An Assessment of the Development of the Female
in Commercial Science Fiction Film

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by

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To SJD

CONTENTS

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TEXT NOTE

This text, including all Front Matter and Back Matter follows the Chicago Style as presented in Kate L. Turabian's 1996 *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed. Revised by John Grossman and Alice Bennett. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Where clarification has been required, reference has been made to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

ABBREVIATIONS

In addition to abbreviations in standard English usage, the following have been used:

COED   The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 8th edition.
Mt.   The New Testament Gospel according to St. Mathew.

INTRODUCTION

Responding to Dionysius of Halicarnassus's assertion that "history is philosophy teaching by example" (Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica* ch.11, sect 2), Debbie Waters offers that "science fiction is philosophy teaching by conjecture" (Waters [1999]). Indeed, science fiction, with its ability to posit, amongst other elements, new sciences, new worlds, new histories, new environments, new technologies, and new species, does exhibit a clear potential to predicate futures with new societies and new ethics. This potential suggested by Waters is reflected in the optimism of Michael Moorcock, in his *Sight and Sound* article, 'Trouble Ahead':

My main hope is that human beings, aided by new technology and scientific theory, will develop a system of ethics and morals on which we can base any future democracy, future business practices, and future social programmes. (Moorcock 1993, 37)

However, the science fiction used by the film industry has habitually ignored the theoretical cultural potentials of the genre, and has produced magnifications of current prevailing morals and ideologies, rather than what Moorcock describes as the "sophisticated ethic" needed to "deal with the profound changes in our daily and political lives" (Moorcock 1993, 37). Science fiction film has continued to develop its ability to present ever more spectacular images to the spectator; and yet, despite this unparalleled capacity to give vent to the imagination, it has continued to confine the role of women. Whilst Waters's words highlight the potential for the genre, and

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Moorcock's words highlight the capacity for the emancipation of women within that potential (a capacity which has been realised on rare occasions), it is the observations of William Hall, in his *Photoplay* feature on *Barbarella* (Vadim 1967), which perhaps best reflect the realities of female representation in science fiction film:

> For if all goes according to plan the (female) shape of things to come will be packaged like this:
>
> SHE will be contoured as perfectly as 400 centuries of biological refinement (Vadim's words, not mine) can make her . . . and that means around 36:22:36.
>
> SHE will be 5 ft 7 ins tall, and brainy - but not too brainy.
>
> SHE will be sweet-natured, sophisticated, sexy, and above all Eager to Please. (Hall 1968, 31)

This thesis examines why and how commercial science fiction film evades its seeming potential. However, it is first necessary to look at the genre itself, and to discover the parameters of that potential.

It is not necessary here to examine the wide and lengthy debates attending the genre's definition; suffice it to say that an argument, concerning literary science fiction in particular, has been extant for some time, and will never be resolved to the satisfaction of all[1]. However, because this debate remains so open, anyone attempting

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[1] For a clear survey of definitions of science fiction, see Clute and Nicholls 1993, 311-14. Cf. Amis 1961; Scholes and Rabkin, 1977; Aldiss and Wingrove 1986; and James 1994, esp. 2-11.

a comment of substantial length on science fiction (be it film or literature) is duty bound to review definitions of the genre, or to formulate a definition, germane to that particular study. As Vivian Sobchack observes, ". . . the very act of definition is, indeed, an academic requirement as well as a personal cathartic" (Sobchack 1988, 17).

After making a somewhat incautious distinction between science fiction literature, as supporting "logic and order", and science fiction film, as supporting "illogic and chaos" (Baxter 1970, 10), John Baxter attempts to divide the films distilled in his latter definition into two categories: "the loss of individuality, and the threat of knowledge" (Baxter 1970, 11). Whilst this further division reflects the pessimistic overview of the science fiction film described by "illogic and chaos", it is clearly too simplistic, and disregards the essentially optimistic stance of films like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Wise 1951), with its Gospel overtones, and *When Worlds Collide* (Mate 1951), in which knowledge is the saviour of the human race[2]. Baxter's description also largely ignores space-opera, a sub-genre which uses science fiction trappings as a backdrop to (often mundane) social issues, or battles between good and evil. Furthermore, written in 1970, Baxter's words could not hope to prescribe for the huge expansion of the genre in the wake of the commercially influential *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977), and the genre's descent into the saccharine realm of alien buddy-movies like *E.T. - The Extra Terrestrial* (Spielberg 1982), and *Alien Nation* (Baker 1988).

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[2] Whilst it could be argued that these two films do highlight the potential "threat of knowledge", the primary message, and therefore the defining factor, in each is one of hope.

Already, then, an attempt at definition has met with difficulties. The existence of rogue examples which challenge any unifying theory, coupled with the impossibility of legislating for future developments in the medium, underscore the futility of attempting to circumscribe the genre. Nevertheless, John Brosnan, in the first chapter of *The Primal Screen*, appears to have a clear definition in mind when he writes:

> Strictly speaking, none of the films covered in this chapter are science fiction films. In retrospect, yes, they are, but at the time many of them were made the term 'science fiction' didn't exist. (Brosnan 1991, 1)

However, Brosnan had already recognised the limitations of speaking "strictly" in the preface to this work:

> I'm sure some purists will complain about my not including *King Kong* in the volume . . . it's a great movie but it's definitely fantasy, not sf (well, it is in *my* book). (Brosnan 1991, *xiii*)

Brosnan's use of humour at the end of this sentence is an attempt to defuse the argument over inclusion, through an admission that this is ultimately down to personal preference. His own nebulous definition, like many, hinges upon the importance of science, an element which Vivian Sobchack attempts to pin down in *Screening Space*, when she states that "in the SF film, science is always related to society, and its positive and negative aspects are seen in the light of their social

effect" (Sobchack 1988, 63). Science is not always the driving force behind the science fiction film, in fact some "depict social change without necessarily making much fuss over scientific development" (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 312). Furthermore, in her oft-quoted essay, *The Imagination of Disaster*, Susan Sontag actually dismisses the importance of science, arguing that "science fiction films are not about science. They are about disaster, which is one of the oldest subjects of art" (Sontag 1966b, 213). Science fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein expanded the general definition beyond mere science by offering the term 'speculative fiction', in recognition of the genre's ability and tendency to present conjecture about future and past events. However, science fiction is not purely speculative, as it often posits consequences for current factual knowledge, for which the term 'extrapolative fiction' is sometimes used. Brian Aldiss makes no direct reference to science at all when he writes, "the greatest successes of science fiction are those which deal with man in relation to his changing surroundings and abilities: what might loosely be called 'environmental fiction'"(Aldiss 1975, 12).

Clearly, if science itself cannot be relied upon as a descriptor for science fiction, then any attempt at definition must be liberal in its inclusion; as Lucie Armitt argues, "to define something before one starts is immediately to constrain it, to imprison it within a label in relation to which all innovation becomes deviation" (Armitt 1991, 11). Therefore, despite Sobchack's statement on page 3 above (1988, 17), conservative attempts to circumscribe the genre can serve little academic purpose here.

For this reason, the former duty of the critic, to review attempts at defining the genre, has been superseded by the necessity of addressing attempts *not* to define the genre, or at least those attempts which aim not to define the genre too closely. Commentators are obliged to survey others' attempts to demonstrate how wide the genre is, rather than close it down. A clear exponent of this is Edward James, whose *Science Fiction in the 20th Century*, is a full-length text which attempts to define literary science fiction, whilst warning that a definition must be a function of the myriad stances and points-of-view generated through both the genre's creation and reception (James 1994, 1); this reflects what, in film terms, is widely accepted as a conjoining of directorial and spectatorial 'enunciation'[3].

Ever more liberal parameters, desirable to the critic not wishing to be pinned-down, inevitably bring a number of researchers to Norman Spinrad's witty conclusion that "science fiction is anything published as science fiction" (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 314); but this is not entirely helpful. If the films used for this thesis are to be delimited, then a clearer definition will be necessary - perhaps one which applies specifically to filmic science fiction. However, as Andrew Tudor notes:

> We are caught in a circle which first requires that the films are isolated,
> for which purposes a criterion {for defining a genre} is necessary, but the
> criterion is, in turn, meant to emerge from the empirically established common

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[3] For a discussion on cinematic narration through directorial enunciation, see Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992, 105-07. For a seminal reading of the importance of the spectator to the construction of the filmic narrative, see Metz 1982b; for links with enunciation, see also Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992, 159-62.

characteristics of the films [Kuhn's interpolation]. (Andrew Tudor, quoted in Kuhn 1995, 3)

In an attempt to offer a liberal but useful definition for science fiction film, Vivian Sobchack recognises the presence of 'speculative', 'extrapolative', and 'environmental' fictions, but goes on to endorse the importance of science fiction's link with horror, as well as its relationships with magic, religion, and fantasy. The somewhat unwieldy result of her attempts to delimit the science fiction film ultimately bears testimony to the difficulties of offering any definition of such a wide-ranging genre:

> The SF film is a film genre which emphasises actual, extrapolative, or speculative science and the empirical method, interacting in a social context with the lesser emphasized, but still present, transcendentalism of magic and religion, in an attempt to reconcile man with the unknown.
> (Sobchack 1988, 63)

Unwieldy it may be, but what Sobchack's definition offers is a frame of reference, an all-encompassing list of what science fiction film *can* be, which enables the elimination of films which match no part of this criterion, whilst retaining those which correspond in some - any - way. In an attempt to reflect this concept more concisely for all science fiction products, Peter Nicholls looks past the content of science fiction texts, to the processes which serve to justify that content. Returning to science, and what Sobchack regards above as "the empirical method", Nicholls argues that whilst

subject matter may vary considerably, scientific justification remains a constant:

> It {sf} shares with fantasy the idea of a novum: some new element, something that distinguishes the fiction from reality as presently constituted. A novum could be a vampire or a colonised planet. The sub-set that is sf insists that the novum be explicable in terms that adhere to conventionally formulated natural law; the remainder, fantasy, has no such requirement. (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 408)

Nicholls's approach both liberates the genre from the oppressive dictates of those who demand an adherence to what Scholes and Rabkin have regarded as the "hard" sciences (Scholes and Rabkin 1977, 136), and accounts for the impressive potential of the genre as reflected in Waters's and Moorcroft's[4] optimistic hopes for the future. However, the reason for highlighting it here is its ability to empower the image-makers, who are able to utilise the genre's wide domain for their own ends. Therefore, this thesis will take Nicholls's 'explicable novum' as a foundation onto which will be placed what Edward James describes, primarily with regard to literature, as a "bundle of perceptions" (James 1994, 1), created by readers, markets and critics of given science fiction products. It will become clear that in the case of science fiction film more emphasis is placed upon market forces, as generic definitions are skewed in order to reflect commercial perceptions of spectator expectation. This in turn will underscore the reasons for the filmic genre's failure to meet its egalitarian potential.

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[4] See page 1 above.

The term 'science fiction film', rather than 'sf film', 'SF film' or 'sci-fi' will be retained throughout this thesis to reflect the importance of explicable, scientific justification to the definitions used in this thesis.

The study of women in science fiction film has traditionally fought a number of rearguard actions: the medium of film is largely disregarded within science fiction studies, which in turn have struggled to find an academic niche; the science fiction genre is considered a poor relation within film studies, which itself has also fought to attain credibility in an academic environment; and the paucity of female subject matter has limited the study of women within both film and science fiction. However, things are beginning to change.

In the introduction to her 1991 collection of essays on "women and science fiction", entitled *Where No Man Has Gone Before*, Lucie Armitt celebrates the burgeoning interest in "science fiction writing in general and that by women in particular" (Armitt 1991, 1), applauding publishers and universities for drawing critical recognition for the genre. However, whilst science fiction literature, and more recently feminist science fiction, has attracted serious critical attention[5], film has remained a poor relation within this genre. Much of this may be due to the fact that, despite these successful attempts at serious examination, the memory of stigma, with

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[5] See Lefanu 1989; Barr 1991; Wolmark 1993; and Donawerth and Kolmerten 1994 for sustained studies on feminism and science fiction literature.

respect to other literary genres, has encouraged science fiction literature to cut off what is clearly considered to be the 'dead wood' of the genre. Subsequently, only two of the thirteen essays collected in Armitt's work cover the medium of film. Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove append a section on film to *Trillion Year Spree* (1986), a sequel to Aldiss's historical review of science fiction, *Billion Year Spree* (1973), but the fact that the initial work contains little reference to the medium is testimony to the low status accorded film and its progeny, here. John Baxter, himself a film historian, even offers that "the two fields of sf and cinema do not mesh; sf films usually succeed as cinema in proportion to the degree in which they fail as sf" (Baxter 1970, 107).

Other film critics have likewise exercised routine traducement of what has been widely regarded as an inferior genre. Hence, science fiction film study suffers from ostracism by both its literary compeer and the film community at large. Again, Baxter does little to stem academic apathy for the form, in his reasoning for the seemingly popular love affair with science fiction in the 1950s:

> The 'boom' however, was an illusory one. The public was not interested in pure sf but in the simpler fare of the movies; audio-visually oriented, it could not cope with the more complex media of magazines and paperbacks. (Baxter 1970, 102)

Science fiction has continued to be an immensely popular genre, with its films sharing 30% of total US box office in 1990, albeit a drop from 50% in 1982[6]. Science

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[6] These figures refer to "cinema of the fantastic", including science fiction, horror,

fiction films have generated some of the highest grossing box office returns of all time, with: *Independence Day* (Emmerich 1996), *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg 1982), *E.T. - The Extra Terrestrial* (Spielberg 1982), and *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977). Despite, or perhaps because of, the ferocity of science fiction film's following, the myriad books offering commentary (usually via copious photographs) on science fiction films, comprise less than a handful which approach serious full-length study; these include John Baxter's *Science Fiction in the Cinema* (1970), and Vivian Sobchack's *The Limits of Infinity* (1980) (re-issued with a new section on postmodernism, as *Screening Space* [1988]). Even the books of John Brosnan - *Future Tense* (1978), and its expanded version, *The Primal Screen* (1991) - whilst being full-length texts on the subject, are essentially well informed personal journeys through the abiding passion of their author, rather than enquiries into the nature of the genre. In her collection of essays on "cultural theory and contemporary science fiction cinema", Annette Kuhn asks whether this dearth of study is ". . . yet another manifestation of an elitism which regards popular media and genres as beneath serious critical attention" (Kuhn 1995, 1)

There is, of course, a danger that to claim science fiction as worthy of academic critical attention is to grant academia the power to bestow an acceptance which projects the very elitism which Kuhn seems to be attempting to eschew. It must be realised that science fiction film itself has a power to bestow credibility, for if either science fiction studies, or film studies, is to present itself as a cultural signifier, then science fiction film - shown within this thesis to be a pervasive exponent of cultural

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        fantasy, and surrealism (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 223).

signification, through its commercial influence - cannot be easily ignored. The importance of science fiction cinema lies, therefore, in what Annette Kuhn terms its "cultural instrumentality" (Kuhn 1995, 1). Whilst by necessity, Constance Penley limits her attentions, in *NASA/Trek*, to space-bound science fiction, she expands this argument to include women, warning that:

> If we accept that "space" remains one of the major sites of utopian thinking and that "going into space" is still one of the most important ways we represent our relation to science, technology, and the future, we need to examine the stories we tell ourselves about space and about women in space. (Penley 1997, 22)

Building upon three decades of feminist film studies, a number of recent full-length texts have added to the studies of women in film in general, with sustained examinations of specific aspects of female representation. For example, Antonia Lant has considered the reinvention of women in wartime British cinema, in *Blackout* (1991), and Lynne Attwood illuminates Soviet cinema in *Red Women on the Silver Screen* (1993), whilst Barbara Creed, in *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993), and Rhona Berenstein, in *Attack of the Leading Ladies* (1996), offer different perspectives on women in the horror genre[7]. Whilst essays and articles have for some time illuminated specific aspects of women in film, most notably through the journal *Camera Obscura*, this relatively recent appearance of sustained specific study has helped to underscore a higher level of commitment (by writers and publishers) to the subject of women in

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[7] Creed examines the importance of the female to the psychoanalytical underpinnings of recent horror films, whilst Berenstein demonstrates the cultural effect of classic horror movies of the 1930s.

film.

It is interesting then that, to date, no widely-published sustained text has attempt to illuminate the function of the female in science fiction film. Even Vivian Sobchack's *Screening Space*, the most notable sustained study of the science fiction film to date, ignores the role of women, with her theories on the aesthetics of the genre, appearing, at times, to disregard the existence of female form and sexuality. Limited study may well be due to the dearth of female representation within the genre; for, like the western, another form in which women claim little critical attention, the science fiction film has offered few substantial female roles. Again, however, the subject has been served by a number of essays and articles in interested journals, most notably in the *Camera Obscura* special edition, addressing "the various ways in which conventional notions of sexual difference are displaced or re-formulated in and by science fiction film" (Bergstrom, Lyon, and Penley, 1986, 4)[8], but these, by necessity, have concentrated upon levering open cracks in the façade of the genre in order to forward progressive readings of particular characters, or to expose detailed elements of misogynous practice. Moreover, despite a number of the essays in Annette Kuhn's *Alien Zone* (1995) addressing the issue of women, in the main this book must, and does, bow to the greater demands created by her wider conspectus. Further collections of essays on women and film[9] have included articles on science fiction women, but again, these publications have not been dedicated to science fiction itself.

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[8] All of the essays contained in this edition were re-collected as part of *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism and Science Fiction* (Penley et al. 1991).

[9] These include Brunsdon 1987; and Cook and Dodd n.d.

Ultimately, whilst many of these texts have been invaluable for their close-up exposés of female representation, in a sense they might be said to have 'jumped the gun'; for, by neither offering nor referring to a frame of reference which is wider than their detailed analysis, but smaller than women-in-film in general, they have largely been unable to expose the expansive edifice that is science fiction film.

By exploring the wider issues of women in science fiction film, issues including limited representation and absence, which have inevitably remained largely beyond the scope of specific detailed study, the current text naturally exposes cracks in the façade of the edifice, inviting further research which is in turn supported by the framework of a generic overview. Examining the position of women within processes which produce science fiction film will serve to explain the apathy and the antipathy which has ensured that women are ill represented, which in turn has fuelled critical indifference.

Science fiction film's status as the most pervasive form of dominant commercial cinema positions it as what might be termed a 'hegemonic monolith'. Part One of this thesis examines the effect that this dominant form has had on the representation of women in what has been termed the 'traditional science fiction film'. This term is used throughout the thesis to refer to the set of generic codes which, since the inception of the genre, have assumed a male spectatorship; these codes have enabled film-makers to support the needs and desires of the male audience, through the representation of both male and female, with little or no consideration for the female spectator.

Clearly, the broadness of the genre, with its elastic definitions, has resulted in a multitude of methods and practices which maintain the dominance of the monolith; and this diversity must necessarily be reflected in the methodological approach of any broad critical exposé. The initial priority in this first section, then, is to avoid single unifying theories which limit development of the argument through their insistence upon a particular theoretical doctrine, and to embrace what David Bordwell and Noël Carroll have regarded, in their introduction to *Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, as 'theorizing':

> What is coming after Theory is not another Theory but theor*ies* and the activity of *theorizing*. . . . Theorizing is a commitment to using the best canons of inference available to answer the question posed. (Bordwell and Carroll 1996, *xiv*)

Later in this volume, Bordwell discusses the merits of both psychoanalytical film theory and cultural film theory, the former being interested in texts whilst the latter concerns itself with ". . . the *uses* made of texts" (Bordwell 1996, 10). In the debate over psychoanalytical theory - what Bordwell and Carroll describe as one of the "Grand Theories" - and its continuing usefulness to the study of film, and more specifically women in film[10], cultural theorists have stressed its varying degrees of validity as just part of the picture. David Bordwell suggests that ". . . most

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[10] For a clear overview of the application of psychoanalysis to both film theory, and feminist film theory, the reader is referred to *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics* (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992, 123-83).

contemporary film scholars act as if the subject-position view collapsed during the 1980s under the onslaught of new trends" (Bordwell 1996, 8); however, carefully placed psychoanalytical theories continue to illuminate modes of representation within a cultural context. With this in mind, Janet Walker applies caution to her outline of the importance of the study of women in film, qualifying her work with:

> One certainly hesitates to authorize feminist speech by quoting from Freud, but at the same time it is satisfying to realize that his challenge to learn about femininity . . . is being met and even gone beyond. (Walker 1994, 90)

These statements, in turn, echo the words of Christian Metz, whose seminal work, *The Imaginary Signifier* (1982b) created an influential link between psychoanalysis and the cinema spectator: ". . . psychoanalysis cannot be the only discipline concerned in the study of the cinematic signifier, . . . its offering has to be articulated with others" (Metz 1982b, 17).

To this end, Part One of this study draws upon reference to a number of theories, including psychoanalysis, in order to illuminate the multifaceted, cultural, commercial structure of the hegemonic monolith.

Whilst feminist film theories, like Laura Mulvey's influential *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), which expose hegemonic domination still ably serve to describe 'traditional' science fiction film alongside general film theories[11], progressive

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[11] For detailed accounts of the application of psychoanalysis to the specific subject of

feminist readings struggle to impact upon this dominant form. However, after the effect of the socio-political pressures in the 1970s, most notably the Women's Movement, theories describing hegemonic ideologies and dominant commercial cinema are no longer sufficient to describe the aims of the science fiction film output. In Part Two, therefore, it is necessary to draw upon multiple aspects of feminist theory and feminist film theory as they become relevant to the multiple aspects of science fiction film. Part One is largely sequential, describing the development of the traditional monolith; Part Two looks at aspects of further development which evolved simultaneously. However, it is clearly not possible to make a strict dividing line between the 'traditional' period, and what might be regarded as a more 'progressive' period. For example, chapter three, "mutation", signals the beginnings of broad changes in the approach to the 'traditional' genre, whilst exposing the continuing influence of that tradition. As such it could be placed in either Part One or Two. Its placement in Part Two reflects the aim of this study to highlight the development of the female in commercial science fiction film. As will be seen, progressive elements are discernible in a few pre-1970s films, and traditional elements remain in the majority of post-1970s films; this split becomes obvious through the small number of films which carry much of the weight of progressive significance in Part Two.

Despite an aim to highlight the significance of this progression, this thesis can

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women in film, the reader is referred to *Film, Feminism, and Psychoanlysis* (Penley 1989) and *Lost Angels: Pychoanalysis and Cinema* (Lebeau 1995). Annette Kuhn punctuates her text, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*, with references to psychoanalysis as it becomes relevant, but also deals specifically with Laura Mulvey's article (Kuhn 1994, esp. 59-64).

ultimately take no position as a progressive feminist reading of science fiction film. Put simply, this is because the thesis exposes the aims of the hegemonic monolith rather than the feminist film-maker; it would clearly be inappropriate to form a feminist frame of reference within a commercial genre so clearly devoid of feminist sympathies. Any attempt at such a framework would of course also be futile given the multi-faceted nature of feminism itself. Furthermore, it will become clear that those feminist ethics which have been implemented by the genre, have generally been so under socio-political duress, and have inevitably been skewed to the needs of the monolith itself. It will be shown that in their potential attack on science fiction film, general feminist theory and feminist film theory - in the absence of a more specific feminist science fiction theory - have ultimately fed the all-pervasive beast.

By examining the manifold structure of commercial cinema's most dominant form, this thesis will examine not merely 'what' effect this domination has had on the development of the female in science fiction film, but more 'how' this development has been effected, and 'why' this development will not meet the potential of the genre in its current form.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

GENDER POSITIONING:
THE TRADITIONAL SCIENCE FICTION FILM

Described by Peter Nicholls as "the single most important year in the history of sf cinema . . ." (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 222), 1968 witnessed the release of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a film which, according to Piers Bizony "stands as the epitome of science fiction film-making . . ." (Bizony 1994, 21). Nicholls continues, stating that "before then sf was not taken very seriously either artistically or commercially; since then it has remained, much of the time, one of the most popular film genres . . ." (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 222). However, Kubrick's film contains very few women, the majority of whom are employed in supporting roles[1]. Whilst commercially and critically successful, Kubrick's intelligent and philosophical masterpiece about the future of humanity, did nothing towards developing a role for women in that future. In fact, the considerable success of the film, with its visually plausible prediction of space travel, added weighty sanction to an employment of women which drew upon traditions reaching far back into the history of the genre. *2001* highlights the paucity of female representation within what can be regarded as the three essential elements of character evaluation: Narrative role, structural function, and relationship with the spectator.

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[1] According to the verified complete cast-list reproduced in Movie Database on-line. 1995f, just 5 of the 39 players are women. Their roles as mother, wife, two stewardesses, and a cameo scientist, all fulfil various levels of support for the male protagonists. Further to this, Vivian Kubrick, the director's daughter, played the daughter of Dr. Floyd (Bizony 1994, 165).

Ask the average person to offer a general description of the female character in science fiction film, and the reply will include sexy costumes (Barbarella), screaming (Faye Wray[2]), and flight from peril (Princess Leia). Albeit purely anecdotal, this wisdom reflects the more empirical evidence that the employment of women in the genre has largely involved a male-dominated perception of their roles in mythology, legend, literature, and society. It takes little account of the genre's potential to posit progressive societies through its obligation to present new concepts. This has been observed by Lucie Armitt to be true of literary science fiction: "unfortunately, irrespective of its superficially futuristic stance, mainstream male-oriented science fiction has traditionally been a genre obsessed with nostalgia and conservatism" (Armitt 1991, 2).

Of course, it is not easy to separate the role and the function of a fictional character. A character taking a recognisable role type within the narrative might have a number of functions within the structure of a film; any of these functions may or, may not be linked to the spectator's perception of her role type. The relationship between the character and the spectator, then, is accentuated or attenuated by the spectator's own perception of the function of this type within the environment of the film, or within his own environment.

There is a sequence in the 1953 classic, *It Came From Outer Space* (Arnold),

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[2] Whilst Ann Darrow is the name of the character played by Faye Wray in the 1933 film *King Kong* (Cooper), in this instance often closer associations are made with the actress than with the character.

which involves two women and a male sheriff. The action takes place in the sheriff's office where the older of the two women is exhibiting distress at the disappearance of her husband. Towards the end of the scene, the second woman, a busty, young blonde, played by Kathleen Hughes, walks towards the camera, swings her breasts in an arc past the lens, and exits. The woman is never seen again. On television this odd occurrence remains baffling, and it is not until it is remembered that the film was originally released in 3-D, that it becomes clear that Hughes was cast to demonstrate the full potential of the 3-D cinema presentation. She has no discernible role, and she performs no structural function. She adds nothing to the narrative. Her function, defined by her single action, resides entirely within Hughes's relationship with the audience, which is calculated to improve the success of Arnold's film through positive critical (male) reception. This function is further highlighted by Hughes's prominent appearance, breasts included, on posters for the film, despite the obscurity of her role.

Whilst this is clearly an extreme instance of the utilisation of the female image, it is by no means unique. In fact rarefied examples are apparent in most science fiction films, as attractive female actors are used to enhance the relationship with the audience, regardless of her other employments.

The most evident employment for the female in science fiction film is her designated role type within the narrative. Ironically, science fiction's tendency to become attached to particular types can be seen in its employment of the professional female, one of the earliest examples of which dates back to 1920, with a weekly serial chapter-play called *The Screaming Shadow* (Worne), which employed a wealthy

woman journalist. Popular with the audience, the female journalist was later made familiar by Lois Lane in her adventures with Superman, and has continued to dominate the professional female roles, with examples which span the history of narrative film as well as numerous countries[3], and is brought up to date by the recent American production of the Japanese *Godzilla* (Emmerich 1998).

Less popular than the journalist, yet apparent within the genre, is the female scientist, whose beginnings can be plotted through her early years: the daughter of eminent thinkers, inventors and scientists gives way to assistant roles, and finally to her first appearance as a fully-fledged scientist, in the 1951 films, *The Thing* (Nyby) and *When Worlds Collide* (Mate). Like the journalist, the scientist has been international, and can be traced through a number of science fiction producing countries[4] to the recent American production, *Lost In Space* (Hopkins 1998). On the surface, the employment of female scientists would appear to contradict, or at least balance, what might be considered as the less progressive roles within the genre; however, the proportion provided remains small. Furthermore, the genre has continued to ensure that these scientists retain links with mother-nature, through a

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[3] The international nature of the female journalist is demonstrated by her appearances in the West German/Italian/French production, *Im Stahlnetz des Dr. Mabuse* (Reinl 1961), the Mexican, *Santo en el Museo de Cera* (Blake, 1963), the Japanese, *Kessen Nankai No DaiKaiju* (Honda 1970), the Italian/Spanish collaboration, *Inferno dei Morti-Viventi* (Dawn 1981), the Dutch, *De Lift* (Maas 1983), and the British film *Midnight Menace* (Hill, 1937).

[4] The international nature of the female scientist is demonstrated by her appearances in the West German/Italian/French production, *Herrin der Welt* (Dieterle 1959), the British *The Night Caller* (Gilling 1965), the Japanese/American collaboration, *Gamma Sango Uchu Daisakusen* (Fukasaku 1968), and the Canadian production, *DefCon 4* (Donovan 1984).

disassociation with what Robert Scholes and Eric Rabkin identify as the "hard" sciences[5] (Scholes and Rabkin 1977, 136). 'Soft' scientists include the wife of the central protagonist in *2010* (Hyams 1984), who is a marine biologist; both *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg 1993) and *Carnosaur* (Simon 1993) present female palaeontologists. The world is threatened in *Highlander II: The Quickening* (1990 Mulcahy) by a female 'eco-terrorist', and is saved in *The Puppet Masters* (Orme 1994) with help from NASA's female extraterrestrial expert. Other female 'soft' scientists include a psychologist in *Invaders from Mars* (Menzies 1953), a psychiatrist in *Shirley Thompson Versus the Aliens* (Sharman 1968), an anthropologist in *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* (Carpenter 1992), and an archaeologist in *Stargate* (Emmerich 1994)[6].

In her text, *Feminism Confronts Technology*, Judy Wajcman examines many of the relationships between "hard" sciences and gender, noting that "the link between technology and masculinity is commonly supposed to be self-evident and in no need of explanation" (Wajcman 1993, 137). Science fiction film has used and supported this supposition in its attempt to retain 'hard' science for its male scientists. Despite arguments pertaining to the nature and primacy of knowledge, the employment of numerous journalists and scientists within a 'masculinised' genre[7] might seem to be a

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[5] Examples of "hard" sciences proposed by Scholes and Rabkin include 'physics and Astronomy', 'computers', and 'thermodynamics'. The 'soft' sciences include 'biology' and 'psychology'.

[6] For a further discussion on the gendering of science, see Rose 1993, chapter 4.

[7] Lucie Armitt introduces science fiction by outlining the inroads made by women into what she describes as a "seemingly patriarchal genre" (Armitt 1991, 5). Peter Nicholls offers the suggestion that "traditionally sf has been rather a puritanical and male-oriented form of literature" (Nicholls 1979, 537), and Ally Acker appears to cite science fiction as a male domain in her appraisal of pioneer film-maker, Alice Guy Blaché, who "directed over two hundred films in her life-time - every genre and manner

positive step. However, this often merely serves to camouflage her function within the structure of the film.

After viewing the opening credits of the 1979 Disney production, *The Black Hole* (Nelson) the audience might be forgiven for thinking that this film goes some way towards parity between men and women; for, although six male characters are balanced by only one female character, Dr. Kate McCrae, played by Yvette Mimieux, is a scientist. However, the status conferred by McCrae's role is reduced almost immediately by her function as a foil for Dr. Alex Durant's delivery of the necessary exposition, as the protagonists approach the black hole:

Durant   The most destructive force in the Universe, Harry: nothing can escape from it, not even light.

Kate McCrae responds with a statement which clearly outlines her information as given:

McCrae   I had a professor who predicted that, eventually, black holes would devour the entire universe.

The value of McCrae's information is then further reduced as her male colleague confirms the validity of her statement, with another of his own:

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of film: . . . *even* a science fiction film . . . [emphasis mine]" (Acker 1991, *xxiv*). For an examination of science fiction television audiences, see Tulloch 1995.

Durant   Why not? When you can see giant suns sucked in and disappear

without a trace.

Exposition aside, the message given in these early exchanges, is that the male

scientist's knowledge is his own, but the female scientist's knowledge is second-hand.

McCrae's narrative role in *The Black Hole* is systematically attenuated by its

subjugation to its structural function, which culminates in her involvement in the

film's formulaic damsel-in-distress ending.

Characters are often employed by science fiction film to project a received

imagery through a film's sub-text; this can be demonstrated through the role of the

mother, Mary Maclean, played by Hillary Brooke, in *Invaders From Mars* (Menzies).

At no point is the character allowed to develop from being the recognised figure of

'mother', which the film uses as a social reference point. Deprived of any character

development, Maclean is immolated shortly after fulfilling her function, which is to

highlight the 'buddy' relationship between her son, Jimmy, and his father: "You two

can go right back to bed". Her death serves largely to court audience sympathy for

Jimmy.

More often than not female characters are used by the science fiction narrative

to evince attributes within other, usually male, characters. It is her consistent use as a

support which has denied the science fiction female a position from which she might

drive the narrative; this in turn has largely withheld from her the relationship with the

spectator which is generally reserved for the central protagonist. The logical

progression of character through adherence to role with its diversity of functions, is subjugated to a function which reflects a male-dominated industry reflecting the desires of a male-dominated society.

The utilisation of an idealised form of the female (and male) image has been exercised through all forms of art; art which, according to Camille Paglia, is the result of a male offensive:

> Man, the sexual conceptualizer and projector, has ruled art because art is his Apollonian response toward and away from woman. A sex object is something to aim at. The eye is Apollo's arrow following the arc of transcendence I saw in male urination and ejaculation . . . Phallic aggression and projection are intrinsic to western conceptualization. (Paglia 1992, 31)

In his 1926 history of the cinema, *A Million and One Nights*, Terry Ramsaye rationalises the prominence of the major art form of the twentieth century:

> The ego of man makes him want to know himself.
>
> That ego is the very soul of both the arts and the sciences. . . . The chief of his desires, the keenest of his wishes, the greatest of his recreations is the business of re-creating himself biologically and his emotional adventures in memory and its art forms. (Ramsaye 1964, *xl*)

The motion picture's unparalleled ability for realistic reproduction of the human

image made it, for Ramsaye, ". . . the Prayer Wheel of the Wish" (Ramsaye, 1964, *lxx*).

In her seminal essay linking feminism and psychoanalysis in the cinema, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Laura Mulvey echoes Ramsaye's work, in her statement that ". . . the cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking" (Mulvey 1975, 9); however, she takes this further, dividing the look into two main categories:

> The first, scopophilic [pleasurable looking], arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen. Thus, in film terms, one implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. (Mulvey 1975, 10)

Initially, Mulvey employs Freud's notion that the lack of the penis in the female serves to remind the male of his fear of castration at the point of his own realisation of sexual difference - a moment which defines, for him, his superiority over the female, who lacks a penis. According to Mulvey, the cinema acknowledges this superiority in two basic ways: the first is the demystification of the female, through narrative investigation, often resulting in the guilt and punishment of the female; the second is the disavowal of castration, by substituting the female with a fetish object or

re-creating the female as a fetish object, each of which returns to the male the pleasure of looking. Whilst Mulvey asserts that these processes are not necessarily intrinsic to film[8], she maintains that film offers the perfect medium for this mechanism because of its unique ability to shift the emphasis of the look[9].

Having escaped from the futuristic city, in the 1976 film *Logan's Run* (Anderson), Logan, and Jessica, played by Jenny Agutter, happen upon an ice-cave; finding some furs, Logan suggests that they replace their wet clothes, before they freeze. The following shot is framed to take in part of Logan's back, as he begins to remove his shirt, and a full view of Jessica, as she strips. A brief reverse shot of Logan still struggling to remove his shirt is replaced by the preceding shot; this time Jessica is naked. Although Logan is not seen undressed during this sequence, it is apparent in a later shot that he is not wearing trousers under his fur. It is clear that the spectator has been invited, through the application of simple editing and framing, to identify with Logan, and to objectify Jessica. This, and further sequences throughout the film, clearly exemplify what Laura Mulvey calls Hollywood style cinema's "skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure" (Mulvey 1975, 8).

Since the publication of Mulvey's ground-breaking work, the study of women in film has broadened considerably, and whilst her work continues to serve as a reference point, its questioning by various theorists has added weight to a number of debates concerning women and cinema; these include the gendering of the gaze and

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[8] Cf. Freud 1961b, 152-57.

[9] See also Stacey 1987, 116.

the notion of sexual difference, as well as the validity of psychoanalysis as a theoretical tool[10].

Mulvey's own work concentrates largely upon the female as an erotic object of the scopophilic gaze; the female as an erotic object in the science fiction film will be dealt with later in this chapter, but of initial consideration will be the manner in which Mulvey's essay also highlights the primacy of the male in the subject/object dynamic of the cinema. Mulvey argues that the male image is presented by the cinema in a manner which enables positive identification by male ego libido processes, leaving the female spectator with few active images of identification; she is expected to identify, if at all, with the passive role of female as male-defined object[11]. In *Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative cinema"*, Mulvey defends her apparent disregard for the female spectator, stating that she was ". . . interested in the relationship between the image of women on the screen and the 'masculinisation' of the spectator position, regardless of the actual sex (or possible deviance) of any real live movie-goer" (Mulvey 1989c, 29).

Mulvey's notion of male objectification of the female image, and identification with the male image, serves as an ideal foundation for an examination of traditional science

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[10] For detailed accounts of the application of psychoanalysis to the specific subject of women in film, see Penley 1989; and Lebeau 1995. In Kuhn 1994, the text is punctuated with references to psychoanalysis as it becomes relevant, but it also deals specifically with Laura Mulvey's article (see esp. 59-64).

[11] Mulvey consciously limits her discussion of the potential of the female gaze to a reference to Pam Cook and Claire Johnston's study of *The Revolt of Mamie Stover* in Phil Hardy (ed.), *Raoul Walsh* (Edinburgh, 1974) (see Mulvey 1989a, 21).

fiction film in two specific ways. Her position reflects the generally recognised 'masculinised' nature of the traditional science fiction film[12]. Furthermore:

> The image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation, adding a further layer demanded by the ideology of the patriarchal order as it is worked out in its favourite cinematic form - illusionistic narrative film.
>
> (Mulvey 1975, 17)

Thus, the already 'masculinised' traditional science fiction film, coupled with its status as arguably the most prolific proponent of "illusionistic narrative", exhibits a strong tendency to magnify the subjectivity of the male Self, and to position the female as Other to that Self. By exploring theories which expose the prevalence of the male Self, this chapter will show how the traditional science fiction film succeeds in limiting female subjectivity.

In *Geographies of Exclusion*, David Sibley (1995) argues that communities are a function of the exclusion of groups which do not conform to a conspectus of the dominant conception of Self. This process equates with the Freudian notion of 'repression', "the process (defence mechanism) by which an unacceptable impulse or idea is rendered unconscious" (Rycroft 1995, 157[13]). Beginning with Freudian psychoanalysis, Sibley locates the creation of the concept of Self at the pre-Oedipal

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[12] See note 7 above.

[13] See also Freud 1953, 235-37; cf. "suppression" and "censorship" in this volume.

stage of development, during which the child knows only itself, considering its mother to be part of itself. "However, this initial pre-Oedipal one-ness with the mother is lost as the child develops a sense of border, a sense of self-hood, and a sense of the social" (Sibley 1995, 6). Once the child realises that it is not alone, internal instinctual processes give way to the need to relate to external objects, including people, beyond the Self. This is explored through Sibley's overview of object relations theory (Sibley 1995, 5-7[14]), in which objects within the experience of the subject become part of the inner life of the infant, and are subsumed into Self (introjection), and objects not subsumed are subject to unwanted feeling and denial, and are regarded as Other (projection), This is used to support Sibley's statement that "some will embrace difference, gain pleasure and satisfaction from merging, whilst others will reject difference" (Sibley 1995, 7). Citing Jacques Lacan, Sibley continues with the concept of the Self as consisting of a balance between the inner (pure) Self, and the outer (defiled) Self, with its relations to society; this, in turn, leads to abjectification of the Other, and the need to maintain the pure Self against the impure (Sibley 1995, 8). Alluding to the abject-object theories of Julia Kristeva, Sibley argues that:

> The urge to make separations, between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, 'us' and 'them', that is, to expel the abject, is encouraged in western cultures, creating feelings of anxiety, because such separations can never be finally achieved. (Sibley 1995, 8)

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[14] See also Hamilton 1988, esp. 35-57.

·It is this anxiety, focused again through the work of Julia Kristeva, which forms the basis of Barbara Creed's examination of the female in the horror film, *The Monstrous Feminine* (1994). Whilst many Hollywood films of the 1930s ostensibly catered for female spectator-identification processes, films of the horror genre assuredly do not[15]. Barbara Creed argues that, with its images of menstruation, archaic mother, *femme castratrice*, and repugnant birth, the horror film often distils the female into an abject-essence, which de-emphasises her human characteristics, thus denying opportunity for identification. According to Creed:

Virtually all horror texts represent the monstrous-feminine in relation to Kristeva's notion of maternal authority and the mapping of the self's clean and proper body. Images of blood, vomit, pus, shit, etc., are central to our culturally/socially constructed notions of the horrific. (Creed 1994, 13)

In chapter 2 of *The Monstrous Feminine*, Creed uses the archaic, parthenogenetic mother as an example of these "constructed notions" of "maternal authority" in order to examine the representation of the primal scene in Ridley Scott's science fiction/horror film, *Alien* (1979)[16].

Because the archaic mother is closely associated with death in its negative aspects - death seen as a desire for continuity and the loss of boundaries - her

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[15] Cf. Barris 1975; and Berenstein 1996.

[16] For a detailed discussion on the primal scene and its relationship to cinema, see Kuntzel 1980.

presence is marked negatively within the project of the horror film. Both the mother and death signify a monstrous obliteration of the self and both are linked to the demonic, as *Alien* so terrifyingly demonstrates. (Creed 1994, 30).

Creed's use of *Alien* to support her own argument is reversible: such is the strength of her premise, that Scott's film can be identified as partly horror *because* it possesses elements of the abject-female highlighted in Creed's work. Drawing upon Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1982), Creed states that the woman in the horror film, through her reproductive functions is situated with nature rather than culture; "in this way woman is again linked to the abject through her body." (Creed 1994, 48). Creed had expanded this theme in an earlier article, *Gynesis, Postmodernism and the Science Fiction Horror Film*, in which she states that "one of the most interesting developments in the genre has been a concentration on imagery connected with the female reproductive cycle" (Creed 1995b, 215). Science fiction film, however, does not employ the primal female monsters indigenous to the horror film, of which Creed offers numerous examples[17]. The closest that traditional science fiction film comes to the archaic mother is the mother-nature figures which proved popular during the early years of the century; however, these characters tended to be beneficent, and their popularity quickly waned[18]. Unlike the horror film, the science fiction film does not,

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[17] Examples of the monstrous feminine in Creed's text include: the 'witch' in *Carrie* (DePalma 1976), the 'vampire' in *The Hunger* (Scott 1983), and the 'possessed child' in *The Exorcist* (Friedkin 1973).

[18] Examples of the mythological mother-nature figure in early science fiction film includes, *The Voyage of the Arctic* (Booth 1903), in which a number of polar sailors are helped by 'The Queen of the Polar regions', who has the power to restore life. The Polar Queen returns in 1909 for another Booth film, as Baron Munchausen races Peary to the Pole in *Up the Pole*. The French offered their own Royal figures in the form of a 'Royal Lady', leading a dancing entourage in *Voyage Autour d'une Etoile* (Velle

in general, utilise the concept of the female as abject Other[19]. The genre tends to de-emphasise female biological function, a notion supported by Vivian Sobchack in 'The Virginity of Astronauts: Sex and the Science Fiction Film':

> Those few science fiction films which deal overtly with sex and the sexuality of human women . . . generally do so outside the articulated context of human heterosexuality and within that of racial and special miscegenation. (Sobchack 1995, 104)

Later in this chapter, an examination of human-female relations with aliens will reveal that, even through racial miscegenation, the science fiction female serves as an extension to the male self, rather than a representation of an abject Other.

The distinction between the female Other as represented variously by horror and science fiction is reflected by Edward Sampson, in *Celebrating the Other: A Dialogic Account of Human Nature*, when he posits a division between aspects of the social Other:

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1906), and 'The Fairy Queen of the Oceans': governess of the Corps de Ballet du Chatelet in Méliès's *Deux Cent Milles Lieues sous les Mers ou le Cauchemar d'un Pêcheur* (1907).

[19] There are, of course, exceptions to any generalisation; In *Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman* (Hertz 1958), for example, the female antagonist, played by Alison Hayes, is presented as a menace to be destroyed. However, even here, the female is cited as feminine rather than monstrous.

(1) The Western project Other (socially constructed)

(2) The Hegelian Other (to be destroyed)

(see Sampson 1993, 4-5)

Sampson argues that the Western project Other is the product of religious, philosophical, cultural, economic and scientific communities in Western history, which have in turn been contrived primarily by educated, white males; "the objects of their construction have been defined as all that the dominant group is not" (Sampson 1993, 4). The Other in this configuration is constructed as a part of the Self, and it is utilised by the traditional science fiction film in its representation the female. The Hegelian Other serves as an antithesis to Sampson's attempt to celebrate dialogic[20], heteroglossic societies. It results from the dialectic nature of "self-celebratory monologues", as examined by Hegel (1931) in which the Other is perceived as a threat to be destroyed, and it is utilised by the horror film. In science fiction film the Hegelian other is reserved largely for the representation of alien concepts[21].

As an introduction to his work, Sampson examines a number of theories relating to human existence, in order to show how these theories have subscribed to the celebration of the self-contained individual. Sampson is largely concerned with this individual in opposition to the non-specific Other. He begins by observing that

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[20] Sampson uses the term "dialogic" in reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic theory, which was formulated to celebrate the other in society (Bakhtin 1981). Dialogism, or 'celebrating the Other' is proposed in contrast to monologism, or 'celebrating the Self' (Sampson 1993, *ix-x*).

[21] For a discussion of the alien Other of science fiction literature, see Wolmark 1993, esp. 27-53.

Freudian instinct-theories placed the biological-individual in conflict with society, and that later interpersonal theories, placed the social-individual within the societal-group[22].

Sampson's notion of the divided Western Other and Hegelian Other serves to outline a basic distinction between the representation of the female Other in science fiction and horror genres, but the positioning of the female in science fiction film alone can better be highlighted through a further division, using Marcel Mauss's 1938 concept of '*personne*' and '*moi*' (Mauss 1985), as two sides of the Self:

> (1) *Moi* (the self-contained, monologic individual)
>
> (2) *Personne* (the individual as a member of an ordered-collective)
>
> (see Carrithers 1985)

Sampson develops the concept of the *moi*, as a function of the monologic self-celebratory view (Sampson 1993, 17/31); this is represented in traditional science fiction film largely through the absence of the female, and will be discussed later in this chapter. The *personne*, is represented in the creation of ordered hierarchies which serve the male Self via his social positioning (Sampson 1993, 28n1[23]). Links are maintained with the Hegelian Other through reference to science fiction aliens, which threaten the hierarchy; it maintains links with the Western project Other through re-creation of the female as a member of the male-dominated ordered-collective. She is

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[22] See Lacan 1977; Bakhtin 1981; Gatens 1991; Mead 1964; Garfinkel; 1967.

[23] See also Wetherell and Potter 1989.

an extension to the male Self; this extension, Sampson terms the "serviceable other":

> Every construction has its dominant group - the constructors - and its others, those who are constructed . . . .
>
> . . . the dominant groups have given priority to their own experiences and their places in the world and have constructed *serviceable* others.
>
> (Sampson 1993, 4)[24]

Sampson applies the term to any community's constructed Others, making it useful to the understanding of the function of women in traditional science fiction film.

Whilst the companions and damsels-in-distress which have sustained narrative fantasy for centuries have continued to proliferate in traditional science fiction film, providing fodder for the projection of male intelligence and machismo, Science fiction, like mythology and religion, has a further (or perhaps more fundamental) goal: it aims to make sense of the environment in which humans live. Employing its unparalleled ability to apply speculation and extrapolation, the genre has re-constructed social and natural environments in a further attempt to understand them. Within this existentialist configuration, Self has become a magnification of hegemonic ideology, and Other has come to represent anything which opposes this. Peter Biskind recognises the importance of this configuration to the science fiction films of the

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[24] Sampson borrows the phrase 'serviceable others' from Toni Morrison (1992), who uses it to describe the role of African Americans, "whose constructed characteristics were essential, says Morrison, to the definition of the white-American character" (Sampson 1993, 16n4).

1950s, referring to "the idea of the alien as profoundly influenced by the Manichean Us/Them habit of thought that was an occupational hazard of the cold-war battle of ideas" (Biskind 1983, 111). He further observes that in machine-loving America of the 1950s, the threat was often nature, a fact borne out by the proliferation of 'revenge of nature' films, in which the social Self is in conflict with the natural Other. Whilst this culture/nature dynamic is essential to Barbara Creed's notion of the male/female distinction in the horror film[25], in science fiction film, the female is part of the cultural 'Us' against the anti-cultural 'Them'. Moreover, Susan Sontag has linked the Other in 1950s science fiction film to the threat of radiation (Sontag 1966b), and John Brosnan indicates that monsters and aliens in the 1950s are ". . . commonly regarded as metaphors for the anxieties of the period . . ." (Brosnan 1991, 85)[26]. The projected female in traditional science fiction film, therefore, serves to reaffirm the introjected male Self, against the invading Other of a socio-political ideology, reproduced not only through alien creatures, but also in unfamiliar technologies, planets, and concepts. Biskind continues:

> Like war films, sci-fi often presented America in the grip of an emergency . . . these emergencies dramatized the necessity of consensus, of pulling together. (Biskind 1983, 102)

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[25] See page 33 above.

[26] Myriad American 'revenge of nature' films of this period were inspired by *Them!* (Douglas), in 1954. The same year saw the release of the Japanese classic, *Gojira* (Honda), which sired a string of sequels in which the mutant reptile fought various other 'revenge of nature' creatures. These are linked to Sontag's notion by the fact that these creatures were often created through misuse of radiation; this in turn is highlighted by Brosnan as one of the post-war period's major anxieties.

Women as reaffirming Others, were essential to this "pulling together", but, as Biskind observes, care was taken that they were not empowered as a separate group. Taking masculine names like Nikki (*The Thing* [Nyby 1951]), Pat (*Them!* [Douglas 1954]), and Steve (*Tarantula* [Arnold 1955]), women were cited as ". . . just one of the boys, part of the male group that restrained the monster from the id" (Biskind 1983, 135fn). The female is thus re-created, and presented as serviceable Other.

Examples of the female science fiction character as a serviceable extension to the male Self, however, are not confined to the 1950s. This characteristic has been conspicuous since the early years of the century, as daughters of prominent male characters[27] were superseded by assistants to prominent scientists, beginning with *The Scarlet Streak* (McRae 1926), in which a scientist and his daughter work together on a weapon. The notion of the father-and-daughter scientist scenario, in which the female is literally an extension to the male, was used for the 1954 classic, *Them!* (Douglas) as well as the 1979 film *The Black Hole* (Nelson), and is brought up to date by *Lost in Space* (Hopkins 1998).

The Scarlet Streak reflected a far less obvious example of the serviceable female, discernible in the limited generic trend which preceded the First World War. Obsessed with the idea of foreign invasion, Britain produced a number of future-war

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[27] Prominent fathers include: A Professor in *Rescued in Mid-Air* (Stow 1906); doctors in *Pawns of Mars* (Marston 1915), and *The Comet's Comeback* (unknown 1916); the US President in *Beneath the Sea* (unknown 1915); and Lord Pax in *Wake Up!* (Cowen 1914).

films from as early as 1909; many of the heroes of these speculative war-time

adventures are women. In *England's Menace* (Shaw 1914), released shortly before

the outbreak of World War I, a plot to invade Britain is thwarted by a young girl who

intercepts a spy's message and motorcycles to Downing Street to warn the Prime

Minister. In the same year, a Guards lieutenant and a Post Office girl save England

from infiltration by German spies, in *If England Were Invaded* (Durrant 1914); and a

nurse saves an Army Captain from the Germans in *Victory and Peace* (Brenon

1918)[28], a film produced by the National War Aims Committee with a cast which

included Ellen Terry. America presented a female war-hero in the form of a Swedish

servant, who raises the alarm in the 1916 film *The Flying Torpedo* (Cabanne 1916).

Whilst this valiant female activity may be read as a response to the burgeoning

women's movements, it was more likely to be designed as a propaganda exercise: the

message sent by these films is that "We will be safe because even our *women* are

capable of defeating the enemy"[29].

A variation of this theme forms the basis of *I Married a Monster From Outer

Space* (Fowler 1958). In this film an alien species has arrived on Earth looking for

human mates to help repopulate its dying planet. One of the aliens takes the form of a

human man; however, the man's patriotic American wife realises that something is

amiss when the man she believes to be her husband appears to have lost that 'little

extra something' which would signify him as human. Despite the alien professing love

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[28] It is possible that this film was also influenced by the infamous execution of nurse
Edith Cavell by German forces in October 1915.

[29] Cf. Lant 1991, esp. 19-58.

for the woman (an unfamiliar sensation for him), she is unsatisfied; the aliens' plot is

finally foiled, the interlopers are destroyed, and the human couple is reunited. Thus,

the woman willingly returns to the man, and the alien threat to take what is clearly

signified by the film to be the human man's possession is thwarted. The female then is

framed as the serviceable Other in the face of threat from an abject Other. However,

the traditional narrative continues to maintain a position of binary sexual opposition,

as Constance Penley observes:

> It is by now well known that the narrative logic of classical film is powered by
>
> the desire to establish, by the end of the film, the nature of masculinity, the
>
> nature of femininity, and the way in which those two can be complementary
>
> rather than antagonistic. . . . Ironically, it is science fiction film - our hoariest
>
> and seemingly most sexless genre - that alone remains capable of supplying the
>
> configurations of sexual difference required by the classical cinema. (Penley
>
> 1986, 75-76)

Whilst Penley goes on to argue that films of the early 1980s framed *aliens* as

sites of *sexual* difference, in the traditional science fiction film it is imperative that the

human female remains the site of sexual difference. The specific theme of femininity-

in-peril is used not merely in order to present victorious masculinity through the

damsel-in-distress formula, but in order for the male hero to claim possession of the

female over the invading alien. The sexual threat of the alien is recognised by Peter

Nicholls as being prevalent in the illustration, and some of the stories, contained in the

science fiction magazines of the 30s and 40s:

Just as white men traditionally fear that the black man is a sexual athlete too well endowed to compete against, so in sf the menace of the alien is often seen in sexual terms. (Nicholls 1979, 537)

Pride in possession of the female, as part of the male *personne*, is common to many science fiction films in which aliens attempt to kidnap women. This formula is magnified by the abject nature of the alien. Whilst films which posit alien attempts to procreate with human women identify the female as sexual Other, she is accepted as a part of the male social Self in order to fight the primary threat of the alien - a representation of primal or social fears. The abject, alien, Hegelian Other is created to be destroyed, whereas the serviceable, female, Western project Other is created to be preserved as an extension to the male Self.

Whilst Edward Sampson and David Sibley deal extensively with theories which serve to explain conflicts between the individual/Self and the group/Other, it is not necessary here to detail further theories of Self, or indeed to examine the manner in which they are reflected and developed by traditional science fiction film. However, it is necessary to further examine the genre's creation of the female as an extension to the male Self in order later to illuminate this within the mechanism of the industry itself and to detail the genre's attempts to develop its representation of a female Self. Nowhere is the concept of the female as a created extension to the male Self more apparent than in science fiction's unique capacity to posit artificial life forms. The genre's phallocentric application of this ability will be termed 'the Frankenstein syndrome', the progenitors of which are suggested, albeit somewhat tenuously, by

Camille Paglia, in *Sexual Personae*:.

The book of Genesis is a male declaration of independence from the ancient mother-cults. Its challenge to nature, so sexist to modern ears, marks one of the crucial moments in western history. Mind can never be free of matter. Yet only by mind *imagining* itself free can culture advance. The mother-cults, by reconciling man to nature, entrapped him in matter. Everything great in western civilization has come from struggle against our origins. Genesis is rigid and unjust, but it gave man hope as a man. It remade the world by male dynasty, cancelling the power of mothers. (Paglia 1990, 40)

Between Camille Paglia's "imagining" man, and Terry Ramsaye's film pioneer, in the "business of re-creating himself biologically" (Ramsaye 1964, *xl*), stands Victor Frankenstein. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's protagonist bestrides the philosophical laws of the ancients, and the new sciences of the nineteenth century (Aldiss 1973, 22-41), signalling the birth of modern science fiction with a new slant on an old myth - male creation. Citing the work of Erasmus Darwin, Brian Aldiss states that "the enduring concept of Frankenstein rests on the quasi-evolutionary idea that God is remote or absent from creation: man therefore is free to create his own sub-life" (Aldiss 1973, 29); in other words, he is able to extend his Self. Reflecting upon this, in *Feminist Futures*, Anne Cranny-Francis observes that the genre of science fiction was in fact born with the ". . . automatization of the first man-made man" (Cranny-Francis 1995, 220).

It is no accident, then, that one of the most enduring myths of the cinema should echo the success of cinema itself - biological re-creation - nor that science fiction cinema should embrace a myth which allows free rein for the creative imagination. Shelley's own description of the moment of her creature's 'birth' is sketchy: Victor Frankenstein's narrative informs the reader that ". . . I collected the instruments of life around me, . . . I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, . . ." (Shelley 1994, 55). However, cinema has employed 'explicable nova' (Clute & Nicholls 1993, 408), in order to explain Frankenstein's creation, and has produced other creatures, in order to perpetuate the fantasy of male creation. Applying this myth to the horror film, Barbara Creed argues that man's desire to create life - to give birth - suggests a desire to "become woman" (Creed 1995b, 216-17), and so eliminate the threat of the archaic mother. However, science fiction replaces horror's fear of the past with a preoccupation with the future; the formation of the Frankenstein syndrome enables man to project himself not only into society, but into that future, and gives him power to control woman through his re-creation of her. In this way the woman is denied the power of nature, and man is able to perpetuate the "challenge to nature" highlighted by Paglia (1990, 40), through the appropriated ability to create his imaginings in a material form. The horror abjectifies and finally destroys the procreative ability of the female, but, just as man has used science in attempts to control female reproduction[30], traditional science fiction film denies female reproduction by re-constituting it for the male. Science fiction's unique contributions to the Frankenstein syndrome are the sub-genres of computers and

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[30] See Wajcman 1991, 54-80; Grant 1993, 41-62; Chodorow 1979b; de Beauvoir 1988, 501-42.

robots.

Constructed as a pastiche of the science fiction genre, *Battle Beyond the Stars* (Murakami 1980) takes much of its story-line from the its Western forebear, *The Magnificent Seven* (Sturges 1960), which in turn borrows its concept from Akira Kurosawa's influential classic, *The Seven Samurai* (1954). Drawing liberally from *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977), *Battle Beyond the Stars* uses a pulp space-opera backdrop to present the story of a young male hero, Shad, in his quest to save his planet from an evil, galactic overlord. Although John Brosnan cites the film as one of the child-orientated movies aimed at capitalising on the *Star Wars* phenomenon, much of screenwriter, John Sayles's, script suggests a more adult target, with sexual innuendo and posturing prominent, not least in his female characters. Sayles utilises a number of narrative stereotypes, including, innocent virgin, vamp, rape-victim, fecund virgin, Amazonian warrior, lesbian, and damsel-in-distress. Of central importance to this chapter, however, is the film's use of the spaceship-computer.

The ship in which Shad accomplishes his quest is clearly gendered as female, with its aquiline form sporting two protuberances, which are plainly designed to represent breasts, complete with nipples. Inside the ship, the lines are smooth, and the colours are soft, creating an inviting environment, in stark contrast to the angular, grey warships of the evil forces. If the spectator has any doubts that the ship is female, the voice of the computer, Nell, will remove these, for not only is Nell identified as the ship's computer but she literally *is* the ship. Furthermore, taking responsibility for Shad, whom she describes as "wet behind the ears", Nell is

identified not only as the mother-figure, common to science fiction computers, but as the womb: *"I'm* your home now, kid". Nell continues to nurture Shad, guiding him, teaching him to fight, and supporting his forays into romance. Towards the end of the film, whilst Shad is kissing the wide-eyed innocent female, played by Lynn Carlin, Nell sighs, "Now I've got *two* babies to sit for". Nell ultimately sacrifices herself to save Shad's besieged planet, but not before she has ensured that her 'children' have escaped from within her.

Through the neglect of her logical functions, Nell is signified more as a nurturing mother than a computer; she is essentially passive, existing to regulate the lives and livelihoods of those in her 'womb'. Selflessly creating a safe environment, she is, initially, the Freudian pre-Oedipal mother, who exist as part of the individual Self[31], in this case, Shad, rather than as a separate entity. Imbued with enough character to give her narrative interest, Nell is then re-created as Other, just as the Oedipal mother is recognised by the male child as other to himself; however, she is retained as a serviceable Other through the fact that her character never jeopardises that of the central (male) Self, and her control never contradicts the will of the Self. To give the mother-computer a will, would be to revoke her function as an extension to the male individual; she would become a separate, and therefore potentially threatening, entity - an Hegelian Other, with the potential to become renegade.

In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, however, the 'mother-computer' becomes exactly

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[31] See Freud 1953; cf. "The Dependent Relationships of the Ego". In Freud 1961a. For a discussion of psychanalysis and the mother figure beyond Freud, see Kaplan 1992, 27-56.

this: HAL9000, the most advanced computer ever built, seemingly attains a level of consciousness and rebels. The important factor, of course is that HAL, the omnipotent, omniscient computer on board the spaceship *Discovery*, is male. It is, therefore, a male computer which rejects the passive, nurturing role, and appears to perform an act of free-will denied to the Oedipal-mother figure represented by Nell. In addition to this, whilst HAL is indeed imbued with a degree of free-will, care is taken to ensure that this never appears as emotion. Even at the point of rebellion, the delivery of HAL's words, "Sorry, I can't do that, Dave", signify his position as a cognitive entity, a fact which, following Sampson, celebrates the male computer - as a separate Self.

Cognitive science describes a vision of the world as a potentially predictable ordered mechanism (Sampson 1993, 59-63). By positing the ability to solve all problems intellectually, rather than emotionally, cognitive science feeds upon, and in turn feeds, a conception of an essentially scientific world[32]. Sampson asks: "what is the source of this order, meaning, and intelligent behaviour? The cognitivists answer: the individual's mind - often the individual's brain." (Sampson 1993, 59). Thus, Sampson argues that by placing emphasis upon the core of the individual as a potential site of all knowledge, cognitive science goes further than all other Self-celebratory theories, by not actually recognising the Other at all. Particularly germane to the link between cognitivism and the science fiction film is the use of the 'computer metaphor'. Regarded as one of the strongest tools in the cognitivists attempt to

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[32] See Gardner 1985; and Code 1991.

isolate the organising structures and principles within the human mind, the computer metaphor describes the suggestion that the basic workings of the psyche might be likened to a computer; we may "look at the computer and find an information-processing device that will serve as a perfect model of the human mind" (Sampson 1993, 60)[33].

Potentially, then, the use of cognitive theories, like the computer metaphor, to de-humanise the central core of the human psyche, should serve to make the individual neutral. Because, theoretically, it uses no keys of social or physical recognition, cognitive knowledge has no affiliation to gender, class, race, and so forth. However, social structures automatically gender knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, as male[34]. Furthermore, the same structures gender other forms of knowledge as female; this is exemplified by the influential 1951 film, *The Thing* (Nyby). Among the scientists and soldiers who are sent to investigate a crashed flying saucer in Antarctica, is a solitary female scientist, Nikki Nicholson, played by Margaret Sheridan. Whilst her narrative role signals a degree of equality, Nicholson's function is governed largely by her gender. Not only is she the film's nominal love interest, but when it transpires that the 'thing' of the title, which is rampaging about the research station, is actually a vegetable, Nicholson suggests that the way to destroy the creature might be to *cook* it. Her plan succeeds (the creature is fried to death across electrical contacts), but the nature of the suggestion helps to support

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[33] See also Osherson and Smith 1990.

[34] See Keller 1978; Irigaray 1987; Potter 1988; Young 1990; and Wajcman 1991, Sibley 1995, 157-62.

preconceptions of limitations in Nicholson's knowledge, buoyed by her primary role

as a woman. Elizabeth Cowie utilises the existence of gendered knowledge in her

critique of a later science fiction film, *Coma* (Crichton 1978); stating that Dr. Susan

Wheeler "is given a pre-eminently masculine trait, the desire for knowledge, . . ."

(Cowie 1987, 156).

Sampson argues that the creation of pure knowledge, unfettered by emotion or

volition, and at the expense of all forms of Other, must reinforce an already dominant

ideology - in this case patriarchy. Pure cognitive knowledge, therefore, normalises the

white-male vision and universalises the white-male gaze[35]. The development of the

Self, subject to the restriction placed upon it by the dominant ideology, tends to

represent the sexual stereotypes employed by that ideology. In *The Primal Screen*,

John Brosnan complains that science fiction computers have a tendency to become

anthropomorphised (Brosnan 1991, 219). Anthropomorphisation of gendered

knowledge has tended to ensure a magnification of gender stereotypes through the

ability of the computer to do whatever it is programmed to do, well. The result,

exemplified by HAL and Nell, has been that male computers think, whilst female

computers feel[36].

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[35] It could be argued that Sampson is being disingenuous to a science which has, at its foundation, the aim of discovering a theory for the *human* mind. Applying social ideologies to the pure cognitive model introduces a variable which, as Sampson himself has stated, needs to be eliminated in order for the model to exist. Therefore, Sampson is arguing from a standpoint which cannot exist in the same environment as the pure cognitive model. What his argument does highlight, however, is a need for a change in the manner in which society, treats theories of knowledge. Pure cognitive knowledge can only be viewed through 'pure' eyes, leaving the fault with society, not with cognitive theory. Sampson addresses the conjoining of cognitive and social theories in chapter 9, 132-34.

[36] See Bowers 1991.

Consequently, HAL's seeming display of emotional volition in *2001*, needs to be carefully explained in the film's sequel, *2010* (Hyams 1984). After the derelict spaceship *Discovery* is recovered from Jupiter-space, HAL is reactivated to reveal that he was merely following his programming; it transpires that HAL's primary objective was to ensure the success of the Jupiter mission at all costs. The male computer is, therefore vindicated and re-instated as a cognitive being, whist retaining the enigmatic character which secured his success in *2001*. For *2010*, another advanced series-9000 computer is created; this time it is a female equivalent: SAL9000. Like HAL, SAL possesses formidable cognitive capabilities; however, this element is de-emphasised, as she is treated, and acts, like a small child. Before being disconnected, as part of a test, she asks her male creator, Dr. Chandra, "Will I dream?", to which Chandra replies, rather patronisingly, "Of course you will. All intelligent beings dream". SAL is not seen again. Later, the spectator is reminded of SAL's child-like question, when the same is asked by HAL. This time Dr. Chandra considers his answer, and replies, "I don't know", a response which is more honest than that given to SAL, and an indication that Chandra considers HAL to be more mature, and possibly even sentient. Again, HAL has managed to retain character, as well as cognitive primacy, whilst SAL's cognitive capacity is subjugated to her anthropomorphisation. Unlike Nell, SAL is not an extension to the on-screen male *personne*, but works to support the off-screen *moi* through HAL's invitation for active identification by the male spectator.

A potential for further active identification is suggested by the apparent osmotic dissemination of cognitive knowledge to the computer user, a recent evolution of

which can be seen in the relationship between H. G. Wells's 1898 novel of Martian invasion, *The War of the Worlds*, its 1953 film progeny (Haskin), and the 1996 virtual remake, *Independence Day* (Emmerich). In Wells' novel, the invading Martians are defeated through their lack of immunity to Earth's bacteria, clearly cited as a victory for God. By 1953, the scientists have reasoned that bacterial-warfare with the aliens is possible, but they are beaten to their victory, again by God. For *Independence Day*, God has been forgotten: success lies firmly in the hands of two male heroes, who destroy the aliens using a man-made computer-virus. The female characters in this film serve almost entirely as emotional supports for the male heroes, whose actions indicate that man's cognitive reasoning and creative abilities, have eliminated the need for luck, or spiritual forces. The myriad flaws in *Independence Day*'s American-male chauvinism, masquerading as international-human chauvinism, is neatly underlined in Caroline Westbrook's witty question: ". . . And how . . . is [Jeff] Goldblum *able* to download said virus from a normal, ordinary, earthly computer to one that has probably never caught a whiff of Windows 95, . . . ?" (Westbrook 1996).

Nowhere is the genre's use of technology to extend the male Self more obvious than in the 1956 film, *Forbidden Planet* (Wilcox). The massive underground machine, built on Altair IV by the now extinct Krell, has the ability literally to expand the cognitive capacity of its operator. Such is the machine's power that its custodian, Dr. Morbius, has not allowed his daughter to use it, an embargo which, in his defence, Morbius extends to Altair IV's male visitors. Much of the drama of *Forbidden Planet* is created through the machine's ability to create physical objects from the thoughts of its user. Close Freudian parallels are drawn, when it transpires that the Krell had discovered a way to manifest physical objects at will, powered by the incredible

machinery at the heart of the planet. Unfortunately the device also had access to the contents of the Krell's unfettered unconscious, creating creatures which annihilated the population. The creature in the film represents Morbius's animosity towards the visitors.

Parallels with cinema itself are clear: the mechanism which allows for the creation of filmic images facilitates the presentation of the creations of the imaginative id processes. Furthermore, this mechanism facilitates the creation of stereotypes explained by analytical psychologist, Gustav Jung's, reformulation of the notion of contrasexuality. Introducing Jung's contribution to the gender debate, in *Gender and Contrasexuality*, Polly Young-Eisendrath writes:

Gender is a central organiser of interpersonal reality. It carries so much meaning that we feel compelled to get it established quickly, both at the birth of an infant and in any instance in which we encounter a stranger. "What is this person's sex?" is a question that opens the way to fantasy, symbol and speech. Any confusion or obscuration of a person's gender creates anxiety. How can I address, act or engage this person unless I am sure about the category that will determine so much of what I expect and perceive? (Young-Eisendrath 1997, 223)

Jung's development of contrasexuality, through the examination of mythological archetypes, posits the existence of opposite-sexed sub-personalities which help to define Self. The sub-personality of the male is the feminine 'anima'

(man = MALE + feminine), and the sub-personality of the female is the masculine 'animus' (woman = FEMALE + masculine)[37]. Jung argues that the personality, influenced in part by the processes of social expectation outlined above by Young-Eisendrath, tends to create a split between what it regards as the Self, and the contrasexual Other. This results in the projection of unwanted attributes onto others: "if a man does not realize that he possesses the anima image within himself, he will tend to project it on to women he meets, and, especially if his feeling side is undeveloped, he is easily fascinated" (Fordham 1991, 114-15). In interpersonal relationships, projection, explains Young-Eisendrath, ". . . can become a way of life. Romantic partners may be consciously or unconsciously chosen because of their willingness to carry idealized or devalued parts of the self" (Young-Eisendrath 1997, 227). On a wider scale then, the cinema allows "idealised or devalued parts of the self" to be projected onto screen characters. However, in a reflection of Andrew Samuels's assertion that "there is little doubt that Jung's 'feminine' is still a *man's* 'feminine'. . ." (Samuels 1997, 5), the cinema uses its phallocentric power structures to project the unwanted anima onto the female object (woman = FEMALE + *feminine*), whilst retaining the animus for the male subject (man = MALE + *masculine*)[38]. Building upon the characteristics of the film medium in general, and utilising the Frankenstein syndrome, the science fiction genre magnifies these phallocentric projections in the form of sexual stereotypes recognisable in all sub-categories of the genre.

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[37] See Jung 1953, esp. para. 301.

[38] See Douglas 1990.

The ability to distil a female 'spirit' drives the plot of the 1988 film, *Cherry 2000* (de Jarnatt), in which the male protagonist, Sam, goes in search of a robot body into which he can insert a personality 'chip', containing what remains of his, now physically defunct, robot partner, Cherry. Sam hires, a tough female tracker, E. Johnson, played by Melanie Griffith, to guide him through the hostile, desert wasteland of 'zone 7', in order to find the robot 'graveyard'. Here, he hopes to replace Cherry with another of the identical Cherry-series robots made seventeen years earlier, in the year 2000. For Sam, the Cherry 2000 is a fantasy, a fetish object onto which he has projected his own images of the ideal female. Through his dangerous quest to find this specific model the film presents a fantasy of male power via the objectification, possession, and subjugation of the female.

Possession as power in *Cherry 2000* is illustrated most explicitly through the possession of the female 'essence'. Throughout the film, the personality chip reinforces Sam's desire for emotional security (as he periodically listens to Cherry's unchanging voice on a chip audio-player device), and his control (as he literally places her in his pocket, to be activated at will). After apparently losing Cherry's personality chip, Sam displays signs of mild depression; these are lifted when he and Johnson discover mutual physical desires, and embrace. During the embrace, however, the chip audio-player, which Johnson has hidden, is activated, alerting Sam to the deception. He immediately breaks off the embrace, and re-states his desire to continue his quest for a Cherry-series robot. Thus he establishes his preference for a female that he is able to possess and control entirely. Whilst in control of the chip, Johnson had been able to assuage her feelings of jealousy towards Cherry, a state to which she returns after possession is regained by Sam. Hence, the custodian of the chip is able

to control both the device itself, and the feelings of their companion. Sam, signified by the film as the legal owner of the chip, controls Johnson via her emotions as they travel across the wasteland. The wasteland itself presents women, this time biological, as victims of rape and brutalisation by the vigilante men. Thus the film, through creations of the narrative and creations within the narrative, serves to magnify patriarchal power structures through the application of the Frankenstein syndrome to physical rather than cognitive aspects of the Self.

One thing that has always annoyed me about most robots, androids and computers in sf movies is the way in which they are anthropomorphized. Take See-Threepio, the prissy robot in the *Star Wars* movies . . . He is just a man in a metal suit, capable of a whole range of human emotions . . . Just because we have a 'thinking' machine does not automatically mean that this machine will have emotions as we recognise them. . . . A machine intelligence - a 'pure' mind - would be totally neutral and have nothing in common with us. (Brosnan 1991, 219)

Despite Brosnan's blanket criticism of artificial life forms, few science fiction robots in films could be considered as being intelligent in the manner that most computers are. Moreover, it has been indicated above that those computers which are anthropomorphised tend to be female. In general terms a robot might be considered as a computer with an ability to move; however, as a cultural product of the science fiction film, the robot is far from being this. The manipulation of cognitive capacity through the science fiction computer has helped film-makers to signify the male as the

site of knowledge, and therefore power, whereas the robot reflects a more physical signification[39]. Citing Brosnan's plaint, Dean Conrad suggests that:

> What Brosnan appears to disregard is the fact that Threepio is supposed to be anthropomorphised; this lies at the very foundation of his success. His over-fussy nature and campness, by contradicting our preconceptions of the way a robot should act, create comedy. (Conrad 1996, 20)

Ironically one of the most 'human' of the male characters in *Forbidden Planet* is the advanced robot, Robby. Continuing the 'buddy' nature suggested by his un-threatening name, Robby performs the various functions of butler, pet, curio, and willing helper throughout the film. Like C-3PO, Robby is also the 'straight man', for much of the film's comic dialogue. Such was the success and appeal of Robby the Robot that he became "the robot character who most symbolized screen robots of the fifties . . ." (Brosnan 1991, 222), and even starred in his own film, *The Invisible Boy* (Hoffman 1957), and an episode of the American television show *Lost In Space*[40]. His success was clearly due to the humanisation of his character, at the expense of more scientific elements. The tendency for anthropomorphic functioning in robot characters like C-3PO and Robby the Robot, is employed primarily to enhance the structure or

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[39] There are of course exceptions to this 'rule': Robby the Robot (*Forbidden Planet*, 1956; *The Invisible Boy*, 1957), C-3PO (*Star Wars*, 1977), and *RoboCop* (1987), are amongst the robots which display levels of cognitive function. However, even with these examples there are strong indications of physical and anthropomorphic functioning.

[40] Robby the Robot appeared as the 'evil robotoid' in the *Lost in Space* episode entitled "War of the Robots".

narrative of the film through audience recognition of familiar idiosyncrasies. However, of primary importance to this chapter is ability of the robot sub-genre also to demonstrate that, once again, the science fiction genre magnifies processes inherent to the cinema itself, through its unparalleled potential to supply the tools which enable fulfilment of the primal wish for reflection and reproduction of Self.

Because of its potential to resemble humans, the robot clearly serves as a strong gender identifier; its capacity for action creates a further potential for gender stereotyping, a capacity which has not been lost on the science fiction film. Whilst C-3PO and Robby are not characters with which the male spectator is necessarily invited to identify, the genre has produced many subjects for male-ego identification, a process which Laura Mulvey, in her examination of the gaze in cinema, relates to Jacques Lacan's 'mirror stage' of development (Mulvey 1975, 9). Upon first seeing a mirror image of itself, the child, according to Lacan, is ". . . captivated by his 'specular image' becoming for ever alienated from his body, which from then on has less reality for him than his mirrored image." (Rycroft 1995, 92[41]). The image, which has become more important to the child, becomes the tool through which the child forms a Self, and learns fundamental realities, including the power structure governing society. Several film theorists have used Lacan's reworking of Freudian psychoanalysis in order to explain the powerful effect of the cinema. The most notable of these theorists is Christian Metz, whose work will be discussed more closely in chapter 2. In *The Imaginary Signifier* (1982b) Metz posits the theory that

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[41] See also Lacan 1968, 161-67.

meaning in film is created in the unconscious of the viewer. Objects on the cinema screen have varying significance within the individual imaginations of the cinema audience. In this way Metz's work links cinema-going with psychoanalysis through individual subject construction. Furthermore, ". . . it meant that film-viewing and subject-formation were reciprocal processes: something about our unconscious identity as subjects is reinforced in film viewing and film viewing is effective because of our unconscious participation" (Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis 1992, 124). Through association with the Lacanian mirror stage, film encourages the formation of the Self as subject, through identification with the image on the screen.

Augmenting this process, through the work of Marcel Mauss, is Lacan's notion of the 'symbolic order': "every culture can be considered as an ensemble or set of symbolic systems, amongst which the most important are: language, marriage rules, economic relationships, art, science, and religion" (Mauss 1966, *xix*, quoted in Lacan 1968, 255). Formation of, and identification with, images is governed by the power structures which pervade the society in which the subject Self is formed. To Lacan, the symbolic order is regulated by paternal authority, or the *name of the father* (Lacan 1968, 41); the male child develops an awareness of his powerful position within this structure, conversely the female child is reminded of her weak position. Born within the patriarchally ordered film industry, the male robot in its various forms serves as a surrogate for mirror stage development of the law of the father, reflecting the values accorded by the symbolic order[42].

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[42] For a detailed account of the application of Lacananian psychoanalysis to and for feminist threory, see Grosz 1990; for a discussion of the place of the female within the symbolic order, see esp. 50-81, in which Grosz highlights Lacan's adherence to the notion of instinctual language.

The function of women, and men, in many science fiction films, reflects the perception of their roles in a patriarchally ordered society. This gender positioning was enhanced in the late-1950s by public interest in the space-race: American astronauts, seen as single-minded, clean-cut, intelligent heroes were, according to Claus Jensen, identified by the public as ". . . being the incarnation of the best that America had to offer" (Jensen 1996, 71). The Soviet Union consummated the myth of the invincible man in space with the world's first space-traveller, Yuri Gagarin. Wives and girlfriends of these conquering heroes had to be content with waiting at home, keeping house, and saying the right things for *Pravda* and *Time Magazine* profiles on 'the family lives of the astronauts': when asked on the day of the moon-landing whether this was the happiest day of her life, Marcia Armstrong (wife of the Apollo 11 commander) replied, "No, that was the day when I married Neil" (Jensen 1996, 215). While the roles of the male astronauts and cosmonauts nourished the already strong notion of male primacy promulgated by patriarchal society, female achievements were forced into second place by an inversion of these values. Science fiction film continued to support the gender conspiracy highlighted by Lynn Spigel, in which women "were barred from participating in the (aptly titled) manned space program" (Spigel 1991, 223). Interest generated by the selection of a small group of female cosmonauts in 1962 may have influenced the introduction of a female spaceship captain in the Soviet film, *Planeta Burg* (Klushantsev 1962), but the genre was little affected beyond this, even by Valentina Tereshkova's historic mission as the first woman in space, in 1963. Apart from a handful of relatively low-budget films, traditional science fiction has shied away from employing female career-astronauts

and cosmonauts.

In *Between the Boys and Their Toys*, Susan Thomas highlights the sub-genre's maintenance of existing power structures through mirror-stage identification: "the function of androids, robots and computers is to act as a channel, or alter ego, through which the (male) audience can solve its emotional dilemmas" (Thomas 1991, 111). Moreover, Laura Mulvey points out that Lacan's mirror stage:

Occurs at a time when children's physical ambitions outstrip their motor capacity, with the result that their recognition of themselves is joyous in that they imagine their mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than they experience in their own body. (Mulvey 1975, 9)

The cinema in general, and science fiction cinema in particular, allows the film-maker to create images which fulfil this need for "perfect" experiences. Consequently, the robot gendered as male has served as a surrogate for general human development as well as male ego-identification through a multiplicity of roles, beginning with the augmentation of physical attributes, and culminating in existentialist inquiry, and the search for god.

Whilst the Parisian clown, Gugusse, dancing with his automaton in *Gugusse et l'Automate* (Méliès 1897), suggests a relatively benign beginning for the male robot, it was not long before film-makers began to capitalise on the robot's enhanced capacity for physical action - the essence of early cinematic comedy. The male robot became an action figure, performing feats of skill and daring. *The Mechanical Statue*

and the Ingenious Servant (Blackton 1907) presents its automaton as a gladiator, whilst the title character in *The Automatic Motorist* (Booth 1911) demonstrated incredible driving skills. 1918 saw the release of chapter-play series, *The Master Mystery* (King), in which the escapologist Harry Houdini and his girlfriend are pursued over fifteen episodes by a ruthless robot. Ruthless male robots became the staple of the science fiction film, with robots controlled by equally ruthless madmen serving as a further demonstration of surrogate male power, often in turn attenuated by a demonstration of male ingenuity as the robot is thwarted[43]. By presenting friendly father figures, films like *Tobor the Great* (Sholem 1954), *Der Ideale Untermeiter* (Schmidt 1956), and *El Rayo Disintegrador* (Cervera 1965), paved the way for protagonists like RoboCop to stretch the genre's examination of the male Self through closer adherence to the human. The cyborg in *RoboCop* (Verhoeven 1987) illustrates robot technology used as a physical augmentation of the male hero, as police officer Murphy becomes literally a reinforced version of himself. Further humanity is injected into the character via the device of stray memories emerging from the human beneath the technology. The uneasy conjunction of man and machine is developed further in *RoboCop 2* (Kershner 1990); this concept, which had been exploited to produce the revolutionary male robots led by Yul Brynner in *Westworld*

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[43] Madmen tried to take over the world with their robot-men in, amongst others, *The Mysterious Dr. Satan* (Witney and English 1940), *The Monster and the Ape* (Bretherton 1945), and *Los Automas de la Muerte* (Curiel 1960). A male robot runs amok in *The Colossus of New York* (Lourié 1958), a theme used for *Saturn 3* (Donen 1980). In *Target Earth* (Rose 1954), Kathleen Crowley discovers a city of killer robots, and in the Czech film *Muz z Prvniho Stoleti* (Lipsky 1961), travellers to 2447AD discover an Earth ruled by robots. This theme was taken up in 1984 for the blockbuster, *The Terminator* (Cameron). Opportunities for men to display their strength and ingenuity defending women, Earth, and their Selves against alien robots are offered in *Robot Monster* (Tucker 1953), *Kronos* (Newman 1957), and *The Human Duplicators* (Grimaldi 1965).

(Crichton 1973), is described by Phil Hardy as ". . . the classic science fiction theme of the robot as man's slave on the verge of self-emancipation . . ." (Hardy 1991, 316).

Whilst the development of the male robot is clearly more complicated than is suggested by this brief overview, these examples are sufficient to illustrate the variety of their activity. A force for both good and evil, with generally a primary function within the narrative or the filmic structure, the male robot is frequently the film's protagonist. In contrast, the female robot has developed little in essence since the her earliest incarnations as a dancing doll in Méliès's two minute film, *Coppélia ou la Poupée Animée* (1900), based upon the hugely popular Delibes ballet, *Coppélia*, which had in turn taken its inspiration from the opera *La Poupée*, by Edmond Audrian. In the story a young girl imitates a life-like doll, created by her toy-maker father to dance for a prince. So successful was the concept of the automatic dancing doll, that Méliès's film spawned a number of imitations[44]. Encumbered with a representation which continued to echo her earliest appearances, the traditional science fiction film robot has rarely developed beyond a male-defined function.

Anthropomorphisation, used to attenuate female cognitive function in the computer sub-genre, is the medium through which the robot sub-genre restricts the female to a series of sexual, and stereotypical roles which reflect a male concept of the female Other. By creating the robot as an idealised surrogate for the female, the

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[44] Coppélia-inspired films include: *The Doll Maker's Daughter* (Fitzhamon 1906), and *An Animated Doll* (unknown 1908). D. W. Griffith produced an eight minute version in 1911, entitled *The Inventor's Secret*, and the theme was taken-up again, in 1966, for the American/Spanish children's film, *Dr. Coppelius* (Kneeland).

male is able to direct her thoughts and actions to a level not even guaranteed by the symbolic order. The concept of the idealised woman, as mother, hostess, housewife, and lover was controversially explored in *The Stepford Wives* (Forbes 1974). The film follows the fortunes of two women who move to a small Connecticut community in which the men have systematically replaced their wives with more malleable robot replicas. The film, which was adversely criticised by feminists, was designed as an allegory for the pervasive influence of male-controlled media over the image of women. By offering a cynical look at the female-robot-as-male-fantasy, *The Stepford Wives* remains one of science fiction film's few progressive, or at least honest, statements about its own treatment of women.

Whilst Bryan Forbes avoided gratuitous reference to the sexual nature of the women in his film, script-writer William Goldman's, original vision reflects Germaine Greer's assertion that "there are stringent limits to the variations on the stereotype, for nothing must interfere with her function as sex object" (Greer 1972, 59). Stepford's 'perfect' housewives were originally conceived by Goldman, as ". . . *Playboy* models walking around the town in tight t-shirts and summer shorts . . ." (Brosnan 1991, 228). He reasoned that

> If you are so insanely desperate, so obsessed with women being nothing but sex objects that you are willing to spend the rest of your days humping a piece of plastic . . . well, that plastic better goddam well be in the form of Bo Derek. (Goldman 1983, quoted in Brosnan 1991, 228)

Goldman's comments were designed to underscore the tendency, highlighted by Laura Mulvey (1975), for male control to result in sexual objectification of the female image; this tendency is maintained by the 1982 film *Blade Runner* (Scott).

Following the Freudian Oedipal entanglements of *The Empire Strikes Back* (Kershner 1980), with its male protagonist forced to confront his evil side in the form of his cyborg father, Darth Vader, *Blade Runner* asks fundamental ontological questions through its replicant antagonist, Batty. Batty is the leader of six 'genetically engineered human constructs', who have returned to Earth to find their maker, Tyrell. Ostensibly Batty's quest is to extend the replicants' four year life-span, but ultimately the film places considerable symbolic importance on the significance of existence itself, and the encounter between 'father' and 'son'. Despite his considerable violence, Batty's ontological reasoning arguably positions him as the most 'human' of the film's characters; this humanity is displayed when he saves Deckard, the Blade Runner whose job it is to kill renegade replicants. Batty's action, and subsequent death, force Deckard to re-evaluate his own existence; this is given greater significance in the 1992 director's cut, in which Deckard himself is indicated as a replicant.

Similarities between human and replicant is one of the significant elements retained from Dick's novel; as Andrew Butler points out:

The technology in the conditional environment of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* has advanced to the point where there is little physical difference between humans and androids. But the question of emotions remains.

(Butler 1995, 158)

This question is further blurred by the film. However, in her examination of the links between speciesism and sexism in *Blade Runner*, Marleen Barr highlights a more basic difference between the male and the female replicants:

> The male replicants are menacing and strong while the females are provocative to the point of exaggeration. It is reasonable to expect a bleached blonde Pris-as-pleasure object to appear dressed in a short skirt revealing her garters. But, is it really necessary for Zhora to die while running through the city in panties, metallic bra, boots, and transparent raincoat? (Barr 1991, 30)

Barr's complaint is born of the fact that replicant Zhora, played by Joanna Cassidy, was produced as a combat model, whereas Pris, played by Darryl Hannah, is a pleasure-model replicant, designed for sex. Despite this role Zhora, is subjugated to a filmic function, along with Pris, as a sex object. The only female character given any opportunity to question her own existence is the replicant, Rachael, played by Sean Young; however, her personal examination never extends beyond tearful cognisance of her own social impotence, and she becomes the object of Deckard's possessive anxieties. In the source novel for the *Blade Runner*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Deckard's main source of possession-anxiety is the expensive replicant sheep, which he keeps as both a pet and a status symbol. This transference of the object of possession, between book and film, highlights Marleen Barr's central argument that *Blade Runner* has "speciesism as its subject and sexism as its unconscious component" (Barr 1991, 25):

Just as man has a perfect right to probe, puncture and irradiate the bodies of laboratory animals, so may he violate the bodies of women. Both women and animals are objects to be bought, seized, used and discarded. (Corea 1984, 47-48, quoted in Barr 1991, 29)

Blade Runner does little to develop the female characters much beyond their roles as strippers, prostitutes, and their functions as sexual lures, whereas man, through his surrogate, Batty, questions the highest agency to his existence. Through Batty, man is granted an audience with God; upon receiving an unfavourable answer, Batty kills his god. *Blade Runner*'s message to fantasy heroes, from Gilgamesh to Captain Kirk, who have searched for a meaning to existence is, "man does not need God", or to return briefly to Camille Paglia, "Genesis is rigid and unjust, but it gave man hope as a man" (Paglia 1990, 40). For women, there is no such hope; Adam conversed with God, and Eve remains subject to Adam's interpretation of the laws of God - the symbolic order. The female role in one of the most philosophical of robot films, therefore, remains rooted in male representation of the idealised woman[45]. Dick's title is essentially re-phrased by the film as, "Do *male* androids dream of electric sheep?", as female androids clearly do not[46].

Rachael's role and function as object rather than subject is reflected in her line to Deckard, "I'm not *in* the business - I *am* the business", a statement which invites a

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[45] See also Sheen 1991, esp. 152-60.

[46] See also Landon 1991.

return to Laura Mulvey's basic division of signification between the male subject and the female object in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*[47]. Whilst it has been noted that Mulvey's landmark essay has been criticised for positing too simplistic an apparatus for cinema spectatorship[48], her basic argument that narrative cinema is structured towards the presentation of the female as an object of the male scopophilic gaze, highlights the primary role of the female robot in the science fiction film. According to Christian Metz, the cinema empowers the viewer through the voyeuristic ability to see without being seen, what Metz, in an appropriation of Freud, calls "unauthorized scopophilia" (Metz 1982b, 63). The fact that science fiction cinema recreates the female from a male scopophilic perspective is emphasised not only by the robot sub-genre, but also by films which posit the idea that women in all-female societies would wear the type of short dress and revealing clothing evident in *Queen of Outer Space*. As early as 1924, *The Last Man on Earth* (Blystone), in which only one man survives a man-killing epidemic, dressed its women in transparent clothing. Fifty-six years later, in *Battle Beyond the Stars* (Corman 1980), the character of Saint Exmin represented the Valkyries, a race of warrior women, in outfits which left very little to the imagination. If seductive costumes in these films are not designed for the edification of the male spectator, then films involving all-female societies must be read as implicitly positing lesbianism, which in turn serves as a fantasy for the male spectator[49]. However, all-male societies are not considered for

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[47] See also Sheen 1991.

[48] See also Irigaray 1992, *The Poverty of Psychoanalysis*, for a discussion on the limitations of psychoanalysis itself.

[49] Andrea Dworkin cites 'essential' lesbianism as a male fantasy (1990, 129-33); Vernon Rosario highlights the acceptance of lesbianism for scopophilia in a society which would otherwise censure homosexuality (1997, esp. 108-09).

science fiction film; this is explained by Mulvey's assertion that the female is denied a scopophilic gaze because "according to the principles of the ruling ideology and the physical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" (Mulvey 1975, 12). Male homosexuality is unfathomable, and so 'unacceptable' to heterosexual patriarchy. The science fiction film uses its considerable creative tools to magnify the male voyeurism already supported by cinema in general.

Susan Thomas demonstrates how the film *Short Circuit* (Badham 1986) uses the relationship between a human female, Stephanie, played by Ally Sheedy, and a robot, No.5, to teach human values to a socially-inept male scientist. No.5 is anthropomorphised to the extent that he becomes a surrogate male child, whilst Stephanie teaches him in what is ostensibly a mother-child relationship. The male robot quickly becomes a surrogate for adolescent male development, as he learns about love and sex. The male scopophilic gaze is highlighted in a scene in which No.5 discovers Stephanie in her bath. The use of a first-person camera shot to indicate No.5's view helps to legitimise the power of the male look, by denying the presence of the camera. The ability of the scopophilic drive to empower the subject of the look consequently reinvests the subject with an enhanced identity. "It is easy to forget that every signifier itself needs to be a signified and that every signified, in turn, can but be a signifier . . ." (Metz 1982b, 31).

Such is the power of this exchange, that the creation and recognition of the object in traditional science fiction film often becomes the primary form of subject identification. This is exemplified in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Wise 1979). In

this film, the *Enterprise* is defending Earth against V'ger, a highly logical, computer-based entity[50]. In order to gain information, V'ger creates a mechanical probe in the form of the abducted lieutenant Ilia, which it sends to the *Enterprise*. The probe, revealed to be a perfect facsimile of Ilia, including "her brain-patterns and memories", is the creation of a entirely cognitive being; in fact, the threat posed by V'ger has been identified as a function of the entity's lack of emotion, imagination, and compassion. Despite this, the probe sent to the *Enterprise* is not wearing Ilia's Starfleet uniform; instead, V'ger has created for her a very short, leg-revealing, white jacket outfit, complete with high-heeled, silver shoes. This distortion of narrative logic highlights the importance of the scopophilic gaze to the establishment of male subjectivity in the science fiction film, and identifies the objectification of the female robot itself, through sexual connotation, as a further extension of the male self[51].

In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle: . . . she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire. (Mulvey 1975, 11)

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[50] "*V'ger*" refers to the Voyager (V[oya]ger) satellite which, in the film's central premise, has fulfilled its mission directive - to explore the universe collecting information - and, having gained consciousness, has returned to earth to find its creator.

[51] One recent non-film example of logic subjugated to scopophilia in what might nominally be regarded as science fiction is the series of *Sexy Robots and Pinups* pictures, created by airbrush artist Hajime Sorayama (Saddle Brook, NJ: Comic Images). These feature chromed female robots in positions reminiscent of pornographic and glamour magazines.

The over-zealous anthropomorphisation of the seductive robot, played by Brigitte Helm, in Fritz Lang's 1926 classic, *Metropolis*, is highlighted in Pauline Kael's description of the "robot vamp's bizarre, lewd wink" as one of the "oddities that defy analysis" (Kael 1970, 310)[52]. The themes explored in *Metropolis* were taken up again, in 1962, for the French film, *La Poupée* (Baratier), in which the 'doll' of the title prompts a social revolution, but not before she has performed an erotic stage act for an audience of cheering men.

Such is the acceptance of the implicit processes which underscore the use of the female robot, that her function within the filmic structure - to serve as a sexual Other to support the male spectator as a viewing Self - is subsumed into her narrative role. On-screen male characters are also empowered by the objectification of female characters. In cinema, this is exemplified by the widespread use of prostitutes. However, through its tendency to use the guise of the 'explicable novum' to magnify cinematic representation, the science fiction film is able make more explicit the male scopophilic-drive. The result is dialogue like, "When you get one of these fired up, it's like slamming an octopus", used to describe the Cherry 2000 series robot; it can

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[52] Kael begins her review with "This is one of the greatest insanities ever perpetrated in the world of film - . . ." (Kael 1970, 310). H. G. Wells, referring to the concept of machines enslaving humans, stated that it was "quite the silliest film" (Tookey 1994, 526), whilst Luis Buñuel made a distinction between the script and the visuals, writing that it is ". . . two films glued together by their bellies" (Hardy 1991, 74). Even Lang himself was unhappy with the ending. Thea von Harbou's status as Fritz Lang's wife has been suggested as the sole reason for her success as a screenwriter, despite her collaboration with other directors, and her important role in the German expressionist movement in the 1920s. Von Harbou and Lang were divorced in 1934, after von Harbou became the official screenwriter for the Nazi party.

also be seen in the employment of sex-slaves and 'pleasure models' in *Westworld*, a film in which only the male robots desire and seek liberation from servitude. Self-conscious exploitation of the theme of narrative objectification is clear even from the title of the 1965 film, *Dr. Goldfoot and the Bikini Machine* (Taurog), in which bikini-clad robots are created to seduce the world's playboys. In this film's more violent sequel, *Dr. Goldfoot and the Girl Bombs* (Bava 1966), members of NATO become the victims of robotic seduction.

Finally, the importance of the robot concept to the fulfilment of scopophilic pleasure is exemplified by the blatantly titled British light comedy, *The Perfect Woman* (Knowles 1949). Returning to the Coppélia theme, the plot involves a woman taking the place of a robot created by her scientist uncle. The film, "in which lingerie and underwear play an unusually prominent role" (Hardy 1991, 120), has become a fetish classic. John Brosnan and Peter Nicholls note that it displays a ". . . underwear fetishism and a sauciness quite close to the rim of what the period regarded as decent" (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 924). Furthermore, John Baxter notes that the male protagonists'". . . efforts with the corpse-like robot only involve them in a variety of obscene poses which, had the Principles been nude, would have graced any set of French postcards, . . .". It could be argued that the level of sexual activity in this film is acceptable because the female object is presented within the narrative as a robot, or what the male protagonists *think* is a robot. The narrative creation here becomes a clear indication of what the film creator would like to present or experience.

It has been shown that the re-construction of the female as serviceable Other places her in a position which supports the male *personne* - his Self within a structured social order. Whilst her function and her role in traditional science fiction film magnify the symbolic order already reinforced by the cinematic apparatus, her re-creation within the 'rules' of the genre de-emphasises her progenitive biological power, seen through the horror film as the source of male anxiety. The absence of female sexuality in the traditional science fiction film is recognised by Vivian Sobchack:

> Biological sexuality and women are often absent from science fiction film narratives, and when they do turn up they tend to be disaffiliated from each other, *stripped of their cultural significance as a semiotic relation*, carefully separated from each other, . . . (Sobchack 1995, 103)

Not only is the sexuality of the female absent from the film, but a brief glance at the genre's cast lists will demonstrate a lack of physical presence. Whilst the horror film demystifies (Mulvey 1975) and abjectifies (Creed 1994) the female, and finally destroys her as the Hegelian Other (Sampson 1993), the science fiction film links with the Hegelian Other only through the physical denial (destruction) of female. Having empowered the creator, science fiction film suggests that the best way to ensure that the man is not upstaged by the woman's inherent ability to create is to eliminate her altogether. Taking the powers of (filmic) creation and (narrative) procreation for himself, the male re-creates himself as the *moi* - the self-contained individual (Sampson 1993). Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous recognise this truism in the

phallocentric cultural, and social symbolic-systems - religion, family, language, and art:

> Either woman is passive or she does not exist. What is left of her is unthinkable, unthought. (Cixous and Clément 1986, 64)

Higher proportions of female roles tend to indicate narratives in which the female is necessary as a serviceable Other; hence all-female society films like *Queen of Outer Space* (Bernds 1958), in which the indispensability of the men is thrown into relief by the overt failure of the women. When the female is not required by the central narrative, she is either subsumed as a social stereotype - as exemplified by the stewardesses in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, or by the astronauts' wives in *Capricorn One* (Hyams 1977) or she is denied presence altogether.

In her examination of the woman, in *Tron* (Lisberger 1982), as a mediator between the man and his recalcitrant machine, Susan Thomas points out that Lora, played by Cindy Morgan, is indispensable to the man in his time of need, as a link between the world of the human and the world of the machine, but ". . . once the balance of power is restored Lora is rediscovered as a threat" (Thomas 1991, 111). At the end of *Tron*, the woman offers herself as a lover to the male protagonist; however, the man, empowered by choice, rejects the unsafe world of flesh and love, represented by the girlfriend who has recently proved indispensable to him, and returns to the safety of his machines. Thus the film ends ". . . with an endorsement of the impulse to remain the outsider" (Thomas 1991, 117), and equates with the notion

of the male as *moi*, through what Sibley identifies in socio-spatial organisational terms as "spatial purification" (Sibley 1995, 77). Developing his theories of spatial exclusion through the exclusion of knowledge, Sibley draws on the work of object relations theorist Evelyn Fox Keller, stating that:

> Because boys develop their sexual identity 'on an opposition to what is both experienced and defined as feminine', gender identity accentuates the processes of separation and autonomy. Keller [1983] recognises that the separation of self and other is reinforced by the dominant culture, which equates masculinity with autonomy and femininity with merging. (Sibley 1995, 159)

Thus, through its phallocentric organisation, the traditional science fiction film includes the female as part of the 'merging' *personne*, but excludes her from the 'autonomous' *moi*. This notion is reflected in the abundance of lone male scientists and astronauts in the genre, characters which, according to Dean Conrad, links science fiction with the Western through the work of Gustav Jung. Referring specifically to the character of Ben Kenobi in *Star Wars*, Conrad asserts that:

> In Western, capitalist, societies much is made of the success of the extrovert personality, as identified by psychologist philosopher Gustav Jung, a major influence on Lucas; whereas the introvert is regarded as less successful in the competitive world of 'dog-eat-dog'. However, in many Eastern societies, the extrovert is seen as rash and foolhardy, whereas the contemplative introvert is respected for the ability to show patience and inner strength. Ironically, the

American Western film genre relies heavily upon the powerful reflective
introvert as a mould for many of its heroes: the man with no name rides alone,
trusting no one, quietly confident in his skills. . . . The character of Ben Kenobi
owes much to this tradition as he too 'rides' alone, and has an inner strength
and determination. (Conrad 1996, 8)

The traditional science fiction film celebrates and facilitates the male choice between
personne and *moi*, along with his control of both modes of representation.

At the end of *Cherry 2000*, Sam and his female guide, Johnson, have located a
Cherry 2000 series robot, into which Sam inserts the personality chip. However, Sam
and Johnson have become mutually attracted, giving Sam the choice between human
and robot. After asking Cherry to get out of the aeroplane to fetch him a cola, a
request with which she unquestioningly complies, Sam leaves with Johnson. An
attempt is made to vindicate Sam by showing Cherry left in ignorant bliss, but this
ending only reinforces the misused and misplaced power of the male protagonist.
Further vindication of Sam is offered through the fact that Cherry is merely a robot,
but Sam's constant defence of his 'love' for Cherry throughout the film had given
assurance that, in his mind at least, Cherry was signified as human. In a parallel with
the processes inherent to the science fiction film itself, Sam supports Cherry as a
creation of his imagination when she is of use to him, but ultimately discards her when
she has outlasted her function. Examining the notion of discardable beings, or
'metahuman kipple', in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and *Blade Runner*,
Marleen Barr describes these serviceable Others as a functions of discrimination, ". . .

which can be understood as one group's power to define and control another group"
(Barr 1991, 25).

In this chapter, the traditional science fiction film has been shown to magnify
processes which celebrate the male Self, and to relegate the female to an extension of
that Self. Thus, male control of the industry reduces the employment of
women-as-personalities to the deployment of women-as-tools. In the words of
Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment, "men act; women are acted upon. This
is patriarchy" (Gamman and Marshment 1994, 1). In order to reveal why the genre,
with its unparalleled potential to posit new environments - social, political, scientific,
and so forth - has not broken free of male-centred determinism, it is necessary to
examine the cinematic structures within which science fiction film must operate.

CHAPTER 2

IDEOLOGY:
THE COMMERCIAL SCIENCE FICTION FILM

1982 witnessed the release of *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott), a film which has become, despite a poor initial following, one of the most influential, and critically discussed, science fiction films to date. It was directed by one of the industry's most visionary artists - Ridley Scott, who had directed *Alien* three years previously. Despite the complexity of Scott's vision of the future, with its numerous inter-textual and intra-textual layers which make *Blade Runner* "one of the most compulsively detailed motion pictures ever made" (Sammon 1996, *xiv*), the final decision on editing remained with the film's financial backers. That this option lay with the production company was not unusual; however, their decision to exercise their right led to the inclusion of two of the film's most contentious elements: the voice-over narrative, and the happy ending. The former was added because the film had been deemed unintelligible without it; the latter represented an attempt to create a 'feel-good' factor after the original ending was considered to be too down-beat. In *Future noir: The making of 'Blade Runner'*, Paul Sammon asserts that neither of these elements was forced upon the director, and that they had each been considered earlier, at various stages in the evolution of the film. However, the fact remains that the voice-over and the happy ending were added after the film received negative responses at the 'sneak previews', held to gauge audience reaction. The artistic values of one of the industry's most holistically visionary directors were subjugated to commercial

expediency[1]. The subsequent *Blade Runner Director's Cut*, released in 1992, contains neither the voice-over nor the happy-ending. George Lucas, having experienced similar difficulties during the making of *THX 1138* (1970), has likened this type of unwelcome intervention by a production company to ". . . taking one of his child's hands and cutting off a finger" (Conrad 1996, 3).

Chapter 2 will demonstrate how the science fiction genre's magnification of commercial film structures demands the perpetuation of the gender positioning revealed in chapter 1. Science fiction's representation of the female has contributed to the success of the genre, and in turn has been adopted and exploited by the genre it has helped to create. In order to examine this apparent paradox, it is necessary initially to review aspects of the development of the commercial cinema, a medium which not only allows, but as will become evident, encourages, the exploitation of the female image.

Art in the cinema has always been subjugated to the drive for financial gain. The result has been the production of an industry which has a tendency to exploit the image, artistic or otherwise, in the pursuit of mass audience gratification. In recent years, it is the science fiction film which has proved most profitable for film-makers, resulting in an further exploitation of the elements of this success. Following her premise that society's rules are based upon natural laws of behaviour, Paglia argues

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[1] For a more detailed discussion of *Blade Runner*'s voice-over and happy ending, see Sammon 1996, 286-308.

that art, including cinematic art, is a reflection of natural urges:

> Arrow, eye, gun, cinema: the blazing lightbeam of the movie projector is our
> modern path of Apollonian transcendence. Cinema is the culmination of the
> obsessive, mechanistic male driven western culture. (Paglia 1992, 31)

To accept Paglia's premise is to accept that nothing can change; that the
immutable laws of nature will always find a vent through art, whatever attempts are
made to counter this. However, Christian Metz, in his seminal work on
psychoanalysis and the cinema, *The Imaginary Signifier* (Metz 1982a), emphasises
that cinema is "peculiar to a historical epoch (that of capitalism) and a state of
society, so called industrial civilisation" (Metz 1982b, 3); it is important for any study
of the cinema to recognise the huge influence that money has in the decision-making
processes. Wholesale commercial cinema is driven by dispassionate conceptions of
audience desire, based upon previous success. Whilst perpetuation of historical (if not
natural) imperatives are clearly apparent in the cinematic product, the tendency for
science fiction film to magnify gender positioning is merely an augmentation of a
process inherent to film itself. Science fiction film simply applies the phenomenon to
an unusual degree. As a result of a post-postmodern society, in which desire is
sanctioned by self-reference, Paglia's work (as feminist) contradicts its basic premise.
Many cinematic images reflect centuries of western culture, but they are, like the
additions to *Blade Runner*, driven by commercial logic; natural urges in commercial
cinema are filtered through accountants and producers with statistics and targets. The
stories chosen by the industry are indicative of, and inextricably linked with, the
industry: cinema is extremely good at telling certain stories, and so chooses those

stories which have proved successful in the past.

The potential success of the cinema, according to Metz, lies in its ability to fulfil the desire for scopophilic pleasure. Laura Mulvey's development of this premise to highlight the primacy of the male gaze was noted in chapter 1; however, the cinema's manner of achieving pleasure creates an apparent paradox. It possesses an ability, unparalleled in the arts, to recreate a believable illusion of reality, but at the same time it allows the spectator the voyeuristic pleasure of viewing its object from a safe distance, through acknowledgement that the object is not real. In order for this to work, the spectator must both accept and deny that the image created by the cinema is an illusion. The cinematic object is perceived as both real and unreal (Metz 1982b, 45). This perception forms the basis of Metz's discussion of similarities and differences between the dreamer and the cinema spectator (Metz 1982a, 101-28); similarities which underscore Metz's theoretical paradox are highlighted by cinema practitioner, Charles Chaplin:

> We see the dead in our dreams and accept them as living, knowing at the same time they are dead. And although this dream mind is without reason, has it not its own credibility? (Chaplin 1979, 287)

The cinema spectator is able, and willing, to suspend the disbelief generated by the fact that the cinematic object is not real, in order to intensify the pleasure gained from experiencing the cinematic product. The power of the photographic image is, to Giuliana Bruno, of central importance to the replicants of *Blade Runner*. In her essay, 'Ramble City: Postmodernism and "Blade Runner"', she suggests that, despite

possessing artificial memories of a fictitious past, the replicant, Rachael, attaches more credence to the tangible photograph of her mother: "that photograph represents the trace of an origin and thus a personal identity, the proof of having existed and therefore of having the right to exist" (Bruno 1995, 191). Like the cinema spectator, Rachael chooses to suppress the fact that the image might be an artificial construct. For this reason the empathetic spectator is less likely to condemn Rachael's seeming resistance to existential enquiry.

Terry Ramsaye suggests that knowledge is the product of wishing; that early humans experienced a pleasure, and wished for this pleasure to be repeated. By realising the wish, humans have developed and, to Ramsaye, cinema is the ultimate expression of a human desire for self-representation (Ramsaye 1964, *lxx*). Spectators return to the cinema because they have experienced pleasure, and wish to experience this pleasure again. The success of commercial cinema, in turn, rests upon its ability to please its spectators, and by pleasing them, to woo them into returning with their money. Commercial accountability contributed more than any other factor to the swift early development of the film industry: through their programmes, early filmmakers strove to give the public what it wanted - prize-fights, dancing girls, and lavish spectacle. This led to a development in technology as entrepreneurs strove to offer higher levels of originality and quality, using portable cameras, multi-reel features, better quality film-stock, electric lighting, and a host of innovations designed to increase the efficiency of the commercial cinematic machine[2].

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[2] There is a great deal of excellent material on innovations of early technical cinema. Further reading on this subject the might begin with: Ramsaye 1964, for an early (1926), if sometimes biased, perspective; Brownlow n.d., esp. 5-40, for a human perspective; Brownlow and Kobal 1979, for a clear overview; Christie 1995, for a link

The financial cost of the development of original technology and material, coupled with the innumerable instances of litigation during the first decade of the life of the film industry, required the investment of large sums of money, and ensured a number of struggles for control of the industry (Ramsaye 1964). This financial outlay led industry exponents at all levels to ensure the best possible return on their investment, which in turn relied upon the recognition and application of factors which maintained the desire to go the cinema. From 1911, the movement of the American industry to the west-coast to escape legal entanglements in New York, and to utilise the California sunshine, paved the way for a commercial industry which was to influence the rest of the world. The economically successful formulae quickly became polarised into narrative genres. Despite the commercial need for original material, development turned to stagnation due to the greater commercial need for the industry to self-perpetuate.

Erica Sheen highlights the importance of the self-sustaining cinema industry to the reconstruction of industry after the economic devastation of World War II:

In the USA and in Great Britain reconstruction of the economy required the stimulus of new technology, particularly domestic technology with its broad market and self-creating demand. (Sheen 1991, 140)

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footnote continued from previous page

    with fantasy film; and Konigsberg 1993, for technical reference.

By becoming remarkably adept at producing what the consumer wants to see, cinema has relieved the consumer of control of the product: The result, according to Metz, is that "'wanting to go to the cinema' is a kind of reflection shaped by the film industry . . ." (Metz 1982b, 8). Despite the movie industry's clear ability to please the spectator, and the spectator's apparent willingness to be pleased, the importance placed by production companies on close control of the type of product being offered is vindicated by Metz's assertion that displeasure with the cinematic product can occur if the spectator's personal values are dissonant with those perceived to be held by the film:

> In short, if a subject is to 'like' a film, the detail of the diegesis must sufficiently please his conscious and unconscious phantasies to permit him a certain instinctual satisfaction, and this satisfaction must stay within certain limits, must not pass the point at which anxiety and rejection would be mobilized. In other words, the spectator's defences . . . must be integrated with the very content of the film . . . in such a way that the subject can avoid activating his own defences, which would inevitably be translated into antipathy for the film. (Metz 1982d, 111)

Metz goes on to suggest that the environment created by the cinema - a dark space, with physical restraints placed upon the spectator - force the spectator into a 'sub-motor, hyper-perceptive' state which encourages the use of the imagination (Metz 1982b, 66); this in turn magnifies cinema's use of the Lacanian mirror stage of

development[3]. Whilst a film which does not display adequate potential for phantasy[4] will not fire the subconscious imagination of the spectator, there is a danger that an unduly large presence of this element within the film will provoke a 'rejection' by the conscious processes, and the film will cause 'unpleasure'[5], due to the spectator's inability to 'believe' in the diegesis. Ally Acker highlights this axiom in her illumination of the career of silent film pioneer, Alice Guy Blaché: "what she was reacting to was an unspoken rule of the industry - if you are too radical, or too convicted to your approach, you're gonna alienate your box office, and put your career in jeopardy" (Acker 1991, 3)

In psychoanalytical terms, the willingness to believe in the cinematic object is represented by the unconscious id; the imagination of the id is, however, fettered by the strong socially structured sense of order governed by the conscious super-ego. If the super-ego, with its sense of right and wrong, is 'offended' by the contents of the imagination (through the film), the pleasure principle is not fulfilled, and the film has failed. Therefore the cinematic 'paradox' cited on page 80 describes the balance between the credulousness of the imaginative id and the incredulousness of the

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[3] See chapter 1, page 57.

[4] "Phantasy" is used here, and hereafter in this thesis, to describe a general "imaginative activity which underlies all thought and feeling" (Rycroft 1995, 131), rather than a more specific "fanciful mental image" (COED), suggested by 'fantasy'.

[5] "Unpleasure" is used by Metz's translators to describe any cinematic experience which does not result in pleasure (Metz 1982a). It is specific and cannot easily be replaced by the word 'displeasure', which suggests a negativity not present in the concept of 'unpleasure'. If the success of cinema is measured in terms of the amount of pleasure it gives, then 'unpleasure' is passive, referring to a degree of failure measured by absence of pleasure; this is not necessarily actively negative.

censoring super-ego; the resultant film is identified as a reflection of the external ego. Hereinafter, this will be referred to as the id/super-ego transaction.

Despite the realisation that they are at the cinema, and that the object presented is not real, spectators, in order to increase the potential for viewing pleasure, will suppress their incredulity, 'willingly suspending disbelief' as long as other aspects of their expectations are met. The result of these internal processes is that spectators are then more likely to accept certain positions (posited by the film) which break the conventions of their concept of a symbolic order. In order to ensure self-perpetuation, commercial film, must ensure that the spectator is "maintained in his credulousness by the perfect organisation of the machinery" (Metz 1982b, 72). The spectators' expectations must therefore be reflected through the film's precepts, its *mise en scène*, its genre, and even its methods of production. Metz suggests this as a primary reason for audiences returning to the cinemas:

> Is it, then, a question of 'ideology'? In other words, the audiences have the same ideology as the films that are provided for them, they fill the cinemas and that is how the machine keeps turning. Of course. But it is also a question of desire, and hence of symbolic positioning. (Metz 1982c, 91)

From its beginnings as an essentially naturalistic medium, the cinema developed the use of editing, artificial sets, and actors. Film-makers began to manufacture only commercially necessary aspects of 'reality', and naturalism in the cinema was superseded by realism - a "selection and distillation of the detailed observation of

everyday life" (Cooper and Mackay 1995, 228). The 'distillation' of the image is occasioned by the film-maker's choice of the environment which will best support the narrative - an environment supported not just by location, but by characters, ideology, and accepted symbolic ordering. However, the life-blood of narrative film is its more maverick element, fiction, which is the result of phantasy governed by the id processes. In order for the audience to accept the level of phantasy suggested by the fictional element of a narrative film, there is a tendency to further invoke the medium's potential for distillation, and to present a further-distilled version of a widely-received ideology.

Narrative film, therefore, uses a distilled reflection of the 'normal' in order to counterbalance its 'abnormal' fictional element.

However, the concept of 'normality' is clearly governed by the patriarchal nature of both the film industry and society as a whole. This nature is reflected by Ally Acker in *Reel Women*. Whilst Acker celebrates the impact women had on the early film industry, she points out that as factors in the success of the cinema became apparent and entrenched, the drive for experimentation which had propelled the earliest entrepreneurs (female and male) became secondary to the drive for money, and women started to be squeezed out of the industry:

So as film began to be a big business and only secondarily an art form, women were shown the door. Labor unions made it quite clear that women

were not to be solicited as members. (Acker 1991, *xxiv*)[6]

It must be remembered, of course, that film-industry executives are not psychoanalysts: they do not choose or reject a film because they think that 'the ego of the spectator will be unable to accept certain principles attractive to his id, due to the fact that they contravene his super-ego's concept of a symbolic order'. The commercial film industry re-creates past successes, themselves a reflection of the expectations of a wider audience, in order to self-perpetuate. These expectations can be experimented with successfully, but, given the financial investment required to make a film, producers are loath to take chances. It was this type of unwillingness to accept new concepts and forms which prompted the major studios' antipathy for sound film in the 1920s[7]. Emphasis upon financial accountability, and the lack of experimentation adds to the stagnation of the industry, resulting in further distillation of accepted values through the preponderance of the stereotype, and the perpetuation of the 'Hollywood myths', myths which have lived off-screen, as well as on.

Whilst Lizzie Francke (1994), Anne Ross Muir (1994), and Ally Acker (1991), amongst others, have highlighted the varying influence that women have had on the creation of the filmic product throughout the history of the cinema, Acker points out that film history has tended to de-emphasise the role of women (Acker 1991, *xviii-xix*). The importance of emphasising these seemingly external considerations is

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[6] See also Muir 1994, esp. 144-45.

[7] Warner Brothers's final decision to produce what is widely regarded as the first sound feature, *The Jazz Singer* (Crosland 1927), represented a final grab for survival, rather than a calculated investment .

highlighted in Annette Kuhn's warning that "debates which limit themselves to the form/content division end, ironically perhaps, by being overtly formalist in that they do not allow consideration of the conditions surrounding the production and reception of texts" (Kuhn 1994, 14). Whilst she emphasises the effect that women-writers have had on the Hollywood film industry, in *Script girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood*, Lizzie Francke (1994) uses a quotation from a Hollywood literary agent to highlight the importance of gender conventions in the designation of work:

When we get a call [from a producer] for a writer, they'll say, 'Who do you have who can write an action adventure piece?' If I suggest a woman, well, they laugh at me. There are certain genres where a woman won't even be considered. By that same token, they'll call and say, 'What woman writers do you have for a piece on so-and-so'. (Bettye McCartt, quoted in Francke 1994, 103)

The limitations categorisation off-screen were, thus, reflective of those on-screen:

From the moment film codified itself into an industry that deified profit over art, Hollywood films sculpted, molded, and glorified the female image according to male desire. (Acker 1991, *xx*)

The largely male-cultivated need for film audiences to have their fiction presented in recognisable, and acceptable, packaging is clearly reflected in the success and importance of the genre film. So prevalent is this need, that unpleasure in a film

may also occur if the film's *mise en scène* is not consonant with what the spectator expects from the genre itself. Moreover, a spectator's decision to see, or not to see, a film can be based entirely upon preference for genre. Some reasons for this are isolated by Kuhn:

> Genre films can be understood in terms of expectations: expectations on the part of audiences that films will provide the security of generic conventions whilst promising the pleasure, and limiting the risk, of the new, the unexpected: a kind of contract between the film industry and the cinema audiences, perhaps. (Kuhn 1995, 2).

Cinema has always been a safe means of escape from the 'real' world, by providing "a *loophole* opening on to something slightly more crazy, slightly less approved than what one does the rest of the time" (Metz 1982b, 66). From the sensationalist one minute 'flickers' exhibiting dancing girls and prize fights to CGI-based science fiction blockbusters, the cinema's success has rested upon credible escapism.

> Films of the fantastic or the supernatural, the most unrealistic films, are very often films which obey another logic, a genre logic (like the realism film itself), a set of ground rules which have been laid down at the outset (genres are institutions) and within which they are perfectly coherent. (Metz 1982d, 120)

Whilst the importance of fulfilling expectation is clear, film-makers can make the mistake of relying entirely upon the generic milieu to ensure the success of a

movie. In an attempt to duplicate the financial success of *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977), Disney Studios produced the visually impressive, yet imaginatively weak *The Black Hole* (Nelson 1979). Disney's producers had failed to recognise that the genre, important as it is, acts, like the underlying ideology, to counterbalance the imaginative processes of the fictional element of a film; devoid of an adequate fictional element, *The Black Hole* "is interesting, but otherwise the movie fails on every level" (Brosnan 1991, 209). Genre cannot stand alone. Genre's capacity to lend economic buoyancy to a movie has, however, led to cycles in the ascendancy of specific genre films, as producers have evaluated comparative popularities and potentials. It is no accident that these cycles follow specific social events or the release of financially prosperous films. In 1919 power restrictions imposed on the German film industry helped to produce the hugely influential expressionist classic, *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (Wiene). In order to save electricity, the required dramatic 'lighting effects' were painted onto the scenery, creating the, now classic, expressionistic images. The romantic 'women's pictures' of the 1930's were designed to exploit a commonly held perception that it was women who decided which films would be supported at the box office (Barris 1975, esp.13). The end of the second world war in America was marked by a disillusionment with the American way of life which generated 'social-consciousness' or 'problem' pictures, which "enjoyed a tremendous vogue in the late forties (in 1947, for example, nearly one third of all films produced in Hollywood had a 'problem' content of some sort) . . ." (Cook 1990, 464). More recently, the success of *Dances with Wolves* (Costner 1990) revitalised the western, a genre which had all but died[8]. Like the western, and genre film in general, the science fiction film has

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[8] See Hardy 1995.

experienced its own waves of success and failure. Its recent rise to the top of the box office charts has been largely due to a development in computer generated images (CGI), which has boosted the wave formed in the wake of *Star Wars* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick 1968). Earlier peaks in the genre's popularity were more representative of social trends: the super-heroes of the 1940s reflected a need for national pride and confidence, and the tremendous resurgence of science fiction film in the 1950s echoed a world increase in UFO 'sightings' and interest in the 'space-race', as well as a more specifically American fear of communist invasion.

As well as helping to maintain a 'normal' foundation which counterbalances the imaginative fictional element of a film, most popular genres, including film noir, the western, the world war two film, the musical, and science fiction, are permeated with a patriarchal ideology, which actually serves to reinforce the role of the underlying generic structure; this further ensures the distillation of a perceived reality. However, some genres have 'ground rules' which stretch credulity further than others. Many of these rules are not established at the outset, but have been created over time by successive influential films, borrowing from older media:

Since its birth at the end of the nineteenth century the cinema has, as it were, been snapped up by Western, Aristotelean tradition of the fictional and representational arts, of *diegesis* and *mimesis*, for which its spectators were prepared - prepared in spirit, but also instinctually - by their experience of the novel, of theatre, of figurative painting . . . (Metz 1982b, 39)

The overriding importance of maintaining the values of ideology, medium, and genre with which the audience can empathise, relies upon the cinema's ability to deceive. Cinema is a deception. The capture of a photographic image is itself a deception, relying upon the careful exposure of light-sensitive emulsions. The very essence of film as the intermittent projection of still photographic images to feign movement, is a deception, relying upon the human capacity for persistence of vision. The size of the screen image in relation to the frame is a deception. These deceptions alone were enough to woo the earliest audiences, but, as desire outstripped the magic, there grew a need for further deception. Editing, the contrived sequential arrangement of the images on the film-strip is a deception. Artificial lamps were developed and employed to enhance the light of the sun. Stunt doubles were employed to perform feats too dangerous or difficult for the 'stars' of the pictures. Producers and film-makers began to develop their deceptions to suggest things which were not there, rather than merely to augment things which were. Fake snow, rain, and wind were produced to create artificial weather conditions on cue. Sets were built to suggest locations too expensive or too inaccessible to film. Later, in order to satiate further need for sensational images, film-makers, like Ferdinand Zecca with his 'flying bicycle'[9], created effects, some of which were developed from earlier still photography, to present images of things which not only were not there in the studio, but did not actually exist anywhere.

In this respect, fantasy films, including science fiction, were a natural

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[9] *A la Conquête de l'Air* (Zecca 1901) represents the first known use of a split-screen effect (Christie 1994, 26-27).

development of the film industry. Special effects, both optical and mechanical, have since been an essential part of the industry. Because it "offers the special effects technician one of the best showcases for his talents" (Brosnan 1976, 184), science fiction has inevitably remained at the cutting edge of special effects technology[10]. The creation and subsequent development of cinematic effects is not due to the insatiable curiosity of the image makers; it is more a product of the insatiable, and financially exploitable, desires of the image hunters, with their "ravenous appetite for eye-popping special effects" (Nichols 1994, 236). However, as audiences have become more sophisticated in their knowledge of the film-making process, they have become less willing to accept as 'real' the images produced by cinema, and especially those of science fiction cinema. Science fiction films of former decades often look dated, inadequate, and sometimes ridiculous, when compared now to the latest films, or even their contemporaries in other genres[11]. Film constantly needs to improve its ability to deceive the spectator, or rather, it must improve its ability to allow the

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[10] Eugen Schüfftan perfected his in-camera composite image process on Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926), a film which impressed audiences with its incredible model effects, if not its screenplay. Science fiction films have since been adorned with lavish cityscape models, from the hugely expensive creation built for *Just Imagine* (Butler 1930), through the ill-fated *Things to Come* (Menzies 1936), to the influential *Blade Runner*. The major redeeming feature of the 1976 film, *Logan's Run* (Anderson), was its Oscar-winning model effects. By 1990, almost half of the Academy Awards garnered for science fiction films had been for special visual effects, a figure which does not include art direction, costumes, cinematography, make-up, sound, and other technical departments which could arguably be included under special effects (for further details on science fiction Oscars, see Hardy 1991, 467-69). For further reading on the history of special effects, see Brosnan 1976; for further reading on recent developments, including computer generated images, see Smith 1991; and Vaz and Duigan 1996.

[11] Having said this, modern computer graphics have been criticised for their 'artificiality'; for this reason, a model of The White House, rather than CGI, was used for the celebrated explosion sequence in *Independence Day* (Emmerich 1996). Clearly the technology has some way to go before spectators are unable to distinguish between the artificial image and the 'real' image.

spectator to deceive himself. Nowhere is this ability more pronounced than in the science fiction film, which is, by necessity, one of the more deceptive of filmic genres. As Michael Stern points out in *Making Culture into Nature*, science fiction (film and television) has actively developed its role ". . . as the designated cultural showplace for special effects" (Stern 1980, 66).

The high cost of cutting-edge, special-effects technology has inevitably had a huge impact on the cost of producing science fiction films[12]. Whilst escalating costs in the 1950s were offset by forcing science fiction into most countries' equivalent of the B-movie slot - where audience expectation was lower - budgets were still high, and ever-frugal producers were conscious of the need to guarantee a return on their investments. Because of this, the genre occupies the commercial end of an essentially commercial medium, and so must doubly observe the 'rules' of self-perpetuation and the generation of wealth to which the commercial narrative film is subject. Nichelle Nichols, who played *Star Trek*'s Lieutenant Uhura, highlights the importance of financial success to the continuation of the film industry, and specifically to the *Star Trek* movie series:

Another Mission? The *Enterprise*, disassembled for storage and space docked in some Los Angeles warehouse [after *Star Trek II*], would await its

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[12] Metropolis was UFA's most expensive film ever, at a cost of 7 million marks, and the model alone for *Just Imagine* cost a reputed $250,000 in 1930. In 1992, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*, required 7,965 frames of state-of-the-art three-dimensional digital imaging (Vaz & Duignan 1996, 201), and notched up a record-breaking $100 million budget (Andrews 1995, 214) (although much of this reportedly constituted Arnold Schwarzenegger's salary).

orders, emanating not from Starfleet Command but the box office. (Nichols 1994, 252)

Science fiction film also occupies the imaginative end of an essentially imaginative medium, and so, like all fiction film, it must also address 'human' issues. It must use its technology to create for the spectator a believable situation in a believable environment, whilst taking care not to alienate its audience by being dissonant with its values. In a criticism of the first of the *Star Trek* films, Nichelle Nichols, states that:

The elaborate, expensive - but ultimately disappointing - special effects *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* [Wise, 1979] served up would prove its undoing, at least critically. You could say that in crafting the script to showcase the high-tech production, Paramount and the writers inadvertently unleashed their own V'Ger, which overshadowed the critical 'carbon unit' [human] interactions and dynamics that had always been *Star Trek*'s soul. (Nichols 1994, 237)

Whilst it has been noted that maintaining a balance between realism and fiction is essential to the success of any film, the problem for science fiction is magnified by its inherent need to stimulate the imaginations of its audience. It is handicapped by its proximity to the dream state. For a film to work as well as a dream on the sub-consciousness, it would have to contain all the subjective imagery which crowds the dream state, in which "the spectator who is also the *auteur* [and] has every reason to be content . . . since one is never so well served as by oneself" (Metz 1982d, 113). However, the subjective imagery which works for one spectator will not work in the

same way for another. Films must find a way of objectifying the imagery, and broadening the *signified*, so that it has meaning to more than one spectator; the successful film increases the potential for subjectivity, by making the *signifier* more objective. The dream is a creation of the id - made by one mind for one mind, the commercial film, in an attempt to offend as few people as possible (and so make as much money as possible), is content to restrict itself to the social mores which govern the ego. Therefore, the unwieldy id, hankering for phantasy, is held in check by a deep rooted social imagery, equating loosely to both the Lacanian symbolic order, and the Freudian super-ego. What results parallels Jung's series of 'archetypes', or universal images, inherent to the human 'collective unconscious' - that which an individual inherits from his forebears. These ". . . archetypes [are] innate releasing mechanisms (or predispositions) to form coherent images in aroused emotional states" (Young-Eisendrath and Dawson 1997, 320)[13], which then become the building blocks of individual personality. It is these universal images, including the 'Great Mother' and the 'Terrible Mother', which are so useful to the film-maker who is trying to evoke audience empathy. What is unclear is whether the inherited archetypes of the collective unconscious are a result of social conditioning, or whether the social ordering of the ego is a result of these archetypes. In a sense, the resolution to this chicken-and-egg debate is unimportant; the fact remains that the greater number of spectators needed to ensure the financial success of a science fiction movie leads inevitably to a greater 'watering-down' of the subjective imagery with objective imagery. This need is highlighted by Phil Hardy's description of *Battle Beyond the Stars* (Murakami 1980) as ". . . a testament to [Roger] Corman's growing

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[13] See Jung 1959b, 28; see also Jacobi 1959, 31-73.

conservatism as a producer as his budget grew larger" (Hardy 1991, 358n)[14].

Ironically then, science fiction film has much to lose by being radical, especially revenue. It handles this seemingly intractable struggle between imaginative necessity and commercial demand like all narrative film, by seeking to counterbalance the unfamiliar (id) with the familiar (super-ego). Whilst the fictional element of the narrative film has been regarded as 'abnormal' in relation to the experiences of the spectator, the fictional element of the science fiction film would have to be regarded as a magnification of this: it is a 'hyper-abnormal' element. Whereas narrative film requires the application of an accepted distillation of reality in order for the audience to accept the 'abnormal' element inherent in the fiction, the science fiction film, with its 'hyper-abnormal' fictional element, must further reflect the spectator's ideology. This it does by magnifying this distillation of a received set of values. In 'The Marrying Kind: Working-Class Courtship and Marriage in 1950s Hollywood', Judith Smith applauds Hollywood's post-war foray into working-class realism as a reaction to what she terms its "ordinary presentation of homogenous classlessness . . .":

Filmed in black and white with mostly unknown actors on location where working-class people lived and worked, these productions claimed an aura of "authenticity" beyond what moviegoers expected from mainstream Hollywood. (Smith 1994, 227)

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[14] Roger Corman and New World Pictures, producers of *Battle Beyond the Stars*, had been renowned for innovative, if not always of the best quality, film productions, including: *Not of This Earth* (Corman 1956b), *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (Corman 1956a), *War of the Satellites* (Corman 1958), *The Wasp Woman* (Corman 1960), *X - The Man With X-Ray Eyes* (Corman 1963), *Death Race 2000* (Bartel 1975).

Science fiction film, however, relies upon Hollywood's perception of a "homogenous classlessness" as a buffer against its magnified fictional imaginings.

I Married a Monster from Outer Space (Fowler 1958) opens with a man and a woman kissing in a car. This scene cuts to a bar where a group of men is seated, one of them is getting married the next day, and the rest are sharing his last evening as a bachelor. On his way home, the husband-to-be is abducted by aliens, who replace him with a facsimile. The alien marries the man's unwitting fiancée, and the story continues. In a regular narrative film, the abduction of the man might be viewed subconsciously as an 'abnormal' event - it could happen, but is statistically unlikely. It would not, however, be rejected because the background ideology and *mise en scène* - a distillation of heterosexual, middle-class, small-town America, Judith Smith's "ordinary presentation of homogenous classlessness" - are acceptable to the audience. However, the fact that the man is abducted by aliens lends a further dimension, and the event can no longer be rationalised within the parameters of an acceptable 'abnormal'. It has become a 'super-abnormal' event. In order for the audience to accept this more incredible premise, the acceptable distillation of the ideology is also magnified. A more detailed analysis of the original scene reveals that the bar is also populated by women, who are making themselves available to the drinking men. Their limited success prompts the following lines:

1st Woman   Those guys aren't even giving us a hard look.

2nd Woman   Maybe they're married.

Whilst the women attempt to woo them; the men are extolling the virtues of being

single:

1st Man   Give him a drink, he's about to get married.

2nd Man   *I'm* already married. Give *me* a drink!

Later, while kissing her fiancé, a daughter is reminded by her mother that she is not

married, *yet*. The film is strewn with further references to a patriarchal ideology (not

least, the fact that the alien, who is assumed to be sleeping with the woman, is, in

effect, 'legally' married to her, and so is conforming to the 'human' censorship code),

which melds with the distilled heterosexual, middle-class values, to reduce the de-

centring effect of the 'super-abnormal' event. It is further arguable that the heavy-

handed use of an idealised middle-America in this film was designed as a contrast to

communism, for which the aliens serve as an allegory[15].

However, the application of these ideological values depends upon the

configuration of the 'hyper-abnormal' element as it is divided between the 'super-

abnormal' event and the 'extra-abnormal' *mise en scène*. The use of a magnified

social framework is common to films not permeated with the paranoia indicative of

many of the American science fiction films of the 1950s: in *Solaris* (Tarkovsky 1971)

images of a seemingly idyllic world suffused with a homely glow enable Kris to

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[15] See Biskind 1984, esp. 123-144.

recover from traumas experienced on board the Solaris space station. The images of home help to ground Kris's character in a tangible reality throughout his following ordeal on the station - in which Kris sees disturbing apparitions themselves counterbalanced by an adherence to male fantasy - and it is a modified version of this saccharine world which the film returns to for its final images of Kris's reconciliation with his father in the apparent safety of the family garden. Similarly, the British film, *Things to Come* (Menzies 1936), opens with a familiar image of a complacent upper-middle-class British family, enjoying dinner, and shunning thoughts of war which will soon devastate the planet. In the 1982 blockbuster, *E.T. - The Extra Terrestrial* (Steven Spielberg), images of the underlying ideology are seemingly not presented before the occurrence of the 'super-abnormal' event - the arrival of the alien. In fact the aliens appear to have landed before the beginning of the film. However, much is implicit in the way the alien visitors are being tracked through the woods. The sounds of tension and determination in the searchers, along with flashing lights and barking dogs, saturate the opening of the film with a sense of hostility at once recognisable to the audience. The audience shares part of the fear being experienced by the alien, and so accepts him, despite his obvious difference. This depiction of an oppressive adult-dominated society is reinforced throughout the film using both narrative techniques (including the arrival of the authorities to remove the alien), and cinematic techniques (including the use of child-level camera angles).

In *Screening Space*, Vivian Sobchack agrees that science fiction film cannot succeed on imagination alone. She goes on to suggest that the audience will accept the alien image only if it is made familiar in some way:

There are three primary ways in which the wonder of alien visual surfaces in SF films can be subverted, bringing us back to a comfortable familiarity with what we see. The first way is through the repetition of the alien image so that it becomes familiar . . . The second method is the humanization of the alien image so that we understand it rather than wonder at it. The third is a deemphasis of the alien image by the camera in order to remove the viewer's attention from it. (Sobchack 1988, 104)

However, Sobchack's statement appears to assume that the visually unfamiliar aspects of a film need to be counterbalanced by familiarisation techniques which act purely on the visual. If this is true, then it follows that specifically aural techniques are needed to counterbalance aurally unfamiliar elements, further techniques are needed to counterbalance ideological unfamiliarity, and so forth. However, the mobilisation of cathexis - the energy attached to a particular mental structure - through the primary psychoanalytical processes allows for *all* unfamiliar elements to be counterbalanced by the sum of *all* familiar elements. This is acknowledged by Sobchack in another work, 'The Virginity of Astronauts', when she recognises the repression of biological sexuality in the science fiction film. She argues that it is possible for an instinct to be broken up in order for it to be repressed in parts, rather than a whole. Both 'condensation' - "The process by which two (or more) images combine (or can be combined) to form a composite image . . ." (Rycroft 1995, 25), and 'displacement' - "The process by which energy . . . is transferred from one mental image to another" (Rycroft 1995, 39) - combine to allow the spectator to cope emotionally with what is being presented by all aspects of the narrative. Through the

condensation, ". . . one representation comes to stand for many" (Sobchack 1995, 111); and displacement allows for "the shifting of impulses from one pathway to another" (Sobchack 1995, 112). If this Freudian notion of the redistribution of *cathexis in order to facilitate repression* is accepted, then it follows that the spectator can use the positive energy created by an acceptable concept, or image, to counteract the negative effect of one which is deemed unacceptable. All that need be balanced by *the narrative is the quantity of cathexis on each side of this equation.*

What results is a basic structure which informs the genre - a kind of push-pull *configuration in which what is repressed will return in disguise to become* overtly articulated. This basic structure, however, is also able to accommodate historical and cultural change - for what will be repressed . . . will alter with *the times and will also emerge in a disguise which responds to historical* concerns. (Sobchack 1995, 113)

Therefore, whatever the level of 'abnormality' engendered by the science fiction film, a familiar underlying ideology should counterbalance an unfamiliar image or an unfamiliar sound.

Familiarising the alien is just one of the techniques available to fulfil a wider need to counteract the 'hyper-abnormal' element of the science fiction film. *In E.T.*, the application of Sobchack's second method of reducing the impact of the alien - its humanisation - works in tandem with the presentation of a received social framework to counterbalance the effect of the science fiction premise. In this film the familiarity

of the environment helps to counterbalance the 'super-abnormal' event. However, many science fiction films cannot rely completely upon the counter-balancing effect of the milieu because they are in fact set in unfamiliar locations. Films set on earth in the future, in space, or on other planets rely more heavily upon the familiar trappings of genre to counterbalance their 'extra-abnormal' *mises en scène*. In order to rationalise the complex messages resulting from this positioning and re-positioning of its textual elements, science fiction film utilises its constant element - recourse to underlying patriarchy, to which female representation is essential. By supporting both high and low budget films an underlying ideology lends an inherent realism to the picture - a constant 'normal' to counterbalance the 'hyper-abnormal'.

The importance of the id/super-ego transaction to science fiction film, and its influence upon the position of the female in the narrative structure can be demonstrated by the 1956 film described by John Brosnan as "possibly the best of all the space-travel pictures made during the 1950s . . ." (Brosnan 1976, 198). *Forbidden Planet* (Wilcox) represented an experiment by MGM studios: success in recouping its $1.9 million budget, would have paved the way for numerous large-scale Technicolor epic science fiction films. Although it was not a complete failure, *Forbidden Planet* only managed to earn $1 million. The huge cost of production, and, the consequential commercial failure of the film, was due largely to the fact that *Forbidden Planet* was, according to John Brosnan, "the first sf movie to be set entirely in the distant future" (Brosnan 1991, 58). More significant, perhaps, is the fact that none of the film is set on earth, so the spectator is given no point of visual reference. The 'super-abnormal' concepts are enhanced by the 'extra-abnormal' *mise*

en scène to create a 'hyper-abnormal' environment which assaults and eventually alienates the senses of the spectator.

Forbidden Planet opens with the pre-credit arrival of a flying saucer swathed in pink light. The saucer is revealed by a narrator to be United Planets Cruiser C57-D, a craft from earth. The date is sometime in the late twenty-third century, and the spaceship is on route to the planet Altair-IV to investigate the disappearance of an expedition ship, *The Bellerophon*, twenty years previously. Through this expository technique the audience is introduced to a number of alien concepts. Not only is this technological wonder from Earth, but its designation suggests that it is one of many such vehicles. Earth itself is now part of a united federation of planets, and has been involved in the exploration and colonisation of other worlds. Against this 'super-abnormal' backdrop are placed the 'extra-abnormal' visuals which further enhance the unfamiliarity of the environment. As the opening sequence unfolds, Cruiser C57-D flies in front of a corona resulting from the eclipse of the Altair-system sun by a planet. Whilst this sequence testifies to the imaginations of the film-makers, the pre space-age audience could not fail to be awe-stricken by the fantastic spectacle of the aberrant environment. The visual accomplishment of this scene remained unparalleled for over a decade, until Stanley Kubrick awed his spectators with the extraordinary panoramas and amazingly precognitive moon-scapes of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, another MGM production.

The alien visuals of *Forbidden Planet* continue inside the spaceship with the presentation of a large, Technicolor environment, appointed with sophisticated machinery and efficient crewmen. Shortly after their arrival in the Altair-system, the

crew of C57-D execute a speed-change procedure, designed to introduce the cinema

audience to the concept of light-speed travel, needed for twenty-third century inter-

stellar exploration. The technique allows the saucer to decelerate from light-speed

without the injurious effects of inertia on the human crew. Taking their "DC"

stations, prescient of the *Star Trek*[16] transporter pads, the crew members are engulfed

in luminous blue lights for a few seconds before emerging somewhat dazed, but ready

to enter Altair-IV's atmosphere.

Filmed on an MGM sound stage, the surface of the planet Altair, "which

features a green sky, pink sand, and two moons" (Pallot et al. 1994, 269), appears

quietly alien. Enhancing the wondrous nature of the environment is a robot, sent to

meet the arriving humans and to escort them to the home of Dr. Morbius, the sole

survivor of *The Bellerophon*. Whilst the concept of robots would not have been

entirely foreign to a 1956 audience, it is made clear that this robot represents a

technology beyond that of the humans: it displays immense strength, and a huge

cognitive capacity, exemplified by his fluency in 187 languages, "along with dialects

and sub-tongues". Dr. Morbius, a philologist, making the robot a clear extension of

his cognitive Self, reveals further depth to the robot's conceptualisation as he

demonstrates its adherence to the three classic laws of robotics, as proposed by Isaac

Asimov[17]. Whilst the concept of the robot adds to the 'extra-abnormal' nature of the

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[16] The original television show was first aired in the United States, on NBC, between September 1966 and August 1969.

[17] Asimov suggested that all robots should be programmed with three basic laws: 1. A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; 2. A robot must obey orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the first law; 3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the first or second law.

mise en scène, probably the most wondrous aspect of the film is the sequence in which Morbius reveals to his visitors the technological legacy of the original inhabitants of Altair-IV - the Krell. Before taking the men to the underground caverns containing the Krell machinery, Morbius warns them, and by extension, the spectator, to prepare "for a new scale of physical scientific values". It is clear that the technology is supposed to be beyond human comprehension. What follows is a feast of special effects camera and model work representing the vast underground caverns housing machinery built by the Krell. The human figures are shown as tiny dots on a bridge traversing the giant shaft at one of the seventy-eight hundred levels which comprise this incredible structure. Despite having resonances of classic films like *Metropolis* and *Things to Come*, these images represented a definite shift away from recent earth-bound science fiction offerings, like *Gojira No Gyakushu* (Oda 1955), *The Quatermass Xperiment* (Guest 1955), and *Attack of the Crab Monsters*. Whilst the films *Cesta do Praveku* (Zeman 1955), and *This Island Earth* (Newman 1955) had both offered alien environments, the former, set in a prehistoric world below the surface of the earth, was aimed primarily at children, and the latter was hamstrung by the film's muddled construction, and over-emphasis upon pulp fiction.

Added to the awesome statistics associated with the Krell machinery is probably the most difficult concept for the audience to comprehend - the 'alien' monster itself, which is actually a personification of Morbius's id; whilst this concept is clearly explained in the film, and is supported by a clever screenplay (including the robot's refusal to attack the creature, knowing that it is a extension of Morbius) the creature, inspired by Freudian psychoanalysis, is not expected by the audience, and so

serves as one of the elements which is potentially more difficult to accept.

Whilst critics are divided over most other aspects of the film, it is agreed that the film is impressive for its "astounding technical prowess" (Pallot et al. 1994, 269). Through the use of mechanical and photographic visual effects, including the opening corona-shot, expert model work, and intelligent concepts, *Forbidden Planet* makes a formidable attempt to present a credible 'hyper-abnormal' environment "elaborate beyond the dreams of sf fans . . ." (Baxter 1970, 112). The quality of the illusion produced for John Baxter, ". . . the ultimate recreation of the future . . . . Reality was not permitted to intrude on this totally manufactured, totally believable world" (Baxter 1970, 112-13)[18]. Ironically, these good quality effects were essential for the *Forbidden Planet* to deliver its parable successfully - a warning about the dangers of excessive reliance upon technology. These visual elements are punctuated by strange haunting "electronic tonalities"[19], provided by Louis and Bebe Barron to enhance the impact of the alien *mise en scène*. However, Brosnan underlines the dangers of challenging the boundaries of audience expectation in commercial film:

It's also possible that, back in 1956, sf of the *Forbidden Planet* kind (i.e., real sf) simply had yet to catch on with the general public. Science fiction meant something entirely different to mainstream cinema audiences (i.e., guys in rubber monster suits and invading UFOs) and only the relatively small group

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[18] Post-*Star Trek* viewers will be more familiar with the studio environments which were to influence the production of Gene Roddenberry's cult television series.

[19] This term is taken from the credits listing following the film.

of hard-core sf readers fully appreciated a movie like *Forbidden Planet*. It was, to use a much-worn cliché, ahead of its time. (Brosnan 1991, 59)

Forbidden Planet's writers, producer, and director were not unaware of the fact that the film, whilst drawing upon some science fiction film traditions, and show-casing ground-breaking special effects, represented a departure for the genre. In an attempt to counteract the effects of this, and to promote box office success, they ensured that the structure, characters, and ideology of the film were firmly rooted in the expectations of the audience.

The story itself acts as a strong familiarising force for the film: despite containing many unfamiliar concepts, the plot develops along traditional lines, and is concerned primarily with human needs and failings. *This Island Earth*, with which *Forbidden Planet* is often compared, deals with alien abduction to a world involved in inter-planetary conflict, in which humans battle with alien creatures; whereas, the central conceit of *Forbidden Planet* is human investigation of a planet, where the travellers encounter the fears and jealousies of another human being. *Forbidden Planet*, then, offers a futuristic metaphor for universal experiences. The success of this universal element comes as no surprise when it is discovered that the film was based upon co-writer Irving Block's favourite play, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. This led John Brosnan to make the witty, but pertinent, observation that "not many sf films can claim that Shakespeare did the original treatment . . ." (Brosnan 1991, 54). Although few members of the cinema audience will be aware of the intricacies of Shakespeare's play, and the film veers markedly from the plot at various points, there

is enough left of the work of the bard to ensure that some of his ability to satisfy the needs and the desires of the mass audience, especially through the use of characters and comedy, is invested in the film[20].

Important though the quality of the special effects, and the undoubted influence of Shakespeare, are, the clearest indication of *Forbidden Planet*'s attempts to solicit mass appeal can be seen through its magnification of the principles of patriarchal ideology. This is best exemplified by the gender positioning which permeates the film through the portrayal of character.

The space-travellers are exclusively male, and conform to many of the tenets laid down in numerous literary and filmic works. The morally robust, square-jawed Commander Adams leads what he describes as "eighteen competitively-selected super-perfect physical specimens, with an average age of twenty four point six". His best buddy, the doctor (another notion later borrowed for *Star Trek*), suffers because of his inquiring mind, but remains loyal to his last breath. Cookie, the cook with a heart of gold, injects the plot with comedy through his quest for alcohol, and Lieutenant Quinn is the miracle-working engineer, whose influence over the creation of *Star Trek*'s Scotty is exemplified by a brief exchange with his captain:

Adams   So, it's impossible: how long will it take?

Quinn   Well, if I don't stop for breakfast -

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[20] See also Morseberger 1961.

The loyalty and camaraderie of the visitors to Altair-IV are contrasted by the reclusive nature of Dr. Morbius, the archetypal genius, who prefers the company of his books, his robot, and his daughter to that of other men. Whilst patriarchal images of the male are divided among the twenty male characters, in *Forbidden Planet* elements of the traditional female are incorporated solely into one female character, Altaira, played by twenty-six year old Anne Francis. Like Shakespeare's Miranda, Altaira is a virgin, stranded with her father in a remote location. Until the arrival of United Planets Cruiser C57-D, Altaira had never set eyes upon a man other than her father:

> *Altaira*   I've always wanted to meet a young man, and now three at once. You're lovely doctor. Of course you end ones are unbelievable.

Through dialogue like this, it becomes obvious that Altaira fulfils the male-fantasy role of sexual innocent; in this case a double-virgin, a flower for the taking both sexually and psychologically. Altaira, carefully revealed as being nineteen to avoid any suggestion of paedophilia, inevitably becomes the centre of attention for the crew of Cruiser C57-D; attention turns to competition, which is quickly won by Commander Adams by virtue of rank. In one sequence a member of the crew, Jerry Farmer, is teaching Altaira, how to kiss. Despite her lack of comprehension or emotion, she is convinced by Jerry that this is good for her, and that she should feel something. Her innocence is highlighted by her request: "Just once more. Do you mind?". Altaira's role as the complicit virgin - a further extension of the male sexual fantasy - is further

emphasised in her question to Commander Adams: "Why don't you kiss me like everybody else does?". Adams, angry at Altara's provocative nature, charges himself with the girl's moral guardianship; hampered by his own prudery, he tries to explain rules of social modesty. Adams, however, is no more immune to Altaira's 'charms' than the rest of his men, and the couple kiss; this time Altaira feels emotion, and thus exerts his authority over his men and the woman.

The surest way of asserting that something is mine is to prevent others from using it. And nothing seems to a man to be more desirable than what has never belonged to any other human being: then the conquest seems like a unique and absolute event. Virgin lands have always fascinated explorers . . . An object that men have already used has become an instrument; cut from its natural ties, it loses its most profound properties . . . A virgin body has the freshness of secret springs, the morning sheen of an unopened flower, the orient lustre of a pearl on which the sun has never shone. (de Beauvoir 1988, 186)

Exploration of the forbidden woman parallels exploration of the forbidden planet[21].

Altaira's loss of innocence results in the loss of her influence over the wild animals of the planet. This gives the Commander an opportunity to take the role of protector, killing Altaira's once-benign tiger, as it leaps to attack her. Her initial role had fulfilled the universal category, proposed by Joseph Campbell, of the virgin-

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[21] For a discussion patriarchal, and especially Christian, views on the power of virginity and their effect on early vernacular literature, see Bloch 1991, 93-112.

mother-nature (Campbell 1993), with power to control the animals, including her tiger, the fawns, the birds, and, of course, the men. She is in this respect the personification of mother-earth, at once innocent and dangerous. This aspect of Altaira's character, specially written into the script by Irving Block, who had a strong interest in mythology, serves as a particularly moralistic reference to the traditional importance of purity in the woman, that the power of the woman resides in her chastity; a concept which has bound women for millennia, and according to Simone de Beauvoir, is deeply rooted in the male psyche:

> The virgin would seem to represent the most consummate form of the feminine mystery; she is therefore its most disturbing and at the same time its most fascinating aspect. . . .
>
> Certain peoples imagine that there is a serpent in the vagina which would bite the husband just as the hymen is broken; some ascribe frightful powers to virginal blood, related to menstrual blood and likewise capable of ruining the man's vigour. Through such imagery is expressed the idea that the feminine principle has more strength, is more menacing, when it is intact. (de Beauvoir 1988, 184)

Altaira's role as the sexual focal point for the plot, and much of the dialogue, is enhanced by visual sexual imagery. Her petite body, clad in very short dresses, and her nymph-like actions constitute a very effective means to satiate the scopophilic drive of the male spectator. Producers were conscious of this need when they cast Francis, "a successful model and cover-girl" and "The Little Queen of Soap Opera" (Katz 1994, 484), for the role. The importance of Altaira's appearance is emphasised

by her numerous different costumes. Whilst the men appear to have only two uniform designs, Altaira has at least seven dresses, all short, except for one which is designed as a response to one of Commander Adams's early moral lectures:

Adams   You can't run around like that in front of men, especially a space-wolf like Farmer. So for Pete's sake, go home and put on something that'll . . . Anything!

The dress that Adams is reacting against is so short that, when she is sitting, Anne Francis has to keep her forearm across her lap to cover her underwear.

The essence of free spirit and sexual innocence in Altaira's character are emphasised by her lack of embarrassment when Adams chances upon her swimming naked. In a brief exchange, it becomes clear that Adams is the more disturbed by this:

Altaira   [*swimming*] Come on in.

Adams   I didn't bring my bathing suit.

Altaira   What's a bathing suit?

Adams   [*turning away*] "Oh, ho, murder!

Altaira's innocuous innocence has become innocent provocation, which continues when she gets out of the water: she interprets Adams's unwillingness to look at her as a reaction to her abhorrent body. Putting on the long dress she had made after Adams's earlier moralising, she informs him that he will not have to look at her again. Adams's effect on Altaira is further highlighted at the end of the film, when Altaira is

seen wearing shoes for the first time. Throughout the film her bare feet have suggested a free and wild nature, but after the death of her father, Altaira is taken further under the wing of her new moral guardian. Her move towards social conditioning is symbolised by the wearing of shoes, as she watches the destruction of Altair-IV from the spaceship taking her to earth. By allowing Adams to temper Altaira's natural drives as they manifest themselves, the film is able to present pleasurable images of the female sexual object, whilst maintaining an aura of moral and social acceptability. Furthermore, underscoring Altaira's character throughout the film is the notion of the dumb blonde: she is more interested in cooking and making dresses than she is in following the work of her father. Danny Peary recognises this as one of *Forbidden Planet*'s many plot inconsistencies, when he asks the question, "how can Morbius be so scholarly and have such an ignorant (and lazy) daughter?" (Danny Peary, quoted in Tookey 1994, 261). In its own review of the film, *The Virgin Film Guide* describes Anne Francis as "failing entirely to transcend her ill-conceived, camp classic role". As well as being somewhat uncharitable, these critics appear to have missed the point entirely. Anne Francis was not *supposed* to transcend the role: had she done this, she would have denied the patriarchal sexual, social, and mythological traditions inherent in her 'classic' character, which are needed to act as a foil for the twenty male characters, to appease the male spectator, and to balance ideologically the recondite nature of the science fiction being presented. A, perhaps more realistic, presentation of the drab but accomplished daughter of a genius, using her time on a remote planet to discover a new form of matter, and showing no interest in the trappings of femininity, would not be acceptable to the spectator of mainstream commercial cinema of the mid-1950s. Thus, the film clearly indicates an

adherence to patriarchal ideology at the expense of logical progression.

Through her development, under the guardianship of Adams, Altaira symbolises the role of the id and the ego in science fiction film in general. Beginning as a free spirit, she represents the unfettered imagination of the id, necessary for the success of narrative film. As she learns the rules of civilised society, she takes on the mantle of the super-ego, ". . . modified by the direct influence of the external world" (Rycroft 1995, 43). Thus the audience is presented with a patriarchal representation of the female ego as sexual complicity (id), tempered by male patriarchal integrity (super-ego). Altaira changes from a dangerously fecund extension to mother-nature to a re-created serviceable extension to the male Self - here in the form of Adams's rather puritanical ideology.

Altaira's sexuality is further echoed in the posters for *Forbidden Planet*, whose images of Robby the Robot and Altaira together do not appear in the film; in an attempt to woo the potential audience, the robot is featured on posters for the film carrying a scantily clad, buxom, unconscious female. The need for this juxtaposition of the fantasy and the fantastic informs the huge number of film posters displaying nubile women being threatened or carried by alien creatures or robots; these in turn underscore the perceived sexual threat of the male alien[22]. A rare departure from this is the poster for the 1960 film, *The Wasp Woman* (Roger Corman), which presents a semi-clad man, struggling in the grasp of a giant wasp with the head of a beautiful

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[22] See chapter 1, page 42.

woman. However, as Bruce Lanier Wright indicates, this image is also somewhat *misleading*:

> One trusts it will come as no surprise to learn that this Roger Corman film has absolutely nothing to do with the arresting image shown here.
> (Wright 1993, 154)

As with the films themselves, there is a need for posters to offer a certain degree of imagination tempered by acceptable ideology. However, the need for posters to perform this task more efficiently, in order to draw audiences into the cinema, leads directly to a further magnification of both the alien and the acceptable. Science Fiction film posters, therefore, amplify science fiction film's magnification of narrative film's tendency to select and distil images and concepts needed to appease both the id and the super-ego of the spectator.

Forbidden Planet demonstrates that the necessary balance between the familiar and the unfamiliar in science fiction film is a product of the interaction between the underlying ideology, and both the characters (alien or human; female or male) and milieu in which they function, each of which is influenced by its relationship with the genre.

The future-Earth conceived for *Mad Max* (Miller 1979) is one of inflated patriarchy, where bad men in fast cars rule the roads, women are indiscriminately raped and killed, and heroes seek vengeance through wild-west style *retributive*

actions. Much of the success of *Mad Max* relies upon its adherence to the western formula; audiences recognise the autonomous *moi* of the lone hero, identified in chapter 1. By melding an augmentation of patriarchal values with an 'extra-abnormal', yet western-based, *mise en scène*, *Mad Max* clearly presents an environment which is both recognised and accepted by the cinema audience. The success of this particular formula ensured its employment in other films[23], many of which failed to reflect the fact that *Mad Max* is also driven by a strong narrative. The strength of its western connections and the absence of any strong 'super-abnormal' event make it easy for *Mad Max*'s superficial science fiction elements to be accepted by the audience. In fact the technology presented in the film suggests a closer association with the road movies made popular by *Easy Rider* (Hopper 1969), ten years earlier.

However, the configuration of the familiar and the unfamiliar is not immutable. In her distinction between high budget science fiction, "a movement which creates and then subdues the extraordinary", and low budget science fiction, "a visual movement which surrenders to and then destroys the ordinary" (Sobchack 1988, 137), Vivian Sobchack shows that the location of the film can be both alien and familiar, depending upon its use; the milieu can be 'normal' or 'extra-abnormal', although many science fiction films rely upon the presentation of a recognisable environment at some point.

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[23] *Mad Max* derivatives include: *The Ravagers* (Compton 1979); *Battletruck* (Cockliss 1982); *Metalstorm: The Destruction of Jared-Syn* (Band, 1983); *I Nuovi Barbari* (Castellari 1983); *Desert Warrior* (Santiago 1985).

Sobchack highlights the importance of the desert to the 1950s American science fiction film for "cheap locations which were 'neutral' enough to admit the introduction of the extraordinary and fantastic into what was, after all, a real and familiar world . . ." (Sobchack 1988, 112). However, she goes on to show that the complacency of this familiarity is often shattered by the ease with which film-makers "show the 'other-ness' of the world in which we live" and "tell us that the Earth is not a part of us, it does not even recognise us" (Sobchack 1989, 113). This apparent contradiction is developed in Anne Cranny-Francis's seeming conflict within her own theory in *Feminist Futures*. Initially she suggests that science fiction environments can engender a degree of "estrangement":

> In films as diverse as *The Day the Earth Stood Still* . . . , *2001: A Space Odyssey* . . . , *Silent Running* . . . and *Star Wars* . . . , high technology produces a fictional setting very different in appearance from the spectator's own world. (Cranny-Francis 1995, 221)

Later, she suggests that the same environment can appear "conservative":

> In the film *Star Wars*, for example, the characters Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Princess Leia enact a patriarchal, bourgeois (liberal humanist), white supremacist narrative in a setting uncannily similar to today's USA. (Cranny-Francis 1995, 223)

Sobchack suggests a further distinction through her assertion that "it is, after

all, logical that the low-budget films, deprived of their special effects and consequently grand flamboyant images, would try to locate their 'science fiction-ness' in the spoken word" (Sobchack 1988, 158). She shows that the reductive nature of the dialogue in a film like *2001: A Space Odyssey* serves to dehumanise human beings, whereas the words "Gort, Klaatu barada nicto", spoken by the alien visitor in *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise 1951), have a "rhythmic and grammatical structure" which humanise the character with their "extraordinarily imaginative resonance" (Sobchack 1988, 146). Other elements of science fiction film are positioned relative to their use within certain films: "The spaceship need not be treated either positively or negatively. In much SF film, it is seen and used neutrally" (Sobchack 1988, 73 [fig. note]).

The flexibility of these aspects of science fiction film, with their potential to be both familiar and unfamiliar, is reflected in the capacity for the 'hyper-abnormal' element to be represented by various combinations of 'super-abnormal' event and 'extra-abnormal' *mise en scène*. Many of the Japanese *Kaiju Eiga* - monster films - detail the arrival of a 'super-abnormal' creature in a 'normal' environment. *Star Wars* uses an 'extra-abnormal' environment to tell its very traditional tale, and in *Dr. Who and the Daleks* (Flemyng 1965) the *TARDIS*[24] allows for 'super-abnormal' travel to the 'extra-abnormal' planet of Skaro.

The shifting signification of the environment - which, after all will depend upon

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[24] An acronym for (T)ime (A)nd (R)elative (D)imensions (I)n (S)pace.

the individual spectator - further emphasises the need for the audience to be maintained in its credulity by a secure underlying ideology.

Despite the seemingly daunting power of hegemonic ideology, genre familiarity has allowed recent science fiction films to be more self-referential, early science fiction films were not able to rely upon inherent genre recognition to imbue them with credibility. As Sobchack observes: "there is no *consistent* cluster of meanings provoked by the image of a spaceship . . . there is little accumulation of 'emblematic power' carried by the object from movie to movie" (Sobchack 1988, 68) This resulted in very few pre-1950s films concerned with travel through space. In order for the credibility of the craft in *Die Frau im Mond* (1929) to be strong enough to carry the narrative, director Fritz Lang employed rocket scientist Hermann Oberth as a scientific advisor. Oberth later filled the same role on Irving Pichel's *Destination Moon* (1950), a film famed for its 'scientific accuracy'. The continued popularity of the science fiction genre, coupled with a plausibility borrowed from the real-life race for space, allowed science fiction film-makers to draw more upon the audience expectation through genre recognition. By 1968, even before the moon-landing, *2001: A Space Odyssey* vividly suggested that space travel might soon become a 'normal activity'. For *Star Wars*, less than a decade later, George Lucas was relying upon the audience's familiarity with space travel to establish the experiences of his characters within a 'normal' framework: "'I suppose it's space fantasy,' Lucas said at the time. 'But we don't explain anything. We take the hardware for granted . . .'" (Champlin 1992, 45). Science fiction has since become so secure as a genre that film-makers feel safe enough to make, often witty, inter-textual references, although the producers of *The Terminator* (Cameron, 1984) allowed their own tribute to become

plagiarism:

> Like most genre films made post *Star Wars*, it alludes to many other works.
> However, this film went a ·bit ·further than most. The producers were
> successfully sued by cult fantasy author Harlan Ellison.
>
> (Pallot et al. 1994, 874)

This development in the success of the science fiction genre has presented film-makers with an increasingly profitable seam of readily mineable material, which, most importantly, is acceptable to the audience. Science fiction trappings, which were once considered strange, and in need of some counter-balancing influence, have become accepted as part of the expected fabric of the genre. The first of Vivian Sobchack's three primary methods of subverting the "wonder of the alien visual surfaces" is expanded to encompass all aspects of the genre, across all films of that genre. Hence, the ". . . repetition of the alien image so that it becomes familiar" (Sobchack 1988, 104) equates to the familiarisation of concepts through duplication. Genre rules, galvanised by previous successes, have become the 'normal' against which deviations are charted as 'abnormal'. This in turn fuels the processes of self-perpetuation and stagnation which attends science fiction cinema. Stagnation leads, inevitably, to the over-valuation, and therefore the inflation, of those ideas which have proven themselves in the commercial cinema. The more money a concept has made, the less likely production companies are to discard it quickly; testimony to this is provided by numerous misguided film-sequels.

In the face of the unknown, science fiction film has embraced safe social structures, based upon universal rites of passage in an attempt to enhance the security of the spectator, and to counteract the initial threat of the unfamiliar, which in turn helps to ensure commercial success.

The American SF film, no matter how abstract individual images may be, finally grounds itself in comprehensibility, in its necessary commerciality. (Sobchack 1988, 151)

The seeming intransigence of this filmic structure can be demonstrated through science fiction's relationship with other genres. As genres tend to be identified by their use of distinct icons and concepts, it would follow that it is not always possible to meld two genres in one film without denuding the effect of one or both contributors[25]. Clearly it is science fiction's relationship with genres of sexual exploitation which has most bearing on this work, but before examining these it will be useful to look at science fiction's relationship with comedy and the musical.

As with science fiction, the musical owes much of its success to the preservation of a social order, especially in the classics of the 1930s: escapism offered by the music and dance was counteracted by a strong sense of moral integrity and patriarchal ideology. The musical science fiction, or the science fiction musical, has little chance of succeeding in commercial cinema because each genre relies upon the

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[25] See Schatz 1981; and Reed 1989, esp. 3-12.

normalising effect of an ideology in order to allow for the acceptance of the incredible. One genre cannot act as a backdrop for the other, because the imaginative aspect of each, needed to pleasure the audience, is inherently unacceptable. The musical and the science fiction film are linked by their adherence to Christian Metz's pleasure principle, which states that "the practice of the cinema is only possible through the perceptual passions: the desire to see . . . [and] . . . the desire to hear" (Metz 1982b, 58); these are isolated as the thematic elements discussed by Vivian Sobchack in *Screening Space* (1988). The musical's domination of the soundtrack leaves no room for the sounds needed by science fiction to emphasise its own visual images. Likewise, *science fiction's* visual monopoly supplants the images needed to reinforce the aural exuberance of the musical. Furthermore, the realism essential to the science fiction film in order for it to be believed, is betrayed by the musical's theatrical roots. Although it is dangerous to draw too many parallels between theatre and film, it is perhaps interesting to note here that a production of a musical version of *Metropolis* (directed by Joan Savoury-Walker), with a set costing over a £1 million, opened at London's Piccadilly Theatre in 1989, and closed a little over six months later (26th February to 2nd September), due to critical lambasting and audience apathy. This theatrical failure reflected the experiences of musical science fiction in the cinema. The failure of *Just Imagine* (Butler 1930), and *It's Great to be Alive* (Werker 1933), produced to capitalise on the advent of sound and the success of the science fiction serial, "did much to turn the major Hollywood studios against science fiction" (Hardy 1991, 83). The latter failed even to offer an 'acceptable' underlying ideology, by positing an almost totally female society; the men of the world have been killed by the viral infection, "masculinitis". It is described by Phil

Hardy as ". . . one of the strangest Science Fiction movies ever made" (Hardy 1991, 89). Other musical outings have included the British, *Elstree Calling* (Hitchcock, Charlot, Hulbert and Murray 1930), a series of revue sketches, including one on the future of television, the "lacklustre" (Hardy 1991, 108) *The Sky Bandits* (Staub 1940), the last in the 'Renfrew of the Mounties' series, featuring the 'singing mountie', and a "fluffy musical version" (Hardy 1991, 120) of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Garnett, 1949).

Science fiction's marriage with comedy has been more productive than that with the musical. Well over a hundred science fiction comedies have been produced between since 1925, including the hugely popular *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (Herek, 1989), which continues the zany humour offered in the British comedy, *Time Bandits* (Gilliam, 1981). Whilst intentionally comic films have not generally been considered for this thesis, and have produced their fair share of critical failures, the popularity of the combination justifies a brief glance. As comedy takes, by its nature, a self-conscious look at its host-genre, its agenda is linked to the subject of its scrutiny. Having few of its own icons of generic recognition, it relies for its success upon an audience understanding of the host-genre. This relationship is developed in the 1988 film, *Earth Girls Are Easy* (Temple 1988), in which much of the comedy rests upon a recognition of the role of the female in science fiction as a fatuous love interest. The need for comedy to assimilate the trappings of a successful genre is further emphasised by the fact that the highest concentrations of these films have been in the 1960s, following the initial explosion of the science fiction film, and in the 1980s, following the resurgence of the genre in the wake of *Star Wars*. In fact the success of the Mel Brooks film, *Spaceballs* (1987) rested almost entirely on audience

knowledge of the *Star Wars* trilogy.[26]

Science fiction, with its tendency to magnify patriarchal fantasy, through characters like Altaira, in *Forbidden Planet*, has always promoted the exploitation of the female image. In 1907, George Méliès used dancers from the Corps de Ballet du Chatelet as semi-clad sea nymphs in his fantasy re-working of Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Méliès 1907), a progenitor of the science fiction film. Whilst Méliès's use of women might be considered as innocuous, preying, as it does, on its spectators' expectations of mythological archetypes, many science fiction films project images of women which are primarily sexual, culminating in examples of pornography. However, sexual exploitation and pornography are fundamentally different, in that they develop from separate sources[27]. Sexual exploitation in science fiction film naturally develops through the host-genre's roots as a patriarchal genre within a patriarchal medium reflecting patriarchal values. An exploitative ideology manifests itself on screen as a reaction to the strangeness of the fiction. Pornography, however, has an agenda of its own; recognisable as a discrete genre, it employs its own generic code, including subject matter, object fetishism, camera angles, and form, to satiate the eroto-scopophilic needs of its predominantly male audience[28]. Whilst science fiction, with its patriarchal nature, lends itself to the presentation of pornography, it remains merely a backdrop to a more seductive collection of scopophilic impulses. The poor quality of films, produced through pornography's

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[26] For an interesting link between comedy and science fiction film, see Dervin 1980.

[27] See Rich 1987, esp.38.

[28] See Dworkin 1990; and Russell 1993b.

bastardisation of science fiction, coupled with its ostracism, has resulted in very few

mainstream examples of this marriage, the most notable being *Flesh Gordon*

(Benveniste 1974), a hard-core film, softened for general release, *Zeta One* (Cort

1969), a product of a feminist backlash, and the Greek film, *Lovers Beyond Time*

(Panyotatos 1990), an essay on multiple orgasms caused by time-travel. Other

successful examples have tended to dilute the effect of the pornography with comedy:

in 1964, Russ Meyer, the 'King of the Nudies', produced *Kiss Me Quick!* with its

comic references to Kubrick's *Doctor Strangelove* (1964) itself a science fiction

comedy.

Clearly sexual exploitation and pornography are related. The difficulty of

drawing a dividing line is demonstrated by the 1976 French film *Spermula* (Matton).

Described by Phil Hardy as "a superior piece of eroticism in the French style . . ."

(Hardy 1991, 330), the film charts the arrival on Earth of a race of virgin vampire

women who live on sperm. They gather this from the men of earth via fellatio, in

scenes which contrive to show the women as submissive. Whilst this exploitative

piece clearly develops traditional concepts of male fantasy with its virgins desperate

for sex, it does not approach the graphic lechery of films like *Flesh Gordon*.

Moreover, in *Forbidden Planet* Altaira is a complicit virgin who loses a degree of

sexual innocence, but few would categorise this film as pornography. Science

fiction's objectification of women occupies various points on a line between two

extremes.

Such has been science fiction's success in the presentation of the pleasure

principle, that it has generated its own momentum, and has subsumed ideological

stereotypes - originally meant as a counterbalance to the 'abnormal' - into its own trappings. Magnifications of the underlying ideology have become part of its own generic code, and so audiences have come to recognise the screaming female victim, for example, as a defining aspect of the genre. Further inflation of the value attached to these ideas, characters, and situations leads to further magnification due to over-use. Science fiction film has been caught in this self-perpetuating spiral of inflated values as a result of its need to be commercially accountable.

Similarly, part of the appeal of science fiction film for the spectator is its considerable potential, through inflation of its generic paraphernalia, and its special effects, to 'subvert' or embellish reality in order to create a degree of escapism. This is, according to Christian Metz, one of the fundamental reasons for the success of cinema itself:

More than the other arts, or in a more unique way, the cinema involves us in the imaginary: it drums up all perception. (Metz 1982b, 45)

Narrative film has always capitalised upon this status, and has over-emphasised gender positioning. However, once successful, a genre's license for hyperbole allows further exaggeration of the female image: such is the power of the imaginative interpretation of the mythological archetypes reproduced by science fiction, that it is able to use its recognisable trappings to create female fetish objects. However, the relationship between female representation and genre becomes cyclical: increasingly incredible generic codes and icons become acceptable principally *because* they are used to identify and augment values - in this case patriarchal values - which are

already enshrined in the ethos of the spectator. This reciprocal arrangement, demonstrates the manner in which science fiction film promotes a unique melding of pornography and sexploitation. Pornography provides fetishes for the female form, whereas science fiction provides the imaginative tools to create objects to focus this fetishism: both are underpinned by the patriarchal ideology of both medium and genre.

In *Screening Space*, Vivian Sobchack uses a sequence from Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) to illustrate her first method used by the science fiction film to subvert the "wonder of alien visual surfaces", namely through the repetition of the unfamiliar image so that it becomes familiar. The location of the scene is the Korova Milk Bar, a favoured haunt of the film's main protagonists; it is a strange, minimalist environment, with black walls adorned with barely decipherable writing, and white female figures in contorted positions, as 'vending machines' and 'tables'. Sobchack suggests that, through repetitive showing, "the strange postures of the sculptures become defined in terms of furniture and vending machinery and finally the Korova is accepted by the viewer . . ." (Sobchack 1988, 106). However, Sobchack omits the fact that the figures have been placed in subdominant sexual positions[29]. Sobchack's omission is placed in higher relief by her incomplete description of the white figures as being "accentuated and punctuated by bits of lurid violet and orange fluorescence" (Sobchack 1988, 105); actually highlighted are the nipples and genital

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[29] The vending machine figures represent kneeling women with open crotches, their hands shackled behind their backs, and their breasts thrust forward; the 'tables' consist of two female figures facing the ceiling, balanced on their hands and feet, with their legs interlocked to the crotch.

areas of the figures. In 'Fears, Fantasies and the Male Unconscious or "You Don't

Know What is Happening, Do You Mr. Jones?"', Laura Mulvey explores the work of

American pop artist, Allen Jones, whose initial concepts served as a templates for the

Korova figures. Citing his 'Women as Furniture' exhibition and his published works[30],

Mulvey discusses Jones's examination of fetishism, observing that "the female

genitals are always concealed, disguised or supplemented in ways which alter the

significance of female sexuality" (Mulvey 1989b, 7). Whilst Mulvey states that

Jones's work is " . . . infinitely more subtle in its understanding of fetishism than the

kitsch design Kubrick finally used for the movie" (Mulvey 1989b, 8/9), it is clear that

Kubrick has retained the iconography of fetishism for his move. The Korova Milk

Bar, then, is not "accepted" through repeated use of its imagery, but rather through

its visual assimilation of a recognised sexual mechanism. It is this recognition which

helps, through the id/super-ego transaction, to familiarise the Korova itself.

Moreover, the 'table' figures are totally impractical as tables; in fact their apparent

primary use as foot rests further attests to the film's reliance upon a perceived sado-

masochistic passive-function for female sexuality. The audience is expected to share

in what Molly Haskel, in *From Reverence to Rape*, describes as Kubrick's "violent

abuse and brutalization" of women (Haskell 1974, 323).

Whilst the 'vending' and 'table figures' in the Korova are not characters, they

exploit a recognisable female form. In doing this, they serve to underscore the *A*

Clockwork Orange's theme of social degradation, through their magnification of the

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[30] Allen Jones's 'Women as Furniture' sculpture was exhibited at Tooth's Gallery, London, 1970. Jones's publication, *Projects* (1971) contains designs for the Korova Milk Bar. Mulvey also refers to a further publication, *Figures* (Jones 1969).

film's own ideology, an ideology captured by the film's tag-line: "Being the adventures of a young man whose principal interests are rape, ultra-violence and Beethoven" (Movie Database on-line 1995e). Through its use of appropriation of fetishism, *A Clockwork Orange* uses the excuse of an alien environment to re-present woman as a pure fetish object.

Perhaps the best, and certainly the most famous, example of a manifestation of fetishism which relies upon science fiction's confidence to magnify its re-creation of the female through the application of increasingly recognisable paraphernalia, in turn supported by the commercial success of the genre, is Roger Vadim's *Barbarella* (1967). *Forbidden Planet* attempts to support commercial success by using a male-defined female to counteract the effects of science fiction fantasy; *Barbarella*, supported by science fiction's commercial success, uses a genre-defined female to *re-invent* the female-as-male-fantasy

Wittily described by Charles Champlin as a "camp visit to outré space" (Charles Champlin, quoted in Haddad-Garcia 1981, 144), *Barbarella* might be summarised as a 1960s psychedelic outing for French artist Jean-Claude Forest's comic-strip heroine. However, John Baxter points out that, for the film, ". . . Forest's sexually emancipated space woman becomes less independent and erotically acquisitive . . ." (Baxter 1970, 199-200). The oft cited opening sequence, involving Jane Fonda in a weightless strip-tease, provides testimony to the fact that Vadim used *Barbarella* as an opportunity to create a sex symbol of his new wife, as he had done with his

previous wives, Brigitte Bardot and Annette Stroyberg[31]. The voyeurism inherent in this first scene, coupled with the fetishist PVC space-suit which conceals Fonda's entire body at the beginning of the sequence, before her lingering strip, sets the tone for the rest of the film, despite Fonda's report of her husband's plans to the contrary:

You know, Vadim only has me completely nude behind the opening titles. He said, "Everybody will be waiting for that, so why don't we get it over with right away and get on with the picture?" (Jane Fonda, quoted in Haddad-Garcia 1981, 143)

To those spectators who are indeed waiting for the film's nude scenes, the strip-tease, far from satiating their desires, merely whets their appetites for more. However, as more of the same is not forthcoming, the end product could appear somewhat disappointing; ironically, this is due to commercial considerations, as the originally X-rated movie was "censored to garner a more profitable rating . . ." (Haddad-Garcia 1981, 142). Despite abridgement, the film does provide the spectator with myriad examples of male fantasy in practice, the most pervasive of which is inevitably the character of Barbarella, herself. Like Altaira in *Forbidden Planet*, Barbarella begins the film as a sexual innocent. She is a virgin in the sense that it is understood by the audience: earth-people of the 40th century no longer indulge in sexual intercourse; instead they take an "exultation transference pellet", and share a

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[31] Vadim caused a sensation when he filmed Brigitte Bardot nude for his 1956 debut feature, *And God Created Woman*. Annette Stroyberg appeared as Annette Vadim in the director's 1959 version of the erotic classic, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and in his elegant horror story, *Blood and Roses* (1960).

moment of pleasure with someone of like mind. Barbarella is sent on a mission by the President of a now pacifist earth to discover the whereabouts of the scientist Duran Duran, who has invented a weapon - the positronic ray. Crash landing on planet 16 of the Tarsetti system, Barbarella encounters the first test of her celibacy, in the form of the Catchman. In payment for rescuing her from killer dolls, which have gnawed her clothes to shreds, Barbarella agrees to have 'old-fashioned' physical sex with the Catchman, delivering the innocuous line, "Well, if you insist" - an echo of Altaira's bemusement with the concept of physical attraction. However, after the event, indicated by a rather quaint image of the Catchman's ice-boat roaming out of control, the naked Barbarella is discovered by the camera languishing happily in a bed of furs, singing to herself. She has clearly enjoyed her experience, and indicates this with her wistful behaviour towards the Catchman. At this point, Barbarella's character is re-created to encompass a second male fantasy - that of the complicit innocent. Like Altaira, she is happy to participate, but she still does not quite understand what she is participating in. This juxtaposition of naiveté and experience informs Barbarella's character throughout the film, and, according to Ian Christie, "most of the film's hilarity springs from the contrast between Miss Fonda's wide-eyed innocence and the astonishingly nasty situations she gets in . . ." (Ian Christie, quoted in Tookey 1994, 52). After the Catchman has repaired Barbarella's spaceship, she regains her composure enough to resume her mission, offering a brief farewell to her lover: "Goodbye, and thanks again [*turn away - pause - turn back*] for everything!"

Barbarella, now addicted to sex, continues her journey in a spaceship complete with sumptuous fake-fur lining and topless caryatids. She is armed with a number of science fiction devices sent to her by the President, and with what the President had

described, in his orders over the video-monitor, as her "talents":

> *President*   Your mission, then: to find Duran Duran and use all of your
>
> incomparable talents to preserve the security of the stars, and
>
> our own mother planet.

As this statement is made at the end of a scene in which Barbarella, having performed her strip-tease, is completely naked, there is little doubt as to what talents the President is alluding. Further reference to her sexual allure is made as he signs off, with, "Someday, Barbarella, we must meet - in the flesh. Hmm".

Leaving the Catchman, Barbarella's ship experiences further problems, and crashes again. Donning her fifth outfit of the film, she ventures from the ship, only to be knocked unconscious by a falling boulder. This temporary quiescence allows Vadim to linger over her body in the voyeuristic manner which Phil Hardy identifies as one of the negative features of the film:

> The film's most revealing failing is its lack of narrative drive, necessitated by
>
> Vadim's need to stop the action and present his scantily clad wife for the
>
> audience to ogle.(Hardy 1991, 260)

This aspect of the film clearly reflects the need for Vadim to objectify Jane Fonda in order to satisfy the scopophilic desires of the predominantly male spectator. The costumes, continuing the role of the credits, which partially hid Barbarella during her strip sequence, are designed to tease. Like Altaira, Barbarella has a plentiful supply of

revealing outfits, which change with almost every scene. However, whereas Altaira's

costumes are essentially short, tight versions of everyday clothing, thus magnifying

the familiar, Barbarella's outfits reflect a more fetishist preoccupation with

underwear, and so re-present the female as a fetish object. Her first costume after the

strip consists of a PVC leotard with translucent breast and belly plates, accompanied

by plastic boots. This is followed by a sheer cat-suit with a silver crop-top, and belt,

with silver boots. Maxim Jakubowski and Peter Nicholls suggest that the costumes

might have been influenced by the work of US illustrator Earle K. Bergey,

affectionately referred to as "the inventor of the brass brassière". His risqué magazine

covers often featured "half-dressed pin-up girls in peril" (Clute and Nicholls 1993,

111), and clearly had an influence on the 1950s film posters, including that for

Forbidden Planet. However, Barbarella's closest science fiction film predecessor is

the 1949 light comedy, *The Perfect Woman* (Knowles)[32]. This association is

continued through a further five costumes, including a green 'Peter Pan' outfit -

complete with boots, a tight top with one translucent breast-cup, and two more sheer

cat-suits in grey and white. The white-satin, fitted leotard, with open cleavage, worn

when she is knocked unconscious by the falling boulder strays closest to lingerie

fetishism with white-plastic thigh-boots attached to the leotard with black 'suspender'

strips. Whilst being on the verge of fetishism, the costumes for this film satiate the

more mainstream scopophilic desires of objectifying the female, leaving the fulfilment

of deeper fetishist desires to the more aberrant images to be revealed later, in Sogo,

the evil city of night. The pleasure derived from Barbarella reflects her innocent

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[32] See chapter 1, page 71.

beauty, rather than sexual promiscuity; like Altaira, Barbarella is a fantasy character to be desired, rather than to be lusted over. It is, perhaps, unsurprising that Jane Fonda, like Anne Francis, preceded her acting career with some modelling, twice making the cover of *Vogue* (Katz 1994, 466).

Barbarella is rescued from the boulder debris and a nasty "dark guard" by Pygar, a blind angel - "the last of the ornithanthropes" - an outcast from Sogo. In a scene containing a number of topless women and semi-clad men, Barbarella is taken on a tour of The Labyrinth of the City of Night, where all those who are too good to live in the city are sent. Here she meets Professor Ping, the first obviously comic character of the film. Looking directly at her breasts, he says to Barbarella: "You have the aspect of an earthling: you are of female gender, are you not?" Innocently diffusing the sexual nature of his actions, Barbarella answers him with a straight "that is correct". Sexual comedy is called into service a little later, after Barbarella has reinstated Pygar's will to fly by having sex with him (this she does, as with the Catchman, as a 'thank you' for saving her life, although this time she is the willing instigator); Professor Ping notices Barbarella's effect on the angel, and mutters "interesting therapy!". It is the comic references to sex, permeating the film, which diffuses what would quickly become purely a treatise on female-objectification. Indeed, such is the level of this objectification after Barbarella arrives in the evil city, Sogo, that, as Christopher Tookey suggests, only the "impressive sets and enjoyably camp jokes compensate for the juvenile moments and the sick, sadistic undertones" (Tookey 1994, 52).

Barbarella persuades Pygar to fly her to Sogo, built over the Matmos, a liquid

creature which feeds on the "negative psychic vibrations" of the evil city-dwellers. It

is here that the imagery moves away from the innocent, 'school-boy' aura of the

psychedelic, saccharine galaxy at large, and concentrates more upon the fetishism not

quite attained by Barbarella's provocative costumes. As Barbarella and Pygar enter

the city, the spectator can glimpse a naked woman suspended high above the ground

on a swing-cum-hammock. This scene is accompanied by naked females behind

translucent screens, being herded by large armoured figures with whips. Whilst it may

be argued that these images are designed to highlight the evil nature of the city,

thereby suggesting that the director condemns the objectification of women, the

evidence against this notion is compelling: rather than being content with one defining

instance, Vadim continues to use the image of naked women under the whip

throughout the film. This sado-masochistic subjugation of women culminates in the

lingering view of a naked woman suspended high above the floor in a leather truss.

The representation of women as fetish objects serving the gaze rather than the

narrative, is explained by Laura Mulvey as part of the process by which the male

unconscious escapes castration anxieties: through fetishist 'disavowal' the female

"becomes reassuring rather than dangerous" (Mulvey 1975, 13). Mulvey's further

statement that disavowal can be seen in the "cult of the female star" forms an

additional link with *Barbarella* and commercial cinema through Haddad-Garcia's

assertion that "after Barbarella's box-office thunder, unplain Jane was referred to as

'the most fantasised-about woman in the world'" (Haddad-Garcia 1981, 142). As

Pauline Kael commented of the director: ". . . it's so obvious that he tries to shock

only to please" (Pauline Kael, quoted in Haddad-Garcia, 1981, 145). Vadim knows

that these ostensibly aberrant images will ably serve to satiate the scopophilic desires of his male audience.

The most prevalent use of signified 'deviance' to gratify the audience appears in the form of the evil queen of Sogo. Introduced as an anonymous killer-vamp, dressed in a red leotard with black leggings, and an eye-patch, the queen reveals her sexuality in an exchange with Barbarella, shortly after saving the film's heroine from potential male rapists:

> *Queen*   Hello, pretty pretty.
>
> *Barbarella* [*Innocent of the queen's intent*] Hello - thank you very much.
>
> *Queen*   Do you want to come and play with me? For someone like you I charge nothing.

Following further conversation, Barbarella senses that she is somehow under 'threat', and flees. Rather than killing Barbarella with her throwing-knives, the queen allows her potential victim to escape. Later, the vamp is revealed to Barbarella as being the queen of Sogo. It is through these scenes that Roger Vadim inadvertently highlights a double-standard inherent to patriarchal ideology; whilst introducing a further personification of male fantasy, in the form of the predatory lesbian, the film proclaims this character's sexuality as abject by making her queen of the city of pure evil. Furthermore, the potential of the dominatrix - another male fantasy - is marred by the queen's proclivity to mindless violence and tyranny. This characteristic, often applied to female leaders in science fiction film, owes some debt to Rider Haggard's 1887 novel, *She*, which has produced a number of filmic offspring, including versions

in 1916, 1917, 1926, 1935 and 1965. Whilst these offered more fantasy-adventure than science fiction, Phil Hardy's comment that successive versions "added little more than better special effects and, ultimately, more nudity" (Hardy 1991, 87) highlights the scopophilic element prevalent in female power figures. In Haggard's novel *Ayesha*, the title character, has a flame of eternal life which keeps her young and beautiful; in *Barbarella*, the queen sleeps in the Chamber of Dreams where she is re-vitalised by the Matmos, which in turn takes its power from the evil psyches of the Sogo's inhabitants. Whilst hedonism has caused the citizens to age quickly, the queen appears to have retained her youth and beauty through her pact with the Matmos. A combination of three novels: *She*, Frank Aubrey's romantic slant on the Atlantis myth, *A Queen of Atlantis* (1899), and Pierre Benoît's *Atlantida* (1920), produced a number of earlier science fiction films dealing directly with the concept of the evil queen. In 1932, Brigitte Helm starred in *Die Herrin von Atlantis* (Pabst), in which the cruel queen mummified her former lovers. Maria Montez mirrored the elegance of Helm's character, with her evil queen Antinea, in the 1949 remake, *Siren of Atlantis* (Tallas). The concept was updated for French/Italian collaboration, *L'Atlantide - Aitinée l'Amante della Citta Sepolta* (Ulmer and Masini 1961), in which Atlantis and its cruel queen are discovered by three helicopter pilots. The popularity of the evil queen has taken her beyond the boundaries of Atlantis, with another French/Italian partnership in the form of *Maciste e la Regina di Samar* (Gentilomo 1965), as well as many other examples[33].

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[33] Examples of films employing evil queens include: the chapterplay, *Flash Gordon's Trip To Mars* (Beebe and Hill 1938), *The Super Inframan* (Shan 1975), and the animated feature, *Le Big Bang* (Picha 1987).

Despite the apparent French/Italian penchant for this subject, the French/Italian

Barbarella owes much to Edward Bernds's kitsch 1958 offering, *Queen of Outer*

Space, in which Zsa Zsa Gabor helps to save three American astronauts from the evil

queen of Venus and her death ray, The Beta Disintegrator. Despite originally being

written as a spoof of the genre, with lines like "twenty-six million miles from earth,

and the little dolls are just the same", the film was directed with a more serious tone.

The result is a film in which, as in *Barbarella*, feminist attitudes are approached from

a misogynous perspective. Further similarities between the two films include the use

of garish colour, extremely short dresses and skirts, and a man-hating - though not, in

Queen of Outer Space, outwardly lesbian - queen. Posters for the films show the

glamorous, semi-clad, central figures of Jane Fonda and Zsa Zsa Gabor, together with

smaller images of women in seductive poses and situations from the films. The

seduction is continued into the tag-lines for each film: *Queen of Outer Space* taunts

the potential spectator with "Mankind's First Fantastic Flight to Venus - The Female

Planet!" (poster reproduced in Wright 1993, 35), whilst one *Barbarella* poster

entices the cinema-goer with a series of questions, including "Who takes sex to outer

space?", "Who nearly dies of pleasure?", "Who strips in space?", and "Who seduces

an angel?"[34]. Another announces her as "The space age adventress whose sex-ploits

are among the most bizarre ever seen." (poster reproduced in Karney 1995, 582)

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[34] These tag-lines are taken from the poster reproduced in a series of *Sixties Design* postcards, produced by Taschen (1996). It is interesting to note that this poster refers to Barbarella as "the girl of the 21st century", whereas in the film she is a heroine of the 40th century. This may represent a mistake in translation from the French, which may also account for the poor literary-quality of the tag-lines cited above in the main text. More importantly, the discrepancy highlights that the important element of the poster design was the projection of sexual imagery, not the accuracy of the data.

Central to *Queen of Outer Space* is the vanity of the evil queen; her reason for hating men, which led to their exile from the planet, is the fact that she has been disfigured by male wars. This rationale translates into the rather pathetic, shallow narcissism of *Barbarella*'s queen, a character designed to highlight a notion of female superficiality. The queen's vanity is evidenced by a sequence in which she is sitting astride the recumbent Pygar, guiding his hands across her body, saying: "If only you had one eye in your head, you would see what a delight I am; my face, my body, all my things are a delight - I am exquisite delight . . . I shall share my delights with you". Whilst the female leader is devalued through these references to shallow vanity, the most pejorative treatment of the queen is signalled by further overt, if not explicit, references to her lesbianism. In an episode in which Pygar has been symbolically crucified, Barbarella retrieves a gun, which she had secreted earlier in the angel's feathered loin-cloth. Taking what is now a thinly veiled representation of the penis she threatens the lesbian queen; the queen responds with a further show of vanity: "How dare you endanger my face?"

After being thwarted, and taken to a giant bird-cage, where her clothes are pecked to shreds again, this time by killer birds, Barbarella is rescued by the dubiously named Dildano. At this point the film moves from being bizarre and surreal, to being silly and juvenile. Dildano, head of the revolutionary forces, stumbles about his malfunctioning head-quarters, breaking knobs off recalcitrant machines and giving nebulous orders to witless subordinates. Meanwhile, Barbarella, keen to continue her tradition of having sex with men who have saved her life, fulfilling her role as complicit innocent, starts to remove her clothing. However, in a witty reversal of

roles, it is now Barbarella who receives a rebuff from a potential lover:

Dildano   No, not like that - like on earth . . . the pill . . . I have the pill.

Barbarella Couldn't we do it your way? I don't want to change your

traditions.

Using the an "exultation transference pellet", the two 'make love', during which

Barbarella is shown to have a far higher capacity than Dildano. It is this sexual

athleticism which later creates what is regarded by John Simon, in the *New York*

Times, as the film's "only episode approaching true wit . . ." (John Simon, *New York*

Times, quoted in Haddad-Garcia 1981, 144). Finally caught by the despot, Duran

Duran, Barbarella is locked into his "excess machine", designed to expose its victim

to fatal amounts of sexual pleasure. However, Barbarella's sexual capacity is such

that the machine is over-loaded, and finally short-circuits. Whilst Barbarella has added

to her fantasy roles the figure of female sexual-athlete, Duran Duran exposes a further

patriarchal double-standard by remonstrating against her: "You've exhausted its

power, it couldn't keep up with you. What kind of girl are you? Have you no

shame?" The end of the film reveals further examples of the male-fantasy roles, as

Barbarella is trapped in the 'Chamber of Dreams' with the evil queen. Avoiding the

wrath of the censors, Barbarella resists any sexual contact with the queen on her bed,

which is shaped like a naked woman with open arms and legs. In an attempt to save

Sogo from Duran Duran, who is using his positronic ray to destroy everything in

sight, the queen releases the creature of liquid evil over which the city is built. The

two females are taken into the Matmos creature in a transparent bubble, created, the

queen explains, by the Matmos "; . . to protect itself from your innocence".

Barbarella, the queen, and Pygar are rejected by the liquid creature, and in a final

symbolic reference to masculine choice, and the patriarchal predilection for double-

standards, the last of the ornithanthropes flies off with the innocent Barbarella under

one arm, the promiscuous queen under the other arm, and a contented grin on his

face.

With its use of a female protagonist who drives the plot, albeit somewhat

inadvertently, through her single-minded adherence to duty, and the recognition of

female sexual drive and desire, *Barbarella* might be regarded as offering a

progressive role for women. However, like *Queen of Outer Space*, the film is clearly

orientated from a male perspective, turning a promising treatise into what John Simon

regards as "elucubrated, anemic pornography" (John Simon, New York Times,

quoted in Haddad-Garcia 1981, 144). *Barbarella*'s re-creation of the female from a

large number of male-fantasy perspectives is perhaps unsurprising when it is noted

that the film had eight male writers. Despite its often disarming comedy, the film

employs futuristic technology, weapons, and situations to magnify a patriarchal ideal.

Through its use of the trappings of the science fiction genre, *Barbarella* supports

Camille Paglia's assertion that "cinema is the supreme Apollonian genre, thing-

making and thing-made, a machine of the gods" (Paglia 1992, 31): man has created

cinema, and cinema, in turn, has recreated woman. Further evidence of the

importance of sex to the success of Vadim's film can be seen in the fact that Jean-

Claude Forest's later attempts to revive his *Barbarella* comic-strip, with less sex and

more science fiction, were unsuccessful (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 89). The film no

longer uses familiar images merely to guard against the rejection and abjection caused by unfamiliar images; it has become a device for the projection of hedonistic fantasy. The portrayal of women in this male genre is part of the self-indulgent fulfilment of the scopophilic pleasure principles. It was this ability for redistribution within the medium which lead Christian Metz to observe that: ". . . filmic pleasure and filmic unpleasure, . . . are not in my view arranged in positions of antithetic symmetry, since the institution as a whole has filmic pleasure alone as its aim." (Metz 1982b, 7) *Scopophilia is a commercially necessity.*

It would appear that a study of science fiction film, and especially the study of the function of the female within the genre, exposes a number of cyclical arguments and paradoxical questions. Special effects, once needed to lend visual realism to aberrant concepts, have joined the criteria used to define the genre. Does the genre become accepted *because* its images are repeated, or does it naturally contain acceptable concepts and images which actually *ensure* its success? Once acceptable to the audience, aspects of science fiction are used to present magnified female archetypes which were, paradoxically, once used to reinforce the credibility of the genre. It *is*, however, unclear whether these inherited archetypes of what Jung terms 'the collective unconscious' are a result of social conditioning, or whether the social ordering of the super-ego is, as Camille Paglia maintains, men's "defense against nature's power" (Paglia 1990, 1). The late 1970s did see a move towards higher-budget interest in female career-astronauts and cosmonauts, notably with *The Black Hole*, and later *2010* (Hyams, 1984), which might be argued as a response to the induction of women into NASA's astronauts corps, which culminated in Sally Ride's mission as the first American woman in space, in 1981. However, since both of these

films were produced in the wake of *Alien*, it is perhaps equally arguable that NASA was reacting to trends in the film industry, which forms the subject of chapter 3.

Moreover, in her autobiography, *Beyond Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories* (1994), Nichelle Nichols suggests that the relationship between NASA and Starfleet has been based upon a high degree of mutual influence, with NASA, in 1976, bowing to the demands of *Star Trek* fans to change the name of the first Space Shuttle from *Constitution* to *Enterprise*; this in turn prompted Paramount to announce principle filming on what was to become *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Wise 1979). Furthermore:

In *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* [Nimoy 1984], we on the *Enterprise* encountered a Federation Starship named the U.S.S. Grissom, in honor of astronaut Virgil 'Gus' Grissom, who in 1967 was killed in the tragic launchpad fire of *Apollo I* (Nichols 1994, 224).

In 1977, Nichols used her own considerable influence to boost NASA's recruitment drive for more women and minorities to join the astronaut training programme (Nichols 1994, 220-25). Constance Penley explores further the relationship between NASA and *Star Trek* in *NASA / TREK: Popular Science and Sex in America* (1997), in which she offers an explanation for the mutual arrangement:

We process our knowledge of NASA in a variety of more or less unconscious ways, ranging from simple displacement to outright denial. A lot of this

individual and collective refashioning of NASA's meanings tends to be wish-fulfilling, to produce the NASA we want, not the one we have. And here the stuffy space agency is aided (again, more or less unconsciously) by an increasing symbolic merging with its hugely popular fictional twin, *Star Trek*. Together they form a powerful cultural icon, a force that I call "NASA/Trek". (Penley 1997, 15-16)

However, Penley later adds that "in principle, NASA and *Star Trek* should be mutually inspiring each other, pushing against each other to push forward, but each seems to reflect the ambivalence of the other toward the idea of women in space" (Penley 1997, 90).

Resolutions to chicken-and-egg debates over primacy are moot; in each case a small development or concession on one side of the equation adds fuel to the other. Cinema, as an "institutionalised signifier" (Metz 1982b, 69), is a product of the society which it represents, and then re-creates. Science fiction has flourished because it allows for a development of concepts forwarded by both the id and the ego processes. Commercial cinema, of which science fiction is a primary exponent, is driven by the basic tenet that the number of spectators needed to ensure the financial success of a movie is proportional to the level to which the subjective imagery is 'watered-down' with objective imagery - the id/super-ego transaction. Women appear to be caught in a cyclical trap, in which their representation sanctions a genre which then augments and re-formulates their representation. It would seem to be impossible for women to escape from the cycle. However, despite seemingly insuperable odds the science fiction genre has produced commercially viable films which present female

protagonists and deuteragonists.

PART TWO

CHAPTER 3

MUTATION: 1970S DEVELOPMENTS

In *2001: Filming the Future*, Piers Bizony writes of Stanley Kubrick's 1968 science fiction classic, that:

> It will take the passing of many more generations of human explorers before the questions raised by *2001* are answered, and the film becomes redundant at last. (Bizony 1994, 22)

This statement refers largely to the philosophical questions posed by *2001: A Space Odyssey*; however, Bizony's earlier description of the film as ". . . a dazzling manifesto for our future in space" (Bizony 1994, 21), invites an examination of the film's socio-political stance. Watched today, *2001's* employment of women raises questions barely even considered by the film, siting it as a manifesto for a *male* future in space. For, whilst Kubrick's film was ". . . undoubtedly the most influential film of the sixties" (Hardy 1991, 279) with regard to special effects, and the commercial and critical viability of the genre, its partial redundancy has been assured by its adherence to gender positioning which was to change considerably after the late 1970s - influenced largely by Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979). In the words of Bizony, "*2001: A Space Odyssey* is as much about the era in which it was made as it is about the future" (Bizony 1994, 21).

Whilst films like *Planet of the Apes* (Schaffner 1968) had already begun to explore the possibilities of female characters which were more reflective of changes, engendered by the growing Women's Liberation movement, in the social, and to some degree political, climate, and *2001* had secured the critical viability of the genre, it was the unexpected financial security delivered by the *Star Wars* phenomenon which gave Ridley Scott the opportunity to make such a sudden move away from the commercial safety of exploitation. David Sibley has suggested that Western society is showing evidence of "a greater intellectual awareness of difference", and "a growing sensitivity to other voices" (Sibley 1995, 184). *Alien* was not the first film to address these considerations, but its timing along with its nonchalant refusal to make an issue of its socio-political liberalism, and its use of a female protagonist, helped to ensure its huge impact on the genre. Consequently, much of the attention directed, by both academic, and by more populist, critics, towards female characters in science fiction film, has been concentrated upon the *Alien* series, and its employment of Ellen Ripley, played by Sigourney Weaver.

However, in order to examine these changes fully, it is necessary to return to 1951, and to a film which introduced the potential for progressive change in the genre before the socio-political structure which supported *Alien* had developed; unsupported, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Wise 1951) stands as a pre-echo of the post-1970s science fiction film. Considered by many critics to be a classic of the genre (Baxter 1970; Kyle 1977; Brosnan 1991; Clute and Nicholls 1993), the film is essentially a thriller set in contemporary Washington D.C. By drawing upon references to both atomic power and alien visitors - the former, a reality made clear only six years previously by the bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the latter being

part of a public craze for flying saucers from the late 1940s - the 'hyper-abnormal' elements of the diegesis are constructed within familiar preoccupations of the general spectator. This 'normalising' of the 'hyper-abnormal' through references to 'reality', allows Wise the freedom to develop his female protagonist, Helen Benson, along less traditional lines. Despite being produced in 1951, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* "depicted a woman as being one of the more intelligent and resourceful characters, an unusual step for that period" (Barker 1992, 11); because of this, the film is used as a base-line reference frequently throughout this and following chapters. Whilst Bruce Lanier Wright suggests the film had "little influence on subsequent genre efforts" (Wright 1993, 100), over twenty-five years later many of its themes were revisited during the emergence of the progressive science fiction female at the social, political, financial, popular, technical, and above all commercial, renaissance of the genre. Therefore, elements of its diegesis as a whole contribute considerably to an understanding of the post-*Alien* development of the female role. Furthermore, Robert Wise's influence continues into his next science fiction project, *The Andromeda Strain* (Wise 1970), in which a woman is again instrumental in saving the world. Dr. Kate Leavitt discovers the means to neutralise a killer space-bacterium. Just as Benson stands in contrast to the social background, so too does Leavitt, openly and cynically criticising the institution from within which she works. Added to Wise's influence is a commitment shown by 20th Century Fox, producer of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, to the development of female characters which do not necessarily adhere to popular female-function stereotypes, including: Princess Leia in *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (Kershner 1980)[1], Ellen Ripley in the

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[1] Produced in association with Lucasfilm Ltd.

Alien trilogy[2], Veronica Quaife in *The Fly* (Cronenberg 1986)[3], and Lindsey Brigman in *The Abyss* (Cameron 1989).

The primary contribution of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* can be illustrated by a conversation at a breakfast table between Helen Benson, played by Patricia Neal, and other guests at the boarding-house where Klaatu, an alien fugitive, is masquerading as 'Mr. Carpenter'. Klaatu silently observes the following scene:

Radio   This creature: where is he? What is he up to? If he can build a spaceship that can fly to Earth, and a robot that can destroy our tanks and guns, what other terrors can he unleash at will? Obviously the monster must be found; he must be tracked down like a wild animal; he must be destroyed. But where would such a creature hide? . . . Everybody agrees there is grave danger . . . What measures can we take to neutralise this menace from another world? Destroy it? Of course, but how?

1st Man   It's enough to give you the shakes. He's got that robot standing there, eight foot tall, just waiting for orders to destroy us.

Benson   This spaceman, or whatever he is, we automatically assume he is a menace: maybe he isn't at all.

2nd Man   Then what's he hiding for? Why doesn't he come out in the

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[2] *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979), produced in association with Brandywine-Ronald Shusett Productions; *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986); *Alien3* (David Fincher, 1992).

[3] Produced in association with Brooks Films.

open?

1st Man   Yeah, like that Heater fella [radio announcer] said: what's he

up to?

<u>*Benson*</u>   Maybe he's afraid.

Woman   He's afraid: ha, ha!

<u>*Benson*</u>   Well, after all, he was shot the minute he landed here. I was just

wondering what I would do.

On the surface, statements like "maybe he's afraid" and "I was just wondering

what I would do", with their rejection of the self-serving concepts of *personne* and

moi discussed in chapter 1, may appear to cast Benson in the traditional role of

compassionate female, a tradition reflected by Susan Thomas in her analysis of the

function of the female in *Metropolis* (Lang 1926). In *Between the Boys and Their*

Toys, Thomas argues that Maria "symbolises the heart as a mediator between the

labouring classes and the ruling elite" (Thomas 1991, 109[4]). Whilst Benson does

indeed mediate between human and alien in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, she

encapsulates the film's central treatise - that of the human need to see beyond its ken

- by refusing to countenance a repulsion for the alien, which she sees as being based

upon irrational fear. Benson is the central figure in a diegesis which, according to

Vivian Sobchack, attacks ". . . the media's penchant for sensationalism" (Sobchack

1988, 192). Through its damning indictment of humanity, *The Day the Earth Stood*

Still offers an important, central human voice of reason to mirror that of the benign

alien visitor, and that voice is female.

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[4] Cf. Dadoun 1989.

Helen Benson is a secretary, living in the boarding-house which becomes Klaatu's home during his clandestine sojourn in Washington D.C. She is a widowed mother who enjoys a healthy relationship with her son, Bobby, and a steady relationship with her fiancé-to-be, Tom. Klaatu and his sentinel robot, Gort have come to Earth to voice the concerns of 'federation of planets' about earth's potential for space travel, coupled with its ability to create nuclear weapons. The people of Earth are presented with an ultimatum: live in peace or face annihilation. The concepts of unbridled (male) emotion and sensationalism, against which Benson projects (female) logic and reason, are highlighted when Klaatu is shot by a nervous soldier just ten seconds after his first words to the people of earth: "We have come to visit you in peace and good will". Absenting himself from the city hospital, Klaatu hears the radio reports conjuring images of an alien monster bent on destruction, images which belie the benign nature of the character presented by both the film and, later, by Benson. Klaatu, now posing as Mr. Carpenter, presents himself at the boarding-house, and is confronted with Benson's excited son, Bobby. This provides the alien, as well as the audience, with an introduction to Helen Benson, as well as an opportunity to witness her apparent nonchalance as she checks her son's exuberance:

Bobby   I bet he's looking for the spaceman!

Benson   I think we've all been hearing too much about spacemen.

The following morning, during the breakfast conversation quoted above, Benson's nonchalance is revealed to be self-assured humanity, as she becomes the

first of the few people in the film to act as advocate for the alien now at large in the city. During this sequence, Benson is the source of considerable audience satisfaction, as it shares, with Klaatu, the knowledge that the alien is actually sitting at the breakfast table. It is this complicity which allows the audience to accept the logic of Klaatu's later actions, when he reveals his identity and intentions to Benson alone. Whilst they neglect the importance of the female character, critics Menville and Reginald highlight the significance of the film's human element by pointing out that "it's only when he [Klaatu] mixes with the average American citizens that one gets the feeling he's satisfied with what he sees" (Menville and Reginald 1977, 87). Remembering Benson's open-mindedness and faced with danger, Klaatu explains the importance of his mission and why it must not fail; in doing so he shares information with her that he had not been prepared to share with any human-being up to this point. Wise further privileges Benson by not even revealing this information to the audience until the end of the film, when it is shared with the entire world.

The dramatic climax of the film sees the benevolent alien visitor shot for the second time, whilst making his way to an assembly of peaceful representatives from around the globe; on this occasion he is killed. Klaatu's experiences are central to the film's aim to criticise the people's mass-hysterical response, and the official small-minded intransigent response, to change. Klaatu is judged not on his actions or his words, but on his nature as an Other. It is only Helen Benson and, later, Professor Bernhardt who do not allow fear to be substituted for reason. After Klaatu's death, the narrative positions Benson as the most important person on the planet; she alone has the ability to stop Gort - Klaatu's sentinel robot - from destroying the earth as an

act of vengeance for the death of his master. Confronting the robot and uttering the words "Gort, Klaatu barada nikto", Benson prevents global annihilation, and displays the qualities which Joseph Campbell ascribes to a 'modern hero'. Rather than being assimilated by the traditional male hero myth, Benson, by succeeding as the antithesis of the film's overt patriarchal-militaristic dynamic, appropriates the attributes of Campbell's modern hero. This she does not as a surrogate male but as a human "individual"; for whilst the main body of Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces* deals exclusively with the male hero, his conclusion recognises mythology's evolution beyond the confines of a dominant ideology.

The modern hero, the modern individual who dares to heed the call and seek the mansion of that presence with whom it is our whole destiny to be atoned, cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalized avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding. (Campbell 1993, 391)

In her autobiography, *As I Am*, Patricia Neal regards *The Day the Earth Stood Still* as "the best science fiction film ever made . . ." (Neal 1989, 161). Whilst presumably partisan, in context this comment clearly highlights the actor's regard for the potential quality of the female role. Screenwriter, Edmund North, and director, Robert Wise, successfully produce a sympathetic female hero who drives the narrative without recourse to the male-subject/female-object dynamic. Further testimony to the fact that the character of Benson clearly represents a conscious decision to, at least, push the boundaries of traditional female representation. Testimony to this fact is

offered by reference to Harry Bates's 1940 original short story, *Farewell to the Master* (Bates 1957), from which *The Day the Earth Stood Still* was developed.

In her critique of the film, Dilys Powell comments that "Robert Wise has directed the story for far more than it is worth" (Dilys Powell, quoted in Tookey 1994, 168). Whilst Powell is referring primarily to Wise's handling of the screenplay, "directed with pace and impressive economy" (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 306), her statement is supported by the fact that Wise's film departs from this text at a number of points germane to this study. Whilst similarities with Bates's story make its influence clear, *Farewell to the Master* itself has no female characters. The film is written from the point of view of the male alien, Klaatu, rather than the book's male reporter, Sutherland; this gives rise to suggestions that Benson, has been included as a love interest. However, as this aspect of Benson and Klaatu's association does not develop sufficiently to make it a primary consideration, Benson's role must link with the central protagonist in other ways. In *Farewell to the Master*, Klaatu remains benevolent despite the intrusive actions of Sutherland and the military. Whilst Benson is less actively pursuant than Sutherland, her dialogue with Klaatu, and compassion and pragmatism promote a beneficent response from the alien. Benson, then, acts as deuteragonist rather than antagonist, in order to reflect and magnify the film's central message. The antagonists in Edmund North's screenplay are the male-dominated government and military agencies representing xenophobic fear, agencies to which Sutherland is allied in the original story. North's employment of a woman symbolically delineates differences between the caring, personal face of 'ordinary' humans, and the impassive, anonymous face of the ruling ideology - identified as exclusively male in both film and book. For director Robert Wise, Benson's

diplomatic role would be wholly in keeping with the expectations of a 1950s audience, an acceptance which, along with her role as a mother and secretary, helps to balance a narrative which casts her also as an antithesis to institutional intolerance, and saviour of humanity.

Through its re-configuration of Bates's original story, Wise's film clearly exemplifies the potential to present a female protagonist who drives the narrative. However, whilst *The Day the Earth Stood Still* represented a desire to offer a departure from the average 1950s' female function, Benson's narrative role emphasises the ideological compromise deemed necessary to integrate female protagonists into the patriarchal environment of commercial film. Her roles as mother and fiancée reflect what Judith Smith, in 'The Marrying Kind', describes as a "popular discourse celebrating domesticity and marriage in the 1950s . . ." (Smith 1994, 226). Later in her essay, Smith refers to a female character's commitment to career-work being temporised by its parity with "suburban domesticity" (Smith 1994, 229)[5]; this is reflected in Benson's unthreatening employment as a secretary, with its traditional functioning as "a boss's status symbol, like his wife . . ." (Greer 1972, 124)[6].

It may be this adherence to commercial film structures which diluted Benson's impact on the female protagonists of the 1950s and 1960s. However, much of this was due also to the nature of the narrative itself; benign alien visitors to earth, a

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[5] Judith Smith is referring specifically to *Pillow Talk* (Gordon 1959), in which the central character, Jan, works as an interior decorator.

[6] See Walby 1990, 25-60 for a clear account of the position of the working woman in a patriarchal environment; see also Davies 1979.

concept which forms the core of the parable in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, were scarce in the 1950s[7]. Moreover, Benson's failure to generate an influence upon other female characters was also the result of a widespread apathy towards female characters of her calibre. Patricia Neal notes that the press at the time of the film's release was more interested in reporting her relationship with already married Gary Cooper than in her film roles (Neal 1989, 161-62). However this indifference towards Helen Benson has not been confined to the 1950s.

Film historian John Baxter appears satisfied to report Benson's contribution as a domestic role, stating that Klaatu enters into "a believable relationship with a young Washington widow . . . and her son" (Baxter 1970, 105), rather than the fact that Benson saves the world from annihilation. Selective reviewing becomes inaccuracy in *The Virgin Film Guide*, which ignores Helen Benson's role altogether, stating that "the wounded Rennie [Klaatu[8]] stops the robot from destroying the planet by uttering the now-classic phrase, 'Klaatu barada nikto'" (Pallot et al. 1994, 182). Whilst the wounded Klaatu does speak to Gort, the "now-classic phrase" was actually used by Benson to save the world, rather than by the alien. Insignificant as this may appear, misinformation and selective reporting highlight not only a lack of interest in the female role, but, more significantly, a patriarchal tendency to de-emphasise the

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[7] The few examples of benign-alien films of the 1950s include, *It Came from Outer Space* (Arnold 1953), which contains a number of the elements of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*; *The Stranger From Venus* (Balaban 1954), a low-budget, British remake of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*; *Uchujin Tokyo ni Arawaru* (Shima 1956), variously titled outside Japan; and *The Cosmic Man* (Greene 1959), a "low-budget oddity" (Hardy 1991, 187).

[8] Played in the film by British actor, Michael Rennie.

contribution of the female protagonist in favour of the male characters. For Beverle Houston, writing in *Missing in Action*, this type of absence underscores ". . . the continuing need for a feminist rewriting of film history at this level . . ." (Houston 1994, 272). Even well-meaning reviewers can confuse matters: Bruce Lanier Wright's reference to Helen Benson as "Klaatu's primary ally" appears to contradict his earlier observation that "the film's military men seem like misguided children compared with the kindly, rational scientist [Professor Bernhardt] who becomes the alien's ally" (Wright 1993, 14). It is Benson who functions as the primary agent of comparison between moral and immoral in the film. Highlighting the historical significance of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Virgin Film Guide* continues, stating that "superb performances . . . , restrained direction . . . , and a magnificent and innovative score . . . help keep this 35-year-old film as relevant today as it was the day it was released" (Pallot et al. 1994, 182). It is not surprising that a review which had neglected to mention the female protagonist, fails here to recognise the fact that the film's historical significance rests equally upon Helen Benson's anticipation of the genre's move towards, in Sibley's words, "a growing sensitivity to other voices" (Sibley 1995, 183).

This growing sensitivity is detectable through the original *Star Trek* movie series, which spans to the period when the strength of changes in the genre's attitudes to women demanded that these issues be addressed. This unique position ensures the *Star Trek* film series, beginning with the 1979 picture, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, also directed by Robert Wise, a central place within this thesis; it will be used to chart the basic development of the female as a function of the conflict between reflecting considerable changes in attitudes towards the integration of women in the genre, and

conserving continuity with the past. In order to examine the extent and impact of this struggle, it is necessary to turn briefly to the roots of the phenomenon - the original television series.

One of the many aspects for which Gene Roddenberry's original seventy-eight television episodes is famous, or perhaps infamous, is its treatment of women. Roddenberry had originally intended the First Officer on board the *Enterprise* to be a woman; the pilot episode, "The Cage", included this character, played by Majel Barrett. However, whilst the network executives were content with the general concept of the show, they ordered a number of changes: they "were especially vocal about getting rid of two roles - the female second-in-command and the devilish-looking alien, Spock" (Nimoy 1996, 32). Roddenberry would not capitulate over his alien, but "the character of Number One was axed. Uhura, the galactic telephonist in a mini skirt, was her replacement" (Killick 1992, 57)[9]. Uhura, played by African-American actor, Nichelle Nichols, was undoubtedly an inspiration to many Blacks[10] in the 1960s and beyond; Whoopi Goldberg has, many times, recorded her debt to Nichelle Nichols and Uhura, as childhood heroes[11], and Mae Jemison, the first

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[9] Majel Barrett, later Majel Barrett Roddenberry, continued in the television series as Nurse Christine Chapel. In *Star Trek: Generations* (Carson 1994) her voice can be heard as the *Enterprise* computer, and in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (TV), she played Lwaxana Troi, a role she reprised for *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (TV).

[10] The noun 'Black' here, taking the upper case 'B', rather than the adjective taking the lower case 'b', follows Nichols's own use of the term. Nichols's influence is generally reported to be over African-American women, rather than over women of colour in general, a term which might include Aboriginal women, Asian women, Latina women, and Caribbean women (see Freydberg 1994).

[11] See Penley 1997, 150n5; and Nichols 1994, 310.

African-American woman in space (1992), has cited Uhura as her inspiration to become an astronaut[12]; she began her historic flight on board the *Endeavor* with Uhura's words, "Hailing frequencies open". According to Nichols, Dr. Martin Luther King was a fan of the series, and was instrumental in persuading her not to leave at the end of the second season, telling her "'You must not leave. You have opened a door that must not be allowed to close'"(Nichols 1994, 164). In the following, and final, season viewers of "Plato's Stepchildren", witnessed American television's first inter-racial kiss - between Uhura and Kirk (Shatner 1993, 282-86). Despite all this, the message presented by the final bridge-complement for the *Enterprise*, as it entered its first television season in 1966, was that authority was more acceptable in an alien-male than in a human-female. This philosophy permeated the three seasons of the television series, with many examples of female characters being included as ornaments for the delectation of Captain Kirk, a narrative device described by Jane Killick as the tradition of "captain's crumpet" (Killick 1992, 57). In *Star Trek Sex: The Female Frontier*, Killick cites two particular examples of the show's misogyny: the first is in "Requiem for Methuselah", in which a beautiful female android dies ". . . moments after she breaks her programming to become an independent human being . . ." (Killick 1992, 57). The second example is taken from "Turnabout Intruder", in which Kirk swaps bodies with an ambitious, beautiful, female alien; however, "the episode treats women's ambition as something malevolent" (Killick 1992, 57)[13].

Whilst it often attempts to posit future societies, science fiction, like other film

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[12] See Penley 1997, 18; Nichols 1994, 297-98.

[13] For further insight into Star Trek, see Harrison, Projansky and Ono. 1996.

genres, also mirrors contemporary mores, issues, and morals. "In the sixties, it was accepted to have a pretty girl in your show every week" (Killick 1992, 57), but by the time *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* came to be written, a new-found social conscience was imbuing the American cinema with new ideas. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (Kramer 1967) and the Oscar-winning *In the Heat of the Night* (Jewison 1967) had both starred Sidney Poitier, "the American screen's first prominent black star" (Katz 1994, 1086), in strong, intelligent roles. Ken Russell's *Women in Love* (1969) involved bisexual characters, and was edited to present strong suggestions of homosexuality, and *Fiddler on the Roof* (Jewison 1971) and *Cabaret* (Fosse 1972) represented attempts by Hollywood to maintain parity with the theatre, by offering musicals with hard-hitting messages (both films dealt with the persecution of Jewish peoples)[14].

Given the complexity of the institutional structures of the film industry, not to mention the coded operations of film texts, the relationship between social climates and the content of films is obviously not a simple one. Explaining the co-existence of dissimilar types of Hollywood films call for an examination of a variety of structures in their historical specificity. (Kuhn 1987, 126)

Despite Annette Kuhn's warning, it might be argued that it was the film industry's new-found consciousness with regard to colour, race and religion had affected the treatment of women in the cinema, thus following a trend set in the

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[14] *Planet of the Apes*, in 1968, represented science fiction's highest profile comment on racial intolerance; *Silent Running* (Trumbull 1971), presented one of the film genre's most intelligent, if misogynous, warnings of impending ecological disaster.

nineteenth century, when calls for women's liberation, sprang from anti-slavery and civil-rights campaigns (Banks 1993, 13-27). However, it is clear that the film industry was also reacting to a burgeoning Women's Liberation movement, which "in fact had its own beginning in the United States independently too of the whole tradition of feminism as it had developed in the past" (Banks 1993, 223). The question of primacy is not important here; the fact remains that the commercial film industry felt an increasing need to react to the changing attitudes of, and towards, women. As Lizzie Francke notes in *Script Girls*, "Hollywood soon caught up with feminism when it realised that there was an audience to be catered for" (Francke 1994, 93[15]).

In her early historical analysis of women in film, *From Reverence to Rape*, Molly Haskell highlights some of the period's shortcomings, with her call for the return of the great actresses, and what she terms as the twenties' ". . . camaraderie, the much-vaunted mutual support among women" (Haskell 1975, 371). However, moves were being made towards a stronger female representation in cinema. In 1968 Katharine Hepburn, winning an historic third Oscar for her portrayal of the shrewd Eleanor of Aquitaine in *The Lion in Winter* (Harvey 1968), was leading actresses like Glenda Jackson - herself a recipient of an Oscar for *A Touch of Class* (Frank 1973) - and Jane Fonda, who had graduated to Oscar-winning class with her portrayal of a complex prostitute character in *Klute*. Hepburn also starred as Hecuba, matriarch of Euripides's *The Trojan Women* (Cacoyannis 1971). Film had been taking its lead from other popular media, including the theatre and popular music; Susan Douglas

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[15] See also Francke 1994, 86-97.

places emphasis upon the importance of the all-girl groups of the early 1960s music

charts to the development of choices and voices for young women of the period:

> Girl group songs were, by turns, boastful, rebellious, and self-abnegating,
> and through them girls could assume different personas, . . . they could be
> martyrs to love . . . , sexual aggressors . . . , fearsome Amazons protecting their
> men . . . , devoted, selfless girlfriends . . . , taunting, competitive brats . . . ,
> sexual sophisticates . . . , and, occasionally, prefeminists . . . . The songs were
> about escaping from yet acquiescing to the demands of male-dominated society,
> in which men called the shots but girls could still try to give them a run for their
> money. (Douglas 1995, 90)

Linked with these popular media developments was an increase in literature

aimed at highlighting and combating sexual discrimination. In *Sexing the Millennium*,

Linda Grant highlights the importance of the "maverick, outrageous, insolent and

stylish. . ." (Grant 1993, 99) *Nova* magazine, launched in 1965, for its work in

"propelling women out of their traditional roles and forcing them to question every

aspect of their lives and values" (Grant 1993, 99-100). While Germaine Greer

(1972/1970), Shulamith Firestone (1979/1971), Marge Piercy (1995/1976), Kate

Millett (1971), Juliet Mitchell (1971), and many others were contributing to what

Greer describes as "the second feminist wave" (Greer 1972, 11), and Marleen Barr

later termed "the statement of the problem" (Barr 1987, *xii*), much of the world

political climate was changing. Women's rights movements were experiencing a huge

renaissance of energy and support;[16] the 1970 Oxford Women's Conference heralded

the formation of feminist organisations (Grant 1993, 16)[17]. The United Nations

designated 1975 as 'International Women's Year'". . . to encourage member

countries to introduce measures to help women to equality as citizens and workers"

(Lewenhak 1980, 270). Furthermore, moves were being made to integrate women

into the American space programme. Asked by NASA, in 1977, to help recruit more

women and minority-representatives to the astronaut programme, Nichelle Nichols,

backed by her company, Women in Motion Inc., used her considerable *Star Trek*

influence to boost female applications to the programme from fewer than 100 to

1,649; minority-group applications rose from 35 to 1,000 (Nichols 1994, 220-25).

Whilst the film industry was making varying attempts - some cynical, some

sincere - to reflect the growing Women's Liberation movement, science fiction film-

makers were unsure about whether to risk huge budgets on films which, by offering

female protagonists, undermined the system upon which the commercial film industry

was built, namely the magnification of patriarchal stereotypes. It was not necessarily

essential, or indeed profitable, to actively support the women's movement; however,

it was clearly dangerous to actively ignore its growing influence. This is exemplified

by the many adverse reactions to *A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick). Describing those

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[16] Following Jessie Bernard (1971) and Jo Freeman (1973), Olive Banks points out that social changes had been affecting American women throughout the 1960s, and the number of books on women had been increasing since 1959 (Banks 1993, 211). However, political change, concomitant with changes in the film industry, had consistently lagged behind social action.

[17] For a further overview of changes in the social and professional positions of British and American women during this period, and throughout the twentieth century, see Rowbotham 1997; for British women specifically, see Hill 1991.

characters of the film who fall prey to Alex and his 'Droogs' as ". . . twisted and incapable of suffering", Pauline Kael observes that "Kubrick carefully estranges us from these victims so that we can enjoy the rapes and beatings" (Pauline Kael, quoted in Tookey 1994, 137). Danny Peary is more blunt with his comments on the director's misogyny: ". . . (his treatment of women is insulting). Kubrick makes their abuse at Alex's hands more palatable by making them grotesque, mannered, snobbish figures" (Danny Peary, quoted in Tookey 1994, 137). Such was the strength of feeling about the effect of the movie's violence, that Kubrick banned it from being shown in Britain until after his death. The resulting uncertainty had a polarising effect on the industry.

A number of films were produced which attempted to avoid stereotype by virtually ignoring women altogether: following the example of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Marooned* (Sturges 1969), *Silent Running, Rollerball* (Jewison 1975) and *Capricorn One* (Hyams 1977) secured large budgets for narratives with almost exclusively male representation. Of course, this female absence itself serves stereotype. Conversely, some film-makers experimented with female protagonists, and of these, some achieved considerable levels of success: *The Andromeda Strain, Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (Taylor 1971), and *Star Wars* all offered female characters with some degree of control over their own actions. Others directors met with controversy: Following the controversial *The Stepford Wives* (Forbes 1974), the science fiction thriller *Coma* (Crichton 1978) has been attacked for its failure to involve the female protagonist, Dr. Susan Wheeler, as the 'knowledgeable' detective: "as a character she is 'strong', but as an actant within the narrative she is 'weak'" (Cowie 1987, 164); and *The Man who Fell to Earth* (Roeg 1976), offers, in its sub-

plot, an indictment of the sexual behaviour of male college-lecturers, behaviour clearly defined as "sexual harassment" by Billie Wright Dziech and Linda Weiner in their essay, 'The Lecherous Professor' (Dziech and Wright 1993).

In 1979, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, like many films of the period, aimed to build upon the increasing critical, popular, and commercial successes of the genre. Furthermore, social changes demanded, an attempt to question modes of patriarchy inherent to traditional science fiction film, as well as to the *Star Trek* series itself. Consequently, Wise "brought *to Star Trek: The Motion Picture* a new, all-encompassing vision of how our 'universe' would look and sound, and for the cast that meant unisex" (Nichols 1994, 238). Laudable as Wise's intentions may appear, the successful images of *Star Trek* had become so entrenched that it proved impossible to place this 'unisex' philosophy over what was already a strong patriarchal framework sustained by considerable financial success. The new philosophy did permeate some of the film, with shots of spaceships and of Starfleet central command revealing men and women working side-by-side in matching two-piece trouser suits, and one-piece jump-suits; however, Jane Killick outlines why this and subsequent *Star Trek* films would fail properly to address female representation:

> What everyone wanted to see when they went to the cinema was Kirk, Spock and McCoy reprising their familiar rôles. The female characters could only be peripheral, and were not allowed to assume power. (Killick 1992, 59)

The tradition-led framework of the *Star Trek* universe, as well as the

considerable power of veto wielded by the leading players, William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy, resulted in the unisex ideal being supplanted by female adherence to male standards: traditional patriarchal female representation had been replaced with a new patriarchal view of *feminist* representation. Aware of this flaw in his scheme, Wise placed emphasis upon the technology of the twenty-third century and the enigma of the central premise, which followed Gene Roddenberry's long-cherished concept of the fusion of human and machine. The result, described by *Time* magazine as "a long day's journey into ennui," (*Time*, quoted in Tookey. 1994, 801.), failed to attain either the grandeur of *2001* or the interpersonal humour of the original *Star Trek* series.

Nichelle Nichols, however, wielded some of her own power to ensure that Uhura's character remained contiguous with the television series.

I really disliked the bland unisex approach, not simply because it was unattractive, but that it just wasn't Uhura. Bob Wise had made it clear that he did not want to see fingernail polish, jewelry, or any other personal extraneous adornment. When I showed up on the set with Uhura's long silver nails, jade earrings, and high heeled boots, he was not pleased, but I argued that it was right for Uhura. When they finally submitted to the court of last resort - Gene [Roddenberry] - he agreed. "Absolutely," he said. "This is not the military, and that is Uhura expressing her individuality. Besides she's a special woman". (Nichols 1994, 238-39)

Whilst it is clear that Nichols's aim was to defend the integrity of her character, her actions underscore one of the reasons for the retarded female-development in the *Star Trek* film series, and indeed, in much of science fiction film. She enhances the patriarchal perception that a woman could not take command of a spaceship because she is too interested in make-up, nails, earrings, and other trappings of 'femininity', deemed not only unnecessary, but also impractical, aboard a working spaceship. Nichols's insistence upon "Uhura expressing her individuality" as "a special woman" would appear to limit her potential to develop as a professional and as a character. In an understandable attempt to ensure that her character was not smothered by *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*'s masculinity masquerading as a unisex ideology, Nichols unwittingly reflects a patriarchally conceived, female representation.

The net result of the sexual, and unisexual, meanderings of Robert Wise and screen-writers, Alan Dean Foster and Harold Livingstone, is a film which offers very little female character development. Uhura, unpromoted, retains her position as the space-age telephonist on the periphery of the male-controlled action, and those women who have been promoted, have been so in role rather than in function. The first of these characters is Nurse Christine Chapel, played by Majel Barrett, who was one of the more regular female characters in the television series, and has by now attained the status of MD. However, the practical effect of this promotion is short-lived as the arrival of Dr. McCoy, at the request of Kirk, soon demotes Dr. Chapel, who regresses to what is essentially nurse to McCoy's doctor. The functional need for McCoy and Chapel to preserve continuity with the television show clearly takes precedence over any realistic attempts to express Dr. Chapel's abilities and

professional pride through her role; no suggestion of a professional clash between the two characters is suggested - instead Chapel is simply relegated. Just as she had been ousted from the First Officer post in the original series, Majel Barrett is again forced to bend under the weight of patriarchal conservatism. In a parallel situation involving two men, the now Admiral, Kirk replaces a new character, Captain Willard Decker, as commander of the *Enterprise*; this situation, however, results in a psychological feud which underscores three-quarters of the film. Superficial female development is further exemplified by another television series regular, Janice Rand, played by Grace Lee Whitney. For the film she has been, somewhat incongruously, 'elevated' from Yeoman to Transporter Operator; however, as soon as a problem occurs with the transporter, Kirk and Scotty take control, later consoling Rand, who is 'unable' to observe the macabre results of the subsequent transporter malfunction. Janice Rand's erratic career in Starfleet is continued through *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (Nimoy 1986), in which she has been promoted to Commander Rand, and into *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (Meyer 1991), where she mirrors Uhura's role, as Communications Officer on board the *Excelsior*. It is not clear whether Whitney's brief appearance as a woman in a cafeteria, in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* (Nimoy 1984), was as Rand or not, but it does serve to emphasise the fact that the films rely upon the spectators' familiarity with the *Star Trek* myth; little thought is invested in many of the characters who helped to create that myth.

Failure to invest fully in these characters results in Spock being given lines, in *The Motion Picture*, which are incongruous with his character. Charged with the task of suggesting a plan of action to contend with the alien whose probe has boarded the

Enterprise, Spock offers the assertion that:

> *Spock* V'ger is a *child*, I suggest we treat *her* as such [emphasis mine].

This statement represents the first gendered reference the entity, V[oya]ger; it is also the first time that the entity has been likened to a child. Whilst it is arguable that the female form taken by the probe, sent by V'ger, suggests gender, Spock, a famed logician, would surely discard these irrelevancies and continue to regard to the entity as 'it'. This instance does not necessarily represent a conscious decision by the writers to liken women to children, but it does highlight a blind acceptance of this type of imagery, highlighted by Charles Krauthammer as "a raging anachronism . . . as common today as it was in 1912" (Krauthammer 1998, 60)[18]. Spock's incongruous adherence to patriarchal ideology is furthered by his explanation for the actions of V'ger:

> *Spock* At some point in every one of our lives each of us goes to an older
>
> brother, a father, or even to god and asks: "Why am I here?"

The patriarchal exclusivity of this lineage, with its suggestion that god is male and its assertion that moral authority rests with the male, is entirely incongruous with Spock's philosophy and his experience. Logic, which underscores the Vulcan ethos,

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[18] Using the film *Titanic* (Cameron 1998) as an example, Krauthammer suggests that "the old maritime tradition of 'women and children first' enjoys total acceptance by modern audiences". This tradition is upheld in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* every time The *Enterprise*, essentially a *Titanic* in space, has to be evacuated.

and the evidence of the television series, shows that Spock's species does not discriminate against its females. Furthermore, the opening of the film witnesses Spock being presented the award for pure logic by a female "Vulcan Master", played by Edna Glover - a role which parallels that of T'Pau, the Vulcan matriarch in the television episode, "Amok Time". The status of the Vulcan female is regained, to a degree, at the end of *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, when High Priestess T'Lar performs the *Fal-to-pan* ceremony, to return Spock's *katra* life-force. However, T'Lar is accompanied by a number of scantily-clad 'vestal virgin' characters, which help to address the imbalances caused to the id/super-ego transaction.

Pedantic though these points may seem, they serve to highlight the tendency for a universal philosophy to align its weak points with the assumptions of a dominant ideology. In this case 'unisex' policies fall victim to patriarchal conditioning, creating a male-homogeneity.

In order to maintain the patriarchal framework of the show and of the science fiction film, a female character was required to replace the celebrated 'captain's crumpet'. This role is filled by Ilia, whose closeness to her television forebears is established by the fact that she was originally conceived for the ultimately unproduced second *Star Trek* series, *Star Trek: Phase II*[19]. Careful to reflect Roddenberry's original vision, and Wise's unisex policy, Ilia, played by Persis Khambatta, is a strong-

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[19] Paramount gave the go-ahead for *Star Trek: Phase II* in response to the phenomenal success of *Star Wars*, in 1977. Twelve episode-scripts were completed, but shortly before the commencement of shooting, it was announced that the *Enterprise* crew would be returning in a film, which was to become *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Nichols 1994, 215).

willed, intelligent, bald Lieutenant; she is posted at 'Ops' to replace the crew member

killed in the transporter malfunction, and easily out-wits and out-performs male

members of the bridge crew. Overriding these qualities, however, is the fact that

Lieutenant Ilia is a Deltan, which automatically causes a reaction on the bridge. It

transpires that Deltans are a highly sensuous people, who prey on the sexual

immaturity of other species. Her professional conduct is, however, promised with the

line designed to titillate the spectator: "Don't worry commander, I have taken a vow

of celibacy". Continuing an adherence to traditional female representation, with

reference to the mother-nature image described in chapter 1, Ilia is an empath; she has

the power to block Chekhov's pain when he is injured during an encounter with

V'ger[20].

Ilia has a bald head, but this weak ruse to suggest an androgynous character

does little to camouflage the beauty of Khambatta, who, as a former Miss India,

continues a tradition of prominent science fiction females with modelling pedigrees (a

tradition not, of course, confined to the science fiction genre). Clearly Ilia's role as an

intelligent professional is a superficial nod towards feminism, her primary function

being the film's love-cum-sex interest. However, the subject of this interest in *The

Motion Picture* is not Kirk, but the younger pretender, Captain Willard Decker, with

whom Ilia has had a previous relationship[21]. Despite the sexual maturity of her race,

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[20] For reasons unknown, this incident was edited from the film as broadcast by the BBC in 1996.

[21] The success of this concept is underscored by the fact that the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* introduces virtually the same situation during its first two-hour movie pilot, "Encounter at Farpoint" (1987). Deanna Troi, an empath, and counsellor on board the newly-built *Enterprise-D*, discovers that the First-Officer is William Riker, with whom she has had a previous relationship.

Ilia's feelings for Decker are allowed to interfere with her professional work. The strength of this relationship culminates in what Clute and Nichols describe as the film's "daring sexual apotheosis" (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 1158), during which Ilia, Decker, and the machine entity, V'ger, merge, in a reflection of what Jean-Paul Sartre regarded as the existential dream of perfect love between entities - physical and psychological absorption (Sartre 1976, 252-302).

Despite this truly unisex, universal climax, William Shatner's famous credit-sequence mission-statement from the television series underscores the primacy of this film, with its final words unchanged: ". . . to boldly go where no *man* has gone before [emphasis mine]". This sentiment was echoed by the message taken to the moon in 1969:

> By international agreement no nation could claim the moon, even one that managed to go there. That was reflected in the plaque on *Eagle*'s front leg, bearing the inscription, "We came in peace for all *man*kind" [emphasis mine]. (Chaikin 1994, 212)

NASA was careful not to claim the moon for one *nation*; however, it was careless in apparently claiming it for one *sex*. With personnel representing, amongst others, America, Scotland, Canada, Africa, Japan, The Soviet Union, Vulcan, Romulus, and Delta, Starfleet, like NASA, moved towards racial and taxonomic parity long before it approached sexual parity. Whilst the phallocentrism of '*man*kind' was not widely regarded as an issue in the 1960s, its current significance as part of

what Hélène Cixous regards as the "phallocratic, patriarchal 'heirachization'" (Gilbert 1986, *x*) inherent in language, justifies its allusion here. The presentation of man as both male and neutral, is challenged in Luce Irigaray's assertion that female desires cannot be properly voiced because the structure - and subject - of language itself is male: "your blood has become their meaning. They can speak to each other, and about us. But what about us? Come out of their language. Try to go back through the names they've given you." (Irigaray 1985, 205). In her examination of the cultural symbiosis between space-fact and space-fiction, which she terms 'NASA/Trek', Constance Penley exposes the relationship between NASA and *Star Trek* as one in which ". . .each seems to reflect the ambivalence of the other toward the idea of women in space" (Penley 1997, 90).

Whilst *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, having taken nearly $60 million at the box office, was deemed a success, it was clear that the next film in the series would need to place more emphasis upon character development and the 'human' element, perceived by producer, Harve Bennett, as being missing from the first film:

I began to analyze it and I realised that the film wasn't really *Star Trek* at all. It was more of a tone poem, a think piece about God . . . The action and the characters that had always been the foundation of the very best *Star Trek* episodes were really just along for the ride, shoehorned into the story in an attempt to make the rich philosophical disputation seem more like a large-scale adventure story. (Harve Bennett, quoted Shatner 1994, 102-03)

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan (Meyer 1982) was designed to bypass *The Motion Picture*, and link directly with the first-season television episode, "Space Seed". In this episode, Kirk had exiled former earth-dictator Khan Noonien Singh to the barren wastes of planet Ceti Alpha V; five years on, Khan is ready to take revenge on his old nemesis. By drawing more directly upon the traditions and myths of the original *Star Trek*, however, Bennett was in danger of further entrenching the series in patriarchal representation. The result of further adherence to commercial success is a narrative which, whilst it attempts to develop female roles, fails to give them any functional significance.

In a statement designed to reflect the equitable nature of Starfleet, *The Wrath of Khan* opens with a female voice: "Captain's log, stardate . . ."; however, the ship, being commanded by female, Romulan/Vulcan captain, Saavik, played by Kirstie Alley, quickly comes under attack. It is close to being destroyed when Admiral Kirk enters, and reveals the situation to be a training exercise, which Saavik has just failed. Whilst this sequence offers a tongue-in-cheek reference to Kirk's famous knack of entering just in time to save the situation, in the context of the film Kirk's patronising comments serve merely to denigrate Saavik for the spectators, both on-screen and in the cinema. As the film progresses, characters continue to undermine Saavik's position as a professional officer: Kirk and McCoy draw attention to her sex by commenting on Saavik's new hairstyle; Spock's invitation for Saavik to helm the *Enterprise* out of space-dock is met with dismay by Kirk and McCoy, the latter asking the Admiral: "Would you like a tranquilliser?"; and after attempting to quote regulations to Kirk, Saavik is reprimanded by Spock. Furthermore, the fact that Saavik attained the rank of Lieutenant whilst still at cadet-school appears to have

little bearing upon her treatment as a professional.

Central to the plot of *The Wrath of Khan*, is the 'Genesis Probe', a terraforming device, designed to transform desolate planets into life-sustaining worlds. Central to the Genesis Project is Dr. Carol Marcus, head of the scientific research team which is developing the device. Whilst Dr. Marcus's position, as a scientist, serves as a development of the individual female role within *Star Trek*, her creation of a device designed to create life also functions to align her character with the image of mother-nature. This creates the foundation for a narrative which is driven by Khan's realisation that Genesis has huge potential as a weapon. The device designed by a woman to create life is procured by a man to destroy life. The promising character of Dr. Marcus, having all but served its usefulness, is relegated to a support function for the male protagonists. The subsequent narrative charts the struggle between Kirk and Khan for possession of Genesis. Dr. Marcus's status within the narrative is further diminished by the revelation that she once had a relationship with Kirk - a fact which categorises her as former 'captain's crumpet' - and that David Marcus, one of the Genesis scientists, is in fact their son. After briefly reprimanding Kirk for "chasing through the universe", familial and narrative emphasis is placed firmly upon the relationship between Kirk and his estranged son, resulting in a reconciliation and male-bonding towards the end of the film.

Bennett's attempts to integrate interesting female protagonists are continually hampered by his investment in the mythology of *Star Trek*, with its inevitable references, both explicit and implicit, to the characters and situations of the original series. New characters are immediately subjugated to a format which continuously

reinforces the patriarchal structure in which Kirk and crew are able to perform feats of derring-do:

'Watching it is like watching a wind-up toy going through its actions. It is a banal, unoriginal piece of work. . . . The characters are the same cardboard entities from the TV series going through the same mechanical routines and uttering the same old clichés'. (John Brosnan's review of *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, quoted in Brosnan 1991, 195)

Recognising the importance of new, younger fans, whose first experience of *Star Trek* had been *The Motion Picture*, *The Wrath of Khan* director, Nicholas Meyer, was careful to ensure that his movie acted as a symbiosis between cinema and television. This is emphasised by the grandiloquent tag-line for the film which evokes both the grandeur of space and the intimacy of human emotions: "At the end of the universe lies the beginning of vengeance" (Movie Database 1995c). In his attempt to create a hybrid, Meyer couples the enhanced patriarchal framework of the original television series with a continuation of the unisex approach favoured by Robert Wise for *The Motion Picture*. Uncertain about how to address 'feminism', the film offers a reformulation of Judith Smith's notion of ". . . Hollywood's ordinary presentation of homogenous classlessness" (Smith 1994, 227), emphasised by Starfleet's theoretically classless hierarchy. The result, however, is a continuation of the male-homogeneity of the first film, sanctioned this time by a more accessible narrative. Nichelle Nichols states that Meyer "wanted the women in the crew to be addressed as 'Sir'" (Nichols

1994, 248); in the film, Saavik is referred to as "Mr"[22]. Nichols takes the issue of male-homogeneity further, with a complaint about the new, but still supposedly unisex, tunics designed for *The Wrath of Khan*:

> While the uniforms looked great on everybody . . . , mine were particularly uncomfortable. They are made of heavy, thick wool, which is padded and inner-faced and then faced again in the front in a contrasting color of the same weighty fabric. As if that weren't enough, they are double-breasted.
>
> "Hey, these are fine for the men and flat-chested women," I complained vehemently, "but I'm already double-breasted. I feel like the *Titanic*!". (Nichols 1994, 247-48)

As a direct sequel to *The Wrath of Khan*, and again written by Harve Bennett, *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* (Nimoy 1984) offers very little further character development. Whereas *The Wrath of Khan* indicated a nominal shift for the series towards representation of a female deuteragonist, *The Search for Spock* returns the narrative emphasis to the activities of the stock crew, punctuated by characters designed to draw upon audience recognition of stereotypical imagery. The sub-plot of the film replaces Khan with a Klingon, Kruge - another 'man' determined to acquire the plans to Genesis. The first female character is the Klingon, Valkris, employed to

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[22] In his *Daily Telegraph* perusal of thirty years of *Star Trek*, Michael Harrington applauds the show's use of central female characters, but insists that the addressing of female officers as "sir" is better than "ma'am", "and should become a convention" (Harrington 1996). He does not offer a further alternative, which would, perhaps, omit male-homogeneity.

deliver the Genesis plans to Kruge in an early sequence of the film. Perceived as an

Amazon-like warrior woman, Valkris clearly takes her name from the 'Valkyrie', the

Norse goddesses who carried the souls of the glorious, battle-slain warriors to live

forever in Valhalla, and is clearly designed as the film series' first allegory for a

perceived radical feminist threat. Close reference is also drawn to Sybil Danning's

sex-queen, Saint-Exmin of the Valkyrie, in the 1980 film, *Battle Beyond the Stars*

(Murakami USA). Both characters represent a magnified patriarchal reading of

radical feminism, which, through its advocacy of female signification[23] is read by

paranoid patriarchy as a challenge. As strong warrior types, these characters claim

independence from men, but are also framed within heterosexual male sexual fantasy;

this is emphasised by costumes which accentuate the female form through a blend of

bondage and sado-masochism, as well as sexual personae which evoke reference to

lesbian tendencies - male sexual-fantasies recognised in *Barbarella* (Vadim 1967).

Further subjugation of this patriarchal representation of radical feminism is presented

as these characters, like the most famous of Norse Valkyrie, Brynhild, are bent to the

will of man: Valkris, denied the Klingon honour of dying in battle, passively allows

her own immolation to protect the secret of Genesis for Kruge. Thus the female,

again having served her function, is absented from the narrative.

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[23] Rosmarie Tong notes that "during the last twenty years, radical feminists have, in a variety of ways, been creating and celebrating women's religion, science, art, poetry, literature, song, dance, cuisine, horticulture. The list is a long and happy one" (Tong 1995, 72).

By 1986, renewed confidence in the *Star Trek* franchise proved strong enough to allow *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* a clear development away from a wholly patriarchal representation of women. However, this new policy cynically highlights Claus Jensen's rather sardonic appraisal of NASA's space-shuttle recruitment policies; *In Contest for the Heavens: The Road to the "Challenger" Disaster*, he neatly emphasises the agency's need publicly to promote, or at least to accept, the concept of women in space, whilst inferring the greater need to de-emphasise their role:

In a crew of seven or eight not everyone needed to be a superman or be made of the finest stuff. Older and younger astronauts joined the ranks, as did women. (Jensen 1996, 217)

It is perhaps fitting then that *The Voyage Home*, with its expansion of Starfleet's egalitarian employment policy, was dedicated to the women and men of the *Challenger* crew". Early sequences include a black male Admiral, an Asian captain, alien officers, and a very efficient, professional black female starship captain. Taking the helm for the second time, Leonard Nimoy, in the most assured of the *Star Trek* films, takes his stock characters and places them in situations designed to accentuate, but also, more interestingly to mock, their, by now, well-known traits[24]. Confident that the audience will endorse this affectionate reappraisal of the familiar

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[24] This essentially comic device formed the basis of a number of the best of the television episodes, including "Amok Time", in which Spock is gripped by an urge to mate, and "Mirror Mirror", in which crew members are confronted by their malevolent selves in a parallel universe.

characters and action, placed, as in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, within the familiar confines of contemporary earth, Nimoy is then able to present a narrative driven partially by a female character without upsetting the expectations of his audience. In *The Voyage Home*, an alien entity is approaching earth, looking for whales with which to communicate. As whales have been extinct for over two hundred years, Kirk and crew are forced to travel back in time in order to find a whale to bring to the twenty-third century. Thus, *The Voyage Home* draws upon the success of what is generally regarded as the best of the television episodes, "The City on the Edge of Forever", in which Kirk, McCoy and Spock travel back in time to America in 1930. For Nimoy's film, *The Enterprise* arrives in 1987, when members of the crew are 'beamed' to Los Angeles, and are given various tasks to ensure the safe transport of the whales which are to be acquired by Kirk and Spock. Having failed to introduce any important female characters within its space environment, and so reflecting NASA's de-emphasis of the role of women in space, the film now introduces an Earth-bound female deuteragonist. Dr. Gillian Taylor is a marine biologist, and custodian of a pair of whales being kept at an aquarium. Taylor is presented as a professional, both dedicated to her job, and passionate about her whales. She takes an interest in Kirk and Spock when the latter announces that the female whale is pregnant, a fact being kept secret by the marine institute. Nimoy, as director, clearly indicates his willingness to nurture character development in his recognition of the qualities brought to Taylor's character by the actor, Catherine Hicks: "Cathy brought a wonderful fresh, wide-eyed innocence mixed with street-smart cynicism that worked very well for the role" (Nimoy 1996, 269). Both cynicism and intelligence are presented in a brief exchange with Spock:

Spock	To hunt a species to extinction is not logical.
Taylor	Who ever said the human race was logical?

Seemingly unperturbed by her subsequent discovery of Kirk and Spock's identity, she announces: "I knew it! I knew outer space was going to come into this", and takes control of the situation, using her experience, contacts, and guile to procure the two whales needed to save the twenty-third century. Returning of her own volition to the twenty-third century, with Kirk, Taylor proceeds to derail tradition by further electing to leave a rather bemused Kirk to pursue a new career aboard a science vessel. Taylor's relationship with Kirk, when juxtaposed with her narrative function, is instrumental to the witty self-referential humour which helps this film to move the series away from the complacent self-reverential mode into which it had fallen.

Despite this, Phil Hardy indicates an instance in which Taylor is subjected to examples of the patriarchal format presented by its forebears: "Shatner, given twenty-four hours to save the world, still finds time to take the heroine . . . out for a romantic dinner" (Hardy 1991, 413). Whilst Hardy's appraisal is not entirely accurate - the meal is more practical than romantic - the scene draws upon Kirk's stock characteristics; he continues to remain true to form with a somewhat belittling chat-up line: "Well, how did a nice girl like you get to be a cetacean biologist?" Thus, Dr. Taylor, like Dr. Marcus before her, is undermined by an association, however tenuous, with 'captain's crumpet'. This alignment with tradition is further highlighted

by her employment as a marine biologist - a continuation of science fiction film's "soft" female scientists.

Whilst care is still taken in *The Voyage Home* to complete the id/super-ego transaction through the employment of females with some adherence to ideological expectation, confidence in the *Star Trek* franchise, as well as Nimoy's assurance as a director, allowed enough of a relaxation of the male-narrative prerogative to admit a female character with a clear narrative function.

This was certainly not true of the next film in the series. Having a contract which guaranteed professional parity with Leonard Nimoy (Nichols 1994, 280), William Shatner was given the director's chair for *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* (1989). Hampered by an unoriginal premise, immature dialogue, and an improbable screenplay, Shatner's is the only film of the series which ". . . failed to hold its own at the box office . . ." (Nichols 1994, 286). Widely hailed as the worst of the original *Star Trek* movies (Altman and Gross 1998, 223; Shatner 1994, 266/7), *The Final Frontier* represents a misguided attempt purely to reproduce the simple derring-do of the television show. Whilst "this reductionism is typical of the whole *Star Trek* cycle, from television to cinema and back to television again" (Hardy 1991, 440), it is made more acute in this film by the absence of the self-referential humour, tight plotting, and egalitarian intent exhibited in the previous film. Kirk and crew are treated with an earnest reverence not even attempted in *The Motion Picture*. With its display of impotent machismo, Shatner's film not only halts the cycle's development of female characters, but even reduces their significance - mainly through their absence - to a level unprecedented in any *Star Trek* incarnation. Uhura is, of course, present as a

member of the *Enterprise* crew, but her central scene, in which she performs a semi-

naked dance to divert the attentions of male guards, only serves to highlight Shatner's

hegemonic marginalisation of his female characters. Nichols's dance is used by

Christopher Tookey, perhaps rather unkindly, to exemplify the advancing ages of the

principal actors of the series: "Lieutenant Uhura's dance of the seven veils might pass

muster in a glamorous granny competition, but is embarrassing in any other context"

(Tookey 1994, 803).

The interregnum between *The Final Frontier* and *Star Trek VI: The*

Undiscovered Country (Meyer 1991) witnessed the flourishing success of the

television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Whilst the television show had first

aired in 1987, almost two years before the release date of *The Final Frontier*, it was

little qualified, as yet, to have an impact on the movie series. Ironically, the failure of

Shatner's film may well have boosted the standing of the new television show. By the

time *The Undiscovered Country* was released, *The Next Generation* was well

established, with a large and loyal following. Although the television show does

employ its females in nurturing roles, Beverley Crusher, the doctor/mother, Deanna

Troi, the counsellor, and Guinan, the mystic alien, narrative emphasis is placed

equally upon these female characters, with some episodes featuring these characters

as central protagonists. Moreover, the *Enterprise-D*'s female security officer, Tasha

Yar, exemplified a willingness for the series to embrace female roles rejected in 1966

by executives who worried that "'TV viewers will never be able to accept such

characters'" (Nimoy 1996, 32)[25]. Taking inspiration from the television show, as well

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[25] Despite the seemingly progressive nature of this role and function, Tasha Yar was

as regaining much of the ethos of Nimoy's *Star Trek IV*, before the hiatus of

Shatner's *Star Trek V*, *Star Trek VI* presents a number of strong female protagonists

and antagonists. In a plot which was designed to parallel the, then, recent reforms in

the Soviet Union, the Klingon Chancellor, Gorkon, is making overtures of peace

towards the federation:

> Just as the original series addressed current-day issues in a "safe"
> futuristic setting, *Star Trek VI* examined how we respond to and redefine
> ourselves in the face of change. Inspired by such recent real-life events as the
> fall of the Berlin Wall and a teetering Soviet government . . . , Leonard [Nimoy,
> executive producer and co- story-writer] explored the repercussions of a
> Klingon-led peace initiative. (Nichols 1994, 291)

As well as underscoring the political comment, this ethos of perestroika

pervades the whole film, with multiple references to the old being replaced by the

new, and a general recognition that this would be the last outing for the crew of the

original *Enterprise*. Many references to this change are signalled by female characters,

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killed off in the first season episode "Skin of Evil", following actor Denise Crosby's dissatisfaction with the development of her role (Nemecek 1992, 54). Her replacement as security officer, was the more traditionally macho, Klingon Worf. Furthermore, as Constance Penley has observed, ". . . it took seventy-eight *Star Trek* episodes, six movies, and two more television spinoff series before there was a female captain" (Penley 1997, 89). (Whilst this is not strictly true - Starfleet employs a black female captain in *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, and in *The Next Generation* episode "Yesterday's Enterprise" involves the *Enterprise-C*, captained by Rachel Grant - Penley is most probably referring to the captain as central protagonist. James Kirk, Jean-Luc Picard, and Benjamin Sisco were finally joined by Kathryn Janeway in *Star Trek: Voyager*, a role described by performer Kate Mulgrew as "the quintessential woman of the future" (*Radio Times*, 19-25 October 1996, 30).

the first of whom is Azetbur, who, after the assassination of her father, Chancellor Gorkon, becomes one of the most powerful Klingons in the empire. Mindful of her responsibility to this empire, she is unafraid of change: "War is obsolete, General, as we are in danger of becoming". However, she maintains a hard Klingon line, promising that Kirk will "pay for the death of my father". This represents a move away from the patriarchally motivated radical feminist approach with its presentation of 'independent' Amazon women framed within male sexual fantasy, towards a liberal feminist approach, with its aim to ". . . free women from oppressive gender roles . . ." (Tong 1995, 28). The hand-over of power to Lieutenant Valeris, the Vulcan officer being groomed to replace Spock, is ostensibly a father/daughter relationship; however, some care is taken to develop the bond along the professional grounds denied to Saavik in the Wrath of Khan. Spock explains to Kirk that Valeris was the first Vulcan to graduate from Starfleet at the top of her class, and the attitude of both Vulcans is encapsulated in Valeris's line: "Sir, I respect you as a kindred intellect". Whilst acting ostensibly as a continuation of a generally accepted Vulcan philosophy of 'liberal' sexual equality, this relationship enters the 'different but equal' debate contested by liberal feminists who recognise a need to accommodate fundamental sexual differences between men and women, whilst maintaining "gender-neutral humanism" (Tong 1995, 31[26]). This difference, however, is evidenced by the revelation that, despite Spock's sponsorship, Valeris is a member of the terrorist group bent upon derailing the Klingon/Federation peace talks.

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[26] Cf. Friedan 1971; and Friedan 1982.

Gender-neutral humanism is nevertheless heralded through *The Undiscovered Country*'s treatment of the Klingons, through the importance of Chancellor Gorkon and later Azetbur, as the open-minded progenitors of the peace accord. Nevertheless, Nichelle Nichols had reservations about the seemingly racist comments made through some of the film's dialogue (Nichols 1994, 292-93). However, seemingly racist comments are used to place the humans, by inference equated with Whites, on a low moral footing. The film's subsequent condemnation of human (white) arrogance, and its questioning of human (white) primacy, is neatly conveyed in an exchange during the state dinner held on board *The Enterprise* in honour of Chancellor Gorkon:

Chekhov   We do believe all planets have a sovereign claim to inalienable human rights.

Azetbur   In-alien - If you could only hear yourselves. Human rights: the very name is racist. The Federation is no more than a homo-sapiens-only club.

By placing Azetbur, already connoted as black by the film's narrative, on a high moral footing, the film might be seen to justify its use of what Nichols regarded as offensive dialogue. As in developing female-representation, an attempt is made to strike a balance between icons of recognition and pejorative stereotypes. The success of this policy in *The Undiscovered Country* is variable, and offence is inevitably taken; however, Nichols appears far less offended by the poor development of her character, choosing to place undue emphasis upon an instance claimed to add narrative weight to Uhura. Towards the end of the film, the *Enterprise*, unable to respond to an attack from a cloaked Klingon vessel, is in danger of being destroyed;

Nicholls maintains that

> It was Uhura - not the chief engineer nor the science officer - who figured out
> how to detect the elusive, invisible bird of prey . . . and so Uhura saved not only
> the *Enterprise* but any hope of intergalactic peace. (Nichols 1994, 294)

Whilst Uhura does indeed "detect the elusive, invisible bird of prey", her revelation is heavily prompted by Spock in an exchange which clearly emphasises a patriarchal tradition which casts the man as the origin of knowledge[27]:

Spock   Gas. [pause] Gas, Captain. Under impulse power she expends fuel like any other vessel; we call it plasma, but whatever the Klingon designation, it's merely ionised gas.

Uhura   Well, what about all that equipment we're carrying to catalogue gaseous anomalies? Well, that thing's gotta have a tail-pipe.

Furthermore, Uhura's announcement that she will be chairing a seminar at the academy does little to counteract the strength of patriarchal mythology; this empty promotion is more reflective of a feeling that the characters are becoming too old for active service as *The Next Generation* takes control of the *Star Trek* Universe.

Nichols's experiences and selective criticism highlight the inevitable futility of

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[27] Cf. Gardner 1983; and Gardner 1985.

attempting to present a message, socio-political, moral, or otherwise, that will appeal to all spectators. Universal endorsement of the messages presented by the *Star Trek* series, as well as the majority of science fiction films produced during this period of social, political, and financial upheaval, is hindered, in the main, by a commercially driven dogged adherence to the iconography of contemporary, dominant ideologies.

Having been framed for the assassination of Chancellor Gorkon, Kirk and McCoy are sent to the penal asteroid, Rura Penthe, where they meet a more traditional science fiction female villain in the form of Martia, played by supermodel, Iman. With multiple allusions to *the femme fatale* tradition, cigar-smoking Martia uses her beauty to appeal to Kirk's loins. Doctor McCoy neatly diffuses what might be regarded as a facile reference to the Kirk of yore with a dryly delivered, self-referential humour:

> *McCoy*   [*after witnessing a kiss between Martia and Kirk*] What is it with you anyway?
>
> *Kirk*   Still think we're finished?
>
> *McCoy*   More than ever!

Kirk's impotence is further signalled when Martia reveals herself as a shape-shifting alien, who has been working for Kirk's enemies; her taunt, "I thought I would assume a pleasing shape", is clearly designed as a humorous draw upon the spectator's knowledge of Kirk. However, it also returns the film to the traditional representation indicated by Laura Mulvey's application of the scopophilic pleasure

principle (1975) to patriarchal mythology in her critique of the films of Jean-Luc Godard:

> For patriarchal mythology, feminine beauty or sexual allure can constitute a further aspect of the enigma. For the Symbolists, film noir, and . . . Godard, female beauty is a mask that conceals deceit and danger. (Mulvey 1989a, *x*)

Despite this late foray into stereotype, the film ends with an acknowledgement that new forces are at large in the *Star Trek* franchise, and the time has come for the original characters and values to depart. In the film's dénouement Kirk responds to a request for a course-heading, with a poignant reference to J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan: "second star to the right, and straight on till morning". The final hand-over is then effected by Kirk's seemingly reluctant voice-over, integrating the words intoned by Captain Picard into his own credit-sequence mission statement: ". . . to boldly go where no man - or no *one* - has gone before". The reference to 'man' is dropped entirely from *The Next Generation* voice-over, a policy continued into the spin-off films, *Star Trek: Generations* (Carson 1994), and *Star Trek: First Contact* (Frakes 1996).

Spanning twelve years, the original *Star Trek* film series witnessed and, to a degree, reflected the period of greatest development in female science fiction film characters. In *Alien to femininity: Speculative fiction and feminist theory*, Marleen Barr identifies three phases of feminist development along with their literary equivalents:

(1) "Statement of Problem"

(2) "Radical Feminist Solutions"

(3) "Moderate Womanist Solutions"

(see Barr 1987, *xii*)

Produced by feminist female writers, critiques and fictions have shifted female representation towards a primary need to make the "patriarchal structures which constrain women obvious and perceptible" (Barr 1987, *xx*)[28]. Whilst shifts in female representation made by science fiction films have developed from a need to respond to social change, and growing criticism by feminist writers as they became germane to financial expediency, framed within its clearly conceived patriarchal framework the genre has assimilated aspects of feminism in the course of various attempts to diffuse them.

Registering the "statement of the problem" as the limitations of traditional female representation, the *Star Trek* film series moved towards an appropriation of "moderate womanist solutions" with a more palatable 'liberal feminist' 'equalisation' of the sexes. Charlotte Brunsdon has observed that many early feminist films "took a feminist politics for granted, and built from there, rather than polemicising to establish

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[28] For "Statement of Problem", Barr cites Betty Friedan's 1963 (1971) criticism, *The Feminine Mystique*, followed four years later by Pamela Zoline's fiction, *The Heat Death of the Universe* (see 1988); "Radical Feminist Solutions", are exemplified by Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970/1979) followed by Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975/1985). "Moderate Womanist Solutions" are forwarded by Alice Walker with *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1984), and the fictional *Shadow Singer*, by Marcia Bennet (1984).

that politics" (Brunsdon 1987, 51). If specifically feminist films tended towards this degree of nonchalance, it is easy to see how *Star Trek*'s unisex 'liberalism', framed from within the patriarchal traditions of both medium and genre, resulted in male-homogeneity. Limitations of this mode prompted a return to the familiar, and therefore financially 'safer', traditions of female exclusion and exploitation with their consequent limited female narrative significance. With a developing confidence in the success of the franchise, coupled with an ability for self-referential humour, once again allowing some interrogation of the ideological foundations underpinning the *Star Trek* universe, a further "statement of the problem" was possible. However, the strength of those foundations inevitably confined this interrogation, resulting in "radical feminist solutions" being re-presenting Pandora's box as a form of 'destructive femininity' (Mulvey 1989a, *x-xi*).

This basic model follows *Star Trek*'s chronological struggle with seemingly conflicting priorities; and whilst it essentially reflects the genre's more complicated vacillation between varying modes of patriarchally conceived 'feminist' representation, the genre as a whole did not develop its reaction to feminism chronologically - in some cases it did not develop at all. In 1979 *Alien* had delivered as impressive a liberal representation as could be expected of any commercial science fiction film. From this point onwards, film-makers were, to a degree, playing "catch-up". The remaining chapters in this thesis examine some of the tools with which interested writers, directors, and producers attempted to appear to fulfil the needs and desires of a feminist spectatorship.

Whilst the *Star Trek* film series succeeds in so far as it manages to create a number of characters which evince a move towards change, these characters rarely reflect either recognisable feminism or rounded individuals, restricted largely by one-dimensional representation. Widespread application of what will be termed here 'patriarchal polarisation' resulted in multiple roles, rather than multi-dimensional individual roles, each of which needed to counteract another in the id/super-ego transaction.

Despite many instances of this inter-character patriarchal polarisation between, science fiction film during this period of mutation developed *intra*-character polarisation, which allowed a limited number of female characters internal swings in representation. Whilst this inevitably reduces the number of female roles, it allows for multi-dimensional characters. Developing lines of patriarchal polarisation highlighted in this chapter's examination of the *Star Trek* film series, chapter 4 explores the completion of the id/super-ego transaction through the creation of individual female characters.

CHAPTER 4

PATRIARCHAL PENDULUM:
POLARISED DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER

Whilst referring specifically to *The Terminator* (Cameron 1984), Constance Penley's suggestion that ". . . the sure sign of a postmodern success is the ability to inspire spinoffs . . ." (Penley 1986, 66), supplies a link between the concept of the patriarchal polarisation and the influence of Ridley Scott's *Alien*, ". . . undoubtedly the most imitated film" of the 1980s (Hardy 1991, 358). Films clearly produced to cash in on Ridley Scott's *Alien* include the low budget *Inseminoid* (Warren 1980), the ultra-low budget *Star Crystal* (Lindsey 1985), and *The Titan Find* (Malone 1985). *Moontrap* (Dyke 1988), starring *Star Trek*'s Walter Koenig, and *Xtro II: The Second Encounter* (Bromley-Davenport 1991) were *Alien* derivatives, whilst *Leviathan* (Cosmatos 1989) took further influence from *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (Corman 1956a), and in turn inspired *La Grieta* (Simón 1989). *Scared to Death* (Malone 1980) also exhibited many *Alien* overtones.

In the rush to capitalise on the commercial success of *Alien*, and on what was clearly perceived as a financial potential for the female protagonist, film-makers mistook the popularity of Sigourney Weaver's single-minded character, Ripley, for an audience desire for wholly 'radical' females. Postmodernist appropriation of individual elements rather than all-encompassing themes, coupled with a financially based "new conservatism" (Hardy 1991, 358), resulted in a further polarisation of individual female characters in a move towards a patriarchal representation of radical feminism. Hitherto, scant commercial demand for female characters to expand beyond

traditional representation, led to elements of this representation becoming 'obligatory', whereas the less traditional elements remained embellishments. Through overuse, the 'obligatory' female elements, established as the mainstays of female character, had become mundane, and, as the ". . . woman is always associated with passivity in philosophy" (Cixous and Clement 1987, 64), had consequently become aligned with the negative. Writers and directors who felt that the success of *Alien* demanded that they promote their female characters, were tempted, therefore, to employ what might be regarded as more 'radical' elements.

It's also fun to play a character that's that big, and that strong, and that clear about who she is. (video interview with Alice Krige, see Frakes 1996 [1998]).

In *Star Trek: First Contact* (Frakes 1996), the Borg, a psychically linked, cybernetic collective bent upon the assimilation of all species and technologies, have, for the first time, a queen, played by Alice Krige[1]. The Borg have travelled back in time through a temporal vortex to earth in the year 2063, one day before the historic 'first contact' between humans and aliens, which is to usher in new era of peace. The Borg Queen plans to destroy a prototype human spaceship before it is able to leave the ground; earth will then be ripe for assimilation by the Borg. Naturally, the *Enterprise-E* is caught in the temporal vortex, and arrives in 2063 in time to save humanity.

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[1] The Borg had made their debut in the *Next Generation* episode "Q Who", considered by Mark Altman and Edward Gross as one of the best of the series. The double episode "Best of Both Worlds", which provides much of the exposition for *First Contact* is considered highly favourably, even against original *Star Trek* episodes (see Altman and Gross 1998).

Learning from the various successes and failures of the original six *Star Trek* movies, and building upon the consciously egalitarian aims of *The Next Generation* television series, *Star Trek: First Contact*, appears from Krige's description, to make a definite attempt to place some of its narrative into the hands of its central female character. However, Krige offers further insight into the psychology of her Borg Queen character:

> She just gets off on power; that's what moves her. . . . the Borg that we've encountered so far in *Star Trek* are just beings that she's colonised, I mean she's just gone in and sucked out their brains and taken what she wants; and uses them as minions - just tools to accomplish what she wants to. (video interview with Alice Krige, see Frakes 1996 [1998])

Krige's celebration highlights a patriarchal fear that the goal of feminism, especially radical feminism with which the Borg Queen is most closely identified, is to wrest power from men[2]. Furthermore, the Borg Queen, as leader of a collective, represents the 'merging', feminine *personne* in direct confrontation with the autonomous, masculine *moi* (Sibley 1995, 159). Furthermore, Mark Altman highlights the undermining influence that the presence of this character has on the, already established, Borg:

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[2] See Redstockings 1978.

By giving the Borg a human face, you diminish their venality. Resistance isn't futile if you can seduce their queen and mislead her with lies and evasions. It's pretty ludicrous that this "girl" just wants to have fun with a fully functional Data, which gives the Borg an all too human persona, considering what made them such great villains was their soulless, relentless quest for mechanical perfection. (Altman and Gross 1998, 226)

Despite narrative attempts to reconcile a number of inconsistencies, it becomes clear that Krige's role was formulated without recourse to plausible narrative determination. Hitherto, the Borg, have been framed within masculine, militaristic iconography; whilst their tight leather suits, and high-tech prostheses, are suggestive of sado-masochistic sexual fantasy; this sexual aspect of the species had been de-emphasised by the television writers. The Borg Queen uses her 'power' to introduce a degree of sexuality to the species, and by doing so, dilutes the potential impact of the powerful female antagonist.

Through a haste to retreat from the confines of Jung's social state, in which "society expects, and indeed must expect, every individual to play the part assigned to him as perfectly as possible . . ." (Jung 1953, 48), films like *First Contact*, with their artificial, apparently one-dimensional protagonists, are in danger of ignoring the id/super-ego transaction by retreating from any form of 'acceptable' socio-ideological foundation; they embrace Christian Metz's dream state, in which ". . . the cinema (rather like the dream in this) represents a kind of enclosure or 'reserve' which escapes the fully social aspect of life . . ." (Metz 1982b, 66). However, with little

room for manoeuvre beyond the confines of her 'radical' representation, which "stretches one's credulity . . ." (Altman and Gross 1998, 226), the potential result is a reduction in viewing pleasure. In an attempt to restore pleasure, *First Contact* aligns its female antagonist with 'acceptable' representation. *First Contact*, therefore, roots the Borg Queen firmly within the scopophilic drive highlighted in chapter 1. Overt sexuality is initially indicated during the Queen's first encounter with the captured robot, Data: after teasing him, and the audience with the line ". . . you haven't been properly [*pause and pout*] stimulated, yet", she blows across the skin which has been grafted onto Data's endoskeletal structure. This action elicits an erotic response from the robot with a, now functioning, emotion-chip, and the Queen continues her sexual assault:

Queen   Are you familiar with physical forms of pleasure?

Data   [*faltering*] If you are referring to sexuality: I am fully functional - programmed in multiple techniques.

Queen   How long has it been since you used them?

Data   Eight years, seven months, sixteen days, four minutes, twenty-two...

Queen   ... Far too long.

            [*she kisses him; he kisses her*]

In his *Guardian* article, *Warp Factor*, Jim McClellan makes it clear that it was no accident that the Borg Queen introduces explicit sexuality to the Borg. Indeed, the intention of Brannon Braga, *First Contact*'s co-writer and producer, was to capitalise

on the, hitherto implicit, sexual nature of the *Next Generation* aliens, with his new female creation:

> The "girl in every galaxy" heterosexual cruising of Captain Kirk has been replaced by an almost S&M style encounter between the lovable android Data . . . and an evil alien queen. . . .
>
> . . . "This is what's so great about this genre", Braga said. "We can do sex in ways that are much more sexy than if she actually pulled down his pants and whipped out his alien dick". (McClellan 1996, 2/19)

Whilst her proclivity for indiscriminate assimilation of species would suggest a multi-sexuality, the Queen does not use her power to embrace the "celibacy, autoeroticism, or lesbianism" (Tong 1995, 95) with which some radical feminists have rejected the institution of male-dominated heterosexuality. Instead she services heterosexuality through her attentions to Data, and her treatment of Picard as the special case for assimilation, who had narrowly escaped becoming part of the Borg in an earlier television story[3]. Thus, the most influential female antagonist of the *Star Trek* series - leader of some of the most powerful aliens known to the Federation - is reined in by patriarchal determinations, to become a consummation of paranoid patriarchal readings of radical feminism coupled with male-servicing sexual fantasy. This tendency for strong science fiction females to be undermined is wittily emphasised in Heather Barker's exposé of the genre's 'witch' type, described by the

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[3] *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: "Best of Both Worlds", Parts 1 and 2.

acronym 'BUM': "Beautiful, Underdressed, Menacing" (Barker 1992, 11). An early

attempt to balance ". . . somewhat contradictory attitudes towards sex and sex roles"

(Biskind 1983, 133) is identified by Peter Biskind in his examination of the

relationship between the films and the social structures of the 1950s, *Seeing is*

Believing. Referring to *Them!* (Douglas 1954), he maintains that the presence of Dr.

Patricia Medford, an independent female scientist played by Joan Weldon, serves not

as a celebration of women, but rather as "a paranoid fantasy of a world dominated by

predatory females" (Biskind 1983, 133). He continues:

> To men the moral is: Better give an inch than lose a mile, better let Pat
>
> Medford assert herself, or face a far more serious challenge to male power in
>
> the future. To women: Don't be too assertive or you'll be punished for it.
>
> (Biskind 1983, 133)

Through a polarisation of female characteristics the Borg Queen represents a

microcosm of the id/super-ego transaction. Rather than representing one element of a

transaction employed by the film as a whole, this individual character contains within

her both the familiar and the unfamiliar which forms the psychoanalytical structure of

the successful film. In this regard, then, she represents a progression from the one-

dimensional projections of the traditional female as extension to the male self.

In his conclusion to *Geographies of Exclusion*, David Sibley writes:

> One assertion which I make at various junctures is that people's relationships
>
> with others are too often conditioned by fear and that fear, anxiety, nervousness

also affect attitudes to knowledge. New ideas or subversive ideas can be as threatening as images of alien others. (Sibley 1995, 183)

Traditional science fiction film has always reflected the fears of men; women have supported men in their fight against the Hegelian Other alien manifestation of socio-political anxieties. However, by the 1970s the influence of women's movements on the science fiction genre heralded a perception of women as the new direct threat. Feminism had, to a degree become the Hegelian Other. The Borg Queen clearly represents "the sort of stereotypically smothering female that men of action like Picard are often called upon to vanquish" (McClellan 1996, 19). The abject representation of radical feminism as an Hegelian Other, to be destroyed, in *First Contact* represented, in 1996, a retrograde step, as well as a rare departure for the genre; the need for science fiction film to integrate changing ideas permeating the commercial film apparatus on the whole generally precludes the direct destruction of this new Hegelian Other in the manner of science fiction aliens and horror monsters. Instead, the threat of feminism is dismantled figuratively through a degree of character development.

In *APEX* (Roth 1993), a *Terminator* "rip-off" (Hardy 1995, 477), which owes much also to *Alien*, the female deuteragonist, Tasha, played by Lisa Ann Russell, is presented as a tough, no-nonsense fighter, Ostracised by her fellow guerrilla fighters for having caught the virus which is destroying the human race, Tasha's intractable attitude is exhibited through her bull-headed commitment to duty, and her unwillingness to acknowledge the friendliness of the film's protagonist, Sinclair. In

the year 2072, Sinclair is one of the head scientists on the APEX (Advanced Prototype EXploration unit) project; the aim of this project is to explore time by sending robotic probes to uninhabited areas of earth. In order to prevent "contamination and the creation of a time paradox", priority order 'A-1-O-1' enables the scientists to send 'sterilization units' to the site of the paradox to correct the problem. These armoured robots continue to be sent automatically until "the complete elimination of the Paradox Time Line" has been accomplished. The stage is now set for Sinclair to be accidentally transported to a parallel time line in which contamination by the APEX units in 1972 has created a human/robot guerrilla war, which has continued for one hundred years. Sinclair, a stranger to this devastated 2072, has to make his way to the APEX laboratory in order to stop the A-1-O-1 order, which continues to send sterilisation units, from ever being implemented. One of the guerrilla fighters chosen to aid him in this task is Tasha, who had been his beloved wife in the alternative 2072. Sinclair spends the rest of the film being tortured by the fact that the feelings of this Tasha are not reciprocated; Tasha makes her feelings for him clear: "Upset me? What are you, some kind of fucking joker, Sinclair? You send me on a goddam re-con, and you're worried about upsetting me?". Tasha, the only character in the film to be addressed by her first name, continues with this hardened attitude, responding to Sinclair's enquires after her well-being with "give me a break". Her response to her abhorrent treatment by the other guerrilla fighters is to confront the largest and toughest of them in a confident show of prowess, after he has given their location away to the robots: "Listen, shit for brains: next time, why don't you send out a goddam invitation!"

APEX, along with other films which raided the themes of *Alien*, suffers from a scant appreciation of the model's multi-layered structural integrity, along with little investment in the humanity which strengthens the character of Ripley. The result of this failure is 'radical' female characters which present magnified projections of male paranoia regarding feminism. This patriarchal presentation of 'tough bitch' radical feminism is then easily restructured by the patriarchal commercial cinematic apparatus in order to incorporate the tropes of fetishism; this results in a return to the male scopophilic fantasy exemplified by *First Contact. APEX*, itself, ensures the elimination of the strong female warrior, not by destroying her completely in the manner of *First Contact*, but by ensuring that Tasha softens towards the end of the film, as the patriarchal film apparatus inevitably shifts character representation from one patriarchal ideal to the next on what might be termed the 'patriarchal pendulum'. The significance of the pendulum is that it swings between characteristics needed to complete the id/super-ego transaction within individual characters. However, it also tends to polarise characteristics within one area of representation at any one time, allowing no interaction between separate facets of the same character. Trapped in the laboratory, Sinclair tells Tasha about the parallel time zone, and his mission to eliminate the paradox; he also tells her about the Tasha, his wife, in this other reality. In an action which contradicts the character presented hitherto by the film, and is clearly calculated to present male control of the 'feisty' women aligned with 'radical' ideas, Tasha kisses Sinclair. Heather Barker's 'witch' (BUM) type is thus neatly combined with her accurately observed 'warrior' type using the acronym 'BIMBO': "Beautiful, Independent, Muscular, Belligerent and (eventually) Obliterated" (Barker 1992, 11). Once 'obliterated', Tasha's fighting spirit does not return for the

remainder of the film. Rather than allow Tasha's new 'love' for Sinclair add dimension to her character, *APEX* subjugates her strong warrior side to the new 'feminine' side before she illogically immolates herself to save Sinclair.

Despite these limitations, the employment of individual characters, each mirroring and magnifying the id/super-ego transaction, imbues a film with a fractal structure which in turn enhances its ability for credible representation. The result is an improvement in the commercial potential for the film, through a more detailed adherence to audience expectation. Whilst these characters manoeuvre within the patriarchal structure of the cinematic apparatus, it is clear that they do experience a degree of development rarely discernible in the traditional science fiction film character. Progressive characters of this nature have their roots, however, far back in the paranoid attempts to expose and control feminist influence, through futurist fiction films made during the early decades of this century. It is no coincidence that both were periods of high-profile societal and political campaigning by women in Europe and America. A brief examination of the earlier period will help to illuminate the social climate which fed the science fiction films of the later period.

By 1910, fuelled by the enfranchisement of Finnish women in 1906 and Danish women in 1908, winning the vote had become the primary goal of the majority of British and American feminist campaigners, rather than the insurgent few (Banks 1993, 140)[4]. The voracity, as well as the increasing respectability, of the women's

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[4] America's Western territories of Wyoming and Utah had already granted female suffrage, in 1869 and 1870 respectively, without any active campaigning (Banks 1993, 136). Whilst it is suggested that the need to attract women to these frontier areas, where they were scarce, led to the move, it should be noted that other Western states

suffrage movement was such that it directly inspired a number of future-society science fiction films. In the 1911 French film *One Hundred Years After* (unknown), an inventor, who has discovered a suspended-animation drug, 'sleeps' until the year 2011. He wakes to discover that women now rule New York, and men have been reduced to a physically smaller, skirt-wearing, sub-race. The temporally-displaced protagonist champions the cause for the, now, male suffragists, and rejects the forcible, sexual advances of the female Mayor of New York. Finally the Mayor rescinds and gives men the vote. Clearly influenced by, then contemporary, male paranoia concerning female suffrage, the film was followed in 1914 by an American version entitled *In the Year 2014* (unknown). Having almost achieved suffrage in the intervening years[5], British campaigners had entered their "final and most destructive phase of militancy . . ." (Banks 1993, 127-28), with the death of Emily Davison, as she tried to seize the reins of King George V's horse during the 1913 Derby, becoming ". . . one of the symbols of the suffragette movement" (Hill 1991, n.p.). Further influenced by the procurement, in the same year, of equal electoral rights by Norwegian women, the plot of *In the Year 2014* reflects male fears of a possible sexual revolution, fears which are represented by role reversal: stockbrokers, Mrs. Jones and her daughter, hire and fire their male staff, including the attractive young

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footnote continued from previous page

took a sight longer to enfranchise women. It is interesting to note further that, although the scarcity of women in the 'wild west' is reflected in western films, this suggested importance of the female voice is rarely considered by those films.

[5] British women almost achieved suffrage in March 1912, with proposed amendments to the Second Conciliation Bill allowing virtually full suffrage for men, to include women. However the Speaker of the House of Commons claimed that this would require a new Bill and the motion was thrown out; his action started the most militant period of the suffrage campaign, which continued until the beginning of World War I (see Banks 1993, 127-28).

Charles; offended by the 'improper' advances of Jones, senior, Charles is too bashful to respond to the advances of Jones, junior (Hardy 1991, 49-50). A second film in the same year develops the theme of role reversal with an effeminate male cabaret dancer: *Percy Pimpernickel, Soubrette* (Hale 1914), set in 1950, presents a woman from a wealthy family who falls in love with, proposes to, and elopes with Percy. Whilst the science fiction elements in these films may be questionable, when viewed as political essays - which represent a considerable percentage of the science fiction films for this period - they offer a strong indication of contemporary social preoccupations.

With post First World War leaders Thomas Woodrow Wilson and David Lloyd George actively supportive of full adult suffrage (Banks 1993, 128/145-46), it was becoming increasingly clear that women could not be dismissed in the manner indicated in Georges Méliès's 1912 film *A la Conquête du Pôle*. In this piece seven intrepid professors are travelling to the Pole in an 'aerobus'; despite encountering a group of female protesters, carrying placards calling for "The Pole for Women!", they continue as an exclusive male group (Hardy 1991, 46). Clearly shaken by feminist inroads, including limited suffrage in Britain, and the nineteenth amendment to the US constitution - allowing limited voting rights for women - John Blystone produced, in 1924, what appears to be a 'last ditch' attempt at anti-female-suffrage propaganda. The "oddly misogynist" (Hardy 1991, 70) film *The Last Man on Earth* depicts women as ridiculous in a world made devoid of all men, bar one, by an epidemic. Aping 'traditional' male behaviour, or concerning themselves with frivolous fashion and trivia, the women wear transparent clothes, and have allowed the world to fall to ruin. The female president of the United States allows cats to run wild in the White House, and the lawn has become overgrown. Elmer, the last man on earth, becomes

. the prize in a boxing match between female senators who are irresistibly attracted to his 'maleness'. The films ends with the suggestion that the world has been saved by this new infusion of male blood.

Whilst less subtle than their 1980s counterparts, a number of these early films . present women with counterbalancing characteristics. Just as both commercial and political considerations acted against the moral issue of women's suffrage (Banks 1993, 139), so film-makers subjugated political awareness to the compulsion to reflect the convictions of a cash-paying public. However, the strength of the female argument during both periods could not be ignored, instead commercial capital was made from what had been a potentially damaging situation by positing individual female failure, or a return to traditional values. Thus, the female position was, again, expediently exploited by and for a patriarchal mechanism.

By taking this particular line, the early films offered a very clear message about a conceived place for women. By removing power and influence from female characters initially imbued with it, the patriarchal establishment is clearly divesting itself of a perceived female threat, reflecting the fact that "many men clearly came to see the women as at worst narrow-minded and bigoted, and at best hopelessly idealistic" (Banks 1993, 148). The 1980s saw a development of a more clandestine attack on the Women's Liberation movement. Gone were the all-female societies, created and inflated, only to be deflated, by an over-confident patriarchy; unsure of their position, later film-makers preferred not to invest their females with even this taste of collective power. The 'honest' misogyny of the early period, in which women

were clearly ridiculed and devalued, was replaced by a more subtle use of new-found

financial 'clout'; seemingly unconstrained female characters, exemplified by Tasha

and the Borg Queen, are subtly invested with the tropes of hegemonic ideologies, as

feminist philosophy is skewed to accommodate patriarchal paranoia. What both sets

of films display, then, are pendulum swings between politically and commercially

motivated characteristics within individual characters. Central to patriarchal control is

the fact that, once set in motion, the pendulum allows no return to previous states of

representation. The point of the film at which these immutable changes take place

may be described as the 'cusp'.

The 'cusp-point' corresponds in general to what Peter Nicholls describes as the

'novum': "some new element, something that distinguishes the fiction from reality as

presently constituted" (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 408). In terms of the filmic narrative

this is often attained at the 'extra-abnormal' *mise en scène* (after travel through space

and time from here and now), or at the advent of the 'super-abnormal' event (the

arrival of the threat of Other). It is the point of the film when the ego processes of the

spectator begin to balance the familiar and the unfamiliar. For the individual

character, however, the cusp represents the point at which s/he becomes knowingly

exposed to the 'hyper-abnormal' element of the plot, and it is often followed by

changes in response to an invitation by the narrative. It is this invitation, coupled with

an active response, rather than merely passive exposure to the situation, which acts as

a measure of the development of character in the science fiction film. In the 1956

classic, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel), the invitation is taken up exclusively

by the male protagonist: after the discovery of mysterious behaviour amongst his

patients, Doctor Miles Bennel of Santa Mira decides to investigate. Alerted by his writer friend, Jack, he discovers that the people of the town are being replaced by alien simulacra. Throughout the investigation, Miles and Jack are accompanied by their female partners, Becky and Theodora, but at no time, despite being privy to equal information, are these women presented as offering any pragmatic or reasoned responses to the situation. All of the major exposition is produced through exchanges in which the men are asked questions by their partners; the answers are shared, not with the women, but with the audience through a series of voice-over narratives which further diminish the female position:

Miles   I was careful not to let Becky know, but for the first time, I was really scared.

Theodora (Carolyn Jones) is given to screaming, and Becky (Dana Wynter) unable to appreciate the gravity of the situation; her final escape is thwarted when she is unable to heed Miles's advice to stay awake, and is 'replaced' by her alien simulacrum. In *APEX*, Tasha responds to the her personal cusp-point - Sinclair's revelations concerning a parallel time line - by relinquishing her independence. However, some cusp-points herald progressive changes in the female character: five years before the release of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Helen Benson *had* been invited by the narrative of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* to respond to the 'super-abnormal' event at her personal cusp point; approached by the alien himself, her reaction had been to save the world.

Benson's course through the 1951 film closely mirrors what Joseph Campbell cites, in

The Hero with a Thousand Faces, as the first stage of his universal hero myth,

beginning with the invitation itself, which he designates "the call to adventure"

(Campbell 1993, 49-58). Whilst Campbell deals exclusively with the male hero myth,

the appropriation of its symbols and actions by female heroes highlights a

development of the female character from within the patriarchal confines of

commercial science fiction film. Appropriation also reflects a reading of Campbell's

own projection of the development of the hero myth:

> The democratic ideal of the self-determining individual, the invention of the
>
> power-driven machine, and the development of the scientific method of
>
> research, have so transformed human life that the long-inherited, timeless
>
> universe of symbols has collapsed. (Campbell 1993, 387)

As the first of five phases in the initial stage of the myth, 'the call to adventure"

deals with the luring of the hero, which "signifies that destiny has summoned the hero

and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a

zone unknown" (Campbell 1993, 58). From the moment Klaatu, disguised as Mr.

Carpenter, takes residence at the Washington boarding house, it becomes clear that

Benson's destiny will be linked with his; her inherent willingness to understand the

plight of the alien shows an open mind. Lured further by her son Bobby's insistence

that Mr. Carpenter is more than he seems, Benson enters the second phase of

Campbell's hero myth: "the refusal of the call" (Campbell 1993, 59-68). Hampered by

affection for the rather dull Tom Stevens, and an adherence to a sense of duty to

society, through her work and her motherhood, Benson does her best to persuade her

son that he merely has an active imagination. Whilst "refusal of the summons converts

the adventure into its negative: walled in boredom, hard work, or 'culture'"

(Campbell 1993, 59), in filmic terms, this slight hiatus serves to increase audience

tension by delaying the inevitable, and highlighting Klaatu's plight. Klaatu finally

reveals his identity to Benson, and requests her help - her personal cusp-point. Timing

their encounter to take place in a lift at the moment the world's power supply is

suspended, Klaatu explains to Benson his presence on earth. In a masterly stroke of

film making, Robert Wise denies the spectator access to the conversation between

Klaatu and Benson, replacing it with images of the world standing still. Klaatu has

neutralised all global power sources, except for those needed to keep people alive, in

an attempt to demonstrate the presence of a greater force. Returning to the lift, Wise

reminds his audience of what it has missed with a tantalising snippet of the secret

shared only with his female hero. Reversing the situation at the breakfast table when

only Klaatu and the audience were aware of the alien's presence, this sequence serves

to empower Benson as the singular human driving-force for the remainder of the film.

Klaatu has become Campbell's "supernatural aid" (Campbell 1993 69-77), a further

lure to adventure common to the hero myth, using special powers when the initial

attempt has failed. Benson's will to help is galvanised by the subsequent death of

Klaatu at the hands of the military. Armed with knowledge of how to save the world,

Benson prepares for "the crossing of the first threshold" (Campbell 1993, 77-89), the

fourth phase of the myth, which requires her to encounter the sentinel robot, Gort:

> With the personification of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes
>
> forward in his adventure until he comes to the "threshold guardian" at the

entrance to the zone of magnified power. Such custodians bound the world in the four directions - also up and down - standing for the limits of the hero's present sphere, or life horizon. Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe. (Campbell 1993, 77-78)

After confronting Gort with the words "Klaatu barada nikto", Benson is carried into the flying saucer, and is thus accepted into "the belly of the whale" (Campbell 1993, 90-94), Campbell's final phase of the first stage of the hero myth, in which the subject passes "beyond the confines of the visible world . . . to be born again" (Campbell 1993, 91). The spectator knows that Helen Benson can never be the same after this experience[6].

Far more explicit in its use of a polarised development of the female after the cusp-point is *The Terminator* (Cameron 1984); probably the most notable, and certainly the most imitated example of a female rise to the challenge of the call to adventure (Sobchack, 1988), the film reflects a level of development demanded by the post-*Alien* renaissance. Written by James Cameron and Gale Ann Hurd, *The Terminator* charts the transformation of Sarah Connor, played by Linda Hamilton,

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[6] The importance of this first stage of Joseph Campbell's hero myth to the creation of George Lucas's *Star Wars* is highlighted by Dean Conrad in *Star Wars: The Genesis of a Legend*. The second and third stages of the myth, "Initiation" (Campbell 1993, 97-192) and "Return" (Campbell 1993, 193-243), each comprising further phases, are continued through the *Star Wars* sequels: *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* (Conrad 1996, 6-7).

from "waitress to goddess"[7]. "Her transformation over the course of the film is miraculous" (Empire 1997, 21): at the beginning, she has few cares in the world beyond earning a living and socialising; at the end of the film she is carrying the child destined to become the saviour of humanity. Central to this heady rise are two male figures: the first, Kyle Reese, has travelled back in time from the year 2029 to save Sarah[8] from the second, the Terminator itself - Arnold Schwarzenegger's cyborg, programmed to seek out and kill her. A detailed description of the film, however, will demonstrate how Sarah's "miraculous" transformation is integrated seamlessly into the narrative of a well executed film.

Initially, Sarah Connor is presented to the film spectator via a sequence of shots designed to emphasise her unsuitability for the role to which she will finally be drawn. Arriving late to work on her moped, she joins a team of waitresses in short peach dresses. She makes mistakes with orders, spills coffee, and has ice-cream placed in her pocket by a precocious child. Sarah's inability to control her stressful environment is counterpoised with the efficiency of the Terminator killing machine, shown in a series of inter-cut sequences, systematically 'terminating' each of the Sarah Connors in the telephone directory. Seeing a television report at work about the first killing, Sarah dismisses it as a coincidence, and thinks no more of it. Dramatic tension is created, for the audience, by the knowledge of an inevitable encounter between these two unmatched characters. In a witty line designed temporarily to diffuse Sarah's

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[7] Martin Scorsese, quoted from his introduction to the first British television broadcast of the uncut version of *The Terminator* (BBC2, 17 October, 1993).

[8] First names have been used here, in order to avoid confusion in later chapters between characters sharing surname - notably Sarah Connor and John Connor.

current job-frustration, another waitress unwittingly augments the tension with reference to Sarah's ignorance of her vulnerability: "look at it this way: in a hundred years' time, who's gonna care?" At home, Sarah further exhibits her clumsiness, knocking her flatmate's earphones off as they prepare for an evening out. Measured against this new character, Ginger, Sarah again falls short of success, as an erotic call from Ginger's boyfriend is contrasted with an answering-machine message to say that Sarah's own date has cancelled. With a nonchalance which suggests that this is not her first rejection, Sarah changes into casual clothes and announces that she is going to the cinema, alone. The elements are now in place for the obligatory encounter with the Terminator.

Towards the end of the evening, Sarah receives news of the second killing of a Sarah Connor living in the Los Angeles area. Making the telephone-book connection, Sarah discovers to her relief that she is not next on the list. Whilst not a cusp-point in terms of her meeting the 'super-abnormal' element, the terminator, this exposure to its actions represents Sarah's first 'call to adventure'. In the traditions of Campbell's universal hero, the "appearance of the carrier of the power of destiny" (Campbell 1993, 52) is an invitation for Sarah to respond. Having begun to respond to the call, with her detective work using the telephone directory, Sarah falls back into a behaviour pattern suggested by her earlier character: understandably disturbed, she attempts to call the police. Failing to get through, she makes her way to a bar, the 'Tech noir', where she diligently waits for her change at the kiosk before making a fatal error: calling home to check on her flatmate, she leaves a message, along with her location, on the answering-machine. Meanwhile, the Terminator has entered her

flat, killed Ginger, assuming her to be Sarah, and is about to leave: the phone-call arrives just in time to inform the terminator that he has killed the wrong woman. Armed with a photograph of Sarah, and the location she has just supplied, he leaves in pursuit of his quarry. Finally managing to contact the police, Sarah is told that she will be safe in this public place, and to wait where she is for a patrol car. She waits in ignorance of the consequence of her actions.

Sarah's response to her initial call to adventure has been framed from within her own limited experiences. Having no knowledge of the existence of the Terminator, and naturally assuming the serial killer to be a deranged human, rather than a killing machine from the future, she acts accordingly. Her inevitable inadequacy in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds reaches its zenith during the first obligatory meeting of the characters. Having traced her to the 'Tech noir' night-club, the Terminator lumbers in with regard for nothing but his prey. Sarah is sitting at a table as the cyborg approaches. Raising his weapon, he trains the red targeting-laser, a device with which the spectator has already been made familiar, onto Sarah's forehead, and waits a tension-raising few seconds. Stunned, Sarah is unable to respond to this new, explicit incarnation of the call to adventure; it lies outside her previous realm of experience, and prompts an inherent denial, or 'refusal of the call'. It is at this point that Sarah is helped by her 'supernatural aid', Kyle Reese:

What such a figure represents is the benign, protecting power of destiny. The fantasy is a reassurance - a promise that the peace of Paradise . . . is not to be lost; . . . it supports the present and stands in the future as well as the past" (Campbell 1993, 71-72)

Grounding his powers firmly in the here-and-now, Kyle blasts the Terminator with a shotgun, and, after a brief shoot-out in the night-club, Kyle conveys Sarah to relative safety. Even though he has saved her life, Sarah continues to doubt Kyle's intentions. During a sequence of exposition, punctuated by flashes-forward to the year 2029, Sarah gradually replaces fear-charged anger with rational disbelief. It is not until after a brief sojourn at a police station, where Kyle is identified by criminal psychologist, Dr. Silberman, as a "loon", that Sarah is able to begin to comprehend the situation that she is in. Unimpressed by Silberman, she begins to probe the concept that Kyle is a guardian, sent from the future by her son. Continuing, initially, to refuse the call to adventure, she becomes exasperated with Kyle's narrative: "You're talking about things I haven't done yet, in the past tense". However, doubt is replaced by anger, as Sarah begins to realise - like Helen Benson before her - that she has been charged with the survival of the entire human race: "I didn't ask for this honour - I don't WANT IT". Having reached a transition point in her character, Sarah vacillates between acceptance of the situation: "Just talk. Tell me about my son", and an unwillingness to believe: "Come on, do I look like the mother of the future? I mean am I tough, organised? I can't even balance my cheque book"; she even manages a note of humour: "Don't suppose you know who the father is, so I won't tell him to get lost when I meet him?" The point of acceptance arrives at the 'Tiki' motel, where the two are hiding for the night. Kyle, knowing that, as supernatural aid, he needs to "provide[s] the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass" (Campbell 1993, 69) gives Sarah a gun. She automatically puts the weapon down, to her an abhorrent object, but upon reflection

takes it up - she has accepted the call, and so has reached her point of no return. Kyle teaches her to make explosives, and further exposes the future until Sarah comprehends the gravity of the situation: "It'll never be over, will it?" A night spent with Kyle, during which she, and the spectator, realises that he is the father of John Connor, galvanises her acceptance of her destiny; however, it is not until the arrival of the Terminator that her full attention is directed towards her quest: symbolically, she is forced to drive the getaway car for the first time.

The remainder of *The Terminator* charts Sarah Connor's climactic encounter with the 'threshold guardian', which, unlike Gort, will not be discovered as a good guardian. Sarah knows that she must cross this first threshold if she is to fulfil her destiny; armed with this conviction, and the few combat techniques gleaned from Kyle, she joins her lover in combat with the cyborg. During the fight, Kyle is killed. Sarah is left to defeat the Terminator alone, a task she completes despite considerable pain and suffering. Going beyond her physical appearance - an inevitable result of her struggle with the cyborg - her final words before destroying the robot, serve as an explicit reminder of the stark contrast between the character of Sarah Connor at either end of the film: pausing for just a moment, she utters the words, "you're terminated, fucker".

The pendulum of representation has swung between what Jackie Stacey describes as "classic feminine behaviour, forgetful, clumsy, unpunctual, and indecisive" (Stacey 1994, 125-26), and Heather Barker's "prototype Warrior" (Barker 1992, 13). It is clear that Sarah could not possibly return to her life as a waitress; not only has her destiny been laid out, but psychologically she has

experienced too great a transformation. Responding to this transformation, she takes herself, pregnant, to Mexico, which acts as the 'belly of the whale', and a "sphere of rebirth" (Campbell 1993, 90). In control, and with a full investment in the future, Sarah Connor makes Dictaphone messages for her son, John: "If you don't send Kyle you could never be".

In what could be read as a rationale for the popularity of the science fiction genre, Joseph Campbell describes the importance of social and scientific development to the hero myth "today" - with its replacement of the divine by the human.

Within the progressive societies themselves, every last vestige of the ancient human heritage of ritual, morality and art is in full decay.

The problem of mankind today, therefore, is precisely the opposite to that of men in the comparatively stable periods of those great co-ordinating mythologies which are now known as lies.

... The modern hero-deed must be that of questing to bring to light again the lost Atlantis of the co-ordinated soul.

Obviously, this work cannot be wrought by turning back, or away, from what has been accomplished by the modern revolution; for the problem is nothing if not that of rendering the modern world *spiritually significant* - or rather (phrasing the same principle the other way round) nothing if not that of *making it possible for men and women to come to full maturity through the conditions of contemporary life.*" (Campbell 1993, 387-88)

Created within the traditions of commercial science fiction, Sarah Connor is bound by a polarising pendulum shift between modes of patriarchal representation, which encompass "the conditions of contemporary life". The choices made throughout the film are framed from within a destiny which is male driven: the callers to adventure, the supernatural aid, and the threshold guardian are all male. The immediate threat is created by the male Terminator. Her investment in the future is prompted by a man, Kyle, who in turn has been sent into the past by her own son. Whilst it can be argued that, as the central figure in a temporal paradox story, Sarah originates the cycle (a line which is developed in chapter 6) her narrative choices are clearly created by the male-driven situation. Therefore, despite Campbell's conclusion to *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, which could be argued as anticipating the development of the female-hero, *The Terminator* and earlier *The Day the Earth Stood Still* present choices taken by the female-hero as proffered by the male. In effect, each of these films offers the female-hero no choice at all; or, at the most, her choice is between having a conscience - by agreeing to save humanity, and having no conscience - by allowing humanity to perish. Having made the choice, she is bound by its consequences; she cannot return to her former existence. Whilst the mere existence of choice does represent a clear development from the films like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and the later *APEX*, it is perhaps this restricted access to the universal male-hero myth which fuelled Amy Taubin's contention that ". . . Linda Hamilton in the *Terminator* films is a dumber, male-identified version of Ripley . . ." (Taubin 1992, 9).

Germaine Greer has stated that a patriarchal preference for binary opposition

takes non-linear differences in gender and polarises them as male and female (Greer 1972, 25-29). This highlights what Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement have described more recently as the "dual, hierarchical oppositions" inherent to the formulation of language as well as the female:

Where is she?

Activity/passivity

Sun/Moon

Culture/Nature

Day/Night

(Cixous and Clement 1987, 63)

This binary opposition which, to Cixous and Clement, leads to the subjugation of woman, and ultimately to the destruction of the whole idea, what they term the "couple" in the male/female configuration; it is used by the patriarchal pendulum to replace one aspect of the male-defined woman with another. In science fiction films employing the patriarchal pendulum as a microcosm of the transaction between id and super-ego stimulation, the whole woman becomes a battlefield: swing of the pendulum results in a choice made between opposing aspects of patriarchal female representation, and "each time, a war is let loose. Death is always at work" (Cixous and Clement 1987, 64). The consequent female characteristics are the result of an either/or choice, where the choice is ultimately made by commercial expediency; in effect the female, framed by patriarchy at each end of the pendulum swing, is given no choice at all, as her characteristics are no longer formulated as id

(unfamiliar/rebellious) versus super-ego (familiar/conformist), but rather one aspect of the patriarchal id versus another aspect of the patriarchal id.

An externalisation of this 'catch-22' situation opens the second film of the *Star Trek* series *The Wrath of Khan*, with its entrapment of the female, in the 'Kobayashi Maru'. Opening this film is the voice of Kirsty Alley, playing the efficient Romulan/Vulcan Saavik. In a tantalising glimpse into a future which was to take almost thirteen years to materialise - with Kathryn Janeway's commission as captain of *Voyager*[9] - Saavik appears to be in command of the federation flagship. Spock is at his accustomed science station, Sulu is at the helm, McCoy is looking perturbed, and Uhura has a message for the captain: she relays a distress call from the *Kobayashi Maru*, an imperilled ship located inside the Neutral Zone. Saavik has a choice: obey the Neutral Zone treaty, and allow three hundred and eighty-one passengers and crew to die, or enter the forbidden zone on a mission of mercy. Having taken the decision to enter the zone, she commands the ship towards the *Kobayashi Maru*, only to discover that she has entered a trap: three Klingon battle-cruisers de-cloak and attack. Despite evasive manoeuvres, the *Enterprise* is rendered helpless, and the bridge officers are killed. Captain Saavik orders the remaining crew to abandon ship - she has failed. At this point, a panel in the wall of the bridge opens, and Kirk enters, dramatically silhouetted against the bright lights of a smoke-filled training simulator:

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[9] *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* was released on 4th June 1982. The first episode of *Voyager*, entitled "Caretaker", was aired on American television on 16th January 1995.

> **Saavik** Any suggestions, Admiral?
>
> **Kirk** Prayer, Mr. Saavik - the Klingons don't take prisoners.

Thus, the spectator, relieved in the knowledge that the *Enterprise* has in fact not been destroyed; that Spock, McCoy, Uhura, and Sulu have not been killed; and that Kirk is in command, is returned to the *Star Trek* universe with its familiar female disenfranchisement intact. For, whilst it is true that the female, Saavik, is a trainee captain, she has been signalled incompetent and incapable in the opening sequence of the film, a tag with which the character is associated for the remainder of the narrative. Taking Kirk's presence as an opportunity to complain about the *Kobayashi Maru* test, Saavik has her own presence further reduced by the patronising admiral:

> **Saavik** I don't believe this was a fair test of my command abilities.
>
> **Kirk** And why not?
>
> **Saavik** Because there was no way to win.
>
> **Kirk** A no-win situation is a possibility every commander may face; has that never occurred to you?
>
> **Saavik** No Sir, it has not.
>
> **Kirk** How we deal with death is at least as important as how we deal with life - wouldn't you say?
>
> **Saavik** As I indicated, Admiral: that thought had not occurred to me.
>
> **Kirk** Well, now you have something new to think about. Carry on.

It is initially arguable that, despite her humiliation, Saavik's treatment has been no different from that which might be expected for any other Starfleet trainee. Indeed,

the audience will have seen enough 'boot-camp' films to know that treatment of cadets is often far worse than this. However, the catch-22 scenario, becomes a leitmotif with which *The Wrath of Khan* measures Kirk's continuing success and Saavik's continued deficiency.

Speaking to Kirk after the training session, Spock comments upon the Admiral's own approach to the academy's no-win scenario; describing Kirk's methods as "unique", Spock leaves the audience to wonder about the details. A little later, on a training mission on board the real *Enterprise*, Kirk is confronted by his former nemesis, Khan, commanding the hijacked *Reliant*. Having had his ship crippled in a surprise attack, Kirk negotiates terms of surrender. However, unbeknown to Khan, the Admiral has a plan: using the *Reliant*'s own security access-code, Kirk and Spock force the renegade ship to lower its shields, leaving it vulnerable to the ensuing offensive from the *Enterprise*. Throughout this sequence, Saavik is privy to snippets of information about what Kirk and Spock plan to do. By allowing Saavik to ask questions, the audience is provided with exposition, while also being reminded of Saavik's previous failings through her continued display of ignorance. On what is perhaps a pedantic note, Saavik, as a Romulan/Vulcan training to become a Starfleet captain, would be fully aware of the procedures and protocols of starship security, including, and perhaps especially, the existence of individual security access-codes for federation starships. The functionally contrived ignorance of Saavik's role is further compounded towards the end of the film, when she, Kirk, McCoy, Carol Marcus - senior scientist on the Genesis Project - and David, Kirk and Marcus's son, are stranded in a cavern on the Genesis planet - again, by Khan; *The*

Enterprise has been forced to flee. It is here that the spectator, reminded again of the *Kobayashi Maru* test, discovers how Kirk managed to defeat the no-win scenario. Saavik, recalling, for the audience, her own failure, cautiously asks Kirk for the details:

Kirk	[*nonchalant*] I reprogrammed the simulator, so that it was possible to rescue the ship.
Saavik	[*incredulous*] What!?
David	[*caustic*] He cheated.
Kirk	I changed the conditions of the test. I got a commendation for original thinking. I don't like to lose.
Saavik	Then you never faced that situation: faced death.
Kirk	I don't believe in the no-win scenario.

Moments later, Kirk smugly opens his communicator and contacts Spock on board *The Enterprise*. Once again, the captain has defied fate, and, once again, he has been reluctant to share his triumph.

Throughout *The Wrath of Khan*, screenwriter, Jack B. Sowards, reminds the audience of Saavik's necessary adherence to the concept of patriarchal binary opposition, suggested by Greer, and utilised by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément. In a development of the little-choice 'do-or-die' position offered to Helen Benson and Sarah Connor, the female, Saavik, is presented with a 'die-or-die' situation - clearly no-choice at all. However, the male, Kirk, continually exhibits a

capacity, firmly established in the original television series, to avoid having to make that choice. In a reflection of patriarchy itself, rules created to confine the female are broken by the male. Kirk, who "never faced that situation", is rediscovered as a personification of patriarchy.

The Day the Earth Stood Still had used Benson's opposition to the personifications of patriarchal ideology as a catalyst for her development at the filmic cusp-point. By taking control of her own destiny within the framework of Campbell's male-hero myth, she initiates changes which ensure a development of character from acquiescence to contrariety. The most pronounced of these changes is in her apparent relationship with Tom Stevens. It has been shown that Benson's role at the beginning of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* fulfils many of the expectations of a conservative 1950s audience. She is a war-widow, her relationship with Stevens appears to be platonic, and she is clearly a conscientious mother. Thus continuing a line which boasts Maria, the female protagonist of Lang's *Metropolis*, Benson reflects the ethos of the late nineteenth century New Life movement under Edward Carpenter, in which "working class women remain[ed] symbols of an idea of motherhood, nurture, suffering, labour, strength and earthiness." (Osborne 1993, 237, quoted in Grant 1993, 33). Extending this conservative ideology, and symbolic strength, into her relationship with Stevens, Benson shows a degree of unwillingness to succumb to his demands from the beginning, with a refusal to give a definite response to his marriage proposals. However, Benson does capitulate, when Stevens assumes the role of active partner and decision maker; the maternal instincts which advocate caution when 'Mr. Carpenter' offers to mind Bobby for the day are quashed by Stevens's cavalier

insistence that the boy will be all right, an assumption driven by Stevens's desire to spend the day alone with Benson.

However, through the call to adventure, Benson is invited to re-evaluate her relationship with Stevens, and after reaching a fundamental disagreement with him, Benson forsakes her fiancé in favour of support for Klaatu, who, with composure of voice and action, stands as an antithesis to the film's masculine bluster. This polarisation represents a continuation of pendulum swings caused initially by the arrival of the spaceship at the beginning of the film. Before the arrival of the alien, men had been shown to be rational observers, radio reporters commenting objectively: "There is anxiety and concern, but no outward sign of panic. As a matter of fact, there are signs of normalcy". Women had been represented by newsreel type footage of washer-women, telephonists, and secretaries, women busy about their 'traditional' business. After the arrival of the alien, at the narrative cusp-point, the military, with its xenophobic attitude, becomes representative of the male, passing its attitudes on to the radio reporters: "There is no denying that there is a monster at large; we are dealing with forces beyond our knowledge and power". Women, beyond this point, are represented by Helen Benson, a nonchalant, but caring, mother and secretary. Klaatu's demonstration of power, the cusp-point for the people of the world, including Benson and Stevens, acts as a catalyst for further polarisation of this gendered symbolism.

Because of this shift in attitude towards patriarchal hegemony, the character of Helen Benson presented after her personal cusp-point is one which clearly could not return to her role as partner to Tom Stevens. However, the character is not divested

of all the attributes which has allowed her to succumb to Stevens's 'charms'. There is no miraculous turning-point, as there is in *The Terminator*. The pendulum of representation may have swung, further dividing the female and male, leaving the spectator to imagine the new life which Benson will forge for herself, but it is clear that she will use her experiences, galvanising her new knowledge with attributes exhibited before her call to adventure. This apparently simple swing of the pendulum is revealed to be more complicated, as, at different points in the narrative, separate aspects of Benson's character swing in divergent directions. The result is a diminishing of the polarising power of the patriarchal pendulum, and a move towards a more heterogeneous representation.

CHAPTER 5

PATRIARCHAL CRUCIBLE:
COMPOSITE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER

"Torn between the deep blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity"(Mulvey 1989c, 30), it would appear that creators of female protagonists and antagonists, even of those who do transform after the cusp-point, have tended to be bound by an indomitable tradition. The resulting allegations of pejorative representation are inevitable whilst writers, directors, and producers work from within "the comforts and fetters of a convention totally without imaginative challenge" (Griffiths 1980, 14). However, the empowerment of the female character does not necessarily lie in the divestiture of all things perceived as being feminine, and in the investiture of all things perceived as being masculine. Moreover, the variety of readings offered in response to many aspects of female representation, from within both film criticism and feminist criticism, makes it virtually impossible for the male film-maker to present any image of the female which is not regarded in some quarters as pejorative. Patriarchy is, in essence, a victim of its own omnipresence. In *Desperately Seeking Difference*, Jackie Stacey identifies this presence even in the formulation of lesbian desires in the cinema:

Since how we desire (masculine/feminine, active/passive), and whom we desire (homosexual or heterosexual object choice) have been separated within psychoanalytic theory, the notion of an active desire between women as anything other than masculine is inconceivable. In other words, the language of psychoanalysis situates desire between women firmly within masculinity. This is

an ironic consequence, since my original aim in analysing a desire between women in the cinema was to move beyond Mulvey's theory of the 'masculine' spectator [1975].

An alternative discourse which speaks of desire between women is that of recent lesbian feminist politics [see Gaines 1994]. Indeed, the naming of that desire has been a political act in itself. (Stacey 1994, 113)

Whilst readings 'against the grain' of any film text are possible, using what Judith Mayne cites as Claire Johnston's notion of "contradiction"[1], progressive readings are more likely to be facilitated by a narrative which does not limit the responses of the character[2]. But limited response of characters, through patriarchal polarisation, has traditionally confined male science fiction characters as well as female ones. For instance, in 'The Virginity of Astronauts: Sex and the Science Fiction Film', Vivian Sobchack criticises the genre's lack of explicit sexuality, contending that:

Astronauts are clearly those figures who centralize and visually represent the values and the virtues common to all the male protagonists of the genre in a

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[1] Mayne writes:

> Given classical cinema's obsession with sexual hierarchy, feminist film critics could . . . undertake the more complex and challenging project of examining the contradictions in classical films, that is, what is repressed or unresolved, and potentially threatening to the patriarchal status quo. (Mayne 1994, 51)

[2] Patrice Petro has identified a division of labour in film studies, "in which 'historians' pursue the realm of the empirical, the quantifiable, the concretely known (the realm of history proper), and 'feminists' explore the more intangible realm of theoretical speculation (the realm of interpretation)" (Petro 1994, 65-66).

single archetypal presence. They are cool, rational, competent, unimaginative, male, and sexless. (Sobchack 1995, 107)

In order for films to become fertile breeding grounds for a new strain of multi-dimensional character, little seen in the genre, it can be argued that it is necessary to utilise a narrative technique which allows for the integration of multiple characteristics into a single role. In 'Child / Alien / Father: Patriarchal Crisis and Generic Exchange', Sobchack asserts that science fiction film from the late 1960s did just this - beginning with its male characters. Using *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick 1968) and *Rosemary's Baby* (Polanski 1968) as starting points, Sobchack identifies a convergence of horror, science fiction and melodrama in the late 1960s, as a mechanism to "contain, work out, and in some fashion resolve narratively the contemporary weakening of patriarchal authority . . ." (Sobchack 1986, 10). In order to take this discussion further, she cites patriarchy's growing disjunction from paternity:

Once perceived as identical in bourgeois capitalist culture, patriarchy and paternity have been recently articulated as different and at odds - one powerful effect of white, middle-class feminist discourse. This difference emerges as a major problem when patriarchy as a political and economic power structure and paternity as a "personal" and subjective relation both locate themselves in the same place (the home). (Sobchack 1986, 17)

In order to resolve this crisis in male representation, the "dominant strain of the

contemporary science fiction film", exemplified at the time Sobchack was writing by

E.T. - The Extra Terrestrial (Spielberg 1982) and *Starman* (Carpenter 1984)

contrived "the innocent extra-terrestrial who is at once patriarchally empowered,

paternal, and childlike" (Sobchack 1986, 17). Science fiction, then, offered an

opportunity for the male character to be re-created through the drawing together of

disparate aspects of patriarchal male representation - the powerful and the endearing -

and re-presented as a palatable reinvention of male dominance; a reunion which is "as

ingenious as it is also ingenuous" (Sobchack 1986, 17). An implicit reflection of

Kirk's avoidance of the either/or, do-or-die, scenario, this utilisation of multiple

gender traits to augment character will be referred to as the 'patriarchal crucible' - a

melting-pot of, albeit patriarchal, representation, from which the character is at liberty

to draw, at any point after character attributes have been established.

Locked within the confines of the patriarchal pendulum, the developing female-

hero is denied a level of transformation which relies upon this convergence of

disparate characteristics. Remaining in this mode of representation, the female is

limited by a structure which insists upon polarised representation. However, at a time

when science fiction film was providing the male with his "first figural contact

between the powerful alien 'child' and the disenfranchised human father" (Sobchack

1986, 18) - through *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg 1977) - it was

also toying with narratives which provided the female-hero with a crucible of her

own.

Michael Crichton's *Coma* (1978) presents Genevieve Bujold as Dr. Susan

Wheeler, a resident surgeon at the Boston Memorial Hospital. The film follows the fortunes of Wheeler as she investigates an incident at the hospital: her best friend has been inexplicably rendered comatose during a routine abortion procedure. Discovering this to be the eleventh case of unexplainable coma in the space of a year, Wheeler becomes suspicious. Finally, after a great deal of detective work and considerable danger to herself, she discovers that comas are being induced in a number of young, healthy patients in order to supply the Jefferson Institute, a high-tech facility which stores comatose patients until their organs can be sold for transplant operations. During the climax of the film, Wheeler is drugged by the head surgeon-cum-villain of the piece, Dr. Harris, and taken to 'OR8' - the operating room discovered by Wheeler to be linked through a control device to a carbon monoxide tank - to have her appendix removed. Wheeler is saved by the quick actions of her boyfriend, and colleague, Dr. Mark Bellows.

Wheeler's rescue by Bellows represents a turn around, not only in Bellows's character, but in the approach of the film, which has placed a large proportion of its narrative emphasis upon Wheeler's struggle with the male-led political wrangling which permeates the hospital. After her illegal procurement of computer data regarding past incidences of coma, she is threatened with dismissal by hospital administrator, Dr. Harris, if she does not talk to the hospital psychiatrist: the psychiatrist then reports back to Dr. Harris about Wheeler's mental state. Later, the apparent male conspiracy is heightened when Wheeler is denied access to the medical files for the coma patients by the patronising head anaesthetist, Dr. George. As Wheeler's investigations begin to achieve results, male opposition becomes overt,

culminating in her encounter with a hit man, and finally Dr. Harris's own attempted

murder of Wheeler, at the operating table.

In her introduction to part three of *Women in Film*, Charlotte Brunsdon (1987)

cautiously welcomes films like *Coma*, which ". . . bear the traces of feminist struggles

. . ." (Brunsdon 1987, 119); ironically, however, she goes on to suggest that the main

criticism of films like *Coma* is that the female characters are not sufficiently

representative or ordinary (Brunsdon 1987, 119). The suggestion here is that Dr.

Wheeler has little to do with the experiences of the average spectators, and so can

elicit little empathy from them. *Coma*, then, potentially removes the opportunity for

the spectator to feel a sense of involvement through personal links with the

character's profession. Contrary to these reservations about the film, Phil Hardy

suggests that ". . . identification with Bujold [Wheeler] brings real tension to what

might otherwise have been a collection of imperilled heroine sequences that rises to a

crescendo of a climax . . ." (Hardy 1991, 340). Rather than merely judging the

employment of the character, Hardy recognises that Wheeler's commitment to her

job, and consequently to the investigation, is plausibly paralleled with her personal

life. Having established Wheeler's professionalism at the beginning of the film,

writer/director, Crichton, introduces his spectator to the doctor's troubled

relationship with Mark Bellows. The following exchange between Wheeler and

Bellows establishes the uncompromising attitude which helps to carry Wheeler

through the rest of the film:

Wheeler   [*partially visible through the translucent shower door*] Did you

start dinner?

Bellows   What?

Wheeler   I said, did you start dinner?

Bellows   Did you hear anything I said? I was try...

Wheeler   ...It's right in the refrigerator, Mark. Just heat it up. It's already cooked.

Bellows   I was trying to tell you something about my day.

Wheeler   [*getting out of the shower*] I had a hard day too. Just go heat it up.

Bellows   Now, why is it whenever we're about to have a fight you always manage to be undressed?

Wheeler   Hey, what's the big deal? Just put the stew in the pan and heat it up. Now, why won't you help out?

Bellows   Oh, is that the way you see it?

Wheeler   Well.

Bellows   Well, I think I make my concessions: you always get to take your shower first.

Wheeler   I don't.

Bellows   You do too, and I'm getting tired of it.

        [*she stops, and looks incredulously at him*]

Bellows   Oh, now Honey, c'mon...

Wheeler   Don't call me 'Honey'.

Bellows   All I'm trying to do is tell you something about my day: something that happened.

Wheeler   Your days are always the same [*she exits to the bedroom*].

Bellows	What the hell is that supposed to mean?
Wheeler	Just politics, that's all - who says what to whom, who's rising, who's falling, who's made a good move, a bad move - politics!
Bellows	Well, somebody has to be interested in hospital politics. You certainly are not.
Wheeler	I thought you were a fourth year surgical resident, not a *political* resident.
Bellows	I like politics; they interest me. Just because you're looking for... [*he follows her to the bedroom and discovers her dressed to go out*] Listen, Suzie. Want me to heat up the dinner - is that what you want?
Wheeler	I want some respect.
Bellows	Susan, c'mon, don't leave again.
Wheeler	I don't see why you can't share out the responsibility.
Bellows	[*raising his voice*] I share more than half the responsibility.
Wheeler	No need to shout.
Bellows	Then what are you running off for? Do you think I want this? Look, let me tell you something Dr. Wheeler: I make my share of concessions for this so-called relationship. And I also...
Wheeler	...I know it's hard for you politically. [*pause*]
Bellows	Susan, don't go. [*pause*]
Wheeler	You know what the trouble with you is? All you care about is being

chief resident.

Bellows   You know what your trouble is? You don't really want a

relationship. Look at you. You run away from it.

Wheeler   This is ridiculous [*she leaves*].

Bellows   You don't want a lover; you want a god damn wife!

The 'ordinariness', found lacking in Wheeler's professional life is provided in this protracted exposé of the doctor's personal life, allowing the audience a degree of "identification", recognised by Hardy, necessary to the id/super-ego transaction. Not only does this scene indicate domestic strife, but it highlights some of the "feminist struggles" cited by Brunsdon. Wheeler and Bellows clearly differ in their views of hospital politics; Wheeler, as has been shown earlier, would prefer to perform her function as a surgeon. This juxtaposition of female professionalism and male politics, which becomes the root of much of the dramatic tension throughout the rest of the film, is represented in Wheeler's personal life by her unwillingness to enter into debate with Bellows. Her profession offers a structure, and hence a degree of security, which her private life, and hospital politics does not. A shot framing Wheeler through the door of the shower cubicle in the background, as Bellows drinks his beer in the foreground, is uncannily similar to Jessica's strip in *Logan's Run* (Anderson 1976)[3], and helps to reinforce the vulnerability of her position as a female in a patriarchal society, a vulnerability later compounded by Bellows's reference to her state of undress. Wheeler's attack on Bellows's selfishness and his seeming reluctance to

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[3] See chapter 1, page 28.

share domestic responsibility, as well as her reaction to his ". . . and I'm getting tired of it", suggest an unwillingness for the character to accede to the wider demands of a patriarchal society. Moreover, she is clearly unwilling to pursue this argument after a hard day at work, and does not like to be called "Honey"[4]. Evidently, this type of exchange has happened before, but it is not clear whether her logical and uncompromising stance is the result of her structured profession, or whether her profession is an extension of her natural need for structure. This layered interdependence becomes central to the character's success; her life is a crucible of private and public realms from which she is able to draw at any time. It is then the drawing of the characteristics displayed during the familiar aspects of the narrative across to the unfamiliar aspects of the narrative which enable the spectator to experience the "identification" highlighted by Phil Hardy as a positive aspect of the film. This is not to say that the character of Dr. Susan Wheeler does not develop. At her personal cusp-point - her realisation that something is wrong in the hospital - she is placed in direct conflict with the hospital's powerful political-players. Accepting the 'call to adventure', she overrides the aspect of her character which drives her to evade confrontation, and embraces her professionalism to pursue her investigation.

Ironically, it is *Coma*'s multifarious representation of Dr. Susan Wheeler which ultimately feeds critical reservations about the lack of 'ordinariness' in the character.

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[4] This type of assertion is used extensively in the 1996 film, *Barb Wire* (Hogan), with the protagonist's line "Don't call me 'Babe'", followed by an attack on the offender. However, this film's removal of female empowerment, primarily through the overt use of Pamela Anderson Lee as a sexual object, clearly places *Barb Wire* with films like *APEX* and *Star Trek: First Contact*, with their patriarchal id/patriarchal super-ego exchange.

By suppressing the major apparent weakness in Wheeler's character, Crichton develops a role which has the potential to be considered by the spectator as 'too strong', a position compounded by Bellows's accusation earlier: "You don't want a lover; you want a god damn wife! Perhaps for Brunsdon Wheeler becomes too versed in dealing with the inequities of patriarchy, and is ultimately divorced from the expectations and experiences of the average female spectator for whom work and home may represent battlegrounds for somewhat less-than-successful forays into feminism[5]. This is compounded by Wheeler's association with what Pauline Kael describes, in *When the Lights Go Down*, as Crichton's over-confidence in the use of medical iconography, especially corpses:

> It could be that his cultivation and training [as a medical doctor] are a hindrance on this kind of movie. He's too used to cadavers to be spooked by them; he doesn't identify with us (or with our superstitious dread) but with the doctors. (Kael 1980, 395)

Dr. Wheeler's further investment in this spectator-alienating environment helps to ensure a further move towards the lack of ordinariness' cited by Brunsdon. Ironically, what Brunsdon appears to be calling for in her critique of the character, is a degree of failure to belong to this alienating world. Pauline Kael provides just this in her echo of Phil Hardy's "identification with Bujold":

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[5] See Lewenhak 1980, esp. 266-278; Davies 1979; Walby 1990, 25-60; and Wajcman 1991, 27-53.

Geneviève Bujold, with her piquant features, her waif's face and sharp jaw, is

like a soft little furry animal - a mink - with a dirty mind. . . .

. . . There's no way to sanitize this actress. With her slightly moldy Peter Pan

pertness, she's irreducibly curious - that's her sexy-witch essence. . . . Dr.

Wheeler's suspiciousness - the sneaky expressions she gets when she doesn't

go along with what her superiors are telling her - is all we've got to hang on in

this sterile environment. (Kael 1980, 394)

Kael's agreement with both Hardy and Brunsdon within the same review

highlights the complex nature of Wheeler's character, and its interaction with the

narrative; her review, in turn, demonstrates the composite development of the female

character towards multifarious representation[6].

Whilst *Coma* serves well to emphasise the interaction of familiar and unfamiliar

character traits within an unfamiliar environment, it has been suggested that the film is

not really science fiction at all; it is essentially a "formula exploitation thriller" (Kael

1980, 395). In *A Discussion of Coma*, Elizabeth Cowie judges the film on the merits

as a detective narrative (Cowie 1987). In fact, whilst *Coma* is included as one of only

eight film entries for 1978 in David Pringle's *The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Science

Fiction* (1997), Christopher Tookey's *The Critics Film Guide* shares Kael's

description of the film as a "thriller". Science fiction film critics Richard Meyers and

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[6] The assured nature of Bujold's performance undoubtedly added to the representation,
and may have influenced the casting of the TV series, *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995),
which commenced shooting with Bujold as captain. Fortunately for Kate Mulgrew,
Bujold resigned a few days into filming (*Radio Times*, 19-25 October 1996, 30).

Phil Hardy, include the film in their surveys of the subject, but prefer the terms a

"fanciful but fascinating film" (Meyers 1984, 100) and "a taut medical thriller" (Hardy

1991, 340), and in *The Primal Screen*, John Brosnan merely mentions the film in a

brief review of the film career of Michael Crichton (Brosnan 1991, 227). However, in

the widest sense of the term, as identified in the introduction to this work, *Coma* is

science fiction. Submitting its 'explicable novum' in the form of the unusual technique

used to 'store' comatose patients, and the premise of an 'organs by demand' agency,

Coma's "fantasy/narrative" (Geraghty 1987, 142) presents an example of the

relatively small sub-genre of 'medical' science fiction. As such, it serves to highlight

the pervasiveness of the patriarchal structures which bind commercial science fiction

film.

Despite this, it is necessary to look to a film which unquestionably is science

fiction, in order to gauge a degree of success for the crucible as a model for rounded

female characters in an unarguably aberrant environment. Such is the power of the

id/super-ego transaction to create plausibility that *Outland* (Hyams 1981), a film set

in outer space, is also able to elicit an empathetic audience-response for its doctor.

The female deuteragonist in Peter Hyams's often criticised *Outland*, Dr. Marian

Lazarus, played by Frances Sternhagen, serves Brunsdon's apparent need to present

female professionalism with a large slice of universal 'reality'. Unlike *Coma*, however,

Outland does not elicit spectator recognition through naked shower scenes or the

"sexy-witch essence" of its female doctor; instead it presents Lazarus, initially, as a

failure, not only exposed to, but also overwhelmed by, many of the social and

psychological problems which beset the average spectator. In *Coma*, the first images

of Wheeler are as a competent professional, a position from which she develops. Whereas, after receiving her call to adventure, and resisting the call in the manner of the traditional hero, Dr. Lazarus has to regain for herself, the mantle of professionalism which has been eroded before the beginning of the film. Rather than augmenting professionalism in the manner of *Coma*, *Outland* develops its female doctor via the more overt counterbalancing of success and failure. Lazarus's consequent need to draw upon more extreme character attributes mirrors *Outland*'s 'extra-abnormal' *mise en scène* - a titanium ore mining colony based on Jupiter's third moon, Io. Spectator expectation, a result of a magnification of the 'extra-abnormal' *mise en scène*, dictates an increase in character response[7]: success in this environment might reasonably be expected to be considerable success; failure, by the same token, must be substantial failure.

The mining facility, to which Lazarus is assigned, is run by franchise owner, Sheppard, who, in an attempt to increase its productivity, is supplying an energy-boosting drug, which ultimately leads to psychosis amongst the work-force to whom it is supplied. Upon his discovery of this scheme, O'Neil, the new federal marshal, played by Sean Connery, is faced with the dilemma of keeping silent and safe, or speaking out and facing danger. Choosing the latter route, he is ostracised by the inhabitants of the colony, including his own deputies, and left, initially, to face the consequences alone. At the film's climax, O'Neil and the entire population of the colony await the arrival of the next shuttle, which they all know is carrying the

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[7] See chapter 2.

henchmen sent to kill the marshal. Whilst a number of critics have been eager to reveal Hyams's debt to the classic 1952 Western, *High Noon* (Zinnemann)[8], many omit mention of the fact that, as with the earlier film, it is a lone female who offers assistance to the marshal in his time of need; O'Neil's life is saved, and the henchmen thwarted, by the actions of Lazarus[9]. In fact, *The Virgin Film Guide* not only ignores the role of the female doctor, but misrepresents the climax of the film, stating that ". . . no one else on Io wants anything to do with the battle, so he [O'Neil] is left to face the company henchmen alone" (Pallot et al. 1994, 633). Richard Meyers collaborates in this distortion, with his own critique of the climax of the film: "naturally O'Neil's deputies and the miners turn their backs on him, forcing a lone confrontation with the killers. The marshall [*sic*] finishes them off, one by one . . ." (Meyers 1984, 206). Not only do these inaccurate reviews represent a disservice to film criticism in general, but, as has been shown for reviews of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, their writers collectively obscure the contribution made by the female deuteragonist to the film's plot, choosing to stress its patriarchal elements. Subjective judgement by critics ultimately hampers both research into and, more importantly, the potential of, the female as a defining force in the post-1970s science fiction film. This failure of critics to recognise the importance of Dr. Lazarus to the narrative structure of *Outland* reflects a tendency for progressive female characters to be held in check by familiar representation; in this case the critics have used absence to silence the female voice.

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[8] These include: Meyers 1984, 206; Hardy 1991, 370; Brosnan 1991, 135; Clute and Nicholls 1993, 900.

[9] In *High Noon*, the marshal (Gary Cooper) is saved by the actions of his wife (Grace Kelly), who abandons her Quaker principles of non-violence, to shoot one of her husband's assailants.

Included because writer/director, Hyams, decided that "it was absurd for a picture set in the future to be unpopulated by women" (*New York Times*, 1981, 26 May), Dr. Lazarus, is initially presented as a no-nonsense, cynical character. In much the same mould as *Star Trek*'s male doctor, McCoy, she is a "cantankerous lady doctor" (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 900) who has allowed the monotony of her job to temper her professionalism with sarcasm:

Lazarus	[*remonstrating with a medical technician*] Who the hell ordered all these pressure pads? This is a mine, not a war . . .
	[*to O'Neil*] . . .Who are you, anyway?
O'Neil	Are you Doctor Lazarus?
Lazarus	Yes, take two aspirin and call me in the morning. That's a doctor joke. Are you the new marshal?
O'Neil	Yes, I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes.
Lazarus	I got an alibi: I got four people swear they were playing poker with me.
O'Neil	[*deadpan*] I've never heard that one before, that's really funny!
Lazarus	I'm sorry . . .

To compensate for this tacit admission that she has lost the first round of what is to become a regular sparring-contest, Lazarus treats O'Neil's later move to pull rank on her with contempt; balking at the marshal's attempt to disrupt her routine, the doctor feels a need to re-assert her status:

Lazarus	I got that list [*of dead, psychotic miners*] you wanted...
O'Neil	...Why didn't you bring it to my office?
Lazarus	I don't make house calls.
O'Neil	Well, you do now. She [*wounded prostitute*] gonna be all right?
Lazarus	Maybe - if you'll let me do my job!

Whilst the doctor and the marshal continue to antagonise each other, with frank comments like the doctor's acerbic: "I'm unpleasant, I'm not stupid!", they develop a mutual respect through a shared disregard for the 'company', and for administrator, Sheppard. Despite apparent nonchalance, it is clear that Lazarus is a capable doctor, and her underlying conscientiousness is ignited by O'Neil's sense of duty. Lazarus's burgeoning regard for the marshal is evident in her moments of self-effacing candour, at one point she tenders a warning ". . .You know, you haven't got your medical all-star here. Company doctors are like ship's doctors: most are one shuttle-flight ahead of a malpractice suit". Although she pleads inability to analyse a new molecule found by O'Neil in blood taken from the corpse of a psychotic miner, Lazarus produces the evidence needed by the marshal to convict franchise owner, Sheppard. At an emotional turning point for the two characters, Lazarus drops her guard and looks to her colleague for reassurance: "I did good, didn't I? For a wreck". Lazarus's professional regard develops into a genuine concern for O'Neil's well-being, as her character is being forced to make decisions about her role at the climax of the film. After some soul-searching, and a poignant exchange with the condemned marshal, Lazarus resolves to help O'Neil. Through this opportunity to make a difference,

Lazarus is able to prove to herself that she has some pride left - pride enough to fight for what she believes to be right. The audience, sympathetic to Lazarus, wills her to succeed; her success, a fulfilment of the mythological need for the 'good versus evil' fight to be won by good, is counterpoised with her continuing modesty and failure to attain a balance 'acceptable' to patriarchy.

It might be argued that, through her essential capacity as helper to O'Neil, Lazarus is aligned with many of the traditional female characters highlighted in chapter 1, and indeed she does act, to a degree, as an extension to the marshal. However, it is clear within the narrative that the actions of the marshal merely awaken principles which had lain dormant in the doctor. Lazarus, a character with an ability to resolve inner-conflicts, is given a choice, and she exercises that choice. Working under her own initiative, she saves a representative of her own, albeit latent, moral code; by doing so she eschews patriarchal polarisation, and fulfils the promise of her name - Lazarus - through a spiritual resurrection.

Outland's contribution to the development of the female role, is evidenced by Hyams's juggling of both pendulum and crucible development, to avoid subjugating his female character to a simple patriarchal exchange. Initially, the counterbalancing characteristics of the female are divided between two roles: The nonconformity of Lazarus is counterbalanced by the traditional conformity of O'Neil's wife, Carol, who, as a devoted wife and mother, has followed her husband from job to job. However, in an emotionally charged video-message to him, she explains that she can no longer stand the life they have been leading, informing him that she has left the

station in order to take their son to earth. Once Carol has departed, Marian Lazarus

takes over as O'Neil's confidante, but because there is still a mutual love between

O'Neil and his wife, little pressure is exerted on the latter relationship to develop

beyond the platonic. Therefore, as with Helen Benson[10] before her, Marian Lazarus's

role as primary deuteragonist avoids tradition in a manner deemed 'acceptable' to the

spectator. Further reinforcement of the underlying ideology, after the departure of the

wife, is provided by the prostitutes on the mining colony, and the naked dancers in the

bar, not by the doctor. This trade-off between characters necessary to balance the film

as a whole is highlighted by Phil Hardy's comment that ". . . *Outland* suffers from

writer/director Hyams' one-dimensional approach to both plot and character" (Hardy

1991, 370). Fair in many respects, it omits the fact that this inter-character

polarisation allows Lazarus intra-character development, as she exhibits manifold

nuances through her development in response to her personal cusp-point event. Dr.

Lazarus maintains her acerbic wit throughout the film, and her character is still large

enough to counter the unfamiliarity of the 'extra-abnormal' *mise en scène*, but the

direction of her barbs alters as she reassesses her role in relation to the other

characters, especially to O'Neil. The pointed sarcasm of their initial exchanges

contrasts markedly with the poignant humour of her line to . him as she bandages

the wound made by the hired killer: "Don't misconstrue this. I'm not displaying any

character - just temporary insanity". Through its utilisation of a different person to

represent the primary female on each side of the narrative cusp, *Outland* is able to

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[10] Wright observes, Edmund North's script for the film "mercifully, resists the temptation to turn the friendship between Klaatu and Helen into a romance; it's virtually the only SF film of the 1950s without a rote subplot of this kind" (Wright 1993, 100).

capitalise on the subtlety of Dr. Lazarus's character development in a manner, arguably, with more potential realism than those films which, like *The Terminator* (Cameron 1984), demand polarised changes in character in response to a dramatic situation.

Despite John Brosnan's description of *Outland* as "another example of the fake sf movie" (Brosnan 1991, 135), the film remains an example of how the concept of the progressive female can be experimented with from within the confines of a Western structure, a science fiction *mise en scène*, and a psychoanalytic apparatus, each of which demands a degree of adherence to the archetypes created by patriarchal ideology. The use of the name Lazarus suggests that Hyams was conscious of the developments in character which lead to Lazarus's personal resurrection. This, coupled with the evidence of Hyams's next science fiction project, *2010* (1984), demonstrates the fact that writer/director's investment in the concept of the versatile professional female was not an accident. In this film, charged with the unenviable task of creating a sequel to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Hyams successfully addresses the imbalances of Kubrick's film with a fully rounded female protagonist. In his attempt to soften the edges of Helen Mirren's Soviet spaceship-captain, Hyams draws references to her humanity, and promotes a gradual warming towards Roy Scheider's American scientist. On the one hand, this character, with her reasoned and pragmatic response to a dilemma caused by cold-war politics stands in stark contrast to the female automata presented in *2001*; on the other hand, the strength of humanity presented through subtle nuances in her character signals a dramatic evolution from traditional science fiction film.

The importance of the multi-layered structure which has developed a link between pendulum and crucible is exemplified by a brief examination of the work of those actors, both male and female, who have been nominated or honoured, for science fiction projects, by the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The 1932 best actor *Oscar* went to Frederick March for his portrayals of the eponymous Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Mamoulian), the quintessential example of an polarised id/super-ego transaction. In 1968, the award was won by Cliff Robertson for his portrayal of the title role in *Charly* (Nelson), a character with an IQ of 68, who is temporarily polarised by the status of genius. Peter Sellers's nomination for *Doctor Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Kubrick 1964), reflects a polarised pendulum swing in the fact that he actually played a number of disparate characters.

However, Jeff Bridges's nomination for *Starman* (Carpenter), in 1984, recognises crucible augmentation of his role from uncertain alien to 'human' lover, creating what Phil Hardy describes as ". . . a genuinely sympathetic character" (Hardy 1991, 393). Whilst no *Oscars* have been received by female actors in science fiction films - due in part to vastly fewer female roles - nominations for women have coincided with this change in expectation for male characters. Between Seller's pendulum and Bridges's crucible, Melinda Dillon received science fiction's first ever best supporting actress nomination for her role in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg 1977), portraying a dedicated mother who later joins Richard Dreyfuss in a quest for the alien landing site, following the abduction of her son. A nomination for

the 1983 best actress award went to Jane Alexander who "contributes a tremendously moving performance" (Hardy 1991, 385) to *Testament* (Littman 1983), a treatise on the horrors of nuclear war. Rather than offering a pendulum development between diverse characteristics, these later nominations reflect composite maturation, and subsequently the presentation of rounded 'human' characters. It is no coincidence that the Academy's recognition of progressively more rounded characters came at a time when the cinema industry was going through the socio-political changes described in chapter 3.

Whilst these female protagonists had clearly benefited from being 'born' into a period of increased application of rounded, human characters - a fact which suggests powers beyond coincidence - the price was a continued and commercially necessary adherence to the id/super-ego transaction. Phil Hardy notes that *Testament* "begins by establishing strongly a profile of the sheer normality of Hamlin" (Hardy 1991, 385), a community later affected by nuclear war. *Close Encounter*'s Jillian Guiler's own humanity draws considerable strength from the unassuming normality of Melinda Dillon's presentation. Jane Fonda encapsulates the difficulties facing the female in patriarchal society with her comments about her character, Kimberley Wells, in *The China Syndrome* (Bridges 1979), a science fiction film for which she also received a best actress nomination:

When Kimberley wants to pursue her story and her boss says "Don't worry your pretty head about all that," I understood. It's hard for a pretty woman to be accepted on a level beyond or in contradiction to the stereotyped image of prettiness. (Jane Fonda, quoted in Haddad-Garcia 1981, 225)

Whilst Fonda's character is "... the moving force behind the film ..." (Hardy 1991, 347), convention is further served by her role as a reporter - the most prolific of the professional-female roles in science fiction film.

These award-nominated films all present female characters who pay for their central, *rounded roles with a degree of adherence to normality*. Whilst *Testament* uses this as a natural extension to a narrative which is designed to emphasise the devastation caused to 'normal' lives by the horrors of nuclear war, in *Close Encounters* and *The China Syndrome*, traditional characteristics have a tendency merely to counterbalance non-conventional aspects of character. The result in each of the latter two cases is a film which, in attempting to present independent females, places disproportionate emphasis upon the 'acceptable' aspects of their multi-faceted representations. Whilst these films clearly offer greater scope for the female characters than those, like *Queen of Outer Space*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which root their female characters wholly in traditional patriarchal ideology, they are limited, especially in the case of *The China Syndrome*, by overt references to the subsequent empowerment of the female as a frivolous aberration, rather than a *fait accompli*.

'Oscar' success for science fiction characters heralds the genre's return to Jung's contrasexual animus/anima projection, resulting in 'feminisation' of the female characters and 'masculinisation' of male characters. However, here the conservative nature of Academy Award nominated films, coupled with crucible development if the individual character, results in composites of feminine id and feminine super-ego -

indicated by the employment of the 'pretty' Jane Fonda as the 'traditional' journalist cum reporter, and masculine id and masculine super-ego - indicated by a manifestation of Vivian Sobchack's "patriarchally empowered, paternal, and childlike" hybrid[11]. Be it pendulum, crucible or a compound of both, the result is a system of representation which, whilst it applies to both male and female, further polarises them into popularly conceived 'masculine' and 'feminine' camps. This polarisation in turn reinforces the fractal structure of the successful science fiction film, with its layered id/super-ego interchange, itself a reflection of an underlying ideology.

The American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences thus augments the structure of the commercial film industry, which conspires to restrict the potential responses of individual characters. The need to present multi-faceted characters is highlighted by Heather Barker, who echoes an argument germane to this thesis:

If we cannot even portray on screen the myriad of personalities and accurate *gender ratios relating to our own world*, then how can we even begin to explore strange new ones? (Barker 1992, 14)

Whilst the presentation of accurate gender ratios is of course essential, of primary moment is the development of *any* multi-faceted personalities. After all, it has been shown that the genre's use of myriad female roles tends to result in one-

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[11] See page 230 above.

dimensional characters, each of which designed to fulfil the separate id and super-ego expectations of the spectator. It is preferable to have one developed character than several which are underdeveloped. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* presents a gender ratio which reflects the film's 1950s militaristic bias, but set against this constant is the single character of Helen Benson, who, through the symbiosis of a variety of personal responses, presents resonances of the real - to use Barker's useful term - 'personality', rather than the fictionally created - and 'catch-all' term - character.

The potential of this symbiosis of multiple elements can be seen to underscore the phenomenal success of *Star Wars*: audiences willingly accepted the futuristic iconography because it supported, and was supported by, a classical structure of recognisable myth and morality. George Lucas has suggested that his aim was to re-invent traditional fairy tale adventure: "'there was no modern mythology to give kids a sense of values, to give them a strong mythological fantasy life'" (Champlin 1992, 42). Isolating this aim in *Star Wars: The Genesis of Legend*, Dean Conrad highlights the factors essential to fantasy film in general: "in order to write successful fantasy, fairy tale adventures one has to understand their inherent popularity; their plots, characters, situations and morals have to be observed" (Conrad 1996, 6). This was the result of a conscious effort by Lucas to commingle a number of elements within his film, including traditional mythology, traditional science fiction, and the work of Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa[12].

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[12] The plot and many of the characters of *Star Wars* are drawn directly from Kurosawa's 1958 film, *The Hidden Fortress*; both Princess Leia and Luke Skwalker are influenced by the Japanese film's Princess Yuki character (see Conrad 1996, 12-14).

Following this line, Leia's character is drawn from a crucible of clearly recognisable disparate elements - including 'damsel in distress' - as she becomes a composite product of dialogue, plot, and relationship to other characters. On the surface, Leia is merely a princess, trapped in a high tower, waiting to be rescued by a dashing prince; denied any overt sexuality, she is an icon of an age of romanticism, and valour[13]. Coupling this with the beauty which first attracts Luke to Leia's hologram message, Lucas forms the foundations of the mythological heroine character, over which less traditional elements are laid. Leia's capture results from her mission to smuggle secret plans to her compatriots in the rebel force. Taken to see the evil Darth Vader in the opening sequences of the film, Leia displays no fear as she remonstrates with him: "Lord Vader. I should have known. Only you could be so bold. The Imperial Senate will not sit still for this . . ." (Lucas 1994, 10) Later, she shows almost comic audacity, in a frank exchange with Vader's superior, Grand Moff Tarkin:

Leia   Governor Tarkin. I should have expected to find you holding Vader's leash. I recognised your foul stench when I was brought on board.

Tarkin   Charming to the last. You don't know how hard I found it signing the order to terminate your life!

Leia   I'm surprised you had the courage to take the responsibility

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[13] Cf. Loomis 1963, esp. 13-22; and Bloch 1991, esp. 93-164.

yourself!

(Lucas 1994, 66)

Leia stands firm against two of the most powerful figures in the evil empire, but, as a safeguard against audience rejection, she retains her traditional femininity throughout. At the moment of her subsequent rescue, Leia is questioning the authority of the disguised Luke Skywalker with: "aren't you a little short for a stormtrooper?". She continues in this vein, remonstrating with Han Solo: "this is some rescue. When you came in here, didn't you have a plan for getting out?"; it is she who makes good their escape by blasting an hole in the side of the cell-bay corridor, and finally in an attempt to take control of the situation after their escape, she barks orders at Luke, Han, and Chewbacca: "Listen. I don't know who you are, or where you came from, but from now on, you do as I tell you. Okay?".

Leia returns in *The Empire Strikes Back* (Kershner 1980), even more secure of her position as an individual personality. Wearing all-in-one jump suits, rather than the flowing robes of the first film, she takes on the mantle of rebel leader:

[*With a sense of urgency, Leia quickly briefs a group of pilots gathered in the center of the hangar*]

Leia   All troop carriers will assemble at the north entrance. The heavy transport ships will leave as soon as they are loaded. Only two fighter escorts per ship. The energy shield can only be opened for a short time, so you'll have to stay close to your transports.

Hobbie   Two fighters against a Star Destroyer?

Leia   The ion cannon will fire several shots to make sure that any enemy

ships will be out of your flight path.

When you've gotten past the energy shield, proceed directly to the

rendezvous point. Understood?

(Brackett and Kasdan 1994, 25-26)[14]

This dynamic leadership is counterbalanced by a continuing romance between

Leia and Han Solo, and a final declaration of love; whilst this serves to augment all

characters involved, screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan[15] is careful to check its

exuberance - primarily by encasing Solo in carbonite - before love and, subsequently,

sex become defining elements of Leia's character. Projecting this development into

Return of the Jedi (Marquand 1983), Carrie Fisher, suggests of her character: "'I

think she would become more of a combination of soldier and human being. And a

woman.'" (Greenberger 1983, 34). Speaking in an interview held during the filming

of *Return of the Jedi*, Fisher muses: "'it is interesting that they give the female so

much power' . . . '*and I get even more, now!*'" (Greenberger 1983, 34). Despite

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[14] Citing this section, Conrad draws similarities between Leia and Queen Elizabeth I, as the latter prepares her own troops to face the Spanish armada, in 1588: ". . . I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport . . . but being resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live or die amongst you all." (Williams 1992, 186, quoted in Conrad 1996, 8).

[15] Whilst Leigh Brackett is credited as a screenwriter on *The Empire Strikes Back*, she died of cancer two weeks after presenting Lucas with the first draft of the film. Lucas was forced to shelve the draft, and start anew with Lawrence Kasdan working from Lucas's own notes. However, Lucas was a adamant that Brackett's estate should benefit from her contribution to the film, securing her a co-screenwriter credit; Lucas took no credit for himself (Pollock 1983, 206-07).

Fisher's revelation, for this third film of the series, Kasdan undoes much of the previous film's rounded character-development, alluded to by Carrie Fisher. *Return of the Jedi*'s male creators[16] preside over the reduction of Leia to traditional female object. During the first section of the film she is dressed in a metal bikini as one of Jabba the Hutt's slave-girls, a sexual, narrative implausibility which ties in closely with the male-Self serving alien penchant for human females[17] discussed in chapter 1. Much of the latter section of the film returns her to the flowing robes of *Star Wars*, as she becomes what is essentially the 'queen of the teddy-bear Ewoks'. In the words of Heather Barker:

> *Star Wars* produced Princess Leia, an intriguing composite of damsel in distress and tough cookie. She was a sarcastic and spunky idea which unfortunately got hopelessly lost as the trilogy unfolded. (Barker 1992, 11/13)

Failing to capitalise upon the foundations laid by *Star Wars* and the promise of *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi* might have been called "Return of the Traditions", as it firmly roots itself, along with the character of Princess Leia, in the 'safe' environment of commercially acceptable ideology.

Despite the failure of *Return of the Jedi* to augment personality, *The Empire Strikes Back* demonstrates the potential of the sequel film in general has potential to

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[16] Writer, Lawrence Kasdan; co-writer and producer, George Lucas; and director, Richard Marquand.

[17] The notion of sexual attraction and sexual action between human and non-human in science fiction literature is discussed in "Sex and Taboos", in Ash 1977, 217-221.

move towards symbiosis through the use of inherent character traits, established in previous films. In the sequels *Aliens* and *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* the female protagonists, already established in the original films as capable individuals, Ripley and Connor, return displaying strong maternal instincts, which serve perhaps ironically to augment their earlier characteristics. Heather Barker is, however, uneasy with what she sees as a dual role:

> So is the Mother / Warrior a triumph for feminism or a male fantasy? The dichotomy between the dominant, tough woman and the protective mother is very attractive . . . . On the other hand, it could be cynically perceived as the age-old compromise which has ensured that tough women retain some semblance of femininity. (Barker 1994, 13)

The potential 'triumph for feminism' might stem from what Adrienne Rich regards as men's jealousy of female reproductive power, stating that "there is much to suggest that the male mind has always been haunted by the force of the idea of *dependence on a woman for life itself*, . . . that he is 'of woman born'" (Rich 1979, 11). Both Ripley and Connor are able to compete with the men at a high physical level, but, in addition, they retain powers which the men will never have; this self-contained 'protective mother' then reduces the need for men. However, Rich continues, suggesting that jealousy leads to fear, and then to the male subjugation of the mother in male attempts to control the means of creation - a subjugation manifested in the Frankenstein syndrome highlighted in chapter 1. Maternalisation of these successful females might, then, be regarded as an attempt to return them to

what Shulamith Firestone describes, in *The Dialectic of Sex*, as their subordinate role in a sexual class system. Firestone uses a Marx-Engels historical-materialist line to argue that whilst subjugation based upon physical prowess might be considered 'natural', it is not 'human':

> Humanity has begun to transcend Nature: we can no longer justify the maintenance of a discriminatory sex class system on the grounds of its origins in nature. (Firestone 1979, 18)

Whilst it is true that the general development of the female in science fiction film has, to a large degree, been tempered by a proclivity reinforce omnipresent patriarchy, the progressive science fiction female hero, like Marian Lazarus, has shown the ability to draw upon multiple characteristics when called to do so at the cusp-point of the narrative. Subsequent increased investment in that personality by the audience results in empathy with her inherent humanity, and sympathy with her predicament. Any apparent regression imbued by the narrative role of a particular individual - in the case of *Terminator 2*, motherhood - is diffused through its appropriation by, rather than its appropriation of, the established personality; the dynamics of this exchange will be discussed further in chapter 6.

It has already been noted that Helen Benson's encapsulation of a thesis which questions the small-minded intransigence of institutionalised patriarchal authority in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, positions her as a rare example of a progressive female who pre-dates the marriage between commercial and socially-conscious science

fiction film at the close of the 1970s. As valuable as Wise's 1951 film has been in illuminating the complex interchange between pendulum, crucible, and id/super-ego transaction necessary to ensure the successful presentation of the progressive female protagonist. as an ally of Klaatu, Benson's. actions are driven not by personal commitment, but rather by adherence to the morality of the male alien. Even a cursory examination of Klaatu reveals the film's religious allegory[18] as a replacement underlying patriarchal ideology - what Mary Daly, in *Beyond God the Father* describes as "the biblical and popular image of God as a great patriarch in heaven, rewarding and punishing according to his mysterious and seemingly arbitrary will . . ." (Daly 1973, 13)[19].

Towards the end of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Klaatu is shot for the second time by U.S. troops; this time he is killed and taken to a police cell. Rescued by Gort, he is returned to his flying saucer, where the robot, witnessed by Helen Benson, brings the alien back to life. Benson, somewhat amazed by this event, enters into a dialogue with Klaatu:

Klaatu   [*rising from the resurrection couch*] Hello.

Benson   I... I thought you were -

Klaatu   - I was.

Benson   [*looking at Gort*] You mean [*pausing*] he has the power of life

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[18] This reading has been recognised by a number of commentators, including Baxter 1970, Brosnan 1991, 61; Hardy 1991, 127; Wright 1993, 100; Pallot et al. 1994, 182.

[19] Cf. Hamerton-Kelly 1979; see also Paglia 1992, 40-71.

and death?

Klaatu   No. That power is reserved for the almighty spirit. This
         technique, in some cases, can restore life for a limited period.

Benson   But, how long?

Klaatu   That, no one can tell.

Whilst this brief exchange, signalling the beginning of the dénouement, sanctions allusions to the film's religious themes, a closer reading reveals a tighter adherence to religious dogma. After protests from the Breen Censorship Office, Klaatu's resurrection was reduced to a temporary state (Brosnan 1991, 61; Wright 1993, 100), and the "power of life and death" ceded to a god, under the guise of "the almighty spirit". Despite this concession to institutionalised censorship, spectators familiar with Harry Bates's *Farewell to the Master* might glean a more subversive subtext, for it is the final chilling words of Bates's original short story which pose the strongest threat to the Christian patriarchal sensibilities of the Production Code: "'You misunderstand,' the mighty robot had said. 'I am the master'" (Bates 1957, 815). "Once again, however, Hollywood discarded the novel plot twist . . ." (Kyle 1977, 72), in favour of a safe 'morality', in which the robots are described as being created by Klaatu's people.

From its "grandiose, melodramatic title" (Tookey 1994, 168) through its first words: "holy mackerel", to the exhibition of the powers which are able to make the earth stand still, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is steeped in religious iconography. However, despite screenwriter, North's, reference, above, to "the almighty spirit" opening a reading for multiple religious groups, the majority of the film is clearly

bound by references to the *New Testament*, and once again, the Production Code, through a "theme [which] mirrors the birth, death and resurrection of Christ . . ." (Hardy 1991, 127).

Reading the name Carpenter on the identification tag of a suit he has acquired from the hospital from which he escapes at the beginning of the film, Klaatu smiles knowingly to himself. His smile reveals, at the least, his understanding of this link between his new alias and the trade of Christianity's most famous son, and in an extreme reading, the coincidence born of the fact that he is actually Jesus, descending from Heaven to revisit earth at the dawn of its nuclear age. Whatever the level of reading, Christ is reflected in Klaatu's love for children, his boundless patience and mild mannerisms, his seemingly miracle powers, his sacrifice to human fear of the unknown, and subsequent resurrection, his sermon on the mount in the form of his flying saucer, and finally in his ascension to the heavens. Faced with the strength of this pervasive metaphor, Benson can do little but reflect the role of the female in the *New Testament*. Following the example of the three Marys (John 19:25 AV), Benson remains loyal to Klaatu throughout his stay on earth; she represents Mary Magdalene, whilst he, the Messiah endures his days in the wilderness. Further to this, the Christian morality of America of the 1950s is seen to govern Benson's character: her relationship with Stevens is sanctioned by the church because she is a widow; however, her relationship with Klaatu, despite temptation, remains platonic, a reflection of his Messianic status:

Christianity wiping out paganism's secular glamours, tried to make spirituality

primary. But as an embattled sect, it ended by reinforcing the west's absolutist

ego-structure. The hero of the medieval Church militant, the knight in shining

armour, is the most perfect Apollonian *thing* in world history.

(Paglia 1992, 31)

This female adherence to an ideology inherent to the male protagonist

highlights the continuing need for films, even those as progressive in their treatment

of women as this, to appease the audience with an acceptable underlying ideology.

Whilst Christianity, as an alternative patriarchal framework within this film, reinforces

an attack on other patriarchal manifestations, represented by the military, and by Tom

Stevens, its "brave attempts to redress the balance" (Barker 1992, 11) replaces a

'human' (familiar) patriarchy[20] with an 'alien' (less familiar) patriarchy. There is a

danger, then, that the multi-layered employment of pendulum and crucible which has

enabled the development of the female character, by broadening her potential

responses, serves merely to create increasingly plausible characters to support ever

present, and mutable, patriarchal overtones.

In *Geographies of Exclusion*, David Sibley, following the work of

psychoanalytical theorist Melanie Klein, argues that the perception of Self and Other,

once formed by an individual, develops a socially constructed process whereby keys

of recognition are used for ease of acceptance and rejection:

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[20] See Daly 1975, esp. 53-73.

Most personalities draw on a range of stereotypes, not necessarily wholly good, not necessarily wholly bad, as a means of coping with instabilities which arise in our perceptions of the world. (Sibley 1995, 15)

Progressive though the crucible-development in science fiction film has proven, it draws upon "a range of stereotypes" formed *within* patriarchal ideology.

If women understand by emancipation the adoption of the masculine role then we are lost indeed. (Greer 1972, 114)

It would follow, then, that the further development of the female character in science fiction film depends upon her ability to transcend the tenets of any, or all, patriarchal ideologies, which depend upon stereotypical and archetypical recognition patterns.

CHAPTER 6

INVERTING AND SUBVERTING PATRIARCHY

Just seventeen minutes before the end of his 1979 movie, *Alien*, Ridley Scott presents a moment which clearly underscores the film's indifference to the specifically patriarchal imperatives which hitherto had formed the basis of the science fiction film genre.

At this point, Ellen Ripley, played by Sigourney Weaver, is the sole survivor of the *Nostromo*, a commercial towing ship which had been returning to Earth with a cargo of twenty million tons of mineral ore. The crew, woken from stasis early by the ship's mother-computer, was obliged to investigate a repeating signal emanating from a nearby planet. As a result of their exploration of this planet, an alien creature had been introduced to the *Nostromo* with devastating consequences. Six of Ripley's colleagues are now dead - killed by the highly evolved predator alien, with acid for blood - and Ripley has been left with no choice but to destroy the *Nostromo*, and flee in the escape-shuttle. Scott takes his audience through Ripley's manipulation of the complex multi-plunger switch arrangement of the auto-destruct device, as the mother-computer issues her foreboding warning: "Option to override automatic detonation sequence expires in five minutes". Ripley makes her way to the shuttle to discover her passage barred by the alien; reminded again of the limited time left to her, she returns to the auto-destruct mechanism, and executes the disengage sequence. Meanwhile, the mother-computer is audibly counting away the seconds left to "override automatic detonation sequence". Tension mounts, as Ripley drops the

final disengage switch in the last second of override time: the count-down, however, continues. Framed in a low-angle shot, Ripley stands for a moment in disbelief, then, in a moment which defines her character for this and the three films to follow, she looks up and cries: "Mother. I've turned the cooling unit back on. MOTHER!". Unmoved, Mother continues: "The ship will automatically destruct in T-minus-five minutes".

Spectators familiar with Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (Lang 1926a) may well recognise, reflected in this sequence, Freder's cry to his father, as he is tortured by his long shift on the subterranean machine: "Father, Father - I did not know that ten hours can be torture". Lang's film, in turn, clearly bears reference to Saint Mathew's report of Jesus's cry to his own father, as he is tortured with pain on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46 AV)[1]. It is the blatant inversion of this defining patriarchal moment, which encapsulates *Alien*'s separation from its many predecessors, and subtly underscores the success of Ripley's character. Having been identified as the central protagonist by the film's narrative, the female, Ripley, is calling to the *Nostromo*'s own omnipresent agent of omnipotence. Mother, having demonstrated the power of life or death during the 'waking' sequence at the beginning of the film, is God - and Mother, like Ripley, is female. It is more the film's nonchalant disregard for the myth of a male God[2], than the often, and incorrectly, cited guns and macho iconography[3], which enables Ripley, to fracture the myth of

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[1] This translation is taken from the Authorised Version of the Bible, which quotes the original as: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?".

[2] See Daly 1973.

[3] Heather Barker states of Ellen Ripley and Sarah Connor in their first films (*Alien* and

patriarchal dominance, and to claim her place in *Alien*'s liberal ideology. Scott, does

not, however, labour his reference to a female God; later in the film, religion is

rejected wholesale, when, during a cursory funeral, no one offers words over the

body of Kane, which is then flushed "out of the airlock as dispassionately as emptying

a toilet" (Greenberg 1986, 102). In fact, Ripley's cry to Mother is presented merely

as a questioning of a tradition which specifies God as male, a challenge highlighted in

the same year by Robert Hamerton-Kelly in *God the Father*, as being advanced by

Mary Daly and the women's movement:

> Which in its moderate form is seeking a reform of the church's language
>
> about God in theology and liturgy, and equal opportunity for women in the
>
> ministry; and in its radical feminist manifestation seeks nothing less than a total
>
> revision of the idea of God. (Hamerton-Kelly 1979, 5)

By describing Daly's pursuit of a revision of the patriarchal imperative as

radical feminism, Hamerton-Kelly disregards her liberal intent, despite later citing this

intent with a quotation from Daly's own text: ". . . neither the Father, nor the son, nor

the mother *is* God . . . [God is] the Verb who transcends anthropomorphic

symbolization . . ." (Daly 1973, 97, quoted in Hamerton-Kelly 1979, 5-6). Further

arguing against Daly's work, Hamerton-Kelly asserts that:

> To make "patriarchy" the root of all evil is comparable to the way the

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The Terminator respectively), "at this point they were in their prototype Warrior phase
. . ." (Barker 1992, 13).

Marxists use "capital" in their analysis of the world's ills and is a form of demonology. All ills simply cannot be attributed to one cause; patriarchy as the devil is not very helpful in analyzing the human dilemma. (Hamerton-Kelly 1979, 6)

However Hamerton-Kelly misses the point of Daly's central thesis, which argues that patriarchy *must* claim responsibility for humanity's problems because patriarchy claims primacy over humanity. Her intent is the undermining of a male-specific establishment, rather than its "radical" replacement by female-specificity. It is this liberal note which is reflected in Ridley Scott's contemporary science fiction film.

Thus far, it has been argued that, whilst the pendulum and the crucible are crucial to the development of the female character in the science fiction film, they tend to draw upon aspects of traditional patriarchal representation, and so, ultimately, confine the female response. The female protagonist appears to succeed within this structure only by appropriating, like Helen Benson and Sarah Connor, the tenets of Campbell's essentially-male hero myth. However, Heather Barker questions this: "do we really need a female Terminator as an experiment in breaking down the last bastions of male superiority . . . ?" (Barker 1992, 13). Ridley Scott's answer is "no". Ripley's cry to an omnipresent mother-god is central to a narrative in which the female characters invert and subvert patriarchal specificity. The mother-computer itself eschews the anthropomorphisation which has hitherto dogged female computers. Ripley is not a personification of Campbell's male hero myth; instead, she is essential to a narrative which challenges the institution from within which the myth

is formed. She has little trouble out-witting *Nostromo* mechanics, Parker and Brett; she questions the validity of Captain Dallas's decisions to allow the alien to remain on board; and she challenges the professionalism of Ash, the sinister science officer. Configured as a point of moral identification within the narrative, Ripley's subsequent relationship with the spectator acts as a guide through the film. Not only does the audience want to her to survive, but, when it is frightened, it also feels safe with Ripley as a companion through the narrative.

A stark contrast to this is offered by *Dune* (Lynch 1984), which subjugates its strongest female characters, the Bene Gesserit, to a plot which increasingly highlights the omnipotence of the central male character, Paul Atreides. In Frank Herbert's original novels[4], however, it is these female characters who guide the reader through the narrative, framing the epic myth of the spice-planet Arrakis. The film itself attempts female narration with weak voice-overs from narrator, Princess Irulan, played by Virginia Madsen, but far from giving her power to drive the narrative or to guide the spectator, her input merely attempts to camouflage inevitable deficiencies created by the editing of twelve hours of footage down to the two hours finally released. The film's early promise for the spiritually-powerful Reverend Mother Ramallo of the Bene Gesserit, played by Silvana Mangano, is eroded, and her insignificance assured by her defeat by the male Messiah.

If the female protagonist is to demonstrate free-will, she must, like Ripley,

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[4] *Dune* (1965); *Dune Messiah* (1969); *Children of Dune* (1976).

demonstrate an ability to find a way to avoid diminution, and to transcend the

patriarchal imperative through strategies of inversion and subversion. Whilst it was

shown in chapter 4[5] that Sarah Connor's narrative role, in *The Terminator* (Cameron

1984), is firmly controlled by the polarising influence of the patriarchal pendulum, her

functional importance to the plot of this film subverts this narrative subjugation. From

shortly after the point at which Kyle and Sarah meet, a sex scene becomes inevitable;

this obligatory interlude delineates the polarised changes in Sarah's character[6].

However, as the film progresses this inevitability becomes less the result of patriarchal

convention, and more the result of causal logic. *The Terminator* uses Connor's

seeming adherence to tradition as a solid foundation from which to develop her

personality, in a reflection of what Olive Banks identifies as a radical feminist

strategy:

> Radical feminists . . . , quite unlike the equal rights feminists, have tended, as Jo
>
> Freeman (1975, pp. 50-1) has pointed out, to concentrate on the 'traditional'
>
> female concerns of love, sex, and children, even if they have been concerned
>
> about them in a very untraditional way. (Banks, 1993, 229)

It is this untraditional treatment of the traditional representation of the female science

fiction character, as sexual object, lover, mother, and so forth, which has enabled a

small number of films to question the nature of these representations. It is necessary,

then, to return to *The Terminator* in order to demonstrate the interplay, during this

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[5] See chapter 4, page 212.

[6] See chapter 4, page 217

period of change in the science fiction female, between patriarchal polarisation, driven

by the id/super-ego transaction, and female Self-serving re-presentation, driven by the

aim goal of transcendence.

Kyle Reese has been sent back from the year 2029 by Sarah Connor's son,

guerrilla leader, John, not only to save John's mother, but also to become his father.

This fact is made clearer at the end of the film, after Kyle's death, when a Mexican

boy takes the Polaroid photograph of Sarah which will, in turn, be given to Kyle by

John in order to inspire Kyle to travel back in time to save her. As these temporal

complexities are unravelled, Sarah's importance to this process is revealed; her

development away from the traditional patriarchal female representation, used to

formulate her initial character, then, becomes less a mere narrative counterbalancing,

and more a structural subversion of inevitabilities.

In her postmodernist review of the science fiction films of the late 1970s and

early 1980s, Vivian Sobchack refers to a proliferation of images of "inverted

millennarianism [*sic*]" (Sobchack 1988, 246), which describes the genre's move away

from a wholesale glorification or condemnation of the future - "consistently figured

in, among other things, the visual 'thrashing' and yet operative functioning of what

used to be shiny 'futurist' technology" (Sobchack 1988, 246) - and towards a

realisation that the postmodernist reductionism of commodified futures in films like

Blade Runner and *The Terminator* creates an interdependence which denies the

existence of anything 'pure'[7]. Whilst films like *The Terminator* and *Blade Runner*

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[7] Borrowing the term from Frederic Jameson (1984), Sobchack explains that the term

offer, for Sobchack, visual metaphors for inverted-millennarianist [*sic*] cynicism about the future, the former film also echoes this theme in its "regressive and circular time-travel plot" (Sobchack 1988, 248). This, she maintains, "narrativizes the genre's symbolic comprehension of the 'end' of modernism, of 'futurism', of the belief in 'progress'" (Sobchack 1988, 248). Through her developing importance in a future which is already in Kyle's past, Sarah Connor can be seen as a continuation, and eventually the embodiment, of Sobchack's concept of inverted millennarianism. Her mere existence heralds an horrific, apocalyptic future; however, in her role as the mother of a twenty-first century leader, she also heralds a new and potentially better future. Sarah eventually realises that, whilst she has no power to alter the past-future, she has the power to alter the future-future.

... her moment of transformation comes when she's having sex with Reese [Kyle] and swings herself into the dominant position. Taking control of her life, conceiving *the future saviour of the world and having a decent orgasm. Girls on top.* (Empire 1997, 21)

Ironically then, sex with, and love for, Kyle become methods by which screenwriters, James Cameron and Gale Ann Hurd, challenge the patriarchal inevitabilities suggested by Connor's earlier character, and embrace her ability to drive the narrative. Whilst the sex scene in *The Terminator* may be seen as an opportunity to present a naked Linda Hamilton, this occurrence appears no more

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'inverted millennarianism' "replaces 'premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive' with a sense of 'the end of this or that'" (Sobchack 1988, 246).

gratuitous than the scenes at the beginning of the film in which the Terminator and

Kyle arrive naked from the future[8]. Sex is important to the development of the plot,

and finally of Sarah Connor's character, rather than a mere erotic interlude; this is

apparent in the manner in which the scene is filmed. Concentrating on the clasping

hands, rather than the writhing bodies, Cameron highlights the narrative importance

of the moment, rather than the scopophilic potential of the sex. In 'Time Travel,

Primal Scene, and the Critical Dystopia', Constance Penley supports a further

narrative importance of this scene. She suggests that science fiction films often reflect

classical cinema's aim to establish a clear difference between masculinity and

femininity, and to celebrate the complementary, rather than the antithetical, nature of

that difference (Penley 1986, 75). By magnifying this complementary difference, the

sexual liaison between Sarah and Kyle

> . . . packs a strong erotic punch, *in its narrative context* because it is a kiss
>
> across time, a kiss between a man from the future and a woman from the
>
> present, an act of love pervaded by death. For Kyle has to die in order to justify
>
> the coda, in which Sarah ensures the continuity of the story, now a legend, of
>
> their love for each other. (Penley 1986, 78)

After describing his attempts, in the early nineteen-eighties, to develop a film-

script exploiting the concept of time-travel, John Brosnan registers his admiration for

the plot of *The Terminator*:

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[8] The time-travel device is only able to transport living tissue or, in the case of the
cyborg, objects encased in living tissue.

I was never able to come up with something for my woman character to do that would be so goddamn important to the future dwellers but Cameron [and Hurd] has [have] the perfect solution - she becomes pregnant and gives birth to the man who will eventually save the human race from the machines. She becomes the mother of a virtual Messiah. (Brosnan 1991, 314)

Through parallels with the Virgin Mary, a figure Camille Paglia describes as one of the last survivors of the great virgin goddess myth (Paglia 1992, 43), Connor's character is, for a moment, returned to the safety of the traditional religious imperative which contributes to the 'acceptance' of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Wise 1951). Comparisons are reinforced by the fact Kyle is not from the here and now - Connor is impregnated by what is essentially a spirit from the future - and are developed through her modesty: "some legend I am, you must be very disappointed". However, by instigating sex with Kyle, now established as a causal inevitability, Sarah begins to weaken her identification with the Virgin Mary; she furthers this repudiation with an angry outburst: "I didn't ask for this honour - I don't want it!". Once she has accepted that her historical role is inevitable, her development away from comparison with a passive image of the Virgin is strengthened by the increasing violence of her actions towards the Terminator, developed through a willingness to embrace causality, and fight for the future of her child. Sarah's debt to the Virgin Mary is limited to an historical role; she is a modern-day Mary, willing to use sex and violence to attain her goals; as a hero, she is able to commit evil to good ends[9]. Resistance to

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[9] In his introduction to the first British television broadcast of the uncut version of *The*

the passive femininity of the mother of Christ returns to the female protagonist the status of 'Great Mother' as highlighted by Camille Paglia in her illumination of aspects of the goddess mother figure:

> She is morally ambivalent, violent as well as benevolent. The sanitized pacifist goddess promoted by feminism is wishful thinking. From prehistory to the end of the Roman empire, the Great Mother never lost her barbarism. She is the ever-changing face of chthonian nature, now savage, now smiling. The medieval Madonna, a direct descendant of Isis, is a Great Mother with her chthonian terror removed. She has lost her roots in nature, because it is pagan nature that Christianity rose to oppose. (Paglia 1992, 43)

Whilst there is clearly potential depth to Brosnan's assertion that Sarah Connor is an allegory for the Virgin Mary, the dangers of over-analysing critical comment is highlighted by the fact that he strengthens his thesis with the observation that John Connor shares his initials with Jesus Christ, an observation echoed Peter Nicholls (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 1212). This final evidence is weakened by the fact that he also shares his initials with the director and co-writer of *The Terminator*, James Cameron.

Developing the importance of this particular female role is the fact that the de-centring of the chronology empowers the woman as the giver of knowledge. When

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> *Terminator*, Martin Scorsese uses this argument to defend what he regards as the "necessary" and "stylised" violence in the film (BBC2, 17 October, 1993).

describing the relationship between Sarah and Kyle, *The Virgin Film Guide* contends that "from him Sarah will learn about her destiny and that of the human race" (Pallot et al. 1994, 874). This is true to a degree, but it conceals the fact that much of the information given to Sarah by Kyle, has been given to Kyle by John, which in turn was - or, perhaps more correctly, will be - given to John by his mother, Sarah. Whilst there can be no satisfactory logical resolution to the ownership of knowledge within this closed loop - ". . . the simplest narrative form of the time-paradox story . . ." (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 1225) - from the point of view of the spectator, the knowledge must have originated with the female. This fact is reinforced by Kyle's reason for accepting his mission: "It was a chance to meet the legend - Sarah Connor, who taught her son to fight, organise, prepare, from when he was a kid."

Just as Helen Benson's humanity in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is never subjugated to the potential love story, neither is Sarah Connor given to the sentimental romanticism, suggested by traditional projections of the female image; and as a result her available reactions are not limited. In fact, it is Kyle who has trouble rationalising his feelings for Sarah, as he professes his love for her: "I came across time for you, Sarah. I love you, I always have". Sarah demonstrates the emotional independence she had suggested towards the beginning of the film in a sequence in which she remained undeterred by having her date called off. Sex and love become narrative tools, through which Connor, supported by biological and chronological inevitabilities, rather than romantic and scopophilic traditions, later drives the narrative. This function can be seen echoed in a number of films: in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* it is the relationship between Helen and Tom which

nurtures the friendship between alien Klaatu and Helen's son, Bobby, which in turn leads directly to the film's climax: curious about his new friend's activities, Bobby follows Klaatu from the boarding-house one evening. Klaatu makes his way to the park, and is witnessed by Bobby entering the flying saucer. Bobby's information, coupled with the diamonds Bobby had received from Klaatu for two dollars, convinces Helen and Tom that Klaatu is indeed the alien visitor. This acts as the catalyst for the divergence of Tom and Helen's characters. In *Starman* (Carpenter 1984), the inevitable sexual liaison between Jenny Hayden and the alien serves as a sharing of knowledge, rather than a scopophilic interlude; even in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Wise 1979), it is the sexual apotheosis at the film's climax which ironically frees Lieutenant Ilia from the harassment she has endured from members of the *Enterprise* crew.

The structure which allows for the woman's function as 'love interest' actually to reinforce her status in *The Terminator*, is carried into the film's sequel, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (Cameron 1991). However, it is not until this later film that Sarah Connor is able freely to draw upon aspects of her character which had remained, throughout *The Terminator*, firmly polarised on either side of her cusp-point. It is this subsequent crucible development which strengthens Sarah's pre-eminent position in a causal-logic narrative, and enables her to invert another mainstay of traditional patriarchal female representation - the mother.

Referring to *The Terminator*, Lillian Necakor writes:

It is refreshing in the 80s to find a film in which women are allowed

power and control and above all, are not subordinated by the male. At the same

time the woman is not sexually objectified, and she is allowed to transcend

genre role expectations. From the very first time we see Sarah, we are aware of

her strength and independence. (Lilian Necakor, *CineAction* 1987, quoted in

Tookey 1994, 843)

However, it is not entirely clear that the scenes which introduce Connor, in the

first film, do demonstrate her "strength and independence":

At the beginning she is a moped-riding, poodle-cut disaster in frilly pink, abused

by kids in restaurants, stood up by Porsche-driving jerks while with an airhead.

A ventilation from Arnie could be considered an improvement. (Empire 1997,

21)

Necakor's 1987 appraisal was, in fact, more prescient of *Terminator 2:*

Judgement Day, in which Connor is first seen bathed in sweat, performing exercises

on the up-turned bed in her cell at a state psychiatric hospital. The extent of her

development away from the feminine 'ideal' presented at the beginning of *The*

Terminator, is highlighted by an exchange with the head psychiatrist, Dr. Silberman,

who is showing a group of students around his hospital. With a menacing look, she

asks after Dr. Silberman's knee; Connor, he reveals had stabbed him earlier with a

ball-point pen. Just as this scene, crucible fashion, builds upon Silberman's

unsympathetic character in the first film, Connor's new character is built upon

foundations developed in *The Terminator*. In their review of *Terminator 2*, John
Clute and Peter Nicholls describe the extent of Connor's development:

> Where once she was cute, now she is a chain-smoking, violent obsessive in a
> psychiatric ward, body rippling with muscles, awaiting with frozen snarl the
> nuclear holocaust. (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 1212)

Whilst this, the film's initial presentation of Sarah Connor, is softened by the
audience's knowledge of her involvement with Kyle and the original T-800
terminator, recounted in an expository voice-over sequence at the beginning of this
film, curiosity is raised by memories of the fact that she ended the last film a free
woman, driving through the desert. It is soon revealed that she was caught trying to
destroy a computer factory; assuming a prior knowledge, writers James Cameron and
William Wisher, leave the audience to surmise that this was the Cyberdyne facility,
which would eventually produce the Skynet computer, which in turn would instigate
the nuclear war, leading to the events of the first film. It becomes clear at this point
that Sarah is not psychotic, but that her violent obsession is driven by a very real fear,
and knowledge, of the future, and a need to do something about changing it. Central
to this obsession is her role as a mother. Such is the power of her need to make
contact with her son, that she is driven to attack Dr. Silberman when he recognises
her previous calmness as a ruse to be moved to a less secure wing, pending escape.

Meanwhile, the spectator is presented with the young John Connor, a tearaway,
living with foster parents, for whom he has little respect. After stealing money from a

cash machine - a trick learned from his mother - John refers to Sarah as a "total loser". It is only after his subsequent encounters with the old T-800 Terminator, played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, and the new T-1000 Terminator, played by Robert Patrick, that he realises that his mother had been telling the truth about the past, and the future. From this point the bond between mother and son is mutual, but Sarah soon reveals that her maternal attachment is, by necessity, practical. After finally making good her escape from the hospital ward at the same time that John and the T-800 arrive to rescue her, Sarah frantically checks her son for wounds, before reprimanding him for returning to rescue her:

> Sarah   John, it was stupid of you to go there. God damn it, you have to be smarter than that; you almost got yourself killed. What were you thinking? You cannot risk yourself, even for me. Do you understand? You're too important. Do you understand?

Sarah reasons that she does not have the luxury of time for what she regards as superfluous maternal-instincts, she has no time to nurture her son, only to train him to be the guerrilla leader that he is destined to become. She makes clear her intention to harden her son's feelings towards her during a brief exchange:

> John   I had to get you out of that place. I'm sorry.
> Sarah   I didn't need your help. I can take care of myself.

Her consequent success is shown in a scene in which the T-800's central

processing unit (CPU) is removed for alteration, to enable it to learn from the humans:

> After the CPU is removed, the T-800 shuts-down and Sarah places it [the CPU] on a table. She picks up a hammer and tries to smash it to render him inoperative. John stops her and says they need him. He starts to show authority for the first time and says to Sarah, "How am I supposed to be a world leader if my own mother won't listen to me?" (Movie database, 1995a)

Assessed at this point in the film, it appears that writers James Cameron and William Wisher, Jr. have consciously veered away from a representation of the traditional nurturing mother, as exposed by Ann Oakley as part of the oppressive myth of motherhood:

> The myth of motherhood contains three popular assertions. The first is the most influential: that children need mothers. The second is the obverse of this: that mothers need their children. The third assertion is a generalization which holds that motherhood represents the greatest achievement of a woman's life: the sole true means of self-realization. . . .
>
> . . . Popular fiction, pseudo-psychology, and the pronouncements of so-called 'experts' faithfully reproduce them as facts rather than unevidenced assumptions. (Oakley 1974, 186)

This move may be seen as an attempt to capitalise upon the success of Linda

Hamilton's fighter character initially produced towards the end of *The Terminator*, as well as Sigourney Weaver's successful character in *Alien* and *Aliens* (Cameron 1986). However, in an attempt to disassociate her from the traditional, discredited nurturing role, the narrative is in danger of moving Sarah towards what Jagger describes as a woman's alienation "from the *product* of her reproductive labour when not she, but someone else, decides how many children she ought to bear" (Jaggar 1983, 353). In order to counter this, Sarah assumes control of the situation she has been placed into by future-history through her emotionless, dedication, to the safety of the future saviour of the human race, just as she had taken control of the sexual liaison in the first film. However, by apparently sublimating her humanity to ruthless dedication to her son's development as a soldier and leader, Sarah foregoes emotional connection. Refuting Barker's assertion that "we have not yet seen a viable female alternative to the Terminator character" (Barker 1992, 13), Sarah mirrors the role of the T-800 in *Terminator 2*. In fact, through her disregard for all human life which threatens her ambition for John, Sarah has become a more indiscriminate killing machine than the T-800 itself, which has been ordered, by John, to preserve human life. This fact becomes more ironic in a voice-over during which Sarah is watching John play with the T-800: she refers to the Terminator as the best father figure John could have had, always there, always patient: "In an insane world, it was the sanest choice". Through Alison Jaggar's observation that the term "'mothering' is extended to any relationship in which one individual nurtures and cares for another" (Jaggar, 1983, 256), the T-800 might be regarded as the new mother-figure for John. Sarah further abdicates responsibility by *disappearing without warning*, to kill Dyson, Cyberdyne's computer specialist. The T-800 further emphasises her de-humanised role, as well as his own

developing humanity, by observing, "It's what I would have done".

By creating this de-humanised warrior figure, which dismisses the nurturant mother figure altogether, Cameron and Wisher would be in danger of reintroducing the patriarchal pendulum, with a denial of what Estella Welldon calls "the power of the womb" (Welldon 1988, 42-62), and a swing towards a polarised reading of radical feminism, ultimately reflecting what Adrienne Rich has regarded as men's jealousy of female reproductive power[10]. Moreover, Welldon concludes with a statement that "to be deprived of the womb is to experience a true loss of power in a unique female way" (Welldon 1988, 62). However, proposing maternal instincts for Sarah's character highlights what Jackie Stacey regards as "a very familiar problem in feminist theory: how to argue for a feminine specificity without falling into the trap of biological essentialism" (Stacey 1994, 119). This further highlights the difficulties attached to creating a universally sympathetic female character, especially for male writers. Cameron and Wisher attempt to allay criticism by broadening the potential responses of the character as much as possible; Sarah is finally given aspects of maternal love for her son. Having located Dyson, Sarah attacks his home with a number of automatic weapons, but stops short of killing the computer specialist; John and the T-800 appear, and Sarah finally gives vent to the emotions which the audience now perceive to have been driving the character throughout the film; she tells her son: "I love you John, I always have". This maternalisation of the female character does not appear as retrograde weakening of her role, but rather, as Barker

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[10] See chapter 5, page 257.

suggests: Cameron "decided to take the Warrior a step *further* and give her maternal instincts [emphasis mine]" (Barker 1992, 13). Whilst this appears to echo a subjugation to the id/super-ego transaction, through the utilisation of familiar iconography, the essential difference here is that the female character, then, uses her multifaceted personality as a springboard to attack patriarchy. Now drawing upon both her newly disclosed maternal instincts *and* her warrior bitterness, Sarah verbally attacks Dyson (and men in general):

> *Sarah* . . .You think you're so creative. You don't know what it's like to really create something. To create a life, to feel it growing inside you, all you know how to create is death and destruction -

Moreover, Sarah's motherhood is not the one-dimensional indicative motherhood generally utilised by the id/super-ego transaction. She begins by supporting Nancy Chodorow's assertion that the nature/nurture aspect of motherhood is a patriarchal myth, by admitting neither; in 'Mothering, Male Dominance and Capitalism', Chodorow examines a development in social obligations tied to biological motherhood (Chodorow 1979b). Taking her role as the mother of the future saviour of the human race seriously, Sarah concentrates upon influence over, and protection of, her son-as-messiah. It is only when her capacity for expediency is established, that she gives credence to nurturing feelings, and finally, in her remonstration to Dyson, to a celebration of a biological instinct. The result, taking, as it does, the presence of multiple instincts, may be argued to be a male fantasy by critics like Shulamith Firestone who, in *The Dialectic of Sex*, advocates an absence of instincts, describing the "special tie women have with children" as "no

more than shared oppression" (Firestone 1979, 73). However, the film is likely to incur less wrath through inclusion of potential, than through exclusion of potential. Furthermore, despite Pallot et al.'s aspersion that ". . . Linda Hamilton is given a lot of New Age, motherly things to say, especially during her sojourn in the desert . . ." (Pallot et al. 1994, 875), Sarah Connor's final words (accompanied by a travelling shot along the desert road) echo Helen Benson's full commitment to a liberal humanity:

> *Sarah*   The unknown future rolls towards us; I face it for the first time with a sense of hope. Because if a machine, a Terminator, can learn the value of human life - maybe we can too.

Just as Linda Hamilton's role in *The Terminator* was not dominated by her sexual liaison, her role in *Terminator 2*, then, ensures that maternal instincts become part of the whole character, helping to shape the role of the female, rather than to tie her to a predetermined patriarchal function. Throughout *Terminator 2*, Sarah challenges the myths and mechanics of motherhood to fulfil Kyle Reese's description of her in *The Terminator*, as the eventual teacher of her guerrilla-warrior son. Thus, rather than being subjected to the ". . . institution', which aims at ensuring that that potential - and all women - shall remain under male control" (Rich, 1979, 13); through her motherhood, Connor develops as a personification of Sobchack's inverted millennarianism: she teaches herself from the future in order to both retain and alter aspects of that future.

There is little doubt that aspects of the mother-figure, because of the importance of her social role, help to place the female character in an ideologically 'acceptable' position for the audience. Motherhood is employed to project 'normality' through adherence to what Simone de Beauvoir records as society's perception of a woman's "physiological destiny" (de Beauvoir, 1988, 501). Although de Beauvoir does not apply the term 'perception', her survey of motherhood (1988, 501-542) places emphasis on the (predominantly patriarchal) social control of biological maternity. Whilst she states that ". . . for about a century the reproductive function in particular has no longer been at the mercy solely of biological chance; it has come under the voluntary control of human beings" (de Beauvoir, 1988, 501) she maintains that society, by denying women a real choice, advocates motherhood as a "natural 'calling'" (de Beauvoir, 1988, 501), and therefore a 'perceived' natural state. However, much of the ability of progressive mother-figures to subvert a traditionally constructed role is due to the fact that they have each been divested of the need to be accountable to a male partner. They draw strength from radical feminism's allegation that ". . . marriage is at the very root of woman's subjection to the man because through it man controls both her reproduction and her person" (Banks 1993, 230).

In her discussion of the convergence of patriarchy and paternity as a ruse to regain male influence in the science fiction films of the early 1980s, 'Child / Alien / Father', Vivian Sobchack describes the instances of unattached mothers and mothers-to-be as "indicative of SF's generic reversal of the structure of parental presence and absence found in the serio-comic family melodrama (Sobchack 1986, 20). However, by immolating the father, and thus devaluing the importance of the nuclear family unit, these films use the ideologically-stable aspect of motherhood whilst reducing its

social commitments. The disappearance of the male after conception (of either child or relationship) is commonplace recent films with progressive female protagonists: shortly after finding someone she can trust, Dr. Lazarus in *Outland* sees O'Neil return to Earth and his wife; Ripley's sexual liaison with Dr. Clemens in *Alien3* is terminated by his gruesome death; Sarah Connor's lover, Reese is killed by the terminator the day after they meet; and Jenny Hayden waves goodbye to the starman who has recently impregnated her. As far back as 1951, Klaatu leaves in his spaceship shortly after he and Helen Benson recognise a mutual respect for one another, in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. In each case, the man disappears shortly after the woman has been given a fillip to her development. Whilst this would appear to free the women to follow their own goals, unshackled to socially constricting marital arrangements, few of these men appear to be of a type who would make these demands of their partners; this leads to the danger of these strong females being aligned only with the perception of radical feminism's advocacy of celibacy and lesbianism, (Bunch 1986) and that heterosexual relations represent a move away from a 'feminist normality', loss of the man, here, could be seen as the 'price of emancipation'. However, they also represent what Marilyn Frye describes as *virgin women*:

> The word "virgin" did not originally mean a woman whose vagina was untouched by any penis, but a free woman, one not betrothed, not married, not bound to, not possessed by any man. It meant a female who is sexually and hence socially her own person. In any universe of patriarchy, there are no Virgins in this sense, and hence Virgins must be unspeakable outlaws, outcasts, thinkable only as negations, their existence impossible. (Frye 1993, 494)

Henceforth the italicised term '*virgin*' will be used to denote allusion to Frye's

patriarchally unfettered individual; the non-italicised 'virgin' will retain its meaning in

general usage, referring to the sexually uninitiated.

The importance of this symbiosis of feminism and patriarchy can be observed

through a number of female protagonists whose 'motherhood' is offset by an

individualism which is heightened by a degree of paternal absenteeism; they are, in

essence, *virgin*-mothers, and, as such, avoid this apparent patriarchal imperative[11].

Sarah Connor is the mother of a boy whose father has not yet been born. By being of

an age before the 'fall of the human race' - in the computer-controlled apocalypse -

Sarah is the embodiment of an immaculate conception, further emphasising John

Brosnan's projection of her as "the mother of a virtual Messiah". As early as 1926

Fritz Lang recognised the importance of the individualist mother-figure, in his film

Metropolis: Brigitte Helm plays Maria, who, when she is not fulfilling her virgin-

mother role as a crèche worker in the bowels of the city, works as a *virgin* activist for

social reform through peaceful revolution. In this context, however, adherence to

images of purity highlights links with the traditional virgin figure, detailed in

Forbidden Planet in the person of Altaira. The virgin-mother-nature figure retains the

mythical power of the virgin - drawing her strengths from a closeness to nature.

Through the beast and Ripley, the science-fiction horror film *Alien* presents

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[11] Examples of the *virgin*-mother as a result of paternal absenteeism include: Mary, in *E.T. - The Extra Terrestrial* (Spielberg 1982); Jillian Guiler, in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg 1977); and Helen Benson, in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

both the virgin-mother and the *virgin*-mother. The first is the alien itself: borrowed from the horror genre, the beast is an evocation of the "monstrous-feminine" (Creed 1994), an abject (Kristeva 1982) projection of the female as the archaic mother. Through parthenogenesis, the alien has no need for man, except as a host for its progeny - a role which can be fulfilled by any creature.

> If we posit a more archaic dimension to the mother - the mother as originating womb - we can at least begin to talk about the maternal figure as *outside* the patriarchal family constellation. In this context, the mother-goddess narratives can be read as primal-scene narratives in which the mother is the sole parent. She is also the subject, not the object, of narrativity. (Creed 1995a, 133)

Whilst the alien expresses *virginal* motherhood with this adherence to chthonic nature, Ripley's virginal motherhood is expressed through an inclination to nurture. This nurturing aspect is highlighted by the importance of the cat, Jonesey, for which Ripley delays her escape from the *Nostromo*. It is Ripley's self-contained, individual, and therefore, *virginal* response to her virginal mothering instincts which helps to present the film as an "idyllic reconstruction of a radical feminist humanism" (Kavanagh 1995, 80), which, according to Olive Banks follows "the principle of male exclusion, which is still a characteristic of radical feminism . . ." (Banks 1993, 226), and a subversion of patriarchy.

As with Sarah Connor, it is not until the second film in the series that Ripley is affected by the developing influence of the patriarchal crucible. Constance Penley

asserts that this development is ". . . one that is both improbable and symptomatic. Ripley 'develops' a maternal instinct, risking her life to save the little girl . . ." (Penley 1986, 77). However, free from paternal intrusion, Ripley's nurturing is merely given wider scope in the sequel, *Aliens*, through her relationship with Newt, a young girl discovered on LV426, the alien-infested colony to which Ripley and a team of Marines are sent to investigate the sudden loss of contact with the colonists. Whilst Ripley clearly bonds with the young girl, encouraging her to break her silence, and looking out for her welfare at all times, suggestions of natural maternal instincts are far from clear-cut; mutual feelings between the two characters are carefully built upon similarities in personality. Newt, having lived alone in this hostile environment for some time, has acquired a mature, worldly-wise temperament, leading her to make statements which could easily be attributed to Ripley.

Ripley   These people are here to protect you; they're soldiers.

Newt   *It won't make any difference.*

Later, Ripley's patronising-mother stance founders under Newt's rationale:

Ripley   Now, you lie here and have a nap. You're very tired.

Newt   I don't wanna sleep; I have scary dreams.

Ripley   Well, I bet Casey doesn't have scary dreams - let's take a look:

              [*looking through the neck-hole into the doll's eye-less head*] No,

              nothing bad in there, see. Maybe you could just try to be like her.

Newt   Ripley, she doesn't have scary dreams because she's just a piece of

              plastic.

Settling for a composite of big sister and adoptive mother, Ripley offers an allegiance to the young girl, by promising not to leave her. This promise is put to the test when Newt is abducted by aliens, and Ripley replays her rescue of Jonsey the cat, this time in search of the young girl. The final action sequence of *Aliens* attests to the importance of substitute motherhood as a powerful image in the *Alien* series. Ripley has rescued Newt from the alien lair, and has destroyed many of the queen-alien's eggs. Seeking retribution, the queen chases Ripley, and finally corners her in the loading bay of the *Sulaco*. Here the parthenogenetic *virgin*-mother and the adoptive virgin-mother fight, with Newt as the prize. Although Amy Taubin suggests that Ripley's ". . . image is immediately tarnished by the line, 'Get away from her, you bitch'" (Taubin 1992, 9), delivered during the fight, it does expand her emotional potential through the further expression of intense nurturant feelings for Newt. Ripley, with the aid of an hydraulic loader, defeats the queen, and the film ends with an echo of the first film, as Ripley prepares the child, rather than the cat, for cryogenic-sleep before taking to her own sleep capsule.

It is not until the third film, *Alien3* (Fincher 1992), that the audience realises the full reason for the ferocity of the alien-queen's battle for Newt: at the beginning of this second sequel it appears that Newt has been the involuntary 'mother' of an alien, which has hatched during the flight, and Ripley, ". . . like some deviant Madonna, . . . [has] been impregnated with alien seed" (Eaton 1997, 8). Ripley is, again, the sole survivor of the escape ship, which crash-lands on a prison planet. Her role, has now developed, as prophesied in her nightmares in *Aliens*, into one of surrogate-

motherhood, still virginal, but with dire consequences for the future of herself, and the human race. Whilst Ripley has a sexual encounter with the prison doctor, *Alien3* concentrates upon Ripley's new relationship with the alien, which now refuses to kill what it senses to be the 'mother' of the future alien-queen. The men of the prison also refuse to kill her, despite the fact that she is carrying the alien; protected by both man and beast, Ripley is invested with the invulnerability of the Virgin Mary. *Alien3* climaxes with what Hardy describes as "an absurd 'transcendent' finale," (Hardy 1995, 468) during which Ripley sacrifices herself to save the human race from the alien queen inside her, and from the Company which wants the alien for its weapons division. In a sequence not unlike the dénouement of *Terminator 2*, Ripley falls into a pool of molten metal, just as the alien bursts from her chest:

> She wraps her arms around it, pressing its hissing mouth to her breast - to prevent its escape, but also to nurture it. A most complicated gesture, and quite unlike any other I've ever seen in movies. (Taubin 1992, 10)

Barbara Creed sees further significance in this image of virgin birth:

> Ripley brings her arms forward, enclosing the infant queen in an embrace both maternal and murderous - an embrace that ensures the alien will die alongside its surrogate mother. Ripley's death is represented as if it were a holy sacrifice. The close-up shot of Ripley's face, with shaven head and expression of blissful resignation, bears a striking resemblance to the face of Falconetti in Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, as she, too, is consumed by the flames. The medieval surroundings of *Alien3* thereby assume a new significance;

Ripley's death is represented as a supreme sacrifice akin to that of an ancient androgynous god or religious saint. (Creed 1994, 52-53)

By making the ultimate sacrifice in spite of the male-controlled Company, Ripley, at the moment her virgin-motherhood is again realised, embraces Frye's *virginity*.

The importance of the *virgin*/virgin-mother as a symbiosis of motherhood and independence, in turn an inversion of patriarchy, is overtly defined in the fourth film of the *Alien* series, *Alien Resurrection*. (Jeunet 1997) After being reborn from DNA in blood extracted during the events of *Alien3*, Ripley undergoes a Caesarean operation to remove the alien-queen which has been recreated within her. However, *the newly cloned Ripley is a hybrid*, biologically linking the parthenogenetic alien mother of the horror genre with the surrogate human mother of the science fiction genre. This union creates a female character with a fierce independence supported by formidable power, coupled with the innate animalistic mother instincts, which link her to the aliens of the second and third films of the series. Such is the film series' narrative investment in the central protagonist, that Ripley is unable to avoid drawing upon aspects of character, and now biology, established earlier in the series; the crucible has created a plausibility which allows her to dominate *Alien Resurrection*. In a scene which mirrors her own experiences in *Alien3*, Ripley is able to sense an alien host merely by sniffing him. Later, her instincts betray the presence of further aliens in the area. By far the clearest indication of Ripley's contribution to the concept of the powerful *virgin*/virgin-mother comes towards the end of *Alien Resurrection*, when

she is drawn into the lair of the new alien-queen - her surrogate daughter. The hybrid queen has evolved a new reproductive system; by-passing the need for eggs and face-huggers, the new aliens are born at an accelerated rate in the new womb inherited through Ripley's human DNA. Developing Barbara Creed's horror-film concept of the "monstrous womb," which "belongs to woman or a female creature who is usually about to give birth to an alien being or brood of terrifying creatures" (Creed 1994, 53), *Alien Resurrection* not only recreates the archaic mother, but makes that mother partly human. Patriarchal fear of the parthenogenetic human is reflected in the abject nature of the creature created through the film's genetic union. Ripley is drawn further into instinctual motherhood by the hybrid creature, which, after savagely rejecting its biological mother, turns to Ripley - its surrogate grandmother - for nurturing. The creature, apparently conceived as an abject female representation of a human foetus crossed with a parent alien, has expressive human eyes, and a voracious alien appetite. Despite clear maternal instincts, which suggest a mutual attachment to the creature, Ripley rejects her genetic progeny, and the creature is dispatched. Throwing some of her own acid blood at the cargo-bay window, Ripley makes a small hole, through which the creature is sucked into the vacuum of space. Michael Eaton observes that this scene "- with its end-product of minced-up tissue fragments, blood and bone - cannot help but recall a Right-to-Life campaign" (Eaton 1997, 9) Ripley has been forced to use powers gained through her hybridisation to abort her only offspring, but, because ". . . abortion is seen here as deliverance not for Ripley but for the whole human race" (Eaton 1997, 9), Ripley, despite links with the abject alien, is invited back to the bosom of humanity.

Ripley's ability to transcend an emotional determinism which ties women to maternal instincts is highlighted in an earlier brief exchange with the robot, Call, after Ripley has killed an alien:

Call   I can't believe you did that.

Ripley   Did what?

Call   It's like killing your own kind.

Ripley   It was in my way.

For Ripley, then, destroying the hybrid creature, created by the male military, serves as an expression of her *virgin*-motherhood, but not before she has acknowledged the maternal instincts governed by her virgin-motherhood.

In 1997, Jeunet's *Alien Resurrection* was clearly able to draw upon aspects of character and scenario created and developed in previous films; in 1979, Ridley Scott's *Alien* did not have this luxury[12]. Furthermore, in *Alien Resurrection*, the central antagonist is the single-minded military machine, which has re-created the alien; as in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, this institution provides a clear personification of patriarchal ideology for Ripley to challenge.

In *Alien*, however, the enemy is not so obvious. In fact, whilst the Company underscores much of what happens on the *Nostromo*, this first film, for the most part

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[12] However, viewing *Alien* today, it is difficult not to imbue Ripley with some of the characteristics gained in later films.

offers no obvious patriarchal driving force; nor does it appear to follow many of the

patterns of the commercially successful science fiction film. Despite continual

demonstrations of strength and resolve, at no point is Ripley's character altered to

counterbalance these commercially aberrant characteristics. The arrival of the alien,

representing one of the film's major cusp-points, does not produce a pendulum swing

towards polarised characteristics - nor does Mother's rejection of Ripley at the auto-

destruct device cause her to give up. She is never unduly fettered by patriarchally

conceived femininity, nor is she restrained by expectations of patriarchally conceived

radical feminism. It might, then, reasonably be asked: if a fundamental change in

social representation is, as suggested by the work of Christian Metz[13], discordant with

the process which facilitates cinematic enjoyment, how have screenwriter, Dan

O'Bannon[14], and director, Ridley Scott, managed to succeed commercially with a film

which does not appear to conform to the id/super ego transaction?

It is, perhaps, the intangibility of Ripley's success which has undermined

attempts by many filmmakers to plunder *Alien* for commercial advantage, and perhaps

the same intangibility which has impelled a vast array of critics, both popular and

academic, feminist and non-feminist, to attempt to deconstruct this success. In order

to better comprehend *Alien*'s accomplishment then, it is necessary to explore a

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[13] See chapter 2, page 83.

[14] John Brosnan (1991) cites considerable acrimony between Dan O'Bannon and the producers of *Alien*, with the latter claiming legion changes of their own to the final script. Whether this is truth or just Hollywood posturing is difficult to clarify; however, as Dan O'Bannon is listed by most sources as the film's screenwriter, he shall, henceforth, be regarded here as such (Movie Database on-line 1995a lists Thilo Timothy Newman as the film's writer, with O'Bannon credited with the story, along with Ronald Shussett).

number of those readings.

Whilst its timing took advantage of considerable changes in Other-awareness, the nonchalant social-political liberalism exhibited by *Alien* by no means reflected a generally familiar ideology. Reinforcing its links with both the film, *It! The Terror from Beyond Space* (Cahn 1958)[15], and A. E. Van Vogt's science fiction story, *Discord in Scarlet* (1939)[16], *Alien*, however, uses high level production values made possible by *Star Wars*, "which supplied the hardware" (Hardy 1991, 346), to create a science fiction *mise en scène* which is at once familiar, and therefore acceptable, to its cinema audience[17]. Having laid these foundations, according to Harvey Greenberg, "*Alien*'s creators have subsumed the audience's tacit acceptance of the previously marvellous, in order to manipulate the gleaming mechanics of 'straight' science fiction towards darker ends" (Greenberg 1986, 92). It is *Alien*'s "darker" side which makes the film a suitable subject for Barbara Creed's discussion of "horror and the archaic mother", in *The Monstrous Feminine* (Creed 1994 16-30). For many critics, including Creed, the film is a seamless blend of both genres[18]. Phil Hardy's description of *Alien* as ". . . nothing less than a gigantic 'Boo!', set in outer space, . . .", links this notion with Harvey Greenberg's reference to the quality of the *mise en scène*, and points to the film's success as a social statement as he understands it:

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[15] See Hardy 1991, 181/346.

[16] After the release of *Alien*, Van Vogt took legal action, claiming that the work plagiarised his own 1939 work; he subsequently received fifty thousand dollars in an out-of-court settlement (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 15).

[17] See Brosnan 1991, 190.

[18] Critics who refer to *Alien* as science-fiction/horror include: Brosnan 1991, 192; Clute and Nicholls 1993, 14; and Tookey 1994, 17.

Through that obscure feedback process by which the cinematic dream factory translates inchoate collective angst into extravagant scenarios, we have been served up an outerspace ghoulie to match the proper paranoia of the day. (Greenberg 1986, 87)

In 'Time Travel, Primal Scene, and the Critical Dystopia', Constance Penley suggests that Scott's direction echoes Dan O'Bannon's film treatment, in which each role could be played by either a man or a woman. This is reflected initially in Ripley's status on board the *Nostromo*. Whilst the role of captain was eventually given to a man, Dallas, as Warrant officer, third in command in a crew of four men and two women, Ripley receives no better or worse than might be expected for any crew member. Whilst she is not always treated with respect by the other characters, this appears to be indicative of life on board ship. Perhaps, then, it is the film's employment of an unexceptional central protagonist, regardless of gender, which underscores its success, by presenting in Ripley a degree of sufficient 'ordinariness', which Charlotte Brunsdon found lacking in *Coma* (Crichton 1978)[19]. As a female in this environment, Ripley is merely reflecting Brunsdon's further comment that ". . . ideas of appropriate feminine behaviour have changed radically since the late 1960s, and that this is partly because of the way feminist ideas have been 'taken on'" (Brunsdon 1987, 122). Peter Nicholls in turn echoes this with his observation that

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[19] See chapter 5, page 233.

"Tough, pragmatic Ripley . . . is the first sf movie heroine to reflect cultural changes in the real world . . ." (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 15). However, it is not only direct feminist *ideas* that *Alien* was responding to; the film industry itself had recently echoed cultural changes, with its employment of women in management positions: in 1975, Marcia Nasatir became the first female Hollywood-executive for nearly thirty years, when she became vice president of production at Universal Artists; more pertinent to *Alien*, however, was Sherry Lansing's attainment, in 1977, of the presidency of 20th Century Fox, the major production company behind the film. Building upon this small, but increasing[20], influx of women to Hollywood's executive, *Alien* presents a crew for the *Nostromo* made up of three white males, one black male, two white females, a male robot, and a cat. The net result is a film which, to Constance Penley, "is (for the most part) stunningly egalitarian" (Penley 1986, 77), as Lambert discovers when she is chosen for the team to make the two thousand metre walk across the hostile planet, to the source of the 'SOS' signal. Penley's point is echoed by Greenberg, with his observation that "no one is a focus of obvious discrimination because of sex, class, color" (Greenberg 1986, 101). However Judith Newton disagrees: despite the fact that Parker is black, she suggests that the film uses mechanics, Parker and Brett, to represent "male - and especially white, middle-class male - hostility and anxiety over the erosion of traditional gender roles" (Newton 1995, 85). Furthermore she asserts that comments like Parker's "she better stay the fuck out of my way", to Brett, "function, for the most part, as soothing reminders that white, middle-class men are still superior in position to *someone*" (Newton 1995,

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[20] For example, in 1987, Dawn Steel became president of Columbia Pictures, and in 1990, Lucy Fisher became vice president of production at Warner Brothers. For further information, see Acker 1991, 133-145; Francke 1994, 86-97; and Muir 1994.

85). Having seemingly disregarded the fact that Parker is black, Newton then relies on his colour to suggest that this allows "hostility to be ventilated and vicariously participated in, while protecting white, middle-class male viewers from having to identify with that ventilation" (Newton 1995, 85).

Moreover, the film appears to favour the socially-disenfranchised Other through the fact that the first characters to be killed by the alien are the white men: Kane, Dallas, and Brett, leaving two women: Lambert and Ripley, a black man: Parker, and the robot: Ash, who is later destroyed by the other crew members. Even within this group, Ripley stands out as the point of identification for the audience, from the moment she denies Kane and the face-hugger access to the drop-ship; knowing that Kane is a potential threat to the ship and its crew, the audience supports Ripley's invocation of the Company's rules on quarantine. However, for Thomas Byers, it is the last-minute rescue of Jonesey the cat which "avoids total amorality and iciness" (Byers 1995, 42). James Kavanagh's reading of this action goes further, stating that "Ripley's concern for the cat functions as a final sign of her recovery for an ideological humanism" (Kavanagh 1995, 79). However, whilst Greenberg agrees that Ripley "evolves into the most humanised character", he also highlights the fact that she "never overtly shows more than momentary anguish over her lost comrades" (Greenberg 1986, 102).

Despite this, Ripley remains the film's central figure for vicarious participation, who, cast as the "individualist hero", helps Newton to establish the film as "a utopian fantasy of women's liberation" (Newton 1995, 82/84). Describing Ripley's qualities

as being ". . . traditionally identified with male, but not masculinist, heroes" (Newton 1995, 84), Newton explores a number of the ways by which Scott and O'Bannon secure audience admiration for the character. For Thomas Byers:

Audience identification with Ripley is strong, partly because her situation is so desperate. But she is excellently adapted to her spaceship environment and her coldness, especially unusual for a Hollywood-style heroine, is part of her adaptation. (Byers 1995, 41)

However, Greenberg adds more traditional representation to Ripley allure for the audience. Having cast Mother, who is supposed to protect the crew of the *Nostromo*, as the "'bad' witch-mother of myth and fairytale", who, "with full knowledge beforehand, . . . re-routes them to certain doom on the asteroid" (Greenberg 1986, 101), Greenberg claims that Ripley's exposé of Mother's "complicity", positions the human as ". . . the nearest thing to a 'good' mother on board" (Greenberg 1986, 101). Attempting to use traditional feminine representation as a counter-charge to Ripley's character, Newton points to "Lambert, who is passive and easily given to hysterics, functions for the most part to define what Ripley is not" (Newton 1995, 86). However, having little more presence than the prostitutes in *Outland* (Hyams 1981) or Aunt Beru in *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977), Lambert is not strong enough alone to counterbalance the impact of Ripley, who, unlike Lazarus and Leia, and despite Greenberg's "good mother" assertions does not effectively reinforce familiar aspects of the id/super-ego transaction. Stressing the importance of the central figure of the alien itself, Kavanagh argues that Ripley's character is

counterbalanced by the creature's abject nature: "as the power of the woman-signifier is foregrounded, the film's complex investment in the alien-signifier can be seen more clearly" (Kavanagh 1995, 75). Kavanagh's suggestion is taken further by Barbara Creed, who cites the parthenogenetic nature of the alien as central to a filmic text which revisits the primal scene on a number of occasions, in which the mother figures alone in procreation, having no need for recourse to the male (Creed 1994, 17-18).

Although Barbara Creed cites the primal scene as the site of female power, using the attack on Kane as an example, in which ". . . man's body becomes grotesque because it is capable of being penetrated" (Creed 1994, 19) - in essence, male rape - her text highlights the horror film's abjectification of the archaic mother as a patriarchal response to the potential threat of castration offered by parthenogenesis; moreover the baby alien is phallic in appearance. *Alien*'s creature, then, through its ability to evoke horror, invests non-abject, female Ripley with a degree of femininity. Amy Taubin, however, highlights a further reading for the parthenogenetic alien:

Released in 1979, Ridley Scott's *Alien* played on anxieties set loose by a decade of feminist and gay activism. Looking for a warm host for their eggs, the aliens didn't bother about the niceties of sexual difference. When the baby alien . . . burst from John Hurt's chest, it cancelled the distinction on which human culture is based.

Prehistoric in appearance, the alien embodied the return of repressed infantile fears and the confusion about where babies come from and the anatomical differences between the sexes. Its toothy, dripping mouth was

hermaphroditic: while the double jaws represented the inner and outer labia of the *vagina dentata*, the projectile movement of the inner jaw was a phallic threat. . . . by making the hero a woman, however tomboyish, gender as well as sexual difference was destabilised. (Taubin 1992, 9)

Alien's "very original *lack* of sexual differentiation" (Penley 1986, 77) between the characters is counterbalanced by the fact, that the imagery of the film presents sexual symbolism as much as it does high technology. This is identified by Phil Hardy as being a result of the influence of H. P. Lovecraft's 'Necronomism' stories on the alien-designer, H. R. Giger. Adding to Giger's 'biomechanoid'[21] being are many elements of the *mise en scène*, which includes the huge alien derelict, from which the 'SOS' call is emanating at the beginning of the film[22].

The entire craft resembles a stupendous uterine-fallopian system. The crew members enter the ship through one of the three unmistakably vaginal hatches. The main deck is shaped like an enormous spine / rib cage. Kane, lowered into the bowels of the derelict, discovers the Alien hatch laid out in the pelvis of a mighty vertebral column. The fossilized "space jockey's" giant skeleton rests upon a control chair, from which juts a huge penile shaft. The chair itself resembles an operating table; here, eons ago, some unfortunate pilot from another race died of the same catastrophic Caesarean which later terminates Kane. (Greenberg 1986, 93)

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[21] See *A Rh+* (1971); *H.R. Giger* (1976); and *Necronomicon* (1977).

[22] Many of these designs are collected in *H.R. Giger's Alien* (1979).

Using this biological and sexual imagery to colour his own writing, Greenberg goes on to highlight what he regards as the sexually-charged nature of what has become *Alien*'s most controversial, and debated, scene - the 'strip':

Eventually able to reach the escape vessel, after her betrayal by Mother at the auto-destruct device, Ripley launches clear of the *Nostromo* with just a few seconds to go before destruction of the mother-ship. Gazing at the explosion with an understandable look of defiance, she utters the words "I got you, you son of a bitch". She then prepares for hyper-sleep and the journey back to Earth. It is at this point that Ripley removes the coveralls that she has been wearing for much of the film, and returns to her state of dress - or rather undress - at the beginning of the film, when Mother had woken the crew from hyper-sleep; she is wearing a small white tee-shirt and brief white panties. Removing her identity tag, she moves over to tend some of the ship's equipment, only to discover that she is not alone: somehow the alien has managed to stow-away on board the escape vessel. Ripley backs into an equipment locker, and, reversing the strip, carefully dons a space-suit. The tension is palpable. Her aim, once inside the suit, is to strap herself down, open the shuttle hatch, and eject the alien into space. This she does, but not before having to shoot at the creature with her grapnel gun, and incinerate it with a short burst from the ship's propulsion system.

Many reviews and critiques of *Alien* appear to divide into two parts, with the main bulk of the text working towards either a condemnation of the strip as a

inversion of what the main article regards as the film's central philosophy, or as a celebration of the sequence as a culmination of the film's attitudes. Taking what might be considered an obvious line, Greenberg exaggerates the scopophilic nature of the strip:

> When Ripley steps out of her fatigues, she becomes intensely desirable and achingly vulnerable. The sight of her nearly nude body is highly arousing, in the context of the film's previous sexual neutrality. (Greenberg 1986, 97).

Using language like "phallic head", "ramrod tongue", "luminescent slime (KY jelly!)", and "hisses voluptuously" (all Greenberg 1986, 97), Greenberg, influenced by his own description of the derelict alien space ship, attempts to heighten the suggested importance of the scopophilic interlude. He posits a sexual charge between the creature and Ripley, severed when Ripley "discharges an ejaculatory bolt . . ." (Greenberg 1986, 99) from the grapnel gun. Finally, the "male" spectator, as "voyeur to her victimization" (Greenberg 1986, 99), is overcome by a sexual excitement, driven by fear, and magnified by the threat of rape. If Greenberg's reading is followed, then it becomes clear that this scene ably counterbalances the rest of the film, swinging Ripley's pendulum firmly towards the male-identified representation recognised by Laura Mulvey in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975), and neatly completing the id/super-ego transaction.

However, unlike Jessica's (Jenny Agutter) virtual striptease in *Logan's Run*

(Anderson 1976)[23], this sequence does not present an obvious male subject for the gaze; the only narrative spectator is the alien creature, already identified as female, and the invitation, throughout the film, for female-spectator identification precludes the notion of a specifically male audience. In 'Feminism, Humanism and Science in *Alien*', Kavanagh's downplaying of the imagery in this sequence as "hardly sensational by any standards" (Kavanagh 1995, 77) begs the further suggestion that, had a film-maker as accomplished as Ridley Scott wanted sensational sexual-imagery at the close of his movie, he could doubtless have produced a more graphic sequence than this, here or even earlier in the film[24]. Kavanagh continues, reasoning that ". . . it seems senseless for a progressive criticism to construct from it a general condemnation of the film that denies all other effects of a fairly consistent feminist statement" (Kavanagh 1995, 77-78). Furthermore, reference to other Scott films reveals a similar reluctance by the director to indulge in gratuitous scopophilia. In '*Thelma and Louise* and the Tradition of the Male Road Movie', Manohla Dargis observes that, in Scott's 1991 feminist-western, the only lingering look at a human body comes when Thelma, played by Geena Davis, gazes at a male body-builder. Men, according to Dargis, "are signposts along this freaky trip - . . . each suggesting a different heterosexual possibility, a potential refuge or threat. (Dargis 1991, 17). Kavanagh forwards the notion of the body image as signpost for *Alien*, when he posits the strip as a reaffirmation of humanity, lost to the alien. Linking the strip to the rescue of the cat, as an affirmation of the fact that Ripley does have human

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[23] See chapter 1, page 28.

[24] A comparison with the opening sequence of Roger Vadim's *Barbarella* (1967), which is clearly devised as a strip-tease, strengthens the position of Scott's scene as a narrative statement, rather than a scopophilic interlude.

feelings and vulnerabilities, Kavanagh sees this sequence as freeing Ripley morally for the one-to-one battle with the alien: ". . . what is important for ideological humanism is preserved - a tough gal, rather than a tough guy, but still with that soft spot in the heart" (Kavanagh 1995, 80). Ripley's vicious killing of the alien is counterbalanced by her selfless saving of the cat.

If it is accepted that the final sequences in *Alien* help to invest Ripley with a degree of humanism, then the strip must present the notion of gendered humanism, as spectators will hardly miss the fact that Sigourney Weaver is a woman. Used to highlight Ripley's gender in a silent cry of "different but equal", the strip serves Thomas Byers's assertion that "there is, by the way, a dig at the predominantly white male power structure in the fact that the minority character (Parker, who is black) and the women (Lambert, Ripley) live the longest" (Byers 1995, 42) - Ripley, of course, outlives everyone. However, to Judith Newton this return to "traditionally feminine qualities" (Newton 1995, 86) underscores the film's evocation of patriarchal paranoia concerning the influence of collective feminism. Returning to the strip a scopophilic reading, with her description of ". . . a long, and lovingly recorded, expanse of marvellous body" (Newton 1995, 86), Newton argues that the lone, almost-naked woman attenuates the film's radical feminist thrust, and reminds the (male) spectator that the female ". . .is not so threatening to men after all" (Newton 1995, 87). The strip for Newton, then, is a direct counterbalancing measure for Ripley's, hitherto, 'deviate' character.

Barbara Creed uses the strip to build upon her theme of counterbalancing images in *The Monstrous-Feminine*. Creed's psychoanalytical reading of film frames

the creature as an object of female fetishism. Reflecting the Freudian female need to 'have the phallus', the creature's changing appearance represents "a form of doubling or multiplication of the 'phallus', pointing to the workings of the fetish project" (Creed 1994, 23). Ripley, in this project, serves as the acceptable face, or body, of female fetishism. However, Creed also places the Ripley/alien axis in a patriarchal context. Building upon her theory that the abject nature of the patriarchal representation of phallic mother is central to the diminution of her power (Creed 1994, esp. 8-15), she also imbues the *Alien* strip-sequence with a similar function, reasoning that ". . . the monstrousness of woman . . . is controlled through the display of woman as reassuring and pleasurable sign" (Creed 1995a, 140[25]).

It is clear from this detailed examination of some the readings of *Alien* that Ridley Scott's film is capable of sustaining multiple, divergent readings. Taking care to ensure that his own reading does not preclude further "politically skewed" interpretations of the film, Kavanagh offers a warning to the intemperate critic:

To say the *Alien* is reactionary and/or sexist can give no new knowledge of either the film or those ideologies. To say the *Alien* broadcasts a very sophisticated set of overwhelmingly feminist signals articulated in contradictory relation to other signals about class, and about humanism and science, opens the way to knowledge of how this film, *and* those ideological raw materials it extracts from a specific field of social discourse, operate. (Kavanagh 1995, 81)

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[25] See also Kavanagh 1995, 75.

It is not necessary here to posit further theories regarding specific aspects of the function of Ripley in *Alien*. What the existing theories provide is a demonstration of the potential for vastly divergent responses within the film's general spectatorship. In chapter 2, it was argued that films must find a way of objectifying their imagery of the signified, so that it conforms to generally held views and, usually patriarchal, ideologies. By making many aspects of their signifier - Ripley - ambiguous, and so open to divergent readings, Scott and O'Bannon have increased the potential for subjective responses from the spectator; by broadening the signifier, it has meaning to more than one spectator. This 'liberal-auteurism' is recognised by Jackie Stacey:

> It is now widely accepted that the cultural production of meaning involves active spectatorship, rather than the passive consumption of textually determined meanings. Sub-cultural groups often produce an alternative set of readings of dominant cultural images, based on a different set of shared codes, conventions and experiences. (Stacey 1994, 114)

Harvey Greenberg has little faith in *"Alien*'s populist political stance and debatable feminism [to] explain its staggering popularity" (Greenberg 1986, 87). However, it is precisely the populist nature of its political stance(s), through Ripley's investment in liberal-auteurism and the debatability of its feminism, which have secured the film's success. Referring to classic American screwball comedies[26], in *To*

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[26] These are defined as ". . . those films with fast-paced, witty repartee revolving

Be Seen But Not Heard, Diane Carson notes:

> These classic films entertain such a troubled, interanimated discourse that they
> conclude indeterminately, unable to convincingly reinforce dominant ideology.
> In other words, the diverse ways in which the outspoken woman challenges and
> confronts, subverts and questions the established patriarchal norm reveal a
> heteroglossic dialogic that resists closure. (Carson 1994a, 215)

Whilst it has been noted that this "established patriarchal norm" is not readily
apparent in *Alien*, Carson's statement underscores the film's major contribution to the
development of the female protagonist in science fiction film. Through *Alien's*
interlayering of the pendulum and crucible development across all characters, and
Ripley's strategies of constant and professional challenges, confrontations, subversion
and inversion, the female protagonist represents a level of characterisation which
"resists closure". Thus, her transcendence is shown to be supported by a platform
from which the she is able to compete with patriarchal determination.

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around a couple humorously at odds with each other and, as frequently, social and
gender expectations. The classic period extended from at least 1934 through to 1942"
(Carson 1994a, 224n1).

CHAPTER 7

COMPETITION WITH PATRIARCHY

In her 1721 work, *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex*, Mary Astell writes:

> A Man ought no more to value himself for being wiser than a Woman, if
> he owes his Advantage to a better Education, than he ought to boast of his
> Courage for beating a Man when his hands were bound. (Mary Astell, quoted in
> Greer 1971, 101)

Fundamental to the fight for female rights has been the right for women to be granted the same privileges as men. This is central to the argument of Virginia Woolf's study of female writers, *A Room of One's Own* (1993/1929), and is highlighted by Olive Banks in *The Faces of Feminism*, by a brief look at women in education (Banks 1993, 39-47). Having stressed the right to matriculation as a basic demand of education reformers, Banks underlines the importance of feminist resistance to "compromises" which separated women from men. For, whilst early attempts to get matriculation for women in British Universities were surprisingly successful, procuring an equal footing with men proved to be more of a problem; women were accepted, but were subjected to different entrance examinations, and were awarded degrees subject to different criteria. Banks records that there was intense male, and some female, hostility towards direct competition between the sexes, and whilst these early compromises were supported by some feminists as fairly taking "account of the weaknesses in the educational background of women students

. . ." (Banks 1993, 41), the overwhelming drive was towards the attainment of a level

playing field, and equal competition.

Competition between men and women in the traditional science fiction film,

however, when in evidence, almost always serves as a platform for the reinforcement

of the subjugation of the female through her subsequent failure. In Edward Bernds's

Queen of Outer Space (1958), for example, square jawed, professional men from

Earth encounter beautiful, fatuous women on a hostile planet Venus. Empowered

initially by their fight against what the film signals as moral turpitude, the Earthmen

are further supported by a narrative which systematically devalues the Venusian

women; finally, the women admit that they cannot cope without men, and the teeth of

the *femme castratrice* are removed (Creed 1994, 122-38). Like early education

reforms, progressive science fiction films build upon a burgeoning 'background' of

female development to present individuals who, unwilling to compromise their gains,

challenge patriarchal subjugation through open competition. Central to their success

is the potential to prevail where men do not; the level of achievement is

inconsequential: the fact that Helen Benson saves Earth from destruction is less

important than the fact that a man did *not* save the planet from destruction. Whilst

often limited by the level of the 'background' development from which they may

draw, progressive films enable the female to succeed, by-turns, on intellectual,

humanist, or physical levels against varying icons of patriarchal representation.

The Terminator (Cameron 1984), like *Queen of Outer Space*, bases much of its

drama on direct confrontation between male and female. Whilst *The Terminator* uses

individual, rather than group, gender representatives, it shares the earlier film's presentation of an idealised form of male machismo. In the late 1950s, the ideal science fiction hero was greatly influenced by the 'Mercury Seven' - articulate, educated, tough, male, test pilots, with the 'right stuff', chosen to represent America in space[1]. These in turn reflected Larry (Buster) Crabbe's depiction of Flash Gordon[2], a futurist manifestation of the mythological hero-knight. In the 1980s, with pride in the space programme diminishing, this idealised, and, to Vivian Sobchack, virginal[3], protagonist was replaced by a different icon - five times 'Mr. Universe', and seven times 'Mr. Olympia' - Arnold Schwarzenegger. Interestingly, Schwarzenegger had previously been cast as the eponymous mythological hero of two 'Conan' sword and sorcery films[4]. The women in both *Queen of Outer Space* and *The Terminator* begin as antitheses of their male antagonists; however, whilst those of the earlier film are subsumed by patriarchal conditioning and desire for the men, Sarah Connor, uses the opportunity of her cusp-point development to offer resistance to the male T-800 terminator.

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[1] For accounts of the *Mercury* programme, and later *Apollo* programme, selection processes, see Shepard and Slayton 1994, esp. 49-87; and Jensen 1996, esp. 69-76.

[2] *Flash Gordon* (Stephani 1936), *Flash Gordon's Trip To Mars* (Beebe and Hill 1938), and *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* (Beebe and Taylor 1940).

[3] Sobchack, in *The Virginity of Astronauts* links astronauts of fact and those of 1950s fiction by their clean, competent image:

> The virginal astronauts of the science fiction film are a sign of penetration and impregnation without biology, without sex, and without the opposite, different, sex. They signify a conquering, potent, masculine and autonomous technology which values production over reproduction, which creates rather than procreates in a seeming immaculate conception and a metaphorically autocratic caesarean birth. (Sobchack 1995, 108)

[4] *Conan the Barbarian* (Milius 1982) and *Conan the Destroyer* (Fleischer 1984).

Although rather crude in its representation of conflict between the sexes, *The Terminator* presides over the defeat of an individual male figure as a direct result of successful female action.

Sharon Stone [*Total Recall* (Verhoeven 1990)] and Linda Hamilton [*Terminator 2: Judgement Day*] made conscious decisions to develop their bodies in accordance with their own perception of the characters they were playing, so that they could compete with men on an equal physical level. (Barker 1992, 13)

Despite Barker's observation, *Terminator 2* proves to be more subtle than its predecessor in its depiction of female competition. In this film, the direct patriarchal threat of the previous film has been diffused by the introduction of Schwarzenegger as Connor's ally; as such, he becomes, within the context of the film as a vehicle for Schwarzenegger, an extension to the female protagonist, through inversion of the patriarchal imperative. His replacement, the T-1000, played by the far less macho Robert Patrick, draws more symbolic strength from its state-of-the-art computer animated abilities than from the actor's physical build. The T-1000 represents the threat of insurgent patriarchal technology far more overtly than did the T-800, now a "a lumbering, obsolescent cyborg from the future . . ." (Tookey 1994, 843). Re-discovering her chthonian terror, Sarah wrests procreative primacy back from the male, initially through the narrative importance of her coupling but finally through her subjugation of the manifestations of the Frankenstein syndrome - the T-800 and the

T-1000. During her escape from the high security hospital in *Terminator 2*, Sarah

Connor reels when she is confronted by a figure resembling the T-800, which

hounded her through *The Terminator*. To those who have seen the first film, her fear

is understandable, and even when she realises that this terminator is here to protect

her from the greater threat of the T-1000, the audience sympathises with her deep-

rooted mistrust. Later, she treats the Terminator with cool distaste, projecting her

relationship with the robot as purely practical, revealed in her statement "If you can't

pass as human, you're no good to us". Connor's reaction mirrors Cameron's earlier

film, *Aliens* (1986), in which Ripley is angered at the discovery that one of her new

ship-mates, Bishop, is a robot. This anger is, again, understood by audiences familiar

with the original film, as the crew of the *Nostromo* was betrayed by its own robot

ship-mate, Ash. Ripley, like Connor, treats her perceived foe with mistrust,

admonishing him to keep away from her. In both of these films, the former

experiences of the female protagonist lead to a mistrust of the patriarchal institutions

which exert manipulative powers; to Connor and Ripley, these artificial beings are

representatives of patriarchal power. Director and writer, Cameron, further supports

his female protagonists by planting ambiguities about both Bishop - through his

academic interest in the anatomy of the alien, and the Terminator - through the

deceptive opening sequences of *Terminator 2*. By placing the female character in a

position of moral superiority, Cameron has inverted the patriarchal imperative,

represented by these artificial 'supermen', placing it on the defensive; it is the 'men'

who must prove themselves to be worthy of female trust. Each film offers these male

characters opportunities to earn respect through their actions; the female characters

gradually respond to this, until reaching a realisation that they are fighting for the

same cause. Ripley acknowledges her debt to Bishop with the simple words "Bishop: you did okay". Connor shows her acknowledgement by shaking the hand of the Terminator. By emphasising their debt to the their respective robots, Connor and Ripley support a concept of constructive competition, and highlights the potential for male and female to join forces to fight external forces.

External forces of institutionalised patriarchy are represented in *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977) by an entire Empire; through Grand Moff Tarkin as the evil overlord, his malevolent henchman Darth Vader as the dark knight, and the stormtroopers like warriors from the underworld, the film presents foreboding all-male antagonists to the rebel forces. However, the rebel forces include a central female figure in the form of Leia; a female protagonist is fighting, here, alongside her male compatriots, against a third force.

In *Starman* (Carpenter 1984) the third force is decidedly more down-to-earth, as widow, Jenny Hayden, helps the alien of the title to evade the full might of American institutionalised authority. An alien is on a reconnaissance mission, visiting earth in response to an 'invitation' contained in the *Voyager II* probe, which was sent into deep space in 1977 to seek-out sentient life-forms. Using DNA from a lock of hair, the visiting alien takes the form of the dead husband, for whom Hayden is still mourning. Confused and terrified, Hayden reluctantly begins the journey to Arizona, where the starman needs to rendezvous with his alien mother-ship. During the journey, Hayden's reluctance and fear turn to sympathy, friendship, and finally to love, as she responds to the needs and vulnerabilities of the starman, who in turn

responds to her needs and desires. The film ends with Hayden successfully and tearfully conveying the alien, to the huge Arizona crater, where he is met by the mother-ship.

Despite being described as ". . . a slightly more adult version of *E.T.* [Spielberg 1982]" (Brosnan 1991, 261), and reputedly taking inspiration from another Spielberg film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) (Hardy 1991, 393), *Starman*, as a vehicle for the female protagonist exhibits more similarities with *The Terminator* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Whilst Jenny Hayden never quite shows the vulnerabilities of Sarah Connor at the beginning of the film, her development through the film is due largely to the actions of the starman - not least when he brings her back to life in a sequence which underscores the film's Christian allegories. Later, Hayden is told that she has been impregnated with the starman's (male) child, who, she is informed, "will be a teacher"; thus, she too takes on the mantle of the 'mother of a virtual Messiah'[5].

The Day the Earth Stood Still is clearly invoked through Hayden's friendship with the disenfranchised alien with allusions to Christ. Similarities with Wise's film continue, with the couple being aided by a sympathetic male academic: Mark Shermin, a specialist from MIT and SETI (the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence), mirrors the role of Professor Berhardt, as he attempts to liaise with the institutionalised forces, which are hunting the alien. Again these institutions are

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[5] See chapter 6, page 273.

signified as patriarchal by exclusive male representation. In Carpenter's film, however, institutionalised patriarchy is signified as far more pernicious from the outset because of its response to an alien who is himself responding to an invitation to visit Earth. Shermin highlights this point when he queries the need for autopsy tables with leather restraining straps. The thinly veiled question and answer offered by the film is, as Peter Nicholls points out, "What would happen to Christ if He came again? We'd crucify Him" (Clute and Nicholls 1993, 1155). This ethic is regularly reflected in Shermin's terse, laconic dialogue.

Despite Shermin's interrogative stance, he is largely, practically ineffectual; Hayden and the starman are forced, then, to outwit the entire might of the American patriarchal institutional machine, which for this film is represented by the police, the FBI, and the military. Whilst the narrative of this film is driven largely by the actions of the starman himself, the importance of Hayden as a protagonist is secured by the responsibility placed upon her, as the knowledgeable party, in their competition with external forces. Moreover, her function as an extension to the male (alien) Self, is balanced by his function as an extension to her Self.

The concept of the shared foe is mirrored and magnified in *Alien*, where Ripley also succeeds, not in direct competition with men, and not by fighting a male alien, but by surviving in an environment in which all others, male, female, and robot, die. "Interestingly, then, *Alien* operates as a feminist statement on a symbolic level that avoids . . . the trivializing, empiricist condemnation of men . . ." (Kavanagh 1995, 77). By offering a level playing field, Ridley Scott removes emphasis from the examination of human biological difference which pervades the traditional science

fiction genre. However, he does retain the importance of the alien as an embodiment

of an ideological threat. In the 1920s the threat was advancing science itself, with a

number of films preoccupied with its ability to reverse the ageing process[6]; in the

1940s, super-heroes helped to restore confidence to an American nation threatened

and battered by war[7]; and the 1950s were dominated by aliens and bug-eyed-

monsters, variously heralding fears about communism, atomic power, and space

travel. In the late 1970s Dan O'Bannon had chosen to allegorise the threat presented

by the growing power of corporate capitalism[8], and it is this threat which is the key to

Alien's seeming lack of patriarchal underpinning.

A number of critics have recognised the importance of the creature to the

organisation referred to in *Alien* as the 'Company'. In *Commodity Futures*, Thomas

Byers suggests a link, stating that "the creature is, in fact, an embodiment of nature as

perceived by corporate capitalism, and by an evolutionary science whose emphasis on

competition is a manifestation of capitalist ideology" (Byers 1995, 40). Quoting Jeff

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[6] Rejuvenation films of the 1920s include: *The Young Diana* (Capellani and Vignola 1922); *Black Oxen* (Lloyd, 1924); *Sinners in Silk* (Henley 1924); *Vanity's Price* (Neill 1924); *One Way Street* (Dillon 1925); *Midstream* (Flood 1929).

[7] Super-hero films of the 1940s include: *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* (Witney and English 1941); *Captain Midnight* (Horne 1942); *Batman* (Hillyer 1943); *Captain America* (English and Clifton 1944); *Superman* (Bennet and Carr 1948); *Batman and Robin* (Bennet 1949).

[8] By the end of the decade, the 1970s had produced a number of successful films which had used the science fiction genre to question corporate capitalist ethics; these films include: *THX 1138* (Lucas 1970); *Silent Running* (Trumbull 1971); *Soylent Green* (Fleischer 1973); *The Stepford Wives* (Forbes 1974); *Rollerball* (Jewison 1975); *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (Roeg 1976); *Capricorn One* (Hyams 1977); *Coma* (Crichton 1978); and *The China Syndrome* (Bridges 1979). These issues were to escalate in science fiction films of the 1980s in response to the the right-wing Anglo-American influence of both Ronald Reagan (from November 1980) and Margaret Thatcher (from May 1979).

Gould (1980), Byers recognises the capitalist nature of the creature itself, as resembling "that other superorganism, itself victor in an evolutionary struggle: the multinational . . ." (Byers 1995, 40)[9]. This evident correlation between the central element of the film and the 'survival of the fittest' ethics of the corporate conglomerate raises questions concerning the ethos underscoring other elements of the film. Through examination, it quickly becomes clear that *Alien* retains capitalism as its underlying theme throughout, and that:

> Late twentieth-century corporate capitalism, with its unslakable thirst to propagate its vast institutions, is nominated as the sinister force which has reincarnated the omnipotent beast. (Greenberg 1986, 105)

From the first recorded conversation between the newly woken crew-members of the *Nostromo*, it is clear that they have a preoccupation with financial gain. Parker leads a brief conversation about the inequitable distribution of the shares to be gained from towing the cargo back to Earth, but his argument is quashed by a reference to his contract. Contractual obligation is later cited by Ash, when the crew is debating whether or not they should respond to the 'SOS' call from the planet, and whether they should receive extra payment for doing so. Ash points out that their contracts require them to investigate, and that failure to do so would in fact result in a *reduction* in payment. These conversations set the tone for much of a film in which character individuality, and crew loyalties, are less important than material gain.

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[9] See also Safford 1980.

Whilst it is not apparent from the beginning of the film, Ash, the replacement

science officer, is in fact a robot programmed, by the Company, explicitly to return

the alien entity to Earth, for use in weapons research. Ash's machinations, though

suspected, are only discovered by Ripley when she gains access to the mother

computer after the death of Dallas and Kane. Prying further than Dallas had, Ripley

gains access to 'priority order one' - to retrieve the alien at any cost; the crew, she is

informed, is expendable. Directed by his programming, Ash attempts to kill the now

too knowledgeable Ripley; during the ensuing fight, he is exposed to the crew as a

robot, and is finally 'killed' by Parker, who partially decapitates him with a metal bar.

The aberrant nature of Company-man, Ash, in this, and a later scene, in which the

robot's head is powered up by the remaining crew in order to get further information

concerning the nature of the alien, helps to underscore Judith Newton's observation

that "the Company in *Alien* represents capitalism in its most systemized,

computerized, and dehumanizing form . . ." (Newton 1995, 82). In this regard, then,

the film stands as a criticism of the pervasive multinational conglomerate companies

which threatened to devour Anglo-American society in the late 1970s. Perhaps, then,

it is a non gender-specific corporate capitalism which serves as a familiar ideology,

against which the crew's egalitarian pursuits may appear acceptable to the spectator.

The beginnings of this multinational conglomerate ethos are examined in R. H.

Tawney's account of the rise of capitalism through Calvinism, in *Religion and the

Rise of Capitalism*; following the work of Max Weber (1991), Tawney explores the

contention that Calvinism, and especially the Calvinist teachings of the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, were instrumental in the birth and growth of capitalism.

Tawney suggests that a "combination of religious zeal and practical shrewdness"

(Tawney 1966, 123) ensured that material profit through personal industry could not

be regarded as a sin against a God who had provided the means to work.

Whilst a number of critics, including, to a degree, Tawney himself, have

highlighted limitations of scope in Weber's links between Calvinism and capitalism[10],

the application of Calvinist social theory can be paralleled with the autocratic

environment of *Alien*. The prohibitive regime of Calvinist Geneva, "a city of glass, in

which every household lived its life under the supervision of a spiritual police . . ."

(Tawney 1966, 125) is reproduced through the supervision of Mother and Ash, as

omniscient representatives of the Company. It has already been noted through

Ripley's cry to the *mother-God-computer*, that the film eschews traditional religious

ideology. However, developing Tawney's suggestion that a freedom, of sorts, from

the sin of materialism promoted, in John Calvin's adopted city of Geneva, ". . . the

twin evils of extortionate interest and extortionate prices" (Tawney 1966, 128), the

film highlights the distance that capitalism may well travel, completely free from the

religious zeal which accompanied Geneva's sixteenth-century Calvinist social policy.

In *Alien* this social policy is filtered through secularism, which removes both the work

ethic, born of a fear of God's retribution (Randell 1990, 71-72), and a direct link

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[10] Tawney's use of general Protestantism during the sixteenth century Reformation is broader than Weber's; however, he returns to Calvinism as the clearest example of the link between religion and capitalism, citing an acceptance of the accumulation of wealth, coupled with a strong work ethic, as central to the link (Tawney 1966, 111-139). Cf. Hamilton 1978, esp. 50-75: in this text, Roberta Hamilton further cites the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism as instrumental in the changing role of women.

between patriarchal religion and the corporate capitalism of *Alien*. This in turn restates, as Robin Wood suggests of the film, "the basic (though unstated) tenet of capitalism, that people have the right to live off other people" (Wood 1978, 32).

Whilst Marxist feminists have successfully argued links between capitalism and patriarchy[11], unlike Christianity, capitalism has no central universal male icon which frames it instantly within patriarchy. Instead capitalism relies largely, for its patriarchal links, upon the evidence of gender segregation within the labour force (Edwards, Reich and Gordon 1975), and regarding the distribution of capital (Weinbaum and Bridges 1979). In *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Sylvia Walby points out that it has been argued that "segregation by gender pre-dates capitalism . . . , so capitalism cannot be considered its cause" (Walby 1990, 38). However, from a Marxist standpoint, it is clear that capitalism has continued to use this pre-existing situation to its own ends, in order to 'divide and conquer' the proletariat[12]. Further arguing that gender-patterns are not solely dominated by capitalism, Linda Gordon states that "liberation is going to require a struggle against capitalism *and* male supremacy as two connected, but not identical, forms of domination" (Gordon 1979, 132). In order to help his audience make a direct link between patriarchy and capitalism, *Blade Runner* (1982), Ridley Scott's next film, presents Tyrell as a conspicuous personification of corporate success. As the male head of the corporation which manufactures replicants, Tyrell, by turns, represents and links, patriarchy, fatherhood, capitalism, and, through his role as creator of the replicant

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[11] See Eisenstein 1979a; and Walby 1990, esp. 33-38.

[12] See also Hartmann 1979.

technology, god of a new religion. For much of *Alien*, however, Ash is passive-aggressive (Greenberg 1986, 104), and so capitalism remains faceless, and genderless; in fact, through Mother, the Company might initially be perceived as female. However, once the sinister Ash is revealed as the Company advocate, capitalism becomes, once again, linked with patriarchy. The symbolic conflict between Ash as patriarchy and Ripley as feminism (or at the least, non-patriarchy) is highlighted during the final moments of the fight between the two: Ash tries to asphyxiate Ripley by shoving a rolled-up pornographic magazine into her mouth, in an evocation of both the medieval scold's bridle and the type of sexual violence which sustains much radical feminist discussion[13]. Through the forefronting of capitalism, indicated by character greed, the *mise en scène*, the alien itself, and finally the patriarchal personification of this underlying ideology through Ash, *Alien* creates an environment which is familiar, and therefore plausible, to the spectator[14]. Referring to both *Blade Runner* and *Alien*, Thomas Byers states that the Hollywood ethos helps to sustain this familiar ideology, which in turn filters through to the human characters:

> Created within the Hollywood style in terms of both genre and cinematography, and aiming at an audience that is both identified and managed by the Hollywood system of production and distribution, the films are bound, consciously or not,

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[13] See Stanko 1985; and Russell 1993a.

[14] The *Nostromo*, itself provides a further link to both capitalism and patriarchy, the former via its visual similarity to a floating city, and the latter through links with Ash. Meaning 'our man', *Nostromo* is taken from the Joseph Conrad novel of the same name, in which the sailor-protagonist becomes obsessed with the idea of saving silver which is under threat of theft from the company mine. Furthermore, the novel is set in the imaginary province of Sulaco, which is the name given to the escape-ship in *Aliens*.

by formidable constraints. . . . Their strongest common element in this regard is their insistence on the dehumanization necessary for human survival in a world dominated by mega-corporations. (Byers 1995, 45)

Byers considers the 'expendable' crew of the *Nostromo* to be 'commodities' which further underline the capitalist ideology of *Alien* (Byers 1995, 40). Greenberg had taken this further, suggesting that the capitalist "menace", led by the company and personified by Ash cannot help but filter through to the characters. In the film itself, argues Greenberg, "it is strongly implied that the source of the Nostromo's impoverished relationships lies in an overwhelming lust for gain . . ." (Greenberg 1986, 102), a lust which, over years of unfettered capitalism has led to ". . . the degradation of the social contract . . ." (Greenberg 1986, 105). Byers picks up this idea, and argues that the majority of the crew members have to lose their fight because their corporate greed is equal to that of the robot, an allegation "raised most explicitly by his [Ash] very indistinguishability" from human beings. (Byers 1995, 40).

This, then, leads naturally to the question: "Why does Ripley succeed?" She is a member of the *Nostromo* crew; she has signed the same contract, expects the same return for her work, and is a product of the same environment. Added to this is a reiteration of the question posed in chapter 6[15]: "Why, if Ripley succeeds against the ethos of the film (now revealed to be capitalism), is the character so successful?" In 'Feminism, Humanism and Science in *Alien*', James Kavanagh answers this clearly

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[15] See chapter 6, page 295.

and simply by citing Ripley as a force for moral good which equals, and balances, Ash's force for evil (Kavanagh 1995, 78-79); Ripley's refusal to open the airlock despite Kane being close to death might be seen as every bit a callous as some of the inhuman actions of the robot, but for the fact that she is supported by moral and narrative rectitude - Kane is under the grip of a creature which could present a danger to the ship. However, throughout this thesis it has been argued that, despite inroads made by various female protagonists, care has been taken to avoid total discordance, with acceptable ideologies. 'Bucking the system' is acceptable, and indeed necessary, to appease the imaginative id processes, as long as the aberrant force is finally subjugated to the familiar social structures reinforced by the super-ego processes, which, in the case of science fiction film, equate to some form of patriarchal ideology. Whilst Kavanagh successfully argues for spectator identification with Ripley through her humanism (signified through Ripley's already cited return for the cat[16]), this does not explain how the film manages to let Ripley oppose the patriarchal system and appear to get away with it, against expectation. Perhaps more germane to this work, then, is not the question: "Why does Ripley succeed?", but rather: "Why does Ripley not fail?"

Interestingly, the answer to this problem can be found in a return to Byers's concept of corporate commodification of the human. Whilst capitalism is personified as patriarchal, through Ash, its ethos is uniform exploitation. In other words, capitalism does not care who or what it exploits, so long as material gain is

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[16] See chapter 6, page 299.

maintained:

> Capitalism represents the ultimate in possessiveness, hence the logical end of
>
> human relations under capitalism. (Wood 1978, 32, quoted in Greenberg 1986,
>
> 91)

This is made clear by the Company's attempted use of, female, male, black, white,

artificial, and alien. It is well recognised that, in familial, social, and religious settings,

the male has for centuries been empowered by the subjugation of the female, and

whilst Marxist feminists argue that this hierarchy has continued into the workplace[17],

a large proportion of men, too, can empathise with subjection by the collective, and

largely faceless, might of corporate capitalism. Ripley, then, is not necessarily seen as

a *woman* fighting male hegemony, but as a *person* fighting for individuality in an

environment controlled by an all-pervading force. The same concept supports the

success of Maria's character in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926), for, whilst the film

does exploit the female through its heavy-handed virgin-versus-whore morality, Maria

is central to a reconciliation between the moneyed classes and the downtrodden

workers[18]. In the earlier, and hugely influential, Soviet film, *Aelita: Queen of Mars*

(Protazanov 1924) women had been central to parallel struggles, for freedom from

economic oppression on Earth, and hierarchical and sexual oppression on Mars, a

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[17] Whilst much Marxist-feminist debate is devoted to the question of 'wages for housework', and whether women at home should be paid a rate comparible to men at 'work' (cf. Dalla Costa and James 1975, 34-36; Bergmann 1986, 212), debates have inevitable moved to the question of equal wages for comparible employment in the work-place (see Tong 1995, 58-59), a consideration of liberal feminism.

[18] Cf. Thomas 1991.

theme highlighted in the film's alternative title: *Aelita: The Revolt of the Robots*[19].

By shifting its emphasis away from an underlying ideology which forces a stereotypical treatment of women, to one which retains patriarchal themes familiar to a broad spectrum of the audience, *Alien* seemingly allows Ripley to transcend a patriarchal imperative which tends to require the success of the male over the female. Here, individuality conquers conformity. Lyn Davis and Tom Genelli state that, in this way the film acts "as a kind of wake-up call to humanity, an attempt to shock us out of our psychic 'hypersleep' into the fuller state of awareness . . ." (Davis and Genelli 1980, 240).

Like most other theories concerning Ripley's importance to any statement alleged to be made by *Alien,* this one has to contend with the seemingly contradictory elements of the film's 'strip' sequence[20]. It will be useful, then, to reassess this scene from the corporate capitalist point of view; for, if sexual delineation is not needed by a narrative which uses a relatively genderless capitalism as its underlying ideology, then why does Ripley take her clothes off at the end of the film? After highlighting the importance of the fantasy of "individual action" over "economic and social horrors", Judith Newton suggests that the film's second fantasy is ". . . that white middle-class women, once integrated into the world of work, will somehow save us from its worst excesses and specifically from its dehumanization (Newton 1995, 83). Whilst this

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[19] Here the term 'robot' takes its Czech meaning 'forced labour', introduced to science fiction in the 1920 Karel Čapek play, *Rossum's Universal Robots.*

[20] See chapter 6, page 303.

statement justifies Ripley's final destruction of the alien, it requires the strip, in order to signify Ripley as female. Kavanagh takes this signification further, arguing that the humanisation instilled by the cat contradicts the film's "implicitly antihumanist statement on the worker's class-interest . . ." (Kavanagh 1995, 80). Furthermore, for Kavanagh, exposure of Ripley's femininity is important to the film's feminist statement: ". . . the death of the alien, as *Alien* has it, is the triumphant rebirth of humanism, disguised as powerful, progressive, and justifying feminism" (Kavanagh 1995, 73).

Seen logically, the strip might be considered as part of a natural course of events. Ripley, believing that she has destroyed the alien, is preparing for hyper-sleep. A status established at the beginning of the film as requiring few clothes. Furthermore, it has already been noted that Ridley Scott, as a film-maker, is capable of producing a far more scopophilic interlude; the 'wake-up' sequence avoided showing either female crew member in her underwear. The strip, therefore, could be regarded as a logical end to the film. However, Thomas Byers sees the final sequence, including the strip and the filling out of the Company log as a continuation of the corporate mentality which Ripley has advocated throughout the film. Whilst Company rules had earlier served her moral purpose, here, after she has exposed the Company as treacherous, her adherence underlines those traits "that serve to make human beings essentially indistinguishable from the corporation's literal, and malevolently controlled, robots" (Byers 1995, 42). It is the visual nature of the strip, aided by Sigourney Weaver's attractive body, which Newton uses to attenuate her own fantasy that Ripley might transcend capitalism; the ending, for Newton, states that Ripley is feminine, and through its control over her, that the Company is patriarchal.

At the end of *Reimagining the Gargoyle*, an examination of *Alien* as the "legitimate inheritor" of Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), the progenitor of the "cruel" horror film genre, Harvey Greenberg issues a warning against the kind of over-arching reading which describes his own text:

> In sum, films like *Alien* cannot legitimately be recommended as polemics against capitalism. They should instead be properly recognized as collective artistic derivatives of its depredations. With rare exceptions, their means of production and, inevitably their ideology are dictated by corporate parameters. At best, these texts constitute sullied jeremiads. They dimly apprehend the primordial selfishness infecting late twentieth-century capitalism, but can only recommend convenient escapist, individualistic solutions. At worst, they are signatory of its callous manipulations of our fellow creatures and our environment. (Greenberg 1986, 107)

Greenberg's description of *Alien* as an artistic derivative of capitalist depredation, coupled with Sherry Lansing's presidency of 20th Century Fox, might equally posit Ripley's final capitulation to a future *matriarchal* capitalism. This is supported by Greenberg's own contention that "the real source of power within this family system is 'Mother', the computer. 'She' and the Company she prefigures are futuristic visions of the classic 'bad' witch-mother of myth and fairytale" (Greenberg 1986, 101). Whilst the ascendancy of the male Company-personnel in the sequels *Aliens*, and the malevolence of Company man, Bishop II, in *Alien3* (Fincher 1992)

cannot be used to dilute the possibility of a matriarchal capitalism underscoring *Alien*, the importance of Ash as a personification of the Company would seem to act too strongly to discount this theory.

Drawing a 'line of best fit' through her own survey of possible readings for Ripley's character, Judith Newton suggests that Ripley neither transcends, nor serves as a victim of, existing capitalistic ideology; instead she chooses to accept her place within it:

> In some respects the film is utopian, for it expresses, through its female hero, the fantasy that white, middle-class women, at their liberated best, can be harmoniously integrated into the late-capitalist world of work. (Newton 1995, 87)

Newton is clearly aware that this statement will draw the primary argument that harmonious integration into an, albeit obliquely, patriarchal institution is tantamount to subservience. However, Greenberg, perhaps predictably, is even more contentious; he implies that since the company "is emphatically labelled villainous", and the alien itself is recognised as "avatar of its unholy scavenging" (Greenberg 1986, 106), one must also consider Ripley, who dutifully fills in the log at the end of the film, as part of this conspiracy, although he does also give her the option of unmasking the Company's treachery upon her return to Earth.

In *God the Father*, Robert Hamerton-Kelly attacks feminists for their use of

patriarchy and Marxists for their use of capital, in their ". . . analysis of the world's ills" (Hamerton-Kelly 1979, 6); however, each of these is questioned, by degrees, throughout *Alien*. By returning Ripley to the bosom of the Company at the end of the film, Scott and O'Bannon appear to be placing her within the confines of an ideology which cannot seemingly be avoided. On a final note, which reduces the debate to a logical reasoning perhaps inconsonant with general modes of cinema viewing, Ripley knows that, in order to earn her money for the mission, she must fulfil this, her last contractual obligation. It may then, of course, be argued that this attitude places Ripley in concert with her dead colleagues.

Whatever Ripley's relationship with corporate capitalism at the end of *Alien*, again, the significant factor is the film's ability to force critics to open up the text to various, plausible readings. Through the uncertain closure of these multiple readings, *Alien* is able to dodge emphatic statements about its intent, thus ensuring that its protagonist - in this case a woman - cannot fail. By approaching patriarchy obliquely, from the direction of widely familiar capitalism, *Alien* is able to question and to criticise a dominant ideology; by making its primary exponent of this challenge female, the film succeeds in projecting an implicit feminist statement. In contrast, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Wise), released in the same year, recognises the patriarchal nature of both medium and genre, but addresses it head-on by sweeping it under the carpet of male homogeneity.

Just as post-1970s developments in the function of the female in science fiction film have built upon the success and acceptance of *Alien*, so the *Alien* series has

drawn upon female traits which, prior to *Alien* itself, had been unfamiliar, and therefore aberrant to the spectator. Writing in 1983, Harvey Greenberg celebrated the ambiguity of the creature in *Alien*, with its:

Formidable mechanisms that allow it to mutate literally second by second, in conformation with the changing stresses of its milieu. . . . Several observers, Ridley Scott included, have rather horribly suggested that its next manifestation would be fully human - at least on the outside! (Greenberg 1986, 95)

Whilst not the next incarnation, *Alien Resurrection* presents Ripley as a part alien, part human; she is human "on the outside". The more abject counterpart to this hybridisation is presented in the form of the creature, which, whilst alien on the outside, shares human genes. Much of the this new creature's ability to unnerve resides in the unknown results of its shared DNA. In *Alien*, fear is generated through an idea that the creature might be intelligent: "its IQ is problematic; it cannot be easily dismissed as a digestive machine propelled by a peabrain - *Jaws* in space" (Greenberg 1986, 96). Eliminating any consideration that it might be a "peabrain", the beast in *Alien Resurrection* demonstrates a high level of intelligence. Incarcerated behind a glass panel, the aliens are patronised by military scientist, Gediman, who discovers that they have quickly learned to be wary of the red emergency-button, with which he can flood the cell with freezing, toxic gas. After a noisy consultation, two of the aliens attack and kill a third, so that its acid blood will dissolve the cell floor, and create an escape route. Later, one of the aliens returns to the other side of the glass, and uses the red emergency-button to kill a human guard. Thus the creature has

returned to torment its creators.

Alien Resurrection serves as an allegory for the culmination of the development of the female in science fiction film to date. The all-male military replaces the male dominated film industry, servicing its own purpose with more and more efficient creations. Ripley and the creature are inverted representations of the end-product in patriarchal attempts to create serviceable others through the Frankenstein syndrome. So much a part of each other's lives through three films, Ripley and the alien have represented polarised aspects of motherhood. This polarisation is carried into *Alien Resurrection* with the divergent images of birth: the serene image of a naked Ripley, submerged in a bio-tank, is starkly contrasted with the graphic birth of the creature, by caesarean section. However, through their shared DNA, Ripley and the alien are inextricably linked; drawing from a genetic crucible, each rebels against, and draws strength from the other. The alien, rather than being a personification of capitalist patriarchy, as it was in the first film, is now framed as a victim of it. While Ripley, who is no longer prepared to toe the Company line, shares the creature's abhorrence for the creator. Born within patriarchy, and appropriating many of the aspects of patriarchy, both human and alien females have developed to a point from which they are empowered not only to invert, subvert, but finally to demolish that ideology.

Claire Johnston writes of those films in which "there exists an 'internal tension' so that the ideology no longer has an independent existence but is 'presented' by the film. The pressure of this tension cracks open the surface of the film; instead of its ideology being assumed and therefore virtually invisible, it is revealed and made explicit". (Johnston 1975, 3, quoted in Mayne 1994, 51)

Alien Resurrection's explicit condemnation of the (male) 'creator', and explicit sympathy for the (female) 'created' is extended further, into the character of Call, the female robot, played by Winona Ryder. Programmed to service human comfort, Call represents a further stage in the *Alien* series' development of the robot: Ash served the Company directive that the crew is expendable; Bishop served to preserve human life; Call, a female, is forced to service humans, effectively traditional female representation. However, the film's sympathetic portrayal of the (female) robot as a victim of the (male) creator serves to "crack[s] open the surface of the film", allowing the spectator to question the ethics of her subjugation, not as a robot, but as a woman. However, it is not only the treatment of Call with which Jean-Pierre Jeunet's film questions the integrity of the dominant ideology. Using interwoven levels, and inter-linked examples, of implicit and explicit attack on a number of forms patriarchal hegemony, *Alien Resurrection* presents a strong feminist message of injustice repaid. The film ends with an explicit solidarity between the disenfranchised female protagonists. Deprived of her own ability to procreate safely - an effect of her alien DNA - Ripley, at the end of *Alien Resurrection* settles for a relationship with Call. Parthenogenesis, *virginity* (represented by Marilyn Frye's patriarchally unfettered individual[21]), virginity (represented by the sexually uninitiated), and motherhood are inextricably linked through this union: Ripley has mothered an entirely new species without recourse to heterosexual human coitus, and Call, as a second-generation robot, is a product of robots designing robots. Unlike the alien parthenogenetic mother of the first film, each of these female characters has a proclivity to nurture:

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[21] See chapter 6, page 286.

Ripley through her reversal of what she perceives as the venal nature of the human race, and Call through her programming. The affinity between these outcast characters is underscored by Ripley's comment when she discovers that Call is a robot: "I should have known. No human being could be that humane". Perhaps then, it is science fiction film's parsimonious attitude to the relinquishment of patriarchal control which has resulted in the number of recent prominent female protagonists already noted who have inverted patriarchal traditions through a *virginal*/virginal motherhood which denies a need for male companionship.

> The goal of such a version of feminism is neither equal rights nor androgyny, but matriarchy. (Glennon 1979, 138)

Alien Resurrection successfully builds upon earlier developments of Ripley's character, allowing Call to draw upon this popularity, and thus humanising the non-humans, in a celebration of Other. This supports the challenge, highlighted by Jenny Wolmark in *Aliens and Others* (Wolmark 1993, 2), of literary feminist-science-fiction to the "duel definition of the 'alien' as other and of the other as always being alien". The result has been to move the potential lesbian relationship away from the male sexual-fantasy exemplified by *Barbarella*'s (Vadim 1967) queen of Sogo, and return it to the female as her right. The ambiguities surrounding Ripley's sexuality, however, serve to strengthen her individuality, in a reflection of a recent - more liberal - trend in radical feminist thinking, which suggests that:

> Each and every woman should be encouraged to experiment sexually with herself, with other women, and even with men. As dangerous as heterosexuality

is for a woman within patriarchal society - as difficult as it can be for a woman to know when she truly wants to say "yes" to a man's sexual advances - she must feel free to follow the lead of her own desires. (Tong 1995, 5)

Whilst it can be taken to suggest that woman can only be free through the absence of man, the denial of heterosexuality does leave the female free to follow the "lead of her own desires". It is this freedom, freely won - which is expressed in the final sequence of *Alien Resurrection*, as Ripley flies towards Earth holding Call, for whom she has deep affection, and, it is suggested, hopes of a relationship. Presented as serene, non-scopophilic, moment, this action represents a clear disdain for patriarchal imperative.

Whilst the *Alien* series' avoidance of heterosexual, and human biological motherhood acts on the whole to free Ripley from the constraints of traditional representation, there is a danger that human reproduction is taken away from the female and replaced only with images of alien reproduction. This serves to devalue the female through an abjectification of human reproduction, and thus site moral power over reproduction with the non-abjectified male[22], an example of the Frankenstein syndrome. In order to secure against accusations of complacent male domination of maternal imagery, inherent in the *Alien* series' assimilation of both Immaculate Conception and virgin birth, *Alien Resurrection* from the caesarean birth of the alien-queen onwards, exposes its cloning as immoral, heartless, aberrant,

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[22] Cf. Gordon 1979, 123-28.

patriarchal motherhood. In a sequence, described by Michael Eaton as ". . . the omphalic centre of the picture . . ." (Eaton 1997, 8), Ripley discovers a door marked '1-7'. Remembering that Ripley is tattooed with the figure '8', the spectator correctly suspects that the room beyond contains the first seven attempts at creating a clone from human/alien DNA. Ripley enters the room and sees:

> Nothing less than a Freak Museum, or more precisely, a variant of what the old carny barkers of the US fairground would have called a 'Punk Show': a display of deformed human foetuses floating in liquid in glass jars. Except that in this instance the exhibits are mutant products of a hybridisation between human and alien life forms. This is a veritable 'Ripley's Believe It or Not' Odditorium. (Eaton 1997, 6)

The *Alien* series suggests that Shulamith Firestone's aim of freeing women from biological maternity (Firestone 1979, esp. 73-102) could not be attained merely through invention of the technology. Because reproductive technology is "intrinsically an instrument of domination" (Wajcman 1993, 59), there must also be a revolution in the control of that technology[23]. Not only does the short sequence in the 'clone room' help to allay fears that *Alien Resurrection* supports the Frankenstein syndrome, but it also condemns the male creator for his blatant disregard for humanity, a theme highlighted initially by General Perez's rejection of Ripley after the successful retrieval of the alien gestating within her: "as far as I'm concerned, number eight is a

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[23] See de Beauvoir, 1988, 501-542, esp. 501.

meat by-product". Continuing Vivian Sobchack's notion of recent science fiction's inverted millenarianism[24], *Alien Resurrection* dismantles the glorious, male-controlled artificial reproduction and nurturing posited by films like *Logan's Run* (Anderson 1976), and returns it to the defiled realm of Victor Frankenstein's errant ambition. Taking the 'wake-up' from hyper-sleep sequence in *Alien* as an artificial, technological birth, the sequel films place significance on the failure of the artificial cryogenic 'womb': At the beginning of *Aliens*, it has taken Ripley's 'womb' over fifty years to find an Earth she no longer feels akin to; In *Alien3* it is revealed that Newt's 'womb' was unable to protect her from the alien, and Ripley is deposited on a hostile prison planet; finally, in *Alien Resurrection*, the man-made womb provides ready victims for the military scientists, as the theft and extraction of hibernating bodies stands, in turn, as a metaphor for Ripley's own caesarean operation. *Alien Resurrection*'s cloning technology echoes Kane's (John Hurt) surrogate motherhood in *Alien*, what Creed regards as an attempt "to appropriate the procreative function of the mother, to represent a man giving birth, to deny the mother as signifier of sexual difference . . ." (Creed 1995a, 136). However, just as Kane's fate in *Alien* is too abject to represent patriarchal appropriation of motherhood (Creed 1995b), *Alien Resurrection* condemns male seizure of reproduction through its own aberrant images. The failure of male reproduction in this film, returns procreative control to the female.

Ripley's graphic description of the horrors awaiting Purvis, who has an alien

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[24] See chapter 6, page 270.

inside him evoke the discomfort of natural female birth, not to abjectify this process, but symbolically to celebrate the role inversion:

Purvis   [*after Ripley has described the alien birth*] Who are you?

Ripley   [*with a wry smile*] I'm the monster's mother.

Punishment for the male through surrogate motherhood was central to *Alien*. Following Dervin (1980, 131), Greenberg recalls Kane's 'motherhood':

> Kane serves as prime focus of *Alien's* complex birth imagery. . . . As if in talion retribution, the [primal] scene recoils upon *him*; his punishment for viewing and participating in the forbidden act of conception is a spectacular (*sic*) death precipitated by the Alien's birth. (Greenberg 1986, 100)

Alien Resurrection goes further than *Alien*, by inviting Ripley, and, by association, all women finally to utilise science fiction's potential to address the inequities of biological reproduction represented by patriarchy.

More direct than this reversal of the Frankenstein syndrome is *Alien Resurrection*'s condemnation of patriarchy through Ripley's direct attack on the icons of its hegemony. Easily identifying the military personnel as targets, Ripley physically attacks head scientist Dr. Wren. Appalled by the scientists' lack of regard for the danger posed by their resurrection of the alien, she taunts them with quiet disdain, and unnerving confidence, telling Gediman: "She'll breed, you'll die: everyone in the Company will die". As with her warning not to allow Kane into the drop-ship in

Alien, Ripley's comments are endorsed by the spectator's support for her moral position; each film sets up in the spectator a wish, despite the consequences, to see Ripley proven right. In *Alien Resurrection* a further dimension is added by the new physical prowess granted by Ripley's alien genes. Obliging the audience, screenwriter Joss Whedon provides a basketball-court confrontation, in which Ripley easily thwarts Johner, the film's central image of mindless machismo.

Johner is one of the mercenary pirates employed by the military to 'acquire' human bodies in which to incubate their aliens. Having delivered their cargo of cryogenic-sleep capsules, the pirates spend time on the *Auriga* military facility; their sojourn is interrupted, however, by the escape of the aliens. Despite their reluctance, they ally themselves with Ripley, along with Distephano, a representative of the dysfunctional military, immoral scientist, Wren, and ineffectual hijack victim, Purvis. Their aim is to gain access to the pirates' ship, *The Betty*, and escape from *The Auriga*. Through this alliance, Whedon and Jeunet use existing audience identification with Ripley to attack subtly these already alienated representatives of recalcitrant patriarchy. This implicit condemnation underscores the film's more subtle approach to competition between male and female. Ripley prefers to use quick wit and sarcasm to undermine the position of the men, a position exemplified by her question to the assembled party shortly after their first meeting: "So, who do I have to fuck to get off this boat?". The actions of the men, especially Johner, are placed in stark contrast to Ripley's, and later Call's, humanity. After Ripley has destroyed the laboratory containing clones '1-7', an action wholly supported by the spectator and by Call, Johner, surveying the mess, utters: "what's the big deal man? Fucking waste of ammo . . . Must be a chick thing". Comic though lines like this are, the audience is never

invited to share in the sentiment.

Towards the end of the film, Ripley's sustained offensive on hegemonic ideology is shared with Call. Needing to communicate with the *Auriga*'s computer - Father, in an attempt to cause the ship to burn-up through Earth's atmosphere, Call announces that she cannot communicate by remote. Recalling a previous robot revolution, she tells them: "I burned my modem; we all did". Emphasising her freedom from unsolicited external control, this statement is clearly meant as a witty intertextual reference to the fabled 'burning of bras' by the Women's Liberation movement. Shortly after this episode, Call instigates a sequence which consciously reflects Ripley's own incredulous cry to Mother, seventeen minutes before the end of *Alien*. Finally interfacing physically with Father, Call discovers that Wren, who had deserted the group, having almost killed Call in the process, is attempting to commandeer *The Betty*. Call causes Father to deny Wren access to the shuttle bay, leaving the scientist to vent his frustration with a cry to the computer: "Father? FATHER!". Taking further control of the computer, Call replies to Wren through the feedback speakers: "Father's dead, asshole". At once, Call inverts what Lacan, in his reformulation of Freudian theory, identified as the symbolic order. Call's control of the computer is indicative of a film which persistently questions the status of Self and Other; Call does not recognise the *name of the father*[25] she has literally taken control of Father.

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[25] See chapter 1, page 58.

In an attempt to break free from the need to assimilate and appropriate patriarchal dynamism, the female protagonists in *Alien Resurrection* have been able to transcend traditional iconography, whilst also retaining female distinctions; they compete as women. It is inevitable, however, that films with these ambitions come under fire from different quarters. Call and Ripley, it may easily be argued, are forced into a mutual relationship by their joint exclusion from patriarchal society. Power is returned to the male for a moment, here, because the quasi-lesbian relationship is born of male rejection: Call, as a robot, and Ripley, as part-alien, are rejected as freaks; this can be read as a further condemnation, perhaps, of radical, matriarchal feminism, but also an affirmation of what David Sibley identifies, in *The Geographies of Exclusion*, as "'spatial purification', . . . a key feature in the organisation of social space" (Sibley 1995, 77) Sibley expands this concept to encompass beliefs, stating that:

There are certain parallels between the exclusion of minorities, the 'imperfect people' who disturb the homogenized and purified topographies of mainstream social space, and the exclusion of ideas which are seen to constitute a challenge to established knowledge and, thus, to power structures. (Sibley 1995, 116)

The futility and impossibility of appeasing all critics has already been stated. Whilst the capacity, of progressive films, for multiple interpretation supplies critics with ammunition, it also provides them with a strong defence. Divested of the necessity to approach patriarchal ideology obliquely (through capitalism), *Alien Resurrection* both builds upon the content of the previous films and magnifies *Alien*'s

multi-layered text, to produce a complex narrative which is interwoven by so many ideological statements that it resists closure at most points. Just as multi-layering the id/super-ego transaction adds depth to films and to characters, and crucible development gives writers confidence to posit multiple character traits, so *Alien Resurrection* is able to use the confidence of previous success to attack patriarchal ideology head-on.

The central method of attack is highlighted by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*:

"Chloe liked Olivia . . ." Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women.

"Chloe liked Olivia," I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia for perhaps the first time in literature. Cleopatra did not like Octavia. And how completely *Antony and Cleopatra* would have been altered had she done so! (Woolf 1993, 74)

The development of the independent female protagonist has warranted the appropriation and assimilation of the tenets of patriarchy; however, her transcendence relies upon her ability to reject these, and to use her new-found initiative for change. Woolf continues:

All these relationships between women, I thought, rapidly recalling the splendid gallery of fictitious women, are too simple. So much has been left out,

unattempted. . . almost without exception they are shown in their relation to men. (Woolf 1993, 74-75)[26]

Charting the progress of the female science fiction personality is not easy; there is no neat progression from the hegemonic isolation of traditional science fiction film, through pendulum, crucible, inversion, and subversion, to transcendence. The repeated use of particular films to exemplify new aspects of development illustrates the fact that the development of the female character has become a lottery of juggled responses, multi-layered id/super-ego-transactions, and varying degrees of competition. Some lead to a successful transcendence of patriarchy, whilst others do not. Moreover, it is the complicated nature of the deconstruction of a limited number of these films which finally underscores their progressiveness. Referring to films which "attempt to capitalise on a discernible new audience . . ." (Brunsdon 1987, 119), Charlotte Brunsdon notes:

While some women have given a cautious welcome to these films, arguing that they do indicate shifts in definitions and representations of femininity, others have been particularly angered, feeling that political ideals have been exploited to provide fashionable - and profitable - entertainment. (Brunsdon 1987, 119)

What becomes clear, however, is that, whatever the level of success or failure, the very act of questioning, competing with, and, in a few cases, eventually transcending ideological hegemony serves merely to underscore, and thereby reinforce, the primacy

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[26] This concept is applied specifically to cinema by Laura Mulvey in *Afterthoughts on*

of that ideology.

"Visual Pleasure and Narrative Form" (1989c).

CONCLUSION

If the evolution of Mankind can be mapped by the development from ape to *Homo sapiens*, then the portrayal of women in Science Fiction perhaps represents the shift from the coffee wielding Maureen Robinson in *Lost in Space* [TV 1965] to Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2*. This shift perhaps corresponds with the slow but sure changes in society's perception of women. (Barker 1992, 9)

Whilst Heather Barker may well have guessed that the film industry would eventually get around to producing its own version of the popular television series, *Lost in Space*, her final statement suggests that she would be surprised and disappointed by the fact that Stephen Hopkins's 1998 film exemplifies science fiction film's regression towards the conservative values which supported the genre in the 1950s. It is no accident that *Lost in Space* should signify this trend, for the original show, modelled, by Irwin Allen on the children's classic *Swiss Family Robinson*[1], itself underscored a trend in the post-war television industry to reformulate conservative family values through what Lynn Spigel terms "the *fantastic family sit-com*, a hybrid genre that mixed the conventions of the suburban sit-com past with the space-age imagery of the New Frontier" (Spigel 1991, 205)[2].

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[1] Allen's original title for the show was in fact "Space Family Robinson", but a screenplay with this title had already been lodged with the Writers' Guild (for further details, see van Hise 1995, 56-82).

[2] In her survey of these hybrid sit-coms, Spigel includes *I Dream of Jeannie*, *My Favourite Martian*, *Bewitched*, and *The Jetsons*.

The recent film version of *Lost in Space* employs three separate female/male pairings: parents, Maureen and John Robinson; their younger children, Penny and Will; and the older Judy Robinson with fighter pilot, Don West. In each pairing, post-1970s thinking is represented by the no-nonsense attitude of the female partner towards her correspondent male. However, a firm return to traditional gender positioning is evident in the fact that at no point do any of these strong female characters drive the narrative. For the finale of the film Maureen, Judy, and Penny remain in the relative safety of the spaceship, whilst the all the male characters leave the ship to hunt a means to escape the planet. The men then meet further versions of themselves, by virtue of a time-bubble, created by Will Robinson. The resolution to the film is equated with a resolution to the troubled relationship between father John, and son Will, to which all other considerations and characters are subjugated. Thus, *Lost in Space* literally extends what Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément regard as philosophical, social and cultural phallocentrism: "which certainly means that she is not thought, that she does not enter into the oppositions, that she does not make a couple with the father (who makes a couple with the son)" (Cixous and Clément 1986, 64).

Joining *Lost in Space* are a number of recent big-budget projects, including *Independence Day* (Emmerich 1996), *Deep Impact* (Leder 1998), *Armageddon* (Bay 1998), and *Godzilla* (Emmerich 1998), which further exemplify a definite return to the conservative values of the traditional science fiction film, with women as:

(a) Emotional supports for the male characters

(b) Journalists and 'soft' scientists, with little or no narrative function

(c) Sex objects

Falling back on tradition has, of course, a great deal to do with the ever escalating costs of producing these science fiction films[3]. The spiralling expectation for impressive special effects coupled with the spiralling cost of producing those effects means that the genre, in an attempt to ensure a profit[4], has retrenched itself in traditional representation[5], taking with it only minimal results of feminist persuasion. Moreover, this is a magnification of a trend for big-budget science fiction films of the past decade to look backwards for their visions of the future: *Batman* (Burton 1989), *Total Recall* (Verhoeven 1990), *Judge Dredd* (Cannon 1995), *Mars Attacks* (Burton 1996), *Starship Troopers* (Verhoeven 1997), *Men in Black* (Sonnenfield 1997), and *Sphere* (Levinson 1998)[6].

This seeming impasse is further supported by the fact that the entrenchment of the traditional patriarchal science fiction genre is not a simple one. The genre amplifies the excesses of an industry, which is in turn supported financially by the successes of the genre; this exchange sanctions the patriarchal conservatism of an

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[3] Budgets for these films: *Lost in Space*, $80 million; *Independence Day*, $90 million; *Deep Impact*, $75 million, *Armaggedon*, $100 million; and *Godzilla*, $160 million (Movie Database on-line 1995a).

[4] See chapter 2.

[5] See chapter 1.

[6] see Jackson 1993.

industry which continues to magnify its reflection of a society which in turn worships and mimics that industry. This loop then perpetuates the status quo, and, as Erica Sheen notes:

> The refinement of . . . technology towards the virtuoso techniques for image-making . . . represents a climax in that process of confinement which expresses itself in the appropriate rhetoric of the SF blockbuster (Sheen 1991, 142)

The ingrained nature of patriarchy is further highlighted in Peter Nicholls's attempt to defend the male science fiction writer: "most sexism by men writers of sf has been thoughtless, a matter of cultural conditioning, rather than deliberately derogatory or malicious" (Nicholls 1979, 661). This *fait accompli* attitude in turn has fuelled the perpetuation of the film industry's patriarchal apparatus, and is reflected in Rosmarie Tong's succinct conclusion that a ". . . woman exists in a man's world on his terms" (Tong 1995, 224). Further fuel is added by the large proportion of male writers in the science fiction genre; for, as Jung states in *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*:

> No author can avoid equipping his hero with some of his own qualities and thus betraying that at least part of himself is invested in him. What happens to the hero also happens symbolically to the author. (Jung 1959a, 171)

In reiterating Freud's notion that "the creative writer presents us with his personal daydreams" (quoted in Lebeau 1995, 3), Jung invites the suggestion that a character

like Ripley represents not the result of a liberal treatise on an egalitarian future, but rather what the male writer would want to be if he were a woman. This notion is supported in this particular case by the fact that screenwriter Dan O'Bannon wrote the role to be played by either a man or a woman. Rather than a conscious fantasy in the manner of the 1950s' heroines, Ripley is the result of expedient, unconscious phantasy[7]; an inflation of the female *animus* is filtered through a socio-political conscience to produce a more socially acceptable surrogate for male identification. If this is the case, then the female has remained subject to male desire, even whilst she has driven the narrative in science fiction film. For, as Rosmarie Tong states:

Masculine discourse has never been able to understand woman, or the feminine, as anything other than a reflection of man, or the masculine. . . . When men look at women, they see not women but reflections, or images and likenesses, of men. (Tong 1995, 227)

This underscores a further entrenchment of the patriarchal imperative. An inevitable conclusion of this layered perpetuation of phallocentrism is reached by Charlotte Brunsdon:

If the very way stories are told . . . always functions to reassure and pleasure the masculine spectator, then it is impossible to use the same forms to effect different representations. It is not a question of real women misrepresented, but

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[7] See chapter 2, page 84.

of filmic representations of women contributing to, and constructing, our

understanding of what a woman is. (Brunsdon 1987, 52)

Here is not the place to present a manifesto for the future resolution of this

seeming intractability, it will, however, be useful to examine briefly how feminist

theorists, feminist film theorists, and feminist film-makers have addressed this

imbalance, how they have attempted to redress the balance[8], and what subsequent

effect this has had on science fiction film.

It is perhaps ironic that capitalism, chief sponsor of the film industry's

hegemonic ideology, has been discovered not only as a foe, but also as a friend to the

progressive science fiction female. Paradoxically, it is corporate capitalism, in *Alien*,

which allowed the homogenous specificity of the common battle against financial

oppression to identify a chink in the armour of patriarchal ideology; this in turn led to

the more direct attack on phallocentrism from *Alien Resurrection*.

In *Parenthesis or Indirect Route*, Jean-Paul Fargier, posits a resistance to

commercial cinema's structured privileging of the representatives of pervasive

bourgeois ideology, by arguing from a Marxist standpoint that cinema is ". . . among

the arsenal of means employed by the bourgeoisie to maintain its power and defend its

interest" (Fargier 1971, 134). The cinema to Fargier is an component of what Louis

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[8] For a detailed study of the interelationship between feminist theory, feminist film theory, and feminist film practice, see Kuhn 1994, esp. 218-51.

Althusser terms, "the legal-political and ideological superstructure" (Althusser 1993, 22); in this case, the medium, an ideological State apparatus, is helped in its task, to reproduce a self-sustaining ideology, by the socio-political / legal-political superstructures, for example, censorship[9]. Responding to Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni's assertion that "cinema is one of the languages through which the world communicates itself to itself" (Comolli and Narboni 1971, 30), Fargier insists that the ". . . the proletariat must appropriate the means of production in the cinema. It will not be able to appropriate them completely unless it has first taken over the means of economic production and the state machine . . ." (Fargier 1971, 142). Fargier's Marxist manifesto can, of course, be restated from a feminist perspective in which man becomes a substitute for the bourgeoisie and woman replaces the proletariat[10]. Thus, "neo-Marxism changes the project of criticism from the *discovery of meaning* to that of *uncovering the means of its production*" (Gledhill 1994, 113/14). Erica Sheen links this dynamic to the science fiction film:

> Feminist critics have long recognised that male creativity needs redefinition as a certain privileged access to structures of production. In terms of access to funding and technical resources you cannot get much more privileged than the Hollywood producer of the SF 'blockbuster'. (Sheen 1991, 145)

Feminist Marxism, then, posits a seizure of the means of production for the

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[9] See also Althusser 1993a, 24.

[10] see also Greer 1972, esp. 114-15.

proletarian female[11]. The posited end of this new configuration is the same, as Laura Mulvey concludes:

> The true exhibit is always the phallus. Women are simply the scenery onto which men project their narcissistic fantasies. The time has come for us to take over the show and exhibit *our own* fears and desires [emphasis mine]. (Mulvey 1989b, 13)

This basic concept is, of course not new to philosophy: in Shakespeare's Othello, Desdemona is advised by her maid about the inequities of patriarchal morality:

> *Emilia*   Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' the world; and
>
> having the world for your labour, 'tis a wrong in
>
> your own world, and you might quickly make it
>
> right.
>
> (Shakespeare 1984, 167-68 [IV.iii.79-82])

Laudable as these aims are, they are inevitably hampered by the multiple voices of feminism itself; for whilst the varying notions and activities of men are continually sanctioned by the pervasiveness of the dominant ideological State apparatus, feminists, with varying strategies to deconstruct and to dismantle that apparatus, find

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[11] Whilst Rosmarie Tong points out that Marxist feminists argue that bourgeois women are, to a degree, cushioned by the class structure, and are affected by patriarchy to a lesser degree than are proletarian women, the point here is that cinema supports the fantasies of *all* men, regardless of class (for a clear overview of Marxist feminism, see Tong 1995 39-69).

themselves in conflict not only with patriarchy, but with each other. For example, a number of theorists have read 'against-the-grain' of film texts clearly framed from within patriarchal ideology; in *Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Theory*, the title of which itself testifies to the diverse nature of the field, Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar, and Janice Welsch collect a number of essays which explore ". . . the ways women directors negotiate compromises that allow them to sidestep total co-optation" (Carson, Dittmar, and Welsch 1994a, 12). However, postmodern feminists postulate the difficulties of mounting *any* challenge to the symbolic order ". . . when the only words available to do so are the words that have been issued by this order" (Tong 1995, 223). Feminist theorist, Luce Irigaray states that women do not only need a voice (genre), they need a language (medium). Acquiring a language through which women can express their Selves without implicit or explicit reference to men has remained a central issue for feminist theorists, feminist film theorists, and feminist film makers (Welsch 1994a). To Irigaray, the male view of woman as 'phallic woman' must be replaced by a female view of the woman as 'non-phallic woman' (see Irigaray 1985, esp. 23-33[12]).

Developments along this line have in turn fuelled an aspect of the radical feminist position which posits the total eradication of the male as a dominant signifier; Marilyn Frye addresses this notion of male exclusion in her question, "Do you have to be a lesbian to be a feminist?":

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[12] Cf. Kaplan 1992, chapter 6, "The Maternal Mother: The 'Phallic' Mother Paradigm, 107-23.

Lesbian feminists have noted that if the institution of female heterosexuality is . . . central to the continuous replication of patriarchy, then women's abandonment of that institution recommends itself as one strategy (perhaps among others) in the project of dismantling patriarchal structures. And if heterosexual encounters, relations and connections are the sites of the inscription of the patriarchal imperatives on the bodies of women, it makes sense to abandon those sites. (Frye 1993, 493)

Clearly this reflects aspects of feminist film theory and practice which aim to dismantle the patriarchal structures and apparatus which are central to this "continuous replication of patriarchy". However, despite supporting the condemnation of male-specificity, film theorists and practitioners, Laura Mulvey and Colin MacCabe, use the very necessity of an exclusively female feminism as a mitigation for Jean-Luc Godard's traditional representation of the female form, arguing that "perhaps the necessary exclusiveness of the Woman's Movement, the need for women to develop their own positions, diminishes the influence of feminism on an established film-maker . . ." (Mulvey and MacCabe 1989, 50) - or indeed a film-making process. Even Frye, whose advocacy of female exclusivity through lesbianism is clearly stated above, is careful not to "embrace any absolute historical, social determinism" (Frye 1993, 494), which makes impossible demands upon those women who choose to have relations with men. This highlights the fact that, whilst attempts have been made to consolidate multiple aspects of feminism under one 'socialist feminist' banner[13], there can be no workable unified-feminism, and therefore

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[13] See Tong 1995, 173.

no workable unified feminist film theory (nor perhaps should there be)[14].

Reactive theories which posit the development of film towards a new and exclusive textual signification of the female necessarily presume that cinema has been designed as a signifier for the male. However, as Ally Acker points out, "the first director in history of a narrative film was a woman, [and] the highest paid director in the silent days was a woman" (Acker 1991, *xvii*). Moreover, much of the language of the cinema was created by women:

> The most empowering discovery through-out the course of my research was how consistent and steadfast women have been as innovators in film. It is important, therefore, to place the pioneer woman of cinema into the historic context of which she is so indelibly a part.
>
> Between 1913 and 1923, at least twenty-six women directors have been counted in Hollywood. (Acker 1991, *xxiii*)

Once women had been squeezed from the director's chair, they continued to make an impression in screenwriting; testimony to this fact is offered by Lizzie Francke throughout *Script Girls: Women Screenwriters in Hollywood* (1994). Both Acker and Francke argue that the technical and structural languages of the cinema are not necessarily inherently male, only that they have been appropriated by men. In addition, despite Freud's biologically determined sidelining of the female through his

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[14] See Kuhn 1994, 218-19.

adherence to the notion of 'lack', the psychic activity so clearly reflected in the cinema by theorists like Christian Metz (1989a), is not the exclusive domain of the male. It is not the dream state that is patriarchal, but rather how the dream state is reflected.

Turning full circle, the issue of control turns away from exclusivity; as Anne Ross Muir asserts in *The Status of Women Working in Film and Television*:

Only . . . when we really *share* control of the means of production, can we fully establish a 'female gaze' within popular culture and present women's point of view in all its fascinating multiplicity [emphasis mine]. (Muir 1994, 152)

Developing the concept of sharing means of production, Teresa de Lauretis posits the necessity for both theorists and practitioners to re-apply existing cinematic apparatus toward the goal of non-patriarchal dialogue.

I further suggest that, even as filmmakers are confronting the problems of transforming vision by engaging all of the codes of cinema, specific and nonspecific, against the dominance of that "basic model", our task as theorists is to articulate the conditions and forms of vision for another social subject, and so to venture into the highly risky business of redefining aesthetic and formal knowledge. (de Lauretis 1994, 147)

Jenny Wolmark has recognised this situation in science fiction literature, and

has noted that its feminist exponents have been able to find expression through postmodernism's tendency to posit what she terms "intersections" between modes of representation, rather than through attempts to define pure forms. Whilst Wolmark here is referring specifically to feminist science fiction literature, her words outline the importance of a genre which she regards as existing at an intersection between postmodernism and feminism:

The use of the term 'intersections' is intended to suggest those cross-over points where discourses become openly contradictory, and boundaries become flexible and subject to renegotiation. Feminist science fiction exists at just such a point of intersection, or intertextuality, where the paradoxical conditions of its own existence enable the production of texts that address new and different issues and audiences: its feminist intentions mean that it functions disruptively within a masculinist popular genre, the generic outlines of which are already in the process of redefinition as the boundaries between high and popular culture become increasingly insecure. (Wolmark 1993, 3)

Pursuing this challenge to purist academic orthodoxy in *NASA/TREK Popular Science and Sex in America*, Constance Penley explores the cultural creativity which lies at the intersection between the real world of NASA and the fictional world of *Star Trek*. Her work examines how women 'slash-fiction' writers "have ingeniously subverted and rewritten *Star Trek* to make it answerable to their own sexual and social desires" (Penley 1997, 2/3) [15]. Penley identifies a scene towards the end of *Star*

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[15] 'Slash-fiction' refers to fan writing which posits sexual relationships between,

Trek V: The Final Frontier (Shatner 1989) in which Kirk is rescued from a planet by

Klingons, led by Spock, whom Kirk moves to embrace:

> Spock interrupts the embrace saying, "Please, Captain, not in front of the
>
> Klingons." Kirk directs a brief glance toward the known universe's most macho
>
> aliens, then turns back to Spock to exchange a complicitous look before
>
> lowering his hands. (Penley 1997, 100)

Penley cites the importance of this scene to the, largely female, writers of 'K/S

slash-fiction', who have for years promulgated fantasies of a homosexual relationship

between Kirk and Spock. Whilst this reading is reinforced by the near-exclusivity of

the male cast, and the film's development of the bond between Kirk, McCoy and

Spock, the scene also emphasises the position into which patriarchal representation,

with its rigid standards and rules of behaviour, forces men as well as women. For the

women writing this fiction, homosexuality ". . . avoids the built-in inequality of the

romance formula, in which dominance and submission are invariably the respective

roles of men and women" (Penley 1997, 125)[16]. Jim McClellan has cited the

importance of re-vamped *Star Trek* scenarios to Gay male fans who have also levered

gaps in the conservative façade in order to reclaim aspects of the monolith for

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usually television-characters, which are not explored in the original shows. The 'slash'
designation takes the initial letters of the characters concerned, dividing them with an
oblique, or slash symbol - in the case of *Star Trek*, (K)irk/(S)pock. Further examples
include *Starsky and Hutch* (S/H), and *Miami Vice*'s Crockett and Castillo (M/V) (see
Penley 1997, 102). Constance Penley uses the convention, in the title of her work, to
suggest a relationship between the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and
Star Trek. See also Jenkins 1988.

[16] See also K. C. D'Alessandro, quoted in Landon 1989, 18-19.

themselves:

> Gay Trekkies have long been disappointed that, despite Gene Roddenberry's multi-culti SF liberalism, the shows have never featured an overtly gay character. The creators of Science Friction [a Toronto-based 'zine'[17]] take matters into their own hands, writing pornographic stories which "out" the Borg, depicting them as a kind of space-cruising Queer Nation. (McClellan 1996, 19)

In these instances, then, science fiction is demonstrated to have potential as a medium for non-patriarchal voices. Diverse groups are able to take these manifestations of hegemonic ideology and reformulate them in a reflection of the dialogic, heteroglossic dynamic proposed by Edward Sampson in *Celebrating the Other* (Sampson 1993, 9). 'Zines' and 'slash-fiction' are able to offer a voice to the voiceless because the relatively low cost of production has made them available media to those who are not served by the ideological State apparatus.

Annette Kuhn points out that developments in video technology made the medium of 'film' far more widely available to independent film-makers who were already using 16mm and super 8 mm in order to reduce the cost of voicing messages which where ignored of money-making machine of institutionalised film production (Kuhn 1994, 221). Ally Acker highlights the importance of cheaper and more

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[17] 'Zine' refers to unofficial, amateur magazines which contain, often 'slash-fiction', stories involving characters from established television shows (see also Penley 1997).

accessible film-making to feminist film-makers wanting to experiment with independent expression, stating that "it would not be until the seventies, with films like Claudia Weill's *Girlfriends* (1978), that women would finally (and of course *independently*) see their real lives on screen - . . ." (Acker 1991, *xx*). Independent production is, according to Laura Mulvey, the keystone to the development of non-hegemonic cinema:

> Technological advances . . . have changed the economic conditions of cinematic production, which can be artisanal as well as capitalist. Thus it has been possible for an alternative cinema to develop. . . . The alternative cinema provides a space for the birth of a cinema which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film. (Mulvey 1975, 7-8)

The 1983 science fiction film, *Liquid Sky* (Tsukerman), represents an attempt to present non-gendered, non-specific sexuality, using science fiction as a medium to destabilise conservative representations of male, female, masculine and feminine. Aliens have landed in New York in a miniature flying saucer, to observe and feed off human beings. It transpires that the aliens live on a chemical created at the point of human orgasm, and that they are using the sexual exploits of the female protagonist, Margaret, played by Anne Carlisle, to survive. Noticing that her sexual partners all seem to die (a result of the alien presence), Margaret decides to instigate a campaign of retributive sexual terrorism, aimed largely, but not exclusively, at men.

Despite this feminist slant, the film's dominant theme is the centring of all sexually disenfranchised individuals, who find sanctuary in hedonism and fashion. The resulting narcissistic fantasy "uses androgynous models to project a negative presence, where masculine and feminine sexual connotations cancel each other out" (Bergstrom 1986, 41). Janet Bergstrom uses the term "model" rather than 'actor', to express the importance of fashion to *Liquid Sky*. Androgynous style, underscored by numerous references to David Bowie, is elevated to a point of such importance that it becomes more 'alien' than the alien visitors themselves, whose spaceship utilises familiar science fiction representation. In a reformulation of the id/super-ego transaction, ". . . the science fiction elements and the 'normal' elements of the film are transposed: it is the fashion poseurs who are on display as the real aliens" (Bergstrom 1986, 53).

Throughout the film, Tsukerman uses androgynous sex and style to provoke a response in his audience, and to undermine numerous ideological and filmic superstructures. The film concludes with the narcissistic suicide of the male/female protagonists (both played by Anne Carlisle), as they attempt to fulfil their hedonistic sexual desires.

Rather than presenting "real lives on screen" in the manner of *Girlfriends*, *Liquid Sky* uses its science fiction base to echo Jean-Paul Fargier's call to expose the illusory nature of film in order for the medium to redefine itself. Arguing that it is cinema's ability to reproduce reality which perpetuates its endorsement of ideology, Fargier suggests that "if the impression of reality ceases the ideologies reflected in it

collapse. . ." (Fargier 1971, 137). A number of feminist film-makers followed this line, using their new-found freedom to embrace a more documentary style of film-making. Following Mikhail Bakhtin's suggestion that distancing oneself from the subject of discourse is essential for dialogic interaction (Bakhtin 1981), Janice Welsch, in *Bakhtin, Language, and Women's Documentary Filmmaking*, discusses the freedom offered by a documentary style:

> Even in realist documentaries various filmmaking techniques are used to help maintain distance, among them direct access to the audience by the filmmaker of film participants, the filmmaker's visual of verbal interaction with her subjects, and shots reminding viewers, either through images, printed text, or sound, that the film is constructed and offers neither a comprehensive nor completely objective treatment of an issue or situation. (Welsch 1994a, 167)

Freed from dictatorial financial constraints, non-patriarchal independent cinema aimed to reproduce what Bertold Brecht described as the socialist realist's aim to show ". . . characters and events as historical and alterable, and as contradictory. This entails a great change; a serious effort has to be made to find new means of representation" (Willett 1991, 269).

In *Born in Flames* (Borden 1983), feminist film-maker Lizzie Borden attempts to show a diversity of real lives in a documentary narrative which, like *Liquid Sky*, uses science fiction to disorientate the spectator. Whist Borden consciously uses the futuristic genre it is employed merely to sanction her radical representation,

unravelling the plot, which posits an American feminist-revolution, through a cascade

of partially-disjointed montages, interspersed with dramatic scenes and narrative

exposition. It is this unfettered representation which, to Teresa de Lauretis, opens the

film up to multiple readings which necessarily conceive the audience as a

"heterogeneous community". However, after quoting Borden's intention that "every

woman . . . would have some level of identification with a position within the film"

(de Lauretis 1994, 153), de Lauretis goes further, stating that:

> Borden's avowed intent to make the spectator a locus ("a repository") of
>
> different points of view and discursive configurations ("*these different styles of*
>
> *rhetoric*") suggests to me that the concept of a heterogeneity of the audience
>
> also entails a heterogeneity of, or in, the individual spectator. (de Lauretis 1994,
>
> 155)

Thus, it is the film's overt engagement with the spectator "as a social subject" which,

to Annette Kuhn, underscores the importance of Lizzie Borden's science fiction film

to feminist film-making[18].

Whilst the relatively low cost of producing independent films has offered

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[18] Phil Hardy points out that *Born in Flames* evolved considerably during its five years
of production, most notably "from a film devoted to white women to include black
women women and general women's issues" (Hardy 1991, 380). Part of this evolution
is reflected by Borden in her comment that "the ideas for the script were developed by
collaborating with the women in the film who, to various degrees, play themselves"
(Borden 1983, 12). This suggest that the film's heterogeneity was, to a degree, an
accident of its long gestation; however, the film should be, and is, judged on its final
incarnation. Furthermore, this evolution ultimately highlights the adaptability of
Borden's experimental method.

essential artistic and cultural outlets for those film-makers whose message is unheeded by the corporate commercial machine, the constraints placed on distribution by low budgets reduces the effectiveness of the independent product as a political force. Claudia Weill herself owes much of the success enjoyed by *Girlfriends* to the fact that Warner Brothers obtained world-wide distribution rights after the film's success at a number of film festivals. Even for those with a will to view, independent films like *Born in Flames* and *Liquid Sky* can be difficult to obtain, even on video, and so fail to achieve the exposure of large commercial science fiction films. The reduction in the effectiveness of low budget film media for independent political messages is compounded on science fiction projects by the necessary costs of production. The genre's need to use special effects to create a credible science fiction environment has placed it in the vanguard of effects production; however, the popularity of, and the resulting familiarity with, the genre has inflated the value associated with special effects to the point that this element has become a major criterion for the production and judgement of the films. The question is not only one of quality, but is increasingly one of presence: a film which has no special effects can be regarded as not being science fiction at all, or, at the least, as not being good science fiction. The success of *Star Wars*, essentially a superficial space-opera, rested largely upon its stunning visuals, whereas claims to be science fiction made by *Stalker* (Tarkovsky 1979), with its creative premise, are hampered by the film's limited use of, or need for, special effects. This fact fuels Barry Norman's observation that ". . . too often nowadays the FX *are* the film" (Norman 1992, 254). Hence the effects originally needed to enhance the realism of the science fiction film in order to counteract the incredulity of the spectator, like the polarisation of gender, have

become instrumental in the defining structures of the genre.

Whilst *Born in Flames* shows that speculative future-fiction can be produced without recourse to dazzling special effects, its appeal for a mass audience is attenuated by the relative normalcy of its presentation, augmented partly by the documentary style. This is not to question the validity of its message, for, as Lizzie Borden points out, "the film is not traditionally 'science fiction': There is no attempt to create a futuristic look because it is as much about today's world as it is about the future" (Borden 1983, 12). However, as Ally Acker asserts from a literary point of view, "he who has access to the major publishers gets to make history" (Acker 1991, *xix*); *Born in Flames*'s effective message is hampered in its attempt to recreate history by its budget. Despite this delineation of influence between independent and mainstream film, Michael Moorcock continues to maintain that "we must examine every detail about our present systems, down to fundamental assumptions about ourselves and our society. . . . Perhaps this can best be done through the visual arts" (Moorcock 1993, 37). It would seem that if cinema is to be one of those visual arts, then change would have to be realised through the re-application of the existing cinematic apparatus. The integration of the independent objective and the commercial product seems, then, to require a degree of compromise if the politics are to be delivered beyond those spectators already converted; as Laura Mulvey has owned with respect to her own independent film making: "I don't feel that *AMY!* {1979} breaks new ground that *Riddles [of the Sphinx* {1977}] did. But at the same time it's more accessible and consumable, and in that sense it could appeal to a wider group of people" (Laura Mulvey, quoted in Danino and Moy-Thomas 1982-83, 11). However,

the larger the commercial consideration, the less it might be expected to compromise. This turns the debate full circle, and returns it to the fact that cinema, as an ideological State apparatus is geared towards the production and distribution of the ideological State product with which, as Cartwright and Fonoroff point out, it is at odds:

> The nature of *experimental* film belies any attempt at a fixed method or procedure: the work needs to proceed in a manner that assumes no ultimate end, no goal for film outside of the real materials and conditions of film itself. *By proposing a feminist film practice, we are necessarily proposing an experimental method.* (Cartwright and Fonoroff 1994, 137)

The potential difference between the virtually non-existent independent science fiction product and the mainstream science fiction product is increasing as the latter becomes further entrenched in its traditional representations of patriarchal ideology. Ironically, part of the reason for this recent regression has been the prominence of feminist, deconstructionist, postmodernist debates, which, like the current text, have revealed so-called 'feminist' science fiction film images to be further representations of patriarchal ideology[19]. These enquiries have systematically exposed post-1970s developments as attempts by the genre to cover its appalling record in the representation of women; as such, these developments represent examples of what Erica Sheen describes as ". . . the lengths to which an industry will go to suggest that its conditions of employment are exactly what a woman needs anyway . . ." (Sheen

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[19] See Introduction, from page 13 above.

1991, 143).

Whilst retaining a token awareness of women, commercial science fiction film, in an attempt to regain some ground, and to ensure a return on investment into hugely expensive special effects, has fallen back onto past visions and moralities. Retreating into what might be described as 'tempered traditionalism' the science fiction film seems to be reflecting what Vivian Sobchack has regarded as a symptom of the genre's desperate attempt, in the 1980s, to cling to power:

> In a dramatic attempt to resolve patriarchal and familial crisis in relevant but conservative narratives, there seems no way for patriarchy to envision a satisfying future for itself symbolically. All it can do is deny the future. (Sobchack 1986, 31).

However, whilst this theory does appear to point towards an artificially enhanced ascendancy of the patriarchal film, the reality of recent box office receipts suggest that audiences are happy, or at least not unhappy, with the genre's current projection of male specificity: the world-wide gross box office takings for *Independence Day*, for example, were in excess of $570 million, against a production budget of $90 million; *Deep Impact* grossed over $41 million in its opening weekend in the US; and, unwearied by numerous blockbuster offerings, including the financial-record-breaking *Titanic* (Cameron 1998), audiences in America alone ensured that *Lost in Space* easily covered its own production costs. These figures underscore Annette Kuhn's observation that "film theory needs cinema: many, however, might

contend that cinema can get along quite well without film theory" (Kuhn 1994, 218). Clearly, commercial science fiction producers are continually given reason to believe in traditional representation.

This thesis has demonstrated that the relationship between the sprawling monolith that is commercial science fiction film, and any, or all, of the multiple statements which constitute feminism, has been a chequered one. At one extreme, the relationship has approached mutuality, reflecting the potential for the wider science fiction genre to embrace socio-political change. At another extreme, the relationship has been non-existent, reflecting science fiction film's reluctance to disinherit its clearly successful formula. The establishment of science fiction film as a particularly stable and supportive structure for patriarchal discursive control, with an ability to skew debate to its own ends, has underscored the futility of attempts to reflect feminism. However, dialectic discussions regarding acceptable female representation - for example through the question of biological determinism against cultural potential in the case of the mother-figure - have highlighted the futility of attempts to appease feminism. The fact remains that despite a number of inroads, notably those of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the socio-political force that is feminism has failed to make any lasting impact on the indulgent sensory medium that is commercial science fiction film.

As feminism continues to develop its multiple debates, inevitable further fragmentation increases the amount of ever more complicated socio-political argument. As science fiction film continues to develop its love affair with the visual image, inevitable simplification of its message decreases its tolerance for socio-

political argument. In consequence, then, this renewed divergence suggests that the opportunity to utilise science fiction film as a platform for feminist debate has been missed.

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FILMS CITED

It is impractical, and in some cases impossible, to view most of the films cited in this thesis in the format originally intended, namely at the cinema; therefore, it has been necessary to rely heavily upon video recordings. However, these can vary considerably from one recording to the next, not merely in quality, but in content also. Not only are films censored by law, but also by television broadcasters unwilling to offend subscribers and sponsors, or pressured by heavy broadcasting schedules and commercial breaks. Furthermore, video companies aiming to make money have little compunction about releasing various versions of the same film with added, or deleted, footage. Georgio Moroder's 1984 edition of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, with colour tinting and a popular music score was described as bringing together all available material from the film, including still photographs - a total of 83 minutes. However, this was superseded in 1992 by a "Director's version Newly restored", released under the *Eureka Video* label, totalling 139 minutes. Neither of these versions contains scene 103, indicated as pivotal to Lang's original by Enno Patalas in his 1986 *Camera Obscura* article. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel 1956) was given a prologue and an epilogue by its original film distributors in order to make it more 'optimistic'; both this, and Don Siegel's original conception have been released on video, as well as a colourised version distributed under the *4Front Video* label. Even recent, well-documented productions can leave the researcher with a daunting number of subjects for criticism: Paul Sammon has identified five versions of *Blade Runner* - cut for theatre, video cassette, and laserdisc release, and a further broadcast version (Sammon 1996, 394). These facts, added to the difficulties of reproducing cinematic formats and aspect ratios on the television screen, make it virtually impossible to ensure that what is reviewed represents the cinematic experience of any particular audience at any particular time. It is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to catalogue all versions of films cited and used. Therefore, where it has been deemed necessary to do so, particular cuts and versions of a film have been noted when used, especially in the case of 'director's cuts' of films like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Television cuts used have not generally been distinguished from commercially obtained cuts, unless apparent differences are germane to the thesis. For example, the 1996 BBC television broadcast of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* omitted a section which involved the female Lieutenant healing another crew member with her telepathic skills. Some films are not available to the public in Great Britain; in these cases it has been necessary to import, or to call upon the services of the British Film Institute. Details of these have been given where appropriate. Finally, those films remembered from notes taken at film-club screenings either in this country or, in the case of *A Clockwork Orange*, in the United States are assumed to be comparable to versions available as video recordings; details of these have been made available where possible.

Full acknowledgement must be made at this stage to a number of sources of reference which have proved invaluable:

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The films cited have been divided into 'Science fiction films', following the description outlined in the Introduction, and 'Non Science Fiction Films'. These lists follow the Chicago style as outlined in Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (6th edition), and, where clarification has been required, the *Chicago Manual of Style* (14th edition). Information has been catalogued in the following order and format:

Director(s). Date. *Film Title* (alternative/original film title). Producer(s). Screenwriter(s). Leading Female Player(s). Countr(y/ies) of Production: Production Compan(y/ies). (extra information).

Female directors, producers and screenwriters have been underlined. In addition to abbreviations in current general English usage, the following have been used:

alt.	- alternative/original title(s)
Pr.	- Producer(s)
Wr.	- Screenwriter(s)
Fp.	- Selected female player(s)
assoc.	- associate
exec.	- executive

Finally, for older films it is not always possible to locate all of the above production details. This is due partly to the fact that records have been lost, and partly due to the fact that personnel titles and roles have changed over one hundred years of cinema production; often the term 'producer' is synonymous with 'director', and writing was not recognised as a discrete art by the industry until 1912 (Francke 1994, 5). Where the director of a work is unknown, the listing records 'Unknown';

however, in the case of incomplete information for other areas of production, these categories have been omitted.

SCIENCE FICTION FILMS

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