**Galactic pioneers: A rough genealogy of UFO folklore**

In order to better understand the creative impetus that fuels our extraterrestrial imagination, I will excavate a rough genealogy of UFO folklore that begins, for the purposes of this study, with such works as Lucian of Samosata’s satirical space opera *True History,*Cyrano deBergerac’s *A Voyage to the Moon*, Kepler’s *Somnium,*and Voltaire’s *Micromegas.* (I am tempted to also consider some subtler works—such as Milton, Dante…) Figments of a pre-industrial revolutionary imagination, the galactic pioneers of these proto-science fiction novels discovered rich universes teeming with robot civilizations, botanical nymphomaniacs and edible planets. These imaginative texts diagnose the human psyche with terrestrial claustrophobia and reflect human anxieties about a very fragile and mortal environment. Elements of satire and the bizarre found in seventeenth century French science fiction, inherently mock traditional hierarchies.

In her article, “Orbs, Blobs and Glows: Astronauts, UFOs and Photography,” Jane Marsching suggests that UFOs, “caught between a theistic and a capitalist world view, resist the standard order.” An autopsy of alien narratives reveals the complex framework of subversion beneath extraterrestrial landscapes that symbolically map our human condition. Drawing upon more contemporary works of science fiction (selections not yet solidified, but definitely: Samuel R. Delany’s *Nova,* CI Defontenay’s *Star: (Ou Psi Cassiopeia)*, Flammarion’s *Uranie*…and less obvious works—like *A High Wind in Jamaica*), I hope to extract a critical interpretation of how alien bodies and landscapes subvert religious, scientific, economic and political hierarchies. This warrants a discussion of the evolution of alien narratives throughout the mid-to-late 1900s, and an examination of UFO conspiracy theories as a form of contemporary folklore. The dramatic evolution of our extraterrestrial imaginations is reflected in literal messages and objects projected desperately, aimlessly into space.

While these inspired attempts to learn more about some unknown “other” are cast ever-outwards, they do not reveal profound insights about what lies beyond, but rather, what pulses within. The various textual and visual artifacts of our scientific exploration in space are emblematic of the human experience. Among these relics, we observe the brave, **heroically dry humor found in astronaut dialogue,** cryptic endeavors to summarize “humanity” in ones and zeros, and breathtaking images that trigger an epidemic of quasi-religious revival. [Arecibo Message, Voyager Golden Records, Apollo 11 moon-landing (film and transcripts), images from the Hubble Space Telescope, alien abduction/contact narratives.] The rise of alien abduction narratives is accompanied by fresh spiritual attempts to fuse the “para” to the “normal.” (L. Ron Hubbard’s prolific space operas, and Claude Vorilhon’s literary contributions to the Raëlian Church.)

**Introduction**

Nothing was more common, in those days, than to interpret all meteoric appearances, and other natural phenomena, that occurred with less regularity than the rise and set of sun and moon, as so many revolutions from a supernatural source. […] Oftener, however, its credibility rested on the faith of some lonely eyewitness, who beheld the wonder through the colored, magnifying, and distorting medium of his imagination, and shaped it more distinctly in his after-thought. It was, indeed, a majestic idea, that the destiny of nations should be revealed, in these awful hieroglyphics, on the cope of heaven.[[1]](#footnote-1)

—*The Scarlet Letter*

I begin by investigating the various ways experiences are negotiated by the extratextual authors of alien abduction narratives, and their intertextual eyewitness identities in order to portray the incredible in a convincingly credible light. The two texts I focus on are John Fuller’s *The Interrupted Journey: Two Lost Hours ‘Aboard a Flying Saucer,*’ and Whitley Strieber’s *Communion: A True Story.* A discussion of Lucian’s satirical space opera, *A True Story* introduces discourse about the specific rhetoric abduction narratives evoke to elevate the authority of the eyewitness. Throughout my study, I draw upon various works of early American supernatural fiction in order to supplement my literary analysis of how the paranormal interacts with the natural world. Specifically, I hope to demonstrate how the fickle relationship between ‘normalcy’ and the extraordinary challenges disbelief. Close examination of the testimony yields a conflicting *desire to believe* on the part of the reluctant eyewitness, the victimized abductee, and the skeptical reader. What are the motives for believing, and how is the evolution of belief reflected in the eyewitness mentality? To ground my exploration of these various questions, I consider how the epistemology of victimhood transforms the meaning of an abduction experience.This inquiry relevantly positions my investigation of how sadomasochistic imagery common to alien abduction narratives elevates the status of paranormal evidence by disrupting the balance between communal experiences and exclusive experiences so that social inversion becomes possible. When submitting to the alien, we discover the duality of power in its potential for both restriction and limitless possibility.

Jerome Clark suggests that “the UFO mystery is primarily subjective and its content primarily symbolic.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The extraterrestrial aesthetic offers a wealth of insight to the construction and composition of analogy, which harmonizes the incoherent into relationships forged “not on harmony, hierarchy, or order, but instead on the chance connections of experience, imagination and presence.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Once this framework of symbolism is established, I will explore how UFOs operate as a repository for postmodern anxieties. The general consensus among critics of abduction narratives is that the UFO phenomenon is culturally constructed and informed. Scientifically, the status of empirical evidence derived from eyewitness testimonies has waxed and waned. By considering how alien perspectives are conceived in order to question existing power systems and reflect certain human anxieties about race, war and the environment, we reveal a highly subversive potential within the uniquely extraterrestrial imagination. The use of language to express an exclusive experience invites symbolic interpretation and consequently creates alternative opportunities for belief. To this extent, whether or not the incredible testimonies of contactees are rendered believable becomes irrelevant to their significance as cultural artifacts and function as social or political commentary. Using these narratives to launch my investigation of how the extraterrestrial aesthetic is rendered through the vocabulary of eyewitness testimony, I transition into an analysis of how visual perception both limits and inspires belief in Margaret Atwood’s *The Blind Assassin* and Samuel Delany’s *Nova*. Sifting through the pantheon of mythic NASA photographs, candy-colored Hubble telescope images, and hodgepodge of bootleg UFO photos found on conspiracy forums, we find how visual testimony fuels the dramatic shifts in perspective that occur when we begin to consider the possibility that in the vast expanse of space, *we* are the aliens. Despite the documentary diligence that has expanded our terrestrial visions, we submit to a sort of *blindness* in our exploration of outer space.

While abductee narratives often intimate divine or technologically apocalyptic sentiments, they evoke a notion Lee Quimby refers to as “ironic apocalypse.” [[4]](#footnote-4) Traditional visions of apocalypse function to invigorate and increase the agency of mankind, alien apocalypse insist on the “prevailing banality of everything,” numbing people into “inaction through its paralyzing sense of futility.” The purpose of reading abduction narratives as legitimate works of literature is to understand the extent to which the reality of any experience bows to the authority of the perceived metaphor and inevitably yields meaningful interpretations.

I am concerned with the meta-evolution of experience—by exposing the various motives for belief within these narratives, I hope to demonstrate how the alien becomes a metaphor for the human condition and how UFOs operate as a medium through which we experience and interpret the world around us. While the extraterrestrial evokes sentiments of the sublime and the profound, and lends itself quite conveniently to symbolic interpretation, it does not explain the world around us, but rather, prompts an exploration of our own inner humanity. “As one can see from all this, the observation and interpretation of Ufos [sic] has already led to the formation of a regular legend,” Carl Jung famously concludes in his seminal treatise *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, “One thing is certain: they have become a *living myth.* We have here a golden opportunity to see how a legend is formed, and how in a difficult and dark time for humanity a miraculous tale grows up of an attempted intervention by extraterrestrial ‘heavenly’ powers…”[[5]](#footnote-5) While Jung’s statement captures the spirit of my endeavor, I would argue that UFO folklore diverges from traditional mythology and represents the formation of a highly *irregular* legend. In this legend, the futility and frailty of mankind is exposed, engendering dramatic shifts in perspective, priority and philosophy.

**Botanical Succubi and the Boring Whale:** *Paranoia and terrestrial claustrophobia as impetus for extraterrestrial exploration in Lucian’s* True Histories

Lucian’s *voyage extraordinaire* begins grounded in unexpected realism. The entire Prologue is dedicated to insisting that his contribution to the “fiction free-for-all” is distinct from a previous tradition of blatant lying committed by “ancient poets, historians and philosophers who wrote much of mythical monsters (§1:2).”[[6]](#footnote-6) While we are forewarned of the following narrative’s fictitious nature, we are simultaneously wise to the narrator’s purported authenticity. By admitting to writing untruths, he casts himself as a source that is *at least* more reliable than the likes of Homer. As such, it is possible to excavate a surrealist potential in Lucian’s fantasy, and extract some kind of critical interpretation despite the narrative’s satirical complexion.

As the voyage begins, Lucian creates a realistic framework with which to situate his reader by revealing an explicit motive and objective. Driven by “intellectual curiosity” and a “desire to know how far the ocean stretched,” Lucian’s pursuits are logically inspired. Furthermore, his nautical preparations are entirely un-extraordinary. He is preoccupied with the quotidian concerns of having “sufficient water on board,” a “well-equipped armoury, and offering a high salary for “the very best helmsman.” When they finally land after eighty trying days on the high seas, they “lay on the ground for a long time, as you might expect after such extended hardship.”[[7]](#footnote-7) These detailed attempts to ground fantasy in some base of reality allow for a range of varying degrees of possibility and impossibility throughout the journey. Even though Lucian denigrates his tale as pure fantasy, we are attuned to the elements of reality with which we can observe in stark contrast to the flights of incredibly absurd fancy.

We discover that the “furthest point Heracles and Dionysus reached,” is disappointingly terrestrial. Despite their divine status, their legacy is restricted to earthly adventures—their footprints etched into the ground and surpassed by mere mortals. The issue of transcending the gods by way of extraterrestrial voyage has its roots in (an even more ancient imagination) even older literature and religious thought, and stubbornly persists to this day. (When images of the Eagle Nebula captured by the Hubble telescope were released to the public, people saw the figure of Jesus.)

Lucian’s imagination subconsciously captures the universal essence of humanity’s extraterrestrial aspirations and anxieties. The narrative subliminally expresses fear and loathing towards confined space and “groundedness.” Lucian and his troupe experience a sort of bizarre claustrophobia when they fall into “internal worlds,” and consistently attempt to escape or remain in “open universes.” When, for instance, they happen upon a colony of disturbingly licentious botanticals, Lucian plants the seed of suspicion that builds and provides the paranoiac momentum that ultimately propels them into outer space. The hybrid vine-women, who seem otherwise fascinating and curiously tantalizing, are cast in a grotesque shadow. They are described as a “monstrous kind of vine (§1:8),” suspiciously friendly, promiscuous, and literally intoxicating. We are hyperaware of the fact that something is terribly wrong with these creatures, but cannot pinpoint the origin of our aversion towards them. Sure enough, the vine-women turn out to be sadomasochistic succubi who, after having “vinosexual intercourse” with their victims, grab onto their genitals and cause them to take root. They become irrevocably grounded, a state of pathetic existence that inspires a very potent anxiety throughout the journey. Lucian and his men flee from this horrific scene and immediately set sail. The fear of being “grounded” is so real that it is reflected in the movement of the narrator’s imagination, which carries our protagonist on an extraordinary gust of wind into the open sky (§1:10). Having escaped from the clutches of an unpleasant and vile terrestrial doom, our heroes are transported to a liberating, unearthly perspective: “lots of other islands came into our view nearby […] and another piece of land below, with cities on it, rivers, seas woods and mountains. So we guessed that this was our world (§1:10).” From this enlightened position, their former planet is reduced to a vague summary of unimpressive geography.

A couple worlds later, our cosmic pioneers find themselves in the belly of a whale. There, they go through alternating phases of hopeless despair, half-hearted attempts to adapt, and overwhelming restlessness. Though the cavity is large enough to “contain a city of ten thousand souls,” and the “whole place looked as though it was under cultivation,” our poor heroes take one look around and “[weep] copiously (§1:32).” A similar feeling of restless panic that spooked us in the land of the botanical succubi, also pervades this incubated atmosphere. It is heightened by the unnerving revelation that their only other fellow human has been trapped there for twenty-seven years. Disoriented and claustrophobic, they realize that they are “prisoners shut into this monster.” Their only recourse is to work out their aggressions through war. By harassing and provoking the other bizarre inhabitants, they are able to temporarily endure their solitary confinement. Their conquests against the absurd creatures—the Picklers and the Triton-Pans, the Crabhands and the Turbotfeet—speak to Lucian’s perspectives regarding the nature of man. When the alien species begin discussing a treaty, the men decide “not to make peace” and “cut them all down to the last one.” (Explain more here about how they also alter their environment…Are there environmental undertones here? Commentary on destruction of nature? Inability to coexist. The men are parasites.) This massive extermination results in what seems to be a sort of pastoral ideal:[[8]](#footnote-8)

We occupied the land, which was now bare of enemies, and lived in it without fear for the rest of our time. Mostly we exercised and hunted. We also worked the vines and gathered the harvest from the trees. All in all, we were like people luxuriating at liberty in a vast prison with no escape route. We lived this way for a year and eight months. (§1:39)

But we soon realize that men are inherently parasitic, and their extermination of the flesh-eating, crayfish-faced foes does not prevent the destruction of their benign host. When all potential conflict within the whale has been subdued, they must be content as spectators to the external conflict, which they observe through the whale’s mouth. A glimpse of the outside world inspires resentment within the passengers, towards their confining, yet life-sustaining environment:

From then on, though, I could no longer bear my life in the whale. I was fed up with hanging around and began to look for a way to escape. (§2:1)

Bored into insanity by the tranquil inertia they have forced upon this cavernous world, they begin exacting deranged revenge, hacking away at the whale’s side and setting the forest on fire. The stench of decay emphasizes the staleness of enclosed atmosphere and heightens the desperation to escape.

Hostile enclosure is confronted again on the island of the impious, which boasts the most horrific smells, “the sort you might get if you burned bitumen, brimstone and pitch together,” the ugliest landscape, a barren “skeleton of rocks and stony places,” and the cruelest existence—being “suspended by the genitals in the smoke rising from a slow fire.” The geography is remarkably confining—rivers of mud, blood and fire encircle the land, and “the whole place had just one narrow entrance (§2:30).”

In contrast to the dread inspired by these hellish wombs, Lucian is desperately nostalgic for extraterrestrial paradise. Their escape from the whale brings them to an exotic Valhalla in the sky, inhabited by disembodied, “impalpable and fleshless” alien spirits, who glide around in purple spider webs, and feast in perpetual pleasure. The landscape is open, and although there are no specific references to the position of this place, we get the sense that it is suspended above other worlds. When their time on this island expires, Lucian “made indignant protests and wept with frustration to think of all the good things [he] was about to leave behind in exchange for more wanderings (§2:27).”

Simultaneously navigating and rendering this unique otherworldly aesthetic, Lucian exposes the conflicting motives and temptations of an eyewitness storyteller. For Lucian, the purpose of literature is not to attempt to record history, but to create it and to be self-authored into posterity. The creation of fact is far more truthful and noble an endeavor than the attempt to preserve an impossibly corruptible memory. To impress this point, Lucian satirically targets the lies of historians, while simultaneously proving firsthand that poets are, to the extent of being creators of fact, incapable of any mendacious tendencies whatsoever. On the Island of the Blest, the narrator converses with a revered Homer, who reveals that “a charge of libel had been brought against him by Thersites because of the way he had ridiculed him in the poem, and the case was won by Homer, with Odysseus for his lawyer (§2:20).”[[9]](#footnote-9) The authority of Homer’s imagination is absolute. Though he is an imagined figure, Odysseus nevertheless carries a stamp of venerable legitimacy. It is automatically assumed that Odysseus would make a formidable defense attorney. On the other hand, Ctesias of Cnidos and Herodotus are both referenced as prisoners of the Island of the Wicked, where they are being punished for telling—and specifically *writing* “what was not true.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Lucian’s conspicuous aside at this moment reinforces his underlying message: “On seeing them, I had good hopes for the future, for I have never told a lie that I know of (§2:32).”[[11]](#footnote-11) Throughout the novel, Lucian reiterates his integrity as an honest writer. While this seems contradictory to his confession in the Prologue, Lucian is in fact impressing upon his readers, the impossibility of conveying any experience or event without creating a story. He argues additionally, that any story that conveys to its reader meaning—rather than fact—is inherently “A True Story.”

Notes:

🡪 Upon meeting Endymion, alien abduction survivor and, consequently, King of the moon, they are promised “the most comfortable life possible” and guaranteed adventure. (Unfinished thought)

* Mythology and religion relationship to exploration of space. (Kepler tried to reconcile)

🡪 Throughout the narrative, hints of a collective human psyche repressed by the boundaries of realism and physical laws…

🡪 Lamptown—robots, they are products of human technology, tools…organized civilization of alternate life form. Somewhat logically configured—artificial intelligence, they do not really have wills, but they have mimicked the organization of human society. Their purpose is unclear, except to be used by humans in a parallel universe, and to appear when summoned by the Lamp King…

🡪 Potable/Edible planets

🡪 The weird biology of alien creatures (bald and hairless, conceive in their calves, sweating milk and honey, hairy stomachs…

🡪 WHALE: Altering their environment…Are there environmental undertones here? Commentary on destruction of nature? Inability to coexist. The men are parasites

**The UFOria of Belief**

BETTY HILL: Well, now do you believe in flying saucers?

BARNEY HILL: Don’t be ridiculous, Betty.

—The Interrupted Journey

On the night of September 18, 1961, Betty and Barney Hills, an interracial—but otherwise unexceptional couple[[12]](#footnote-12) in their early 40s, were driving through the White Mountains of New Hampshire on their way home from Niagara Falls. At around 10 p.m., their scenic, moonlit journey down US-3 was interrupted by an unidentifiable bright light in the sky. Their baffling encounter with the celestial apparition was accompanied by an abrupt onset of unexplainable amnesia, but a fragmented distortion of the Hills’ uncanny experience nevertheless catalyzed authentic emotions of terrifying confusion and excitement. Under hypnosis, a bewildering, enthralling narrative of alien abduction emerged. A retrospective article published in *The New York Times* identifies the Hills phenomenon as the “first to capture the public imagination on a grand scale, defining a narrative subgenre that has flourished in the decades since.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Rife with such traditional supernatural elements of mystery and intrigue as illusions of normalcy, a nighttime excursion, enigmatic apparitions, and sexual undercurrent, the gripping excerpts that emerged exhibited many “Victorian gothic hallmarks, [and…] shared the common Western folklore theme of being spirited off and ravished by an otherworldly creature.”[[14]](#footnote-14) The Hills’ enchanting tale captivated the American public by revitalizing these familiar Gothic themes and transposing them into the paranoiac, cold war mindset.

Dubbed the “Hill Abduction,” or alternatively, the “Zeta Reticuli Incident,” this haunting account of alien encounter became the subject of a best-selling book by accomplished journalist John G. Fuller entitled, *The Interrupted Journey: Two Lost Hours Aboard a Flying Saucer* (1966). A deluge of alleged contact stories followed in the wake of this landmark abduction case, but in the interest of specifically illuminating the manner by which such experiences are transmogrified by text, I have selected the two hallmark narratives that are perceptibly concerned with the aesthetics of portrayal. In his rendition of the events that transpired on that portentous September night, Fuller liberally saturated the slivers of raw testimony from Betty and Barney Hills’ hypnotic interviews with bewitching textual foreplay. His conspicuous narrative presence implicates the featured evidence in the formation of a highly stylized testimony that is mutilated by the motivations of the witnesses, the narrator, and the perceived audience. But beneath the embellishing prose, exists a dramatic dialogue that demands symbolic interpretation. More than two decades later, horror fictionist Whitley Strieber revealed his own personal encounter with the paranormal in his debut non-fiction book, *Communion: A True Story* (1987). Strieber’s account is particularly relevant to this exploration of how experiences—whether real or imaginary—are modified by literary expression. Ultimately, both texts redefine the boundaries between perception and truth by simultaneously resisting and desiring belief.

TRUE STORIES—FROM LITERAL TO LITERARY

My decision to inaugurate this discussion of alien abduction narratives with the ancient Greek novel, *A True Story* written in the 2nd century A.D. by Lucian of Samosata goes beyond the ironic titular similarity.[[15]](#footnote-15) Admittedly, I was, at first, rather superficially drawn to the text’s rendition of chimerical planets and their wonderfully extraterrestrial inhabitants. I struggled to find a justifiable way to situate Lucian in my analysis of extraterrestrial literature without forcing an artificial correlation between arbitrary texts with merely coincidental thematic similarities. Indeed, *A True Story* reciprocates an exploration of the extraterrestrial aesthetic, conveniently conjuring images of alien abduction and interplanetary conflict. For instance, when Lucian and his troupe rendezvous with Endymion, the king of the Moon, they discover that “he too was a human being […] who had once been ravished from our country in his sleep, and on coming there had been king of the land (§1:11).”[[16]](#footnote-16) But besides its thematic coherence in dramatizing events of extraterrestrial significance, Lucian’s text further negotiates such salient motifs of paranoia, environmental anxiety, sexual submission and social oppression that are recognized in alien abduction narratives.

Furthermore, A *True Story* provides a template for codifying the diverse and transient elements that establish a framework of belief witnessed in alien abduction narratives. Preemptively spotlighting the corruptibility of language, Lucian’s meta-literary *voyage extraordinaire* endeavors to exploit the potential for persuasive authority within narratives of the “incredible.” In particular, Lucian’s seminal rendition of other worlds pertinently capitalizes on the process by which extraordinary events metamorphose from *literal* to *literary*. Though he admits to “writing about things which I have neither seen nor had to do with nor learned from other—which, in fact, do not exist at all and, in the nature of things, cannot exist (§1:4),”[[17]](#footnote-17) his satirical treatment of literary “charlatanry” invites discourse on the genuine impulse to communicate an exclusive experience and cast it in the accessible language of words or images. I am interested, therefore, in the polarizing lexicon that emanates from this enterprise—the vocabulary that is evoked in order to articulate the bizarre in familiar terms, for as Steven D. Smith postulates:

[…the] notions of the alien and the fantastic may reflect private desires, but they also provide the very means of questioning, testing, and perhaps even dismantling the intellectual frameworks within which we perceive the world.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Despite its emphatic disclosure, the text nevertheless reasserts its credibility as a testimony of significant literary and interpretive value. By reading *A True Story* as a prototype for the evolved genre of extraterrestrial folklore, I hope to decipher the process by which faculties of imagination become “enshrined in literature to achieve the status of a fact,”[[19]](#footnote-19) and how in turn, they inherently reflect alienable truths regarding the human condition.

Lucian inaugurates his pastiche of epical odysseys by assuming the mantel of an audacious raconteur. Prefaced by a cheeky disclaimer that absolves the narrator of traditional eyewitness responsibilities, the text blatantly sabotages journalistic tropes by promising to chronicle “all kinds of lies in a plausible and specious way (§1:2).”[[20]](#footnote-20) This premeditated reification of fabricated fact is a meticulous art that has been sublimated into the eyewitness aesthetic of retro-sensationalism. That is to say, in *A True Story* as well as in eyewitness abduction narratives, reality is at the disposition of the prescribed author who flaunts his poetic license not only by anticipating disbelief, but also by recommending it as well. As if to compensate for eccentricity, a sense of commiserating incredulity is conveyed, wherein the author assures the reader that skepticism to be expected. In *Communion: A True Story*, Whitley Strieber harkens back to the pedestrian mentality of a skeptic:

I did not believe in UFOs at all before this happened. And I would have laughed in the face of anybody who claimed contact. Period. I am not a candidate for conversion to any new religion that involves belief in benevolent space brothers, or in unidentified flying objects as the craft of intergalactic saints—or sinners.[[21]](#footnote-21)

By articulating his state of mind prior to the momentous event of extraterrestrial abduction, Strieber establishes a point of commonality with the reader. He elevates the authenticity of his narrative, distinguishing his experience from the flights of lunacy that are espoused by cultish believers in the same way Lucian testifies that his “lying is far more honest than theirs, for though I tell the truth in nothing else, I shall at least be truthful in saying that I am a liar (§1:4).”

The modus operandi of professing a state of prior or conventional skepticism, differentiating between imposter-believers and legitimate witnesses, and buttressing the architecture of normalcy is reflected in the preamble of Lucian’s *A True Story*. By his own admission, Lucian is compelled to invent his narrative because he “had nothing true to tell, not having had any adventures of significance (§1:4).”[[22]](#footnote-22) In a private letter to her mother, Betty Hill voiced similar concerns regarding her story’s potential to *appeal* to an audience:

In the beginning we felt that this was our own personal experience, and believed that there really was not any great public interest. […] we believed that the overall picture [of UFO experiences] was one of boredom, disbelief, and apathy.[[23]](#footnote-23)

In order for an experience to become enshrined in text—or any mode of transmuting, be it verbal or visual—it must be deemed worthy of public interest. Lucian candidly admits that while he has had no real experiences worth sharing, he is nevertheless “eager to hand something down to posterity, that I might not be the only one excluded from the privileges of poetic licence [sic] (§1:4).”[[24]](#footnote-24) At the same time, this concern must also be understated; otherwise, the experience loses credibility because it is suspect of being tainted by ulterior agendas. Walter Webb, the Assistant Director of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena in Washington, specifically mentions being “impressed that the Hills *underplayed* the dramatic aspects of the case. They were not trying to sensationalize. They did not seek publicity.”[[25]](#footnote-25) As historian Hayden White has observed, “events are *made* into a story by […] characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Exaggerating normalcy is another method by which authors will attempt to ground or substantiate seemingly extraordinary testimony. An element of realism is achieved by this strategy of alternative description, whereby something that is fantastic is framed by scenes that are overwhelmingly ordinary. To be conveyed, the unbelievable must be portrayed within a believable atmosphere. In UFO photographs the framing of the mysterious objects reflects the degree to which any attempt to capture reality is subject to the whims of the storyteller. Depicted on the following page, are the Trent-McMinnville photographs, taken in the1950s at the height of 



UFO craze.[[27]](#footnote-27) Considered the most convincing and iconic photographic evidence of UFO activity to date, the snapshots have been scrutinized by experts and widely publicized by the media for decades. As in the Hills case, investigators were impressed that “he could find no evidence that [the Trents] had sought any fame or fortune from [the photos].”[[28]](#footnote-28) The photos encapsulate the technique of contextualizing the incredible with an atmosphere of normalcy. Without including the telephone wires, the distant horizon, and the shack to the left of the frame, it would be impossible to identify the flying object as an “unidentifiable flying object.” A vague, blurry spot like that could just as easily be an earthly insect or a common photographic imperfection. The surrounding scenery provides perspective and renders the object as abnormal in an otherwise normal setting. Photographer Jane Marsching postulates:

[…] the UFO photograph seeks to place the otherworldly into our world by means of the treeline or the curve of the earth over which the saucer flies. The hazy, indistinct forms of alien spacecraft are completely vague, as if the actual form of the alien is unseeable. But the ordinary world that they infiltrate is an indispensable framework for belief.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Similarly, extraterrestrial narratives erect scenes of familiarity in which to situate the alien. In *A True Story,* Lucian creates a realistic framework with which to situate his reader by revealing an explicit motive and objective. Driven by “intellectual activity and desire for adventure,” Lucian’s pursuits are logically inspired. Furthermore, his nautical preparations are entirely un-extraordinary. He is preoccupied with the quotidian concerns of ensuring “a good store of provisions […] a great quantity of arms,” stowing enough water, and “[enlisting] in the venture fifty of my acquaintances who were like-minded with myself (§1:5).”[[30]](#footnote-30) Similarly, *An Interrupted Journey* begins with a gloss over the ordinary events that led up to the momentous journey. Betty and Barney Hill plan their trip “over a cup of hot coffee,” and mull over mundane concerns about the budget and familial relations. The fact that they are an interracial couple is featured prominently, but also consciously underplayed. Fuller insists that the “total adjustment to their mixed marriage had been remarkably smooth,” implying that the protagonists of his narrative were just as ordinary as any other American couple in the sixties.[[31]](#footnote-31) When Lucian and his men finally land after eighty trying days on the high seas, they “lay on the ground for some time.” The traditional expectations of epic heroes are discarded in favor of realism. Lucian’s characters exude ordinariness in the same way Betty and Barney Hill seem posed as figures in a portrait of the typical American couple. These subtle attempts to ground fantasy in some base of reality allow for a range of varying degrees of possibility and impossibility throughout the journey. Even though Lucian denigrates his tale as pure fantasy, we are minutely attuned to the elements of reality that operate in stark contrast to the flights of incredibly absurd fancy. Faculties of logic are what frame the illogical in Lucian’s *A True Story.*

The logic of composed normalcy is further exercised in Strieber’s *Communion: A True Story.* When Strieber attempts to describe his momentous first encounter, he is compelled to go through the motions of describing the surroundings that enabled his faculties of reliable eyesight:

Before I narrate those next few seconds, though, I would like to give an exact description of how the figure looked to me. First, I will describe the physical conditions under which I was seeing it. The room was dim but not dark. The burglar-alarm panel alone emitted enough light for me to see. In addition, there was snow on the ground and that added some ambient light.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Because the narrative being conveyed is purportedly an eyewitness testimony, the importance of creating a visually negotiable environment becomes a foremost concern. We do not get a clear impression of the actual visitor; rather, we are given a vague textual silhouette. The description of the precise lighting of the room culminates in Strieber proposing: “had it been a person peeking into the room, I would have made out his or her features clearly.” As it was, he was unable at first sight, to explicitly capture the features of the being in the same way the actual subjects of UFO photographs to some extent, defy literal interpretation and are defined by their mysteriously blurred forms. This passage calls to mind the eerie scene at “The Minister’s Vigil,” in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter.* The relationship between the natural world and the supernatural is heavily explored and deconstructed in Hawthorne’s romance, which is relevantly positioned at the threshold between Puritanical realism and a distinct otherworldly imagination. As Hester, Pearl and Dimmesdale share an electric moment together on the scaffold, the insular atmosphere is penetrated by a portentous celestial event:

a light gleamed far and wide over all the muffled sky. […] The great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp. It showed the familiar scene of the street, with the distinctness of mid-day, but also with the awfulness that is always imparted to familiar objects by an unaccustomed light.[[33]](#footnote-33)

The significance of the meteor is reflected in the scenes of familiarity that are suddenly cast in an alien light. Illuminated by the meteor, the “wooden houses, with their jutting stories and quaint gable-peaks [… and] the marketplace margined with green on either side;--all were visible” and invite new “moral interpretation.” This moment perfectly encapsulates the method by which familiar abnormality is articulated and justified. In the Custom-House, Hawthorne reflects on the way lighting alters the actual substance of the objects that are cast in its light: “—all these details, so completely seen, are so spiritualized by the unusual light, that they seem to lose their actual substance, and become things of intellect.”[[34]](#footnote-34) The “unaccustomed light” exposes an unsuspected significance and drama beneath the drabness of Puritan society. In *An Interrupted Journey,* we imagine the Hills “winding effortlessly along the flat ground of the uppermost Connecticut River valley,” in their 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air. The text is haunted by an eerie familiarity that hauntingly pervades the landscape:

The stars were brilliant, as they always are in the New Hampshire mountains on a cloudless night, when starshine seems to illuminate the tops of the peaks with a strange incandescence.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The stars become a fixture in the New Hampshire landscape, being brilliant, “as they always are.” At the same time, the light they exude infiltrates the ordinary with an aura of suspicion and expectation. Extensively commenting on the foliage, the serene landscape and various wildlife[[36]](#footnote-36) that are not actually observed by the Hills, Fuller exercises his creative authority. Just as the luminescence of the meteor infuses the drab Puritan town with new moral significance, Fuller interprets the surrounding landscape in a way that evokes a sense of suspense, mystery and meaning. The description of the backdrop of the event, for instance, is not just “the uppermost Connecticut River valley,” but also “an ancient Indian and lumbering country, rich in history and legend.”[[37]](#footnote-37) Fuller supplements his various physical descriptions with dramatic gravity, as if to suggest: *This is the sort of place where strange and extraordinary things happen.*

**Close Encounters of the Uncanny Kind**

In alien abduction narratives, the spirit of the uncanny is conveyed not only through subtle manipulations of a familiar atmosphere, but also through specific objects or places that serve as portals to the realm of the incredible. Lucian’s incredible journey begins at a mythological landmark—“a slab of bronze, inscribed with Greek letters, faint and obliterated, which said: ‘To this point came Hercules and Dionysus’ (§1:7).”[[38]](#footnote-38) The place is further marked by two gigantic footprints and a river of wine that seem to corroborate and authenticate the author’s lofty claims: “Thus we could not help having much greater faith in the inscription on the slab, seeing the evidence of Dionysus’ visit (§1:7).”[[39]](#footnote-39) In *Communion,* ordinary sentiments also frame the incredible, while provoking intense anxiety and sensations of fear. This technique is particularly effective in Edgar Allen Poe’s short story, “The Fall of the House of Usher.” Upon entering the house, the narrator describes at moderate length, the various objects that clutter the interior of this dilapidated mansion—the decorated ceilings, “somber tapestries,” black floors and “phantasmagoric armorial trophies.” He prompts the reader to note how “unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up.”[[40]](#footnote-40) Freud identifies the uncanny as belonging to a “class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and familiar.”[[41]](#footnote-41) The rattling phantasmagoric trophies were “matters to which […the narrator] had been accustomed from [his] infancy.”[[42]](#footnote-42) The familiarity of these objects adds to the mystery of the place. Freud identifies the uncanny as belonging to a “class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and familiar.”[[43]](#footnote-43) In Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto,* and E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “The Sandman,” ordinary or familiar sentiments not only frame the fantastic to provoke a unique type of anxiety, but also become subject to the power of the imagination, as much as they begin as a source of it. Grounded in an atmosphere of realism, the uncanny is represented in scenes of the familiar that are usurped by the paranoia spawned by superstition, coincidence, or my understanding of what Freud termed “the omnipotence of thought.” The uncanny rests on the edge of reality and familiarity. Familiar objects that evolve into some unknown dimension foster paranoiac uncertainty. Objects that have the semblance of reality—or are assumed to be one way but discovered to be something entirely different in remarkably subtle ways provoke similar feelings of suspicion. When elements of the imagination invade an established atmosphere of reality, demonstrating an “omnipotence of thought,” the uncanny is evoked because this edge between the realms of reality and fantasy is obfuscated.

In a similar but more direct and perhaps accelerated way, Walpole delineates the “process of repression,” which Freud theorizes is the formation of the uncanny.[[44]](#footnote-44) The castle of Otranto seems haunted by phantoms of omnipotent thought; the most remarkable case being the helmet that cataclysmically launches the plot. In Chapter I, an ancient prophecy is revealed:

*That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it.* It was difficult to make any sense of this prophecy; and still less easy to conceive what it had to do with the marriage in question. Yet these mysteries, or contradictions, did not make the populace adhere to less to their opinions.[[45]](#footnote-45)

The prophecy hovers above the characters and literally foreshadows the events of the following paragraphs. Even though the prophecy cannot be directly deciphered, its significance is clear—we cannot help but *believe* in the prophecy and trust that it will render itself potent in some way, at some point in the narrative. It is this belief that creates real paranoia that is abruptly transformed into a moment of sheer uncanniness. We encounter the reactions of the characters to the event before ourselves realizing how the prophecy has played out. This narrative decision prolongs our suspense and solidifies our anticipation that some aspect of the prophecy will come to pass. Once we discover that the helmet has fallen from the sky and crushed Conrad, the uncanny is realized in two ways: first, the prophecy is fully understood and fulfilled thus confirming the “omnipotence of thought,” and second, the somewhat arbitrary, unrealistic cause of death elevates the uncanny sense of superstition and coincidence. The unexplainable circumstances of Conrad’s death heighten the sense of the uncanny. Manfred’s authority within the familiar walls of the Otranto castle are breached by the strange. Breaking down the word itself, Freud defines the uncanny by its positive opposite; he reasons that *heimlich* comes “*from the idea of ‘homelike,’ ‘belonging to the house,*” and therefore the *unheimlich* must represent an atmosphere of familiarity that is subverted by the unknown. The comfort of his authority and castle is threatened by supernatural, alien forces as well as his familiar but estranged past.

Freud argues that Jentsch’s reading of Olimpia as the source of the uncanny is undeveloped.[[46]](#footnote-46) Instead, he proposes that the uncanny is propounded by the fear of castration, in the form of the loss of the eyes. In my personal experience in reading E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “The Sandman,” I still found Olimpia’s uncanny inorganic reality to be the most shocking, perverse and impressive force in the narrative. Though I do agree that eyes and the loss thereof is a major source of fear for *Nathaniel* throughout the novel, I do not feel it is a manifestation of the uncanny because of the element of fantasy that surrounds “the Sandman.” I propose that Olimpia is far more realistic than the character we know to be a figment of Nathaniel’s insanity. Despite the blatant hints which reference her lifeless eyes, her mechanical dance, and the fact that she “gave us a very weird feeling; we wanted nothing to do with her; we felt that she was only pretending to be a living being, and that there was something very strange about her,” the fact that all these literary descriptions are manifested in a literal automaton is nevertheless shocking. Because the description is so close to reality, we never expect Olimpia to actually be a robot. We become somewhat vested in her as an actual character, interacting with her and interpreting the blossoming relationship between Nathaniel and this creature of fragile beauty. When the illusion is shattered, we are faced with the uncanny. Nathaniel’s relationship with Olimpia and his vision of her, humanizes Olimpia to the point where she becomes increasingly familiar. Her body becomes a site of familiarity that is invaded and transgressed upon by Coppola. Hoffmann manipulates his characters to simulate a reality that flirts with artificiality so obviously that the outcome is effectively shocking and evokes a feeling of pure uncanny.

For Strieber, the burglar-alarm panel operates on a symbolic level for the reader. It is a security measure we can immediately relate to. Upon hearing strange noises, Strieber reflexively glances at the panel beside his bed. But the fact that the system “was armed and working perfectly” does not lessen the tension of the moment; in fact, it substantially heightens the level of paranoia and suspense as we realize we are faced with a supernatural force that cannot be prevented, or even detected by objective means. Suddenly, the authority of reality is usurped: “Not a covered window or door was opened, and nobody had entered—at least according to the row of glowing lights.” Encouraging our suspicious, the narrator transforms our image of the fully functioning burglar-alarm panel into a creepy, UFO-esque “row of glowing lights.” In a rather direct and accelerated way, Strieber illuminates the “process of repression,” which Freud theorizes is the formation of the uncanny, “for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old—established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression.”[[47]](#footnote-47) The illusion of the uncanny depends on the ability of the writer to seamlessly fuse together the realms of the real and the incredible.

In his analysis of *The Interrupted Journey,* Terry Matheson observes that the imagery Betty employs in her “description of the UFO’s interior […] is very domestic.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Her reference to ‘stools,’ ‘doors,’ ‘rooms,’ ‘Q-tips,’ create an environment of familiarity in an alien territory. At the same time, there is something *off* about each of these items—and the descriptions must be supplemented by “unidentifications.” In other words, Betty attempts to use familiar vocabulary to describe her surroundings, but then alters or negates her own definitions, thereby rendering all the objects unidentifiable, to a certain degree:

[…] it’s something like a microscope, only a microscope with a big lens […]

[…] like a dentist, not like a dentist, something like, you know, the brace of a dentist’s chair.

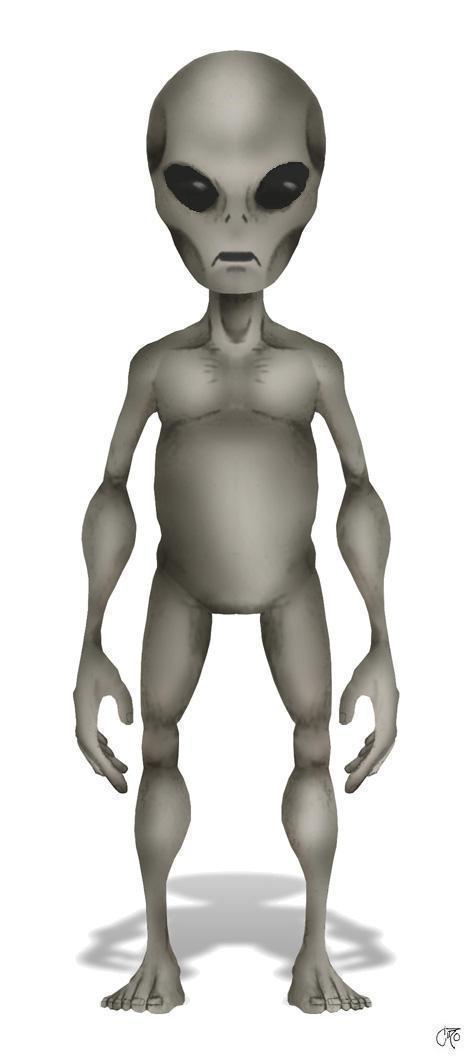
[…] then he takes like a—oh, a swab or a Q-tip I guess it is—they use it on babies—and he cleans out, he puts it in my left ear […]

Then he takes something maybe like scissors, I don’t know what it is, and he cut, they cut a piece of it […]

The uncanny dismantles conventions of realism and replaces them with “irreducible uncertainty.”[[49]](#footnote-49) These abduction narratives demand to be read as real, but whether or not this is the case, the protagonists of this extraterrestrial drama embody the experiences of the collective audience. In her essay “The License: Poetics, Power, and the Uncanny,” Susan Lepselter examines how the uncanny operates within the UFO theme:

In a social understanding of the uncanny, then, a few essential themes emerge. […] With one foot inside the dominant, the uncanny plays on the liminality of partially articulated ideology—a semi-emergent ‘political unconscious.’ The uncanny story denaturalizes dominant histories, imagining ghostly pasts and potential futures in elaborated discourses of nostalgia and apocalypse.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Freud’s theorized “omnipotence of thought,” therefore, is expressed in the collective understanding of the anxieties that are symbolized through the ritual of alien abduction. This concept is further explored in the following section, where the “invisible human structures” that underlie the Hills’ narrative are exposed and interpreted.[[51]](#footnote-51)

But this unknown familiar is what makes the alien so fascinatingly eerie. If we consider the iconography of the alien, we see how the alien body is an uncanny reflection of the human form. Strieber encounters beings that vary in “human-ness.” He describes “four different types of figures. The first was the small robotlike being […] These had wide faces, appearing either dark gray or dark blue in that light, with glittering deep-set eyes, pug noses, and broad, somewhat human mouths. Inside the room, I encountered two types of creatures that did not look at all human.” And yet, the beings he then goes on to describe have eyes, and “almost vestigial mouth and nose.”[[52]](#footnote-52) Strieber’s alien is none other than the classic “Grey” icon that became an emblem of the extraterrestrial imagination throughout the twentieth century.[[53]](#footnote-53) In “The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial: Two Figures of Evolutionist Fantasy,” Jean-Bruno Renard suggests that the alien body seems to represent an evolved counterpoint to the hairy, ape-like “Wild Man” of older times.[[54]](#footnote-54) Frederick Malmstrom put forth the “Mother Hypothesis” in which he suggests that Greys represent the distorted, residual memories of early childhood development. In his article, he reconstructs the face of a Grey through the various contortions of a mother’s face based on our best understanding of a newborn’s faculties of sensation and perception. Blurring the photograph of the face of a Caucasian woman, he shows how alien iconography may be derived from our earliest cognitive memories.[[55]](#footnote-55)





In either theory, the alien reverts back to the familiar, which is the source of the unknown, “for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old—established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

**The truth is in the (symbolic) pudding**

Prior to their supposed abduction, the Hills stop at a diner to rest and refuel before commencing the final leg of their journey home. As in Strieber’s text, this fixture in reality exudes a distinctly eerie aura: “A forlorn glow came from the windows of a single restaurant, and realizing that this might be the last chance for any bracing refreshment for the rest of the trip, they decided to turn back even though they had driven past it.”[[57]](#footnote-57) In actuality, the fact that they stop for coffee and cake is innocuously inconsequential to the actual paranormal event. But within the narrative of the abduction experience, the diner operates as a pivotal portal to the incredible. Fuller emphasizes that the Hills go out of their way to dine at this particular restaurant. Furthermore, he represses the familiarity of a roadside diner by basing its entire description off “a forlorn glow.” By now, it seems logical to infer that variations of the word “glow” are specific to the vocabulary of UFO experiences. When we piece together the raw sequence of events that are manicured by Fuller’s diction we see how extensively our perspective is informed by Fuller himself, rather than the Hills. Fuller uses the diner primarily to address and subsequently dismiss the unconventionality of the Hills’ interracial marriage: “The restaurant was nearly deserted. A few teen-agers gathered in a far corner. Only one woman, the waitress, in the quiet restaurant seemed to show any reaction at all to the fact that Betty and Barney Hill’s was a mixed marriage: Barney, a strikingly handsome descendent of a proud Ethiopian freeman…”[[58]](#footnote-58) He launches into a swift and efficient history of both the Hills, focusing particularly on their racial and social backgrounds. But by creating a negative parallel between the fact of interracial romance and the temporal interruption of the Hills’ actual journey, the passage has the opposite effect of emphasizing correlation and significance:

[…] what was to happen to them this night of September 19, 1961, had nothing whatever to do with their successful mixed marriage or their dedication to social progress. Nor was there any hint of what was to happen as they sat at the paneled restaurant counter in Colebrook, Barney unceremoniously eating a hamburger, Betty a piece of chocolate layer cake.[[59]](#footnote-59)

The details of their meal and the banal way in which they consume their food creates a sort of suspension in narrative time, allowing the reader temporal space to reflect on the implications of racial anxiety and the significance of their stop at the restaurant. The language of the passage is adamantly passive yet anticipatory at the same time. As the narrative progresses, the diner comes to represent a sort of realistic stage from which the Barney’s anxieties stem. During his session with Dr. Simon, Barney reveals his insecurities about racial difference. He is hyper-aware of the racial identities of the other diners and in particular, the waitress: “There is a dark-skinned woman in there, I think, dark by Caucasian standards, and I wonder—is she a light-skinned Negro, or is she Indian, or is she white?”[[60]](#footnote-60) Barney’s testimony is fraught with such racial ambivalences and consistently attempts to negotiate the unfamiliar in terms of good and evil. In one of his parenthetical interpretive interjections, Fuller notes that Barney’s diction under hypnosis seems almost “Biblical in style.”[[61]](#footnote-61) Fuller uses Barney’s diner experience to explain away theories that the Hills’ experience stems entirely from the stress of being an interracial couple in the sixties. In *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace*, Jodi Dean observes, “Fuller’s effort to downplay race is so strong that Barney Hill himself begins to fade. […] Barney is detached from the history of slavery (his great-grandmother’s mother is not mentioned; the father is a plantation owner), from the reality of racial discrimination, and from his own experiences […].”[[62]](#footnote-62) But Barney’s testimony seems to suggest otherwise; in fact, the alien body appears to be a direct reflection of his racial anxieties. When prompted by Dr. Simon to describe the face of his abductor, Barney pauses then stammers: “I think of—I think of—a red-headed Irishman. I don’t know why.” After pausing again, he hazards his own interpretation: “I think I know why. Because the Irish are usually hostile to Negroes.” This particular alien being seems friendly, however, he goes on to identify what he perceives to be the “evil” alien leader:”

BARNEY: […] And the evil face on the—

(He starts to say “leader.”)

He looks like a German Nazi. He’s a Nazi…

[…]

DOCTOR: How could you see the figures so clearly at that distance?

BARNEY: I was looking at them with binoculars.

DOCTOR: Oh. Did they have faces like other people. You said one was like a red-headed Irishman.

BARNEY: His eyes were slanted. Oh—his eyes were *slanted!* But not like a Chinese—Oh. Oh. *(Quite abruptly.)* I feel like a rabbit. I feel like a rabbit.

By bringing the issue of race into his abduction narrative, Barney gives his testimony social authority. Furthermore, the racial drama brings out a certain element of realism. It is not so much that we believe in the literal racialization of the aliens, but we believe in Barney’s anxiety. We easily slip behind Barney’s binoculars and accept the reality of his fears on a *symbolic* level.

For the reader, the assumption that the Hills were seen by a whole diner-full of witnesses immediately prior to their alleged abduction, undoubtedly adds to the realism of the testimony. Not only does the diner contribute the believability of the story, but it also carries metaphoric weight. At that point in their journey, Barney seems to feel that they are nearing the end of their trip home when he suddenly becomes disoriented:

I feel that my trip is over and I’m on Route 3 and I see Route 3 going left and to the right from straight ahead, and I become confused, and I realize I want to go straight and not to the left. I decide to stop and check my map, and I turn around and go back to a restaurant I have passed—and I park—and we go in.[[63]](#footnote-63)

The sequence of events and the repetitive appearance of the diner throughout the narrative make their stop seem almost causal. Barney’s testimony contextualizes the narrative with spatial placement and more importantly—temporal positioning. At the diner, he is able to somewhat frame the time and place of the abduction that follows by noting that this interlude occurs near or in Colebrook, on Route 3. The temporal fragmentation of Fuller’s narrative intentionally reflects the Hills’ lapse in memory and their own confusion about the chronological sequence of events. Therefore, it is especially noteworthy that Barney is attempts to recall a specific time and mental frame under hypnosis. However, he manages to blur space and time. Eager to return embark on the final leg of his journey home, Barney rushes Betty, noting that “the clock and my watch say five minutes after ten, and I know I should be in Portsmouth, I think, by two o’clock.” The doctor attempts clarification: “Didn’t you say just a while ago it was 1:10 or 1:15?”—to which Barney replies, “I said *Route* 114.”[[64]](#footnote-64) The perplexing and conflicting accounts of exactly where and when the diner scene takes place symbolically situates the intersection between certainty and uncertainty within the story. As the title of the book indicates, the Hills’ story is of an *interrupted journey*—one that hinges on moments that obfuscate this line between the credible and the incredible. Interrupted by the restaurant stop, Betty and Barney Hills’ journey takes a sharp turn for the uncanny.

As previously suggested, the diner functions as testimonial evidence, confirming that the Hills’ experience is capable of existing in the realm of the imaginable. Despite the fact that Barney’s memory of the diner is not completely solid, and seems in fact, to contradict itself at several points, we nevertheless largely assume the existence of the restaurant. This is perhaps due to the authority Fuller gives it as a sort of anchoring centerpiece to his overarching narrative. The image of the restaurant is so repetitive and pervasive that when Betty’s narrative comes into play, the entire illusion of certainty that has been constructed rapidly disintegrates.

BETTY: […] We were driving home, we were looking for some place that was open, so we could see people and get a cup of coffee. And we drove, we were driving along, and we saw a diner. The lights were on in the interior, and we assumed it was open. So we drove into the yard and found that it was closed. And I always felt that if I could find this diner, it might be a clue to what actually happened.

DOCTOR: Yes.

BETTY: And I still haven’t been able to find that diner.

DOCTOR: So there is a possibility later on that you might locate it, is that right?

BETTY: Yes. I’m still looking for it.[[65]](#footnote-65)

While Barney’s memory includes an elaborate and highly emotional experience of entering and dining at the restaurant, Betty’s seems to be oddly abducted. She contends that the diner was in fact closed. Without careful and close reading, this moment would be lost in the confusing disorder of Betty’s hypnotic dialogue. Fuller does not address or attempt to rectify this inconsistency in his commentary. The existence or non-existence of the diner casts an enormous shadow of doubt on the Hills’ testimony. Barney’s highly specific experience at the diner made us assume that it was the one dependable fragment of truth throughout the narrative. Betty’s testimony shakes the entire framework of belief upon which the believability of the narrative depends. However, despite the doubt that is generated by Betty’s inconsistent narrative, we are more inclined to accept Barney’s testimony—not because he seems to be a more reliable witness than Betty (though this may indeed be the case)—but because his version of the story imbues the abduction experience with meaning and symbolic significance. We *want* to believe that their experience is more than a story about alien abduction, so that even if the reality of the abduction falls short of believability, the implication of racial anxiety remains intact and authentic.

The story ends with a final reference to the restaurant: “Neither Barney nor Betty Hill had any thought that they might be involved in such an event when they left the little restaurant at Colebrook, New Hampshire, at 10:05 P.M. on the night of September 19, 1961.”[[66]](#footnote-66) The specifics of the place and time of the diner scene seem to achieve the status of fact, when it is in fact, debatable whether or not the restaurant even exists. At the same time, the diner allows Betty to *hope* for eventual proof—it is the thread that connects her to the reality of her experience. Jodi Dean suggests a different theory: “Maybe that is why when we hear a story of alien abduction and we can’t believe it, we feel reassured. The story sets up the boundary we think we need at a place that surely must be secure(d). The stigma of the alien protects us from facing insecurity even as it enables us to think insecurity to its limits.”[[67]](#footnote-67) Indeed, both the Hills and Whitley Strieber seem to battle their compulsion to pursue belief and their outrage at having been subjected to an experience that is so vulnerable to public criticism and skepticism. They suffer from “Cassandra syndrome”—cursed to experience something that his so privatized that it cannot be easily communicated.

**Terrestrial Bottoms:** The epistemology of victimhood in alien abduction narratives

The protagonists of our abduction narratives struggle with conflicting emotions regarding their disgust at the reality of their experience versus their desire to believe, that complicate their status as victims. This tension is compounded by the sadomasochistic imagery that evolves from abduction testimonies. Alien abduction brings to mind images of “brightly lit, clinical spaces,” and hi-tech penetrations—scenarios which depict the drama of dominance and submission heightened by the threat of the unknown alien.[[68]](#footnote-68) In “Good Subjects: Submitting to the Alien,” Bridget Brown postulates, “To believe one has been abducted by aliens is to be able to transform social captivity and limited possibility into a type of pleasure, albeit bounded.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Throughout *Communion,* Strieber maintains a confusing relationship with his abductors—one that turns increasingly sexual. The aliens exert complete control over their victims; their dominance is made absolute by their technological superiority. Their procedures often inflict pain upon the abductee, but the purpose is far from sexual; rather, the aliens often seem sterile but gendered: “I say *her*, but I don’t know why. To me this is a woman, perhaps because her movements are so graceful, perhaps because she has created states of sexual arousal in me[…] She was undeniably appealing to me. In some sense I thought I might love this being […]” Bridget Brown suggests in “Good Subjects: Submitting to the Alien:”

By attributing the desiring sexual gaze, and tendency toward kinkiness, to the alien, these male abductees can play outside the boundaries of procreative heterosexual sex, without implication or censure. So too can they play at transgressive desire and kinkiness, and assume the passive role fairly common in hetsex fantasy, shamelessly, guiltlessly, suggesting that this role, like their arousal, is quite literally thrust upon them.[[70]](#footnote-70)

The rhetoric of masochism in alien abduction narratives can be further deconstructed in early Puritan possession narratives. In his hallmark sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,* Rev. Edwards elevates the urgency and authority of his message by whetting the sadomasochistic appetite of his Puritan audience with images of eternal bondage, punishment, and submission: “God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to Him, that it is said he will only ‘laugh and mock.’” Shepherding his flock along a trajectory of shifting mentalities and diverse emotive sensations, Edwards texturizes the spiritual experience with an enhanced understanding of abjection. Throughout his sermon, Edwards takes his parishioners into different modes of sadistic dominance in order to contextualize their complete and utter submission to God: “We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth […] thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast His enemies down to hell.”[[71]](#footnote-71) By exhibiting the helplessness with which a worm is at the whim of man, Edwards endeavors to translate the power and wrath of God into relatable terms. Man’s submission is not personalized, but rather summarized: “They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion.” The shift in pronoun significantly places the listener into the role of an observer of tragedy, instead of a participant. Edwards preaches submission to religious authority by demonstrating the unnatural subversion of power: “Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment; […] the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts.”[[72]](#footnote-72) In this passage, man’s artificial authority is rejected; it is a cumbersome detriment to the natural universe. The range of emotional responses to such dynamic homilies are delineated in *A Faithful Narrative*: “[…] the assembly in general were, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors.”[[73]](#footnote-73) By introducing this epistemology of suffering, the rhetoric of such religious narratives motivates an imagination that is distinctly concerned with rationalizing hedonic desires and voyeuristic guilt.

The tribulations of the tormented protagonists are articulated in a language that both objectifies and dramatizes misery. This is particularly evident in Cotton Mather’s testimony *A Brand Pluck’d out of the Burning*, where both the literal and literary observers are further removed from the victimized protagonist through sensory disjunctions that exist on several levels: “Her ears were altogether stopt unto all of our Noises, being wholly engrossed by the Invisible Assailants; insomuch that tho’ wee sometimes halloo’d extremely loud in her ears, yet shee heard nothing of it.”[[74]](#footnote-74) The sensory distancing between Mercy and the spectators of her torment heighten the intrusive presence of an external, voyeuristic gaze. Derived from witnessing scenes of misery, the alleviating pleasures of “virtuous sympathy” hold spectators in captive awe. The protagonists of these narratives often exhibit compelling emotions of pity that are ironically echoed their witnesses’ sympathies: “She often expressed an exceeding compassion and pitiful love, which she found in her heart towards persons in a Christless condition; which was sometimes so strong that as she was passing by such in the streets, or those that she feared were such, she would be overcome by the sight of them.”[[75]](#footnote-75) This phenomenon makes narratives of suffering morally and ethically significant.

At the same time, the integrity of trauma is corrupted by an effort to sensationalize distress in order to accommodate the presence of an external observer: “Reader, If thou hadst a Desire to have seen a Picture of Hell, it was visible in the doleful Circumstances of Mercy Short!”[[76]](#footnote-76) Abruptly disrupting the intimacy of his personal dialogue, Mather addresses a public audience—one that transcends both space and time. By harkening to an unknown “Reader,” Mather expands the sphere of shared experience from the private community of those who actually witnessed the possession of Mercy Short to encompass a wider literary public. The address continues: “Here was one lying in Outer Darkness, haunted with the Divel and his Angels, deprived of all common Comforts, tortured with most cruciating Fires, Wounded with a thousand Pains all over, and cured immediately, that the Pains of those Wounds might bee repeated.”[[77]](#footnote-77) Mercy’s suffering is systematically reinforced through her masochistic tendencies. We are only privy to a one-sided dialogue: “Indeed Wee could not hear what They said unto her […] But Wee could Hear Her Answers, and from her Answers Wee could usually gather the Tenour of Their Assaults.”[[78]](#footnote-78) This censorship has the effect of making Mercy’s utterances seem proactive, despite her passive identity as the victim: “Do, Burn mee then, if you will.” By vocalizing her willingness to endure the torments of her daemons, Mercy transcends the mantel of victimhood and becomes the ultimate submissive. Even Mather’s objective observation of the “horrible Threatnings of miseries which they would inflict upon her,” cannot escape the jurisdiction of Mercy’s masochistic imagination.

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Locke delineates the intimate dichotomy between pleasure and pain: “*Pain is often produced by the same Objects* and Ideas, *that produce Pleasure* in us.”[[79]](#footnote-79) Intentional by divine design, this symbiotic “Conjunction” functions on both spiritual and corporeal levels. On a purely organic level, pain operates as a mechanism “necessary to the preservation of life.” Particularly relevant to this discourse on religious experience is Locke’s philosophy of divine providence: “[…] that we finding imperfection, dissatisfaction, and want of complete happiness, in all the Enjoyments which the Creatures can afford us, might be led to seek it in the enjoyment of him, *with whom there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.*”[[80]](#footnote-80) According to Locke’s theory, the distress of man’s abject existence instigates his search for eternal comfort. By reinforcing the authenticity of pain, Locke legitimizes the productive potential of suffering.

Locke’s treatise elevates the significance of the Body as an ultimate instrument for worship and divine communion. The gendered testimony of Sarah Edwards attempts to reconcile sexual desire with the Puritan ethos: **“I seemed to myself perceive a glow of divine love come down from the heart of Christ in heaven, into my heart, in a constant stream, like a stream or pencil of sweet light.”[[81]](#footnote-81) The phallic imagery here is subtle yet consistent with the theme of alternatively demonic penetration endured by Mercy Short: “[…] they stuck innumerable pins into her. Many of those pins They did themselves pluck out again; and yet They left the Bloody Marks of them […] They thrust an hot Iron down her Throat.”[[82]](#footnote-82) Both Mercy Short and Sarah Edwards express their desires through masochistic imaginations. Mercy Short does so by portraying herself as the unwilling victim of corruptive forces: “They would then come and sitt upon her Breast, and pull open her Jaw.” Her guilt is absolved by her constant and convincing struggle. Sarah Edwards, on the other hand, exhibits a willing masochism in which she offers herself in devoted submission to God’s whim, “with respect to the kind and manner of death that I should die; having been made willing to die on the rack, or at the stake, or any other tormenting death, and, if it were God’s pleasure and for his glory, to die in horror.”[[83]](#footnote-83) This “language of resignation” ultimately consumes her as she subjects herself to the pain of death by starvation.**

An examination of the relationship between pain and desire reinforce the moral and epistemic authority of an experience. The devoted Christian submissive expresses a zealous enthusiasm to emulate the Passion narrative and suffer for the sins of others. This willingness to do penance engenders a desire to punish others, and the threat of punishment “drives the wild excess of the sinner, who secretly wishes the same punishment upon himself.” As Edwards articulates in *A Divine and Supernatural Light,* “Conscience is a principle natural to men; and the work that it doth naturally, or of itself, is to give an apprehension of right and wrong; and to suggest to the mind the relation that there is between right and wrong, and a retribution.”[[84]](#footnote-84) The language of sadomasochism in Puritan literature allows for creative subversion of conventional roles. Rules regarding dominance and submission regulate and construct a framework that is then manipulated at the convenience of the self-victimizing protagonists. The construal of pain, whether directly experienced or witnessed, hijacks the traditional narratives and enhances the victim’s imaginative potential. These victims, abducted by demons, not only challenge sexual norms, but also the boundaries of belief.

In Chapter Ten, Barney expresses his secret impulse to prove and reify the incident in spite of his fear and overall desire to completely reject the entire experience:

BARNEY: […] It was the same type of power as I tried to describe, a force that was causing me to continue to come closer to it, even when I wanted to run away.

DOCTOR: A fascination in spite of your fear?

BARNEY: Well, fascination was there. I was amazed.

DOCTOR: All of this was a feeling in yourself. Wasn’t it? […] As if it were being produced from something stronger than yourself.

BARNEY: It was being produced by something stronger than me, outside of me, that I wasn’t creating this.

DOCTOR: I see. This power. [[85]](#footnote-85)

Betty too, is concerned with this mysterious desire to investigate the facts of their experience even though parts of it are evidently highly traumatizing and distressing. When strange lights begin to appear in the sky, she recalls passing a motel “somewhere between the Flume and Indian Head.” Again, we are presented with eerie images of secluded cabins, and “one cottage on the end that had a light on” with a man standing in the door. Betty consciously recognizes that her instinct is compelling her to subject herself to the danger of the unknown:

And I saw this and I thought, if I want to I can get out of this whole situation right now. All we have to do is drive in here, and this object will go away. And that will be the end of it. I mean, this is our escape from it, if I want this. And I was thinking this, and I didn’t say anything to Barney, I didn’t say anything. All I could think of was, I don’t know where we’re going, but I’m ready for it.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Here, Betty realizes her own agency and seems to be able to navigate her true experience more lucidly. Although she identifies as a victim of abduction, Betty seems captivated by the possibility of the strange and the unknown. Something about it translates to her as a positive hope, despite the somewhat traumatic experience of being seized and examined by aliens. Later, Betty is able to recall, through hypnosis, being given a book in an unintelligible language. She becomes attached to this alien artifact, protesting, “This is my proof. […] I won’t ever forget about it! You can take the book, but you can *never, never, never* make me forget! I’ll remember it if it is the last thing I do.” The visitor responds by explaining, “If you do remember, it would be better if you forgot it anyway.” During one particularly emotional session with Dr. Simon, Barney expresses conflicting desires to believe. When the doctor prompts him for an objective answer as to whether or not he was abducted, Barney has difficulty separating himself from the emotions evoked by belief:

BARNEY: I feel I was abducted.

DOCTOR: *Were* you abducted. Not “how do you feel.” *Were* you abducted?

BARNEY: Yes. I don’t want to believe I was abducted.

DOCTOR: But you are convinced you were?

BARNEY: I say “I feel” because this makes it comfortable for me to accept something I don’t want to accept, that has happened.[[87]](#footnote-87)

For the abductees, belief is as inevitable as the abduction was, and it is important for them to convey a sense of helplessness. The language of alien abduction is highly submissive—the word “abducted” occurs only in the passive sense; our protagonists relate the experience of *being* abducted. In the same way, the reader is expected to resist belief yet be captivated by the possibility that some aspects of the story are true. UFO narratives present a range of opportunities for belief. The legal jargon of “innocent until proven guilty” applies also to philosophy on extraterrestrial life. Because the universe is infinite, it becomes more difficult to harbor disbelief than it is to simply acknowledge the potential for truth within UFO narratives. As one participant at the 1992 MIT abduction observed about the lack of conclusive proof of the extraterrestriality of UFOs, “the absence of evidence is not *evidence of absence.*”[[88]](#footnote-88)

In *Communion: A True Story,* Strieber negotiates the (in)credibility of his narrative through his attachment to the image of a barn owl. Although he finds his experience highly traumatizing—going so far as to relate it to that of a rape victim—he nevertheless is desperately hopeful that what he experienced was real:

I awoke the morning of the twenty-seventh very much as usual, but grappling with a distinct sense of unease and a very improbable but intense memory of seeing a barn owl staring at me through the window sometime during the night. I remember how I felt in the gathering evening of the twenty-seventh, when I looked out onto the roof and saw that there were no owl tracks in the snow. I knew I had not seen an owl. I shuddered, suddenly cold […]. But I wanted desperately to believe in that owl. [[89]](#footnote-89)

As it turns out, Strieber comes to the conclusion that the image of the owl was an intentionally placed figment of his abductor’s imaginations. Therefore, the image of the owl—not the actuality of a barn owl—operates as point of credibility to his experience. Strieber relies on the community of contactees; he attempts to explain away the inconsistencies in his narrative by correlating them to the equally incredible experiences of others. In this way, the unbelievable aspects of his narrative are normalized. Strieber’s emotions are first and foremost that of anger and rage, but he—like Betty—is seduced by the intense sensations, emotions, and insights they feel emanate from their unique experience. As he clarifies, “it’s not a question of being a hero. It’s much more a question of not wanting to walk out before the end of the movie.”[[90]](#footnote-90) Ultimately, the desire to believe manipulates the language that enshrines the experience so that it can, as I have previously postulated, achieve the status of fact.

**The Blind Eyewitness**

“All philosophy,” I told her, “is based on two things only: curiosity and poor eyesight; if you had better eyesight you could see perfectly well whether or not these stars are solar systems, and if you were less curious you wouldn’t care about knowing, which amounts to the same thing, but we see things other than as they are.”

--Fontanelle, Conversations

The evolution of belief is illustrated through moments that repeatedly appear but seem to slightly change at every turn. Towards the beginning of *The Interrupted Journey,* Fuller enshrines one such conspicuous moment in his own diction:

Betty remembers faintly saying to her husband: “Now do you believe in flying saucers?” And he recalls answering: “Don’t be ridiculous. Of course not.”[[91]](#footnote-91)

In this first iteration of the exchange, Barney’s disbelief is quite apparent. He dismisses Betty’s suggestion as ridiculous, thus relating to a skeptical reader’s mindset that the notion of flying saucers is preposterous. By “Don’t be ridiculous,” he means “of course” he does *not* believe in flying saucers. The moment is then recast in Betty’s own words:

And I’m so happy, and I said, “Well, Barney, now try to tell me that you don’t believe in flying saucers.” And Barney said, “Oh, don’t be ridiculous!” And I think he is joking.[[92]](#footnote-92)

In this reading of the exchange, Barney’s skepticism is questioned; Betty seems to interpret his retort as positive sarcasm. Finally, Barney himself presents an unquestionable version of the dialogue that completely inverts the original implication:

And as we drove further on, Betty then remarked to me, “Well, now do you believe in flying saucers?” And I said, “Don’t be ridiculous, Betty. […] I basically *know* what had *happened, happened.* And this is why I think the whole thing’s ridiculous, to even ask the question. (243)

The transformation of this moment throughout the book is representative of the way belief evolves from the narration of an experience. Shifts in perspective occur constantly throughout the book—from Fuller’s interpretation of the evidence, to Dr. Simon’s professional opinion of the Hills’ psychology, to Betty and Barney’s individual testimonies. Indeed, Barney’s own version of the conversation is radically different from Fuller’s initial mention of it. While he starts out as a skeptic himself, Barney seems to become overwhelmingly convinced by the authority of his own testimony. His initial ambivalence is replaced by an unquestionable conviction that the memories he accesses through hypnosis are fact. The word “ridiculous” appears in every version of the dialogue, but Barney eventually subverts its original implication. By the end, *skepticism* is ridiculed, and the non-believer is shunned. In their concluding sessions with Dr. Simon, Betty and Barney express relief at having dealt with the anxiety caused by their experience: “They felt that some kind of permanent record should be established in the event that future happenings should confirm what they both now were willing to consider possible: the reality of the experience.”[[93]](#footnote-93) Having regained their memory of the abduction, the Hills’ first impulse is to communicate what they have experienced via the written word. In *The Myth and Mystery of UFOs* Thomas E. Bullard explains: “Creating a text engages cultural preferences for telling a story and established frameworks of meaning, so that patterns emerge in the human treatment of a phenomenon.”[[94]](#footnote-94) To this extent, in the same way Dr. Simon’s scientific authority seems to solidify the credibility of their testimony, John Fuller’s literary authority appeals to them because it establishes their story as one of significant and public interest. In a letter to Betty’s mother, the Hills conclude, “We hope the publication of this book will enable the reader to judge for himself and to decide if this is illusion, hallucination, dream, or reality.”[[95]](#footnote-95) Ultimately, the reality of the experience is, in a sense, defined by the perception of the reader, and for the reader, the meanings derived from a literary text transcend literal interpretation.

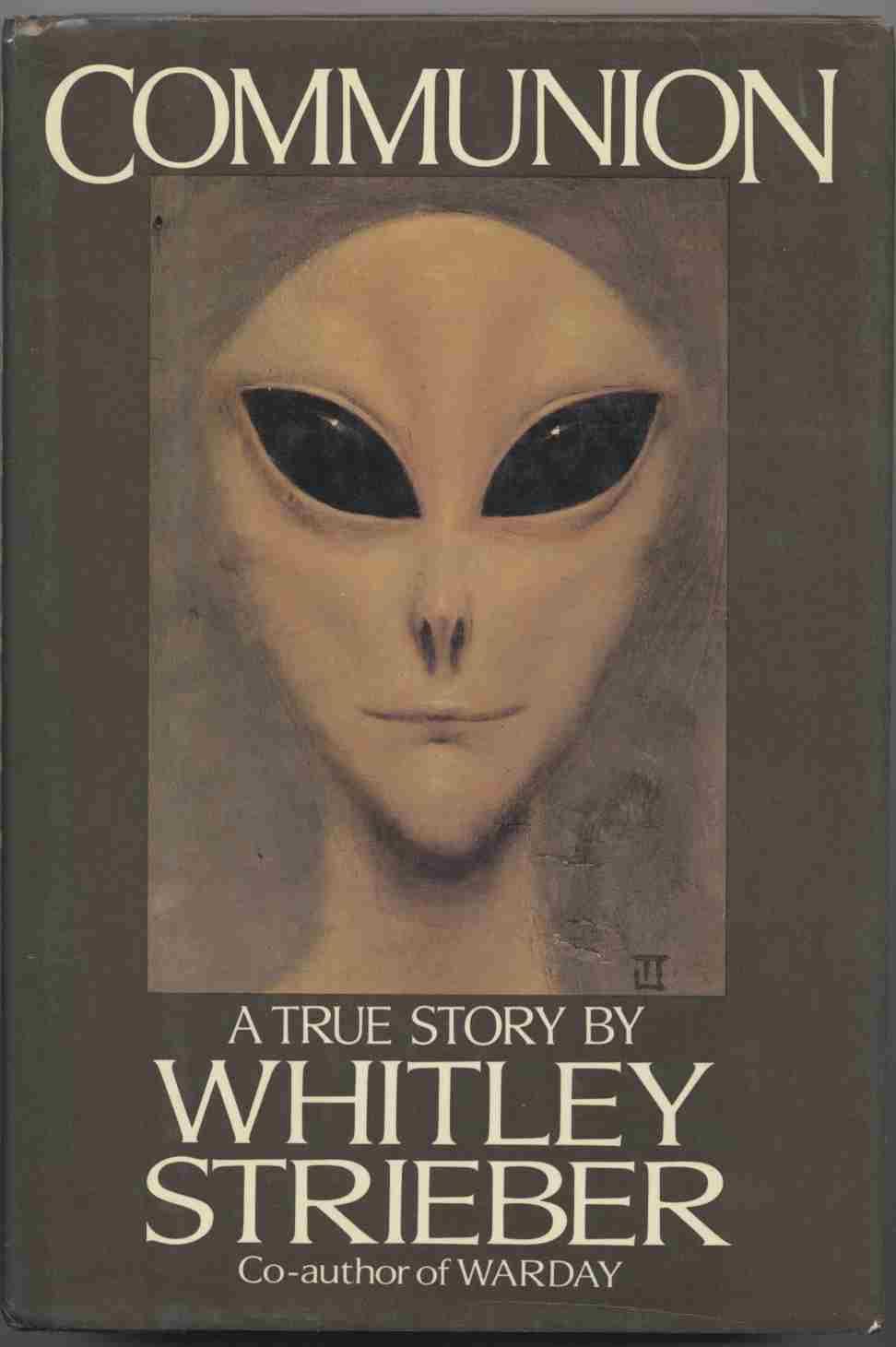
The subjectivity of perception—and in particular, of *visual* perception is of paramount concern to those engaged in alien abduction narratives. In *Communion*, Strieber muses:

[…] why was Homer blind? It is known that many different storytellers comprise ‘Homer.’ Perhaps hysterical blindness was commonplace among prehistoric Greek bards out of whose tales the classical pantheon emerged. I don’t blame them. Hysterical blindness and congenial belief systems would both be excellent defenses against things similar to what I have seen.[[96]](#footnote-96)

Dismissing religious and mythological narratives as illusions that obfuscate literal reality, Strieber suggests that symbolic interpretation signifies the same “hysterical blindness” that inspired such prolific poets as Homer. Later on in the narrative, Strieber propositions us with the narrative of a perceptual psychologist with prodigious memory and “eyes so superb that he can see the moons of Jupiter unaided.” The description of the man is mythic and legendary—he remains nameless throughout the anecdote and inhabits the role of the ‘ideal’ eyewitness. Not only does he have the gift of superhuman vision, but his expertise also gives him the added authority of one who possesses “encyclopedic knowledge of just exactly how the brain perceives things, and what misperceptions mean” at his disposal.[[97]](#footnote-97) For Strieber, literal interpretation of the information taken in by the human eye renders objects unknowable and unidentifiable. At the same time, the disempowerment of confronting the unknown is exaggerated by the voyeuristic alien presence. The gaze of the alien becomes increasingly intense throughout the narrative, and seems to translate literally on the alien body in the eyes:

By far the most arresting feature in this face was the eyes. They were far larger than our own eyes. In them I once or twice glimpsed a suggestion of black iris and pupil, but it was no more than a suggestion, as if there were optic structures of some kind floating behind those wells of darkness […] I was oppressed by it; there was an acute impression of being watched […][[98]](#footnote-98)

The cover of the book depicts Strieber’s perception of the “visitors’” face, featuring the trademark, oversized eyes of the popularized alien icon.



The eyes of the visitor are exaggerated by the pale, muted colors and slender face. They intensify the gaze of an unknown entity and exude a sense of mystery or even paranoia. Though eyes are the most emotive features of a face, the alien’s eyes are blank and expressionless—we cannot penetrate them, and we cannot know the direction of the gaze. In his detailed description of one of the visitors, Strieber *is* able to connect on a somewhat emotional level:

She had those amazing, electrifying eyes…the huge, staring eyes of the old gods…they were featureless, in the sense that I could see neither pupil nor iris.[…] In some sense I thought I might love this being—almost as much as I might my own anima. I bore toward her the same feelings of terror and fascination that I might toward someone I saw staring back at me from the depths of my unconscious.[[99]](#footnote-99)

The eyes of the alien become a sort of reflection of the psyche of the human observer. On a symbolic level, this voyeuristic inversion suggests that while our inspired attempts to learn more about an unknown ‘other’ are cast ever-outwards, they do not reveal profound insights about what lies beyond, but rather, what pulses within. On another level, the more evolved alien vision renders us helpless and relatively blind: “Maybe this was quite literally a stage, and we were blind actors.”[[100]](#footnote-100)

**“Only the Blind are Free:” Blindness as a theme in Science Fiction**

Sensory perception and stimulus is a central theme in Samuel Delany’s space opera *Nova* (1968). Set in the 32nd century, the novel depicts a galaxy divided into two political factions: the older Earth-based Draco and the younger Pleiades Federation. Represented by captain Lorq Von Ray, the Pleiades Federation is pitted against Prince Red of Draco’s Red Shift Ltd. in a race to harvest large amounts of Illyrion from the heart of a stellar nova. Caught in this feud between the aristocratic Red family and the economically powerful Pleiades Federation, is a motley crew of misfit “cyborg studs.” Among these recruits is Pontichos Provechi, (a.k.a. Mouse), a young “Gypsy” from Earth whose time is mostly spent spinning enchanting sensory illusions and visual holograms with his precious “sensory syrynx.” Although the narrative is divided pretty evenly among the cast, the reader tends to gravitate towards Mouse’s relatively impartial point of view. In the mythological framework that structures the text, Mouse figures prominently as the lyre-playing orator. The novel opens: “Hey, Mouse! Play us something.”[[101]](#footnote-101) And so, the story begins.

A mysterious, blind man wanders into the opening pages of the novel: “He was an old man. He was a strong man. […] Old. Strong. The third thing the Mouse saw: blind.”[[102]](#footnote-102) Blind Dan immediately unravels the driving force of the novel—the quest for a *nova.* A veteran cyborg stud for Lorq Von Ray, Dan’s blindness is a casualty of a botched mission that exposed him to the overwhelming rays of a stellar nova, jamming the “rods and cones of [his] retina to constant stimulation.”[[103]](#footnote-103) Despite his blindness, Dan possesses a vision that gives us insight to the dangers of sensory stimulus. In this futuristic universe, senses cannot be trusted. We discover this with Mouse, who spins fantastic visions enhanced by sounds and smells that mimic reality.

In abduction narratives, the dependability of eyesight and visual perception is of paramount concern. To what extent does visual perception equate to truth? Is this bond between the material exterior and our internal psyche a window or a prison? To see or not to see—that is the question in Margaret Atwood’s multilayered novel, *The Blind Assassin* (2000). Like the abduction narratives I have previously investigated, Atwood’s romance combines elements of gothic drama and science fiction fantasy. With its complicated maze of juxtaposing images, the novel challenges the age-old adage, “seeing is believing” by revealing the inconsistencies of conflicting implications that are manifest within a single photograph. We are guided through this labyrinth of faulty visuals by the soothing voice of Iris, who by definition of her own name, is charged with the task of determining what we do or do not see.[[104]](#footnote-104) Caught within a suffocating web of deceptive images, Iris struggles with the problematic shortcomings of sight as a reliable agent of truth. In fact as the plot thickens, we too become increasingly aware of the not only misguiding, but also inhibiting inadequacy of sight. “Only the blind are free” is a dictum subscribed to by the carpet-weaving children of Sakiel-Norn, and it is a conclusion Iris ultimately reaches, despite the devastating costs of her ignorance. Without this blindness, there would be “no stories, because there [would be] no journeys.”[[105]](#footnote-105) The disastrous results of her inability to see are what ultimately give her force to break free from stifling images projected onto to her by others, and establish a true identity. Finally, Iris realizes that embracing blindness is part of the process of achieving truth, as well as the only salvation from the iron cast of the past and future—of history and fate.

Through the medium of photography, one moment in time is granted certain immortality, forever having a place of its own in the present. But as the captured image is transformed from its three dimensional existence and exiled to the confines of a two dimensional image, it loses a fundamental part of its being. The framework of the novel is centered upon the photograph of a picnic. As the photo repeatedly swims its way to the surface of the plot, it takes on different messages, insights, meanings, and appearances each time. The initial description of the “picnic photograph” is presented in the Prologue of Laura’s “book.” In this sketch, Iris appears enamored by Alex, smiling “in a way she can’t remember smiling at anyone since.”[[106]](#footnote-106) The romantic mood is perpetuated by the somewhat perplexing issue of Alex’s hand. The photograph shows him “holding up his hand,” and yet this action lends itself to a mélange of conflicting interpretations: “as if to fend her off […] or else to protect himself from the camera […] or else to protect himself from those in the future who might be looking at him […] As if to protect himself from her. To protect her.”[[107]](#footnote-107) The varying interpretations of his gesture all focus on the theme of protection. In this observation of the “picnic photo,” Alex assumes the role of the protective man, while Iris enjoys her youth and explores love.

However, this dreamy romanticism exists only within the Prologue. Though the newspaper publishes the exact photograph described in the Prologue, the interpretation has completely changed. The once “protective” arm of Alex is not compared to the guilty reflex of “gangland criminals” shielding themselves from “the flashbulbs when they were being arrested.”[[108]](#footnote-108) Reenie’s harsh judgments ascribe a completely different view of the girls. The look of “smiling in a way she can’t remember smiling at anyone before” refers to the exact same facial expression described by Reenie as a “silly leer.” Because photographs rely entirely on sight, they will always be subject to the interpretations of others. There is no preservation of truth in photos, only the unreliability of people’s emotions.

Throughout *The Blind Assassin*, images (in the form of photographs) are used to mark important events in life. But the portrayed image is almost always contradictory to the feelings and experiences of the subjects. In the case of “A Beautiful Bride,” Iris completely rejects the identity captured by her wedding photograph. Iris can neither appreciate nor identify with the image of her matrimonial self. The criticisms she makes about her appearance highlight several imprisoning burdens of her garb. Her feet are steeped in “spilled molasses,” her dress is “too straight,” her eyes are weighed down by the shadow of her veil. Again, Atwood uses the juxtaposition between the implications of beauty made by the caption and the ugliness of the bride’s imprisoning garb to create conflict between sight and reality. Iris implies that her “beauty” was required—it was an obligation which further condemned her to visual judgment. In her parenthetical rationalization of third person usage, Iris cannot “recall having been present […] I and the girl in the picture have ceased to be the same person.”[[109]](#footnote-109) She develops a blind spot within her consciousness, and lifts the curse of her doomed marriage. By severing this particular image of the past from her collective memory, Iris liberates herself from the oppressive clutches of societal expectations.

Like photos, the mirror also fails to accurately reflect an image of reality for Iris, who struggles with her identity throughout the novel. Even in her old age, Iris cannot identify herself with confidence and clarity. “When I look in the mirror, I see an old woman; or not old, because nobody is allowed to be *old* anymore. *Older,* then.”[[110]](#footnote-110) Iris continues to struggle with her perceived notions of what is “allowed” and not “allowed.” She changes her identity from “old” to “older” for superficial reasons. Her “old—or not old—older” makes her seem hesitant and unsure. Her identity seems to be primarily determined by the image of her grandmother—a woman she has never met before, as well as her late mother. The closest Iris gets to describing herself is when she has flashbacks of the “young girl’s face I once spent so much time rearranging and deploring, drowned and floating just beneath my present face, which seems—especially in the afternoons, with the light on a slant—so loose and transparent I could peel it off like a stocking.”[[111]](#footnote-111) When Iris looks into the mirror, she allows herself to think of her current image as temporary—as a mask that can be removed at will. It is not the mirror that is defective, but rather, it is the failure of sight to accurately translate the mirror’s reflection. Essentially, anything that requires the use of sight, may be manipulated by our inner desires and motives to reflect a subjective perception, which is the crux of the issue of belief in alien abduction narratives. Ultimately, Isis realizes the futility and dangers of relying on visual objects for semblances of truth. Isis realizes that photographs and mirrors cannot be considered reliable bases on which to develop judgments. The consequences of her oversights are dire and irreversible. But Iris realizes that blindness ultimately grants her salvation from her numbed existence with the Griffens.

For the carpet-weaving children of Sakiel-Norn, “the blind are free” because blindness is the only salvation from the present. For them, the ability to see keeps them chained to the weaving machine. They produce “delicate veils […] as light as spiderwebs, and […] carpets so soft and fine you would think you were walking on air, an air made to resemble flowers and flowing water.”[[112]](#footnote-112) This description is surprisingly poetic for Alex, whose pace and style of narration doesn’t typically have room for flowery fancies. Therefore, the main purpose of this imagery is to inspire a comparison between the tapestry slaves and the figurative weaver of literary tapestry. The issue of blindness exists on many levels for Iris. As a writer, Iris can be compared to the tapestry children. She must weave a tapestry—one made of intricately fine threads of interconnected stories and characters. Like the carpets of Sakiel-Norn, her story requires the closest attention to detail so as to maintain order within the complex web of plots. The advantages of blindness are only really explored in Alex’s tale of the blind assassin and the mute girl. She is often blinded by her inability to “make sense out of what [she] was seeing.” Her vision is distorted by near-sightedness—“as if my eyes were right up against whatever I was supposed to be looking at, and I would come away only with textures: roughness of brick or stone, smoothness of waxed wooden banisters, harshness of mangy fur […] glass eyes.”[[113]](#footnote-113) Indeed, Iris’ mistakes are often results of her inability to see an overall truth. As Iris nears the end of her story, she detaches herself her own recorded legacy: “What I remembered, and also what I imagined, which is also the truth. I thought of myself as recording. A bodiless hand, scrawling across a wall.”[[114]](#footnote-114) This bodiless hand writes blindly and perfectly.

On another level, Iris is a sister. The small superficialities of married life with Richard, and the upkeep of her social image, numb Iris’ senses. The drastic and dire consequences of her semi-willful and semi-induced blindness ultimately yank her out of the easy comforts of high society. Blindness and the drastic consequences of it are her salvation from the clutches of a satisfied life of complacency. Iris finally takes the initiative to stand up against Richard and the tyrannical rule of Winifred after the tragic death of her sister. “Some of the best things are done by those with nowhere to turn, by those who don’t have much time, by those who truly understand the word *helpless.* They dispense with the calculation of risk and profit, they take no thought for the future, they’re forced at spear point into the present tense. Thrown over a precipice, you fall or else you fly; you clutch at any hope, however unlikely; however—if I may use such an overworked word—miraculous.”[[115]](#footnote-115) The death of Laura and the weight of her secrets are what ultimately drive Iris to assert herself; the *consequences* of blindness liberate our protagonist. Ironically, photographs and emblems of visual reality only serve to confuse and further blind Iris. It is only the driving force of blindness which shakes Iris from her trance.

As a mother and grandmother, Iris embraces blindness as the promise of liberty for her future generations: “Since Laura is no longer who you thought she was, you’re no longer who you think you are either. That can be a shock, but it can also be a relief. For instance, you are no relation at all to Winifred, and none to Richard. There’s not a speck of Griffen in you at all: your hands are clean on that score.”[[116]](#footnote-116) Iris finally and absolutely washes her hands clean of the evil blood of the Griffens. She then offers her daughter blind freedom: “You’re grandfather was Alex Thomas, and as to who his father was, well the sky’s the limit. Rich man, poor man, beggar-man, saint, a score of countries of origin, a dozen cancelled maps, a hundred leveled villages—take your pick. Your legacy from him is the realm of infinite speculation. You are free to reinvent yourself at will.”[[117]](#footnote-117) Iris accepts that blindness is a process of achieving truth. The truth of lineage liberates both Iris and her descendants from the oppressive memories of the Griffens. In the end, blindness is crucial to the human experience: “Without such ignorance, such carelessness, how could we live? If you knew what was going to happen, if you knew everything that was going to happen next—if you knew in advance the consequences of your own actions—you’d be doomed. You’d be as ruined as God. You’d be a stone. […] You’d never love anyone, ever again. You’d never dare to.”[[118]](#footnote-118)

IMAGES OF SPACE

The rawest pieces of information available to the reader throughout *The Interrupted Journey* are the doctor transcripts, which detail the Hills’ hypnosis sessions with Dr. Simon. However, even these sections of the book seem to inadvertently dramatize the interaction, creating a noticeably theatrical rendition of the dialogue. Bullard writes:

As soon as speakers or writers organize their thinking into a text, they shape their memories into a shared language and forms of expression, whereupon texts take on an autonomous life with social dynamics guiding formulation, transmission, adaptation, and variation.[[119]](#footnote-119)

The script-like presentation of the conversations, project the Hills onto a symbolic stage. Fuller’s italicized and parenthesized “stage directions” seem rather subjective at times. When Barney begins describing the initial UFO sighting, Fuller interjects: “*(His tone reflects the strangeness, now. Ominously.)”* And later, when Betty pauses, Fuller chooses to suggest that her pause is “*as if to recall the picture more clearly*.”[[120]](#footnote-120) As Terry Matheson argues: “A more skeptical commentator could argue just as easily that the pause is to allow her time for further fabulation.”[[121]](#footnote-121) Fuller’s treatment of the doctor-patient transcripts reflects the very conspicuous way in which raw testimony is transmogrified by the interpretations of the external viewer.

In the same way language transforms the literal into the literary, engendering a coherent set of meanings, images—as Atwood illustrates—possess a “rhetorical function of symbolism, representation and persuasion” that make them highly subjective artifacts. Cassie Smith defines the term “visual rhetoric” as a “theoretical framework examining how visual images communicate different messages.”[[122]](#footnote-122) A similarly dramatic, organic narrative emerges from the pantheon of mythic NASA photographs and candy-colored Hubble telescope images that guide and influence our extraterrestrial imaginations.

1. Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Minister’s Vigil,” *The Scarlet Letter* (205. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman, *The Unidentified* (New York: Warner Books, 1975), 236-249. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jane D. Marsching, “Orbs, Blobs, and Glows: Astronauts, UFOs, and Photography,” *Art Journal,* Vol. 62, No. 3 (Autumn, 2003), pp. 56-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lee Quinby, *Anti-Apocalypse: Essays in Genealogical Criticism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Carl G. Jung, *Flying saucers: a modern myth of things seen in the skies,* trans. by R.F.C. Hull, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lucian, "True Histories," in *Chattering Courtesans and Other Sardonic Sketches*, trans. Keith Sidwell, 309-346 (London: Penguin Books, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. S.C. Fredericks, "Lucian's True History as SF," *Science Fiction Studies* (SF-TH Inc) 3, no. 1 (March 1976): 49-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. S.C. Fredericks, "Lucian's True History as SF," *Science Fiction Studies* (SF-TH Inc) 3, no. 1 (March 1976): 49-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid, 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid, 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The racial composition of the couple becomes *significantly irrelevant*—that Barney Hill is African American is repeatedly trivialized to the point of making interpreters seem preoccupied with denial. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Margalit Fox, “Betty Hill, 85, Figure in Alien Abduction Case,” *New York Times*, 23 October, 2004, A18, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2007).* [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid, A18. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. In my analysis, I draw from an English translation of Lucian’s original text. While some of the author’s original intent may be lost in either time or translation, my analysis should not be compromised because, as I attempt to prove, the authority of any text transcends the reality of the original experience from which it descends. I will be referring to the Loeb Classical Library translation of Lucian’s *A True Story* by A.M. Harmon. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Lucian, “A True Story,” in *LUCIAN: Volume I*, trans. A.M. Harmon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Lucian, “A True Story,” 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Steven D. Smith, “Lucian’s *True Story* and the Ethics of Empire,” in *A Lucian for Our Times,* ed. Adam Bartley (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Thomas E. Bullard, “Explaining UFOs: An Inward Look,” in *The Myth and Mystery of UFOs* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas), 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Lucian, “A True Story,” 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Whitley Strieber, *Communion: A True Story*, (New York: Beech Tree Books, 1987), 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Lucian, “A True Story,” 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Betty Hill in *An Interrupted Journey: Two Lost Hours “Aboard a Flying Saucer,”* by John G. Fuller, (New York: The Dial Press, 1966), xv. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Lucian, “A True Story,” 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Walter Webb in *An Interrupted Journey: Two Lost Hours “Aboard a Flying Saucer,”* by John G. Fuller, (New York: The Dial Press, 1966), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Pictures scanned from *The UFO Book: Encyclopedia of the Extraterrestrial.* Jerome Clark, Visible Ink Press, 1998. 372-375. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Jerome Clark, *The UFO Book: Encyclopedia of the Extraterrestrial.* (Visible Ink press, 1998), 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Marsching, “Orbs, Blobs, and Glows: Astronauts, UFOs, and Photography,” 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Lucian, “A True Story,” 253. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Fuller, *An Interrupted Journey,* 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Steiber, *Communion: A True Story,* 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter,* 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter,* 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. “Bears and red foxes roam freely. In a few weeks hunters in scarlet or luminous orange jackets will be on the trials, intent on deer or riffed grouse.” [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey* 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Lucian, “A True Story,” 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Lucian, “A True Story,” 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Edgar Allen Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings,* ed. David Galloway, (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVII: An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works,* trans. James Strachey, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1995), 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’”168. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Walpole 17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Jentsch [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Terry Matheson, *Alien Abductions,* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Susan Lepselter, “The License: Poetics, Power, and the Uncanny,” in *E.T. Culture,* ed. Debbora Battaglia, (London: Duke University Press, 2005), 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Susan Lepselter, “The License: Poetics, Power, and the Uncanny,” 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Strieber, *Communion: A True Story,* 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Public image drawn by “LeCire.” No copyright. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Jean-Bruno Renard, “The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial: Two Figures of Evolutionist Fantasy,” *Diogenes*, Sage Publications, <http://dio/sagepub.com/content/32/127/63.citation>, (accessed January 12, 2011), 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Frederick V. Malmstrom, “Close Encounters of the Facial Kind,” *Skeptic, vol. 11,* (November 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid, 73 [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. *(In his normal conversation, Barney seldom starts his sentences with and. Yet here, he seems to do so constantly, almost in Biblical style.)* in Fuller, 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Jodi Dean, *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace,*  (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998),165. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Dean, *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace,* 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Bridget Brown, *They Know Us Better Than We Know Ourselves: The History and Politics of Alien Abduction,* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Brown, *They Know Us Better Than We Know Ourselves: The History and Politics of Alien Abduction,* 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Bridget Brown, “Good Subjects: Submitting to the Alien,” 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Edwards. Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. 585 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Edwards, Wrath, 589 [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Edwards, A Faithful Narrative, 151 [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Mather, 262 [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Edwards, Faithful Narrative, 196 [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Mather, 267 [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Mather, 267 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Mather, 262 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Locke, 129 [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Locke, 130 [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Sarah Edwards [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Mather, 264 [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Sarah Edwards [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Edwards, 208 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 238. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 150 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 281-282. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. C.D.B. Bryan, *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind: Alien Abduction, UFOs, and the Conference at MIT* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Strieber, *Communion: A True Story,* 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Strieber, *Communion: A True Story,* 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,* 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Bullard, “Explaining UFOs: An Inward Look,” 39-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey,*  xvi [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Strieber, *Communion: A True Story,* 125 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Ibid, 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Strieber, *Communion: A True Story,* 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Strieber, *Communion: A True Story,* 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Ibid, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Samuel Delany, *Nova*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Delany, *Nova,* 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Delany, *Nova,* 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. The ‘iris’ of an eye regulates the amount of light entering the eye. It is the pigmented, round, contractile membrane of the eye, suspended between the cornea and lens and perforated by the pupil. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin,* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Atwood, *The Blind Assassin,* 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Ibid, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Ibid, 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Atwood, *The Blind Assassin,* 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Ibid, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Atwood, *The Blind Assassin,* 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Ibid, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Atwood, *The Blind Assassin,* 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Ibid, 512. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Atwood, *The Blind Assassin,* 256. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Ibid, 513. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Ibid, 513. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Atwood, *The Blind Assassin,* 518. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Bullard, “Explaining UFOs: An Inward Look,” 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Fuller, *An Interrupted Journey,* 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Matheson, “ *Alien Abductions,* 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Cassie Smith, “Re-Interpreting an Icon: The Rhetorical Function of ‘Earthrise,’” (Colorado: University of Colorado, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, 2009), 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)