

This month's books, films and games

reviews



A crypto-comedy of errors

The body of a hairy man found bobbing in the Bering Sea (or was it from Asia?) turns up as a sideshow exhibit then disappears and is replaced by a model and rancour...



Neanderthal

The Strange Saga of the Minnesota Iceman

Bernard Heuvelmans

Anomalist Books 2016

Pb, 277pp., refs, illus., appx., £15.95, ISBN 9781938398612

In one way, the Minnesota Iceman episode is the Roswell incident of cryptozoology: a glimpse of what at first seemed proof of an extraordinary anomaly before the evidence was snatched away, to fade into secrecy, confusion, and endless dispute.

With Roswell, however, the (by now mangled and contradictory) testimony bearing on the case didn't get to researchers, too many of whom turned out to be less than able, till three decades later.

With the Minnesota Iceman, the ostensible evidence's existence was known and studied almost immediately by zoologists. They concluded that the body encased in ice was of a recently slain hairy man with pre-modern characteristics. A complex of circumstances conspired to frustrate any hope of establishing anything one way or another.

Of course, as many readers know, the zoologists were Ivan T Sanderson and Bernard Heuvelmans. In 1968, the Belgian-French Heuvelmans happened to be visiting Sanderson's New Jersey farm. They shared an interest in cryptozoology, a field Heuvelmans created in its modern incarnation.

Heuvelmans's adventurous curiosity sometimes bumped up against the boundaries of the scientific mainstream but did not entirely cross them; unknown animals, after all, remained animals in the ordinarily understood sense.

On the other hand, lifelong fortean and flamboyant personality Sanderson had already written books that featured UFOs, teleportation, poltergeists, and underwater civilisations. Even so, there was no disputing Sanderson's impressive scientific education and his wide field experience of the animal world.

The story began when Terry Cullen, operator of a vivarium in Milwaukee, called Sanderson to report something he had stumbled into one day in August 1967 while attending the Wisconsin State Fair, namely a sideshow featuring the supposed frozen body of a humanlike but not quite *Homo sapiens* figure, the victim to all appearances of gun violence. Cullen added that a friend had viewed it in Chicago only three days before his phone call (made on 9 December 1968).

Cullen, who possessed an undergraduate education in biology, had examined the Iceman and judged it to be a once-living creature, not a model. He was told that a Soviet trawler had found it floating in the Bering Sea. Confiscated in Hong Kong, it vanished for a few months before reappearing in the American Midwest.

With Cullen's help, Sanderson located the exhibitor, Frank D Hansen of Rollingstone, Minnesota, and arranged to meet him. Sanderson and Heuvelmans spent two days in Hansen's

"Terry Cullen was told a Soviet trawler had found the Iceman floating in the Bering Sea"

garage photographing, sketching and analysing what they could see through the ice. They even smelled its decaying flesh, they claimed.

They emerged convinced that the Minnesota Iceman was real, even though Hansen himself offered them no encouragement: he didn't deny it, but he dissembled, contradicted himself almost from sentence to sentence, and insisted – strangely for a man trying to profit from exhibitions of the alleged find – that he had no interest in publicity.

It was the beginning of a nightmare that would roll on over several years after the original alleged corpse disappeared and was replaced by a model apparently created in Hollywood by special-effects masters.

Virtually the only thing everybody would agree on is that the Minnesota Iceman that survives as an exhibit in marginal venues is different from the first one. Before the event had reached its sorry climax, however, the Smithsonian Institution, the FBI, and a few evolutionary scientists (including the then-famous Carleton Coon) expressed open-mindedness about its authenticity on the authority of Heuvelmans's photos, notes and scientific papers.

One theme in Hansen's evolving narrative (which had,

admittedly, multiple origin stories) held that the true owner, a wealthy collector of curios, had picked up the Ice Man in Asia. Hansen would sometimes assert that the man, wishing no attention, forbade further scrutiny of the supposed body; moreover, he refused to sell it so that others could determine its true nature.

From what they had seen at length and at close range, Sanderson and Heuvelmans swore to the end of their days – the former died in 1973, the latter in 2001 – that it was a biological entity. They insisted that the first specimen was too complex, intricately detailed, and biologically sophisticated to have been hoaxed. Not to mention smelly.

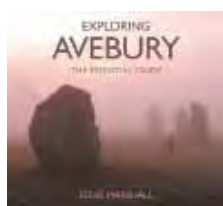
Neanderthal is the first English translation of a 1974 French-language, book-length treatment by Heuvelmans. Cryptozoologists and others intrigued by this bizarre episode will welcome its publication, in a translation by Canadian marine biologist Paul LeBlond. It outlines what the initial excitement was about even as it fails to lay the affair to rest. Obviously, it will never be resolved unless the original body/model resurfaces, which at this late date seems unlikely – though I suppose not impossible.

Even the most sympathetic reader will wonder how, if the specimen is genuine, it had the misfortune to show up under lurid and impossible circumstances. One doesn't have to question the expertise or judgment of either Heuvelmans or Sanderson to wonder further why, moreover, only one such specimen has come

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All you need to know...

A minutely detailed study of 10 square miles around Avebury may be the only book you need about its Neolithic sites



Exploring Avebury

The Essential Guide

Steve Marshall

The History Press 2016
Pb, 140pp, £14.99, ISBN 9780750967662

This handsome guide to Avebury's Neolithic stone circles, standing stones and earthen monuments is illustrated with superb photographs and maps of the core complex and surrounding sites, all laced together with informed and well written text. It covers the henge, plus the surrounding monuments and features in the core area of the complex – the West Kennet and Beckhampton avenues, Windmill Hill, the Sanctuary, Silbury Hill, West Kennet Long Barrow. It includes features and sites further out in a 10-mile square around the core complex. There are superb graphics and plans.

Marshall's study of what he calls 'Avebury's Waterscape' evinces a breathtaking knowledge of the ancient streams and springs of the Avebury landscape. And his knowledge of the sarsen stones forming the megalithic monuments is equally impressive. He explains how sarsens were formed, discusses (and illustrates) *polissoirs* – stones with smooth hollows caused by the polishing of prehistoric stone axes – and explains other curious markings on the stones. He discusses sourcing possibilities for the monument stones and describes how close analysis reveals differing tints in various sarsens. 'Blue', 'pink' and 'orange' stones occur in groups within the henge and along the West Kennet

Avenue.

There is one place where Marshall misses a trick. He describes how the great Neolithic mound of Silbury Hill reached its present height (31m/102ft), but why did its builders stop at that height and why construct a tall monument in one of the lowest places in the landscape? In a 1991 paper, [1] I offered some answers. The profile of Silbury Hill appears visually bisected between its summit and a structural ledge [2] a few metres below it by the far horizon when viewed from any of the encircling major monuments – West Kennet Long Barrow (WKLb), East Kennet Long Barrow, the Sanctuary, from within Avebury Henge itself (the sightline only disappears or minimises when an intervening cereal crop reaches harvest height), and the Beckhampton long barrow. These sightlines are unlikely to be coincidental. The one from WKLb toward Silbury is so precise that it works only if viewed from the barrow's western tip, and that location only exists because WKLb was extended long after the main part had been constructed. Furthermore, the skyline that bisects the Silbury profile along this sightline is formed by Windmill Hill.

Other potentially significant observations also relate to the summit-ledge segment of Silbury Hill. During periods around May Day and August Harvest (Christian Lamma's, pagan Lughnasadh) festivals, an observer on the summit of Silbury [3] would see the Sun rise over the distant eastern horizon, and by moving down to the ledge would see it rise again a few minutes later over the adjacent ridge of Waden Hill. At these times Silbury Hill throws a long shadow westwards, from which an optical effect, a 'glory', caused by refraction in dewdrops, throws a swathe of golden light across the fields. Even if this was not an

intentionally engineered effect by Silbury's builders, it certainly would have been noticed and probably venerated.

Photographs of all these factors, even the 'glory', exist, and would have added to the guide's sumptuousness. A useful photographic innovation in the book is the use of scaled linear 'roll-outs' of stone circles in the henge, along the passage of WKLb, and elsewhere. Marshall also provides annotated views from key points. Best of all is his treatment of the crop marks that are all that remain of what had been huge and mysterious timber structures now known as the West Kennet Palisades south of the henge: he helpfully superimposes the crop marks onto oblique photographs of the fields involved.

Marshall touches on many other aspects, such as possible astronomical effects and, especially, his own acoustics work at WKLb [4] and his involvement in acoustics experiments at Longstones Cove. The book is an unmatched guide to Avebury, and much more than the superficiality that the term 'guide' implies. Highly recommended.
Paul Devereux

Notes

- Devereux, P. 1991. "Three-dimensional aspects of apparent relationships between selected natural and artificial features within the topography of the Avebury Complex", *Antiquity* vol.65, no. 249.
- This ledge is original and structural, but is thought to have been re-cut during mediæval fortification work. The flatness of the summit is also probably due to similar activity.
- Climbing the Hill is now not allowed.
- Fully described in his paper in *Time & Mind*, March 2016, pp43–56.

Fortean Times Verdict

EXEMPLARY GUIDE TO AVEBURY'S CORE AND SURROUNDING SITES

9

Continued from previous page

to light. Surely, others should have emerged, and in more scientifically congenial contexts.

Whatever else this book may be, this is the stuff of a potential comic novel.

The central character would be a congenital liar like Hansen, able to subvert the minds of otherwise honest inquirers and corrupt them as he did Sanderson, who went on to aid and abet a subsequent Hansen fabrication in the hope – failed, naturally – of salvaging the Larger Truth. Sanderson and Heuvelmans's friendship turned out to be one more casualty of the Minnesota Iceman.

Or maybe this is all less cryptozoological than fortean, the sort of quasi-hallucinatory episode that plays out in a wilderness of mirrors through which those who enter – hardy anomalists who fear no ambiguity – are content to wander in amusement and delight.

For entirely understandable reasons Heuvelmans was not one of these. On the contrary, the experience forever frustrated and embittered him.

In common with his jeering critics, he anticipated certainty at the end of the quest. And as we should know by now, nobody gets that.

Jerome Clark

Fortean Times Verdict

ONE FOR THE ANCIENT ALIEN BELIEVERS AND SCOFFERS ALIKE

6

The Boiling River

Adventure and Discovery in the Amazon

Andrés Ruzo

TED Books 2016

Hb, 119pp, ISBN 9781471151583



Google Earth is a fascinating way to explore the planet. I remember introducing a couple of geologists to it, and they were astounded at how useful it was.

It has often occurred to me to wonder what fortean discoveries could be made with it, by looking at inaccessible parts of the world. Well, I have now found one

fortean site visible on Google Earth.

Ancient Inca legends speak of a boiling river somewhere in the jungle of the upper Amazon basin (along with the obligatory city of gold). Hot streams are not unknown in volcanic regions, but there are no volcanos in the Amazon, so the legend must be fantasy – or is it? Point Google Earth to 8.81 S 74.72 W, and you will see something labelled “Agua Caliente” – hot water. Admittedly, from satellite imagery you can’t tell it’s boiling, but you can click on images and see photos of the river with steam coming off it. No, it’s not morning mist – it really is scalding steam.

Or you can read Andrés Ruzo’s account of it, in a pocket-size book published by TED. It is a written version of a TED talk given by the author (available at the TED website) and won’t take long to read. Think of it as an extended ‘Fortean Traveller’ column.

The author is a young Peruvian geophysicist who became obsessed with the boiling river legend while working on a geothermal map of Peru. The book recounts how he tracked it down, and describes not only his scientific investigation of the river, but the river’s shamanistic significance. The author is good on conveying what it is like to do science, but is also to be commended on his open-minded approach to the local shamanism. He also makes an interesting discovery about legends of fabulous gold. And there are some nice photos, all in colour.

Demerits: the shortness of it, imposed by the format, means that some stuff gets left out. I would have liked a bit more of the science. Also, the author’s relentless use of the present tense throughout is a bit wearing. But this little book would make a nice stocking-filler, and it really is rather awesome that there is such a thing as a boiling river. Not just a little stream – a river as wide as a road, and it really is boiling.

Roger Musson

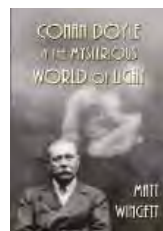
Fortean Times Verdict

HOT STUFF – A RIVER THAT BOILS.
NOT ENOUGH SCIENCE THOUGH

8

More heat than light

A ring-side seat for Conan Doyle’s fight to convince his opponents of the spiritualist case for survival after death



Conan Doyle & The Mysterious World of Light

1887–1920

Matt Wingett

Life is Amazing 2016

Pb, 322pp, ind, appxs, £12.99, ISBN 9780957241350

Ever since his death in 1930, many people have wondered just how Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of the supreme detective in literature, could have believed the most extraordinary spiritualist manifestations and endorsed the infamous ‘Cottingley Fairy’ photographs as genuine.

In this book, Matt Wingett traces how Conan Doyle became convinced of the existence of a spiritual – and specifically spiritualist – realm, starting from a materialist position in his younger days and emerging as the greatest champion and propagandist that the spiritualist movement ever possessed.

Though Doyle’s contribution to spiritualist literature was relatively slight, his influence in public arguments over the faith was – for a period – huge. Drawing particularly on Doyle’s contributions to the world’s oldest spiritualist journal *Light* magazine (now in its 132nd year), Wingett does a valuable service for scholars and historians by reproducing every article and letter that Doyle wrote for the publication between 1887 and 1920. But he also goes further in examining the impact that Doyle made and the controversies which erupted as he set forth

to convince the world of the spiritualist case for survival after death.

Doyle debated and clashed with many opponents ranging from materialist sceptics to representatives of many of the established churches. Some Christians welcomed spiritualism but many others maintained a tradition of ardent opposition dating back to the mid-19th century, working to extinguish the movement as a dangerous rival.

Particularly interesting is the book’s rediscovery of two of Doyle’s unjustly forgotten opponents who engaged Doyle in lengthy bouts of argument. (Interestingly, all three shared a common background in Roman Catholicism). In the red corner was the former Catholic priest turned champion of atheism, Joseph McCabe, a founder of the Rationalist Press Association who boasted of having written more than any living human being in his battle against God and the supernatural. Pitching in from the blue corner, Doyle was attacked by the foaming Jesuit Father Bernard Vaughan, who denounced spiritualism as a snare set by the Devil himself. Their gladiatorial debates in the press and on public platforms generated a great deal more heat than light (no pun intended) and with the result one finds oneself thinking of the Monty Python sketch of a theological debate over the existence of God being settled by a wrestling match (God exists by two falls to a submission).

The colossal death toll of the Great War ensured huge and receptive audiences, with thousands flocking to meetings at which Doyle debated and preached. Both the debaters and the audiences showed huge stamina for these contests but none ever succeeded in a knock-out blow to the other

party. Within them can be seen the same moves, counters and evasions which characterise such believer versus sceptic arguments today. Wingett duly provides a ring-side seat to these and numerous other clashes; and by way of intervals between rounds, he reproduces a number of fascinating examples of ghostly phenomena also reported in *Light* and other publications of the day.

After leading us through Doyle’s writings for *Light*, Wingett summarises the final portion of Doyle’s career as a spiritualist champion up to his death; it is pleasing to learn that the author is planning two further volumes covering this, which will feature the Cottingley fairies, Houdini and the Crewe Circle of spiritualists.

Currently, the author leaves hanging the question of how Doyle could create the world’s most rational detective and yet simultaneously embrace belief in incredible phenomena.

I would venture that it is surely to make a category error to assume the mind of Doyle must have equated with that of his fictional creation. Doyle was no more Sherlock Holmes than Ian Fleming was James Bond or Edgar Rice Burroughs was Tarzan. In my view, Doyle was far closer in personality to an earlier campaigning journalist and spiritualist champion, WT Stead (1849–1912), whom Lord Milner described as a combination of “Don Quixote, Phineas T Barnum and the Apostle Paul.” But we shall have to see what future volumes reveal. In the meantime, we can but regret the absence of such mighty figures today and reflect upon how feeble and diminished modern public discourse seems by comparison.

Alan Murdie

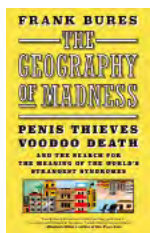
Fortean Times Verdict

THE SPIRITUALIST CASE IN DETAIL
FOR SURVIVAL AFTER DEATH

9

Family jewels

Penis thieves – human and vulpine – and other biocultural panics cleverly laid bare



The Geography of Madness

Penis Thieves, Voodoo Death and the Search for the Meaning of the World's Strangest Syndromes

Frank Bures

Merrivale House 2016

Hb, pp246, notes, US\$25.95, ISBN 9781612193724

FT has monitored waves of penis theft scarelore, mostly in West Africa, since 1990 [FT56:33]. Rumour had it that evil wizards could steal a man's private parts, often by merely touching him on a bus. Those accused of such thefts are often attacked or killed by an angry mob. A related rumour claims the missing tackle materialises in the witchcraft market as *muti*. The rumour was first noted in the Sudan in the 1960s, followed by a Nigerian epidemic in 1977–79.

Bures starts his investigation – part travelogue, part treatise – in Alagbado, a dangerous slum on the outer reaches of Lagos, where a victim was reported to live.

Penis theft anxiety has a longer and wider history than one might suppose. In China the Yellow Emperor's *Nei Ching* (*Classic Text of Internal Medicine*) (400–100 BC) describes the mortal dangers of *suo yang* or “shrinking penis”, a syndrome still appearing in 20th century Chinese medical textbooks; while in Europe the 15th century *Malleus Maleficarum* warned that a witch could cause one's *membrum virile* to vanish. In 1874 Dutchman Benjamin Matthes was compiling a dictionary of Buginese (the language spoken on Sulawesi in what is now

Indonesia) when he came across the term *lasa koro* (“shrinking of the penis”), a disease that he said was not uncommon among locals and “must be very dangerous”. There were large-scale epidemics in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in Singapore, Thailand, and India. The biggest took place on Hainan island, southern China, in 1984–85: a fox spirit was said to be stealing genitals from thousands of men while they lay in bed. Bures describes his investigation on this strangely isolated island.

Other culture-bound syndromes include *latah* in Malaysia, where a sudden fright puts victims in a trance, during which they are compelled to imitate the words and actions of those around them; and *taijin kyofusho* in Japan, where the afflicted have a terrifying fear of other people's embarrassment (not their own). Cambodians can suffer from *khyal cap* or “wind attacks” in which *khyal*, a wind-like substance believed to flow alongside blood, rushes to the head and causes dizziness, numbness, fever – you name it. I'll resist the strong temptation to enumerate other strange fears from around the world.

Bures usefully demolishes the smug assumption that the modern West (with its mechanistic model of the body) is free of culture-bound syndromes – consider anorexia, pet hoarding, and Truman syndrome. Some are virtually confined to one country, like *Herzinsuffizienz* (“heart insufficiency”) in Germany, or “chilblains” in England; others have come and gone, like “scriveners' palsy” in the early 19th century. All these syndromes are biocultural, not merely biological – which is not to say they are in any sense “unreal”.

Paul Sieveking

Fortean Times Verdict

HOW CULTURE CAN INFLUENCE MEDICAL SYMPTOMS

8

The Age of Lovecraft

Carl H Sederholm and Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock

University of Minnesota Press 2016

Pb, 256pp, illus, bib, ind, \$24.95 / £17.23, ISBN 9780816699254



The last 20 years or so have seen a revolution in the critical perception of HP Lovecraft.

Once a cult author whose work was well outside the critical mainstream, Lovecraft has started to turn up in the unlikeliest of places. His work is now acknowledged as an influence by novelists and filmmakers and he is included in the pantheon of 20th-century American writers. Literary respectability has belatedly arrived with inclusion in the Library of America and Penguin Modern Classics series.

But Lovecraft's influence has spread even beyond the literary field; he's been adopted by philosophers, especially speculative realists like Graham Harman, who used Lovecraft as an example of “object-oriented ontology” in his book *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (Zero Books 2012).

Amid all this, of course, philosophers, critics and fans have all had to grapple with other aspects of Lovecraft's work, most notably his deeply-held racist beliefs.

With all this critical and mainstream attention being paid to Lovecraft, editors Sederholm and Weinstock ask: why Lovecraft? And why now?

At least, that's what the back cover of *The Age of Lovecraft* asks, but the book doesn't attempt to provide a definitive answer. Instead, it's a collection of scholarly articles approaching Lovecraft from a variety of perspectives, including race, sex, ethics, geography, music, the history and nature of fan fiction, anthropology, psychology and film studies.

All of this concludes with an interview with author China Miéville. British horror legend Ramsey Campbell turns in a brief appreciation of Lovecraft as a foreword.

Like any collection of

academic articles, *The Age of Lovecraft* is a mixed bag. It wouldn't be at all appealing to someone only casually familiar with Lovecraft, and yet its nature means that it frequently repeats very basic biographical or literary details. The same nature, for instance, means that there's likely to be something here for anyone interested in Lovecraft.

If you don't care at all about speculative realism, you may still find W Scott Poole's article on “witch-cults” in Lovecraft informative, or appreciate Weinstock's piece on things – portraits, books and buildings – in Lovecraft's fiction.

The Age of Lovecraft is also an interesting look at the contemporary debates around Lovecraft; several papers deal with the difficult issue of Lovecraft's racism, and authors vary from enthusiastic to sceptical about Lovecraft's adoption by philosophers and about the claims made by some of his interpreters.

The volume is a fascinating look at different aspects of Lovecraft's writing – and, perhaps more interestingly, at the ways in which modern academics have used and interpreted his writing. It doesn't provide much of an answer to the question “why Lovecraft? Why now?” unless that answer is that changes in society over the intervening decades mean that Lovecraft now provides more fertile ground for reinterpretation.

Alternatively, it could just be, as Miéville suggests, that a generation of young Lovecraft fans are now old enough to be writing and editing academic volumes about a favourite writer.

There's something to interest anyone who takes a serious interest in Lovecraft in *The Age of Lovecraft* – but, as with any edited volume, what interests one reader might not interest another.

An excellent read for the committed Lovecraft scholar, but less devoted fans will have to judge it based on their specific interests.

James Holloway

Fortean Times Verdict

SOMETHING FOR ALL LOVECRAFT FANS, AND LOTS FOR DEVOTEES

9

ALSO RECEIVED

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

The Children of Roswell

Thomas J Carey & Donald R Schmitt

New Page Books 2016

Pb, 255pp, notes, bib, ind, \$16.99, ISBN 9781632650191

Ufologists Schmitt and Carey have years of serious investigations – and a sheffload of books – behind them. This is not the usual rehash of the convoluted mystery of the alleged 1947 crash in the New Mexico desert of an alien craft. Instead, the pair focus on the people who believed they saw the wreckage or an alien body, the military's attempts to cover up the incident, and those who consistently claimed that government agents threatened 'reprisals'. The son of a witness disappeared in 1960; the daughter of another had her phone tapped; and the son of an intelligence officer was subject to 'mind control' pressure. Even the authors describe years of "abuse and surveillance". We hear a lot about 'targeted individuals' who believe they are being harassed by sinister forces. Here, it is within the context of ufology.

Afterlife

A History of Life after Death

Philip C Almond

IB Tauris 2016

Pb, 236pp, £25.00, ISBN 9781784534967

Not another tome on NDEs (etc), but on the conceptions and expectations of the Afterlife in different times and cultures. Almond – a professor of religion – devotes the greater part of his study to analysing the complicated morass that comprises the Christian view of the next stage of a soul's journey, from the earliest, simplistic concepts, through all the mediæval schismatic and sectish variations with their Hells of punishment, right up to modern New Age – almost pagan or Theosophical – imaginings. In contrast, the imagined Afterlife of the Greeks and Romans and other primal cultures is rich in models of mythical aspiration and geography. The equivalents from oriental

and archaic religious systems, including shamanism, alas, do not get the comparable treatment here, though in the final chapter, non-Christian ideas of the soul and its progression are shown to influence European theologies. Nevertheless, this is a valuable resource for understanding the Western religious imperative.

Unwelcomed

The True Story of the Moffitt Family Haunting

Deborah Moffitt

Unwelcomed.com 2015

Pb, illus, \$16.99, ISBN 9780990304920

Between 1987 and 1992, the Moffitt family endured a prolonged and at times violent haunting of their home at Rancho Cucamonga, at the foot of Mt Baldy in southern California. Deborah Moffitt's account details, earnestly, the messages inscribed on walls and mirrors, the symbols carved into surfaces and the bedding slashed while sleepers slept on unaware, and many other 'pranks' from simple nuisances to the disturbing 'possessions' of her father-in-law. It's not going to convince 'skeptics' as it's all circumstantial ... but it does give us some insight into the plight of a frightened family and the people they turn to for help. Many of these were self-professed spiritualists, exorcists and paranormal investigators ... and top of the list were the notorious 'demonologists' Ed and Lorraine Warren, who have made a business massaging their 'investigations' into B-grade horror movies.

The Indus

Andrew Robinson

Reaktion Books 2015

Hb, 208pp, illus, refs, bib, ind, £15.00, ISBN 9781162054210

In 326 BC, when Alexander the Great yomped his army up the valley of the Indus River in northwest India, he was wholly unaware that he was trampling over the remains of an enigmatic civilization, comparable with those

of Egypt or Mesopotamia, that had flourished there for more than half a millennium, and which declined and vanished just as Egypt and Mesopotamia began their ascendancy. It was not until the 1920s that, beneath nearly 4,000 years of dust, the remains of that Harappian civilization were unearthed to the astonishment of archaeologists. It once spread over large parts of what is now India and Pakistan with nearly 1,000 settlements and two cities, Harappa and Mohenjo-daro (now a World Heritage site). The culture – which featured a balance of art and technology and, surprisingly, seems to have had no armies or warfare – is considered to be the origins of Indian civilization and possibly even Hinduism. Robinson's detailed, yet gripping and clear, portrait of this important cultural ancestor is highly recommended.

Monsters of New York

Bruce G Hallenbeck

Stackpole Books 2014

Pb, 135pp, bib, \$12.95, ISBN 9780811712132

Monsters of North Carolina

John Hairr

Stackpole Books 2014

Pb, 123pp, bib, \$12.95, ISBN 9780811712040

Monsters of Massachusetts

Loren Coleman

Stackpole Books 2014

Pb, 115pp, \$12.95, ISBN 9780811708111

Bigfoot features prolifically in these summary surveys of US states and their fortean wildlife, but lake monsters, sea monsters, vampires, mermaids, small humanoid, giant insects and out-of-place alligators, to name just a few, also get a look-in. While the general focus is on cryptozoology, the authors, inevitably, are lured, in places, off the beaten path into the swirling mists inhabited by more supernatural critters. Each author is an expert in his subject matter and the landscape of his region, which he sets out

concisely. They bring to nine the number of single state guides by Stackpole; a series that can be recommended to younger readers.

Induced After Death Communication

Allan L Botkin

Hampton Roads 2014

Pb, 232pp, bib, \$18.95, ISBN 9781571747129

Not, as might appear at first glance, a new way of communicating with the dead, but a careful account of a new technique of grief counselling. Botkin is a clinical psychologist who treats traumatised veterans and began testing 'eye-movement desensitisation', which seems to 're-process' thoughts and emotions, as a way of accessing 'core grief'. He tells of Victor, a Vietnam vet who was traumatised when a young friend was shot in front of him. After a session, Botkin says Victor became calm, smiling – ecstatic, even. Botkin replicated the technique with other vets with equal success until he had treated hundreds of patients; each time, the patient experienced an encounter with the deceased object of their grief, and each time, Botkin says, the intimate reconciliation or resolution "reversed the sadness in which [they were] immersed", bypassing months of conventional grief therapy. Now Botkin – who claims the method has a significantly different neurological action to hypnosis – teaches it to other doctors and counsellors. *Life after Death* author Raymond Moody, in the introduction, praises Botkin for carefully avoiding presentation of his work "as scientific evidence of life after death". The CSICOPS may froth at all this, but here is an experienced clinician regularly demonstrating a technique that resolves traumatic stress disorders, during which something remarkable passes between the patient and his traumatic memories in a subjective encounter.

No wonder there is growing interest in the technique by leading NDE researchers. Could be a very important study.