

## An Esoteric History of Red Hair

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#### Summary

### Introduction

This book is a collection of all the interesting bits and pieces of information about red hair that I've gathered over the course of the last ten years or so. My interest in the subject began in childhood really. As a child I had red hair myself (it's darkened somewhat with age) and several of my family members were also redheads. This made me acutely aware of how differently redheads were often viewed by both themselves and other people. I also often wondered where in history this difference originated.

However, my interest really blossomed after I published a short article on-line detailing some of the myths associated with the hair colour, and some of the famous historical figures in possession of it. The article, although it was a bit of a throwaway piece, generated much more interest and web traffic than anything else I'd written at that time. That made me realise that there must be a lot of people, like myself, interested in

the topic and actively searching on-line for information and answers about it. Seeing this unfilled vacuum I then decided to start collecting and searching out information about red hair in order to set up a website, which I eventually did. I've now been maintaining that website (somewhat half-arsedly) for the last six or seven years now, along with a blog about red hair, and I've continued keeping an eye out for any interesting information relating to red hair throughout that time.

Since then popular interest in red hair seems to have grown much more. There are now several websites on-line dedicated to it - most of them much more sleek and professional than mine. On top of this there seems to have been a renewed appreciation of red hair in the mainstream media, with a plethora of red-haired celebrities and artists now occupying the top-tier of celebrity culture. It's difficult to judge whether this image change for red hair is a permanent one, or whether it's just a passing trend. Either way it'll be interesting to see what happens over the next few years or so. At the moment however I'm concentrating on looking backwards in time rather than forwards, and that's the general theme of this book - the history and mythology of red hair. I also add a fair bit of my own speculation about all this along the way.

Before I finish this brief introduction though I'd like to just take a minute to weave a few words of caution. When I think back to when I was a child my main interest in red hair came not from any aesthetic appreciation of it, or in fact from any feeling that it was anything special at all. It was only of interest to me in that other people sometimes treated me differently because I had it. Sometimes it was just playful teasing, other times it was more barbed. Either way I just wanted equal treatment, and wondered why redheads weren't getting it. Was red hair really that different? Was there something wrong with red hair? I guess originally I wanted it not to be an issue at all.

However, I now sometimes worry that my initial interest in red hair, born out of that frustration, has now developed into an active attempt to glorify red hair. Lauding it as not just equal to, but better than other hair colours. So before I start this book I'd like to put a dampener on that idea and state that although it's fun to look at the history of red hair, and some the wacky ideas associated with it, it's probably best not to take it all too seriously. After all, it's just a colour.

Obviously, being a redhead myself I find it hard not to resist the temptation to massage my own ego by telling myself that red hair is inherently brilliant, and that by extension

I'm brilliant too. In fact, maybe deep down this entire endeavour stems from a desire to improve my own self-worth in my eyes and in the eyes of other people. So it's worth bearing in mind my own personal biases before we start, and at least try to avoid falling into that trap.

When we delve into the topic of human hair colour and skin tone it's easy to wander into issues of race and origin. In this book I sometimes wonder where red hair originated and discuss some of the ideas that people have had about that question. Did it originate with one particular group of humans at one particular point in time? Or has it popped up in varying places and times independently? These questions are interesting, but ultimately they are all quite superficial ones.

For the record, I generally believe that different hair colours are simply an inevitable part of the natural variation in humans. If we look at other mammals - cats, dogs, horses, cattle - the same hair colour range can be seen that we see in humans - black, brown, red, rusty, fair, sandy, blond, white. In fact, it would be quite weird if we didn't see this variation in us as well.

So yeah, hopefully you'll enjoy this book, but don't take it to heart too much. By all means love red hair, but love it as a variation on a divine theme, rather than as something divine above all things else.

### Red Hair in the Ancient World

A logical place to start this book is the ancient world - namely ancient Greece and Rome. This is generally the starting point for anyone writing about history from a western perspective, and I guess it's only natural that I should start with the same bias. In fact, when I first started wondering about the origins of red hair this was where I first looked. Searching on-line I came across the odd ancient quote about red hair here and there and felt as though I'd inched a little closer to the truth in some way.

It says a lot about the mystery surrounding the origins of red hair that this was the case really. As a child I literally had zero information on the topic. I remember being vaguely aware that red hair was a northern European thing, and that Scottish people were more red-haired than everyone else. And that maybe it was an evolutionary consequence of

the northern climate. But that was about it. So when I came across the odd quote by an ancient Greek or Roman stating that this tribe or that tribe were red-haired it seemed like a big deal.

Since then I've lost a lot of faith in these ancient writers. They're often unreliable, difficult to translate and difficult to date. Generally leaving more questions than answers. However, they do at least give us something to work with, and they make for fascinating reading for anyone interested in the history of red hair.

One of the most famous ancient writers to speak of red hair was the Greek philosopher Aristotle, and in many ways the quotes attributed to him sum up the fascination and frustration that comes with searching for ancient references to the hair colour.

The most often repeated quote attributed to Aristotle on-line is this one;

*"Those with tawny coloured hair are brave; witness the lions. [But those with] reddish [hair] are of bad character; witness the foxes."*

It plays into the seemingly age old belief that redheads are somehow less trustworthy and courageous than everyone else. However, when we delve a little deeper things become a little less clear. For a start the quote comes from a work titled *Physiognomics*. Although this work was originally attributed to Aristotle, modern scholars now believe it to be the work of another author. They believe this "other" author wrote it around the year 300 BC, so it would still at least be an ancient quote, but just maybe not from Aristotle.

On top of this when I searched out an actual translation of the work the full quote given was this;

*Too black a hue marks the coward, as witness Egyptians and Ethiopians, and so does also too white a complexion, as you may see from women. So the hue that makes for courage must be intermediate between these extremes. A tawny colour indicates a bold spirit, as in lions : but too ruddy a hue marks a rogue, as in the case of the fox. A pale mottled hue signifies cowardice, for that is the colour one turns in terror. The honey-pale are cold, and coldness means immobility, and an immobile body means slowness. A red hue indicates hastiness, for all parts of the body on being heated by movement turn red. A flaming skin, however, indicates mania, for it results from an overheated body, and extreme bodily heat is likely to mean mania.*

From this quote it seems the writer is speaking more of skin colour than hair colour. And that even if he is speaking of hair colour he seems to be denigrating not just redheads, but also black people, pale people, women - pretty much anyone that isn't a white Greek male.

In fact, the word 'ruddy' in the text is one that crops up time and time again, and it's problematic for people searching for info about hair colour. The general sense of the word is red. The word might even share its etymology with the word red - *rud* and *red* being essentially the same word when we consider how interchangeable vowel sounds can be. However, does it refer to red hair or red skin? Can it be used to describe either?

A good example of this confusion can be seen when considering the appearance of Aristotle's star pupil Alexander the Great. The writer Plutarch described him as having a 'ruddy' tinge. Some have chosen to see this as an indication that he had red hair, others think this was a reference to his skin tone.

My favourite Aristotle quote about red hair is the following one. It comes from a collection titled *Problems*, and again according to scholars there is some doubt as to whether this work can be attributed to Aristotle or not. They believe it reached its final form somewhere between the 3rd century BC and the 6th century AD - quite a broad brush stroke, but still reasonably ancient.

*Why have fishermen reddish hair, and divers for murex, and in short all who work on the sea? Is it because the sea is hot and full of dryness because it is salty? Now that which is of this nature, like lye and orpiment, makes the hair reddish. Or is it because they are warmer in their outer parts, but their inner parts are chilled, because, owing to their getting wet, the surrounding parts are always being dried by the sun? And as they undergo this process, the hair being dried becomes fine and reddish. Furthermore all those who live towards the north have fine, reddish hair.*

It seems odd that he attributes red hair to a watery environment. His opinions may sound quite naive to our ears, almost laughable, however, interestingly, they're not too dissimilar to the general view we have today about red hair, and our belief that it's an adaption to the sunlight-deprived northern climate. In fact, the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius Pollio - the man who inspired Leonardo da Vinci's famous Vitruvian Man illustration - makes a similar statement to this in his work *The Ten Books On Architecture*;

*In the cold regions that are far away from the south, the moisture is not drawn out by hot weather, but the atmosphere is full of dampness which diffuses moisture into the system, and makes the frame larger and the pitch of the voice deeper. This is also the reason why the races that are bred in the north are of vast height, and have fair complexions, straight red hair, grey eyes, and a great deal of blood, owing to the abundance of moisture and the coolness of the atmosphere.*

This idea that red hair was a northern thing was a common theme for the Romans and I'll return to it later, for the time being though I'll return to and expand upon that Aristotle quote. The *murex* he mentions is the name given to a particular sea snail. It was from this sea snail that the ancient Phoenicians produced their famous purple dye *Tyrian purple* - royal purple (or tyrants purple if you prefer). This reference to both *murex* and *reddish hair* fascinates me no end as it suggests a possible link between red hair and the Phoenicians.

It's thought that the name Phoenician means *red people*, or alternatively *purple people*, and it's generally believed that this name owes itself to their association with the above mentioned purple dye. However, others have speculated that it maybe refers to red hair.

Interestingly, the Phoenicians were famed seafarers and had trade links with ancient Britain. So again we have the possibility of red hair being associated with a wet, northern environment. Was there maybe a genetic link between the British and the Phoenicians? If they had red hair could it have originated in Britain? Or did the red hair actually arrive in Britain via the Phoenicians? Aristotle's claim that "all who worked on the sea had reddish hair" is quite telling in this regard.

I also wonder if the *Phoenix* could relate to all this. The Phoenix, of course, was a mythical bird that was said to die and be reborn in flames. Could its red and orange flames have been seen as symbolic of red hair? Some researchers have suggested that the pink Flamingo bird might have been the inspiration for the Phoenix. The word *Flamingo* suggests *flame*, so again the link with fire. It's not hard to imagine how ancient people could mythologise the Flamingo, with its bright pink feathers, into a totemic fire-bird.

The fact that purple was deemed the colour of royalty is also of interest here, as red hair has often been linked with royalty throughout history - a theme that will be touched

upon in later chapters. When looking into all this it can be frustrating that scholars are unsure as to whether the name Phoenician denotes red or purple, however their difficulty is understandable given their limited frame of reference. In earlier times colours may not have been differentiated the way we differentiate them today. Red and purple can look similar depending on the shade, so maybe the red and purple of ancient writers weren't as distinct as we think of them today. In fact, the above mentioned Flamingo, with its pink colouring, would maybe help explain this confusion between red and purple. Maybe red, pink and purple were all viewed as being under the same umbrella? Maybe they were all a symbol of red hair, fire and royalty?

The way we use the term *red hair* today illustrates this problem quite succinctly actually. When we say red hair what we usually mean is brown or orangey hair. However, someone reading this in a few thousand years time without our frame of reference could easily think we were describing people with telephone-box red hair, instead of the more natural colouring we actually mean. If we're this vague in our descriptions now it's little wonder we have so much trouble trying to understand what ancient writers were trying to describe.

Incidentally, it was also not uncommon for people to be described as purple-haired in ancient texts. Take this reference to violet-hair from a dithyramb (an ancient hymn) by the Greek poet Bacchylides;

*It may be that the dear lovely-named daughter of Phoenix went to the bed of Zeus beneath the brow of Ida and bore you, greatest of mortals, but I too was borne by the daughter of rich Pittheus, who coupled with the sea-god Poseidon, and the violet-haired Nereids gave her a golden veil.*

There's also the story of King Nisus of Megara. This tale comes from the *Description of Greece* by the Greek geographer Pausanias. In this translation the hair is described as red. However, in other translations the colour is often given as purple.

*Behind the Lyceum is a monument of Nisus, who was killed while king of Megara by Minos, and the Athenians carried him here and buried him. About this Nisus there is a legend. His hair, they say, was red, and it was fated that he should die on its being cut off. When the Cretans attacked the country, they captured the other cities of the Megarid by assault, but Nisaea, in which Nisus had taken refuge, they beleaguered. The story says how the daughter of Nisus, falling in love here with Minos, cut off her father's*

hair.

Again too the link between hair colour and kingly power.

Another dithyramb by Bacchylides links the mythological Greek hero Theseus, the founder-king of Athens, with red hair (although in this case the passage most likely refers to the plume of red hair on his helmet, as opposed to the hair on his actual head);

*The herald says that only two men accompany him, and that he has a sword slung over his bright shoulders ... and two polished javelins in his hands, and a well-made Laconian hat on his head with its fire-red hair. A purple tunic covers his chest, and a woolen Thessalian cloak. Bright red Lemnian fire flashes from his eyes. He is a boy in the prime of youth, intent on the playthings of Ares: war and battles of clashing bronze. He is on his way to splendor-loving Athens.*

The fire-red plume of the Laconian hat reminds me a little of the red Phrygian caps sported by ancient peoples, and then later, of course, by French revolutionaries. Note also the 'purple tunic' covering his chest. Incidentally, it's said that in ancient times girls who were about to be married offered locks of their hair to Hippolytus, son of Theseus, as a sign of their virginity.

In Homer's *Iliad* both Menelaus and Achilles are described as redheads too, although again translations differ - some giving Achilles' hair as blond or golden instead. Bizarrely, there's even a story that in his youth Achilles spent time disguised as a red-haired girl named *Pyrrha* - *Pyrrha* meaning "the red-haired".

The story goes that in order to stop Achilles dying at Troy as prophesied, his mother, the nymph Thetis, sent him to the court of Lycomedes, king of Skyros, disguised as a girl. There he fell in love with Deidamia, the daughter of Lycomedes, before being lured back to the call of war by the ever-cunning Odysseus. The story is alluded to in the *Iliad*, and was later expounded upon further in other works. It became a staple part of the Achilles mythology and was popular in both art and literature right up until the 20th century. Neoptolemus, the child produced by the affair between Achilles and Deidamia was also supposedly red-haired, being nick-named *Pyrrhus* because of it.

This fact that some Greek heroes were described as red-haired can appear quite odd when we consider that in other texts red hair was often viewed as something foreign and barbarian. In general red hair was associated with the tribes of Thrace and Scythia -

areas to the north of ancient Greece. For example, the historian Herodotus mentions a tribe with "blue-grey eyes and red hair" called the Budini, living in the region of Scythia, and the philosopher Xenophanes makes reference to the red hair of the Thracians in his famous quote regarding the human tendency to depict gods in human form;

*The Ethiopians claim that their gods are flat-nosed and black-skinned; the Thracians, that they are blue-eyed and have red hair...if oxen, horses, and lions had hands with which to draw and make works like men, horses would represent the gods in the likeness of a horse, oxen in that of an ox, and each one would make for them a body like the one he himself possessed.*

This is a great quote, only spoiled by the fact that again some translations give the hair colour as blond and not red. It should be pointed out however that the contention that the Thracians were red-haired (or at least that some of them were) is supported by the Ostrusha burial mound excavation in what is now modern day Bulgaria, which uncovered a beautiful image of a clearly red-haired Thracian woman.

Like the Greeks the ancient Romans also viewed red hair as a token of foreignness. However, they tended to associate it with the Germanic and Gaulish tribes of northern Europe. For example, the Roman historian Livy had this to say about the Gauls;

*Their tall stature, their long red hair, their huge shields, their extraordinarily long swords; still more, their songs as they enter into battle, their war-whoops and dances, and the horrible clash of arms as they shake their shields in the way their fathers did before them - all these things are intended to terrify and appall.*

This appraisal of the Gauls was echoed by the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus;

*For stature they are tall, of a pale complexion, and red haired, not only naturally, but they endeavour all they can to make it redder by art.*

It's also said that the Roman emperor Caligula made prisoners from Gaul grow their hair long and dye it red so that he could display them to the public on his triumph in Rome. The following account comes from the historian Suetonius;

*He now concentrated his attention on the imminent triumph. To supplement the few prisoners taken in frontier skirmishes and the deserters who had come over from the barbarians, he picked the tallest Gauls of the province — 'those worthy of a triumph' — and some of their chiefs as well, for his supposed train of captives. These had not only to*

*grow their hair and dye it red, but also to learn German and adopt German names.*

This suggestion that Gauls had to dye their hair red to look like Germans seems to contradict the earlier quotes describing the Gauls with long red hair. It would also suggest that the Germanic tribes were viewed as especially red-haired by the Romans.

The idea that Germanic people were red-haired appears slightly odd to our modern eyes, as in modern day Germany red hair seems relatively rare. This would suggest that maybe these 'ancient' accounts are somewhat muddled and untrustworthy - or even completely false and fraudulent. There's also the possibility that "red hair" is a mistranslation - when it comes to Germanics would blond hair maybe make more sense? Whatever the provenance though we once again see red hair (or possibly fair hair) put down in text in association with ideas of otherness and northerness.

Many other Roman authors also made this connection. Tacitus had this to say;

*For my own part, I agree with those who think that the tribes of Germany are free from all taint of inter-marriages with foreign nations, and that they appear as a distinct, unmixed race, like none but themselves. Hence, too, the same physical peculiarities throughout so vast a population. All have fierce blue eyes, red hair, huge frames, fit only for a sudden exertion. They are less able to bear laborious work. Heat and thirst they cannot in the least endure; to cold and hunger their climate and their soil inure them.*

Again, this quote would suggest that the ancient Germanic tribes were viewed as being especially red-haired. Wouldn't it be truly fascinating if this was indeed the case. Perhaps maybe it was, it's plausible that a lot could have changed in the last two thousand years or so. However, once again, mistranslation, confusion and exaggeration are much more likely explanations for this discrepancy between modern and ancient population demographics.

Another writer who painted the Germanic tribes as red-haired was the Roman writer Seneca;

*Among his own people, there is nothing distinctive about the colouring of an Ethiopian; nor is red hair tied in a knot unbecoming to a German male. Nothing in an individual is noteworthy or ugly if it is common to his entire nation.*

Again we see these Romans and Greeks placing themselves in between the extremes of dark-skinned Africans and light-skinned northern Europeans. It's almost as if they used

this distinction to define and self-identify themselves. It would be interesting to note however that red hair wasn't completely unknown amongst the Roman population. It's said that the emperor Vitellius was a redhead for example. There was also a Roman family line that went by the moniker Ahenobarbus - so called because they possessed red beards. Ahenobarbus literally translating as "bronze beard". Suetonius relates the story of how they came by this name;

*The AEnobarbi derive both their extraction and their cognomen from one Lucius Domitius, of whom we have this tradition: -- As he was returning out of the country to Rome, he was met by two young men of a most august appearance, who desired him to announce to the senate and people a victory, of which no certain intelligence had yet reached the city. To prove that they were more than mortals, they stroked his cheeks, and thus changed his hair, which was black, to a bright colour, resembling that of brass; which mark of distinction descended to his posterity, for they had generally red beards.*

It's also said that Roman matrons would sprinkle gold dust on their hair to make it a reddish-colour in appearance. However, in spite of these few instances of positivity for red hair, the following example, coming from the Roman poet Martial's epigram about a slave named Zoilus, shows us, in quite swingeing terms, that, as per usual, red hair was in general seen as something different and unappealing;

*Zoilus, with your red hair, dark complexion, short foot, and bleary eye, it would be miraculous if you were virtuous.*

Quite a stinging indictment. There's also this brief exchange from a Roman play titled *Heautontimorumenos (The Self-Tormentor)* by the Roman dramatist Publius Terentius.

*SOSTRATA: My son, upon my honor I'll give you that charming girl, whom you may soon become attached to, the daughter of our neighbor Phanocrata.*

*CLITIPHO: What! that red-haired girl, with cat's eyes, freckled face, and hooked nose? I can not, father.*

It's also said that in Roman plays slaves would wear red wigs to distinguish themselves from the rest of the cast. This tradition supposedly derived from the fact that Roman and Greek slaves were sourced from the tribes of northern Europe. Incidentally, on the subject of plays, the famous Greek playwright Euripides was also said to have had a freckled appearance.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the tribes of ancient Britain were also associated with red hair in the minds of ancient Romans. In fact, the famed British warrior-queen Boudica, scourge of the Roman legions, was described by the writer Dio Cassius as being "tall and terrifying" in appearance and as having a "great mass of red hair". Both then and now she was seen as a symbol of the fiery red-haired north.

The redheaded Brits were also compared and linked to the above-mentioned red-haired tribes of Germany. Strangely presaging later writers that would chronicle the genetic links between the Anglo-Saxons and their continental German cousins. The writer Tacitus made this comment;

*The red hair and large limbs of the inhabitants of Caledonia point clearly to a Germanic origin.*

And Intriguingly, when the Scots published their *Declaration of Arbroath*, in an attempt to establish Scottish independence in 1320, they traced their lineage back to the ancient Scythians. Were the red-haired Scythians equated with the red-haired Germanic tribes in the Medieval mind?

Moving on to a slightly more ghoulish topic, the ancient Britons, most notably the Celtic Druids, were also often accused by the Romans of human sacrifice. Now it's been suggested by some that redheads were a particular target for these sacrifices, and that the disproportionate number of bog bodies found with red hair is evidence of this practice.

For the uninitiated bog bodies are bodies that have been naturally preserved in peat bogs. As a consequence of this preservation some are found in astoundingly good condition - some almost looking life-like. Some of these well-preserved bodies do indeed show evidence of sacrifice, but the evidence is often highly contentious. It's also true that many appear to have red hair, however it's claimed that this is often due to the way the hair has chemically decomposed due to the conditions in the bog. The acid in the bog attacking the brown/black pigment in the hair (eumelanin), but leaving the naturally red/brown pigment (pheomelanin). Again though opinions often differ on this.

There do appear to be some uncontested bona fide redheaded bog bodies though. Two striking examples being *Yde Girl* - the body of a girl approximately 16 years old with long reddish-blond hair, and *Neu Versen Man* - the body of a man with red hair and beard, also known as *Roter Franz*, meaning Red Franz in English.

Concurrently, it's also been suggested that redheads were sacrificed in ancient Egypt. The ancient writer Diodorus Siculus gives us this testimony;

*It is lawful to sacrifice red oxen, because Typhon seemed to be of that colour, who treacherously murdered Osiris, and was himself put to death by Isis, for the murder of her husband. They report likewise, that anciently men that had red hair, like Typhon, were sacrificed by the kings at the sepulchre of Osiris.*

On the one hand this far-fetched testimony is quite terrifying and chilling, on the other hand however it does make for good reading - and it makes the history of red hair seem a lot more sexy and cinematic than it otherwise would be. Maybe we can have our cake and eat it by pretending it's true for entertainments value, but at the same time hoping it's not true for our moral peace of mind. If there is any real truth in it though (and I guess given how well documented human sacrifice is in human history it has to be seriously considered) then it could maybe help explain why there are so few redheads around nowadays. It also parallels quite neatly the claim that red-haired 'witches' were singled out for the flames during the witch hunts that would later rage through Europe. A frightening historic strand of persecution if these claims do bear any truth.

My first introduction to these sacrificial claims regarding ancient Egypt came via Sir James Frazer and his seminal, and much referenced work, *The Golden Bough*. I might as well quote from it below for dramatic effect.

*With regard to the ancient Egyptians we have it on the authority of Manetho that they used to burn red-haired men and scatter their ashes with winnowing fans, and it is highly significant that this barbarous sacrifice was offered by the kings at the grave of Osiris. We may conjecture that the victims represented Osiris himself, who was annually slain, dismembered, and buried in their persons that he might quicken the seed in the earth.*

He then later elaborates on this;

*Again the theory that the pig, originally Osiris himself, afterwards came to be regarded as an embodiment of his enemy Typhon, is supported by the similar relation of red-haired men and red oxen to Typhon. For in regards to the red-haired men who were burned and whose ashes were scattered with winnowing-fans, we have seen fair grounds for believing that originally, like the red-haired puppies killed at Rome in the spring, they were representatives of the corn-spirit himself, that is, of Osiris, and were slain for the express purpose of making the corn turn red or golden.*

The killing of *red-haired puppies* seems particularly unnecessary. A further reference to redhead-sacrifice in *The Golden Bough* comes when Frazer speaks of the ancient inhabitants of Harran - an area in upper Mesopotamia, in what is now modern day Turkey.

*The heathen of Harran offered to the sun, moon, and planets human victims who were chosen on the ground of their supposed resemblance to the heavenly bodies to which they were sacrificed; for example, the priests, clothed in red and smeared with blood, offered a red-haired, red-cheeked man to "the red planet Mars" in a temple which was painted red and draped with red hangings.*

Again this sounds quite cinematic and shocking ..and possibly apocryphal. If it's true though it paints a pretty horrific picture for any redhead caring to envision it. On a more positive note however, and to at least try to level up the playing field a little, it should be noted that many ancient Egyptian Pharaohs actually had red hair themselves. The most famous being Rameses II, aka Rameses the Great. His red hair can still be seen clinging on to his mummified corpse, as can the red hair of many other mummified Pharaohs. Again though, some people claim this red colouring may be a consequence of the decomposition process. So as ever opinion varies.

Interestingly, and taking us back quite fittingly to the realms of ancient Greece and Rome, it has also been claimed that the Egyptian queen Cleopatra was a redhead. A portrait unearthed from the ruins of the ancient city of Herculaneum, showing a regal looking woman with red hair, is said to depict her. Her hair colour was supposedly inherited from her Ptolemaic ancestors, who came and conquered Egypt with the previously mentioned Alexander the Great.

In summary then, to conclude this chapter, it would seem that in the ancient world red hair generally occupied one of three positions - ruler, victim or foreigner. In short, anything but the regarded norm. I suppose this was a natural consequence of the minority status of redheads - assuming, of course, they were a minority at that time. What's deemed normal is generally what's most common. A black sheep is defined by the multitude of white sheep, and redheads I guess were defined by the multitude of non-redheads. They no doubt symbolised otherness because of this, a theme that very much continues in the next chapter.

## Oranges, Witches and Vampires

Some people have speculated that the tree in the Garden of Eden was an orange tree. In fact, it was sometimes depicted as such in European art. This would be quite fitting as the sun-shaped orange can be thought of as a symbol of light and illumination. The orange quite aptly representing the knowledge Eve reached for against the wishes of God.

Surprisingly, the orange can also be seen as a symbol of red hair. These two ideas overlap in the symbol of the halo. The radiant aura surrounding the heads of enlightened beings. The words 'aura' and 'orange' may even be cognate with one another. The Latin for gold is *aurum*, the French for gold *or*. The Spanish likewise *oro*. The orange is therefore the *golden* fruit. Its brightness equated with gold, the king of metals. An aura is thus a golden halo, and it's easy to imagine how a head of bright red or blond hair could be seen as a literal halo. A circle of light standing out against the backdrop of the natural world. An earthly equivalent to the sun.

Before we proceed further it might be wise to briefly investigate this relationship between blond and red hair. We saw in the last chapter how easily the two can be confused. Is golden hair red or blond? Does fair mean fiery or flaxen? Can we speak of them both in the same breath, or do they have to be separate?

The difference between blond and red can be slight, but within that slightness there's often a great distance of opinion. Blond hair is often viewed as the very embodiment of beauty - a symbol of purity and perfection. The fair princess. All that is good and chaste. Whereas red is often viewed as a symbol of danger and sexuality. As a deviance from the accepted path. Even to the point where red hair can be viewed as a mark of deformity or abnormality.

Obviously this book is concerned with what we call 'red' hair - the deviant half of this vivid spectrum. However, it's impossible to truly cast a line between these two extremes. Strawberry-blond hair for example can be classed under both these categories, straddling the imaginary line between innocence and danger. I guess we therefore have to accept that both red and blond hair are somehow intertwined. There's an iridescent quality that we can't define. They're two sides of the same golden coin. However, the link they both have with brightness and illumination is impossible to

ignore.

This association that red and blond hair have with light and illumination can almost have an alchemical tinge to it at times. For instance, the famed 17th century French dramatist Cyrano de Bergerac had this to say about red hair. I'll quote him in full as it's one of the more flattering accounts we have from history regarding red hair.

*"A brave head covered with red hair is nothing else but the sun in the midst of his rays, yet many speak ill of it, because few have the honour to be so. Do we not see that all things in nature are more or less red? Among the elements, he that contains the most essence and the least substance is the fire, because of his colour. Gold hath received of his dye, the honour to reign over metals and of all planets the sun is most considered only because he is most red. The best-balanced constitution is that which is between phlegmatic and melancholy. The flaxen and black are beside it - that is to say the fickle and obstinate, between both is the medium, where wisdom in favour of red-haired men hath lodged virtue, so their flesh is much more delicate, their blood more pure, their spirits more clarified, and consequently their intellects more accomplished, because of the mixture of the four qualities."*

This is a clear example of red hair being given a special pre-eminence because of its colour, a pre-eminence apparently equivalent to the golden sun. Interestingly, in the medieval period it was even said that the blood of a red-haired man was needed to turn copper into gold, and perhaps more bizarrely it's recorded that the urine of red-haired boys was often used when making both swords and stained glass windows. Clearly red hair, or redheads, were seen as having some sort of magical chemical property - something needed in the process of achieving perfection.

Historical figures with red hair were sometimes described as having *gilt* or *gild* hair. The word gild means to add a thin layer of gold to something, and is clearly cognate with the word gold itself. This is where we get the term 'to gild the lily' - in essence to make something more beautiful. However, interestingly the word *gild* also had the archaic meaning of *to smear with blood*. Linking red hair with blood as well as gold. The old superstition that redheads were conceived during menstruation immediately springs to mind.

If we return to the Garden of Eden for a minute we'll remember that not only was the Tree of Knowledge associated with enlightenment, but also with sex and shame. The

apple is often viewed as the archetypal symbol of sexuality, however, again, an orange could be viewed similarly. There's even of course the *blood orange* variety of orange - a rather literal link between oranges and blood. In some countries the blood orange was even seen as symbolic of the blood of Christ. We could even maybe make a link between the words *gilt* and *guilt*. Or even a link between the words *sin* and *sun*.

Mention of sin and Christ brings us quite neatly to another famous Christian symbol of sexuality, Mary Magdalene. Of course she was also often depicted in art with red hair - often quite noticeably so too. In fact, in his book *Mary Magdalene: Princess of Orange* the author Ralph Ellis suggests that because of this Mary's very symbol was the orange. He even goes so far as to suggest that she was the ancient ancestor of the Dutch *House of Orange*, and that it was from this that they derived their distinctive family name.

Mary was famously denounced as a prostitute by the Catholic Church, and her role in the Gospels diminished - relegated to the position of renegade sinner. So again in history we see red hair being held in association with fallenness and sexual deviancy. This can be seen in marked contrast to the Virgin Mary, who tended to be depicted with blond angelic hair. Once more highlighting the seemingly inbuilt tendency we have to regard blondness in affinity with purity and redness in affinity with danger. This in itself is quite a curious thing. Is it the product of human culture? Or is it an inherent part of nature itself? Something we can't help but feel instinctively? Something that maybe holds an inherent grain of truth.

Interestingly, it's said that French witches would blaspheme the name of the Virgin Mary by referring to her as "la Rousse" - the redhead. This was recorded as early as the 16th century and no doubt suggests a tradition going back even further. Did these witches see the concept of a virgin birth as an idea worthy of mockery? Or were they possibly aware of a counter tradition in which Mary was in some way deemed to actually be red-haired?

A similar link between red hair and the Virgin Mary can be found in the English saint St Modwen of Burton. She had red hair and was likewise associated with childbirth - carrying a staff which labouring women would take possession of to use as a walking aid during the exhausting months of pregnancy. A variant of the name Modwen was Modwenna, which clearly has echoes of the name Madonna, so it's possible that this was an ancient English version of the Mary myth. Clearly in this case though red hair was associated with childbirth in a positive way.

By the 18th century this positive association between red hair and motherhood in England had apparently disappeared though. A book of the period titled *The Diseases of Women with Child, And in Child-Bed* noted quite bluntly how unfit redheaded women were for the task. Warning parents of the dangers of hiring a red-haired wet nurse. It stated that a wet nurse "must not be red-hair'd, nor marked with Spots[.]" Going on to state;

*"She ought to have a sweet Voice to please and rejoice the Child, and likewise ought to have a clear and free Pronunciation, that the child may not learn an ill Accent from her, as usually red-hair'd have[.]"*

This ill opinion of red-hair continues even further when it moves on to the topic of breast milk;

*"It must be of a sweet and pleasant Smell, which is Testimony of a good Temperament, as may be seen in red hair'd Women, whose Milk hath a sour, stinking and bad Scent ...Very frequently the Milk of a Nurse, who is Red-hair'd, given to Wine, or very Amorous, may by its Heat and Acrimony cause small Ulcers in an Infant's Mouth[.]"*

Once again we see red hair mentioned in the same bracket as sexual licentiousness - and in this case it's akin to alcoholism as well. The very idea that milk from a red-haired woman could give a child's mouth "small ulcers" seems quite ridiculous to us, but it does serve to illustrate just how differently red hair was viewed in these earlier periods. In this light the much touted idea that red hair was seen as a sign of witchcraft seems perfectly realistic. In fact, that first line stating she "*must not be red-hair'd, nor marked with spots*" plays into this very notion. Red hair, birthmarks, strange spots and no doubt freckles all probably being seen as equally suspect by European witch-hunters.

This prejudicial attitude towards red hair seems to run deep in European history. In medieval times red hair was viewed as being inherently untrustworthy and writers would warn their readers not to take advice from red-haired men, nor to take them in as friends. A work titled *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (a popular work from the 1600s falsely attributed to the philosopher Aristotle) stated;

*"He whose hair is of a reddish complexion, is for the most part, if not always, proud, deceitful, detracting and full of envy."*

It also contained the following unflattering question and answer;

*"Q. Why doth red hair grow white sooner than hair of any other colour?"*

*A. Because redness is an infirmity of the hair; for it is engendered of a weak and infirm matter, that is, of matter corrupted with the flowers of the woman; and therefore it waxes white sooner than any other colour."*

There's also the following story about a poor red-haired chap found in *The Life of Charlemagne* by the Monk of Saint Gall. This was supposedly written in the 9th century. It's a little long, but it likewise gives a flavour of how lowly red hair was deemed.

*So he [a bishop] mounted the pulpit as though he were going to address the people. All the people ran together...except one poor red-headed fellow, who had his head covered with clouts, because he had no hat, and was foolishly ashamed of his red hair. Then the bishop [said] "Bring me that man in the hat who is standing there near the door of the church." The doorkeeper made haste to obey, seized the poor man and began to drag him towards the bishop. But he feared some heavy penalty for daring to stand in the house of God with covered head, and struggled with all his might to avoid being brought before the tribunal of the terrible judge. But the bishop, looking from his perch, now addressing his vassals and now chiding the poor knave, bawled out and preached as follows: -"Here with him! don't let him slip! Willy-nilly you've got to come." When at last force or fear brought him near, the bishop cried: "Come forward; nay you must come quite close." Then he snatched the head-covering from his captive and cried to the people: -- "Lo and behold all ye people; the boor is red-headed."*

No doubt this story is somewhat apocryphal, but it serves as yet another example of red hair being viewed as shameful. It also highlights the religious chastisement of it. Intriguingly, this status of red hair in the medieval period was heavily intertwined with the figure of Judas - that archetypal personification of dishonesty and betrayal. In artwork of the time Judas was often portrayed with red hair and a red beard. In fact, even as late as the 19th century the phrase "poil de Judas" (hair of Judas) was still being used in France to describe the colour. Even Shakespeare attributed the colour to Judas, describing it as "the dissembling colour" in the play *As You Like It*. There was also a Jacobean play titled *Bonduca*, about the previously mentioned warrior queen Boudica, that featured a devious character named Judas complete with "red beard".

Judas, of course, was also the personification of the archetypal Jew in the Christian mindset, and it's interesting to note that red hair was also associated with Jewishness in

earlier periods. It's often stated on-line that during the Spanish Inquisition all redheads were regarded as Jewish, and that in Italy red-haired people were thought of as Italian Jews. On top of this there were also the famed "Red Jews" of Eastern Europe. These were a Jewish tribe or nation that crop up in German sources from the medieval era. The reason for their moniker "red" is contested, but some believe they were called such because they had red hair. The Red Jews have also been equated with the Khazars, a Turkic nation that are said to have adopted Judaism in the 8th century. Quite fittingly, the Khazars were described by Arab scholars as being red-haired and blue-eyed.

Mention of Judas brings me quite nicely to the final section of this chapter - the apparent link between red hair and vampires. We're well into the realms of fantasy when it comes to this topic, but it's still highly entertaining and revealing. The link is said to owe itself to Judas himself, as there's a legend that states that following his betrayal of Jesus and subsequent suicide he became the very first vampire. Destined to stalk the earth in eternal purgatory for his sins. The thirty pieces of silver he received for this betrayal becoming a weapon that could be wielded against him, burning his skin with its touch. Apparently this is where the idea that silver bullets can be used to destroy vampires and werewolves came from.

I'll leave the final word on all this to the writer Montague Summers. In his 1928 book *The Vampire, His Kith and Kin* he made this statement about red hair, Judas and vampires;

*Red was the colour of the hair of Judas Iscariot, and of Cain ...I have not met with the following tradition save orally, but it is believed in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Rumania [sic], that there are certain red-poll'd vampires who are called "Children of Judas," and that these, the foulest of the foul, kill their victim with one bite or kiss which drains the blood as it were at a single draught. The poisoned flesh of the victim is wounded with the Devil's stigmata, three hideous scars shaped thus, XXX, signifying the thirty pieces of silver, the price of blood.*

...and hence we get the Kiss of Judas.

Red-Haired Royalty ..and Robin Hood

When it comes to royalty red hair seems to be surprisingly common. So common it almost seems like a royal trait at times. We mentioned in the last chapter how red or blond hair could be seen as a natural halo, and how gold was deemed to be the king of metals. In this chapter we make the next logical leap and suggest that those red hair-haloes are effectively golden crowns.

On face value this claim may look slightly far-fetched, and seem a little bit like wishful thinking on the part of redheads, however as we go through the long list of red-haired rulers it becomes unavoidably apparent. Interestingly, this correlation between red hair and royalty has often been picked up by modern myth makers as well, and has seeped into popular culture because of this. Helping to re-mythologise the colour in modern times to some extent. In Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* the central female character Sophie Neveu is given red hair - a token of her descent from the line of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. On top of this red hair often gets linked on-line with that other famous *grail* family, the Merovingians.

Another frequently made claim is that King Arthur was a redhead. In fact, one often repeated on-line legend states that a red-haired leader will always come to lead Britain in times of trouble, with Elizabeth I, Boudica, Oliver Cromwell and Winston Churchill (all redheads) often being cited along with Arthur as fulfillments of this apparent ancient prophesy. Whether any of these popular myths have any genuine pedigree, or even have any precedence beyond the modern era is difficult to ascertain. However, as the following chapter will show, they do tap into quite a noticeable historic vein.

When it comes to actual history a good place to start is England. The first "red-haired" king of England is often cited as William II, aka William Rufus or William the Red. However, although he was called "the red", the historian William of Malmesbury described him as having yellow hair (once again that confusion between red and blond cropping up). Incidentally, he also stated that William possessed different coloured eyes - it's difficult not to imagine some medieval, gingery-blond David Bowie type figure.

The first actual red-haired English king we have on record is Henry II, the first Plantagenet king of England, and it's with the Plantagenet line that we really start to see red hair and English kingship go hand in hand. We know he was "red-haired" because he was described as such by the French cleric Peter of Blois. We can also be reasonably sure his hair was this colour because his father, Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou was also a redhead. He apparently had reddish-gold hair, and was described by John of

Marmoutier as "handsome, red-headed, jovial, and a great warrior". Geoffrey is also depicted with reddish hair in the enamel effigy that appears on his tomb in Le Mans.

The wife of Henry II was the famous Eleanor of Aquitaine. Sadly there are no surviving written accounts that describe her hair colour, however there is a 14th century illustration that depicts her with yellowy-blond hair. If this is accurate, and given that Henry was a redhead, it won't come as a surprise to find that their children were predominantly fair-haired too. It's been suggested that their sons John and Henry were both redheads. John would later become the famed King John, and Henry would become known to history as "Henry the Young King" - as he reigned alongside his father, who sadly outlived him. John supposedly had dark red hair and Henry hair of a more red-gold colour. This appearance of Henry was noted at the time in a contemporary court poem, which described him as being "tall but well proportioned, broad-shouldered with a long and elegant neck, pale and freckled skin, bright and wide blue eyes, and a thick mop of the reddish-gold hair".

However, both Henry and John were eclipsed by another of their brothers - the equally red-haired Richard the Lionheart. The famed king and crusader was described in the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* (a Latin narrative of the Third Crusade) as follows: "He was tall, of elegant build; the colour of his hair was between red and gold; his limbs were supple and straight. He had long arms suited to wielding a sword. His long legs matched the rest of his body." One particularly interesting story about Richard comes from the chronicler Giraud le Cambrien. He claimed that Richard was fond of telling people that his family were descended from a countess of Anjou who in actual fact was a fairy *Melusine* - a Melusine was a mythical figure from European legend that was supposedly a woman from the waist up and a fish or serpent from the waist down. Sometimes she would be depicted in art as a mermaid type figure, only with two tails instead of one. Much like the famous *Starbucks* logo. Richard would conclude this strange tale by stating that his whole family had "came from the devil and would return to the devil".

This strange story is quite intriguing as there's a parallel to the Melusine myth in Eastern European lore. There they have female water spirits called *Rusalka* - these are likewise similar to mermaids, however in this case they're often depicted with red or light hair as well (oddly they're also sometimes described as green-haired too). These water spirits are said to be the spirits of young women that have committed suicide or that have been drowned for becoming pregnant with unwanted children. They're said to lure

young men to their death, much like the mermaids and sirens in the mythologies of other cultures. They were also at times said to be the spirits of unbaptised children. In this light it's interesting to note the parallels with the red-haired vampires we mentioned in the previous chapter. In both cases they apparently represent the spirits of those that have died in unsanctified ways.

Returning to King Richard it's hard not to see his red hair, along with his mythic Melusine ancestry, as part of a similar strand. It's also tempting to return to the supposed red hair of the Merovingians and take a fresh look at them as well. The Merovingians were likewise said to be descended from a sea monster (hence the *mer*, meaning sea, in their name), and although we have no genuine evidence regarding their hair colour we do know that they were noted for having *long hair* - being referred to as the "long-haired kings". It seems we're quite close to some sort of link between red hair, mermaids and royalty, but we don't quite have the evidence to make the jump.

Talk of King Richard and red hair does allow us to go off on another red-haired tangent though. This time into the realms of Robin Hood and his Merry Men. There's no exact consensus on when (or if) Robin Hood existed, however we're generally used to seeing his antics set during the days of King Richard. Specifically during the period when Richard was absent from the kingdom whilst fighting the Crusades. For our purpose our main interest in Robin Hood lies with his name - in particular the idea that it may translate, quite literally, as "Red Head". This may seem quite odd at first, however once we dig a little deeper it isn't quite as illogical as it first seems.

Firstly, when we consider the name *Robin* the most immediate thing that springs to mind is the *Robin Redbreast*. The red or orange-breasted bird that appears in gardens and on Christmas cards every winter. Now it's my opinion that the word "robin" is simply a variant of the word *red*, hence explaining why it would be given to a red-coloured bird. I should point out that this isn't the generally accepted etymology of the word though. Most etymologists state that the name Robin comes from the name *Robert*, and that Robert in turn comes from the Old High German name *Hrodebert*, meaning "bright with glory" - *hruod* meaning "fame, glory" and *berht* meaning "bright". However, I'm going to be bold and suggest that the scholars might just have it wrong on this one. I would suggest that the word *hroud* is simply a variant of the word *red*, and that Hrodebert is more likely to translate as "bright red", or maybe even as "red beard". The fact that in German the similar sounding name *rotbard* translates as "Redbeard"

adds weight to this argument. Therefore I would say that both Robin and Robert are related names essentially denoting the colour red. It would seem that the Robin Redbreast therefore got named robin because of its colouring, and that the name Robin Redbreast is just a compound of two separate names for the bird - both essentially meaning the same thing. This is backed up by the fact that in earlier times the robin was also called by the names *robinet* and *ruddock*. Again *robinet* is clearly just another variant of robin, and *ruddock* is no doubt cognate with the word ruddy - also meaning red, as mentioned in Chapter One. Given this it seems reasonable to speculate that the name robin in "Robin Hood" could also mean red.

Moving on to the word *hood* we can make a similar etymological leap. In language vowels can be quite interchangeable, and it's easy to see how *hood* could be pronounced as *head* and vice versa depending on the accent. Adding to this there's also the simple fact that a hood covers a person's head, so on some level the words could be cognate anyway. Putting this together with our red *robin* we can then speculate that the name Robin Hood actually means "red head", and then move on to the question of why this might be the case. One notable reason why may come from the fact that Robin Hood was an outlaw, as oddly enough red hair has been linked with outlaws and bandits at many times throughout history - both with on-land robbers (again the word *rob*) and with on-sea pirates. In fact, we could even suggest that the red-haired Judas, with his money-bag of ill-gotten gains, is another variant on this theme.

One such example of this is the story of the *red-headed bandits of Mawddach*. As the name suggests these were a band of red-haired robbers and thieves. They terrorised Wales during the 16th century and many of them ended up finding their way to the gallows for their various crimes. It's been suggested that on one day alone a staggering 80 of them were executed. A burial mound at *Rhos Groch* (the Red Moor) is said to be where their bodies are buried.

It's also interesting to recall the red-haired Phoenicians of the first chapter. In that discussion we catalogued the links between red hair and fire. Maybe in this case we can add the word pirate to this chain of thinking too - maybe it shares its root with the word *pyro* (fire). We've already mentioned the common pirate nickname "Redbeard" too. In fact, the North Yorkshire coastal village of *Robin Hood's Bay* springs to mind as well, with its legends of pirates and smugglers. We could also add to all this the famous Scottish outlaw *Rob Roy* - another redhead.

Of course, Scotland also has its fair share of red-haired monarchs too, so this may be a good point to move back to the topic at hand and start discussing royalty again. One Scottish monarch worth mentioning at this point is King Alexander II. He too had red hair. Strangely we know this because of a quote we have from his contemporary, the previously mentioned King John. According to the *Chronica Majora* of Matthew Paris John "taunted King Alexander, and because he was red-headed, sent word to him, saying, 'so shall we hunt the red fox-cub from his lairs.'"

This all seems slightly odd given the fact that we've already mentioned that King John was also a redhead. Maybe we have it wrong regarding his hair colour, then again I guess it could be an example of one not-so-very-red-haired person taunting another who has a much more noteworthy shade of it. Alternately, the quote itself may be without substance. Or maybe King John just didn't care about the hypocrisy. In fact, given the less than wholesome reputation of King John it might be better for redheads of all shades if we just kick him out of the redhead club and leave it at that ..but then again, maybe if we start doing that after a while we won't have too many left. Incidentally, while on the Scottish theme it's also interesting to note that the famed King Macbeth was called "the Red King". No-one is really sure what this redness alludes to, but I suppose hair colour would be as good a guess as any.

Going back to England, another king we can put in the maybe pile is Edward I. It's said that he had blond hair, however there are a few images which show him with hair of a slightly more gingery colour. He was also the grandson of King John. I also came across this strange bit of red-related trivia regarding Edward's son and successor King Edward II. In the *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme*, a 17th century work by the English antiquary John Aubrey, the author relates the following bit of curious information.

*"Johannes Medicos. who lived and wrot[e] in the time of Ed[ward] 2, and was Physi[cian] to that king, gives an account of his [curing] the Prince of [the] Smallpox (a distemper but then lately known in England) by ordering his bed, his room, and his attendants to be all in scarlet, and imputes [the] cure in great measure to the [virtue] of [the] colour."*

Quite an odd scene to envision.

Our next round of red-haired rulers moves us into the Wars of the Roses era. Fascinatingly enough the word *rose* even comes with connotations of the colour red. The term "rosy-cheeked" for example. Also in Italian the word *rosa* means both "rose"

and "pink", so a pink rose would be "una rosa rosa". It would be tempting to suggest that the red and white roses of the Houses of Lancaster and York were somehow symbolic of red and blond hair, but I think that would be pushing things. We could maybe consider though the possible relationship between the red rose and the *rising* sun. The double meaning of the word *rose* equally evoking images of redness. Another echo of the heavenly/kingly halo. Jesus too of course was the *risen son*. Interestingly, it's also been suggested that the name *Russia* (which I guess could be cognate with the word *rose*) means *land of the reds* - though this is contested by scholars. We may recall however the above referenced *Rusalka* of Eastern Europe, with their fair or red coloured hair. So maybe there's some truth in this link between Russia and red hair after all.

The most noteworthy of the redheads from this period is probably Elizabeth Woodville. She was the wife of Edward IV and grandmother of Henry VIII. She was described as "the most beautiful woman in the Island of Britain" with "heavy-lidded eyes like those of a dragon." This dragon reference maybe plays into the legend surrounding Richard the Lionheart and his Melusine heritage. On top of this the mother of Elizabeth Woodville was Jacquetta of Luxembourg. The Luxembourgs were likewise said to descend from a Melusine water deity - via their ancestor Siegfried of Luxembourg. Jacquetta was actually put on trial for witchcraft too. We don't know what colour hair she had, but I think we can have a guess (if I used emoticons in this book I'd be putting a winky face right about now.)

Many of Elizabeth Woodville's daughters were also red-haired, including both Mary and Elizabeth of York. Elizabeth of York was the wife of Henry VII, the first Tudor king of England, and Elizabeth's red-gold hair was her legacy to this dynasty - reappearing on the heads of many of the following monarchs of that line. Most notably her granddaughter Elizabeth I of England. It's with the Tudor dynasty that we really see red hair take center stage.

Henry's son, and England's most famous king, Henry VIII was said to possess "auburn" hair. His siblings had hair of a similar colour. Arthur, Prince of Wales, his elder brother who died aged 15, was said to have reddish hair, and his sister Mary Tudor, Queen of France, was said to possess red-gold hair. She was also described as tall, slender and grey-eyed. The first wife of Henry VIII, Catherine of Aragon, was said to be red-haired too. In fact, a painting thought to show a young Catherine, by the artist Juan de Flandes, shows her with bright red hair. Catherine's sister Joanna of Castile (aka Joanna the Mad)

was also red-haired, as was their mother Isabella I of Castile. Their ancestor Ferdinand I of Aragon was also said to be thin, ruddy and freckled.

James IV of Scotland was likewise said to be a redhead. He married Henry's sister Margaret Tudor. James was the last British monarch to die in battle, falling at the Battle of Flodden Field. His body was apparently recovered from the battlefield and taken to London where it was seen by a certain John Stow, who claimed to have seen its severed head, along with its red hair, before it was buried at St Michael Wood Street. Interestingly, another person from the Tudor era that was said to be red-haired was the Nine Day Queen - Lady Jane Grey.

The most famous redhead of the period, perhaps one of the most famous redheads of all time, was of course Elizabeth I. Her life and her red hair are both quite well known, however what's less well known is that her rival and relation Mary Queen of Scots was also possibly red-haired too. The hair colour of Mary has been much contested and we only really have her portraits to go on. Some of which show hair of a darker colour, others of hair much fairer. However, apparently there are miniature portraits contemporary with the period that show her with red hair and blue eyes. Given that her grandfather was the red-haired James IV and her grandmother a Tudor - Margaret Tudor in this case - this wouldn't be too far-fetched. Also, although we don't know exactly what colour the hair of her father, James V, was, we do know that there are portraits that show him, along with his wife Mary of Guise (Mary's mother) with reddish hair.

Interestingly, during her lifetime Mary Queen of Scots was branded a "mermaid" by her detractors (again we see the royal, red hair, mermaid/melusine vibe). Mermaid was a euphemism at that time for a prostitute. Actually, if we go off-piste a little bit we can even link this all in to that other "fallen" red-haired Mary - Mary Magdalene. Again, we're wandering quite far from the beaten track of accepted history and etymologies here, but if we look at things with fresh eyes we may throw some fresh light on things. Believe it or not if we take the name Mary Magdalene we can actually translate it as *mermaid*. Mary means *sea*, as in *Stella Maris*, "Star of the Sea" and Magdalene can mean *maiden*. A variant of the name Magdalene is *Madeleine*, and in German this translates as "little girl" (*mädelein*). Hence from Mary Magdalene we get *Sea-Maiden* or *Mer-maiden*. Now I know the most common translation generally given for Magdalene is *tower* - "magdala" - but even with this translation the sense can still mean maiden. As

in maidens being kept in towers to protect their chastity - a common motif in fairy tales. No doubt this will have literally been the case for *royal* maidens that actually lived in castles with towers.

We can also link the name Mary to the word sex. The name Mary is obviously similar to the word *marry* - and also the word *merry*. Now a marriage is simply a formalised celebration of a sexual coupling. In bygone times two people that had sex would be considered married by virtue of this fact alone. With the children produced being the evidence of this union. So it's not unrealistic to think that originally to *marry* someone simply meant *to have sex* with someone - it would only later over time come to denote the formalised ceremony that celebrated that coupling, not the actual act itself. Marry is therefore probably cognate with the word merry too, and is no doubt where we get the term "to get merry" from. In fact, in old English the name for mermaids was actually *merrymaids*.

With this new translation of Mary at hand we can then look at the major figures of Christianity in a new light. The Virgin Mary would simply be a *married* virgin - a virgin that's had sex. This would make a lot more sense of the whole "virgin birth" tradition. Mary Magdalene would likewise translate similarly, meaning the exact same thing - a *married* maiden. In fact, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene are in all probability just the same woman - or rather two duplicates of the same symbolic female archetype. We can even see echoes of this in other traditions. For example, Maid Marian from the stories of Robin Hood and his *Merry Men*. Again, no doubt Maid Marian was simply a symbolic *married maiden* - or a maid *marrying*, another version of this same very ancient archetype. This is no doubt why Maid Marian and Robin Hood are associated with pagan May Day celebrations. In my opinion all these traditions are simply ancient celebrations of sex and marriage that have evolved over time to the point where we don't know what they symbolise anymore. Why many of the people in these traditions have red hair is something of a mystery, but once again we can see a link between red hair and sexual license.

On a side note it may also be worth mentioning here that the Rusalka sea spirits we mentioned earlier were said to be at their most dangerous during *Green Week* - an eastern European festival held in June, similar in tone to the May Day celebrations of pagan Europe. Green Week, or *Rusalka Week* as it was also called, has also been equated by scholars with *Rosalia*, the festival of roses. A festival celebrated during the

days of the Roman Empire. So yet again we have the link with Roses.

Whilst on the topic of Mary Magdalene it may be worth mentioning that there are also numerous depictions of Jesus that show him with red hair too. In fact, research into the Rabula Gospels (a Christian manuscript dated to the 6th century) showed that an image of the crucified Jesus had been repainted - with his hair being changed from curly red to straight black. These images run counter to the standard narrative that has Judas as the redhead, but at the same time they maybe also play into what we mentioned earlier about orange being a symbol of enlightenment, and the orange likewise being a symbol of Christ.

It's going to be difficult getting back to red-haired kings and queens after that little Christian detour, but maybe the cavalier sex lives of some Stuart era redheads will help us do that. It's said that the mistress of Charles II, Nell Gwyn, had reddish hair. She was an actress and also at one time, along with her sister Rose, an "orange-girl". Orange-girls were girls that sold small sweet "china" oranges to theatre-goers for a sixpence. They were nicknamed "orange-wenches". I don't think there's any particular link to red hair here sadly but it seems worth including as it fits the general theme. Another infamous redhead was George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham. It's rumoured that he was the lover of James I of England - the grandfather of Charles II. It's said that Buckingham was the "handsomest" man in all of England. His daughter Mary, Duchess of Richmond, was also a redhead.

After this period red hair seems to take a back seat in English royal affairs, so it may be time to step out onto the continent and list a few of the red-haired monarchs from Europe and elsewhere. It turns out that the Holy Roman Emperors Otto II and Otto III were both red-haired. In fact, Otto II was known as *Otto the Red*. The Holy Roman Emperors Frederick I Barbarossa and Frederick II were likewise ginger. *Barbarossa* translating as "red beard". Incidentally, Frederick II was amusingly described by the chronicler Sibte Ibn al-Jawzi as follows; "The Emperor was covered with red hair, was bald and myopic. Had he been a slave, he would not have fetched 200 dirhams at market." The Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg was also red-haired. In childhood he was nicknamed the "ginger fox" because of it.

Baldwin IV, King of Jerusalem was red-haired too. He was described as "a blue-eyed, freckled, leprous evil-doer." Curiously there is, or was, a train of thought in some parts of the world that actually linked red hair with leprosy. In a 1662 book I came across by

the German scholar Adam Olearius titled *The Voyages & Travels of the Ambassadors* (translated into English by John Davies) it states that Indian Muslims "love not flaxen or fair hair'd people, and have an aversion for such as are red hair'd, out of an opinion they have, that they are Leprous." It would be interesting to pursue this line of enquiry further, but so far I've only found the odd link here and there.

Going back to our list, Louis II of Hungary was also red-haired. As was Philip IV of Spain and his son Charles II (known as "the Bewitched"). Interestingly enough the early 16th century ruler Ismail I, Shah of Iran was also red-haired. He was described by a contemporary as follows; "His hair is reddish; he only wears moustachios, and uses his left hand instead of his right. He is as brave as a game cock, and stronger than any of his lords; in the archery contests, out of the ten apples that are knocked down, he knocks down seven." There's even a portrait showing him with striking ginger hair.

All in all quite an impressive list, especially when we consider that there's quite a sizable chunk of royals where we simply don't know the hair colour as we have no contemporary record or description of it. There are also many minor nobles and royals with red hair that I haven't included here for the sake of brevity. In fact, according to renaissance portraits at least, there seems to be a plethora of Medicis and Sforzas with red hair too (we'll mention some famous Italians with red hair in the next chapter incidentally).

In summary it would certainly appear that redheads are over-represented in royals circles. It seems a little anomalous to say the least. In the next few chapters we'll see how well represented redheads were in the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. Can red hair be royal and revolutionary at the same time? I'm guessing you know the answer by this point.

### Stargazers & Seafarers

We move into the age of discovery in this chapter, and the opening up of both the skies and the seas to exploration. Unsurprisingly redheads figured quite heavily in both these fields. We'll start with astronomy.

Possibly the most famous of all astronomers, Galileo Galilee, was said to be a redhead.

It's also said that he had a fiery temper to match it - a classic red hair cliché of course. Famously he was deemed a heretic by the Catholic church for his advocacy of the heliocentric astronomical model, and as we'll see in the next chapter he wasn't the last redhead to find himself in opposition to the Church of Rome. It may seem strange to imagine such a famous Italian as Galileo as having had red hair, however oddly there are glimpses that red hair was maybe less uncommon in Italy in former times. There are actually quite a few famous Italians from history that had hair of the colour. The composer Antonio Vivaldi, most famous for his *Four Seasons* violin concerti, was a redhead. An ordained priest, Vivaldi was nicknamed *il Prete Rosso* ("the Red Priest") because of it. It's also said that the name Rossi is the most common surname in Italy (we mentioned the words *rose* and *rosa* in the last chapter). Is this because there were more redheads in Italy at some point in the past? - or is it simply a case of people acquiring surnames based on the characteristics that set them aside from the general population. I guess the surname *black-hair* wouldn't really be much use in a population where most people have that hair colour.

It's also interesting to note that, like elsewhere, there are traditions in Italy that associate red hair with untrustworthiness and ill fortune. For instance, one Italian proverb states; *God protect us from women, coughs and redheads*. It's likewise said that Sicilians believed that all redheads had an evil and malicious disposition. In fact, there's even a 19th century short story titled *Rosso Malpelo* by the Italian writer Giovanni Verga in part inspired by this idea - *Rosso Malpelo* literally translating as "evil red hair". It's a quite beautiful, though sad, tale of a young red-haired boy named *Rosso Malpelo* and his unfortunate life working in a sand mine. The story is said to be a commentary on the social and economic conditions endured by the working poor in southern Italy at that time.

Another very famous Italian with red hair was the noted poet and dramatist Vittorio Alfieri, considered the founder of Italian tragedy. He even penned a self-portrait poem in which he described his hair colour;

*Sublime mirror of truthful words, show me*

*In soul and body what I am: scant hair*

*Thinning above the brow, but still rich red,*

*A figure tall and slim, on two straight shanks*

Returning to our theme of stargazers there were also other redheads helping to re-imagine our night sky. The Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe had light red hair. He is probably now most famous for compiling the accurate and comprehensive astronomical observations that would later be used by his assistant Johannes Kepler to develop his law of planetary motion. There's also a portrait of the original heliocentrist Nicolaus Copernicus that shows him with distinctly coppery locks. Although as we've mentioned before, portraits aren't always a reliable way of indicating hair colour, and there are other pictures showing him with hair of a much darker colouring.

Another potential redhead is the philosopher and astronomer Giordano Bruno. It's been suggested by some that he had thin red hair, although again genuine evidence of this is difficult to come by. Bruno was burnt at the stake by the Roman Inquisition in 1600 for his then novel cosmological beliefs, which included his idea that stars were simply distant suns, and that the universe was infinite with no discernible centre. If he was a redhead then he can maybe be added to the long list of red-haired witches and heretics that were supposedly burnt at the stake by religious authorities.

Curiously, redheads also seemed to be especially well represented when it came to exploring the seas as well. The most notable being the most famous of them all; Christopher Columbus, who was said to have had a freckled appearance. However, he wasn't alone. The Spanish explorer and conquistador Juan Ponce de Leon was a redhead. He led the first European expedition to Florida, and was associated with the legend of the Fountain of Youth - the spring that supposedly restored youthfulness to anyone who drank or bathed in its waters. Leon and his fellow conquistadors were also said to be accompanied by a red-haired attack dog called *Becerillo* that would attack and terrify the native Indians. Another Spanish conquistador associated with Florida was Pánfilo de Narváez. He had red hair and one eye, losing the other one fighting. He was said to be exceedingly cruel towards the native population - not a great guy to add to the red hair roll call, but interesting nonetheless. The Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa was also red-haired. Balboa was the first European to lead an expedition to reach the Pacific from the New World.

As well as the above mentioned Christopher Columbus & Co we also have the English

explorer and privateer Francis Drake. He was known as El Draque/Draco - meaning "The Dragon", another redhead with serpentine credentials. Interestingly, it's also said that Drake recorded seeing "red-haired giants" in the Americas that were over nine feet tall. Sightings which, if true, tie in with some of the reports related in our final chapter.

It would appear that red-haired pirates like Drake were ten a penny. We mentioned the ubiquitous "Red Beards" in the last chapter. Two notable ones worth mentioning here are the brothers Oruç Reis and Hayreddin Barbarossa. Both were nicknamed "Barbarossa" because of their red beards. Reis was a Barbary pirate and Hayreddin was an Ottoman admiral of the Fleet. Both helped the Ottoman Empire dominate the Mediterranean in the early 16th century.

There was also a bevy of red-haired female pirates too. Anne Bonny operated in the Caribbean in the 18th century. She was known for her red hair and fiery temper. And there was the 17th century French pirate Jacquotte Delahaye who also operated in the Caribbean. She was famous for faking her own death to escape her pursuers, apparently taking on a male alias and living as a man for many years. On her return she became known as "back from the dead red" because of her red hair. Quite a cool nickname by any stretch of the imagination. Another famed female pirate was the Irish chieftain Grace O'Malley. According to legend as a young girl she shaved her long red hair off in order to go on a trading expedition, as her father had initially refused to take her stating her hair would get tangled in the ship's ropes.

With the next chapter in mind it might be fitting though to finish by going back to Drake. Drake was said to be a devout Protestant, and it was this drive that led him to be so successful in his attempts to undermine the Catholic Spanish. In fact, he seemed to do as much proselytising on his travels as he did pirating. The following poem about him, written by Robert Hayman, a Devon man who became Governor of Britaniola (Newfoundland), seems to encapsulate, quite neatly, the "orangey" theme we touch upon in the next chapter. It was said to be inspired by a chance encounter Hayman had with Drake when he was a child. However, it could also possibly be read as a simple allegory, with the orange maybe representing a symbolic handing down of the Protestant chalice to future generations.

*He asked me whose I was. I answered him.*

*He asked if his good friend were within.  
A fair red orange in his hand he had.  
He gave it me, whereof I was right glad.  
Takes and kissed me and prays, God bless my boy,  
Which I recall in comfort to this day.*

### Halloween & Protestant Pumpkinheads

There's a good argument for red hair being an important touchstone during the Protestant Reformation. In the second chapter we noted how the Spanish Inquisition took a dim view of red hair, viewing it as a token of heresy, and in the chapter following that we mentioned in passing some of the kings and queens from English history that stood in opposition to the dominance of Catholicism. The auburn-haired Henry VIII of course broke from the Church of Rome, and his daughter, the red-haired Elizabeth, became a totem of English independence and defiance (we mentioned her red-haired Protestant pirate Drake at the end of the last chapter). The Dutch too, along with their House of Orange, which we'll come to later, were also something of a Protestant bulwark against the forces of Catholicism. Could there have been a deeper symbolism to this use of the colour orange though?

It's interesting to note that the Reformation leader Martin Luther may have been red-haired too. There are portraits by the artist Lucas Cranach the Elder that show both him and his wife, Katherine von Bora, with red hair. In fact, many of the Northern Renaissance artists of the period seemed to have a penchant for painting redheads. The most celebrated of them Albrecht Durer was even a redhead himself, and his gingery locks can still be viewed in some of his self-portraits.

Oddly, Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of Wittenberg church on the 31st October - Halloween. This may seem incidental at first glance, however a deeper look reveals some strange points of interest. We take it for granted that the

Pumpkin is a symbol of Halloween, but we rarely ask ourselves why. The big orange vegetable, often complete with a face carved in it, creates a powerful image. It resonates quite strongly with us, we can't help but associate it with Halloween, but what does it symbolise? Strangely enough it may be symbolic of the Protestant movement ..and maybe even red hair too.

As alluded to above the colour orange figures quite heavily in Protestantism. We have the famed Orange Order of Northern Ireland, and it's Scottish counterpart the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland. We also have the previously mentioned House of Orange - the Protestant William of Orange replacing the Catholic James II on the throne of England. There are even medals celebrating this "Glorious Revolution" that show an oak tree, symbolic of the Stuart line, being supplanted by an *orange* tree. The parliamentarians during the English Civil Wars also fought under an orange banner, in this case the *orange tawny* of the Earls of Essex. So why orange? Was it because there were disproportionately more redheads on the Reformation side? It was in the northern states of Europe that Protestantism took hold most strongly after all. The link between Mary Magdalene, red hair and the House of Orange from earlier springs to mind too.

More evidence reinforcing these links may come in the shape of the Christingle orange. For those unfamiliar, Christingle is a religious tradition where children decorate an orange with a red bow, a candle and four cocktail sticks. The service normally takes place sometime around the Christmas period. The candle supposedly symbolises the light of Christ, the red bow his blood and the four cocktail sticks the four arms of the cross. The tradition is a Protestant one and is said to have its origins in the Moravian Church, supposedly the very first Protestant church. We noted in the second chapter how the orange was said to be a symbol of Christ and enlightenment. In this case the idea that the candle on top of the orange symbolises the light of Christ fits quite nicely with that tradition.

The Christingle orange also has quite obvious parallels with the Halloween pumpkin. The Christingle orange is a round, orange fruit with a candle placed on top. The Halloween pumpkin a round, orange vegetable, often with a candle placed inside. They're both also traditions originating in northern Protestant countries. In fact, it's even said that French Huguenots were compared by their detractors to the ghouls and ghosts that would rise from their tombs and wander the night once a year every Halloween. No doubt this is another example of us keeping up a tradition, but losing track of its origins and meaning.

While on this theme it's also interesting to note that in America round "soup bowl" haircuts were once called "pumpkin-shell cuts" - the idea being that a pumpkin shell was put on the head and used as a template for the haircut. Again, this haircut likewise has its links with Protestantism - the parliamentary Roundheads, with their pudding bowl haircuts, being so-called for this very reason. They were literally the pumpkin-heads. Fighting under an orange banner, some possibly with red hair themselves, even led by a red-haired leader - the much-feared Oliver Cromwell.

In fact, in many ways Oliver Cromwell was the very embodiment of this entire arc of cultural and political change. Possibly the most towering figure from English history, maybe even European history. He seems to enter the political stage with an almost divine sense of purpose. A sense of unrelenting action. Not so much a man with a man's trivialities and personal traits, but more an archetypal totemic figure cutting through history like a scythe. Even now that period seems difficult for us to comprehend. We speak about it in hushed tones. We're not sure whether it was good or bad, divine or evil. Either way though the world would be very different now were he absent from that history.

Perhaps quite in keeping with his story we know he had red hair because of his severed head. Another ghoulish image fit for Halloween. Following the Restoration, when Charles II, son of the executed Charles I, came to the throne, Cromwell's body was dug up, publicly hung and then decapitated. His head was then displayed on a spike as a warning to anyone else who might be having thoughts about overthrowing the government and murdering a king. It's said the head was then taken by a soldier and that it eventually, via the hands of various owners, found its way to its current resting place in a secret location at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Fortunately for us though, before being buried it was examined and said to possess Cromwell's red hair and trademark facial wart.

This apparent relationship between political revolt and red hair would also continue across the pond in America, and also to some extent in France and Italy. In America the relationship was possibly even more pronounced than in England. Numerous American presidents over the years would have red hair, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren. The American Revolution in particular seemed to attract redheads like bees around honey. Not only were both Washington and Jefferson red-haired, but also founding father Alexander Hamilton and Military hero

Marquis de Lafayette too. Hamilton was said to be small, blue-eyed and red-haired, while Lafayette was described as tall, red-haired and with a long nose. A 19th century account gives the following, quite lucid description of Lafayette's appearance;

*"[T]he Marquis de Lafayette was a noble looking man, notwithstanding his deep red hair. His forehead, though receding, was fine, his eye clear hazel, and his mouth and chin delicately formed; exhibiting beauty rather than strength."*

As for George Washington, he was said to have had red hair as a child, though in adulthood he would come to powder his hair white - which is why it appears so white in the portraits we're used to seeing of him. Powdering hair was quite common at the time, as were wigs, and one wonders how many other historic redheads were hiding under this disguise. Jefferson is another redhead we're normally used to seeing with white hair. He was described in one account though as follows;

*"His height exceeded six feet; his form was spare; his step even in old age light and springy; his hair was inclined to red. His eyes were blue, and had a most benignant expression."*

He was also described by Abigail Adams, wife of President John Adams, as looking "not unlike God." Quite a cool description by any standard. Martha Jefferson Randolph, Jefferson's daughter was also a redhead too. Indeed the entire state of Virginia seemed to have a reputation for red hair at that time, and it's said that during the American War of Independence red hair was quite a common sight amongst the soldiers from that state. One 19th century publication produced the following account;

*"Red hair was another peculiarity of the Virginians. One who saw the Virginia troops pass through Petersburg on their way to join the army of Greene, told my informant that two-thirds of the officers had red hair. Jefferson, Campbell, the hero of King's Mountain, Arthur Campbell, John Taylor of Caroline, many of the valiant race of Green, had red hair."*

Again, it would seem that redheads were especially inclined towards overthrowing kings and embracing democracy. Slightly odd in light of the number of red-haired kings and queens we mentioned in our earlier chapter. It's almost as if the genes for red hair somehow decided a different strategy was needed for survival. Just as red-haired rulers started disappearing red-haired presidents started popping up. In fact, it really is quite an amazing fact that of the first three American presidents, two had red hair, and out of

the first eight, four did. Quite incredible. It may also be worth remembering the importance of the pumpkin in the American holiday of Thanksgiving as well come to think of it.

The seventh American President Andrew Jackson was said to have had penetrating blue eyes and a shock of unruly red hair. He is probably now most famous for his opposition to a National Bank, believing it to increase the fortunes of a small "elite circle" at the expense of everyone else. A sentiment that would no doubt be quite popular today too. The eighth President Martin Van Buren had red hair and red sideburns. He was nicknamed "the Red Fox of Kinderhook" because of it.

Red hair also played its part in the Revolutions of France as well. The infamous Maximilien Robespierre was said to have "blue eyes, carnation lips, and light chestnut hair", and to go with the above mentioned Lafayette both Michel Ney and Napoléon Bonaparte were both red-haired as well. Michel Ney was a French soldier and military commander. He was known as Le Rougeaud - "red faced" or "ruddy" - by his men, and nicknamed le Brave des Braves ("the bravest of the brave") by Napoleon. Napoleon himself was said to have had "dark reddish-blond hair" and blue eyes. Incidentally, his famed lover Joséphine de Beauharnais was also chestnut-haired and hazel-eyed.

Another red-haired revolutionary was the unusually named Chilean independence leader Bernardo O'Higgins. Of dual Spanish and Irish ancestry O'Higgins helped to free Chile from Spanish rule in the Chilean War of Independence. He went on to become the Supreme Director of Chile from 1817 to 1823 and is now viewed as one of Chile's most important founding fathers.

The relationship between red hair and revolution continued in Italy as well with the red-haired revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi. He helped unify Italy in the 19th century and in many ways put the final seal on Europe's process of realignment that had started with Martin Luther & Co all those years before. He was known as "the hero of the two worlds" for his exploits in both Europe and South America. The fact that he was a redhead is nowadays not well known, although he is shown as such in many of his portraits. Perhaps quite fittingly his followers wore red shirts. Like George Washington and some of the other French and American revolutionaries he was also a Freemason. He saw his common enemy as the Church of Rome, stating: "The papacy, being the most harmful of all secret societies, ought to be abolished." Contrastingly, he viewed Freemasonry as a useful network for uniting progressive men as part of a global

community.

Incidentally, Garibaldi wasn't the only red-haired Italian associated with this process of unification. The revolutionary poet Ugo Foscolo was also a redhead. After his death in 1827 he became something of a symbolic figure for the movement. He died and was buried in London, where he spent the last decade or so of his life. In 1871 his remains were then brought to Florence where they were finally laid to rest at the church of Santa Croce, alongside some of Italy's other famous sons, including Machiavelli, Michelangelo and that other famous redhead Galileo Galilei. In fact, Garibaldi's conflict with Rome in many ways brings us back full circle to Galileo's conflict with Rome. It's hard not to come to the conclusion that redheads are just born trouble makers.

### The Auburn Age

We start getting a little more modern now and move into the post-enlightenment world of the 19th century. Views on red-hair and other aspects of human biology were starting to coalesce into something more scientific than anything offered by previous eras, yet the pseudoscience and misconceptions of previous centuries were pretty hard to shift. In fact, this new found certainty of amateur scientists and gentleman scholars may, if anything, have led to a hardening of it. The 19th century would become an age obsessed with ethnography. The entire world had opened up to exploration and the opinion makers of the day were eager to catalogue it.

Much like the earlier Greeks and Romans, who defined 'normal' as Europeans with dark hair and white skin like themselves, so too did the European scholars and scientists profess this exact same view, tending to deem anything outside this archetype as a lesser deviation from the norm. Red hair was seen in a similar light to dark skin or other foreign racial characteristics. There was a natural hierarchy when it came to the human race and now we had the "science" to back up this perceived sense of order.

Actually things didn't start out too badly for red hair. One of the earliest ethnographers was the antiquarian John Pinkerton. He speculated about the origins of the people of the British Isles and decided that they fell into two categories; Goths and Celts. The Goths, akin to the Anglo-Saxons of England and the Scottish Lowlands, were said to be

"red, or yellow-haired, blue-eyed, fair complexioned, large of limb, and tall of stature." The Celts on the other hand were deemed to be "dark-haired, dark-eyed, of swarthy complexion, and small in stature." He saw the Goths as the superior racial specimen, stating; "What a lion is to an ass, such is a Goth to a Celt". So far so good for redheads. However, over time this view was overturned. It would seem that in the end Pinkerton lost the argument, and within a generation red hair would miraculously switch teams. Resulting in the general view that we still have today. Namely that red hair is generally a Celtic trait and that the Anglo-Saxon English are predominately dark or blond-haired interlopers from the European continent.

Perhaps the most famous of the 19th century ethnographers to express this view was Dr John Beddoe. He had views that would be considered rather unpalatable by the standards of today. Judging people, for example, by using an "Index of Negrescence" which he himself had devised, that rated people according to their racial characteristics. He also postulated the idea that the arrest of intellectual achievement during the Dark Ages was a product of scholars going into monastic celibacy and leaving the work of reproduction to the lesser minded folk. To test this theory he actually measured the skulls of monks (phrenology being very much in vogue at that time), concluding that they were more highly developed than the skulls of more warlike peoples. As for hair colour he had this to say;

*"Black eyes and black hair are rare, except where Celtic blood may be supposed to preponderate. Hazel and light brown eyes, especially when conjoined with brown or flaxen hair, belong usually to the Teutons. In both races, the majority have blue or grey eyes, but dark grey belongs especially to the Celts. Red hair occurs everywhere; but the colour is more common, and also brighter and stronger, among some of the Celtic populations. Yellow and light brown hair are found in both races, but flaxen, and a light sandy red, belong to the Saxons and their kindred."*

He also suggested the possibility that red may have been the hair colour of the original inhabitants of Europe (more on this topic next chapter). He stated; "There are, of course, facts, or reported facts, which would lead one to suspect that red was the original hair colour of man in Europe - at least, when living in primitive or natural conditions with much exposure, and that the development of brown pigment came later, with subjection to heat and malaria, and other influences connected with what we call civilisation."

The 19th century journals and periodicals of the time also pondered upon the origins and properties of red hair. One article titled "Red Hair" from a publication called *Bentley's Miscellany* eulogised about the various shades of it.

*"It may be the fiery Milesian shock - it may be the paly amber - it may be the burnished gold - it may be the "brown in the shadow, and gold in the sun"...it is all "red" - they have no other word. And yet, under this general term are confounded the two extremes of beauty and ugliness - the two shades which have been respectively made the attributes of the angel and the demon. [W]e find that while, on the one hand, red hair (or rather a certain shade of it) has been both popularly and poetically associated with all ugliness, all vice, and all malignity, a more pleasing variety of the same hue has been associated with all loveliness, all meekness, and all innocence."*

Once again the juxtaposition between extreme beauty and extreme ugliness. The author of the piece then went on to consider, with quite a poetic lilt I think, how odd it is that a warm, sunny climate produces dark hair, yet a cold, dark climate produces bright golden hair.

*"And, indeed, it would seem a natural thing for a person to suppose, if unassisted by experience - on two beautiful women being placed before him - the one with shining locks of gold, and complexion radiant as the light, and the other with raven tresses and olive cheek, that the former was a native of a bright and sunny clime, and that the latter had grown up in the shadow of the gloomy northern land."*

He then expounded further and considered the colour of Eve's hair in the Garden of Eden.

*"Now were I to picture the first women, I would give her an almost Indian dusk, and the Abyssinian large, sad, gentle eye (for the mother of mankind should have a touch of melancholy), and flowing tresses of raven black, and everybody would say it was nothing like her."*

There were also some interesting tales regarding red hair in American newspapers in the 19th century too. One often mentioned myth was the so-called "Redheaded Girl and the White Horse". The general idea was that if someone saw a red-haired girl in the street they would invariably see a white horse not long after. Almost as if red-haired girls and white horses were in some sort of cosmic conjunction with each other. It no doubt stemmed from the rarity of both red hair and white horses, and was apparently a

commonly held superstition at the time in America. One 1896 article titled "The Girl With Red Hair" from *The New York Times* stated;

*"The time was when a philosopher of this town, meeting a girl with the auburn hair on Broadway, need only spin on his heel to regale his vision with the spectacle of a white horse coming from the opposite direction. And in the good old days, a lover of omens could stroll through the Bowery and count the mystic conjunctions hour after hour, until he had accumulated enough material to fill a dream book."*

Continuing;

*"The only thing really certain about this myth is that it has become well established in the United States, where ordinary charms, omens, and prognostications are at a discount. Long before the civil war, the superstition was current in the South, especially in Georgia. It was a common thing for a red-headed girl to sit at her window and count the white horses as they passed. Popular games were founded on the idea that wherever and whenever a red-headed girl was seen, there would also be seen a white horse ..[s]ome of the believers in the superstition have aggravated themselves into fanaticism. They have degenerated into cranks. There are some theosophists for example, who hold that a red-headed woman, after death, changes into a white horse and vice versa, ad infinitum."*

A quite beautiful superstition, if not slightly wacky, no doubt killed off by the advent of the automobile. On a slightly sadder note I also came across the following in a New York Times article from 1901.

*"Fifty-two black-haired, brown-haired, yellow-haired, and tow-headed children from New York Roman Catholic foundling and orphan asylums filled a special car at the Union Station this morning, waiting to be adopted. No red-headed children or children with freckles were among them. Red-headed children, especially those with freckles, are not easily placed in homes, even if their hair is of the Titian tint and the freckles beauty spots."*

The article then went on to state that the agent in charge of the children had said he had "invariably been told that red-headed children fought too much, and had bad tempers generally", and that although he didn't "agree with this verdict" he found it "difficult to overcome a tradition that has stood for many generations."

Echoes of this exact same theme can be found in the modern stories we have about sperm banks turning down redheaded sperm donors because of lack of demand.

Moving back to England though it's maybe time to mention the Pre-Raphaelites. After all, it wouldn't really be fitting to write a book about red hair and not mention them. This is old, but cherished ground for most redheads, so I'll try to be brief for fear of preaching to the converted. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti with the aim of reforming art. Their plan was to abandon the mechanistic style of painting that they deemed had taken hold since the advent of the artist Raphael, and to return to a more luscious, vibrant style of painting. In essence, their aim was to produce less conventional, more heartfelt works ..they also painted a lot of redheads.

One famous example of this is the work "Christ in the House of His Parents" by Millais, which depicted the child Jesus with gingery red hair. The boy in the painting was unkindly described by Charles Dickens as a "wry-necked, blubbering, redheaded boy, in a bed-gown". The painting will no doubt have been anathema to Dickens who normally saved red hair and freckles for the villains in his books. A classic example being the character Fagin from *Oliver Twist* who was described as having a "villainous and repulsive face, and matted red hair."

Of the major figures in the Pre-Raphaelite movement the most noted for painting redheads was Rossetti. Two of his famous models being the redheads Alexa Wilding and Elizabeth Siddal. Elizabeth Siddal married Rossetti and was described by his brother, the writer and critic William Michael Rossetti, as having "greenish-blue unsparkling eyes, large perfect eyelids, brilliant complexion and a lavish heavy wealth of coppery golden hair." One story that adds to the mythology of Elizabeth concerns what happened following her death. When she was buried a grief-stricken Rossetti placed a journal containing some of his poetry in her coffin. However, as it was the only copy he later decided he wanted to retrieve it. The coffin was therefore subsequently exhumed. The myth goes that when her coffin was opened it was filled with her coppery red hair, which had continued growing after death.

Interestingly, this story has echoes of a previous exhumation that had happened earlier that century. This time concerning the tomb of Mary of York, who as we recall from chapter three was also red-haired. It's said that in 1789, workmen carrying out repairs in St. George's Chapel, Windsor accidentally broke into the vault of Edward IV and

Elizabeth Woodville. In a small adjoining vault were discovered the coffins of two children - Mary and her brother George. The coffins were put back and re-sealed. However, in 1810 the tomb was re-opened and this time the coffin of Mary was opened too. It's said that her pale red hair had weaved itself through the chinks in the coffin and that her eyes, which were pale blue and still open, turned to dust on being exposed to the air.

There seems to be something about red hair and poetic death that go hand in hand during this period. "Auburn-haired" poets wandering around cemeteries seemed to be quite a theme. Of course, the idea that poets actually wandered around graveyards may just be a clichéd view I have based on the fact that most my knowledge about poetry comes from the Smiths song Cemetery Gates. Wherever poets and writers were wandering though the number of them that had red or auburn hair does indeed seem quite striking. From the Romantic period onwards red or auburn hair seems de jure for poets and writers of any stripe. For example, there are portraits that show both Percy Bysshe Shelley and his wife Mary Shelley (author of *Frankenstein*) with reddish hair. Lord Byron was said to be "auburn" haired. The tragic figure of John Keats had "golden red" hair. Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*, strangely enough given our previous mention of vampires, had red hair. The writers/poets Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, George Bernard Shaw, A. C. Swinburne, Ezra Pound and D. H. Lawrence likewise all had red hair too.

Another famed 19th century writer with red hair was Thomas Carlyle, who apparently told fellow writer Henry Fielding Dickens (son of Charles) that in his younger days he was a "gawky youth with a shock of red hair, and explained how he used to be bullied by other boys".

Mark Twain in particular was a good source for quotes about red hair. Making the quite telling observation "when red headed people are above a certain social grade their hair is auburn." He also stated: "I would have loved to live in the time of Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth, the best dressed period of the world. You know I like color and flummery and all such things - I was born red-headed - maybe that accounts for my passion for the gorgeous and ornamental." The poet Emily Dickinson was also quite lucid in describing her hair colour, saying of herself "I am small, like the wren, and my hair is bold, like the chestnut bur, and my eyes like the sherry in the glass that the guest leaves." She also once sent a lock of her red hair to a friend with the message, "I shall

never give you any-thing again that will be half so full of sunshine as this wee lock of hair but I wish no hue more somber might ever fall to you."

The writer D. H. Lawrence was described as having a "mass of red hair" by the famed aristocratic socialite Lady Ottoline Morrell. She too was red-haired and was also a member of the famous Bloomsbury Set - the circle of influential writers, intellectuals and artists that lived and operated around Bloomsbury, London in the early 20th century. It included the likes of Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes and E. M. Forster. Morrell was one of the more flamboyant characters in the group, standing six foot tall, dressed in wild flowing garments and with fiery red hair. She was said to be the inspiration for the character of Hermione Roddice in Lawrence's novel *Women in Love*.

Another red-haired female from this period of history is the suffragette Emily Wilding Davison. She famously died after stepping in front of the king's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913. A seminal moment in the history of women's rights. She was described by Sylvia Pankhurst as "tall and slender, with unusually long arms, a small narrow head and red hair" and also as having "whimsical green eyes".

The British wartime leader and politician Winston Churchill was also red-haired. This fact is often little known as most of the pictures we see of him are in black and white. They also generally show him later in life, by which time he was of course balding too. In his youth however he had bright red hair and was known as "Copperknob" at school because of it. Incidentally, the red-haired Empress Eugenie, wife of Napoleon III, also suffered a similar fate, being nicknamed "Carrots" whilst at an English boarding school in 1837. Later in life though she would become something of a fashion icon, and French ladies would dye their hair red and copy her fashions - so it wasn't all bad for her.

An interesting story concerning Churchill relates to Svetlana Alliluyeva, the daughter of Joseph Stalin. While in Stalin's private apartments in the Kremlin Churchill saw her and described her as "a handsome red-haired girl, who kissed her father dutifully". Going on to say "[Stalin] looked at me with a twinkle in his eye as if, so I thought, to convey 'You see, even we Bolsheviks have a family life'". Given that the "red-haired" gene is recessive, we can take it from this that Stalin must have possessed the redhead gene too - in spite of his famously thick dark hair. Not a great person to add to the collection, I think we'll leave him in the dark-haired camp - I'm sure the problem was that he wasn't red-haired enough. The Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin was a redhead though. In fact, we can definitely add him to the list of revolutionary redheads we drew

up in the last chapter. Yet another red-haired trouble maker ..and on that note we'll finish this chapter.

### Aliens and Atlantis

A lot of the themes in this book have had a tendency to loop over on themselves, taking us back full circle to ideas we thought we'd left behind. Like interweaving vines all worming their way towards the same sun. In the previous chapter we ended up at Lenin, which in turn took us back in a loop to the red-haired revolutionaries of the chapter before that. In this chapter we come full circle once again, only this time right back to the first chapter, and the ancient origins of red hair. We reach this destination via the mythic-scientific (and possibly red-haired) Neanderthals, and via conspiracy theories involving redheads in ancient Egypt and elsewhere. So ouroboros-style we'll end at the start, and start at the end. It also gives us a nice excuse to explore some of the strange (but fascinating) ideas that are out there in Internet-land about red hair.

We might as well start in Atlantis ..where all things on-line begin. One Atlantis myth that often does the rounds on the Internet is the story of *Prince Idon of Mu*. The general story goes something like this. Prince Idon discovered Atlantis after fleeing his homeland. Arriving at sunset he was so amazed by the brilliant red colours in the sky that his hair magically became bright red upon seeing it. He was the very first redhead and all other redheads are descended from him.

The story always appears in this same form and never runs longer than one or two paragraphs. In fact, the short synopsis I've just written contains all the details that are out there about it. It seems to just get repeated again and again on various on-line sites - I can't complain too much about that though as that's pretty much all I'm doing right now. I can't find any reference to a Prince Idon anywhere else, and as far as I can tell there isn't any provenance for the tale outside the on-line world, so it very much seems to be a modern myth. No doubt created by some imaginative person and then repeated ad infinitum by red hair aficionados like myself. It's quite a cool story though, for redheads anyway, and it manages to contain all the salient elements of modern redhead lore - Atlantis, royalty, a red-haired bloodline, the orange sun. The fact that he's called Prince Idon "of Mu" is also quite clever as it taps into the notion, common in

Theosophical circles, that the inhabitants of Atlantis are in turn descended from the inhabitants of Mu or Lemuria - that other fabled lost continent in esoteric mythology.

On a side note, while on the topic of Theosophy it's interesting to note that it's co-founder, the famed Madame Blavatsky, actually mentioned redheads in her works. Writing in *Isis Unveiled*;

*"In India, as well as in Russia and some other countries, there is an instinctive repugnance to stepping across a man's shadow, especially if he have red hair ...[t]he magnetism of a red-haired man, we have found, in almost every nation, is instinctively dreaded. We might quote proverbs from the Russian, Persian, Georgian, Hindustani, French, Turkish, and even German, to show that treachery and other vices are popularly supposed to accompany the rufous complexion."*

Returning to the Atlantis stuff though, it all seems to tap into a wider on-line theme - namely the idea that redheads were once the sea-faring rulers of the ancient world. The basic premise states this; that all the ancient civilisations of pre-history were started and ruled by seafaring redheads, who originally came from Atlantis; and that these "Atlanteans" seeded a global cultural awakening - traces of which can be found everywhere from South America to ancient Egypt. With evidence for this being found in various ancient myths, and in the mummified remains of redheaded people discovered around the globe.

We mentioned mummified redheads in the first chapter. These mummies have not only been found in Egypt, but also in other far flung places. A brief Internet search will bring up countless examples - most notably the red-haired mummies of Peru, and the red-haired Tarim mummies that have been found in China. There are also countless legends and stories of red-haired rulers coming from far across the sea. For example, it's said that the Aztecs mistook Hernan Cortes for the god Quetzalcoatl, as he had light skin, light eyes, red hair and arrived by ship from across the ocean. It's also been suggested that the red capstones on the tops of the famous Easter Island statues are symbolic of red hair. Polynesian myths likewise speak of redheaded rulers. One Kiribati legend speaks of eels coming ashore who turned into red-haired men, with another stating that one of these redheaded men copulated with a woman who was bathing at sunrise. Stating that the "Sun" entered her loins and that a child of the sun was born to her.

There's also the interesting legend of the red-haired giants of Lovelock Cave. This is a

cave in Nevada that supposedly contained the enormous remains of red-haired giants. The story goes that the Paiutes, a tribe of natives who inhabited the area, were at war with these giants in earlier times, and that they killed them off by ambushing them in the cave. According to the legend some of these giants were said to be up to 12 feet tall. The legend also bizarrely stated that the giants had a fondness for eating the natives ..no doubt the reason for the eventual war.

There are also modern myths on-line that state that redheads have "dragons" blood - or in some versions "reptile" blood. This plays into the previously mentioned notion of red-haired rulers being descended from dragons and serpents. It also fits quite nicely with modern tales of Illuminati bloodlines and their shape-shifting reptilian DNA. We can see quite clearly in this case how modern ideas about the "reptilian" British royal family, a la David Icke, tally quite neatly with the sea-spawned Merovingians and the Melusine-conceived Richard the Lionheart. Similar speculation has linked this red-haired bloodline with the Rothschilds ("Red-Shields") and the Rosicrucians - we've mentioned the rose link before. Some on-line commentators have even suggested that redheads are descended from a line of people that had copper-based blood systems, as opposed to the normal iron-based systems. Stating that this is where the royalty-denoting term "blue blood" originates.

Interestingly, some creatures in the real world do actually have copper-based blood systems, and this does indeed give their blood a blue-coloured tinge. One common example being the Horseshoe crab. The Vulcans in Star Trek were also said to have copper-based blood too. Again highlighting the blurred lines between reality and fiction.

Another variety of blood associated with redheads on-line is the rhesus negative blood type. Rhesus negative blood is linked to all sorts of weird and wonderful stuff on-line - aliens, magical abilities, grail bloodlines, pretty much everything. It's also often claimed that redheads are much more likely to possess rhesus negative blood than others. One of the problems with rhesus negative blood concerns pregnancy. If a rhesus negative woman is carrying a rhesus positive child her body may produce antibodies that attack the blood cells of the baby. The antibodies effectively treating the rhesus positive blood as a foreign invader. Some have speculated that this is evidence that inter-breeding has taken place at some point in human history - with the speculation often being that rhesus negative people are therefore part reptile or part alien, or part some other *other*. Interestingly, on a side note, there was actually a mythological Thracian king called

Rhesus of Thrace who was said to have red hair.

Another candidate for this interbreeding is the Neanderthals. Neanderthals have become a staple of modern redhead lore. Owing to the fact that it's been discovered that they possessed the gene for red hair. This has led to speculation that redheads are descended from the Neanderthals - the product of Neanderthals interbreeding with *Homo sapiens*. The fact that Neanderthals occupied a similar geographical territory to that which redheads occupy today lends credence to this idea as well. However, at the present time of writing it's believed by mainstream science that the Neanderthal red hair gene was different to the red hair gene we currently possess, and that therefore modern red hair isn't a Neanderthal genetic trait. However, there has been so much back and forth regarding Neanderthals over the last decade or so it would be perhaps unwise to deem the issue put to bed.

One writer who believed modern red hair was a Neanderthal trait was the now deceased Stan Gooch. In his book *The Neanderthal Legacy* he claimed that not only were Neanderthals red-haired, but that they were also nocturnal, left-handed and that they worshipped the moon. In fact, he predicted that Neanderthals would be found to have possessed red hair long before we even had any genetic evidence to make the speculative leap. He believed that modern humans were the result of inter-breeding between Neanderthals and Cro-Magnon Man, and that many of our personal and societal problems stem from the fact that we have two conflicting species competing inside us for supremacy.

Gooch also claimed that Jewish people had more Neanderthal DNA than the rest of the population. He likewise believed that evidence for mankind being the product of interbreeding could be found in the bible, citing the story of Rebekah, who gave birth to two twins representing two nations - Esau and Jacob. He stated that the first born, Esau, covered with red hair, represented the Neanderthals, and that the second born, Jacob, represented the Cro-Magnons. He also believed the Nazis were subconsciously trying to wipe out the Neanderthal gene with their persecution of Jews and other groups. Similarly he believed the aristocratic practice of hunting red foxes was a modern tradition stemming from the supposedly ancient practice of hunting red-haired wild-men. Given the apparent links between red hair and Judaism we noted in the second chapter his claim that both Jews and redheads are more closely related to Neanderthals than the rest of the population is very interesting indeed.

Another theory postulated by Gooch was the idea that the face of the Sphinx in Egypt was carved as a tribute to this melding of Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals. Going on to claim that it was the "hybrid-vigour" created by this union that led to the explosion of human culture that we see in ancient Egypt and other early civilisations. He stated that the top half of the face of the Sphinx corresponded to the top half of the Cro-Magnon skull, and that the bottom half matched the Neanderthal jawline. The Sphinx therefore being created as a symbolic celebration of this epochal enjoining.

On the topic of Neanderthals and skulls it's also interesting to note that there are other variations on this theme out there in the world of alternative thinking. In the book *The Mystery of the Crystal Skulls* by Chris Morton and Ciri Louise Thomas they relay a supposed native American tribal tradition that tells how humans are descended from Neanderthals that were modified by alien visitors (again with the aliens). The modification being made as many women were apparently dying in childbirth due to the large size of the heads of the Neanderthal babies. This problem is still with us today of course. In fact, Gooch also touches on this issue stating that humans are actually the product of Neanderthal women mating with Cro-Magnon man, as Cro-Magnon women couldn't give birth to Neanderthal children due to the larger Neanderthal skull size.

This male/female divide may help explain why red hair is often seen as a feminine trait. And why red-haired women are often seen as sexually attractive, but red-haired men decried as effete and undesirable. It may also overlap with the idea mentioned above about the bodies of rhesus negative women rejecting their rhesus positive babies. On a similar topic Gooch also claimed that Neanderthal society was a matriarchal one, dominated by women, and that contrastingly Cro-Magnon society was a patriarchal one ruled by the males. Interestingly, he believed that our seemingly ingrained fear of snakes and spiders is a consequence of this unacknowledged genetic memory. Spiders and snakes being the only two animals on common view where the female is generally larger than the male.

Of course, the mention of alien interference with human DNA brings us to perhaps the most outlandish idea out there on-line about red hair - namely that it's a trait inherited from actual alien ancestors. This is an idea that ties in with the reptilian narrative we mentioned above, though this time with a slightly more galactic lilt. We've moved from redheads being children of the sun, to redheads being children of the stars ..and I guess a run down of a few of the red-haired aliens out there might be a quite fitting way to

finish this book.

Now most people familiar with UFO literature will be aware of the main types of alien. We have the Greys (the big-headed scary aliens - the ones that abduct and probe people), the Nordics (the good-looking friendly type - generally blond of course) ..and the Reptilians (that redheads may or may not be related to). However, in the hardcore world of alien hunters there's a whole host of other alien races out there ..some with red hair.

First up we have the *Lyrans*. According to various on-line sources the Lyrans have red or strawberry blond hair, and have eyes in the range from very light to green. They're also said to have a very fair skin tone and have trouble when exposing their skin to certain frequencies of light (much like we're told normal freckly redheads do). Some are said to be giant in stature and some apparently much more human sized. They're said to be very violent and aggressive, and are distantly related to redheads on Earth. The marauding vikings often being given on web forums as a classic example of their descendants.

Another race of red-haired aliens mentioned on-line are the *Oranges* (quite a coincidental name given our previous topics). The Oranges are thought to be Reptilians or hybrid-Reptilians. There are said to be two distinct types - one with scaly orange skin and another more human-looking variety with red hair. Curiously, these guys have also been linked on-line with the red-haired giants of Lovelock Cave.

And for even more evidence of alien red hair I'll relate the Antonio Villas Boas case. This is a classic, and often repeated, case from the annals of ufology and it contains red hair in a slightly salacious sense, so it's doubly worth sharing. Plus I think anyone that's managed to get to the end of this book deserves a little bit of mindless titillation.

The story goes that Antonio Villas Boas was a young Brazilian farmer. In 1957 he was out working the fields when he encountered a circular spaceship. He was kidnapped by its humanoid occupants and taken aboard. After being stripped naked and subjected to various medical procedures he was then left alone in a room. After a brief wait another alien entered ..*this time female*. She was about five foot tall and completely naked. Her face was human, except for her large, catlike eyes and rather pointed chin. She had long white hair, but her pubic hair was bright red! Villa Boas claimed she then proceeded to have sex with him. He said her technique was quite unusual ..she did not kiss him, but

nipped him on the chin and made barking noises! The alien-woman then apparently rubbed her belly and pointed skywards - indicating that she would have his baby somewhere up in space. Just like Captain Kirk he never saw the kid or paid child support.

And finally to complete the cycle we leave on Mars. There's a theory oft-repeated on-line that states that the original inhabitants of the "red" planet, quite fittingly, had red hair. However, they were forced to leave their beloved planet following a natural catastrophe. After moving to Earth they then interbred with the earthlings and spawned the redheads we see wandering about our planet today. Evidence for this can apparently be seen in the NASA photographs of "pyramid-like" structures on the surface of Mars, and, of course, in the Sphinx-like "Face on Mars", so famous in in the journals of alternative media. All these Martian structures are said by ET aficionados to be the product of the same red-haired "Martian" culture that came to Earth and produced the monuments of ancient Egypt. I did say I'd bring it all back to ancient Egypt.

### Summary

In this short summary I'm going to provide my final thoughts on the text itself, and then touch a little on the status of red hair in our wider culture as it stands today at the time of writing.

As for the book there is plenty of room for criticism and reflection. In the Introduction section I explained that my aim was to simply collect and compile all the interesting pieces of information I've found about red hair into one readable work. I feel I've achieved this aim, however, this process of simply "gathering" information together has come at the cost of genuine critical rigour. Much of the information contained within is selective and some of it is admittedly badly sourced.

In fact, this work is for the most part a product of what could be called "Internet research", and although the Internet has provided wonderful opportunities and access to information for people such as myself, there are also obvious failings when it comes to this type of research. Most notably the lack of hard source evidence, and the inherent temptation to take online statements on face value without genuine fact checking.

Sadly, I've never been in a position to travel the world researching red hair, or even

devote full time hours and resources to the task. It's largely been the product of hobby and passion. So most of the information is garnered from books and online research. Another consequence of this is that the work is heavy on my own opinion and speculation, but not too concerned with the opinions of other modern commentators - be they experts or simply other people that possess red hair or have some experience or opinion to relate about it. However, I feel there are benefits to this approach as well, as I never set out to write a work about the modern cultural and emotional dimensions to having red hair. Nor was I especially interested in modern scientific thought on red hair and its related issues. That would be a completely different book. Maybe one for the future.

Another point I should address is that this book doesn't include a reference section. This is partly for practical reasons - it's such a short little book that an extensive reference section would seem slightly out of kilter. Plus, the addition of reference notations throughout the text would make the process of putting together a self-published work much more complicated than would otherwise be necessary. I've tried to include most of the important references within the text itself. If I haven't provided a reference for a statement it probably means that the information comes from a secondary source - i.e. a modern book or text, or worse still an on-line resource such as Wikipedia, etc.

For anyone interested in where I've sourced such information more detail can be found on my blog and my website, which I'll provide links for at the end of the book. I generally catalogue the information I come across in a journal/diary format on the blog, and I usually include details regarding the origin of the information. I'm also happy to answer any queries by email. Again I'll provide my email address at the end of the book.

Finally I'd like to address the status of red hair in popular culture at this current moment in time. Over the last decade or so there has been a huge change in the way red hair is depicted in our media. Red hair used to receive a largely negative press. However, this has changed massively in recent years. There are several possible reasons for why this may be. It may be in part due to the greater prominence of red-haired celebrities such as Ed Sheeran or Rupert Grint (AKA Harry Potter's Ron Weasley). It may also simply be part of a wider trend in society to celebrate minorities rather than victimise them. Another contributing factor could be the efforts of people such as myself that have tried to create a more positive mystique for red hair through online work.

It could be a combination of all these factors, or the product of something else entirely.

Whatever the reason it probably goes beyond the scope of this short summary to explain it. However, the main point I'd like to address is the possible negative consequences of this rise in redhead affirmation.

Along with the rise of more positive press coverage for redheads there has also been a rise in the number of redhead "events" and pro-redhead groups and organisations out there. Events such as "redhead days" where red-haired people congregate to celebrate their hair and meet up with other redheads - though formed with the absolute best intentions by the people involved - are a slightly worrying trend I feel. "Group-think" and herd mentalities are never a good thing in any society, and can often lead to situations where individuals get swept away in a tide of emotion. Or in situations where a few loud voices or leaders can manipulate a very large group of people.

I feel a little bad finishing the book on such a seemingly negative note, and I'd hate to dampen the spirit of any redhead that may be reading. However, I've been helping this romanticisation of red hair online over the last decade or so, and I feel I have at least a duty to try and address the issue. I would hate for this book to push any of these negative trends along even further.

Now I'm not saying that people shouldn't attend or enjoy these redhead events, but we should always remember that red hair is just hair of a particular colour, not much different to hair of any other colour. Your hair colour and other such superficial things should never be what define you as an individual. What defines you should be your individual opinions and tastes. Your thoughts and feelings. The music you like. The things you love and hate. You should never allow yourself to be herded by hair colour or any other racial trait. The world has enough interest groups formed around race, religion, sex and other such things. We don't need another political dividing line in the sand between people.

If you've experienced bullying because of your red hair it may be tempting to join anti-redhead bullying groups, or to go out in the street protesting for *redhead rights*. However, the rights you're protesting for are the rights common to all humanity. Women's rights, the rights of ethnic minorities, the rights of gay and lesbian people, etc, etc - they're all just **human rights**. Rights we should all be universally entitled to - and they should never be considered unique to any one particular group. So, if you join any sort of political organisation or protest it should be because of what you think and believe - not because you're a particular colour, gender or type.

So in conclusion, it's good that redheads are starting to feel empowered, but a victim-mentality will only lead to redheads that fail to take responsible for wider society, and that sink into self pity and victimhood. One of the great benefits that has come from the rare distribution of redheads throughout society in the past is that redheads generally understand what it feels like to stand out in some way. An experience that generally leads to a greater empathy for all other people - not just other redheads. Celebrate your red hair, but celebrate your individuality first and foremost. A herd of redheads kind of defeats the purpose of what it usually means to be a redhead. Don't let anything in this book, or anywhere else for that matter, lead you to change that.

Thanks for reading.

Neil, October 2016.

### Thanks

I should also give a big thank you to my beautiful red-haired Italian friend Emanuela for providing me with so much of the *good* information that is in the book (though she no doubt disapproves of much of the speculation within it :)).

### Email and Links

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<http://redhairmyths.blogspot.co.uk/>

<http://www.themythsandhistoryofredhair.co.uk/>

