UNIVERSITY—THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGHTINGS OF HIS GHOST...YET...



COMING NEXT MONTH



MEXICAN FAIRIES

IN SEARCH OF DUENDES,
CHANEQUES AND OTHERS



IN CROWLEY'S UNIFORM

THE ESOTERIC HISTORY
OF DAVID BOWIE



MYSTERY MOGGIES,
LEPRECHAUN PANICS,
19TH CENTURY UFOs,
AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 338

ON SALE 3 MAR 2016

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



Eleven wooden boats, 10-12m (33-40ft) long, some badly damaged, were found adrift in the Sea of Japan, or the East Sea as it is known in North and South Korea, during October and November 2015. There were 22 "partially skeletonised" bodies aboard, two without heads. One boat contained six skulls. One of three boats found adrift off the city of Wajima on the west coast of Japan on 20 November contained 10 bodies and had lettering on the hull reading "Korean People's Army", while a tattered scrap of cloth found on another boat appeared to be from a North Korean national flag. The latest boat, containing the remains of three people, was pulled ashore at Fukui port on 24 November. In recent years, North Korean fishermen have increasingly ventured into Japanese waters hunting squid, and some of the boats found adrift were carrying squid-catching equipment. Others might have been carrying refugees from the communist dystopia. Dozens of wrecks drift towards the coast of Japan every year. By the beginning of December, 34 mystery boats had drifted over in 2015, including the 11 found between late October and November. In 2014 there were 65, and in 2013 there were 80. *Sky News*, 27 Nov; *CNN* 2 Dec; *AP* 1 Dec 2015.

Chelsea Patricia Ake-Salvacion, 24, was found "frozen in solid ice" on 28 October inside a liquid nitrogen chamber used for cryotherapy ("cold cure"). Her self-treatment in the Rejuvenice health spa in Las Vegas, Nevada, where she was a manager, had gone awry. The cryo-chamber was turned on at minus 240°F (-150°C), and it's estimated she was inside for at least 10 hours before being found by one of her employees. Firefighters had to crack the ice to release her body from the chamber. Police said it appeared to be an accident, though the case remained open. Doctors said she died within seconds – possibly suffocating after nitrous oxide used in the cooling process got into her lungs and made her sleepy.

Cryotherapy in its present form was devised in Japan in the 1970s by Dr Toshima Yamauchi, to treat rheumatoid arthritis. Its efficacy for other purposes is dubious and its application unregulated. Users are placed inside an extremely cold chamber for just a minute or two, typically causing an endorphin rush. Athletes who have long used ice baths to ease their aches and pains have turned to whole body cryotherapy as a quicker way to recover after exercise or competition. The treatment is also promoted as boosting the immune system, aiding weight loss, rejuvenating skin and increasing blood circulation, leading some salons to offer cryotherapy facials as an anti-aging remedy. Demi Moore (the film actress from Roswell) is rumoured to use it to smooth facial wrinkles. Liquid nitrogen has also long been used to treat and remove warts. *AP* *ABC News*, 27 Oct; *Times*, *D.Mail*, 28 Oct 2015.

A suspected burglar became stuck in a chimney and died when the homeowner lit a fire without realising he was trapped inside. Cody Caldwell, 19, is presumed to have climbed onto the roof of the house in Huron, California, and down the chimney on the night of 27 November while the house was empty. The owner returned and lit a fire the following afternoon and soon heard

screams coming from inside the stack.

The house quickly filled with smoke.

Firefighters used drills and chisels to break through the brickwork, but Caldwell died of smoke inhalation and burns.

fresnobee.com, 28 Nov; *Metro*, 1 Dec 2015.

Munna Mishra, a 50-year-old priest, was sweeping the porch of his home in the Mirchai Gali locality of Patna in Bihar when a troop of monkeys began throwing stones and bricks at him from the roof above. Severely injured, he was rushed to hospital by his family but died a short while later. Officials said he was the third fatality caused by the "nuisance" monkeys, adding that women and children had also been attacked by the creatures brandishing stones. *Sunday Express*, 6 Dec 2015.

A drunken fight between two Danish brothers in northern Jutland in November 2014 led to the younger one, aged 55, shoving potatoes down the throat of the 57-year-old brother. He then called emergency services to say that his brother was lying unconscious in their shared house and rescue personnel arrived to find him dead with a potato lodged in his windpipe. In October 2015, the younger brother was acquitted of manslaughter but found guilty of "violence causing death". He was jailed for seven years. *The Local (Denmark)*, 28 Oct 2015.

Last July, Grant Thompson, 18, who worked at his family's pet shop in Temple, Texas, was found dead in his car in the parking lot of a Lowe's store in Austin. He had several snakebites on his arm, a car door was open and a snake container was empty. Another snake and several tarantulas were also found in the car. A highly poisonous monole cobra was later found dead on a highway slip road nearby, having been run over. A medical report revealed that Thompson apparently allowed the snake to bite him repeatedly, causing his death. The autopsy revealed no evidence that he had tried to stop the snake from biting him or get away from it. Death reportedly occurred within about half an hour, due to paralysis and respiratory failure. The snakebites "appeared to be intentional injection sites", according to the medical examiner, who added that Thompson had a history of "suicidal ideation". *Breitbart.com*, 13 Nov 2015.

Mary Hancy, 55, died after she was kicked in the chest by a horse she was grooming and smashed her head into a stable wall in Ashill, Norfolk. She was clipping the animal's coat with her daughter Kelly when it lashed out. She was airlifted to hospital but died from lung and chest injuries during surgery. The young Warmblood horse had been given a mild sedative to keep it calm during the clipping. *Sun*, 11 Mar 2015.

THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2

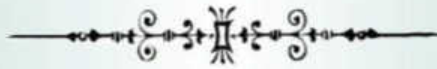
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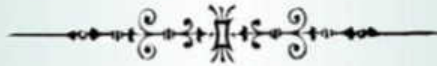


HIDDEN MASTERS

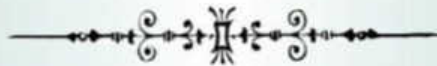
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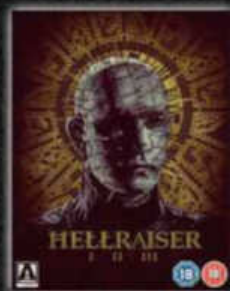


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