

TRUTH OR FICTION?

The majority of this production is based on the actual events of Alfred Russel Wallace's life. A large percentage of the lines Wallace speaks are direct quotations from his writings. The meetings with Darwin are fictitious, but based on actual meetings that did take place between the men. Their first meeting was at the British Museum; they did meet upon occasion at Darwin's home. Darwin's sentiments in the scene of his final meeting with Wallace are based on letters he'd written and on the reflections of one of his biographers.

The character of Bates (who presents the conspiracy theory that Darwin stole Wallace's ideas) is based on a real person; there was a Bates who did receive a letter from Wallace two weeks prior to the famous letter sent to Darwin (outlining Wallace's theory of natural selection.) There is no record of Bates himself ever challenging Wallace to believe Darwin had plagiarized his ideas, but a number of scholars have put forth that theory (see bibliography to the right) and someone must have at least encouraged Wallace to believe the idea was his first, because he wrote avidly in defense of Darwin's priority.

Wallace did actually have his revelation about evolution in the midst of a malarial fit, but he describes no specific hallucinations in his writings, thus his interaction with the Komodo dragons are a purely fictional element of our tale (though he did sail right past Komodo Island, see Page 6).

The orangutan hunt is an agglomeration of several separate hunting expeditions Wallace recounts in his writings.

The character of Edwin Roberts and his newspaper are fictitious.

CHARLES DARWIN'S GHOST

Traveling to Hastings, Minnesota, one could visit the fascinating historical site where once lived William Gates Le Duc and his family. Like Wallace, Le Duc was swept up in the Spiritualism movement. In 1906, Le Duc published a small text recounting (among other things) his encounters during seances with the spirit of Charles Darwin. This seems particularly intriguing because Darwin had been an adamant opponent of Spiritualism; one would think his spirit would also be opposed to having anything to do with seances.

Le Duc's accounts read at times like a science fiction novel as the spirit of Darwin describes visits to other planets and civilizations. In one account Darwin describes: "...south of the star mapped as Beta Conturina...there be one hundred and thirty inhabited worlds, all in communication with each other..."

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Shermer, Michael. *In Darwin's Shadow; The Life and Science of Alfred Russel Wallace.* (2002). New York: Oxford University Press.
Slotten, Ross A. *The Heretic in Darwin's Court; The Life of Alfred Russel Wallace.* (2004). New York: Columbia University Press.
Wallace, Alfred Russel. *The Malay Archipelago; The Land of the Orangutan and the Bird of Paradise; A Narrative of Travel with Studies of Man and Nature.* (1869). London: Macmillan and Company.

Also consulted were the websites of:
wikipedia.org (regarding Wallace, Darwin, Evolution, Komodo dragons, Malay Archipelago)
wku.edu/~smithch/index1.htm "The Alfred Russel Wallace Page"

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