



**Matthew Hayes.** *Search for the Unknown: Canada's UFO Files and the Rise of Conspiracy Theory.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022. Illustrations. 248 pp. \$34.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-228-01074-6.

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The unidentified flying object (UFO) has experienced renewed attention in the United States in recent years as Pentagon disclosures have revealed the ongoing status of UFOs as "objects of inquiry" in the national security apparatus. This renewed interest has not been contained to the popular media and weird corners of the internet; we are also witnessing a flurry of academic UFO activity.

Matthew Hayes's *Search for the Unknown: Canada's UFO Files and the Rise of Conspiracy Theory* provides a compelling and important contribution to this new and growing literature of serious scholarly study of the history of the UFO. While the study keeps the UFO at the center of the narrative, *Search for the Unknown* is as much a history of Cold War science funding, military anxiety, and Canadian history as it is a review of anything strange in the sky. In this way, Hayes's book contributes not only to a growing transnational literature of UFO investigation but also to the history of Canadian Cold War science.

*Search for the Unknown* is organized chronologically, beginning with Canada's first quasi-sanctioned UFO investigation via Project Magnet, a Department of Transport program meant to explore the possibility of magnetic propulsion through Earth's atmosphere in the postwar era and turned

by the will of one man into the first formal UFO investigation. The next chapter dives into Project Second Storey, Canada's equivalent to the more well-known American Project Blue Book. Here Hayes captures the Canadian military's attempt to capture and quantify the mysterious phenomena citizens are reporting across the nation, following closely via archival records the Project Second Storey committee's efforts to create and maintain an objective study.

Project Second Storey's 1954 termination "accelerated the cycle of mistrust between the government and citizen" where UFOs were concerned, and chapter 3 explores this cycle in depth (p. 70). Historians of the UFO and buffs alike will recognize many names here, as figures like J. Allen Hynek and Donald Keyhoe make appearances in the record. Hayes uses the correspondence of average citizens to evaluate the public response to the closure of Project Second Storey, the rise of private investigatory UFO clubs, government secrecy in the name of national security, and the growing tendrils of paranoid conspiracy theory snaking their way into UFO discourse by the late 1960s.

In chapter 4, Hayes argues that despite the closing of Project Second Storey, the Canadian government remained interested in credible UFO re-

ports that held the possibility of positive identification. Hayes does this through a close reading of three sightings in the late 1960s, each investigated by official Canadian governmental organizations and each to this day still unexplained. These case studies are interesting because they included physical evidence that could be scientifically analyzed; the Duhamel crop circles, for example, lent themselves to soil sampling. These events also reinforce Hayes's earlier claims that the Canadian government was not disinterested in UFOs but rather sought to limit its efforts to sightings it thought might be quantitatively explored, analyzed, and explained. In the age of Cold War applied technoscience, "good science"—indeed, science at all—was limited to things that could be collected, objectified, quantified, analyzed, and recreated (or at least verified) by colleagues. UFOs were viable objects of inquiry, as long as they adhered to these criteria.

The final chapter, somewhat deceptively titled "The End," covers the final three decades of the twentieth century, from 1967 to 1995. The chapter opens with the delegation of responsibility for UFO investigation from the Canadian defense complex to the National Research Council, Canada's national scientific research and development agency. While UFO sightings continued, the government's unwillingness to investigate reports that could not be quantifiably investigated and its own policies of secrecy met increasing hostility from the interested public. Hayes relays the hopeful moments that grew from revised Canadian policies in regard to transparency and information sharing, and the dashing of hopes when such disclosures produced nothing new. By the conclusion, we find a Canadian government and an interested public trapped in an intractable, unresolvable conflict over truth, secrecy, accountability, authority, and possibility.

Readers familiar with Cold War histories of American technoscience, secrecy, conspiracy, and UFOs will find many similarities between Americ-

an histories and those of its northern neighbor. However, just as recent histories of Canada's geopolitical role in the Cold War seek to give Canada back some of its autonomy, understanding its history in its own right rather than as a "little brother" mirror of America's, Hayes insistently draws our attention to how specifically Canadian perspectives and goals shaped and influenced Canada's official UFO investigations. Canada's desire to guard its own national security and be a serious technoscientific player on the global stage both inspired its interest in UFO phenomena and ultimately led to the demise of that same interest and of the UFO investigative programs as well.

As is the case with the best scholarship into "pseudoscientific" topics, the UFO in Hayes's story manages to be both the narrative fulcrum and seemingly also a footnote in the broader history he seeks to tell. *Search for the Unknown* is an important entry in the growing literature on the Cold War UFO in and of itself. But the book is also an important contribution to the history of Cold War technoscience, especially that vein of history of science that hopes to overcome the US-Soviet binary. And, of course, *Search for the Unknown* is an important contribution to Canadian history more broadly, capturing the development and persistence of mistrust and conspiracy amid the tumultuous 1960s and beyond.

Hayes's work is yet another excellent entry in a growing subfield of the history of science that treats heterodox beliefs as worthy of serious attention and as valuable subjects of inquiry. The book is well written, with only a few "dissertation-style" literature interjections remaining, and an excellent model for our colleagues looking to tackle controversial subjects. Overall, *Search for the Unknown* promises an exciting future for the field's ability to produce histories that present expertise and epistemology in publicly accessible ways.

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