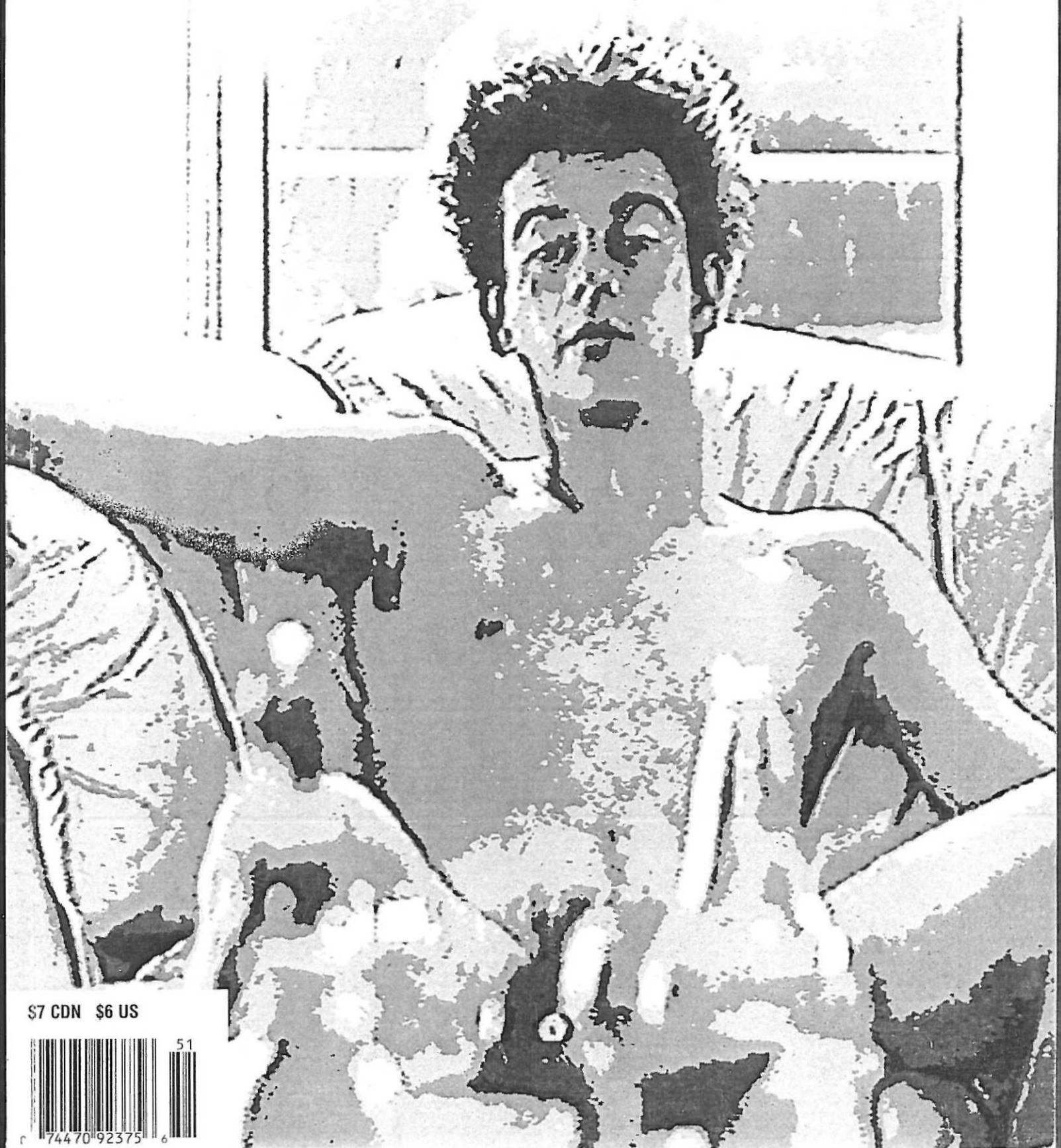


WHAT HAPPENED?

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TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL '99



W H A T H A P P E N E D ?

This is the first issue of CineAction to be published in the twenty-first century. Consequently, I felt that a fitting theme would be a reflection on the state of filmmaking at the end of the twentieth century. The title for the issue, "What Happened?", was inspired initially by the last shot of Larry Clark's 1995 film *Kids*, in which one of the lead characters, an amoral quasi-psychopathic skater-type called Casper, looks directly at the camera/audience and asks that precise question. As a summation to a powerful and disturbing film that documented the sexual and social behaviour of young adolescents in New York city, the question "What Happened?" brings the audience directly into contact with the filmic characters, implicating them (as both judges and observers) in the events that they had been watching for the past 90 minutes, serving as a kind of "wake-up call" to parents, other adults and to adolescents themselves.

My intention for this issue of CineAction was to embark on a similar quest, perhaps not so much as a wake-up call but in a more mellow vein, to consider the direction that the cinema had taken over the past decade or so with regards to an assessment of the major trends that have come to dominate the industry, and a side glance at the state of national cinemas in the wake of the American juggernaut. Only one of the papers in this issue deals with a single film: David Anshen's Marxist-inflected piece on class analysis in *The Titanic*, perhaps the most significant film in the last decade with regards to the intermingling of genres—special effects disaster film with a coming-of-age woman's film — and its unprecedented box office popularity despite critical rejection. Jamie Clarke's paper, "Space invaders" looks at the inherent contradictions within a number of recent science fiction films such as *The Matrix* which purport to be about auto-emancipation but which he argues are inextricably caught up and embedded within the matrix of speculative capitalism. Diane Weiner looks at some trends in certain recent science fiction films that she



Kids

calls "invasion narratives", in which women are perceived as secondary to their male counterparts, no matter the purported intention of equality. Geoff King examines the late twentieth century phenomenon of the convergence of films and theme-parks, where rides are based on films, and actual films are constructed as if they were rides. Graeme Harper takes a different path altogether and analyses the impact of what he calls the "film avid" generation on filmmaking today. The state of film programming is the subject of Stephen Brophy's interview with George Mansour, a Boston area programmer for the last 40 years. And I am pleased to include 2 papers which survey national cinemas: David Gerstner and Sarah Greenlees' extensive research into the history of filmmaking in New Zealand; and Carole Zucker and Kristian Moen's comprehensive analysis of recent Irish films screened at the 1999 Montreal Film Festival.

As is CineAction's custom, this being the first issue following the 1999 Toronto International Film festival, there is a section on reviews of films screened as well as an interview with one of the directors present, Bruno Dumont.

I would like to add a note of thanks to my colleague Flemming Kress whose expertise in the more obscure practices of Internet file translation prevented a number of meltdowns on my part.

Susan Morrison

Mars Attacks, 1996



Representing Pre-Millennial T@rasn®ms

Hollywood's Gendered Invasion Narratives

by Diane R. Wiener

As we approach our own millennium, the epidemics of hysterical disorders, imaginary illnesses, and hypnotically induced pseudomemories that have flooded the media seem to be reaching a high-water mark. These hystories are merging with the more generalized paranoid, religious revivals, and conspiracy theories that have always characterized American life, and the apocalyptic anxieties that always accompany the end of a century. Elaine Showalter¹

I was dreamin' when I wrote this Forgive me if it goes astray But when I woke up this mornin' Coulda sworn it was judgment day The sky was all purple, there were people runnin' everywhere Tryin' 2 run from the destruction, U know I didn't even care. 'Cuz they say two thousand zero zero party over, Oops, out of time So tonight I'm gonna party like it's 1999. Prince, "1999"²

The Artist Formerly Known as Prince released his album *1999* via Warner Bros. Records in 1982. Whether or not he anticipated in 1982 what would be the album's refund popularity during 1999, he and Warner Bros. have benefitted (and during 2000 will probably continue to benefit) from the title song's numerous re-mixes, radio playback and club usage. The song effectively and repeatedly speaks about and to what is frequently referred

¹ Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 5-6.

² Prince, "1999," *1999* (Warner Bros. and Controversy Music, 1982).

to as a postmodern age. Some of the song's poignant lines include:

"War is all around us, my mind says prepare 2 fight
So if I gotta die I'm gonna listen 2 my body tonight"

"everybody's got a bomb,
we could all die any day
But before I'll let that happen,
I'll dance my life away,"

"Mommy—why does everybody have a bomb?"³

The Artist, his "real" name an un-name, his alternate name a multi-gendered symbol, is a paradigm for the current postmodern, post-structuralist contention that identity is a performance always under construction. Some say we must "party" in these uncertain times, while others busy themselves, perhaps anguished and worried about the non-cohesive underpinnings of this *fin de siècle*.

I observe a trend in recent Hollywood-produced science fiction films, that comments upon North Americans' supposed pre-millennial tensions. While we continue to have the opportunity to gaze upon demonized and/or exoticized alien life forms, since 1995 a spate of science fiction films have depicted allegedly empowered, human female protagonists who, side by side with their male counterparts, fight to protect the United States and/or the world from intra- and extraterrestrial alien intrusion. I term these films Hollywood's invasion narratives, a genre that includes three thematic types: viral infection (e.g. *12 Monkeys* [1995], *Outbreak* [1995]), alien takeover and relationships (e.g. *Mars Attacks!* [1996], *Contact* [1997]) and killer asteroids, comets or meteors (e.g. *Deep Impact* [1998], *Armageddon* [1998]).⁴

Deep Impact depicts late twentieth century worries about a comet whose path is destined to collide with the Earth. Shelters are erected, emergency protocols put in place, and these "secrets" are successfully kept from the American people until a young, troublemaking female news reporter gets her first scoop. The plotline, led by racialized and gendered family dramas, does not maintain primary focus upon the reporter, Jenny Lerner/Teá Leoni, but instead becomes obsessed with male power and media subplots beyond Lerner's control.

Armageddon is concerned with "an asteroid the size of Texas" which, like *Deep Impact's* comet, is headed straight for Earth. Harry S. Stamper/Bruce Willis leads "the world's best deep core drilling team...sent to nuke the rock from the inside."⁵ His mouthy daughter Grace/Liv Tyler metaphorically holds the American nation's hands with gendered finesse as it watches ongoing, televised images of Daddy and the crew trying to save the world (at the expense of many lost lives, including Dad Stamper's).

Outbreak begins with genius scholar and scientist Robby Keough/Rene Russo's impressive initiation of methods and mechanisms to "contain an epidemic of a deadly airborne virus."⁶ Soon after the story unfolds, ex-husband and fellow scientist Sam Daniels/Dustin Hoffman, aided by General Billy Ford/Morgan Freeman and a crew of military fighters and EPA/FDA types, must step in to help the little lady out of a jam, and, of course, save the planet.

Mars Attacks!, half macabre comedy, half drama, is director Tim Burton's send-up of a late twentieth century Martian invasion. While the large ensemble cast has numerous female protagonists (including the wickedly funny First Lady, Marsha Dale/Glenn Close), it is the male military and governmental leaders who must teach the aliens a lesson.

Contact is the only film on my list that has a continuously empowered female protagonist (Dr. Ellie Arroway/Jodie Foster). This film addresses relationships with aliens more so than

takeover by aliens. However, the film's subtexts comment upon a fear of alien invasion. One film summary states: "After years of searching, [Arroway] finds conclusive radio proof of intelligent aliens who send plans for a mysterious machine" to the Earth.⁷ Arroway eventually grabs the opportunity to be the newly-built machine's first pilot, chosen by the scientific community's male leadership.

While inside the machine, Arroway moves through an alternative space-time continuum and meets an alien, who is cloaked as a hologram-like representation of her long-deceased, beloved father (whose shocking demise, according to the plot, encouraged her to spend her life searching for extra-terrestrial intelligence). Her return to American consensual reality is greeted with the male gaze's scientific and spiritual skepticism, and she simultaneously must face and cope with her own self-doubts about what she saw, experienced and still believes.

The catch here is that while her power is questioned yet prevails, her sanity is likewise questioned and does not necessarily prevail, depending upon one's critical interpretation. She can have her power, but at what cost? If she is crazy, does she indeed keep any power at all?

12 Monkeys stars James Cole/Bruce Willis, a time traveler-turned-mental-patient, his psychiatrist Kathryn Raily/Madeleine Stowe, and Jeffrey Goines/Brad Pitt, another mental patient whose life as an animals rights activist defies his father's corporate science practices. Eventually, the nutty son becomes the leader of an underground band, the 12 Monkeys, anarchists who find the fatal virus (manufactured for biological warfare by Goines' father's company) that destroys humanity in 1997.

The underground contraband name, 12 Monkeys, while it calls forth anti-experimentation humanitarianism, also hearkens back to images of the John T. Scopes monkey trial, and the audacity of believing in evolution, let alone animal rights. Goines' craziness and eventual leadership of the 12 Monkeys summons historical linkages between madness, eugenics and the fear of human devolution. His lack of stereotypical male control, accompanied by his commitment to animal rights and environmentalism rather than warfare, might be described by his patriarchal father as "monkey business." In between and in contrast to Stowe and Willis' roles, Pitt's role is a liminal one, linked to the figure of the dangerously toxic while protective female, central to my discussion.

Cole, a penal colony member in post-apocalyptic 2035, is sent back in time to 1996 in an alternative-to-incarceration guinea pig role, to stop the virus from reaching its lethal proportions. Initially, Cole is accidentally sent back to 1990, when he meets his lovely and intelligent psychiatrist. In 1990, he is believed to be crazy because he describes events which have yet to transpire, events too far-fetched to be acceptable in the late twentieth century.

Eventually, Dr. Raily believes Cole is both special and truthful, when he disappears out of four-point restraints, and reappears six years later to show her the secrets of the band of 12 Monkeys. Initially his healer and savior, she becomes his sidekick and helps him (unsuccessfully) try to save the world.

The "12" in 12 Monkeys can be interpreted as a metonym for the 12 apostles, the name itself thereby setting up a postmodern, chaotic conflict between co-existent creationism/religion and evolutionism/science. The posters of the 12 Monkeys, shown by Cole to his psychiatrist as proof that he is not crazy, are red and spiralled. The film begins with a swirling, nauseous pastiche of these poster images, virally uncontrollable in their blood-colored, semiotically reproducing frenzy.

While Matthew Ruben capably uses *12 Monkeys* to explore 1990s brand commodity fetishism, race, poverty and global capitalism's exploitation of postmodern circumstances to forward its own ends,⁸ I use *12 Monkeys* as a case study or template⁹ to examine what I see as a late twentieth century Hollywood trend of new

wave misogyny, full to the brim with impersonations of counter-hegemony and empowerment while it differently and more insidiously reinscribes the sexist propaganda that is unsurprisingly "Hollywood." The other five films are referenced to denote the trend to which I am referring.

These films were released for public consumption between 1995 and 1998, and their contemporary narratives/storylines speak to and accentuate the supposedly prevalent popular anxiety related to the coming millennial change. This anxiety, if voiced, might wearily or excitedly ask: what will become of us? will we all perish? will we be transformed? will the world be an entirely new place?

On the surface, the important roles women maintain within these films suggest their valuation within a changing hegemonic sensibility: these women with apparently strong voices are portrayed as having political, economic and cultural capital. However, regardless of these initially "politically correct" depictions, in each case it is the male protagonist(s) who inevitably must save the day, and women remain having less than primary status.

More than being mere muses, these initially empowered women are demoted and (sometimes) redeemed when elevated to buddy or sidekick status, a location formerly reserved for the lucky Tonto, Sancho Panza, Barney Fife and their ilk. Unlike 1990s female buddy movies (initially popularized by the success of *Thehna and Louise* [1991]), here the girls get to play right along with the boys instead of being utterly ghettoized. I will now briefly discuss the presence of female monsters and heroes in recent science fiction films in order to contextualize ways for thinking about gender dynamics within the invasion narrative genre.

Late twentieth century feminist scholarship gives sustained

critical attention to the North American mainstream film industry's ongoing tendency to create female monsters and grotesqueries. Within arguments made by Barbara Creed, Marina Warner and others, this ancient fear of the Harpy or Siren, manifested through Godzilla and company's legacy, is now echoed with the multimedia finesse and computerized refinements found in *Jurassic Park* (1993), its sequel *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (1997), the *Alien* tetralogy¹⁰ and the *Species* (1995) phenomenon (soon to become a series—*Species II* was released in 1997).

Discussing Crichton's book and its film adaptation, Warner begins her analysis of *Jurassic Park* as follows:

Is the terror the velociraptors inspire in any way connected to their femaleness? It isn't emphasized as such—though the book calls the park a matriarchy. Yet popular films of this kind often refract popular concerns in metaphorical terms, and then reinforce them.¹¹ *Jurassic Park, The Lost World: Jurassic*

3 Ibid.

4 I am grateful to R. Luna Fernandez for talking with me about this (rend, and encouraging me to critically discuss it in writing. Thanks also to Barbara Babcock and Ronit Fainman-Frenkel for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay, and to Susan White for her mentorship as a feminist film scholar.

5 "Armageddon" The Internet Movie Database Ltd., 1999, n. pag.

6 "Outbreak" The Internet Movie Database Ltd., 1999, n. pag.

7 "Contact" The Internet Movie Database Ltd., 1999, n. pag.

8 Matthew Ruben "12 Monkeys and the Failure of Everything: For a New Method" *Rethinking Marxism* 10 (1998), 106-123.

9 Thanks to Judd E. Ruggill for helping me develop this "template" strategy and for sharing his media expertise with me.

10 The tetralogy's chronology is: *Alien* (1979), *Aliens* (1986), *Alien 3* (1992), and *Alien: Resurrection* (1997).

11 Marina Warner, "Monstrous Mothers: Women Over the Top." *Six Myths of Our Time: Little Angels, Little Monsters, Beautiful Beasts and More* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 5.

Park, the *Alien* tetralogy and *Species/Species II* point to Hollywood's apparent obsession with depicting anxiety-rendering, uncontrollable female fecundity, as translated and sieved through the sci-fi adventure film genre's xenophobia, xenophilia, and attendant misogynies and racisms.

Concluding her discussion of *Alien's* final scenes, Barbara Creed remarks,

We can see [the horror film's] ideological project as an attempt to shore up the symbolic order by constructing the feminine as an imaginary 'other' which must be repressed and controlled in order to secure and protect social order. Thus, the horror film stages and re-stages a constant repudiation of the maternal figure.¹²

In 1993, Creed published a book on her Kristevan thesis of the abject monstrous-feminine, as initially discussed in the 1986 *Screen* essay cited above.¹³ *Alien*, *Aliens* and *Alien 3* are all addressed in this volume. Due to the book's historicity, Creed does not interpret the tetralogy's fourth artifact, *Alien: Resurrection*. However, she does expand her 1986 analysis by addressing some of Ellen Ripley/Sigourney Weaver's transformations from the first to the third film.

While Creed's psychoanalytic approach privileges Ripley's maternal roles and uses them to suggest the ways conflicting forms of maternalization may lead to female personal destruction in the guise of some allegedly greater good, I see Ripley as less delimited by maternal roles than does Creed. Ripley clearly possesses and exerts complex maternal abilities, and she is also appreciated, envied and decried for powers that may be viewed as maternal but are not always contingent upon maternity, including: intelligence, strategic skill, brute strength, and leadership. Certainly, it is possible that some fellow characters perceive her to be dangerous partly because they fear or are threatened by a

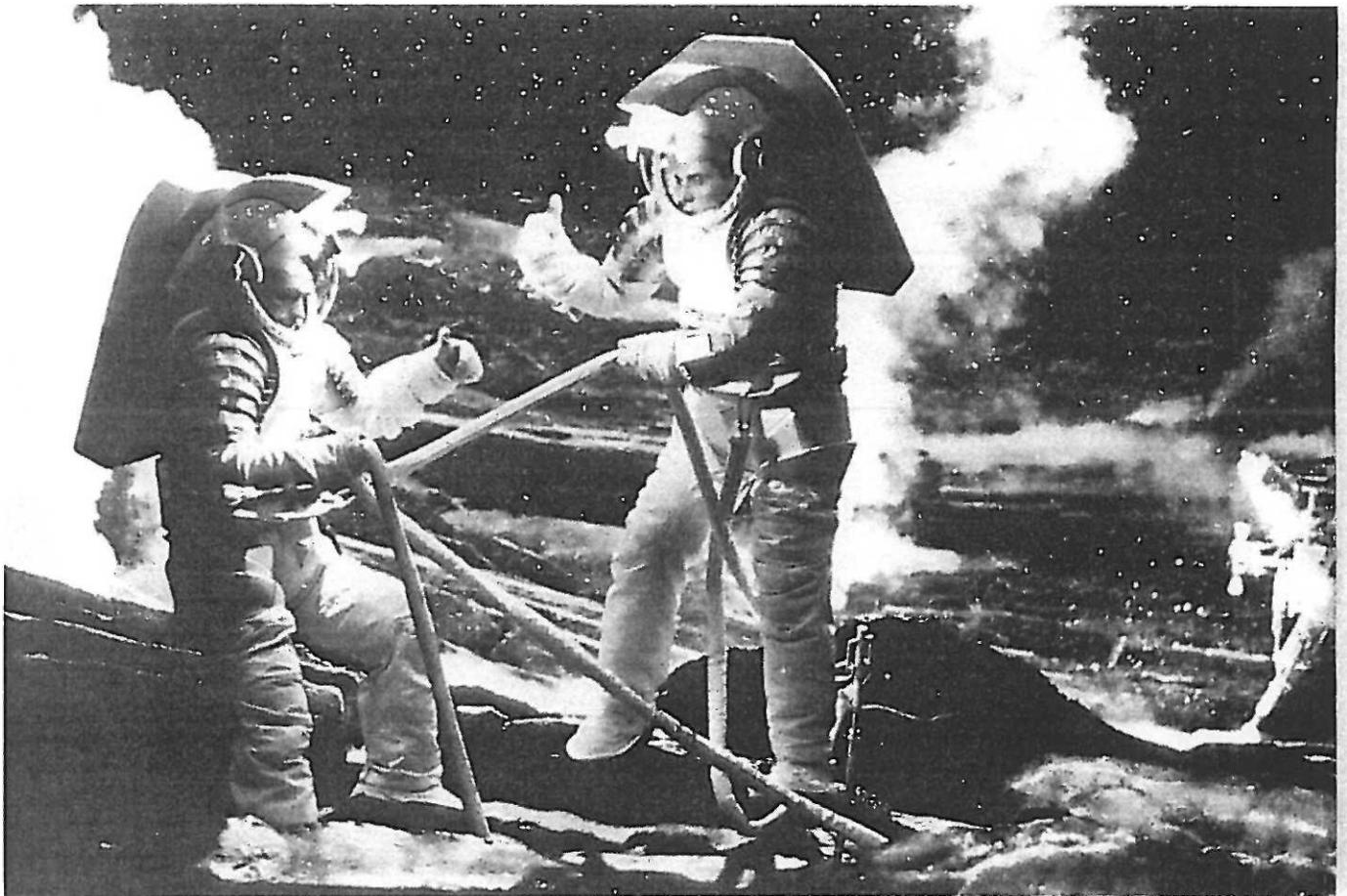
tough and reproductively capable woman. However, I believe it is Ripley's complex femaleness more so than her complex motherliness that elicits potent feelings among her peer characters, and among the film's consumers.

Over the course of the tetralogy, Ripley is depicted as decreasingly stereotypically feminine. While she is a fierce, even viciously protective mother in *Aliens*, she has many roles other than "the fecund mother-as-abys" highlighted by Creed as "central to *Alien*."¹⁴ The reasons Ripley becomes and succeeds as a respected and often violent leader in *Alien 3* are more than merely maternal. In *Alien: Resurrection*, Ripley has been cloned and is therefore reborn after the self-imposed death she sought to rid her body of the alien that invaded her. Ripley, who can be seen in this film as a kind of post-woman, is more homophilic with than mothering toward a younger, female cyborg crew member, played by Winona Ryder.

The *Alien* series, both post-millennial and post-apocalyptic, initially reinforces and later challenges or even disrupts horror/sci-fi's depictions of a monstrous-feminine who is and must remain a "controlled" entity, an "imaginary 'other'." Within my discussion, an important key is the post-twentieth century "reality" within which the *Alien* tetralogy's images unfold, a fantasy locus perhaps less immediately threatening than our own time. Creed's assertions are helpful for imagining how femaleness is comparatively "constructed" within science fiction's pre-millennial invasion narratives. She cogently remarks, "*Alien 3* is set in the past which is also the future; this is the end of the world, the death of civilization, the Apocalypse heralded by the arrival of the alien/woman."¹⁵

Apparently, it is too dangerous to have a truly progressive and strong female protagonist represented within a pre-millennial period. Futuristic depictions that index the pre-millennial past, even the kind of "past which is also the future," provoke images of terrifying women. Perhaps the subtextual message viewers are to glean is that the thing to be feared is not the virus or the meteor or the

Deep Impact, 1998



alien, but, like Godzilla and her *Jurassic Park* contemporaries, the (reproductive) female herself. Potentially, the fear of viral contagion and alien or meteor invasion is also the fear and/or fetishization of female intrusion into or infection of male spaces.

The North American New Age industry has invested and earned capital from what could be called a niche-market of the supposedly pre-millennially tense and anxious, and those curious about "them." Pilgrimages to Quartzite, attendance at localized workshops, and the consumption of pop psychology books, bestsellers and films all point to intra- and extra-New Age industry's capitalist profitability spaces. What Elaine Showalter describes as "hystories" are beyond pandemic in their imagined and literal proportions:

Hysteria not only survives in the 1990s, it is more contagious than in the past. Infectious diseases spread by ecological change, modern technology, urbanization, jet travel, and human interaction. Infectious epidemics of hysteria spread by stories circulated through self-help books, articles in newspapers and magazines, TV talk shows and series, films, the Internet, and even literary criticism. The cultural narratives of hysteria, which I call hystories, multiply rapidly and uncontrollably in the era of mass media, telecommunications, and e-mail.¹⁶

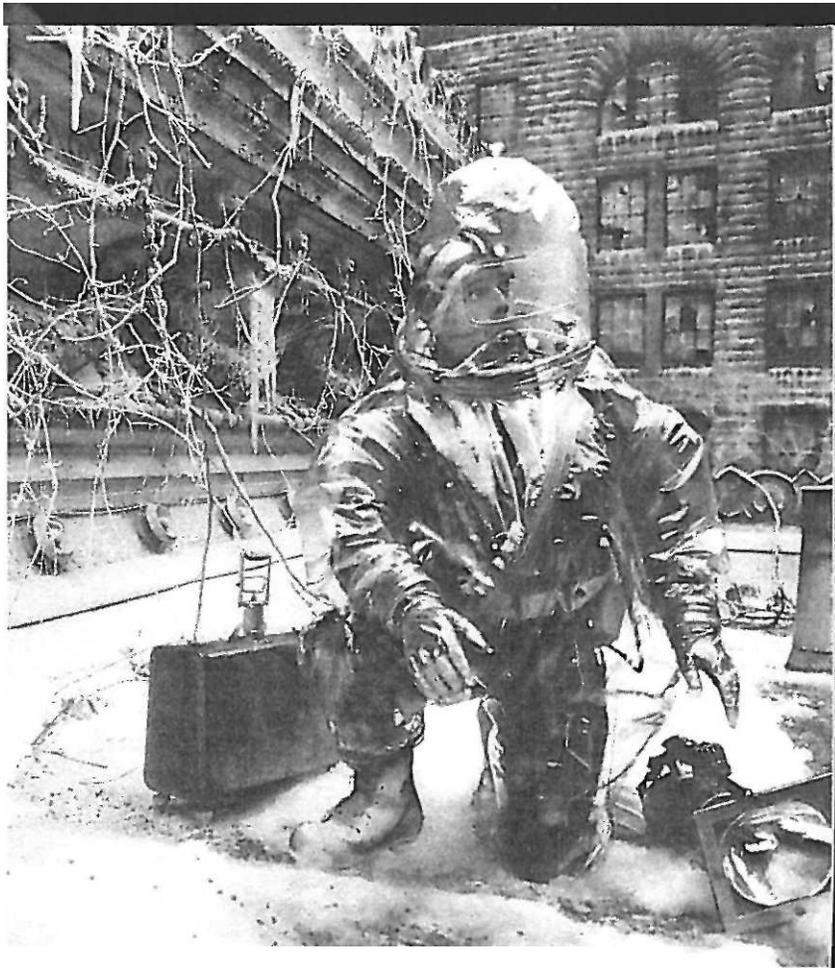
I interpret the three types of invasion stories as examples of the "cultural narratives" understood by Showalter. While Hollywood in the late 1990s spends and amasses blockbuster dollars by hearkening back to Elizabethan and Victorian Europe, a large part of its imagination and attention is also devoted to and frolics among the invaded and invading. Interestingly, Showalter describes the pathways of contagion and infection as "rapidly and uncontrollably" multiplying, a remark that recalls images of mass culture as the to-be-feared, endlessly reproducing, fecund woman.

Mass culture long ago became a new form of "nature," and the information age, as novels like *White Noise*¹⁷ tell us, has not only furthered this nature's inability to be self-controlled, but our inability to "master" it or ourselves.¹⁸ Donna Haraway points out that "Natural history can be—and has sometimes been—a means for millennial expectation and disorderly action."¹⁹ If the information age and mass culture are our current understanding of "nature," it seems, following Showalter, that a consequence of this is a new "natural hystory," of which *12 Monkeys* is a part. Perhaps "natural hystory" produces "millennial expectation and disorderly action" as much as the other way around?

In the concluding sentiments of "Mass Culture as Woman," Huyssen articulates how the decline in the tendency to gender mass culture "as feminine and inferior" accompanies "the decline of modernism itself."²⁰ He states,

The universalizing ascription of femininity to mass culture always depended on the very real exclusion of women from high culture and its institutions. Such exclusions are, hopefully forever, a thing of the past. Thus, the old rhetoric has lost its persuasive power because the realities have changed.²¹

Unfortunately, despite his hopeful wishes, while often-seen-as-feminine mass culture has in some ways incorporated female voices, and the lives and utterances allegedly spoken by these, voices, women are differently absented or excluded than had previously been the case from creative representations of "reali-



12 Monkeys, 1995

ties [that] have changed." These creative representations include late twentieth century Hollywood invasion narratives.

At face-value, movies like *12 Monkeys* and its sisters seem to promote images of female strength, class privilege and monetary liberation. The female protagonist bandwagon reads as follows: *12 Monkeys*' psychiatrist, *Outbreak*'s expert scientist, *Mars Attacks*'s national leader, *Contact*'s expert scientist, *Deep Impact*'s powerhouse reporter, and (last, and I think, least impressive) *Armageddon*'s tough girl. What do these female roles say about our obsessive, simulacra-filled times? Discussing terrorism, transvestitism and cancer in the light of postmodernism, Baudrillard points out,

All these forms are viral -fascinating, indiscriminate and their virulence is reinforced by their images, for the modern media have a viral force of their own, and their virulence is contagious. Ours is a culture in which bodies and minds are irradiated by signals and images; little wonder, then, that for all its

12 Barbara Creed "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection" *Screen* 27 (1986), 70.

13 Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

14 *Ibid.*, 25.

15 *Ibid.*, 52.

16 Showalter, 5.

17 Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

18 George Henderson uses *White Noise* to articulate the theme of "second nature" in an undergraduate cultural studies course for which I had the pleasure of being a Teaching Associate.

19 Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936" *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 44.

20 Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other" *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*. Ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 205.

21 *Ibid.*, 205-206.

marvels this culture also produces the most murderous viruses.²²

The female characters mentioned live in, and I would say embody, these "viral" forms. While they seem to have power and embrace leadership roles, it is the male characters who must intervene and take over to "denature" each invasion narrative's sickness. In *12 Monkeys*, this invading mechanism is not only symbolically "viral," it is a virus. It contains within its own make-up the ability to reproduce at proportions that threaten to destroy humankind itself. This virus can be read as a female, racialized image, a figure of feared mass culture in our information age, "fascinating" while toxic, unhygienic, intrusive and "indiscriminate." According to Huyssen, the "realities have changed," but perhaps they have merely shifted gears, and place blame for disease among the usual suspects.

Discussing the power of representations and representation making in her essay "The Ideological Impediment: Epistemology, Feminism and Film Theory," feminist film theorist Jennifer Hammett remarks:

What we need in order to challenge patriarchy is not an alternative epistemic relation to the real. To the extent that the struggle is over ideas—that is, over representations—what is needed is not a feminist position *vis-a-vis* representation, but feminist representations.²³

Hammett concludes her discussion wondering whether or not "feminist film critics need feminist film theory."²⁴ It is now well known that film viewers, critics and society's other members are inescapably influenced by ideology's unrelenting grasp, and Hammett tells her reader there is "nothing categorical we can say about representations/beliefs."²⁵ She cautions against feminist film theorists' arguing about the fact of representation making instead of inventing our own representations. Hammett believes that feminist theorists ought to be "arguing over the validity of particular beliefs" rather than the validity of some beliefs' representations.²⁶

Among the "particular beliefs" validated by Hollywood's invasion narratives, chaos, madness, potential death, fecundity and femaleness are inextricably linked. While symbolic women may act as helpful catalysts, their main roles lie behind and beside their good symbolic male hero counterparts. Craig Owens tells us, "Film composes narratives out of a succession of concrete images, which makes it particularly suited to allegory's essential pictogrammatism."²⁷ Addressing director Terry Gilliam's talent, one *12 Monkeys* reviewer remarks, "Gilliam uses skewed camera angles and histrionic performances to conjure a modern allegory for our disease-and paranoia-ridden culture."²⁸ A viewer's ability to accept these narratives' "particular" and "conjured" beliefs hinges upon postmodern allegorical contextualizations of female, unable-to-be-"pure" power turned into dependent, "histrionic" disempowerment. Discussing postmodernism, Owens remarks:

Photography and film, based as they are on single-point perspective, are transparent mediums; their derivation from the Classical system of representation is obvious, yet remains to be investigated critically. Artists who deal with such images work to expose them as instruments of power. Not only do they investigate the ideological messages encoded therein, but, more importantly, the strategies and tactics whereby such images secure their authoritative status in our culture.²⁹

I join feminist critics, artful in their own right, to continue to "investigate" the invasion film genre's "encoded messages," and those "strategies and tactics whereby [its] images secure their authoritative status." Such investigations are aided by looking

toward Mary Douglas' work in symbolic anthropology and its relevance for discussing gendered representations of impurity and disease.

In comments immediately applicable to *12 Monkeys'* viruses and viral symbolism, Baudrillard points to postmodernism's key symbols, deep structures and root metaphors without overtly referencing Douglas when he says,

The high degree to which AIDS, terrorism, crack cocaine or computer viruses mobilize the popular imagination should tell us that they are more than anecdotal occurrences in an irrational world. The fact is that they contain within them the whole logic of our system: these events are merely the spectacular expression of that system. They all hew to the same agenda of virulence and radiation, an agenda whose very power over the imagination is of a viral character. An outbreak of AIDS, even a statistically insignificant one, forces us to view the whole spectrum of disease in the light of the immunodeficiency thesis³⁰

As Douglas famously remarked,

If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt, there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight back into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity.³¹

Reading Baudrillard's comments in the context of Douglas's theoretical stance, it follows that *12 Monkeys* not only allegorically comments upon what Lyotard called the "postmodern condition,"³² but exports numerous messages about late twentieth century North America's associations of femaleness with dirt, disorder, chaos, disease in general and viruses in particular, intrusion and an absence of "pure," orderly, systematized male power. Therefore, despite alleged improvements in Hollywood's female characterizations, it is no wonder (and, following Owens, it can be viewed as "transparent") that maleness must consistently step forward to cleanse, purify and save each female-dirty day.

22 Jean Baudrillard, "Superconductive Events" *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. Trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1993), 36-37.

23 Jennifer Hammett, "The Ideological Impediment: Epistemology, Feminism, and Film Theory" *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Ed. Richard Allen and Murray Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 257.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 256.

26 Ibid.

27 Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*. Ed. Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman and Jane Weinstock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 80.

28 John Fried, Rev. of *12 Monkeys*. *Cineaste* 22 (1996), 49.

29 Owens, 111.

30 Jean Baudrillard, "Prophylaxis and Virulence" *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. Trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1993), 67.

31 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. (London: Routledge, 1991), 36.

32 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

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