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Toby Smith. *Little Gray Men : Roswell and the Rise of a Popular Culture.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000. xi + 199 pp. $24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8263-2121-3.

Reviewed by Bernadette Zbicki Heiney (Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania)
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Millions of Americans today believe in the existence of extraterrestrial beings and UFOs. Even though this belief is based on purported sightings and eyewitness accounts, most Americans maintain a blind faith in ufology that is continually being fueled by the mass media. In his new book, *Little Gray Men : Roswell and the Rise of a Popular Culture*, Toby Smith examines the very notion that aliens exist and traces this cultural phenomenon to the July 1947 incident at Roswell, New Mexico and examines the role the mass media plays in fueling these beliefs.

According to UFO believers, on July 4, 1947, an alien spacecraft crashed near Roswell, New Mexico. From the wreckage found at the site, the United States Army Air Corps supposedly found and confiscated three alien bodies and the spaceship. Initially transported to the Roswell Army Air Field, it is believed that the remains were ultimately transferred to Dayton, Ohio, to what is now known as the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. According to Smith, this incident, regardless of whether or not it is fact or fiction was and continues to be popularized by the media. This continued popularization subsequently provides legitimacy to Roswell. Throughout the book, he provides the reader with a detailed history of news articles, books, television shows and movies that discuss UFO sightings and trace this history back to Roswell. Drawing from the many examples that he provides, he also argues that Roswell serves most often as a model for other sightings. Many of the aliens and spacecraft sighted since then closely resemble what was described at Roswell.

Other ideas explored by Smith include first, the incident's relationship to post World War II America. According to Smith, the Cold War and various government cover-ups from atomic bomb construction at Los Alamos to reconnaissance balloon flights over the continent add credence to the belief that the US government's denial of Roswell is, in fact, just another cover-up. Secondly, he discusses the commercialization of the incident and how this provides another level of credibility for believers. Interestingly, he also notes that this commercialization is an economic boost to the city of Roswell. Third, he outlines for his readers the science of rocketry and how that also relates to ufology, Roswell and the media.

Smith has presented a well-researched, finely detailed review of the events surrounding the UFO crash at Roswell, the science of ufology and the media's role in establishing Roswell as a fixture in American popular culture. Real or imagined, Smith argues that Roswell has become an American urban legend. For UFO believers and skeptics alike, Smith provides a wealth of information for both sides to consider.

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