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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: Abduction - The Issue Of Reality

From: Kevin Randle <[KRandle993@aol.com](mailto:KRandle993@aol.com)>  
Date: Sun, 7 Feb 1999 12:04:48 EST  
Fwd Date: Sun, 07 Feb 1999 15:05:54 -0500  
Subject: Re: Abduction - The Issue Of Reality

>From: Greg Sandow <[gsandow@prodigy.net](mailto:gsandow@prodigy.net)>  
>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <[updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)>  
>Subject: Re: Abduction - The Issue Of Reality  
>Date: Sat, 6 Feb 1999 22:02:15 -0500

>>From: Kevin Randle <[KRandle993@aol.com](mailto:KRandle993@aol.com)>  
>>Date: Sat, 6 Feb 1999 09:44:20 EST  
>>To: [updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)  
>>Subject: Re: Abduction - The Issue Of Reality

>>Given the timing, I did try to find out when Mars Needs Women  
>>was circulated in the Midwest by reading the newspaper ads in  
>>1966. Given the promotion of films in that era, that is, large  
>>newspaper ads when the films changed (usually in midweek), it is  
>>possible that Schirmer didn't see the movie, but saw the ads.

>>And how do you prove that a particular presentation wasn't  
>>available to a specific witness? In this case, it is possible  
>>that Schirmer didn't see the movie and could tell us that he  
>>didn't see it. But, does that mean he didn't see the ads for it  
>>in the newspaper? That he didn't walk by the theater and see the  
>>posters out front displaying the Martians and their headgear?  
>>Could it be that he noticed something from the pop culture that,  
>>for some reason, stuck in his mind and then, under the influence  
>>of hypnosis, recalled that detail?

>But this is exactly the problem, Kevin, as Jerry and Mark and I  
>keep pointing out. Questions like these can always be asked.  
>You're demonstrating that there's no way to falsify any argument  
>that Herb Schirmer got his alien from the movie you cite. And  
>since there's no way to falsify it, how can the claim be proved?  
>(And no -- I'm not saying pop culture has no influence. I'm  
>saying that it's hard to pin most UFO events to any particular  
>pop-culture stimulus.)

Then we seem to be in agreement. Pop culture can influence the  
UFO phenomena, which is all I was saying. No, we can't falsify  
the argument, which is what I was saying. That was it. Not that  
Schirmer saw Mars Needs Women, or that he saw the ads, only, in  
that time frame, the movie was out, and the alien he drew  
resembles the aliens from the movie. An interesting coincidence,  
but that's why they call them coincidences.

>To put it differently -- what would convince you that Schirmer  
>\_didn't\_ get his alien from the movie? That is, what would  
>convince you apart from a completely different description of  
>the alien? You have to grant, I hope you'll agree, at least the

>slight possibility that somebody might genuinely meet an alien  
>resembling one in a movie. So, given that possibility, what  
>would convince you that there wasn't any media influence?  
(Short >of Schirmer having been raised by wolves, so he never  
saw any >movies, movie trailers, ads for movies, or anything  
else in our >culture.)

I never said that Schirmer got his inspiration from the movie,  
only that he could have. I never said that I was convinced that  
this was the source of his alien description, only that it could  
be.

>There's an additional problem with all of this that just occurred  
>to me, courtesy of Peter Brookesmith, who helpfully posted  
>Martin Kottmeyer's article on similar details in abduction  
>cases. Kottmeyer points out that, in the cases he's discussing,  
>the alleged similarities aren't as apparent to him as they were  
>to John Carpenter and other abduction investigators. Some, in  
>his not unconvincing view, required a leap of faith.

>Isn't it interesting, then, that Kottmeyer has argued more  
>strongly and in more detail than anyone else for the influence  
>of media on abduction narratives? He must spend half his life  
>reading ancient science fiction comics, and seeing wonderfully  
>bad old monster movies. Give him an abduction story, and he'll  
>find something resembling it somewhere in a movie my video store  
>hasn't even heard of.

>What he doesn't seem to understand is that -- just as with the  
>abduction details he dissects -- many of these resemblances are  
>matters of opinion. Abduction aliens have big eyes; aliens in a  
>movie he's seen have big eyes; the big eyes in fact look quite  
>different in the two cases, but that doesn't seem to bother  
>Kottmeyer a bit. He has a double standard, in other words. When  
>he's looking at abduction details, such differences matter a lot  
>to him; when he's arguing for media influence on abduction  
>accounts, the differences don't register.

>To return to you, Kevin, my point here is that there are  
>substantial differences -- both in specific details and in the  
>larger context in which images appear -- between the science  
>fiction movies you and Kottmeyer cite (not that I'm saying you  
>and he always think alike). Again, I'm not denying that media  
>influence abductees or anyone else. But media influence isn't  
>random, and can't -- at least not if we want to be at all  
>scientific -- be invoked as some catch-all explanation. Social  
>scientists (notably absent from this debate about abduction  
>imagery) need to specify the rules that media influence might  
>follow, before we can responsibly say that media influenced  
>anything in particular, unless the causal connection (as  
>opposed to mere resemblance) is absolutely obvious.

While Kottmeyer might be saying this, it is not a theory to  
which I subscribe. My point has always been that pop culture  
does exert influences on us every day and if we are going to  
understand abductions we cannot simply reject this idea. We can  
see many parallels between abductions and the pop culture, (many  
of them in well known movies easily obtainable in a video  
store). But, as you point out, these similarities might be the  
result of coincidence and can be viewed as circumstantial. They  
might not even be relevant.

However, there is, at least, one way to check. It would seem to  
me that if we had a database of abductions of sufficient size  
with the proper descriptions (or better yet, drawings of the  
aliens), then we could review it searching for "spikes" in  
specific descriptions. Using Schirmer again, what if we found  
that no one had reported the specific descriptive features until  
after Mars Needs Women came out. We then find a drop off in  
those kinds of reports until Ralph Blum's book came out. This  
would suggest there might be a causal relation between these  
reports and the cultural influences.

If, on the other hand, there are no such jumps, then the  
probability is that this specific stimuli had no effect on the  
reporting of alien abduction.

Yes, I can think of other examples. How about a sudden increase  
in reports of nasal implants after Arnold Schwarzenegger pulled  
one out of his nose in Total Recall? No, I am not suggesting  
that the tales of nasal implants came from the movie, only that

if we had a database that was large enough, we could then research it to find out if there was a sudden increase in such reports.

Or, let's talk about Star Trek II, in which insects are put into the ears of two Enterprise officers. How many of us heard stories about insects crawling into people's ears right after that movie was released?

>Example of an obvious connection, courtesy of Philip Klass: An >article about Bigfoot appears in the Washington Post, and >immediately afterward people report 'bigfoot' sightings right in >the DC area. (Were they confusing Washington, DC with Washington >State?)

>One reason I'm not impressed by arguments for media influence is >that the core of the reported abduction experience isn't in any >science fiction I remember reading (and I read it voraciously >for many years). That is, you can find details here and there, >but the \_entire\_ picture -- shadowy aliens that come at night, >take people from their beds, whisk them up to UFOs, never tell >them why and frighten them by depriving them of all control, >perform medical examinations, and make women pregnant -- can't >be found in any science fiction narrative I've read or heard of.

So, let me turn this around out you? What would it take for you to become "impressed" that elements of abduction could be found in science fiction?

<snip>

>You can find details in the abduction phenomenon that correspond >to things (often pretty obscure) in science fiction. But can you >find any familiar science fiction source that directly spawned >the whole abduction narrative, the way Anne Rice spawned vampire >cults?

Greg, I'm not sure that you're being fair with your continual suggestion that these things are "often pretty obscure." That, however, is another argument. The real point is that I have not suggested that pop culture "spawned the whole abduction" narrative. I have suggested that we can see some parallels, and those parallels should be investigated before they are so casually dismissed.

Nor have I suggested that the whole of the abduction phenomena can be explained by pop culture. My point, lost so often, is simply that pop culture influences our lives in many ways, and if we are to understand abduction, we should try to understand the influence of pop culture. Since this avenue of investigation has not been properly explored, I merely suggest it should be. Who knows what we might learn?

KRandle

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