



# Elsewhen Press

*delivering outstanding new talents in speculative fiction*

## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Author cites value of a close community in the face of growing environmental despair.***

***Glasgow author Douglas Thompson honours his late brother's UFO obsession with new sci-fi novel considering the abductee as divine outsider.***

**DARTFORD, KENT – 15 July 2022 – Elsewhen Press**, an independent UK publisher specialising in Speculative Fiction, is committed to publishing outstanding books by incredible authors. One of those authors is **Douglas Thompson**, from Glasgow.

Douglas was always sceptical of the fanatical belief in UFOs of his elder brother (the artist Ally Thompson 1955-2016), but since Ally's untimely death from alcoholism, international news stories leaked from the American military have made Douglas wonder if his brother might ultimately be proven right. 'White tic tacs' and 'off world vehicles' have recently been publicly accepted as having 'buzzed' US boats and airplanes during military exercises while moving at speeds beyond any known terrestrial technology. Although the meaning and origin of these objects remains unknown, their existence is no longer denied or in doubt. Even NASA are entertaining the possibility that alien life may have located us before we're able to locate them.

In homage to his late brother's obsession, and bearing a dedication to him, Douglas Thompson's new novel from Elsewhen Press, *Stray Pilot*, takes the notion of extra-terrestrial existence seriously by asking what would happen if a military pilot abducted by a UFO were to return 80 years later to his hometown to find everyone and everything aged while, for him, only a year has gone by (an effect known as time dilation according to Einstein's theory of special relativity). Thompson has taken the starting point for his novel from classic UFO cases of the 1940s and '80s that his brother 'indoctrinated' him with when he was in his early teens. The most famous of those was the tragic Mantell incident of 1948, when a 25-year old Kentucky Air National Guard pilot Captain Thomas Mantell was killed when he lost control of his P-51 Mustang while pursuing a mysterious silver disk as it rose to high altitude. Mantell's crashed plane and body were recovered; but, in a similar case in 1978 in Australia, 20-year old pilot Frederick Valentich went missing in pursuit of a UFO and neither airplane nor pilot were ever found.

Rather than set his novel in Kentucky or Australia, Thompson wanted to use the story to shed light on his own contemporary Scotland, and its currently tense and complex relationship with the British state, which has a history of suppressing UFO data. He chose to turn Thomas Mantell into one Thomas Tellman and set his departure and return in a fictitious small town on Scotland's north-east coast. Thompson explains: "Nobody says they won't read or watch Shakespeare's *Macbeth* because they don't believe in the supernatural. And likewise I wonder if it's time the contemporary taboo on talking about UFOs was lifted in favour of seeing the potential of this trope as a metaphor for the age-old idea of some divine messenger, be it angel or demon, coming to live among us for a while and thereby throwing light on the irony of human society, the weaknesses and strengths of homo sapiens. There's always also the 'changeling' myth, the ancient anxiety that the missing child returns as something else in disguise..."

Thompson's novel explores the creative tension between the closed intimacy of a small rural community and an outsider whose mind has been opened not just to an international, but stellar and cosmic perspective. Creating his own fictional setting for his altered version of the Thomas Mantell 'myth' has also enabled Thompson to add other ingredients into the plot mix. His fascination with his mother-in-law's dementia has transmuted into the character of Tellman's daughter now grown to be a bed-bound octogenarian, her loss of memory of the last 80 years standing in eerie parallel to her father's disappearance. Tellman's return also enables a penetrating perspective on the environmental damage humanity has done in that same time period.

So does Thompson now regret dismissing his brother's 'crank' theories? Rather, he sees them as a message to the future whose value he has come to belatedly understand: "I still suspect that a lot of the UFO theories over the last five decades have been elaborate busking around a small core of mysterious facts. It's the same with religion, in that the human brain won't accept the unknown and seems always compelled to invent its own explanations. But just as with gothic cathedrals, we should never lose sight of how beautiful these inventions are, the stories we tell ourselves, since they are the very essence of all literature and art and essential to what we are as a species. If

*...more*



anyone or anything is studying us now and capable of being emotionally moved enough to find value in anything about us, I can't help thinking it will be in precisely that capacity for invention and in our longing to meet something greater than ourselves. But regardless of any of that, maybe the real challenge is for us to try to become that greater thing we can already imagine and thereby save ourselves and our beleaguered natural environment before it's too late."

*Stray Pilot*, was published by Elsewhen Press in eBook format on 1<sup>st</sup> July and will be out in paperback on the 1<sup>st</sup> August.

## Notes for Editors

### About Douglas Thompson

Glasgow writer, Douglas Thompson, won the Herald/Grosch Question Of Style Award 1989, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the Neil Gunn Writing Competition 2007, and the Faith/Unbelief Poetry Prize 2016. His short stories and poems have appeared in a wide range of magazines and anthologies, including *Ambit*, *Albedo One*, *Chapman* and *New Writing Scotland*. Variouslly classed as a Weird, Horror, Sci Fi, Literary, or Historical novelist, he has published more than 17 novels and collections of short stories and poetry since 2009, from various publishers in Britain, Europe and America.

### About *Stray Pilot*

#### A passionate environmental allegory



Thomas Tellman, an RAF pilot who disappeared pursuing a UFO in 1948, unexpectedly returns entirely un-aged to a small town on Scotland's north-east coast. He finds that his 7-year-old daughter is now a bed-bound 87-year-old woman suffering from dementia. She greets him as her father but others assume she is deluded and that Thomas is an unhinged impostor or con man. While Thomas endeavours to blend in to an ordinary life, his presence gradually sets off unpredictable consequences, locally, nationally and globally. Members of the British Intelligence Services attempt to discredit Thomas in advance of what they anticipate will be his public disclosure of evidence of extra-terrestrial activity, but the local community protect him. Thomas, appalled by the increase in environmental damage that has occurred in his 80 year absence, appears to have returned with a mission: the true nature of which he guards from everyone around him.

Douglas Thompson's thought-provoking novel is unashamedly science-fiction yet firmly in the tradition of literary explorations of the experience of the outsider. He weaves together themes of memory loss and dementia, alienation, and spiritual respect for the natural world; while at the same time counterposing the humanity inherent in close communities against the xenophobia and nihilistic materialism of contemporary urban society. Of all the book's vivid characters, the fictional village of Kinburgh itself is the stand-out star: an archetypal symbol of human community. In an age of growing despair in the face of climate crises, *Stray Pilot* offers a passionate environmental allegory with a positive message of constructive hope: a love song to all that is best in ordinary people.

Cover design by Tenebrae

Visit [bit.ly/StrayPilot](http://bit.ly/StrayPilot)

### About Elsewhen Press

Elsewhen Press is an independent publisher of Speculative Fiction. Based in the UK, in the South East of England, Elsewhen Press publishes titles in English, in digital and print editions, adopting a digital-first policy for most titles. Established in 2011, Elsewhen Press is an imprint of Alnpete Limited.

### Contact details:

Elsewhen Press contact: Al Murray on +44 (0) 7956 233402 email: [al@elsewhen.co.uk](mailto:al@elsewhen.co.uk)

Information about Elsewhen Press, authors, titles and past press releases can be obtained online from <https://elsewhen.press>

or through our Journolink Press Room <https://pressroom.journolink.com/elsewhen-press>

Interviews with authors can be arranged through Elsewhen Press, contact Al Murray, as above.

###