

5th World Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities

28 - 30 October 2022

Milan, Italy



When E.T. Encounters ‘psychohistory’: Radio Astronomy, C/SETI, and Deep Space Biosignatures –from Pulp Fiction to Reality

Nathan M. Moore

Louisiana Tech University, School of History and Social Science, USA

Abstract

In 1960 Frank Drake began Project Ozma to collect deep-space radio transmissions and ignited decades of advanced research in the years following within a new field, the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, or SETI. This paper’s research question addresses a similar topic: what was the origin of the idea of CETI, or “communicating with extraterrestrial intelligence,” and what is its relationship to some motifs of the cultural Cold War? The history of CETI and the SETI Institute organization, have been intertwined almost exclusively with the practice of radio astronomy. This thesis delves into both the scientific and social implications of the emergence of the concept of CETI and explores new methodologies of communicating with hypothetical extraterrestrial intelligence through international collaboration on issues such as disaster, social issues, economics, and predictive modeling. My findings pointed to a Diplomatic Revolution and revealed parallels between the SETI Institute’s search for ET and popular science fiction social systems, where depictions of the search for extraterrestrials by late pulp-fiction era writers by the 1990s made communicating with ETs part of global diplomatic goals between the Western Bloc and Eastern Bloc of nations. It was the carrying forward of the literary theme of “Future History” narratives that influenced the cultural Cold War by popularizing how authors, scientists, and the public could coordinate new diplomatic policies in anticipation of first contact.

Keywords: CETI, Diplomacy, Radio Astronomy, SETI, Science Fiction