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Discussion Laconic

Ultraterrestrials

*"60 million years ago
another race, superior to ours
foresaw the catastrophe
fled to space and fled the tragedy
now they're here again, with a simple claim
Alien, Alien attack
They. Want. Their. Planet. Back."
- S.P.O.C.K., "Alien Attack"*

The ultraterrestrials are an alien race that, well, isn't all too alien. In fact, they originate from Earth, just like us humans, but their civilization is so much older and more advanced than ours that they have no trouble hiding from us (for *whatever reason*). The term was coined by the ufologist John Keel in his *Operation Trojan Horse* in 1970, wherein he claims that the UFOs, various supernatural phenomena (like the Mothman), and *religious myths* imply the activity of an almighty High *Energy Being* co-existing with humans on Earth.

Contrast *Earth All Along*, which includes a reversal of this trope: human spacefarers encounter a strange planet with strange lifeforms. It turns out that a lot of time have passed, and this strange planet is actually Earth. Thus, the visiting human protagonists are actually *Aliens From Earth*.

Different from *The Masquerade* in that the masquerade is the act of hiding (e.g. in *Men In Black* extraterrestrials are walking among humans), whereas this is about the origin of the hiding species.

The ultraterrestrials often reside inside the *Hollow Earth*. Still others hang out in *Atlantis*, or a place that's said to be the inspiration for it. Compare/contrast *Transhuman Aliens*. Often a form of *Precursor*.

Examples:

ANIME

- The Atlanteans in *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water*.
- The Olmecs in *The Mysterious Cities of Gold*.
- The "Subterraneans" in *Super Atragon*.
- The Dinosaur Empire (highly evolved survivors of when *Phlebotinum Killed The Dinosaurs*) in *Getter Robo*.
- In the manga *Outlanders*, the invading aliens were originally from Earth. They were not happy to find squatters on the Sacred Mother Planet.
- The title nasty in the *gorn-filled hentai* OVA series *Demon Beast Invasion*; numerous *retcons* gradually transformed it from an advance scout for his race to a transdimensional *Cosmic Horror*.

COMICS

- The Reveal* in the *2000AD* series *Zenith* was that the *Eldritch Abomination* villains were actually a trio of Earth superhumans who had evolved far beyond human form and and gotten stuck on the wrong side of a dimensional barrier in the process.
- Marvel Comics* has the Eternals, the Deviants, and the Inhumans, all different groups who were genetically modified by aliens, long ago. Also the Sub-Mariner's Atlantis.
 - Lost lands of this type were also a staple of the company's "giant monster" and science fiction stories in the 50's, although not all of those stories are still considered canon in the Marvel Universe.
- The *DC Universe* has Paradise Island/Themyscira, home of the *Amazons*; Gorilla City, home of gorillas *genetically enhanced by aliens*; and Aquaman's Atlantis. The Warlord's land of Skartaris *used* to count, being a *Hollow World*, but then got retconned as being a *Land of the Lost*-style *Alternate Universe*.
 - According to one story from *Arion Lord Of Atlantis* at least one alien race is descended from Atlantean space explorers. This *might* be an explanation for why there are so many *human-looking alien races* in the *DC Universe*.
- Gold Digger* LIVES on this trope. Digging up artifacts from such civilizations is the whole point of Gina's character.

FILM

- In the 2005 *War of the Worlds* film, the aliens had buried their war machines underground back before humans had evolved.
- The deep sea beings in *The Abyss* may or may not be these.
 - Not according to the novelization which pretty much follows the plot exactly, but also includes a few bits from the perspective of the aliens who specifically indicate that they came to Earth from another planet, keeping to the trench in order to hide from humanity.

LITERATURE

- In *Sinister Barrier* by Eric Frank Russell, Earth is populated by Vitons, *Energy Beings* who exist outside visible spectrum and feed upon human pain and anguish. Oh, and when they die, they *turn into ball lightnings*.
- In *Bruce Coville's* novel *The Search for Snout*, a boy believed his *Disappeared Dad* was an alien, but upon meeting him in space,

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finds out that he's a scientist from [Atlantis](#) who traveled into space before it fell, became immortal, and had adventures on alien worlds before returning to live. (And then he disappeared because an alien he'd ticked off on his adventures found him and wanted to harm his family.)

- The fairies from the *Artemis Fowl* series have got magic *and* have technology just about 50 years ahead of ours. And they live within the Hollow Earth, to boot.
- Humorous version from one of the spin-off *Dilbert* books, where Scott Adams postulates that all the smart people in the world have hyper-evolved to resemble grey aliens and are the real cause behind UFO sightings, but in fact have all just gone off to live in Switzerland.
- In the writings of [Richard Sharpe Shaver](#)—which he and many others believed to be fact—the Earth was once home to a super-advanced race of people living in ancient cave cities who abandoned this world to travel to another, leaving behind their descendants, the noble Teros and the degenerate Deros. The Deros would later inspire the evil dwarf-like Derros in *Dungeons & Dragons*.
- The dolphins in *The Illuminatus! Trilogy*.
- In *Anne McCaffrey's Acorna* series, the eponymous character is a member of a humanoid race of unicorns, descended from more traditional equine unicorns and the [Sufficiently Advanced Aliens](#) who rescued them from being hunted to extinction on Earth in the middle ages.
- [Ken MacLeod's](#) Cosmonaut Keep series is set in the Second Sphere, an area of space colonized by successive waves of intelligent Earth-evolved life forms, starting with hyperintelligent giant squid, and uplifted dinosaurs. Who fly around in saucers and happen to look a lot like [grays](#).
- A staple of [H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos](#). *Deep Ones*, *Ghouls*, and *Sand Dwellers* are all roughly humanoid and presumably originated on Earth; the Cthonians could also possibly be of terrestrial origins, but their being full-fledged [Eldritch Abominations](#) makes this hard to determine. The [Great Race](#) is actually a subversion, as while their *host bodies* originated on Earth, the *possessing intelligences* that are the actual Great Race projected themselves through time and space from elsewhere and -when.

LIVE ACTION TV

- In the *Star Trek: Voyager* episode "Distant Origin", the starship encounters an ancient civilization of earth dinosaurs. However, the theory that dinosaurs originate on Earth quickly gets branded as heresy, since it conflicts with the dogma that they have always been in their current region of space.
- The *Doctor Who* serials "Doctor Who and the Silurians", "The Sea Devils" and "Warriors of the Deep" feature various branches of a scientifically-advanced race of lizard people who ruled Earth in the days BEFORE the dinosaurs (stated at least once as being 300 million B.C).
 - Also, the Cybermen were originally humans. As of developments in the new series, there are now two distinct groups of Cybermen: those developed into Cybermen on Earth's twin planet Mondas and those created in an [Alternate Universe](#) (wherein Britain is a republic, Rose Tyler's dad is still alive, Rose Tyler never existed, and Mickey is Ricky).
 - There were even a few Dalek iterations that were fully or mostly created using human genetic materials (such as those from the finale of the first season of the new series). Being [Dalek](#) they were not amused by this fact being pointed out.
- Gary Seven, from the *Star Trek: The Original Series* episode "Assignment: Earth", was from a race of humans raised on another planet, returned to Earth to guide human evolution.
- The aliens in *X-Files* were actually ancient native Earth lifeforms that left for a few millennia and decided to come back. Much to their horror, they found that those pesky apes had built a civilization and replaced them — so they set out to re-colonize Earth, using the [Government Conspiracy](#) to aid them.
- *Fringe's* First People are a subversion. They're actually contemporary humans using a time machine.
- The antagonists in the *Ultra Seven* episode "Envoy from Nonmalto".

MUSIC

- In the song "Alien Attack" (see Page Quote), the synth band S.P.O.C.K. tells a story of hypertech dinosaurs coming back to reclaim their home planet from the humans.

TABLETOP GAMES

- The Subterrans and Tritons in *Monsterpocalypse*.

VIDEO GAMES

- The Lunarians in *Touhou Project*.
- The D'ni of *Myst* fame, though they originated on another world. Their city can be visited in *Myst V* and *URU*.
- In *Iji* the Komato, and, by extension, the Tasen originated from Earth.
- The Gillmen of *X-COM*, possibly inspired by the Silurians and Sea-Devils of *Doctor Who*.

WEB COMICS

- The dragons in *The Inexplicable Adventures of Bob!*, although they left Earth for another planet in the Middle Ages.

WEB ORIGINAL

- The [ahuman](#) and solipsist transapient AIs from *Orion's Arm* are ultraterrestrials to an extent - they *were* originally created by humans, but after losing their cyberwar against the pro-human transapient, they were exiled from Earth. When the (trans)humans and pro-human AIs finally reached the systems the ahumans had passed through, they found apparently alien artifacts - which turned out to be just stuff that the ahumans had built.

WESTERN ANIMATION

- Leela from *Futurama* was introduced on the show as a cyclops alien. As the series progressed, it was revealed she was a human mutant born on Earth.
- *South Park's* Crab People.
"Taste like crab, talk like people..."
- *Stingray*: The various aquatic races.

- The title monsters from *Inhumanoids* as well as the Mutores.

| | | |
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alternative title(s): [Aliens From Earth](#)

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Hollow World

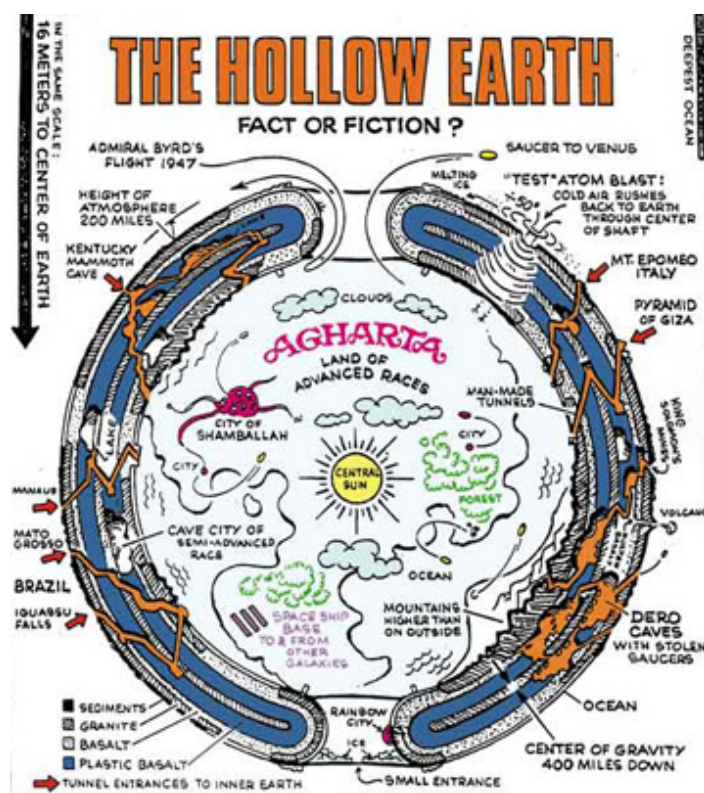
aka: Hollow Earth

Old man: *Years ago, I climbed the mountains, even though it was forbidden.*

Kirk: *Why is it forbidden?*

Old man: *I am not sure, (writhes and gasps in pain from a control device) but things are not as they teach us. For the world is hollow and I have touched the sky.*

— *Star Trek: Original Series*, "For the World Is Hollow and I Have Touched the Sky"



So, mainstream scientists today believe that the Earth under our feet has a lot of molten rock and metal filling it and have gathered a lot of pretty solid evidence for it. The only complication is that we've never been able to send a human down more than several miles to actually study it up close, largely because [No One Could Survive That](#). Which is why since times that are [Older Than Radio](#), early scientists, writers and more than a few crackpots have believed that there just might be something...or indeed, someone (say, [Ultra Terrestrials](#))...down there, possibly powered by a suitably sized sun in the center. (Yet other people believe

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we are actually living on the inside of a sphere, and the size of the universe is some kind of clever illusion, this variant is known as the concave hollow earth. But that's really [taking it too far.](#))

The most known early example is [Jules Verne's *A Journey To The Center Of The Earth*](#), although he likely drew from theories of his time. When science started to switch over to the modern view of Earth's composition the idea of the hollow earth became a [Discredited Trope](#), but later generations of [Speculative Fiction](#) writers [took up the concept and revitalized it](#). [Sci Fi](#) works bring us hollow world concepts such as the [Dyson Sphere](#), which is a [Hollow World](#) taken to a solar system scale, and other variations of [artificially constructed worlds](#).

Note that its usual configuration, with people walking about on the inner surface, wouldn't work; a hollow sphere has *no* net gravitational pull on any object inside it (although some theorists, such as [John Symmes](#), claim that this actually *could* work due to the [centrifugal force](#) caused by the planet's rotation).

A related belief is that of "Concave Hollow Earth": that Earth is actually a hollow bubble inside an infinite mass of rock.

A sub-trope of [World Shapes](#). Compare [Beneath the Earth](#), [Dyson Sphere](#). When the inhabitants don't know they're in a hollow world, may become [City in a Bottle](#).

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alternative title(s): Hollow Earth

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Transhuman Aliens

We WAH like you ONCE but now we ah di-FER-ent... SAH-tain WEAK-nesses have been RE-moved.

—**A Sai-BAH-man**, *Doctor Who*, "The Tenth Planet"

Related to the [Planet of the Apes Ending](#), and sort of like [Was Once a Man](#) for an entire species, this is where a group of alien/future creatures (typically those encountered by normal humans) are revealed to be the [future evolutionary path](#) of humanity. These creatures are often monstrous in appearance and behavior and this idea generally has a strong element of [Humans Are Bastards](#). Compare with [Theyre Not Even Human](#); in this case, they are worse because they are. Note, that there are occasional instances of uplifted humans who having experienced [The Singularity](#) are benevolent and god-like.

Compare/contrast with [Human All Along](#) and [Human Subspecies](#). Not to be confused with [Ultraterrestrials](#). See also [No Transhumanism Allowed](#) and [Transhuman](#).

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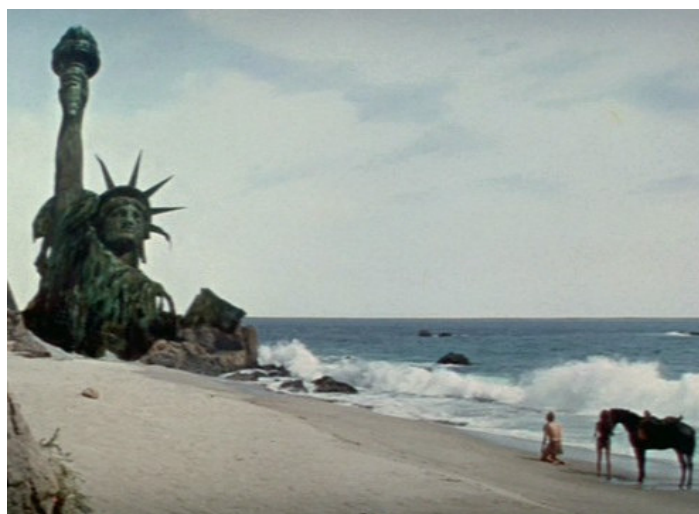
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Earth All Along

*The only danger [of space travel] is if they send us to that terrible Planet of the Apes. Wait a minute... Statue of Liberty... **that was our planet!!***

— **Homer Simpson**, *The Simpsons*.



You maniacs!! You blew it up!!

At some point of a [Speculative Fiction](#) story (often the end), the apparently

alien setting turns out to be the Earth, warped and twisted by disaster, disease, the passage of time, or some other instrument of drastic change.

Almost invariably this involves a character who was sure he was anywhere but Earth discovering the [Awful Truth](#).

At some point, this actually was very shocking (partially because humanity was [very close to blowing itself up](#) in the 1960s) and is one of the most famous kinds of [Twist Ending](#). Through over-use, these days, it's become [The Untwist](#); it would usually be more surprising if the apocalyptic planet turned out to be anywhere *but* Earth.

Variations:

- A classic [Twilight Zone](#) twist: the characters in the story turn out

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to be [Human Aliens](#). They're stranded on a primitive planet and now have to colonize. On resigning themselves to their fate, the leader says, "And I shall call this planet 'Earth'." **Double points if his name is Adam.** (The original *Twilight Zone* actually used this plot in "Probe 7—Over and Out".)

- The preferred *Outer Limits* version: the peaceful folks living in fear of alien invasion are really humanoid aliens. The aggressors? Humans. - this variation also a classic *Twilight Zone* episode- "The Invaders".
- Instead of believing it to be a different place, believe it to be a different time. You believe you're in caveman days, but later realize you're in the future [After the End](#), or you believe you're in the future, but later realize you're in the [past during an enlightened period](#) that will later get destroyed (with all record of it also wiped out).

As you might expect, this is an [ENDING TROPE](#), so there are many **spoilers** below. However, once you've read the description above, most Earths All Along are self-spoiling anyhow.

Related to [Humans Through Alien Eyes](#) and [Tomato Surprise](#).

Caution: There will be spoilers!!

Examples:

OPEN/CLOSE ALL FOLDERS

IT WAS EARTH ALL
ALONG

IT WAS OUR
HOMEWORLD ALL
ALONG

STARTING EARTH
FROM SCRATCH

BEFORE THE
BEGINNING OR AFTER
THE END

BATTLESTAR
GALACTICA (REMAKE)

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alternative title(s): Planet Of The Apes Ending

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MEDIA

Energy Beings

aka: Energy Being

"You can't beat the Drej. They're pure energy!"
 — Korso, *Titan A.E.*

Creatures that dispense with the need to have a body altogether.

Energy Beings are frequently Sufficiently Advanced or Precursors; in fact, non-physicality is a common prerequisite, though they may take on A Form You Are Comfortable With. Often times this means that when they "Touch" a corporeal being it has interesting side effects. Other times they are the result of when a species Ascend to a Higher Plane of Existence.

Even cheaper and simpler to pull off than Rubber Forehead Aliens, which explains why Energy Beings and Human Aliens so often dominate the demographics of The Final Frontier.

Never mind that being "made of energy" makes as much sense as being "made of heavy." Their continued appearance shows the unpopularity of philosophical materialism among science fiction writers (see Transhumanism and No Transhumanism Allowed). You could also argue that Energy Beings are basically used as a materialist/secularist version of religious transfiguration or afterlife.

It is also considered nonsensical as the energy beings usually act more like floating clouds of luminescent gas than energy, pure or not. Or, they might just plain be *made of stars*.

Of course, what are often referred to colloquially as 'energy beings' share many characteristics with the classic concept of a 'spirit'. This can be an example of Sufficiently Analyzed Magic.

See *Made of Magic* for a more fantastic version.

See also: *Evolutionary Levels* and *Hollywood Evolution*.

Examples

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The *Organians* were easy to cast: two 300-watt light bulbs and a purple filter.



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alternative title(s): Energy Being

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Discussion

Precursors

aka: Precursor

*They left our
planets long ago
The Elder Race
still learn and grow
Their power grows
with purpose
strong
To claim the home
where they belong
— Rush, 2112*



"And because, in all the galaxy, they had found nothing more precious than Mind, they encouraged its dawning everywhere."

Also known as "ancients." They are a standard fixture of much science fiction and fantasy: an ancient race

whose culture and knowledge rose to its pinnacle in ages long past but which is now extinct or [Ascended to a Higher Plane of Existence](#). In science fiction settings, they are usually considered the *first* race to have gained sentience in the universe or galaxy, giving them a noticeable leg up on everybody else; in fantasy settings, they will usually be the original, pinnacle sentient species created by the gods/God. At their height, they are usually rumored to have been capable of doing (and have done) just about anything, up to and including creating intelligent species and reworking entire worlds with a snap of a finger, and almost any strange and persistent mystery in the story's ['verse](#) is usually laid at their feet. They may have been [sufficiently advanced](#), or just much better than everyone else with technology/magic, but either way they left their mark, a mark that remains to this day.

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Then they vanished into [myth](#), leaving behind nothing but [tantalizing ruins](#) and rare, sometimes incomprehensible [artifacts](#) and [dangerous weapons](#). Just why, no one knows. Perhaps they [Ascended To A Higher Plane Of Existence](#), or were wiped out by [a disaster or war](#), or maybe they just relocated *en masse* to somewhere else where they haven't been found yet.

Whatever the reason, they set the stage for the modern world, left behind a few [MacGuffins](#) and surprises for the heroes and villains to find, and then got [conveniently out of the way](#). And then there are the times where they themselves are the reason everything's gone to hell, [and they intend to keep it that way](#).

Sometimes the Precursors can be rediscovered; usually nobody — especially not the Precursors themselves — is happy with that. This also applies to the audience: the romance of Precursors can be easily shattered by giving too much away.

[Bonus points](#) if [Earth Humans are Precursors and their incredibly human descendants try to rediscover their heritage](#) — or, conversely, if Earth Humans are the only descendants. If Humans are the Precursors and everyone's scared of them, that's [Humans Are Cthulhu](#). If they pick on their descendants, that's [Abusive Precursors](#); if they couldn't care less about anyone else, it's [Neglectful Precursors](#); if they help their descendants, it's [Benevolent Precursors](#). Any and all of these are susceptible to [Awakening the Sleeping Giant](#). If they gave their tech or it's being used by another race, it's [Low Culture, High Tech](#).

Very commonly used to [justify Rubber Forehead Aliens](#): everyone was made from a common template by the Precursors, so they look pretty similar.

Not to be confused with the space flight sim, [The Precursors](#).

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alternative title(s): Precursor; The Precursors

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