

THE INVISIBLE LIBRARY
GRAHAM MASTERTON

A couple with the slightly incredible names of Hemester and Fayaway Barrington emailed me from Malibu Lake, California, asking about a book on Native American anthropology by Dr Ernest Snow.

They were anxious to know if *Rites and Rituals of the Hidatsa Indians* actually existed.

I had to write back and tell them that Dr Ernest Snow was a character in a horror novel I had published in 1975, *The Manitou*, and that his book was as fictitious as he was. The nearest Dr Snow ever got to living and breathing was being played by Burgess Meredith in the movie of the same name.

To my surprise, Hemester and Fayaway were delighted. It turned out that they are the custodians of the Malibu Lake branch of The Invisible Library, which is a collection of books that only appear in other books.

They wanted to include Dr Snow's learned non-work in their catalogue, as well as the racy novel *Girl From Green Planet*, which was being read in *The Manitou* by the hero Harry Erskine (Tony Curtis in the movie.)

"Within the library's catalog you will find imaginary books, pseudobiblia, artificions, fabled tomes, libris phantastica, and all manner of books unwritten, unread, unpublished, and unfound."

The original Invisible Library was opened by another unlikely-sounding individual, Brian Quinette, between spring 2001 to summer of 2006. It can still be accessed online today but Mr Quinette seems to have vanished. Unable to locate him but fascinated by the idea of a catalog of non-books, Hemester and Fayaway decided to open their own branch.

Their shelves boast such titles as *Where God Went Wrong* by Oolon Colluphid (invented by Douglas Adams); *Jungle Fever – the Roosevelt-Kipling Letters* (Mark Axelrod); *Anne of Green Bogeys* by Fungus the Bogeyman (Raymond Briggs); *Memoirs to Prove the Existence of the Devil* by Clarke (Arthur Machen); and *The Queen Victoria and Emily Pankhurst Girl-on-Girl Novelty Flipbook*.

You can also find *Cocaine And Rowing: the Sure Way to Health* (Alan Moore); *Push Me, Pull You: the Importance of Railroad Handcars to an Emerging Industry* (Michael J.

Nelson); *The Little Fourth-Quarter Earnings Index that Could* by Alan Greenspan (The Onion magazine); *Listening In The Dark: Echolocation of Bats and Men* by Donald R. Griffith (Valentine Worth); and *Science Experiments You Can Eat*. Not to mention *1001 Top Shaving Tips For Boys* by Grant Morrison (Dean Patrick.)

The main reason why most authors create pseudo-books is to give their own stories a spurious air of authority. I have frequently prefaced my horror novels with portentous-sounding quotes from such authorities as Abdul Hazw'halla's notorious *Book of Magic*, and *Legends of the Persian Sorcerers, Volume IV, Chapter III*, which warns that while Nazwah the Unthinkable can make you the most powerful person on earth, he will demand a fee that many will find beyond their means.

Randolph Miller's *Travels In South America* was also useful, especially Chapter XII, which told of the shipwreck of the *Charlotte* off Cape Horn in 1837, with a cargo so frightening that nobody dared to try to salvage it.

I also managed to locate the so-called "forbidden last paragraph" from the *Codex Daemonicus*, 1516, itself a "forbidden book" until reprinted (without the last paragraph) by the Ibis Press in Paris in 1926. The only known complete copy of the *Codex Daemonicus* is now in the Vatican Library's secret case, so eat your heart out, Dan Brown.

Other titles are invented to make a satirical point; or simply out of whimsy; or to express a longing for an eccentric, bookish world which has never really existed.

There are literally thousands of pseudo-books, perhaps the best known of which is *The Giant Rat of Sumatra* by John H. Watson, M.D. (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle). Some of would be a delight to read, such as *Mervyn Keene, Clubman* by Bingo Little's sister Rosie Banks (P.G. Wodehouse); or *Unauthorized Leaks: Enuresis in the Late Novels of Henry James* by Luisi Albedo.

It was James Branch Cabell who was most creative in his longing for non-existent titles, in particular *The Terrible and Marvellous History of Manuel The Pig-Tender That Was Afterwards Named Manuel The Redeemer; Tentative Restoration of the Lost Books of Elephantis*; and possibly my favourite, *System Of Worshipping Girls*.

I am now looking forward to not reading *A Journey* (Tony Blair.)

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