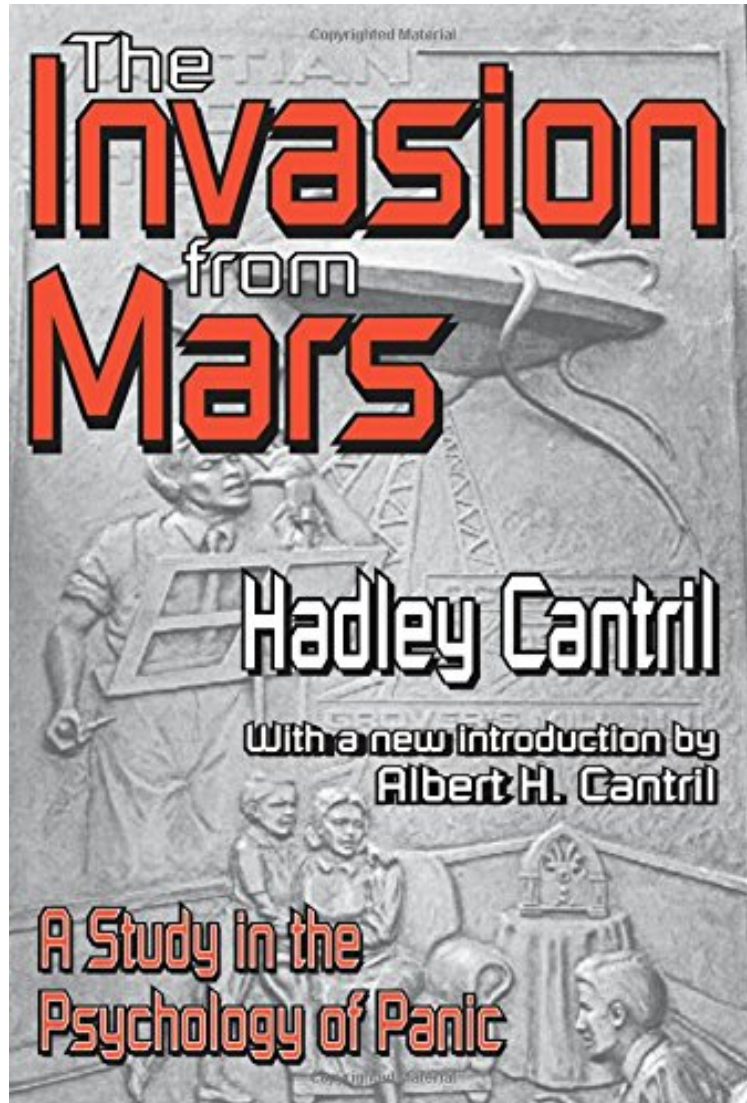


(Get free) The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic

## The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic

Hadley Cantril

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#1210235 in Books Hadley Cantril 2005-06-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.02 x .59 x 5.981, .94  
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45.Mb

**Hadley Cantril : The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Don't panic By Michael J. Tresca The Invasion from Mars is an interesting look at what happened on October 30, 1938 when one Welles (Orson) adapted another Wells' (H.G.) book (The War of the Worlds) to a radio play. What was unique about the play was that it was conducted as if it were real,

with the narrator, news casters, and even commercials dispersed throughout to create the illusion that Grover Mills had been invaded by Martians. It caused a "panic" -- I put that in quotes because the book is never entirely clear what the panic was exactly -- that had repercussions on the use of mass media with the public in ways that are still felt today. Author Hadley Cantril does his best to interview and survey those affected by the panic and to find some commonality between them. What, he asks, create a panic? And is there a personality type that makes a person more susceptible to disinformation? Is it social class? Cantril examines two well-off men, one shallow the other well-read, and determines that while poverty does not give the poor as many opportunities to be educated in critical thinking, it is not necessarily a guarantee that the poor will ignorantly believe everything they hear. Indeed, one of the advantages a well-read (and therefore, upper class) person had in avoiding panic was recognizing the plot as too fantastical or actually having read Wells' book. Another factor, perhaps more disconcerting, is the possibility that religious fervor makes the population more prone to panic. But Cantril debunks this too. He compares two women, both devout churchgoers, but finds major differences in their approach to new information. One spinster has a rigid, unforgiving world view and was taken in by the apocalyptic visions of the radio play because she secretly (Cantril posits) longed for the Rapture. The other woman simply thought the whole thing didn't make much sense. Asking for a second opinion helps, but sometimes those second opinions are unreliable. Some listeners were in a crowd of equally panicked bystanders; others called up their friends to warn them of impending doom, heightening the effect. Conversely, other folks simply turned the dial and realized that none of the other stations were carrying the same broadcast. No one is innocent in this Halloween charade. Welles knew the first comic sketch of a show on another network end at the 15 minute mark, when many readers switched over to the broadcast -- and thus entirely missed that the broadcast was fictional until 40 minutes later. The full extent of the panic is overblown too (which may explain why Cantril never does quite explain the full extent of the "panic"), amplified by newspapers suggesting that radio -- a real threat to their business -- was dangerous. Finally, people had good reason to be concerned -- Hitler was saber-rattling in Europe and another World War was on the horizon. Those who claimed to be "panicked" believed the Nazis, not Martians, were invading. Cantril comes to the conclusion that critical thinking is the key defense against panic, and it becomes more important the more access people have to broad swaths of information. In the era of increasingly polarized publications with significantly biased viewpoints and the ubiquitous fire hose of information that is the Internet, we need this skill more than ever. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A modern classic even in its reprint edition over fifty years later. By Midwest Book Review Hadley Cantril was chairman of the Institute for international Social Research: his *Invasion From Mars: A Study In The Psychology Of Panic* originally appeared in 1940 but remains a modern classic even in its reprint edition over fifty years later. The focus on the lasting effects of Orson Welles' radio adaptation of the fantasy *War of the Worlds* explores how radio could have such an effect - and how people judged the accuracy of what they were hearing on the radio.

On Halloween night 1938, Orson Welles broadcast a radio adaptation of the H. G. Wells fantasy, *The War of the Worlds*. What listeners heard sounded so realistic that at least a million were frightened by word that "strange creatures" from Mars had landed in central New Jersey and were "unleashing a deadly assault." Several thousand were so terrified they ran into the streets, drove away in their cars, or called the police for information about how to escape. Why did so many panic when the circumstances reported were so improbable? That is just the question Hadley Cantril, then a young social psychologist, set out to answer. Originally published in 1940, *The Invasion from Mars* remains a classic. The broadcast provided a unique real-life opportunity to explore why the relatively new medium of radio could have such an effect. Using a mix of research methods, Cantril shows that the impact of the broadcast had less to do with what went out over the air than with the "standards of judgment" people did or did not use in evaluating what they were hearing. This book is of continuing value to those interested in communications and mass behavior.

"One of the most fascinating, illuminating and provocative social documents that have been brought to public attention for some time." *New York Times Book* [T]he primary scientific and historical significance of Cantril's research with regard to the effect of the media is absolutely indisputable. This research continues to be regarded as one of the definitive works on the psychology of individual and collective panic reactions and as such is still worthy of being read today, either again or for the first time. . . . It is highly recommended Gerd H. Hvelmann, *Journal of Scientific Exploration* "The dramatic account brings into sharp focus those factors in the situation and from the individuals conducive to critical appraisal or contagious panic behavior." Muzafer Sherif About the Author Hadley Cantril (1906-1969) was chairman of the Institute for International Social Research. Earlier he founded the Office of Public Opinion Research and was Stuart Professor of Psychology at Princeton University. He was author of nineteen books and monitored public opinion for the executive branch during World War II. Albert H. Cantril, son of Hadley Cantril, is an independent public opinion analyst. Among his books are *Reading Mixed Signals: Ambivalence in American Public Opinion about Government* (with Susan Davis Cantril). He also worked on the White House staff during the Johnson administration and later served in the Bureaus of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Public Affairs of the Department

of State.