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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:10,600

It was October 30th, 1938, just past 8 o'clock at night.

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00:00:10,600 --> 00:00:18,400

CBS Radio interrupted its regular programming to announce that a strange flying machine had crashed at Grover's Mill, New Jersey.

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00:00:18,400 --> 00:00:24,400

Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt our program of dance music to bring you a special bulletin from the Intercontinental Radio News.

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00:00:24,400 --> 00:00:34,400

It is reported that at 8.50 p.m. a huge flaming object believed to be a meteorite fell on a farm in the neighborhood of Grover's Mill, New Jersey, 22 miles from France.

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00:00:34,400 --> 00:00:42,400

We now return you to the music of Ramon Roquello playing for you in the meridian room of the Park Slazer Hotel situated in downtown New York.

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00:00:45,400 --> 00:00:53,400

Moments later came the announcement that people approaching the object had been struck down by a mysterious death ray.

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00:00:53,400 --> 00:00:55,400

The invasion had begun.

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00:01:02,400 --> 00:01:11,400

Armed with their incredible war machines, these Martian invaders were destroying everything in their path. There would be no stopping this army.

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00:01:12,400 --> 00:01:21,400

It would take the Martian invaders no longer than an hour to conquer the entire world.

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00:01:21,400 --> 00:01:27,400

And the mastermind behind this devastating attack was the theatrical genius, Orson Welles.

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00:01:27,400 --> 00:01:33,400

Ladies and gentlemen, due to circumstances beyond our control, we are unable to continue the broadcast from Grover's Mill.

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00:02:12,400 --> 00:02:28,400

Since the early days of unidentified flying objects or UFOs, many people have wondered about the true origin of these sightings.

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00:02:28,400 --> 00:02:35,400

Could UFOs be a sign of external forces? Or does their mystique have a more sociological origin?

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00:02:35,400 --> 00:02:41,260

geological origin. How is it that UFOs have changed over the past 50 years from classic

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00:02:41,260 --> 00:02:47,360

flying saucers to ominous black triangles? The changes in stories of alien encounters

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00:02:47,360 --> 00:02:52,680

are even stronger proof of this evolution. Just a half century ago, aliens looked more

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00:02:52,680 --> 00:02:58,160

like goblins in spacesuits than small people with big bug eyes. How can we explain this

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00:02:58,160 --> 00:03:04,520

change in the way they look? In the last 50 years, there has been a noticeable evolution

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00:03:04,520 --> 00:03:12,520

in UFO phenomena. In the early 1950s, you had your basic flying saucer that had a tendency

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00:03:12,520 --> 00:03:19,560

to break down from time to time, like your trusty old Ford. Braver aliens would stop

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00:03:19,560 --> 00:03:28,800

and ask to borrow a screwdriver to repair their ship. The next big trends were alien

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00:03:28,800 --> 00:03:37,200

abductions and encounters with humanoids. Then in the early 1990s, there were waves

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00:03:37,200 --> 00:03:45,120

of triangle sightings. It seems that there has been an evolution in UFOs and aliens.

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00:03:45,120 --> 00:03:50,440

In actual fact, this evolution has a familiar ring to it, since aliens have evolved in science

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00:03:50,440 --> 00:03:55,440

fiction as well. In 1978, Bertrand Meilleuse, a philosopher

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00:03:55,560 --> 00:04:00,680

by trade, published a book that essentially revolutionized the way we think about UFOs

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00:04:00,680 --> 00:04:07,520

called Science Fiction et ce coup volant, literally science fiction and flying saucers.

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00:04:07,520 --> 00:04:11,400

In it, he made a connection between UFOs and science fiction that apparently no one else

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00:04:11,400 --> 00:04:16,880

had thought of. He compared flying saucer stories from after 1947 with popular science

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00:04:16,880 --> 00:04:23,200

fiction stories prior to 1947. He found many interesting similarities, such as saucer-shaped

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00:04:23,200 --> 00:04:29,840

objects, beams of light, small aliens with big heads, and abductions. It was all there

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00:04:29,840 --> 00:04:35,280

in science fiction. How do we explain such a coincidence? The most obvious answer is

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00:04:35,280 --> 00:04:40,520

that people who report UFO sightings must be avid readers of science fiction case closed.

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00:04:40,520 --> 00:04:44,760

But Meilleuse contended from the start that the answer is not as simple as that. He presented

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00:04:44,760 --> 00:04:49,160

a number of different hypotheses to explain the phenomenon, but the similarities between

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00:04:49,160 --> 00:04:54,200

the two just kept on growing over time. More recently, Michel Merge and authority on

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00:04:54,200 --> 00:04:59,120

the history of science fiction suggested that people who see UFOs are a bit like science

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00:04:59,120 --> 00:05:04,480

fiction writers. Their stories, which are at least partly fictional, are based on ideas

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00:05:04,480 --> 00:05:09,480

that they have already been exposed to. They are a product of their culture.

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00:05:09,480 --> 00:05:16,480

Proponents of this psychological theory were quick to adopt Michel Merge's book Alien Abduction,

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00:05:22,000 --> 00:05:27,000

published in 1995 over Bertrand Meilleuse's earlier works.

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00:05:27,000 --> 00:05:34,000

What I was trying to accomplish with that book was to put my observations down on paper.

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00:05:34,000 --> 00:05:40,080

The history of UFOs began in 1947. Books on UFOs had existed for twenty years before

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00:05:40,080 --> 00:05:46,200

that, which meant that American readers were already familiar with the concepts of discs-shaped

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00:05:46,200 --> 00:05:53,040

crafts flying saucers and small pilots with big heads, small pilots who abduct people.

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00:05:53,040 --> 00:05:57,320

It was all there in American science fiction magazines, so it could be said that these

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00:05:57,320 --> 00:06:03,600

alien stories were all simply based on these fictional models. For example, science fiction

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00:06:03,680 --> 00:06:10,040

introduced the idea of men in black, who are now a well-known phenomenon in UFO circles.

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00:06:10,040 --> 00:06:15,480

They are often suspected of being aliens in disguise who visit and harass UFO witnesses.

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00:06:15,480 --> 00:06:21,840

As early as 1930, a document by Fortean Edmund Hamilton described one of these beings disguised

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00:06:21,840 --> 00:06:28,600

as a human going around abducting or killing people because they knew too much. You get

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00:06:28,600 --> 00:06:34,360

the general idea. So you see there are distinct correlations between American fiction of the

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00:06:34,360 --> 00:06:40,880

1920s and 30s and UFO stories reported later on. That being said, there is no way of knowing

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00:06:40,880 --> 00:06:45,880

precisely how the transference occurred. It would take a highly specialized sociological

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00:06:45,880 --> 00:06:52,880

study that for all intents and purposes would be next to impossible to conduct today.

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00:06:53,880 --> 00:07:00,480

So to what extent could aliens in science fiction have actually influenced the accounts

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00:07:00,480 --> 00:07:07,240

of UFO sightings? Do people subconsciously draw on science fiction folklore to embellish

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00:07:07,240 --> 00:07:14,120

their stories? Or do they really experience what they claim? Some extraordinary technological

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00:07:14,120 --> 00:07:19,760

advances were made at the end of the 19th century, including the telephone, gramophone,

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00:07:19,760 --> 00:07:26,760

diesel engine, x-rays, and the radio. In 1886, Jules Verne wrote Robert the Conqueror,

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00:07:27,800 --> 00:07:33,040

a novel in which the hero travels the world in an amazing flying machine, a cross between

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00:07:33,040 --> 00:07:38,320

a boat and a blimp. At about the same time, strange objects began to appear in the sky

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00:07:38,320 --> 00:07:43,520

over the United States. It was the dawn of airships, flying machines that looked more

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00:07:43,520 --> 00:07:48,440

like dirigibles than spaceships. While some people saw this coincidence as an uncanny

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00:07:48,440 --> 00:07:57,080

parallel to science fiction, others saw it differently. When discussing the influence

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00:07:57,080 --> 00:08:02,680

of science fiction on UFO sightings, people will often bring up the wave of airships over

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00:08:02,680 --> 00:08:09,680

the United States in 1897. During the Great Airship, as it was known, one or more objects

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00:08:10,320 --> 00:08:17,320

were seen flying over the country. Some people even claimed to have met the occupants. Rationalists

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00:08:18,320 --> 00:08:24,320

pointed to Robert the Conqueror and other futuristic novels as sci-fi novels were known

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00:08:24,800 --> 00:08:31,800

back then, saying that they had influenced journalists to create these tall tales, which

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00:08:32,040 --> 00:08:39,040

was probably true in some cases. But literature wasn't the main cause of the wave. There

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00:08:39,200 --> 00:08:46,200

was just something in the air at the time. Patents were being issued for inventions that

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00:08:47,840 --> 00:08:54,840

bore a striking resemblance to the strange flying machines of the day. Machines made

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00:08:54,840 --> 00:09:01,840

with Victorian technology, not just nuts and bolts, but heavy-duty hardware. These were

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00:09:02,600 --> 00:09:09,600

machines that should not have been able to fly at all. Still, people claimed to have

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00:09:12,680 --> 00:09:19,680

seen giant steel cylinders with paddle wheels flying in the skies. Very strange indeed.

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00:09:19,680 --> 00:09:26,680

We need to consider the possibility that people really did see these older UFOs. This is a

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00:09:27,160 --> 00:09:34,160

subject that has always been of great interest to me, because these sightings occurred before

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00:09:35,080 --> 00:09:42,080

1947. Before man had begun to fly, before the invention of any aviation technology.

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00:09:42,840 --> 00:09:49,840

And I guess it's entirely possible that people found old pictures from that era and touched

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00:09:50,840 --> 00:09:57,840

them up, claiming that they showed what was seen in the sky at the time. Maybe that's

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00:09:58,960 --> 00:10:04,960

how we ended up with those pictures of flying cigars or hovering discs taken from unusual

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00:10:04,960 --> 00:10:11,960

angles. So were these stories made up or just a sign of the times? The debate continues.

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00:10:11,960 --> 00:10:16,320

There are countless examples, starting with the so-called abduction of Betty and Barney

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00:10:16,320 --> 00:10:23,320

Hill in 1961. In her account given mostly under hypnosis, Betty Hill reported that she

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00:10:23,320 --> 00:10:28,920

had undergone a pregnancy test that involved inserting a long needle into her navel. There

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00:10:28,920 --> 00:10:33,600

is a scene that is practically identical in *Invaders from Mars*, a science fiction movie

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00:10:33,600 --> 00:10:40,600

that came out in 1953, eight years before the Hill ordeal. In addition to the pregnancy

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00:10:40,880 --> 00:10:47,400

test, *Invaders from Mars* also depicted extraterrestrials using radio transmitter implants to control

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00:10:47,400 --> 00:10:53,040

the minds of their victims. There was no mention of implants in UFO stories from the 1940s

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00:10:53,040 --> 00:11:00,040

and 50s, but they became incredibly popular during the 1980s. Can we just chalk up these

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00:11:00,320 --> 00:11:05,000

abduction stories to the influence of science fiction in the media? Could it be that some

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00:11:05,000 --> 00:11:12,000

abductions are genuine, while others are imaginary? I guess you could say that the issue here

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00:11:13,040 --> 00:11:17,640

is whether some abductions are authentic and some are just hoaxes and delusions. We live

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00:11:17,640 --> 00:11:22,760

in a world of mass culture. If we're a European or Canadian, we are very influenced by American

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00:11:22,760 --> 00:11:27,520

mass culture. Let's not forget that thousands of stories have been influencing people since

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00:11:27,520 --> 00:11:34,520

the 1920s and 30s. Plus, there were all those sci-fi movies from the 1950s depicting alien

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00:11:34,600 --> 00:11:41,600

Asians. Even American cartoons featured aliens. That's a lot of exposure to the idea of aliens.

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00:11:43,240 --> 00:11:48,840

And I think that people's minds just got saturated. To put it in visual terms, it's like we're

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00:11:48,840 --> 00:11:53,720

living in a big fish tank, so it seems to me that it must be difficult to distinguish between

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00:11:53,720 --> 00:11:59,080

a fake abduction and a genuine one. I think that as soon as potential scenarios are presented,

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00:11:59,160 --> 00:12:05,040

it's good enough for me personally. It may not be as simple as that. While some people

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00:12:05,040 --> 00:12:12,040

attach a deep significance to these connections, others see them as mere coincidences. There

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00:12:12,720 --> 00:12:19,720

is no doubt in my mind that the witnesses experienced the events as real. You see, for the most

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00:12:20,720 --> 00:12:25,920

part, they're just honest people. Giving their version of something, they really think happened

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00:12:25,920 --> 00:12:32,920

to them. They believe that their interpretation is the honest to God truth. Their stories

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00:12:36,040 --> 00:12:41,760

are not pure fiction, although there are definite similarities between the accounts they give

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00:12:41,760 --> 00:12:46,720

and some elements of science fiction. But then again, you can find pretty much everything

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00:12:46,720 --> 00:12:51,920

in science fiction. What I find interesting and what, in my opinion, theorists like Michel

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00:12:51,920 --> 00:12:57,520

Murgé have not been able to fully explain is why science fiction only influences certain

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00:12:57,520 --> 00:13:04,520

aspects of witness accounts. Why are descriptions of aliens always the same in every story?

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00:13:08,160 --> 00:13:13,760

Why is it that the bug-eyed monsters of 1930s science fiction have caught on, but not any

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00:13:13,760 --> 00:13:19,920

other space monsters? Why doesn't anyone ever see little green men? Why do aliens perform

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00:13:19,920 --> 00:13:25,240

the exact same tests every time? These types of questions are fundamental, but neither

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00:13:25,240 --> 00:13:32,240

school of thought has been able to answer them yet.

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00:13:33,640 --> 00:13:40,640

Curiously enough, the theory that UFOs originated in science fiction was most popular in Europe

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00:13:41,200 --> 00:13:48,200

and particularly in France. The science fiction community is a lot like the ufology community.

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00:13:49,200 --> 00:13:55,200

Science fiction isn't considered total trash, but then again, it certainly isn't considered

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00:13:55,200 --> 00:14:02,200

in the same league as classic literature or film. The science fiction community has the

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00:14:02,840 --> 00:14:09,840

same problem gaining recognition as the ufology community. Somewhere along the way, science

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00:14:10,200 --> 00:14:17,200

fiction writers came to be known as myth makers, a role they were all too pleased to assume.

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00:14:18,760 --> 00:14:23,440

But this seemed to occur only in Europe. For some reason, it never made its way across

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00:14:23,440 --> 00:14:30,440

the ocean to the United States, where sci-fi writers never talk about that theory.

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00:14:34,280 --> 00:14:39,160

As a matter of fact, even though the United States is quite large, science fiction magazines

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00:14:39,160 --> 00:14:44,040

were not really as popular as Michel Murgers would lead us to believe. In order for us to

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00:14:44,040 --> 00:14:47,860

believe that they were the original source of myths, they would have had to have been

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00:14:47,860 --> 00:14:53,600

extremely popular, which has not been proven.

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00:14:53,600 --> 00:14:59,000

You have to consider that in the 1920s and 30s, especially in the U.S., there were entire

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00:14:59,000 --> 00:15:03,880

commissions in charge of protecting the youth from violence, or aliens, or anything else

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00:15:03,880 --> 00:15:09,760

that might give them nightmares. In all likelihood, it was just another form of censorship. In

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00:15:09,760 --> 00:15:14,680

other words, it was thought to be in their youth's best interest to keep them from being

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00:15:14,680 --> 00:15:21,040

exposed to those magazines. I suppose that this may partly explain their lack of popularity

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00:15:21,040 --> 00:15:27,040

during that period. And it's also important to remember that there were major differences

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00:15:27,040 --> 00:15:34,040

between the literature aimed at youth and the literature aimed at adults back then.

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00:15:35,040 --> 00:15:40,600

Long before there were reports of UFO landings, aliens had infiltrated society through science

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00:15:40,600 --> 00:15:46,040

fiction. Today, some people credit science fiction with having created part of our UFO

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00:15:46,040 --> 00:15:51,560

knowledge base, specifically with regards to alien abductions. But still, the sci-fi

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00:15:51,560 --> 00:15:56,360

culture remains on the fringes of society. Is it possible that this culture could have

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00:15:56,360 --> 00:16:01,680

been responsible for one of the most surprising phenomena of the 20th century? Just as UFO

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00:16:01,680 --> 00:16:06,800

literature took ideas from science fiction, likewise science fiction took ideas from UFO

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00:16:06,800 --> 00:16:13,160

literature. Series like the X-Files and movies like Close Encounters of the Third Kind borrowed

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00:16:13,160 --> 00:16:19,160

extensively from UFO literature. It boils down to the age-old debate of the chicken and the egg.

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00:16:19,160 --> 00:16:25,280

If we look back at when aliens first began to appear in science fiction, one of the first

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00:16:25,280 --> 00:16:32,280

things that comes to mind is H. G. Wells' novel *The War of the Worlds*, written in 1898.

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00:16:33,520 --> 00:16:40,120

In that book, aliens invaded London, England. But there was no widespread alien invasion

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00:16:40,120 --> 00:16:47,360

in literature at the time. It would still be a few more years before they would really

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00:16:47,360 --> 00:16:54,280

become popular. It wasn't until around the mid-1920s or perhaps early 1930s that pop

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00:16:54,320 --> 00:17:02,320

magazines began to appear on magazine stands throughout America. That's when people's

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00:17:02,320 --> 00:17:08,240

imaginations really started to take off. It was relatively easy to get stories published

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00:17:08,240 --> 00:17:14,520

in those magazines. Aliens at that time were invaders or big, ugly creatures out to harm

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00:17:14,520 --> 00:17:21,520

humans. In futuristic novels, on the other hand, they were portrayed as travelers and

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00:17:21,680 --> 00:17:28,680

explorers. That's when the whole phenomenon really began to develop. There were the inventions

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00:17:28,680 --> 00:17:34,680

at the turn of the century, plus the industrial and technological revolutions. Authors back

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00:17:34,680 --> 00:17:41,680

then had far-fetched ideas, although reality seeped in now and then. Seeds were being planted

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00:17:43,440 --> 00:17:49,600

for the television, the laser, and the whole telecommunications industry. In the beginning,

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00:17:49,680 --> 00:17:55,560

aliens didn't have much in the way of a personality. They were just big, ugly monsters. Then eventually,

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00:17:55,560 --> 00:18:01,360

in the 1940s and 50s, they began to evolve with writer Philippe Josée Farmère, who tried

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00:18:01,360 --> 00:18:07,680

to portray them as having a personality. He also tried to portray intergalactic relations

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00:18:07,680 --> 00:18:14,920

between earthlings and extraterrestrials. So basically, that was how aliens and UFOs

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00:18:14,960 --> 00:18:21,280

evolved early in the 20th century. Then along came the comic book, which introduced us to

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00:18:21,280 --> 00:18:27,440

the most famous extraterrestrial evolved Superman, protector of the human race. Superheroes

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00:18:27,440 --> 00:18:33,440

are a whole other aspect of aliens that we mustn't forget. In the United States, science

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00:18:33,440 --> 00:18:40,440

fiction appeared primarily in cheap magazines, known as pulp magazines, or pups for short.

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00:18:40,520 --> 00:18:46,680

The first one to become popular was Argusy, which came out in 1896. But the real wave

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00:18:46,680 --> 00:18:53,680

of pop popularity was between 1923 and 1926. They were around for about half of the 1920s.

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00:18:53,760 --> 00:18:59,240

The first one that was really of the science fiction genre was written by Hugo Gensbach,

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00:18:59,240 --> 00:19:05,000

a Luxembourg immigrant living in the United States. He was a big fan of technology, which

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00:19:05,000 --> 00:19:10,240

he used as material for his first sci-fi pop magazine called Amazing Stories. He also

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00:19:10,280 --> 00:19:16,800

created a fantasy series called Weird Tales. What followed was that most, if not all well

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00:19:16,800 --> 00:19:22,640

known American science fiction writers, ended up contributing stories to pulp magazines,

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00:19:22,640 --> 00:19:29,240

which earned their name from the poor quality of the paper that they were printed on. You

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00:19:29,240 --> 00:19:36,240

could still see bits of pulp in the paper itself. This is where the space operas originated.

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00:19:36,480 --> 00:19:43,480

There were grandiose stories about invasions and the valiant heroes who stopped them, heroes

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00:19:43,480 --> 00:19:50,480

like Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers and Doc Savage. Not only did they have their own pulp magazines,

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00:19:53,600 --> 00:19:58,000

but they also appeared in other series as well. They fended off evil invaders who were

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00:19:58,000 --> 00:20:03,760

threatening to oppress smaller territories and planets. There were simple adventure stories,

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00:20:03,800 --> 00:20:09,120

nothing more. The most exotic thing about them was probably the costumes and the appearance

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00:20:09,120 --> 00:20:15,240

of the characters. The pulp's heyday was really in the 1930s, but it all came to an end in

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00:20:15,240 --> 00:20:20,280

the early 1950s, with the advent of television and driving movie theaters along with new

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00:20:20,280 --> 00:20:27,080

technology and media. At that point, science fiction moved more into paperback novels,

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00:20:27,080 --> 00:20:32,880

and pop magazines virtually disappeared. Still, they are an important part of the legacy of

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00:20:32,920 --> 00:20:38,760

science fiction literature, because they were more or less where it all began, and everyone

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00:20:38,760 --> 00:20:44,160

was involved in them. Later on, sci-fi buffs got together and founded fan clubs all over

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00:20:44,160 --> 00:20:50,440

the world, which in some ways paralleled the pulp magazines. They carried on the tradition

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00:20:50,440 --> 00:20:56,640

of science fiction and kept the big name authors on a cultural radar. In the wake of World War

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00:20:56,640 --> 00:21:02,520

II, science fiction gained a new audience through movies and television. Flying saucers

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00:21:02,560 --> 00:21:06,720

could be seen in theaters throughout America, just when it was too worried about a Soviet

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00:21:06,720 --> 00:21:11,760

invasion to be concerned about a Martian one. All that really mattered was that these visitors

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00:21:11,760 --> 00:21:18,440

from outer space were a moneymaker. Pulp basically fell off the face of the earth in the 1950s,

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00:21:18,440 --> 00:21:25,280

when they were replaced with television and movies. There were a few juvenile TV shows

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00:21:25,280 --> 00:21:31,520

like Space Rangers, but basically movies played a bigger role in teaching the public about aliens.

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00:21:33,520 --> 00:21:39,760

In previous decades, things had been more subtle. There had been more mad scientists and

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00:21:39,760 --> 00:21:45,600

vampires. Then in the 1950s, we had these big Hollywood productions like Forbidden Planet

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00:21:45,600 --> 00:21:52,640

and The Thing that really tried to depict first contact between humans and aliens. These movies

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00:21:52,640 --> 00:21:57,720

were a disaster. Aliens were either totally misunderstood or they were portrayed as some

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00:21:57,760 --> 00:22:03,080

kind of a threat. Directors came up with all kinds of characters, scenarios and planets.

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00:22:03,080 --> 00:22:10,480

Television also picked up on the trend. Countless series came out, especially Saturday morning

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00:22:10,480 --> 00:22:16,960

cartoons like Space Ghost. The movie industry found that it could make a profit from movies

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00:22:16,960 --> 00:22:24,320

about aliens. So directors began cranking out a whole series of low-budget films. A lot of

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00:22:24,360 --> 00:22:29,240

studios figured that they could make a quick buck out of the alien fad. So they started working

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00:22:29,240 --> 00:22:34,200

with plastic models of aliens. It soon became a global trend, popping up in Italy, Japan,

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00:22:34,200 --> 00:22:39,280

everywhere. There weren't too many movies trying to make a statement, with the possible exception

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00:22:39,280 --> 00:22:47,400

of a few American films in the early 1950s. The influence of science fiction can also be seen

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00:22:47,480 --> 00:22:53,320

in the messages received by contactees in the 1950s. In *The Day the Earth Stood Still*,

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00:22:53,320 --> 00:22:58,680

Klaatu, an alien played by Michael Rennie, claimed that he had come to warn man against his

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00:22:58,680 --> 00:23:04,680

aggressive ways. Less than a year later, a man named George Adamski revealed that an alien from

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00:23:04,680 --> 00:23:10,360

the planet Venus had come to him to warn him about humanity's hostile tendencies. Just like

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00:23:10,360 --> 00:23:15,400

Adamski's claims, science fiction movies began to reflect the concerns of society at the time.

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00:23:16,400 --> 00:23:22,000

There is a kind of symbolism in science fiction if you look at the way films have evolved over the

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00:23:22,000 --> 00:23:28,040

years. For instance, in the 1950s there were a lot of movies about invasions that paralleled the

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00:23:28,040 --> 00:23:34,040

social climate of that decade. Think back to the McCarthy era and all the witch hunts. Communism

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00:23:34,040 --> 00:23:40,200

was rampant. It was all about rooting out the Reds. That's why the planet Mars, the Red Planet,

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00:23:40,200 --> 00:23:45,000

was often used to represent the enemy. Red Planet, Red Army, they were all the same during the

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00:23:45,080 --> 00:23:51,160

Cold War. Political tensions were starting to subside by the time Star Trek came on the scene.

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00:23:52,200 --> 00:23:58,200

And Star Trek's mission and message were much more peaceful. The show reflected the political

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00:23:58,200 --> 00:24:04,600

climate. People were watching what was happening in Vietnam and what was going on in Iran with

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00:24:04,600 --> 00:24:10,120

Ayatollahomeini. So there have always been trends that follow the world political situation.

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00:24:11,080 --> 00:24:16,360

Then along came ET in 1982 and all of a sudden aliens could be funny.

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00:24:18,760 --> 00:24:23,960

There were TV shows with aliens on them, like that furry little guy, Alf, who was taken in by an

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00:24:23,960 --> 00:24:30,280

Earth family. There were other shows like it as well. Media have always shifted in cycles. Today

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00:24:30,280 --> 00:24:36,040

we have both good aliens and bad aliens. The same thing goes for vampires. It's just a big cycle,

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00:24:36,120 --> 00:24:38,840

and it all depends on the social conditions of the time.

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00:24:42,040 --> 00:24:47,160

In hindsight, it's much easier to spot the connections, like in the case of Adamsky's visitor

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00:24:47,160 --> 00:24:53,160

from Venus and the alien in the day the Earth stood still, or the implants that so-called abductees

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00:24:53,160 --> 00:24:58,520

talk about. And the device is used in invaders from Mars. But is this enough to claim that a

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00:24:58,520 --> 00:25:04,120

phenomenon as complicated as UFOs is the direct result of aliens appearing in the media?

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00:25:06,440 --> 00:25:14,360

It seems a little far-fetched to me because, unfortunately, and I say unfortunately because

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00:25:14,360 --> 00:25:19,160

I'm a big fan of science fiction literature myself, it simply isn't all that important

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00:25:19,160 --> 00:25:26,520

in the great scheme of things. In 1947, there was only American sci-fi that was known worldwide,

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00:25:27,400 --> 00:25:32,840

and it wasn't that popular even in the United States. Science fiction magazine sales were 10

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00:25:32,840 --> 00:25:38,360

to 20 times lower than adventure and western magazines. Movies weren't around yet. Sci-fi

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00:25:38,360 --> 00:25:43,160

literature was generally geared towards juvenile adolescents and comic book readers. It never

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00:25:43,160 --> 00:25:50,120

reached the same mythical proportions as the western did in America. It's just not logical

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00:25:50,120 --> 00:25:54,760

that it would have created a myth that suddenly swept through the country. If it had been something

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00:25:54,760 --> 00:26:00,520

out of a western, that might have made a little more sense. Science fiction crept gradually into

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00:26:00,520 --> 00:26:06,680

society. You could see it in the movies of the 1950s and 60s, where there were a lot of flying

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00:26:06,680 --> 00:26:15,560

saucers. Industry was just following popular trends. If UFOs hadn't been so popular, they wouldn't

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00:26:15,560 --> 00:26:23,480

have appeared on the silver screen. There were few, if any, screenplays that depicted UFO sightings

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00:26:23,480 --> 00:26:30,040

as they were reported. The basic plot line stayed the same, but flying saucers were added for

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00:26:30,760 --> 00:26:39,080

theatrics. Earth versus the Flying Saucers is a classic example of Hollywood theatrics

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00:26:39,080 --> 00:26:46,360

loosely reflecting reality. Filmed in 1956, this movie depicted aliens attacking Washington,

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00:26:46,360 --> 00:26:52,680

D.C., and destroying the Washington Monument and the dome of the Capitol Building. The film came

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00:26:52,680 --> 00:26:59,880

out four years after the famous Washington Carousel incident. In July 1952, UFOs were seen flying

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00:26:59,880 --> 00:27:06,120

over the nation's Capitol. This event received more media coverage than any other in UFO history.

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00:27:06,120 --> 00:27:11,800

The closing scene of the movie was obviously inspired by the events of 1952, yet another

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00:27:11,800 --> 00:27:17,560

example of art imitating life. The truth is that the psychological theory is nothing more than a

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00:27:17,560 --> 00:27:23,880

caricature of real UFO incidents. Some say that Betty Hill was merely influenced by the movie

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00:27:23,880 --> 00:27:30,200

Invaders from Mars. If that's so, then what about the radar echoes? On the night the couple claims

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00:27:30,200 --> 00:27:35,560

to have been abducted, two unidentified radar echoes were reported for the same time in sector

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00:27:35,560 --> 00:27:40,840

as those described by the Hills. It's plausible that the Hills were influenced by science fiction,

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00:27:40,840 --> 00:27:46,280

but it's a lot harder to believe that military radar could have been. Proponents of the psychosocial

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00:27:46,280 --> 00:27:51,960

theory ignore any physical evidence, choosing to speak of UFOs only in terms of apparitions.

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00:27:52,040 --> 00:27:56,520

They also believe that witnesses are so impressionable that it's next to impossible to find any

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00:27:56,520 --> 00:28:01,960

objective evidence in their stories. In their minds, simply showing a science fiction movie

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00:28:01,960 --> 00:28:07,800

might be enough to set off a rash of UFO sightings. For investigators in the field, however, this is

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00:28:07,800 --> 00:28:18,120

just not true. It seems that there were a lot more UFO sightings reported in the past than there

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00:28:18,120 --> 00:28:24,840

are these days. The 1970s are a perfect example, because there were a great deal more sightings

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00:28:24,840 --> 00:28:30,680

per year throughout that decade. To give you a better idea of what that means, today we get

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00:28:30,680 --> 00:28:38,360

about 50 sightings reported every year. Back in the 70s, we were getting well over 100 sightings

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00:28:38,360 --> 00:28:45,240

every year. Specifically, there were a lot of reports classified under Category D, events that

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00:28:45,240 --> 00:28:51,320

remained unexplained given the data provided in the account. Basically, there are no conclusive

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00:28:51,320 --> 00:28:56,280

findings in all of this. Some people have tried to claim that when movies appear like

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00:28:56,280 --> 00:29:01,640

E.T., close encounters of the third kind or more recently Independence Day and Mars attack,

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00:29:02,440 --> 00:29:09,080

the number of UFO sightings increases. That's just not true. Statistics show that there is no

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00:29:09,080 --> 00:29:14,920

correlation whatsoever between movies or television shows about aliens and the number of UFO sightings

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00:29:14,920 --> 00:29:24,840

reported. In actual fact, what happens most of the time is that a person comes face to face

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00:29:24,840 --> 00:29:30,840

with something that they do not understand and they contact the police in the hopes of getting

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00:29:30,840 --> 00:29:37,400

an answer to the mystery. Of all the sightings that are reported, practically none of them turn

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00:29:37,400 --> 00:29:43,480

out to be hoax. I would say maybe one hoax per thousand cases reported.

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00:29:56,520 --> 00:30:02,040

And the influence of sci-fi on witness accounts appears to be much less significant than supporters

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00:30:02,040 --> 00:30:12,200

of the psychosocial theory would have us believe. When you thoroughly examine UFO accounts,

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00:30:12,200 --> 00:30:19,720

you can see that science fiction literature has no direct influence on them. You can tell that

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00:30:19,720 --> 00:30:26,280

these people truly want to know more about something that they experienced or saw, but which somehow

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00:30:26,280 --> 00:30:33,160

eludes them. It's pretty easy to notice when a person is intentionally trying to inject their own

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00:30:33,160 --> 00:30:43,240

beliefs into their account. In my opinion, these accounts are something spontaneous that results

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00:30:43,240 --> 00:30:56,120

from self-questioning. Of course, there's always the possibility that the media is promoting a

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00:30:56,200 --> 00:31:02,520

much less noble cause. While some people see the media as creators of myths, others think the

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00:31:02,520 --> 00:31:08,520

opposite. In their view, which borders on paranoia, the film industry is controlled by authorities

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00:31:08,520 --> 00:31:14,920

who want to use science fiction movies to prepare the population for the terrifying reality of alien

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00:31:14,920 --> 00:31:21,400

contact. At least that's what a lot of conspiracy theorists tend to believe. According to them,

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00:31:21,400 --> 00:31:25,800

this is what the powers that be need to do in order to prevent a war of the worlds.

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00:31:27,960 --> 00:31:34,680

On October 30th, 1938, the Mercury Theatre Company gathered in the studios of the Columbia Broadcasting

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00:31:34,680 --> 00:31:40,920

System, or CBS as it's known in New York, to broadcast an adaptation of H. G. Wells' novel

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00:31:40,920 --> 00:31:46,840

The War of the Worlds. Published in 1898, the novel described Mars' invasion of Earth.

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00:31:47,560 --> 00:31:54,760

Overseeing, the production was 23-year-old Orson Wells. In his adaptation, Wells changed the story

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00:31:54,760 --> 00:32:00,680

into a series of news flashes, inspired in part by Herb Morrison, a journalist who had reported

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00:32:00,680 --> 00:32:07,400

live on the Hindenburg disaster one year earlier. I can't talk to people who spend their time there.

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00:32:08,280 --> 00:32:23,160

Let's go back to 1938. We need to remember the climate of the time. For starters, there had been

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00:32:23,160 --> 00:32:30,680

the stock market crash in 1929, World War I had ended fairly recently, and there were rumors of

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00:32:30,680 --> 00:32:37,800

another war brewing in Europe. Amidst all this, Wells decided to stage a Martian landing on Earth.

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00:32:38,840 --> 00:32:45,720

The story developed gradually over the course of the broadcast. So, it was Halloween night in

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00:32:45,720 --> 00:32:53,080

the fall of 1938, and Orson Wells was presenting this play. It had been advertised in the newspapers

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00:32:53,080 --> 00:32:57,640

a few times, and during the broadcast itself there were three or four announcements indicating

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00:32:57,640 --> 00:32:59,640

that it was only a play.

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00:33:13,080 --> 00:33:19,400

It was set up as a sort of show within a show, appearing to be a big band music program.

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00:33:19,800 --> 00:33:25,240

The music program was interrupted, saying that activity had been noticed on the planet Mars,

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00:33:25,240 --> 00:33:29,160

but they weren't too sure what was happening, and listeners should stay tuned.

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00:33:33,160 --> 00:33:38,680

Ladies and gentlemen, we interrupt our program of dance music to bring you a special bulletin from the

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00:33:38,680 --> 00:33:43,480

Intercontinental Radio News. At 20 minutes before 8 central time, Professor Farrell of the Mount

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00:33:43,480 --> 00:33:49,320

Gennings Observatory, Chicago, Illinois reports observing several explosions of incandescent gas

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00:33:49,960 --> 00:33:56,040

on the planet Mars. They continued to interrupt the music program with news flashes whenever

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00:33:56,040 --> 00:34:02,760

important information came in, just like the media do now. There were around six million listeners,

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00:34:02,760 --> 00:34:08,520

and they say that about one-sixth or a million of those people were genuinely frightened or

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00:34:08,520 --> 00:34:10,520

panicked by the show.

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00:34:10,520 --> 00:34:16,200

The metal casing is definitely extra-terrestrial. Not far from the friction with the earth's

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00:34:16,200 --> 00:34:19,400

atmosphere usually tears holes in the meteorite, just being a fool.

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00:34:19,400 --> 00:34:21,400

Mars, the Martian.

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00:34:21,400 --> 00:34:23,400

He's back! He's back! He's back! He's back!

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00:34:23,400 --> 00:34:25,400

He's not back! Oh my god.

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00:34:25,400 --> 00:34:27,400

What's the problem? Martians.

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00:34:29,400 --> 00:34:31,400

I'm gonna go home.

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00:34:36,040 --> 00:34:38,040

There's no line.

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00:34:38,040 --> 00:34:40,040

Try it again.

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00:34:41,000 --> 00:34:47,000

There's no line. I mean, it's real.

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00:34:55,000 --> 00:34:57,000

I think it's too...

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00:34:57,000 --> 00:34:59,000

Oh my gosh.

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00:34:59,960 --> 00:35:07,960

What's important about this broadcast is that it received huge media coverage afterwards,

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00:35:07,960 --> 00:35:13,480

and there were reports that people had actually gone to New Jersey to see if Martians had indeed

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00:35:13,480 --> 00:35:19,240

landed in that farmer's field. So many people reacted to the show that a study was published

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00:35:19,240 --> 00:35:27,240

a year or two later, referred to as the Cantrell study. In the week following the broadcast,

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00:35:27,480 --> 00:35:33,480

Hadley Cantrell interviewed four different categories of people, those who had listened

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00:35:33,480 --> 00:35:41,480

to the show, and figured out that it was just a fictional story, those who had listened

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00:35:41,480 --> 00:35:51,480

to the show, and had to check if it was real or not, had aliens really landed on earth.

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00:35:51,720 --> 00:35:59,720

And then there were the two other categories, people who tried to find out if it was real,

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00:35:59,720 --> 00:36:07,720

but who continued to listen as if it was, and people who blindly assumed that it was

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00:36:07,720 --> 00:36:11,720

real and made no attempts to find out for sure.

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00:36:11,720 --> 00:36:17,720

Cantrell's study, entitled The Invasion from Mars, was one of the first of its kind to

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00:36:17,720 --> 00:36:23,960

focus on the influence of media on popular beliefs.

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00:36:23,960 --> 00:36:29,480

You have to understand that what Cantrell's study shows is that there were a variety of

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00:36:29,480 --> 00:36:35,560

contributing factors. And there were the social and political climates that I already mentioned.

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00:36:36,600 --> 00:36:42,600

Plus, there were personal factors, such as a lack of critical thinking, which led to some

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00:36:42,600 --> 00:36:46,840

people's prejudices or instincts being influenced by this group of actors.

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00:36:49,160 --> 00:36:54,280

Also, depending on their level of education, some people could have been more gullible than

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00:36:54,280 --> 00:37:01,160

others, or at least more personally insecure. All of these personal factors still exist in

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00:37:01,160 --> 00:37:08,200

today's society. There are still people who are less secure, less informed, who listen to gossip,

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00:37:08,280 --> 00:37:15,240

etc. So are we really very different today than people were back then? There are probably

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00:37:15,240 --> 00:37:20,760

differences in the social and political climates now, although there are still a lot of similarities

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00:37:20,760 --> 00:37:26,920

between the two periods. We still hear talk of war, and we still see economic problems.

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00:37:27,800 --> 00:37:33,560

What has changed is the number of readily available information sources. What set this

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00:37:33,560 --> 00:37:38,920

study apart was that it did not focus on the power of the media, per se. Rather, it looked at

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00:37:38,920 --> 00:37:44,840

the psychological, sociological, and interpersonal aspects of people's reactions. It revealed that

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00:37:44,840 --> 00:37:48,840

our level of critical thinking can make a difference in whether or not we panic,

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00:37:48,840 --> 00:37:54,120

and to what degree we might be influenced by the media. In other words, whether the media has

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00:37:54,120 --> 00:38:03,480

enough power to make us think or do almost anything. What Cantrell concluded in his study

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00:38:03,480 --> 00:38:10,680

was proven repeatedly afterwards. An adaptation of Orson Welles' play aired twice in South America,

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00:38:10,680 --> 00:38:19,240

in Santiago, Chile in 1944, and in Quito, Ecuador in 1949. In both cases, the programming cited mass

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00:38:19,240 --> 00:38:25,000

hysteria. In Quito, when it was learned that the show was fictional, hundreds of angry listeners

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00:38:25,000 --> 00:38:30,760

set the radio station on fire. These violent reactions bolstered the argument of those who

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00:38:30,760 --> 00:38:36,840

believe that the use of aliens in mass media serves an educational purpose. Those people feel

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00:38:36,840 --> 00:38:42,360

that the panic experienced by radio listeners is a classic example of what would happen if the

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00:38:42,360 --> 00:38:50,120

government announced tomorrow that aliens had landed on earth. Something that always comes

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00:38:50,120 --> 00:38:55,800

up in discussions about UFOs and the media, something that dates back before UFOs were popular,

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00:38:56,600 --> 00:39:00,280

is the Orson Welles' production of the War of the Worlds in 1938.

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00:39:01,480 --> 00:39:07,480

It set off mass hysteria. The question is, what would happen if the government said,

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00:39:07,480 --> 00:39:13,800

it's true, they're here? Some say that people would react the same way today as they did back in 1938.

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00:39:16,360 --> 00:39:20,840

I think that in 1938, the effects of the Welles broadcast spiraled out of control.

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00:39:21,400 --> 00:39:26,520

It produced this heightened sense of panic, and there were people who honestly thought it was

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00:39:26,520 --> 00:39:31,880

real because they hadn't heard the announcement that it was just a play. The fact that there were

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00:39:31,880 --> 00:39:39,080

traffic jams and a mass hysteria throughout the entire state of New York, well, it's as if the

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00:39:39,080 --> 00:39:47,800

newspapers were in on it with CBS, the network that aired the program. Okay, so people fell for

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00:39:47,880 --> 00:39:55,480

this prank in 1938, although perhaps less than we may think. It happened again in France in 1946,

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00:39:56,120 --> 00:40:03,960

with Jean Nocher's Platforms-60, except in that case, the crisis was a nuclear war instead of an

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00:40:03,960 --> 00:40:12,120

alien invasion. In 1949, War of the Worlds was presented in Ecuador. When people there found

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00:40:12,120 --> 00:40:17,640

out that it wasn't real, they burned down the radio station. But nowadays, with the Internet,

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00:40:17,640 --> 00:40:22,440

it just wouldn't be the same. Soon, we'll all be at the point where we'll be getting news before

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00:40:22,440 --> 00:40:28,520

it even happens. The play worked back in Welles' day, because people couldn't just pick up a phone

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00:40:28,520 --> 00:40:34,040

and call Grover's Mill to find out if a Martian spaceship had really landed. These days, you

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00:40:34,040 --> 00:40:38,200

just have to click on the Internet and you instantly know what's real and what isn't.

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00:40:38,200 --> 00:40:42,760

Not to mention the number of television channels there are now. It would be pretty impossible to

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00:40:42,760 --> 00:40:47,240

pull off something like the War of the Worlds today. Then again, if the president were to appear on

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00:40:47,240 --> 00:40:52,200

television today and announce that aliens had landed, obviously it would be somewhat of a shock.

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00:40:52,920 --> 00:40:58,360

But it wouldn't cause mass hysteria like Orson Welles' play did. I don't see how that could

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00:40:58,360 --> 00:41:05,400

happen. There's just no argument for that theory. From the science fiction magazines of the 30s to

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00:41:05,400 --> 00:41:10,920

present-day movies like Signs, it's clear that a number of ideas have impacted on the collective

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00:41:10,920 --> 00:41:21,160

consciousness. But the media is only one part of the equation. Science fiction literature definitely

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00:41:21,160 --> 00:41:26,760

played a role in the 20s and 30s, and science fiction is still playing a role today. Just look

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00:41:26,760 --> 00:41:32,680

at the movie Signs from 2002. There's a definite interest in things that are strange out of the

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00:41:32,680 --> 00:41:37,880

ordinary. I'm not talking about everyone, but there are a lot of people that this applies to,

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00:41:37,880 --> 00:41:44,840

and I don't think that will ever change. I think to some degree, there's a demand for this kind

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00:41:44,840 --> 00:41:50,440

of thing. How well that demand is met is a different issue, but there's a definite fascination with

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00:41:50,440 --> 00:41:56,040

it. Earlier, we spoke of the impact of Orson Welles' play on South America when it aired down

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00:41:56,040 --> 00:42:01,000

there three years later. But we don't have to go as far as Chile or Ecuador to see how

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00:42:01,080 --> 00:42:07,880

fascinated people are by aliens. In 1980, a small community station outside of Montreal

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00:42:07,880 --> 00:42:13,800

announced that aliens had landed near Mont Saint-Hilaire, and some 800 people went to check it out.

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00:42:14,520 --> 00:42:21,800

That was in 1980, which is not that long ago. Science fiction may not fill a vital need,

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00:42:22,360 --> 00:42:28,280

but I think it fills a need that people have to fantasize. Some things that were mere fantasy

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00:42:28,280 --> 00:42:34,760

back in the 1930s and 40s have become reality in the new millennium, especially in the areas of

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00:42:34,760 --> 00:42:42,680

technology and transportation. There's a fine line between fact and fiction, and sometimes it's hard

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00:42:42,680 --> 00:42:52,920

to tell where the line begins and where it ends. The Cantrell studies show that the influence of

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00:42:52,920 --> 00:42:58,600

the media on our beliefs is a personal matter. Even if you support the theory that authorities

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00:42:58,600 --> 00:43:03,880

were trying to manipulate the population, it's a bit of a stretch to say that that alone could be

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00:43:03,880 --> 00:43:12,760

enough to convince the entire population that aliens exist. There are a lot of different

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00:43:12,760 --> 00:43:18,280

influences, and for people who allow it, the mass media can become a source of influence.

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00:43:19,000 --> 00:43:24,280

So, when they're in line at the grocery store and they read a headline about some Hollywood

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00:43:24,280 --> 00:43:30,120

celebrity being abducted by Martians, if they're already inclined to believe what's in the tabloids,

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00:43:30,120 --> 00:43:35,800

and if they read a lot about aliens and so on, seeing that headline might just be proof enough for them.

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00:43:35,800 --> 00:43:41,640

The media's job is to present the different issues of the day. It's up to us to figure out what's

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00:43:41,960 --> 00:43:47,960

true and what isn't. Hopefully, the majority of people still have some analytical abilities

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00:43:47,960 --> 00:43:53,880

and are capable of critical thinking. But given a situation where both the external and internal

400

00:43:53,880 --> 00:44:01,000

factors come into play, a person might experience confirmation bias and see what they want to believe.

401

00:44:04,440 --> 00:44:09,400

If UFOs are nothing but a myth born out of pop culture, then whatever happened to the monsters

402

00:44:09,480 --> 00:44:14,600

and robots of early sci-fi novels? And if the media was just a puppet used by the government to

403

00:44:14,600 --> 00:44:19,800

prepare the world for the big revelation that aliens are real, then its efforts were clearly

404

00:44:19,800 --> 00:44:26,040

in vain. The number of people who believe in aliens is about the same today as in 1950.

405

00:44:26,040 --> 00:44:31,800

Studying UFOs without taking pop culture into account would be an exercise in futility.

406

00:44:31,800 --> 00:44:36,440

You'd have to be blind to miss the remarkable coincidences between science fiction and the

407

00:44:36,440 --> 00:44:41,960

field of ufology. But you'd have to be just as blind to chalk up the whole UFO phenomenon

408

00:44:41,960 --> 00:44:47,080

to the single explanation that it comes from pop culture. The appearance of science fiction

409

00:44:47,080 --> 00:44:53,640

concepts in UFO stories doesn't teach us much about the UFO phenomenon itself, but it does tell us

410

00:44:53,640 --> 00:45:00,120

about the witnesses and how the media influences them. The trees shouldn't stop us from seeing the forest.

411

00:46:36,440 --> 00:46:37,180

you