

BOOK REVIEW

Neanderthal: The Strange Saga of the Minnesota Iceman by Bernard Heuvelmans, translated by Paul LeBlond, with Afterword by Loren Coleman. San Antonio, TX: Anomalist Books, 2016. 284 pp. \$22.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-1938398612.

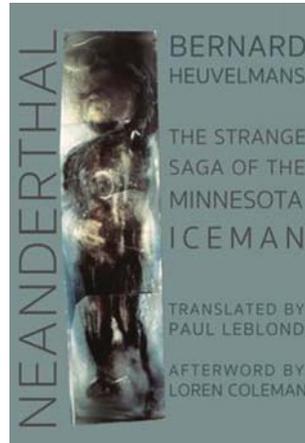
The story of the Minnesota Iceman, the alleged corpse of an unknown hominid, might be conflated by some today, with a more recent iteration on this theme—the claim by charlatans Rick Dyer and Matt Wheaton to have recovered the corpse of a shot and dispatched Bigfoot and their sophomoric attempt to entomb it in a block of ice. It turned out to be an off-the-shelf Bigfoot costume, laced with roadkill. In fact, there was a second attempt by Dyer to pass off an alleged Bigfoot corpse (what is the adage?—“Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice . . .”). In the second more notorious incident, Dyer claims to have shot the unfortunate specimen himself outside of Austin, Texas. Eventually, the supposedly taxidermied skin was stuffed and displayed in a crude plywood coffin placed in a garishly decorated trailer, while the skinless corpse itself was reportedly sequestered in a secret lab facility, being examined by unnamed specialists. The resemblance between these tales and the Minnesota Iceman largely ends there, at least as far as the lead-in goes. In 1968, the Iceman incident involved a credentialed and reputable scientist, Bernard Heuvelmans, and a renowned naturalist, Ivan T. Sanderson, who jointly examined Frank Hansen’s exhibit extensively in December 1968. Beyond that distinction, any similarity in outcomes remains an open question.

For decades, those Anglophones interested in the saga of the Iceman were left to rely largely on the popular paper by Sanderson in *Argosy* (May 1969), a men’s adventure magazine. Additionally, there were the second-hand insights offered by authors of books touching upon the subject, most notably Dr. John Napier’s *Bigfoot: The Yeti and Sasquatch in Myth and Reality*, he being one of few primatologists who gave the question of unknown primates a semblance of objective consideration. It was Heuvelmans’ perhaps rash rush to publish a scientific report of the discovery and examination in March 1969, in the *Bulletin of the Royal Institute of Natural Science* in Belgium, which precipitated much publicity for the Iceman. However, his original report remained inaccessible to most English speakers. Heuvelmans’ in-depth account of events and descriptions of the

Iceman were likewise published in French as the second part of a joint effort with Russian historian (and hominologist) Boris Porshnev, entitled *Neanderthal Man Is Still Alive* (Plon 1974).

Heuvelmans' contribution has now been translated by Paul LeBlond, a professor emeritus of ocean science at the University of British Columbia, with a long-standing interest in cryptozoology. It offers what seemed to be the culmination of Porshnev and Heuvelmans' search for Linnaeus' second species of human, *Homo troglodytes*, the Wildman, which they considered to be a relict form of Neanderthal. The discovery and evaluation of the alleged frozen corpse occurred within, and must be considered within, this conceptual context. Connecting the dots between a Minnesota carnival side show and a relict Asian Neanderthal constitutes a significant portion of Heuvelmans' deductive reasoning and rationalizing on this "discovery."

Chapter 1 provides a brief objective description of what was observed and examined under the glass. In Chapter 2 Heuvelmans lays out what he considers the 6 potential hypotheses that may explain what was observed. Chapter 3 establishes a paleoanthropological context, albeit dated in terms of today's understanding, for the affirmative hypotheses about the corpse's identity and nature. Chapter 4 explores the potentially ominous implications of Frank Hansen's evasiveness concerning the Iceman's origins and ownership. Chapter 5 describes the fallout and complications arising from official interest in the Iceman by the Smithsonian, the FBI, and various media outlets. Chapter 6 traces Hansen's "confession" and the ensuing shell game surrounding the origin and disposition of the corpse. Chapter 7 expounds upon further intrigue over the origin, authenticity, ownership, and professed substitution of the fabricated model. Chapter 8 develops Heuvelmans' cloak-and-dagger theory surrounding a Viet Nam connection for the Iceman. Chapter 9 laments the politics and paradigms that produce a dauntingly prejudicial gauntlet for the person announcing an unorthodox find. Chapter 10 provides a significant and revealing in-depth description of the "original" specimen. Chapter 11 is a bestiary of man-beasts, offering a series of fascinating comparisons of the Iceman to Khakhlov's *Ksy-Gyik*, and other potential Asian relict hominoids. Chapter 12 employs the notion of "de-hominization" (i.e. the gradual distancing from traits of modern *H.*



sapiens), or what today might be referred to as hominid adaptive radiation, or niche partitioning, to account for the distinction of a frozen relict Neanderthal corpse.

An Afterword written by Loren Coleman lends his personal perspective, based on his initial encounter with what he concludes is the substituted Iceman model in August 1969, and through his correspondence with Sanderson during the ensuing years. He traces the comeback of the long-missing mannequin, which ends up in the possession of the proprietor of the Museum of the Weird in Austin Texas, in July 2013. It also had a 5-month-long display stint at Coleman's International Cryptozoology Museum, in Maine, through January 2016, before returning to Texas. That seems to be the only surviving physical legacy of the Minnesota Iceman.

Setting aside all the speculations spawned by Hansen's shell games, the question remains—Was there ever a flesh-and-bones corpse—a real hominid? Perhaps more fundamentally, will the answer to that question carry any weight whatsoever in the absence of the body?—Or does this constitute an example of *corpus delicti*? After nearly 50 years the point remains moot. Therefore, what is the value of this volume? It certainly provides a more meticulous description, accompanied by figures and measurements of the Iceman, more extensive than in Sanderson's accounts. What is perhaps more revealing is the personal discussion of the struggle to bring attention and consideration by the scientific community to the matter. A reactionary statement to the press by Dr. Josef Biegert (1921–1989), professor of comparative morphology of primates at Zurich's Anthropological Institute, was particularly illuminating of the obstacle of the prevailing paradigm at that time—“The thesis to which Neanderthal creatures might still be living among us is absolute nonsense, whatever supposed proofs might be put forward. Today, on the Earth, there lives only one species of hominid, modern *Homo sapiens*” (p. 144). Heuvelmans expressed dismay at this declaration by a respected colleague. However, this is a rather typical manifestation betraying the dogmatic and generally pervasive attitude toward “supposed proof,” or credible evidence of any sort, regarding a notion perceived as running askance of the accepted orthodoxy. Regardless of whether there ever was a flesh-and-blood corpse encased in a block of ice, Heuvelmans' *Neanderthal* is a lesson that all interested in the case for relict hominoids should take note of, and reflect upon in the wake of shifting paradigms in the here and now.

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