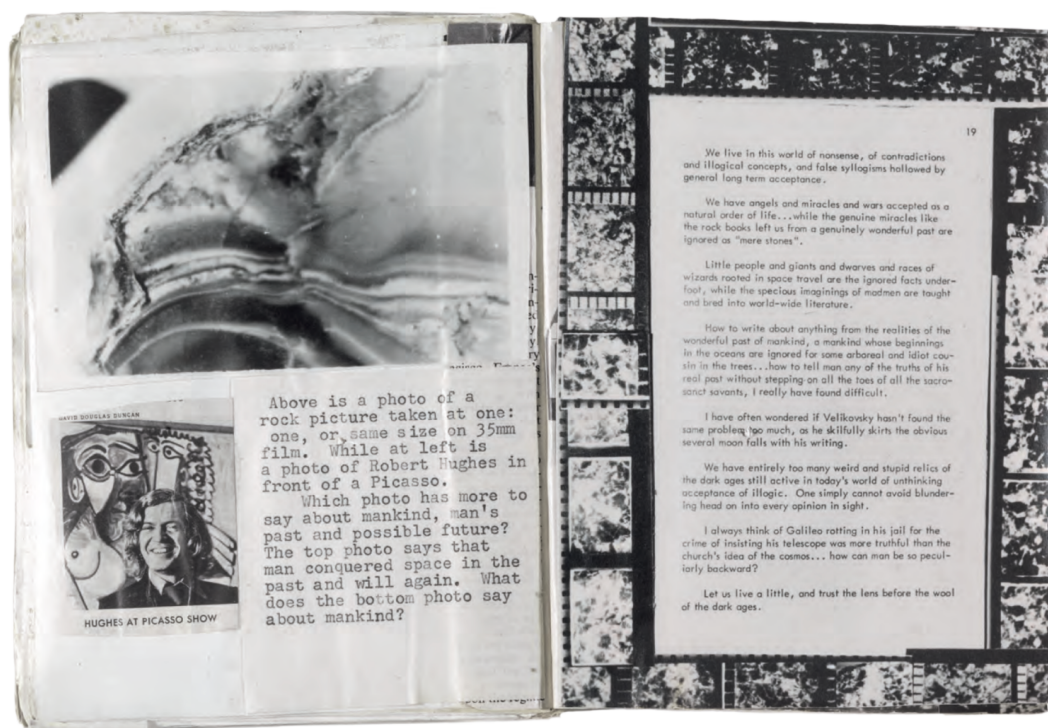




“A Threat to Mental Health”: How to Read Rocks

By **Brian Tucker** March 20, 2025

DOCUMENT



Richard Sharpe Shaver, born 1907 in Berwick, Pennsylvania, became a national sensation in the forties with his dramatic accounts of a highly advanced civilization that inhabited Earth in prehistoric times. An itinerant Midwesterner, he'd been employed as a landscape gardener, a figure model for art classes, and a welder at Henry Ford's original auto plant. He gained public attention as a writer who asserted that descendants of those early beings still live in hidden underground cities, where they wield terrifying technology capable of controlling thoughts. Many readers agreed with Shaver, and a splashy controversy ensued.

Public fascination with his writings subsided during the fifties, but Shaver continued searching for evidence of a great bygone civilization. In about 1960, while living in rural Wisconsin, Shaver formulated a hypothesis that would captivate him for the balance of his life: some stones are ancient books, designed and fabricated by people of the remote past using technology that surpasses anything known today. He identified complex pictorial content in these “rock books.” Images reveal themselves at every angle and every level of magnification and are layered throughout each rock. Graphic symbols and lettering also appear in what he called “the most fascinating exhibition of virtuosity in art existent on earth.”

Frustrated that the equipment needed to fully decipher the dense rock books was lost to time, Shaver undertook strategies to make at least a fraction of the books’ content clearly visible. Initially, he made drawings and paintings of images he found in the rocks, developing idiosyncratic techniques to project a slice of rock onto cardboard or a wooden plank. Shaver also produced conventional black-and-white photos using 35 mm film, often showing a cross section of rock alongside a ruler or a coin to indicate scale. Sometimes he highlighted imagery by hand coloring the prints with felt pens. He attached photos to typewriter paper where he added commentary: he describes the rock books, interprets images, details his photo techniques, and expresses disappointment at the conspicuous lack of academic or journalistic interest in his findings.

Shaver and his wife, Dorothy, moved in 1963 to Summit, Arkansas, where he established his Rock House Studio on their small property. There, in addition to painting, he processed and printed film. His efforts at illuminating the rock books moved away from painting and toward photography in his final years. That shift may have been influenced by his perception that viewers interpreted the paintings as a product of his imagination rather than an objective record of ancient artifacts. Shaver wrote, “People will believe photos and won’t believe drawings or paintings... the camera wins, by being honest. Which doesn’t say much for artist’s honesty, I guess. We try... but people think we lie.”

Shaver made small books on paper at his studio—some illustrated with his drawings or collages of rock photos—which he produced with a local printer. He kept his manuscripts in file folders with colorful hand-lettered titles. As many as twenty booklets were planned; five of them, plus a brochure about “pre-deluge art stones,” are known to have seen print. Each one views the prehistoric library in stone from a different angle. “Giant Evening Wings” is named after swarming ape-bats that threatened the ancient Amazons; “Blue Mansions” features the undersea Mer people; “The Vermin from Space!!!” paints a bleak picture involving rock books, mind control, and flying saucer sightings: “We are a remnant of an ancient race, adrift on a dying world and the parasites of space circle us, looking for a place to sink in their sucking tube.”

In contrast with faulty reconstructions of human history from bone fragments, “from now on ... we can read the books written by people who actually lived the pre-history.” He describes how rock books, which once filled great libraries, were tossed across the world by a cataclysmic deluge that “burst the ancient libraries like ripe nuts. The seeds of ages of learning were scattered over the earth. They await only fertile mental soil to grow again.”

To approach Shaver’s rock photography—a process he sometimes referred to as “rokfogo”—it is useful to consider his earlier success as a writer and to introduce Ray Palmer, the magazine editor who became an inextricable part of his public life. Ray Palmer was, by the early forties, editor of *Amazing Stories*, the first American science fiction magazine, and a line of other pulp fiction periodicals published by Ziff-Davis in Chicago, Illinois. In addition to fiction, Palmer’s *Amazing Stories* included regular sections on “Scientific Mysteries,” “Scientific Oddities,” and a wide-ranging forum for letters to the editor under the banner “Discussions.” In the January 1944 issue of *Amazing Stories*, a letter signed by S. Shaver appears with the headline “An Ancient Language?” It included a glossary that attached meanings to each letter of the English alphabet. (The excerpt quoted below is drawn from a later, expanded manuscript of his glossary, probably written in the seventies. Shaver’s “Alphabet of the Ancients” remained important to him for decades; it was often known as the “Mantong” alphabet.)

A stands for animal

B stands for be, to exist... to be.

C stands for vision, and the history of C as it relates to the Greek-wave-pattern is interesting and backs up the amphibious or fish-lizard source of the man-shape.

C also meant "sea-water clear water.. water in which vision was possible..thus "Clear as crystal" means understanding as in "CON" for see-on ..used today in words like conning tower...

Thus today.. I see means I understand...

Shaver wrote, "Am sending you this in hopes you will insert in an issue to keep it from dying with me... This language seems to me to be definite proof of the Atlantean legend... This is perhaps the only copy of this language in existence, and it represents my work over a long period of years... I need a little encouragement."

Response to the letter was so encouraging that Shaver soon became a featured author in the magazine. In his 1975 autobiography, Ray Palmer writes, "Many hundreds of readers' letters came in, and the net result was a query to Richard S. Shaver asking him where he got his alphabet. The answer was in the form of a 10,000 word 'manuscript' typed with what was certainly the ultimate in non-ability at the typewriter and entitled, 'A Warning to Future Man.' " According to Palmer, Shaver's text was not a short story but a long letter detailing his beliefs about the true history of intelligent life on Earth and the terrible hidden reality that humanity currently faced. Palmer saw it as a "jumping off place" for salable stories. "Using Mr. Shaver's strange letter-manuscript as a basis, I wrote a thirty-one-thousand-word story which I titled 'I Remember Lemuria!' " Shaver disputed Palmer's claim of authorship, but regardless, the story was featured on the cover of the March 1945 issue of *Amazing Stories*.

"I Remember Lemuria!" is set in an underground civilization where the protagonist, an aspiring painter, is humiliated by a brutal art critique. On the advice of his artistic mentor, he sets off in search of knowledge. Unusual for the pulp fiction of its era, the story includes footnotes that elaborate Shaver's scientific claims. Also unusual is the author's preface, in which he writes, "To me it is tragic that the only way I can tell my story is in the guise of fiction."

Shaver insisted that his tales, however outlandish they may seem, were true and grounded in firsthand experience. According to Shaver, sadistic creatures that live inside the earth manipulate human society. They torture and enslave, project voices and thoughts into people's minds, and induce death, mayhem, and war. Known as Dero—short for degenerate or detrimental robots—these are the mentally impaired descendants of a super-sophisticated civilization that occupied Earth eons ago. Those ancients discovered they were being poisoned by the rays of Earth's sun, so they built cities deep underground. Ultimately, they departed Earth in favor of a planet with a more accommodating atmosphere. A few were left behind in the cavern cities (the “abandondero”), and their powerful machinery remained underground as well, including the “ray” devices that the Dero use to project voices into the minds of contemporary humans. A smaller population also exists underground: the benevolent Tero. This group did not suffer the mental and moral decline that shaped generations of Dero. It was the Tero who guided Shaver into the under-ground cities and educated him about Earth's true cultural history. Tero protected him in the face of the Dero, such that Shaver, unique among men, could return to the surface to tell his story.

Touted by Palmer as “The Shaver Mystery,” these warnings about a legion of mind-manipulating evildoers found a receptive audience in the immediate aftermath of World War II; readers were attuned to reports of diabolical enemies and secret weapons. Shaver's accounts also resonated with those who were troubled by intrusive voices or antisocial impulses. Many wrote to express support for his claims; some affirmed that they had personally heard voices or encountered malevolent Dero. According to Palmer, demand for the magazine grew explosively in response to Shaver's stories.

The groundswell of enthusiasm extended beyond the pages of *Amazing Stories*. Shaver Mystery fans set out in search of entrances to the underground cities and attempted to build working models of the Dero's fantastic machines. Earnest mimeographed publications, such as “The Shaver Mystery Club Letterzine,” appeared. A separate *Shaver Mystery Magazine* was launched. The Shaver Mystery soon met with opposition, some of it from fans committed to elevating the literary reputation of science fiction. A resolution at the 1947 World Science Fiction Convention condemned “The Shaver Mythos and related absurdities” as a threat to mental health and a “perversion of fantasy fiction.” The controversy drew mention in general-circulation magazines, including *Life* and *Harper's*. The publishers of *Amazing Stories* put an end to the Shaver series in 1949.

Shaver anticipated that his audience would miss the point of the rock books because of the Dero's baleful influence on their thoughts. In *The Hidden World*, a sixteen-volume series later published by Palmer, Shaver writes: "Please, dear victimized and brutally mistreated people that you are, PLEASE wake up! No matter what cavern idiots tell you in the back of your mind, look at these stones and understand what they are! How can anyone ignore these marvelous ancient picture books?"

Richard Shaver died in Arkansas in 1975. He produced the following photos and texts at his Rock House Studio during the last decade of his life.

*Adapted from **Richard Sharpe Shaver: Some Stones Are Ancient Books**, edited by Christine Burgin and Andrew Lampert and with an introduction by Brian Tucker, to be published by Further Reading Library in April.*

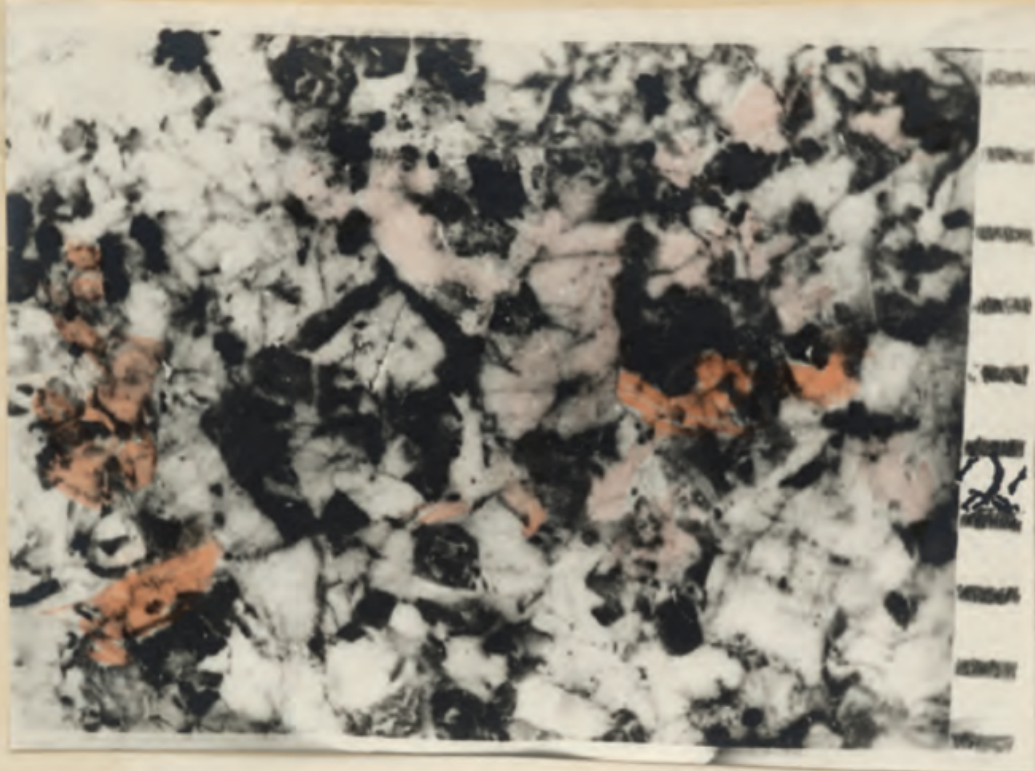
Brian Tucker is a professor of art at Pasadena City College who has researched the life and work of Richard Shaver since 1989. As an artist, he has exhibited work based on the story of Shaver and Palmer at venues including the California Institute of the Arts and Curt Marcus Gallery in New York City.



MICRO PHOTO OF AN AMAZON'S LEG

We think of women's boots as modern, actually the thigh high boot for women was high style in the Amazon empire long before the moon struck the earth. Here is a photo of an Amazon boot, which had a flap for riding out brush..much as chaps do today.

Rokfoto by Shaver



I am forever explaining prints like this photo of Viet Nam rock to someone not at all willing to be explained to.

The rock saw has cross-sectioned a series of photo-like pictorials which run in 2 to 4 mm. sizes in scan-strips in the rock. IF you could use a penetrative light instead of ordinary light you would see and unders and that such pictures are pictures..but the saw cross-sections them. Thus they are mutilated and s distorted..like bits torn out of an encyclopedia they re unreadable and un-understandable.

HOWEVER they are very interesting glimpses of an ancient way of life and and a forgotten culture and language now quite unknown. Once it was world wide..now it lies forgo ten and ignoed as "mere rocks" on the landscape that "should" be cleaned off and thrown away..and usually are.

We destroy all these rock books by making them into road gravel... and what were once treasured libraries containing the lore of millions of years of study and mental effort..are made into black top roads that go now-where for no real purpose.

Our whole civilization is very busily rushing about to go no-where to no particular purpose and most of the careening cars are in fact making trips totally un-necessary is something you know.



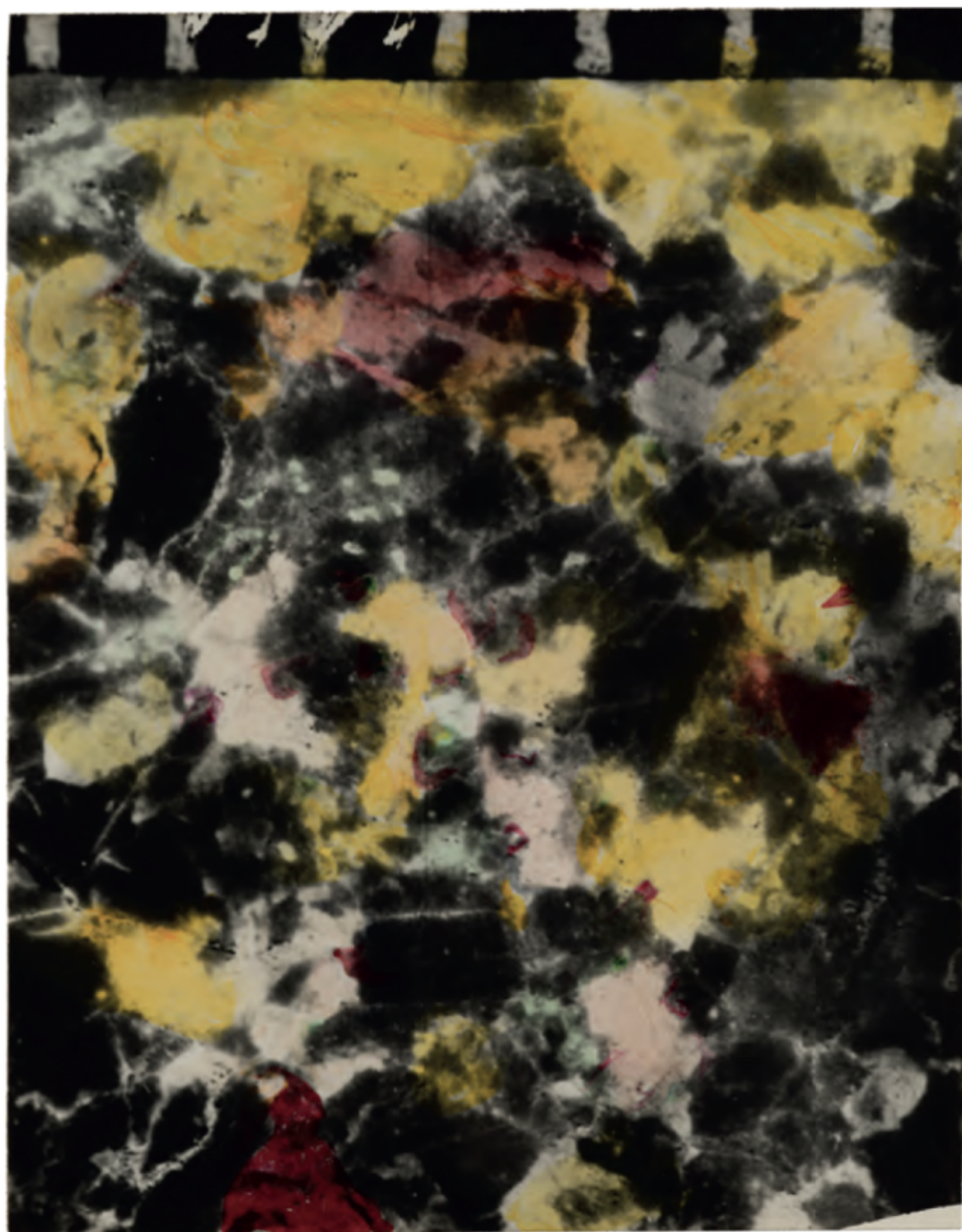
WEIRD AND WONDERFUL ART

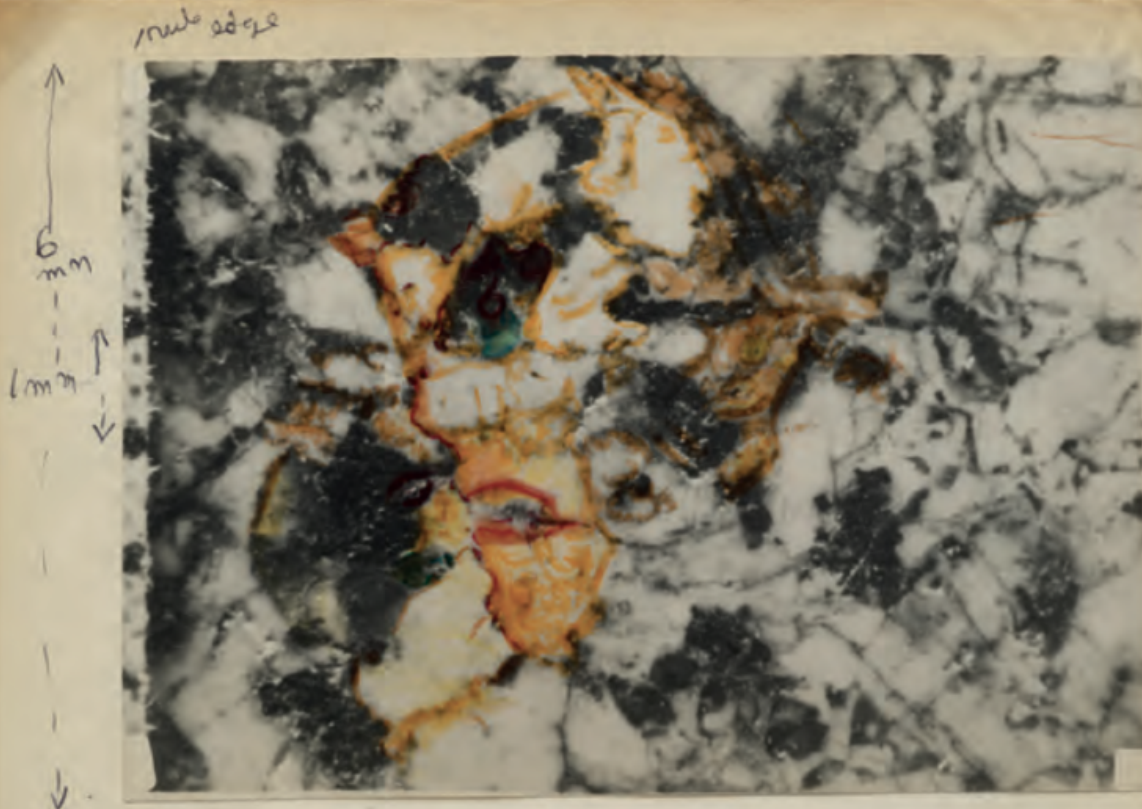
in the rock books can be mistaken for "mere" accidentals only by a superficial eye and careless mind refusing to look carefully.

When one has studied enough of them, the rock books begin to assume their true stature...the greatest of all books extant on earth. How to get this across to a modern ignoramus, shorn of all right to reason and learn by a misguided and sabotaged school system...is a genuine problem. That 3-di art means a 3-di mind, and is not to be appreciated in one glance any more than 3-di chess can be learned in one sitting.

Such great features are the faces of immortals, practically, with minds active over immense periods of time, and their rock art is the art of saying much in little space and with few symbols.

Their bodies seem double-jointed, for they were...amphibious races and space races...yet their faces are the faces of our ancestors, as well as the faces of our Gods. The little figures with the big tell the story in gesture, sometimes they are musical score.





Accenting a B&W print with colored pens gives you faces like this, multiples of faces in series of sizes... what I am supposed to do about it after I tell them I can never quite figure. To the average Joe its an insane idea, because he never heard of any "previous civilization" the whole thing is some sort of delusion, I suppose. If I dont accent the prints, he "Cant see them" and if I DO accent them, I am "making them from my imagination". Since I cant win, I dont try very hard.

BUT the rock books are a vast library from antiquity, of inestimable value. Those people had solved ecological problems like overcrowding. They lived underground, farmed the whole surface of the earth. They lived IN the oceans, too, as Mers and "Mermaids". We think of mermaids as a mad sort of myth, but in fact they were our direct ancestors.

What to do about universal ignorance of man's beginnings is too much problem for me. I cant even sell a rock book; ("no sich animal".)