

THE WILD MAN
AND THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL:
TWO FIGURES OF EVOLUTIONIST
FANTASY

The image of the Other, particularly in the Western World, expresses itself through a continuous flow of representations of fabulous peoples with strange physical appearance living in far-away places. In our day, the successors to the sirens, Cyclops, unipedes and cyncephala of Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are the Sirians, Saturnians, Selenites and Martians of the 17th through the 20th centuries.

Evidence of this succession may be observed in the shapes these creatures take;¹ hybrids, composite creatures, hyperatrophy, atrophy in certain parts of the body, etc. Often enough, one is able

Translated by Ian Sloan

¹ Henri Baudin, "Les Monstres dans la science-fiction", *Circé*, Revue du Centre de recherche sur l'imaginaire (Chambéry), n. 6, 1976.

The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial

to follow the cultural diffusion of these motifs, but their content varies from one epoch to the next, from one society to another. So it is that Heinz Mode writes, "These motifs form one universal movement, in which the forms, once created, frequently take on new contents. This formula is not reversible. The forms are relatively conservative and static; the contents, on the other hand, are subject, in this continuous evolution, to social and ideological developments".²

We intend to show how, since the end of the 19th century, the abundant world of fabulous creatures in the West has taken shape around two poles, two mythical figures, whose meanings are arrived at through analogic and antithetic relation one with the other: the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial. As figures of the alien they are significant because they are almost human images; in fact, we can say that they represent the first *alteration* of this image, in the etomological sense of "to make another". Thus, they define the exact limits between human and non-human. As Franck Tinland writes,³ "The encounter with the Wild Man is an encounter with something completely different from ourselves, or the closest thing to that which is still alien to us. Thus, it introduces a whole dialectic between self and other which is not without consequence for the image we form about ourselves, about the way in which we, as civilized beings, feel placed in our humanity". The same thing could perhaps be said, word for word, about the Extraterrestrial.

The thrust of our argument is that the image of the Extraterrestrial is an inverse image of the image of the Wild Man, and that both share the attribute at this point in time of belonging to the same mythology: the mythology of evolution.

We shall examine, one after another, where these mythical types manifest themselves in culture, what characteristics each possesses, and what significance each carries.

² Heinz Mode, *Démons et Animaux fantastiques*, Paris, Lib. G. Kogan and Editions Leipsig, 1977, p. 36.

³ Franck Tinland, *L'Homme sauvage*, Paris, Payot, 1968 (coll. "Bibliothèque Scientifique"), p. 23.

I. THE CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE TWO MYTHICAL FIGURES

The figure of the Wild Man has haunted the Western imagination for some time. Inspired by the mythology of Antiquity with its satyrs, its fauns, its sylvans and its ogres, the image of the Wild Man is for all intents and purposes formed at the end of the Middle Ages.⁴ Chrétien de Troyes, in the 12th century, drew the image of a giant Wild Man in *Yvain*. In the 14th century, artists frequently represented the Wild Man in murals, tapestries, jewelry cases and playing cards. The image has also been used for costumes, so reports Froissart, describing the celebrated ‘Ball of the Ardents’, or ‘The Ball of the Wild Men’, in 1393, where the young lords, clubs in hand, dressed themselves in costumes smeared with pitch over which they had glued hairs: their costumes burst into flame at contact with a flaming torch and many perished, burnt alive: Charles VI nearly lost his own life there. In the same period, the Wild Man is such a stereotype that he becomes a figure in heraldry in the form of a “tenant”, one of the characters framing and upholding an escutcheon in the coat of arms. The art of the Renaissance adopts the theme of the Wild Man: one sees it in the works of Dürer and Bruegel. The great explorations and encounters with so-called “savage” or “primitive” societies occur through the 16th to the 18th centuries, and the image of the Wild Man comes to be projected on the indigenous people, who only little by little come to be recognized by Westerners as being fully human (see Franck Tinland, *op. cit.*). At the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th, the Wild Man becomes Prehistoric Man, and thus gains a new lease on life, most particularly as the “missing link”—the half-man half-ape of the mythology of evolution. This period also is the era of a new literary genre, the prehistoric novel: J.H. Rosny the elder, Austin Bierbower, Stanley Waterloo, H.G. Wells, Fernand Mysor, Max Begouën, Léon Lambry, etc. At the same time E.R. Burroughs fashions a modern version of the Wild Man, Tarzan the ape-man. The success today of such comic strips as *Rahan* or films like the adaptation of Rosny’s novel entitled *La*

⁴ Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1952.

The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial

Guerre du feu demonstrate that a fascination with prehistoric man still exists.

The stereotype of the prehistoric man, as utilised by the comic strip writers, for example, is a function of the iconography of the Wild Man: thickset, hairy, wearing the skins of wild animals, and always holding a club in his hand.

Popular tradition has conserved the image of the Wild Man, sometimes since the Middle Ages: thus at Oberstdorf, in Bavaria, a dance continues to be danced in costumes of the Wild Man, while in the carnival at Basel a Wild Man is paraded between a lion and a gryphon. One can also think of a certain strain of folkloric figures having attributes of the Wild Man: for example, in Languedoc-Roussillon, the “*pailhasses*” of Cournonterral (Hérault) and the “bears” of the Festival of the “Bears” at Prats-de-Mollo (East Pyrenees).

But the Wild Man does not belong solely to the domains of literature, art and folklore. We also find, throughout the centuries, a belief in the real existence of these creatures, a belief founded on sightings and rumours. In Antiquity, Greek adventurers confirmed encountering the *agrioi anthropoi*, the Wild Men of West Africa: thus Hannon (6th century B.C.) and Herodotus (5th century B.C.). Pausanias, in the 2nd century A.D., was persuaded that satyrs inhabited the far away places of the world. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance incorporated many fictions, including that of fabulous races, into their representation of the world. In the 18th century Maupertuis reports that, while among the lost islands, “the adventurers are sure they have seen the Wild Men, hairy men with tails: a species between the apes and us” (*Oeuvres*, Lyons, 1768, v. II, p. 382). Even in the 19th century a number of the educated believed in the existence of a race of men with tails in Central Africa.⁵ Again, today, one regularly receives reports from around the world of the man-beast: the Yeti of Tibet, Bigfoot or Sasquatch of North America, Yowies of Australia, “Savages” of Hubi (China), etc. Zoologists such as Bernard Heuvelmans⁶ have

⁵ Jean-Dominique Penel, *Homo caudatus. Les Hommes à queue d'Afrique centrale. Un avatar de l'imaginaire occidental*, Paris, Société d'études linguistiques et anthropologiques de France, 1983.

⁶ Bernard Heuvelmans, *Les Bêtes humaines d'Afrique*, Paris, Plon, 1974.

taken the question seriously; allowing for both science and myth, even venturing the hypothesis that Neanderthal Man has survived in remote parts of the globe.⁷

The Extraterrestrial, however more recent in origin than the Wild Man, has taken an analogous path and belongs in the same place in our culture.

If one puts aside the texts of precursors—Lucian of Samos (2nd century A.D.) and Ariosto (16th century)—the Extraterrestrial makes his first literary appearance as a figure of the Other in certain of the philosophical tracts of the 17th and 18th centuries: for example, in *L'Homme dans la lune ou Relation d'un voyage à cet astre par Domingo Gonzales* (1638), by the English bishop Francis Godwin; *La Découverte d'un monde dans la lune* (1638), by another English bishop, John Wilkins; *Les Etats et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil* (1657, 1662), by Cyrano de Bergerac, *Micromégas* (1652) in which Voltaire creates an inhabitant of Sirius who travels from planet to planet. In the 19th century Edgar Allan Poe recreates once again the fantastic and satirical image of the Extraterrestrial in his short story *The Unparalleled Adventure of one Hans Pfaall* (1835). Afterwards appears a quite new literature, science fiction, which makes the Extraterrestrial more realistic and more terrifying: thus, the astonishing short story by Maupassant *L'Homme de Mars* (1888), the novel by Kent Lasswitz, *Auf Zwei Planeten* (1897), in which appear Martians with superior technology, and above all *The War of the Worlds* (1897) by H.G. Wells, which he followed with *The First Man in the Moon* (1901). Science fiction, in both novel and film, develops practically as a consequence of interest in the Extraterrestrial being. Because of this exposure, the Extraterrestrial quickly becomes a stereotype. The forms the stereotype takes are more varied than the Wild Man's, but nonetheless its characteristics are fixed: mastery of the sky, technical power, superiority over man. The recent success of the film *E.T.* (1982) shows how well this mythology lives in the collective imagination. On television, children's shows frequently make use of extraterrestrial creatures ("Brok and Chnok", "The

⁷ Boris Porchnev and Bernard Heuvelmans, *L'Homme de Néanderthal est toujours vivant*, Paris, Plon, 1974.

The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial

Village in the Clouds”, etc., creatures which are modern successors to the fairies, spirits and *nounours* of one time.

Like the Wild Man, the Extraterrestrial is caricatured in the comics: for example, as “the Martian”, “the little green man”. The Extraterrestrial is also a figure of folklore from the panoplies of children to the parading costumed figures circling a wagon covered in flowers in the form of a flying saucer in this or that parade (Carnival of Prades, East Pyrenees, February 1981). We can note also the videogames on the theme of space invaders, and tight rope walkers who perform in “extraterrestrial” settings (“*Circo Americano*”, in the 1970’s).

The Extraterrestrial, like the Wild Man, is also an object of belief. From Antiquity to the 16th century, speculation concerning the “plurality of inhabited worlds” was limited to philosophers and clerics, from Lucretius to Giordano Bruno. When modern science was born in the 17th century (Descartes, Kepler, Newton), the debate touched a larger public. With Galileo’s first telescopic observations (1610), everyone began to scrutinize the heavens. In 1634 *Somnium* was published, a popularized and romanticized work written by the celebrated German astronomer Johann Kepler, in which he describes in particular the inhabitants of the moon. In *Les Femmes Savantes* (1672) Molière has Philaminte say, “And I have clearly seen the men in the moon” (v. 890). Some years later Fontenelle popularizes the idea of inhabitants of other planets with the famous *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686), a thesis also taken up in the Netherlands by Christiaan Huygens in his *Cosmotheoros* (1698). If the 18th century is marked by a literary use of the theme, the 19th, in contrast, especially in the last decades of the century, returned to the fashion of debate over the possibility of extraterrestrial life: works by Flammarion (*La Pluralité des mondes habités*, 1862; *Les Terres du ciel*, 1877), the discovery by Schiaparelli of the “canals” of Mars (1877). The new literary mode—science fiction from *circa* 1900 to *circa* 1930—made the public strongly receptive to belief in Extraterrestrials; this is true even today: let us mention briefly the panic provoked in October 1938 by Orson Welles’ radio transmission of H.G. Wells *The War of the Worlds*, the increasing number of sightings of flying saucers since 1947, the scientific experiments to catch waves originating in outer space (the American programme

SETI, *Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence*), the messages sent in space probes to possible extraterrestrial recipients, the research regarding life on other planets, etc.

But the most striking parallel to make between the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial concerns accounts given of “encounters”. It is significant that the same word is used in both cases: a chapter entitled “Encounters” in Franck Tinland’s book and the typology of “Encounters of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd kind”, according to the ufologists. The accounts are astonishingly similar. Here are two, among the hundreds:

A young farm woman, Mrs. Zhou Xiangqun last August 19th had gone to pick herbs about a kilometer from her home. It was 9 in the morning and, after the rain of the preceding night, the weather was magnificent. At a certain moment, the woman was convinced she was no longer alone, and so she raised her head. She was stunned to observe, about 20 meters away, a shaggy-haired creature more than 2 meters tall, whose hair mostly covered his shoulders and who, with arms hanging, looked at her fixedly [...] God knows what might have happened to her if her fear had not overcome her curiosity, causing the young woman to make a desperate escape. The “savage” did not seem to try to trap her. But the next day a scientific mission was already in the area. Too bad! It was only to discover some footprints, still very clear, about 30 centimeters in length.⁸

13 July 1959. It is early morning, about 5:30 am. We are staying at a little farm, close to the town of Blenheim in New Zealand. Mrs. Frederick Moreland [...] crossed an enclosure on her way to milk the cows. She raised her eyes and observed a strong green light among the clouds. Mrs. Moreland was not over her initial surprise when she saw two large intense green lights descend rapidly from the sky, materializing as an object of great size... The top of the machine, shaped like a dome, was made of material clearer than glass; the inside was lighted, so Mrs. Moreland clearly distinguished two men dressed in shiny suits which fitted like gloves over their bodies. The material of these uniforms had the brilliance of aluminium or of silver paper [...] Suddenly out of the vents in the side of the machine burst orange flames, the machine

⁸ Alain Jacob, “Les ‘sauvages’ du Hubei”, *Le Monde*, 23 November 1980.

The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial

tilted itself a little and shot off into the sky, where it disappeared with a slight noise which, however, according to the astonished witness, seemed very loud. Mrs. Moreland recounted that she was so stunned that she took cover for some moments in the shelter of the trees. At the same time she distinguished about her a very pungent smell.⁹

The two accounts are constructed according to the same schema:

1. The moment and place of observation are indicated very precisely. This precision contrasts with the imprecision which surrounds the alien apparition, but it contributes to its credibility.
2. A person, usually alone, is interrupted in a routine and familiar activity by the strange phenomena,
3. which culminate in the observation of one or two humanoid beings.
4. The witness remains immobilised and is held between fear and curiosity.
5. The creatures are observed for a fraction of a second before they disappear as suddenly as they appeared.¹⁰
6. They sometimes leave behind traces of their presence.
7. Finally, the witness is hesitant to tell what has happened to him, for fear of being taken for a fool.

These two types of “encounters” are subject to the same questions. Is the witness in good faith? Is he not victim of an error of perception or of a poor interpretation of known phenomena? Might he not be victim of a prank or practical joke? Is the recorded account first-hand or influenced by rumour or the mass media? As to the proofs—footprints by humanoids, traces of flying saucer landings, photographs, wounds inflicted on witnesses, etc.—are they authentic? Certainly some fakes have been fabricated—the scalp of the Yeti with the hide of a yak, for example, or falsified

⁹ Jean Ferguson, *Les Humanoides. Les cerveaux qui dirigent les soucoupes volantes*, Ottawa (Canada), Leméac, 1977, pp. 44-45. See also: Jader U. Pereira, “Les Extra-terrestres”, 2nd special issue of the journal *Phénomènes spatiaux*, Paris, 1974; Éric Zurcher, *Les Apparitions d'humanoides*, Nice, Alain Lefevre, 1979 (coll. “Connaissance de l'étrange”).

¹⁰ The constantly “elusive” character of the UFO phenomenon has been underlined by Bertrand Méheust, *Science-fiction et soucoupes volantes*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1978, pp. 252-253. This “elusivity” seems moreover to be a trait common to all phenomena called paranormal.

photographs of UFO's. One finds in both cases the passionate quest for the definitive proof so dear to St. Thomas: that each man might see and touch a Wild Man or an Extraterrestrial! And in both cases the same hopes are dashed when the accounts are invalidated, when the proofs disintegrate, when a rational or banal explanation destroys the mystery.

The characteristics common to the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial are as much their size—they are as soon giants as dwarfs—as their great strength: the Wild Man's physical strength, the Extraterrestrial's psychic and technical strength, and their habitat, always remote and far from the territories held by man. Infinite space has simply replaced the ocean, and the planets themselves are substitutes for far away islands. Issuing from the margins of our world, they return to their own sometimes taking human beings with them—women and children kidnapped by Wild Men, earth dwellers transported by Extraterrestrials.

Besides these points in common, the two figures have antithetical relationships between them as we shall now see.

II. THE INVERSE IMAGE

A comparative analysis of the stereotypical Wild Man and the humanoid Extraterrestrial shows the striking manner in which the one's characteristics are the inversion of the other.

In physical appearance, the Wild Man is thickset, hairy, with dark skin, generally naked or wearing a pelt. On the other hand, the Extraterrestrial is rather slim, dressed in a tight fitting, smooth suit, or entirely covered by a space suit, his skin is pale with little or no hair; he is often bald. The Wild Man is frequently microcephalous while the Extraterrestrial is macrocephalous; either the Extraterrestrial's brain appears swelled, or his whole head appears larger in relation to his body than that of a normal adult human. The face of the Wild Man is characterized by two large black eyes, a large mouth, a flat nose, hairy and prominent eyebrows. Conversely, the face of the Extraterrestrial is rather round, his eyes are frequently small or narrow, and one notes sometimes the absence of a nose, mouth, or ears.

The Wild Man expresses himself by gestures, with animal cries.

The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial

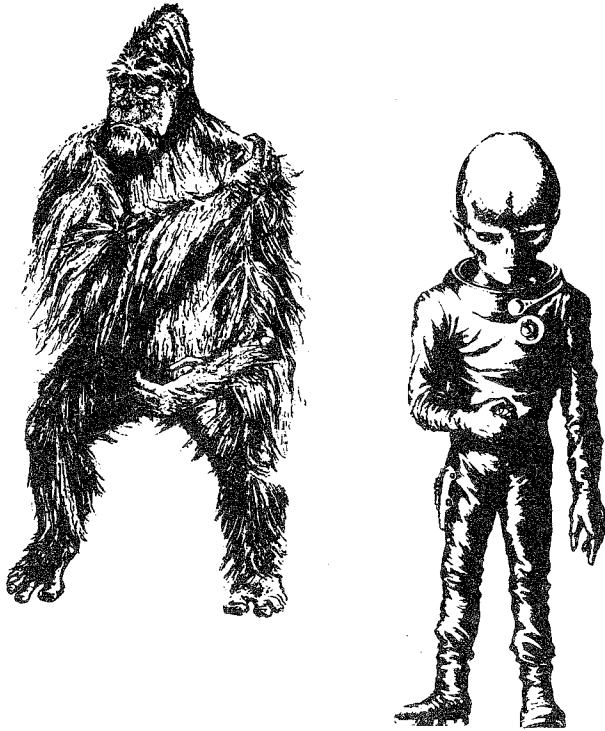
If he talks his voice is rough and his speech is interrupted by grunts. On the contrary, the Extraterrestrial is immediately understandable, and he understands perfectly our language, utilising a translation machine or practicing telepathy—or, if his language is unintelligible, it will often be composed of acute and modulated sounds. The antenna or the antennae which one frequently sees are proof of his superior technical ability in communication.

The weapon and the defining characteristic of the Wild Man is the club or cudgel. The weapon of the Extraterrestrial is the paralysing or disintegrator. The former is heavy in weight and made of wood, it works by contact (a euphemism!), makes noise, and it knocks the assailant to the ground stunned. The latter, on the other hand, is made of metal, is light in weight (holstered at the bearer's side, or incorporated in his uniform), it fires at distance, silently, and in the case of the disintegrating beam, volatilizes the adversary.

The Wild Man's deportment is natural: he walks or runs. His movement is rather slow, clumsy and placed on the horizontal plane—the ground. By contrast, the Extraterrestrial makes use of artificial and ultrarapid means to transport himself in the vertical plane—a propulsion unit fixed to his back, beams which raise him or propel him, flying saucers or rockets which transport him at high speed into the sky.

The last contraposition, and not the least, between the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial concerns their habitat. The Wild Man—appropriately named “Man of the Forest”, as, etymologically speaking, “savage”, comes from the Latin *silva*, “forest”—lives in the primeval forest, in the woods, in caves: all chthonian places, even if they are sometimes on a mountain. The Extraterrestrial, on the contrary, as he comes from another planet, has by definition an uranian, celestial habitat.

Thus, the images of the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial present a dualism in which the one's invariable traits oppose point by point those of the other. Structural analysis has already marked pairings of this type in several cultures. For example, the *xwéxwé* mask and the *dzonokwa* mask of the Kwakiutl Indians (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Voie des masques*, Geneva, Skira, 1975), Pierrot and Harlequin in the *Commedia dell'arte* (see the astonishing novel by Michel Tournier—who was a student of Lévi-Strauss—*Pierrot*,



*The Yeti and the Extraterrestrial: two identikits or two archetypes
-symmetrical and inverse-of Western fantasy?*

ou les secrets de la nuit, Paris, Gallimard, 1975), the white clown and the *auguste* of the circus (Michel Tournier, "Le Rouge et le blanc", in *Des clés et des serrures*, Paris, ed. du Chêne, 1979, pp. 132-133; Luc Routeau, "Au Cirque", *Esprit*, n. 5, 1980, pp. 51-74).

It remains for us to present the general semantic categories which give an account of these series of oppositions and which define for them a universe of common signification.

III. THE MYTHOLOGY OF EVOLUTION

For each of the criteria described here (physical appearance, language, weapon, etc.) the Wild Man is opposed to the Extraterres-

The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial

trial as brute nature is opposed to sophisticated culture (science)—the totally cultured, totally scientific man would be the robot, an image quite close to that of the Extraterrestrial—as the animal or the subhuman is to the superhuman; the primitive to the evolved, the inferior to the superior. These are the exact categories that the theory of evolution applies to humanity, a theory which projects in history and in geography a hierarchy of races and cultures, from the Hottentot to the white European.¹¹ The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial appear as the two extremes of evolution: the one incarnates the past, the origins, the other the future, the completion. They are the two limiting figures to Western man: the Wild Man representing the inferior limit and the Extraterrestrial representing the superior limit.

From this hierarchy of species derives relations of domination. The Wild Man represents *par excellence* those it is necessary to “civilize” by various means: slavery, colonization, study (where a certain evolutionistic ethnology differs little from zoology), integration. If the savages resist, it is necessary to conquer them by invasion, by occupation, sometimes by slaughter. The lands of the indigenous return then to the Europeans, one could say, by “the right of evolution”.

An essential difference between the image of the Wild Man and that of the Extraterrestrial is that the first was projected by Western Man on men described as “primitive” while the second cannot benefit from such projection; it remains, thus, more imaginary. But through these images, Western man redefines and modifies his place in the evolution of the universe: Western man situates himself in relation to the Extraterrestrial in exactly the same way as the Wild Man is placed in relation to Western man. Our relationship with Extraterrestrials is perfectly analogous to that relationship which we Westerners have held in relation to the colonised peoples. The imagery of evolution is always present, even if it is exercised henceforth at our expense!

In effect, Extraterrestrials are always conceived to be our technological superiors and, often, our superiors physically (see what

¹¹ Jean Servier, *L'Homme et l'Invisible*, Paris, Imago/Payot, 1980 (1964), (coll. “Petite Bibliothèque Payot”). See the introduction and the first three chapters for a critical analysis of the evolutionist ideology.

Wells wrote on the Martians or Silenites; see also the hypercephalic characteristic as a futuristic projection of cephalization in the process of hominization: B. Méheust, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-132)—and sometimes they are also our superiors morally and socially. They come to study us as if we were animals or colonize us as “primitives”. Already in the 17th century Cyrano de Bergerac imagined inhabitants of the moon so superior to man socially that they took man for an ape! The conquest of exotic lands by the Europeans is followed by the conquest of Earth by the Extraterrestrials. A number of science-fiction authors are explicit in making this connection: Wells stated that it was the genocide of the Tasmanians, a race which was exterminated in 1877 through colonization, that gave him the idea of an imaginary invasion of England by the Martians.¹² The same colonial image underlies many beliefs in regard to Extraterrestrials, both those of the masses and those “contacted” by the Extraterrestrials. The Extraterrestrials are conceived of as our “big brothers”, as our “superiors”, as our “masters”. The belief in the phenomenon of Extraterrestrial visits, which develops exactly at the same time as decolonization, may in fact be reckoned a tendency to expiate in a fantastic way the “sins of colonization”.

The image of evolution can also be inverted, giving rise to two new images: the “good savage” and the degenerate Extraterrestrial who has neither moral conscience nor feelings. Both figures thus represent as much a Utopian model as its contrary. Societies will often define themselves so by reference to other societies set up as ideal models or contrasting models. For example, the ancient Greeks located themselves by relation to the Egyptians, symbols of an antique civilization, and by relation to the Scythians, a race of nomadic barbarians (see François Hartog, *Le Miroir d'Hérodote. Essai sur la représentation de l'autre*, Paris, Gallimard, 1980).

The Wild Man, as we have seen, has above all been a counter-model. He typifies everything we should not want to be: nearly an animal, uncultured, nude, a cannibal, brutal, licentious, slothful, without faith or law. As for the model of the “Good Savage”, we encounter him in the Renaissance: witness this discourse held by

¹² Pierre Versins, *Encyclopédie de l'utopie, des voyages extraordinaires et de la science-fiction*, Lausanne, L'Âge d'Homme, 1972.

The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial

Wild Men about “City Men” in a poem by Hans Sach (17th century):

Now, since the world has plunged into knavery and disloyalty, we have decided to abandon it and flee to a place where its duplicity cannot touch us. We live in the depths of the forests, with our children, and that without education. We feed ourselves on wild fruits and roots, drinking spring water, and warming ourselves by the light of the sun. There is overflowing fraternal love among us, and never any conflict, because each does for the other what he would desire for himself. If sickness or death touches us, we know it is given to us by God, who does all things for our good. So we live our life in simplicity and humility, waiting for the great change, when in the world each shall become loyal and pious, returning to original poverty and simplicity. Yes, then shall we quit the forests to live among men... (Poem cited by Bernheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 208, and by Tinland, *op. cit.*, p. 43).

All the Utopian characteristics of the Golden Age¹³ are enunciated in this manifesto, this astonishing precursor to contemporary ecological thought! In the 18th century, the Rousseauists made Wild Men men in the state of nature—good, and wise. They attributed to them knowledge of fundamental truths, power of universal language, belief in natural religion. They were supposed to be the “bearers of truth about men” (Tinland, *op. cit.*, p. 268). “I should much prefer”, writes Maupertuis (*op. cit.*, p. 382), “one hour of conversation with them than one with the finest mind in Europe”. With the same hope with which, according to Herodotus, the Pharaohs of Egypt raised children in complete isolation in order that they might come to understand the most ancient language, the 18th century dreamed of learning from the mouth of the Wild Man that which can be, in a natural state, a natural existence, a natural wisdom, an idea of God freed of theological encumbrances. Even today, after all our scientific research, the Wild Man profiles the nostalgia of a lost paradise. “In the expression ‘human-beast’ the more abusive term is not the one which one might think [...] For my part, I would wish that he [the

¹³ Jean Servier, Paris, *L’Utopie*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1979 (coll. “Que sais-je?”, n. 1757).

humanoid] be left in peace, among his own things, there where he lives, that he should not be uprooted from the green cathedrals of his well loved paradise, that he should not be allowed to taste the smallest slice of the fruit of Applied Science, and that no attempt be made to reduce him to servitude nor to evangelize him, nor to indoctrinate him. I should prefer that he was not treated like one has always treated beasts, nor like one has always treated men (Bernard Heuvelmans, *op. cit.*, p. 25 and p. 598).

Like the Wild Man, the Extraterrestrial has this double image: as positive, amicable and idyllic as it is negative and aggressive.

To begin with, extraterrestrial societies are projections in celestial space of inhabitants of paradisiacal islands. As Jean Servier writes, "The West has been guided, in traversing the ocean, by the attraction of a compensating dream—the archetype of the radiant city by the sea, later located in the depths of space [...] Of course the rebuff the navigators suffered in not rediscovering that pleasant Lost Paradise beyond the seas [projects] the New World into the infinity of a populated heaven—once again—due to the dreams of men" (*L'Utopie*, pp. 38-39). Cyrano de Bergerac—who rendered an explicit homage to the Utopianist Campanella—imagines that the inhabitants of the moon recite poems instead of remunerating each other with money: the absence of money is a Utopian characteristic which one again discovers today in the accounts "contacted" people give describing idyllic extraterrestrial societies. Another example: the ecological rehabilitation of animals and plants to be found from Cyrano to *E.T.*; numerous inquiries show moreover that the interest in UFO's and opinions about ecology are strongly correlated. As from the Wild Man, so from the Extraterrestrial revelation concerning our human condition: the Extraterrestrial is supposed to hold a secret knowledge about man's origin or end, a forgotten or still unknown wisdom, knowledge of fabulous scientific truths. All the reports of the "contacted" present the Extraterrestrial as coming to warn man, or better, to give him answers to the dangers menacing the Earth: nuclear war, pollution, the crisis in values. the same messianic hope is expressed through popular belief in Extraterrestrials, as well as through scientific research seeking evidence of intelligent life in the universe.

In presenting the inverse aspect of the UFO mythology, science-fiction films—except precisely those inspired by this mythology—

give an extremely negative image of Extraterrestrials: they are aggressive, devastators, egoists, supremely proud, without any respect for human life. They incarnate the archetype of the alien (*Alien*), and of the invader (*Invader*).

Thus, both the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial inherit the ethical aspects—and sometimes also the morphologies—of the angel and the demon. But, in contrast to these religious and spiritual entities, they are situated in a historical and materialistic dimension which is particularly contemporary. Jean Servier has ably shown that evolutionism is functionally atheistic. The belief in a simian ancestor, as one in extraterrestrial humanoids, relieves man of the weight of his uniqueness, of his responsibility: “This is why he is reassured by his descendance from the apes. If he doesn’t descend from the apes, he is created by God directly. He would thus be invested with a mission he must fulfill. And if he is alone in the cosmos, what a problem!”¹⁴

With the image of the Other are also associated a sexual and racial image, which one can observe in a number of cases regarding the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial. From the psychoanalytic point of view, an encounter, inasmuch as it is an intrusion of an alien in our world, can also be linked to fantasies of rape and penetration. Bernheimer (*op. cit.*, pp. 121-175) has given examples of what erotic connotations were attached to the Wild Man in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages: lasciviousness of satyrs, kidnappings of women by Wild Men. From the Renaissance to the present-day there continues a racial prejudice, according to which the “inferior races”, driven by their sexual instincts alone, abandon themselves to debauchery or have sexual capacities superior to Whites. The same image concerns the Extraterrestrials: popular science fiction has used and abused the theme of the beautiful captured woman—sometimes captivated!—at the hands of an extraterrestrial monster; As in the case of the Wild Man, zoophilic fantasies could be involved here.¹⁵ Some reports by the “contacted” mention sexual relations between earthlings and Extraterrestrials:

¹⁴ “Entretien avec Jean Servier”, *Totalité*, n. 15, 1982, p. 49.

¹⁵ Roland Villeneuve, *Le Musée de la bestialité*, Paris, Henri Veyrier, 1973; about fauns, apes and man-apes see pp. 73-88, 191, 218-265 and about extraterrestrials see pp. 11, 261-262. See also the article “Xénosexologie” in P. Versins, *op. cit.*, p. 972.

at the same time, certain ufologists have interpreted in this sense the celebrated verse of Genesis 6:2: “The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair and they took to wife all those which they chose”. In a quite different genre the cartoonist Pat Mallet has imagined a little Martian whose exploits are such that they are reserved for the readers of *Lui!* The Extraterrestrial often appears as the outer limit of the exotic in sexual partners, as the following anecdote illustrates: in an housing development, a woman is conversing with her neighbour, who has lived maritally with the Maghrébiens: “Don’t sh... around us with your international a... You’ve had all kinds and, happily, the Martians haven’t come, or we would have seen them on the stairs!” (from the study by Claude Liscia, “Miroir sans reflet. La famille dans les cités de transit”, *Esprit*, n. 5, 1982, p. 49).

This sexual and racial imagery is tied together with the injunctions, sometimes transgressed, of traditional societies with regard to sexual relations with animals and gods. “Is it necessary to see in this”, asks Jean Gattégno about Extraterrestrial sexuality, “the age-old dread of exogamic dishonour? The more recent memory of the first half-breeds (from the first rapes) of Whites with Blacks or with Indians?”¹⁶ The hybrid creature, born of different races, raises in its turn two opposed concepts: the ideal of fraternity among races or the abomination of a sacrilegious impurity.

CONCLUSION

The images of the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial are sometimes found in surroundings which reflect their common right to belong to contemporary fantasy. It is significant that often the authors of prehistoric novels are also the writers of science fiction—for example, Rosny the elder, Wells, d’Hervilly, Francis Carsac, the comic strip writers Roger Lecureux and Jean-Claude Forest. In publications on the strange and the mysterious, articles about beast-men are seen side by side with those concerning UFO’s and Extraterrestrials. The researchers interested in strange phenomena (ufolo-

¹⁶ Jean Gattégno, *La Science-fiction*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1971 (coll. “Que sais-je?”, n. 1426), p. 91.

The Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial

gists, parapsychologists) study together the appearances of Wild Men and Extraterrestrials. Certain of them will confirm that UFO's have frequently been observed in locations where Wild Men have been sighted. The most fantastic hypotheses have been advanced:¹⁷ Wild Men might be Extraterrestrials—this idea was taken up in 1954 by Jijé in the comic strip *Blondin et Cirage découvrent les soucoupes volantes*, and in 1961 by the Hungarian novelist Zoltan Csernai, who imagined that the Yetis were shipwrecked space travellers whose ship was forced into a disastrous emergency landing in Central Asia; or, again, that Wild Men might be the domestic animals or slaves of the Extraterrestrials; or, again, creatures subjected to scientific experiments conducted by the Extraterrestrials. Finally, certain ufologists have supposed that the human race came into existence through the copulation of Extraterrestrials coming from the sky and Wild Men, primordial inhabitants of the earth. This hypothesis, within which evolution closes in on itself, summarizes in one stroke the myth surrounding the images of the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial. Man would be half way between them, or better, the product of these two extremes of the human form (this is the meaning of the suffix “oid”): “hominoid”, near the ape, and “humanoid”, near “android”, or robot. The popular science fiction films (*Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, the Japanese newspaper serial *San Ku Kai*, etc.) have in fact given the heroes two non-human companions: a man-ape of elementary and instinctive behavior, and a sentient and moralistic robot. We have attempted to demonstrate in what ways and why these figures are culturally endowed. A psychoanalytic paper, complementary to our own, could show in them a projection of the Id (Wild Man), the Ego (Man), and the Superego (Extraterrestrial). But this would bring us back to the idea that the image of the Other is never anything but an image of one's self.

Having already constructed in the images of the Monster and the Fool the limiting figures of body and spirit, Western man has made the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial the limiting figures of his History and of his relationship to technology, History and Science

¹⁷ Margaret Sachs, *The U.F.O. Encyclopedia*, London, Corgi Edition, 1981. See articles “Bigfoot”, “Occupants”.

being precisely the ideologies, indeed, the mythologies, which dominate in the West. The central figure in a myth of origin, on the one hand, the central figure in an eschatological myth on the other, the Wild Man and the Extraterrestrial exercise over modern man the fascination for Doubles, and they take upon themselves the redoubtable task of revealing to him the meaning of his destiny.

Jean-Bruno Renard
(Université de Montpellier)