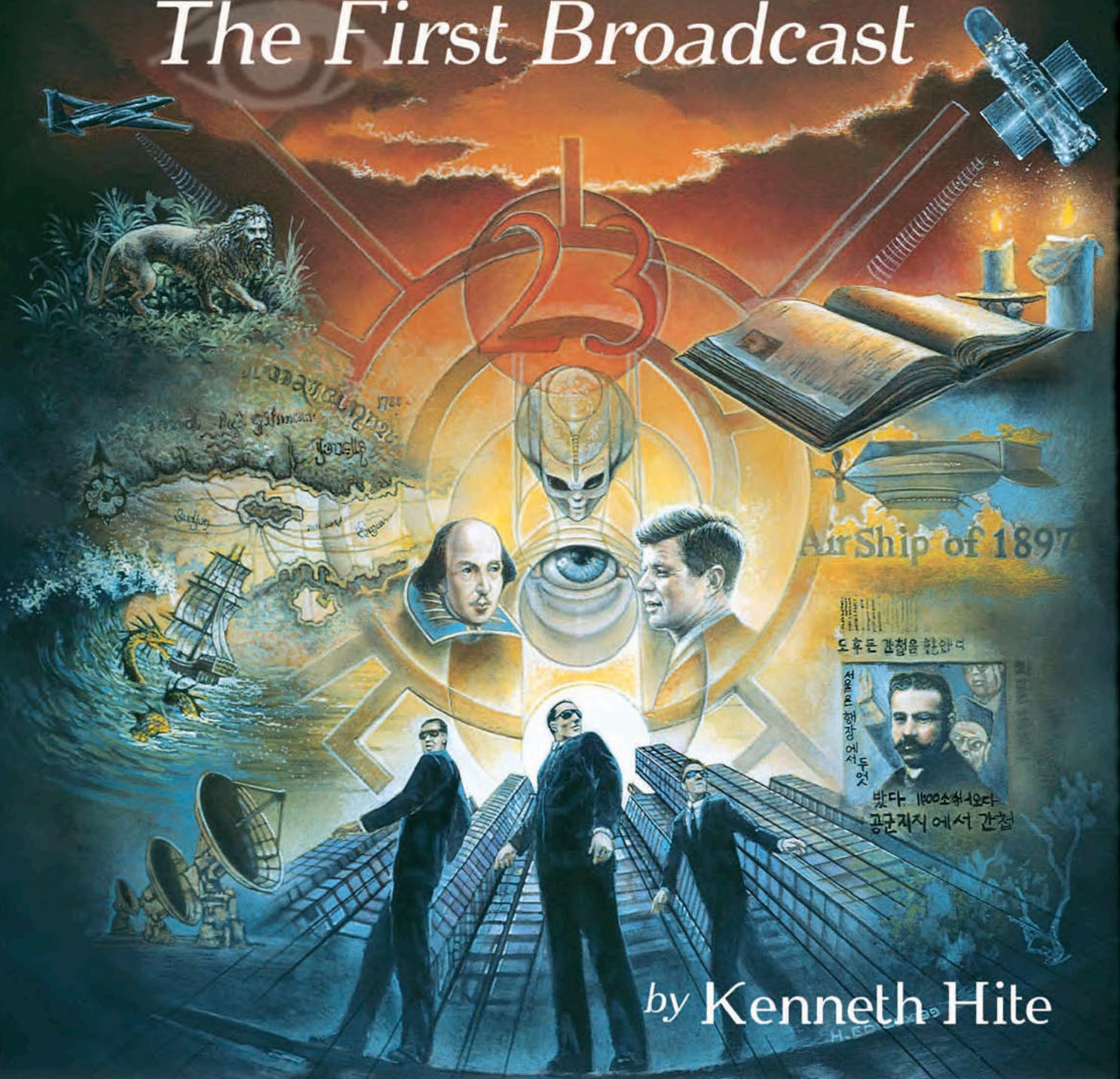


# SUPPRESSED TRANSMISSION

*The First Broadcast*



by Kenneth Hite

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

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## PAGE REFERENCES

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition* Revised; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of the *Basic Set*. AE refers to *Alternate Earths*, AH refers to *Atomic Horror*, AN refers to *Arabian Nights*, BE refers to *Bestiary*, BO refers to *Black Ops*, CL refers to *Cliffhangers*, CM refers to *Celtic Myth*, CT refers to *CthulhuPunk*, D refers to *Dinosaurs*, EG refers to *Egypt*, FF refers to *Fantasy Folk*, I refers to *Illuminati*, IOU refers to *Illuminati University*, PM refers to *Places of Mystery*, RS refers to *Reign of Steel*, RU refers to *Russia*, S refers to *Space, Third Edition*, T refers to *Technomancer*, TI refers to *Timeline*, WI to *Wizards*, WT refers to *Warehouse 23*, WWi refers to *Who's Who 1*, WWii refers to *Who's Who 2*, Y to Y2K.

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# Introduction

by Kenneth Hite

*“There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion.”*

– Sir Francis Bacon, *On Beauty*

So what’s a nice guy like me doing with a column like this, anyway? Anything he wants to, that’s what, and it’s all Scott Haring’s fault. That’s what I tell the men in the black Lincoln Continental who ask me that question in their grating, almost mechanical-sounding, voices. Of course, the way they stare at me, the three of them with their flat black sunglasses mounted on the oddly pitted, almost artificial skin of their faces – it makes it hard to remember exactly what I say. But I do know I always try to mention Scott Haring. Many, many times, if need be. Because, you see, it really is his fault.

*“Woe to you, ye perverted in heart, who are watchful to obtain an accurate knowledge of evil, and to discover terrors. No one shall assist you.”*

– *Book of Enoch, Chapter XCIX: 6*

Scott was starting a new thing, or rather transforming an old thing into a new thing; Steve Jackson Games’ magazine, *Pyramid*, was metamorphosing from a glossy print magazine that lost rather a lot of money into a virtual electronic Web-based magazine that, hopefully, wouldn’t. All this under Scott’s direction as editor. Scott offered me a spot as a columnist, based on the fact that I already had a weekly game review and industry news column somewhere else.

As a freelance writer, you soon learn that the answer to all such requests is “Sure.” And so it was agreed, and it was all Scott’s fault. The official mission statement of my column, as hammered out by the two of us, is as follows: “Ken will rattle on about whatever he feels like, so long as it isn’t game reviews or gaming industry news.”

Now, I just had to decide what it *would* be about. First off, it had to relate to gaming somehow, *Pyramid* is a gaming magazine, after all. That doesn’t narrow it down much; everything can be about gaming. With deadline rapidly approaching, I went with what I knew and wrote the essay on pp. 6-8; those four genres (alternate history, secret history, conspiracy, and horror) have pretty much defined the column ever since. This book, then, is a collection of most of the first year of “Suppressed Transmission,” from April 1998 to March 1999, slightly modified from its *Pyramid* appearance, and annotated, cross-referenced, and indexed for extra utility.

*“It is better, of course, to know useless things than to know nothing.”*

– Seneca, *Epistles*, 88, 45



So what does that mean to you, the reader? If you're a gamer, you'll find plenty of stuff you can use right away, especially if your game involves any of those four themes I mentioned earlier. If you're not a gamer, don't worry; there's plenty of normal weirdness here, too. Just substitute "writing" (or "daydreaming") for "gaming," and "story" for "campaign" while you read. Who knows? You might even want to pick up another game book. I mostly cite **GURPS** books in these essays, for a number of reasons. I like **GURPS**, first of all. Also, **GURPS** players are *Pyramid's* core audience, **GURPS** has a number of game settings and sourcebooks that naturally match the topic matter, and finally, it's easier to say, for instance, "a **GURPS Black Ops** game" than "a conspiratorial game of elite UFO-hunters in an action-movie idiom." Even if you don't play **GURPS**, there's no shortage of stuff to steal from **GURPS** books; that's the way they're written.

And the way this book is written, too. Hopefully, there will be specific topic essays here that you can work into your game (or your reading) right away, but there are campaign frames, scenario ideas, GMing tips, and things I think are cool scattered throughout. You may have to wrench them a bit, or knock some things around, but one good thing about High Weirdness is that it's used to that kind of treatment. Look up stuff in the index, follow the cross-references, or just read bits at bibliomantic random. Toward the end of this book, there's some general notes on putting this sort of high-strangeness Illuminated universe together, but I think that even reading the essays should give you some idea of what we're all about here, and how to do it.

*"Research, mostly. Very obscure, totally useless research . . . Sacrificial rituals of the ancient Scythians. The secret meaning of the Book of Genesis. Trying to find a pattern in NYSE figures between April and June of 1957."*

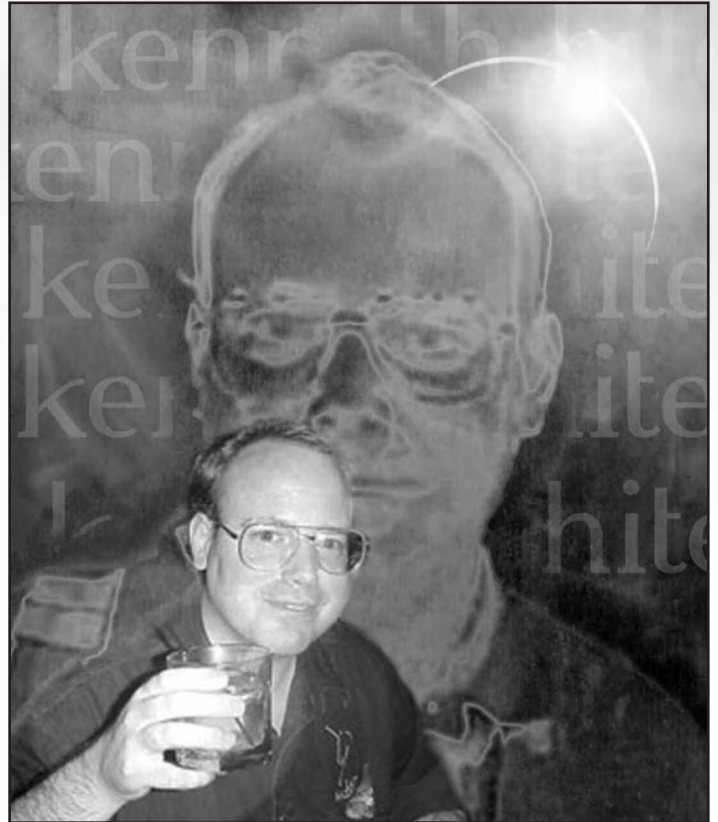
– Angelica di Rienzi, in *Waking the Moon* by Elizabeth Hand

Speaking of how to do it, people always assume that I'm channeling some kind of secret Lemurian mind-ray with the aid of blasphemous tomes in Aklo and puissant herbs scraped from the walls of Inca tombs. Whether that would work or not, I also get good results by reading a wide variety of nonsense and books about nonsense. For every essay, I've given some indications of specific works to consult; in the body, in the annotations, and in the quotes. (I've also wrapped a Bibliophany around my essay on the subject, starting on p. 123.) The rest is just my trick memory (one of those that does well on standardized tests), and a 20-year head start on most of my readers.

*"If you do not expect it,  
you will not find the unexpected,  
for it is hard to find, and difficult."*

– Heraclitus

But truly, everything is Illuminated, everything is weird, if you look at it long enough. Mankind is a pattern-finding animal, whether there exists one to find or not. The real trick comes, as Heraclitus knew, in expecting it, in listening for it. So, tune your mental dial, warm up those crystals, and get set to receive some Suppressed Transmissions.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

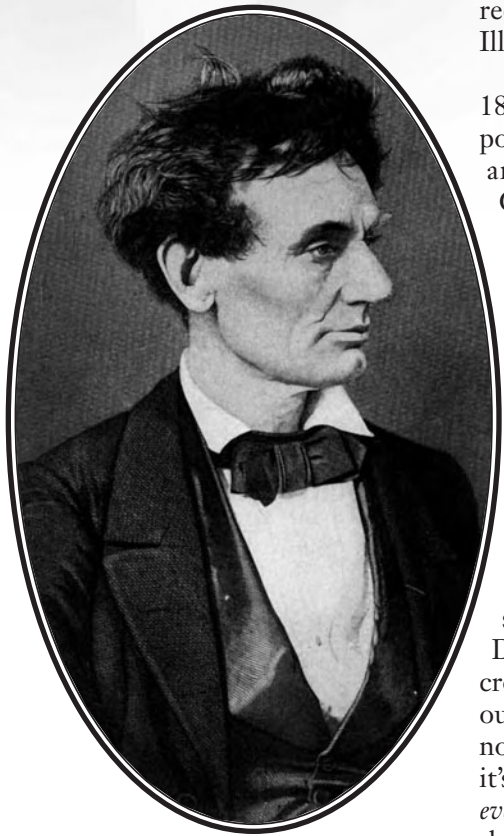
Kenneth Hite is an editor and writer living in Chicago. Since the last paragraph on p. 8 was written, he has become Line Developer for the original-series *Star Trek Roleplaying Game* from Last Unicorn Games. Additional, possibly relevant, writing credits include portions of *Mage: the Sorcerer's Crusade*, the *Cainite Heresy* sourcebook for *Vampire: the Dark Ages*, part of *Back East: The South* for *Deadlands*, and a chapter in *GURPS Y2K*. His wife Sheila perseveres.

Kenneth Hite is an NPC on p. 116 of Atlas Games' *Unknown Armies*. He knows quite a bit about certain historical elements behind the secret masters of the occult underground, who manifest in ripples of coincidence and symbolism.

Kenneth Hite is an alias of convenience used by an extrusion of empyrean pneuma into the material plane. Under this alias, he is known at many of the more poorly-organized bookshops ornamenting the North American Tectonic Plate during this Aeon.

This first column was originally titled "Suppressed Transmission" when *Pyramid* posted it on April 3, 1998. For this collection, I've rearranged the essays into some sort of thematic order; if you'd rather retain their dizzy historical sense by reading them in their original sequence, these first annotations for each essay will tell you the next column to read. The next column to read, thus, is "Six Degrees of Sir Francis Bacon," on p. 105.

1 In *Slacker*, writer-director Richard Linklater follows a rough chain of associations through the streets of Austin, Texas, over the course of 24 hours. A series of casual encounters with people, none of whom seem to have much to do with their time at the moment, spurs rambles into conspiracy theory, sociology, personal observation, and quasi-mysticism. The people themselves are usually only tangentially connected, although they can all be seen as part of the grand "slacker" subculture, and any given scene may follow anything or anybody that looks interesting, sometimes away from the action and into the next scene. Compulsively watchable and cleverly structured, *Slacker* isn't one of those life-changing movies like *Chinatown*, but it certainly informs the spirit of these columns.



# The First Transmission

"You know about the suppressed transmission, of course."

– *Been On The Moon Since The Fifties, Slacker*<sup>1</sup>

With those words, those of us watching Richard Linklater's indie film classic for the first time (which, for me, I seem to recall was the spring of 1992) sat up, nudged our friends in the ribs to shut up their incessant chatter, and realized that we were in the presence of greatness. Not many people knew about the suppressed transmission in the spring of 1992,<sup>2</sup> but I'll bet a lot of the ones who did were *GURPS* players. They've always been my kind of folk, even when I nodded off during discussions of power-train ratios versus hull configuration in vehicle building. That's why I'm especially delighted that Scott Haring has offered me a slice of Steve Jackson Games' valuable bandwidth to discuss all kinds of suppressed transmissions – those little pieces of weirdness that only Steve, of all the game designers out there, seems to think are important enough to write sidebars around. I'll be making the phosphors dance every couple of weeks until They catch up to me, so I thought I'd start out with a few sidebars to get us all started and to let you know the kinds of things that make me ask "Now how can I work this into a game?" Because that's the kind of thing I'll be sharing with you good people.

## CONSPIRACY

So, I'm reading Paul Johnson's new *History of the American People*, and he tosses off a mention of an interesting rumor about Abraham Lincoln. To wit, apparently some folks thought that Abe was just too good a politician to be some rural nobody from Illinois. There had to be some deeper secret to his birth. Namely, that he was actually the son of either John Marshall, the great Supreme Court Justice, or of former Vice-President John C. Calhoun, the most eloquent defender of the slave-owning South. Horsefeathers, you say. But, of course, frontier records are pretty fragmentary. It's not until he begins his meteoric legal career in Illinois that Lincoln begins to leave a paper trail.

Could Abraham Lincoln be part of some secretive aristocracy that even in 1809 was working to preserve or create vital bloodlines for some unguessable purpose? Could Lincoln be connected to the shadowy Merovingian *Prieuré de Sion*<sup>3</sup> and its quest for a sacred royal bloodline tied to the Holy Grail and the Crucifixion? Have the Merovingians got their hooks into America's democracy after failing to keep the Thirteen Colonies under a monarch in 1776? After all, it was only chance that George Washington turned down the crown in 1783 and that the Stuart heir Bonnie Prince Charlie was seemingly prevented from coming to America to take up a crown the following year. Perhaps the *Prieuré* was actually attempting to force the issue of the Civil War, hoping to create a Stuart aristocracy<sup>4</sup> in the seceded South. Or perhaps the bloodline has another purpose, related to the "Faculty X"<sup>5</sup> mutation that, according to Colin Wilson, produces both genius and visionary depression. Lincoln was certainly a genius, and he both saw ghosts and visions in the White House and, later, haunted it himself. (He still does.) Is this group breeding ghosts?

In *GURPS Timeline*, (p. TI94-96) Chris McCubbin reminds us that 1809 also saw the birth of Edgar Allan Poe (speaking of genius and visionary depression), Charles Darwin, and Grail poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Lincoln and Darwin even shared the same birthday! Was 1809 a "harvest year" for a bumper crop of psychic influences? Perhaps the *Prieuré* agent in America was the mysterious "pirate" Jean Lafitte,<sup>6</sup> who arrived in New Orleans in 1809 with absolutely no verifiable past. This is the kind of thing whole campaigns can be made of, and it's all true. Well, most of it, anyway. With the proper conspiratorial mindset, *everything* is campaign material. And I haven't even mentioned the coolest thing that happened in 1809.<sup>7</sup> Maybe in another essay.

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