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Through the Dark Mirror: UFOs as a Postmodern Myth?

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All of us gaze into that "dark glass" in which the dark myth takes shape, adumbrating the invisible truth. In this glass the eyes of the spirit glimpse an image which we call the self, fully conscious of the fact that it is an anthropomorphic image which we have merely named but not explained. By "self" we mean psychic wholeness, but what realities underlie this concept we do not know... in religious experience man comes face to face with a psychically overwhelming Other.

- Carl Jung, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth* (104, 39)

Je ne suis pas, là où je suis le jouet de ma pensée; je pense à ce que je suis, là où je ne pense pas penser. ["I am not, there where I am the plaything of my thought; I think about what I am, there where I do not think that I am thinking."]

- Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self* (183)

Ubi Cogito, ibi sum. ("Where I think, there I am.")

- Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self* (182)

You know, old boy, what with your signifieds and our archetypes, we're really first cousins.

- Roland Cahen (student of Jung), to Lacan (Roudinesco, 264)

A vast circular presence, monumental yet weightless, darkly gleaming, metallic, glides suddenly into place above the heads of enraptured onlookers: this is more than they, or anyone, had expected; there is unfathomable power here. Roy Neary (Richard Dreyfuss) looks upward at the flying Mount of Olives that validates his personal quest: one that has led him out of the suburbs and into the desert, for a meeting with the sky. Focus on the cockpit of a jetliner on a night flight over upstate New York, pilots peering through the clouds, passengers just unbuckling their seatbelts after takeoff. Suddenly, an exclamation and desperate transmission from the cockpit, as the voice recorder would later reveal: "What the hell is this? Mayday, mayday - craft on intercept pattern..." Turbulence and incandescence flood the cabin's windows, as the emergency exit door is wrenched loose. As Fox Mulder and Dana Scully will later surmise, one of the passengers, Max Fenig, was to be abducted, once again, this time via a tractor beam right through the jet's popped exit door and into an alien craft. The aliens, however, are interrupted in their attempt by the Strategic Air Command, who have scrambled a jet fighter to intercept the alien craft and shoot it down. If the airliner gets in the way, too bad. Orders from the CIA? As in the crash of TWA Flight 800, the investigation of the resulting air disaster is surrounded by

unanswered questions, intrigue, and possible cover up. Nearby on Lake Sacandaga, Mulder dons scuba gear for a night dive; he discovers an alien craft sunk beneath a lake in the vicinity of the crash site. Absorbed in inspection of alien bodies amidst the wreckage, he is interrupted by an entrancing white light from above. A few scenes later, Mulder's watch stops during a flight to Washington, a sign that an alien craft is approaching. The jet is abruptly intercepted by the flood of white light (See Carter, X-Files, "Tempus Fugit," 3/16/97 and "Max," 3/23/97).

Whether we are looking at "Close Encounters" or "The X-Files", or "Contact" or "Independence Day", to name just a few of the genre of films since Orson Wells' famous radio broadcast dramatizing, for a stunned public, the H.G. Wells story "War of The Worlds," we are confronted with what is apparently a new, late-modern kind of encounter: the meeting with alien intelligence. What is perhaps most interesting about this encounter is, as Carl Jung noted, that it shows the signs of traditional religion, revitalized by the shock of high technology. In our view, however, amplifying and transforming what Jung has to say in terms of French neopsychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, these close encounters are sketching the contours of a postmodern religion. Jung was a late modernist visionary insofar as he in part rejected the mechanistic world picture that modernism entailed, while still retaining some of its features. So he quips regarding the visions of radiance experienced by those like Mulder, as he sees the "miracle" of a UFO, or like Moses as he asks, "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah, 33:14):

Nowadays people who have an experience of this kind are more likely to go running to the doctor or psychiatrist than to the theologian... They took them for symptoms of mental illness, possibly heralding insanity, whereas in reality they were 'dreams sent by God,' real and genuine religious experiences that collided with a mind unprepared, ignorant, and profoundly prejudiced...anything out of the ordinary can only be pathological, for that abstraction, the 'statistical average,' counts as the ultimate truth... (Flying Saucers, 32).

This intellectual one-sidedness that leads us to view things only from one perspective has its consequences, argues Jung: "In psychology it inevitably leads to explanations in terms of one particular bias," yielding explanations that "turn the psychic apparatus into a machine" (41). Jung's "dreams sent by god," of course, come from his version of the Freudian "unconscious," from which also arise, of course, those new visions of disks in the sky called UFOs.

Jung has the savvy to realize that his unconscious and the archetypes that inhabit it need not be a separate metaphysical reality, but rather ways of understanding that our conscious knowledge is incomplete:

Transcendence in this sense is not equivalent to a metaphysical postulate or hypostasis; it claims to be no more than a borderline concept, to quote Kant, that there is something beyond the borderline, beyond the frontiers of knowledge, is shown by the archetypes...(Jung, Flying Saucers, 104-105)

It is the "psychic apparatus" of these archetypes which Jung employs as an explanation for the phenomena of UFO sightings. Whether the perceived aliens are "real" or not is a separate question for Jung. What is important, regardless of their ontological status, is that they must be perceived and understood in terms of human symbolic systems; and it is these systems which yield the rich content of visions in the dark mirror.

The structures of symbolic systems as they generate human experience are also on the mind of Lacan, and indeed, as Cahen's comment quoted at the outset suggests, the analysis of these structures in terms of the signifiers and signifieds of Saussure's linguistics yields a new frame within which to set the looking glass of Freudian psychology: a Lacanian Mirror more reminiscent of Lewis Carroll than of Freud. In any case, this is a glass within which we might reflect upon the deities of an emerging postmodern religious sensibility.

The content of alien experience becomes intelligible from Jung's perspective when we come to understand the key to alien visions: they are unintelligible and uncontrollable within the context of modern power systems of government, business and military. They don't even fit into the modern Newtonian system of knowledge, symbolized by the clock. They are, in Jung's terms, a hybrid between the "collective unconscious" of religious sensibility, suppressed by the *cogito* of modern consciousness, and late modern technologies. But if Jung's perspective is supplemented by that of Lacan and his student Anthony Wilden, the psychoanalysis that emerges reveals a postmodern-ecological unconscious. The primary awareness illuminated from this perspective is well articulated by Tyler in Douglas Coupland's *Shampoo Planet*: "Wake up - the world is alive" (299). Here personal identity merges with the imago or archetype revealing that, although our individual persona may seem private, it is generated by a subjective functional complex based on collective images.

Jung and Lacan at the Movies

"The starry vault of heaven is in truth the open book of cosmic projection, in which are reflected the mythologems, i.e., the archetypes" Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche" (Basic Writings, 67).

For both Jung and Lacan, the imago is a key to the unconscious. For Lacan the imago functions as the spectral self - the self-image - that is interiorized by the child during the Mirror Stage. This stage he understands in terms of three orders of psychological production: the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. The conjoining of the Imaginary, in which the imago is inscribed as an image, with the Symbolic, the syntax of signs into which the image is fit, generates the human persona out of the Real: the prepredicative domain of experience before the Mirror Stage, in which the child has not yet formed a separate identity from its mother and cannot distinguish her/himself from her. Imagine a child and her mother looking into a mirror. At a certain stage the child is able to point to the image of herself and say - "There, that's me" - distinguishing her image from her mother's. That act of distinction is made possible by the development of language, which creates a syntax of subject and predicate, character and characteristics, as well as a logic

of classification in terms of binary oppositions: P and not-P. The classification of the image as the distinguishing mark of self, the rest of its qualities (hair, eyes, secondary sexual characteristics, clothing, etc.) being aspects of the self-image, creates the persona that we refer to with the personal pronoun: I, me, je, moi, Ich, mich. This self-image becomes conjoined, in Saussure's terms, as a signifier (image) with a signified (self-concept), in a self-referential loop that generates the personality. The "me" in turn is typically made into a signifier for a more abstract identity, encoded in the archetype or "transcendental" signified, say that of the Mother. On the basis of this distinguishing image, the rest of the self is constructed.

Descartes argued in the *Meditations* that an Evil Genius could deceive him about anything except that he thinks: for one must be able to cogitate in order to be fooled. He concluded, in his famous aphorism, *Cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore I am." He thus essentialized the self as *res cogitans*, a thinking substance, independent of the flux of external appearances and of matter in motion, *res extensa*. Lacan, however, amended this aphorism to say, as we have read above, "Where I think, there I am." What he means is that thought is situated in the productive mechanisms that generate it and does not transcend them as some essential being. Thus the self (*moi*) is literally made through the process of mirroring. It should not be thought of simply as an internalized self-image, however, but also as an ever deferred, ever displaced and displacing activity. The self may crystallize out of the process of differentiation, ideation, and imagination: the play of difference. But it is still situated amidst what Lacan calls an "aggressive concurrence" of internal conflict with external influence (see *L'Aggressivité*, 379, Wilden, 173). The self-image is thus the self-reference of a paradoxical thought process that can only think of itself, reflect on itself, by the use of representations. The representations, in turn, must be fit into the syntax of signs which ultimately become self-predicating and recursive. It cannot be "pinned down" because signified can never be reduced to signifier, self to self-image, in the differential course of signification (see Lacan, Unpublished Seminar 1958, Wilden, 274). This is the language of the self. It is in and through language that "I am."

It is through the system of language, broadly understood as the realm of signifying practices, that selves are articulated and, as the imaging of self indicates, find themselves among the spectrum of significations: the ciphers that represent, in Derridean terms, the play of communication. This is interestingly parallel to Jung's formulation of the distinction, or perhaps better the connection, between the ego and the self and, more broadly, between the self and the collective unconscious. The ego, as our citations of Jung above suggest, is the narrowly imagined self-image - the narcissistic preoccupation of the personality that would demarcate itself from the larger play of language and communication out of which it is generated. The self is a representation of human identity. It arises from the process of semiotic production that gives the individual persona her form and meaning. All we need to do, as the remark by Cahen at the outset suggests, is associate Jung's archetypes with the imaginary and symbolic order of language out of which we, in Lacan's view, arise. From this perspective it is easy to see that the image in the mirror is but the tip of the iceberg, or the detail in the mandala, of the larger processes of signification and communication that we in some sense are.

The mandala, in Jung's view, is a symbol for totality and wholeness. It represents the psychic striving toward closure and the search for meaning in one's personal existence. This need for psychic integration means that people strive for harmony, peace, and closure; but in times of disunity and dehumanization, one's potential to attain individual closure is hampered. For Jung, the post-war decade of the 1950s manifested tremendous confusion and conflict (both sociocultural and intrapsychic). It is therefore to him no coincidence that the popular interest in ETs and alien contact in our culture begins in this decade (e.g. the Roswell incident). The psychological consequence of social disunity and alienation may be, as Jung argued, the projection of unfulfilled psychic needs in the form of archetypal symbolism such as the mandala-disk (i.e., flying saucers and their alien crews). Indeed, as Hall and Norby point out, "Jung's analytical interpretation is that flying saucers are mandalas...The saucer is from another planet (the unconscious), and is inhabited by aliens (other archetypes)" (115).

Add the archaizing dimension of evolutionary ecology, the life history of Gaia, including the planetary stress of the ecological crisis, to this picture, and we are prepared to see ourselves in a planetary mirror, a Gaian mandala. This self-image is what Dion Wright refers to in his painting *Mandala of Evolution*. But for now it's time to imagine ourselves in the screen of the cinema.

What if Jung almost got the myth of Flying Saucers right? What if his system is translatable, just as we have just suggested, into the terms of structuralism and poststructuralism? From such a trans- and then post-substantiated Jungianism, what strange image or post imago haunts our filmic post-heroes? Imagine a kind of collective "Mirror Stage" in which the forms in the darkened glass of heaven are not so much genetic as mutagenic. These post imagos in the dark mirror become aliens in the precise sense that they generate alterity, differential or diffractive transformations of traditional "ideas." If we read the old Platonic *eidos* (idea) not as an arche-typus, an "originary type" but, as Bateson would say "a difference which makes a difference" (459) or as Derrida would write, *differance*, then what Jung took to be the mandala image of the flying saucer could be re-envisioned as the morphic play of the alien post imago. The "aliens" plummeting from the Lacanian sky then become none other than our collective selves inscribed like mirages in the desert air of a radical futurity lived as the wave of an ever-deferred present. The "collectivity" of what we might call this evolutionary unconscious is not established by archaism, as were Jung's archetypes, nor are they inhabiting some eternal psychic domain; rather, they are articulated in the languages of semiosis productive of communicative structures from the DNA helix to the syntax of this sentence. This is the play of language in the broadest sense, one that generates the bodies of "nature" and the *dramatis personae* of "culture," including of course those strangers from on high. In their images we become, in the words of Julia Kristeva, "strangers to ourselves," as collectively we deconstruct the authoritarian personae, the deep structures and the imaginary projections of our heritage and peer over the event horizon.

It is interesting that the film "Contact" would like to have it both ways: expressing perhaps the deep conservatism of American popular culture, epitomized by Hollywood, as it tries to reinscribe the postmodern Imaginary back into the patriarchal codes of

established power. The film's protagonist, Eleanor "Ellie" Arroway, is encouraged by her father to study astronomy and gaze into Carl Sagan's cosmos. It becomes her lifelong quest to understand the universe and, with the death of her father, to make "contact" with extraterrestrial life that she knows (by an intuition that will turn into faith) is out there, just as Mulder on Chris Carter's "X-Files" knows the truth (typically in later episodes referring to extraterrestrial invasion) is out there. Ellie's voyage starward reaches its terminus in reunion of father and daughter. No appearances of strange aliens here, only a pristine vision of early paradise where father and daughter can be together again.

What Jung says about the origin of gods, paternal and maternal, is clearly relevant here, precisely highlighting the cases of Ellie and Mulder: "In most of the existing religions it seems that the formative factor which creates the attributes of divinity is the father-*imago*, while in the older religions it is the mother-*imago*" (Symbols of Transformation I, sec. 89, 56-57). Indeed, "Contact" represents what Jung would call a "loving paternalism" on the part of the aliens whereas, for example, "Independence Day: ID4", in which the invaders vaporize the White House, Congress and so on is an example of what he would dub "a sternly persecuting paternalism through fear" (57). Similarly forefronting the parental image in the encounter with extraterrestrial beings, Mulder desperately tries to save the life of an alien, Jeremiah Smith, who like Jesus has the power to heal - Mulder hopes, his mother - with a touch (see Carter, "X-Files" episodes *Herrenvolk* 10/4/96 and *Talitha Cumi* 5/17/96). The case of Jeremiah Smith is particularly interesting for the psychology of postmodernity, as it combines the Christ-like loving paternalism of the healer with the revival of the maternal archetype in the form of Mulder's mother. This, in turn, may indicate the "feminine," feminist, and matriarchal tendencies of postmodernity, the modern being a "masculine" era in which, as in the Cartesian *cogito*, intellect is separated from feeling, mind from body, logic from metaphor.

Jung's comments are also significant here, and lend themselves to translation into the language of Lacan:

The first bearer of the soul-image is always the mother; later it is borne by those women who arouse the man's feelings, whether in a positive or a negative sense. Because the mother is the first bearer of the soul-image, separation from her is a delicate and important matter of the greatest educational significance. ("The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious: Anima and Animus, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, sec. 314, p. 197)

In Lacan's terms separation of child from mother takes place, as we have seen, in the Mirror Stage. This stage provides, moreover, the mechanism for the semiotic construction of self through the function of the imaginary and symbolic process of demarcating and introjecting a self-image. The self-image is formed, just like the images of self and divinity in Jung, on the templates of the parental *imagos*. In traditional psychoanalytic terms, Mulder is a hero who is perhaps overly influenced by the mother *imago*, and hence whose female side, what Jung would call his *anima*, threatens sometimes to topple his masculine persona: thus his emotional and visionary dimension sometimes threatens his rational and strictly empirical intelligence. Every person has repressed many of the

qualities of the opposite sex. For men, the repressed feminine qualities are represented in the anima; for women, repressed masculine qualities are embodied in the animus. Because similar pressures to conform to gender stereotypes have existed for many generations, Jung argued, the anima and animus have become inherited as archetypes in our collective unconscious. (See *Basic Writings*, 162ff.) Notice that in the "X-Files" Scully takes up the traditional masculine role of "doctor" with all of her scientific wits about her, including skepticism about Mulder's alien visions. Thus at least in some extraterrestrial encounters, there is a tendency to rewrite the mythologems of American popular culture, while others more obviously try to reinscribe traditional ones into new technological forms.

"Strangers to Ourselves"

Flying Saucers and the Human-Ecological Unconscious

The more deeply we penetrate the nature of the psyche, the more the conviction grows upon us that the diversity, the multidimensionality of human nature requires the greatest variety of standpoints and methods in order to satisfy the variety of psychic dispositions.

- Jung, *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, Collected Works, Vol 16, p. 9

The "unconscious" in poststructural terms must be inscribed in the semiotic configurations out of which all communicative forms emerge. It would be foolhardy and irresponsible to imagine that there is not some form of collective memory written into the deep structures of the cultural and biological languages in which our bodies and minds have been written. To this degree Jung is no doubt right to emphasize the archaic dimension of his archetypes. But those archaisms are historical formations at the other end of which we now write and are written: ones which have articulated the vast plurality of life and mind that makes up the dynamic formations of Gaian planetary ecology.

The form of the ecological other is manifest in cultural representations both of immigrants and of extraterrestrials, the cultural and biological aliens who keep rising into "American" (US) consciousness. Terrestrial others are the focus of Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* and, significantly, of an "X-Files" episode, *El Mundo Gira* in which Scully and Mulder investigate the possibility of a "Chupacabra" (1/12/97, all quotations from the relevant Web site). The episode focuses on a migrant worker camp in California's San Joaquin Valley. Interestingly, the story begins with a traditional masculinist scenario, described by an observant neighbor, Flakita: "Two brothers. One woman. Trouble." Eladio Buente flirts with Maria Dorantes, the flame of his brother Soledad. But this triad is interrupted by intervention from on high: a sudden quake of thunder, an incandescent flash, and a downpour of warm yellow rain. After the storm Flakita comes upon the corpses of Maria and one of the goats she's been tending, their features partially eaten away. Eladio is not to be found. Mulder theorizes that the deaths are the result of the strange storm, a Fortean event: "An unusual or highly infrequent meteorological phenomenon...Fortean events have been linked to alien encounters, and cattle mutilations..." Scully, as usual, says the evidence is inconclusive and goes on to suggest

the obvious conclusion, based on the love triangle, that Eladio is the killer. Flakita thinks that the cause is El Chupacabra"(the Goatsucker) - a gray hairless creature out of Puerto Rican folk tales with a small body, large head and bulging black eyes." But forensic investigation of Maria's body proves otherwise: the cause of death is a green fungal infection. With the assistance of Conrad Lozano, a cynical INS agent, Mulder locates Eladio. As it turns out, he has been infected with the same fungal growth that killed Maria, but he seems to be a carrier. Soledad also would like to catch up with Eladio, to take revenge for the death of Maria. Meanwhile a professor of mycology has confirmed the infectious agent as the aforementioned fungal growth. If loosed into the environment it could be a serious biohazard. Elsewhere, Eladio looks into the mirror and recognizes himself as El Chupacabra, the mythic beast, after all. Lozano takes Soledad into custody. Two alternative narratives now emerge through the narration of Flakita and Eladio's cousin, Gabrielle. Flakita says that Lozano brings Soledad to the camp where his brother is hiding and orders him to face Eladio man to man. Eladio is no longer a human, however, but a Chupacabra. At this point gray aliens descend, kill Lozano and abduct Soledad into the heavens. Gabrielle says, in turn, that Soledad comes to shoot Eladio, but is so stricken by his appearance as El Chupacabra that he cannot fire. The two wrestle over the gun, which goes off and kills Lozano. Soledad is here transformed, too, and both brothers, now Chupacabras, escape to Mexico. Mulder and Scully offer a similarly confusing story to Assistant FBI Director Skinner. The episode closes with a shot of the two immigrant Chupacabras on the road.

The superposition of aliens - cultural, biological and extraterrestrial - is striking here. The Mexicans are cast as immigrants, as the Chupacabras of Puerto Rican folklore, and as subjects of alien infection and abduction. In both of these cases they pose "threats" to the powers that be, represented by the INS and FBI: biohazard, ethnohazard, and econohazard. They are depicted as diseased, foreign, and poor. But the episode does not represent the INS or official FBI in a very positive light: Lozano is a cynic, and Skinner is caught between the genuine desire for truth and justice motivating his agents, Mulder and Scully, and the faceless and corrupt powers of Congressional committees (see *Gethsemane*, "X-Files" 5/18/97), as well as the shadowy threat of the cigarette- smoking man. The public distrust of governmental authority is salient here. In another postmodern inversion of traditional authority, the episode ends, as its final shot of the Chupacabras on the road suggests, paradoxically by identifying with the difference that the "aliens" represent. Kristeva articulates this, in the voice of Rimbaud: "Je est une autre" ("I is an other"), which, she elaborates, "...foreshadowed the exile, the possibility or necessity to be foreign and to live in a foreign country, thus heralding the art of living of a modern era, the cosmopolitanism of those who have been flayed" (13). She also casts the role of the "flayed" in Freudian terms that apply to the range of alien identities:

With Freud, foreignness, an uncanny one, creeps into the tranquility of reason itself, and, without being restricted to madness, beauty, or faith anymore than to ethnicity or race, irrigates our very speaking-being, estranged by other logics, including the heterogeneity of biology" (170).

Hence, our collective unconscious becomes the postmodern cosmopolitanism in which we realize that we are the heterogeneous others - strangers to ourselves.

The second forms of ecological other, biological aliens, are aptly represented in the now classic films "Alien", "Aliens", and "Alien 3". "The Andromeda Strain", where extraterrestrial bacteria are introduced into the human bloodstream, as they are into Mulder's in "X-Files" (see *Terma*, 12/196), and "Mimic", where humans are under attack from genetically altered insects, are good analogs. In the Alien series a profound fear of the biological other, not to mention venture capitalists, as anthropophagous is expressed. Appropriate to the anti-patriarchic postmodern sensibility, the film has a female protagonist, Ripley (Sigourney Weaver), who takes on the conflict with the aliens herself. The most interesting aspect of the aliens here is their use of the human body as a host, from which they spring horrifically, with intelligence and stealth that will inspire Spielberg's Velociraptors, to ravage and consume their human prey. The "mutagenic" theme is clearly present in all three films, as the torso of homo sapiens becomes, in a gross caricature, pregnant with a new species. The terror of being violently transmuted is played against the heroic female protagonist's quest to preserve her life and species. Surrealist sets by H.R. Geiger add to the dreamlike blurring of worlds that characterizes the alien landscape, and powerful special effects by Stan Winston bring the voracious creatures, appropriately named xenomorphs, to startling life. All this happens, in Alien, under the sure direction of Ridley Scott whose darkly gleaming vision of futurity - what Paul Sammon calls *future noir* - was best expressed in the cyberpunk classic "Blade Runner". The deadpan humor of that film and genre, typified by the post phrase for "good day," "Have a better one," is best expressed by Private Vasquez (Jenette Goldstein) of the (appropriately named) Colonial Marine Corps in "Aliens", directed by James Cameron. As she readies herself for combat, doing chin-ups, Pvt. Hudson (Bill Paxton) asks her: "Anybody ever mistake you for a man?" To which she answers, "Anybody ever mistake you for one?" This repartee may be interpreted, of course, not only as a humorous jab at gender stereotypes but also as a reference to the mutagenic drama of the human-alien encounter. A punk band with a similar sense of humor haunted the late '70's with a comparable view of evolutionary alterity: "Are we not men? We are DEVO!" In any case, this is, typical of Scott, an alien vision with film-noir tone: a dark look askance at the biotechnological future projected by what Jameson calls the "cultural logic of late capitalism." The aliens are, after all, on Company property and might themselves, like Raptors, be commoditized. And by the time that Alien 3 comes along, the film series itself has become little more than product. As Rachel says in "Blade Runner", on discovering that she is a Replicant with human memory implants, owned by the Tyrell Corporation: "I'm not in the business, I am the business." Jung, finally, would no doubt have been intrigued by the theological implications of the latest film title in the series: Alien Resurrection.

The combination of terrestrial and extraterrestrial aliens perhaps takes on its most "awesome" form in Tom Graeff's 1959 "thriller," "Teenagers from Outer Space", in which the "generation gap" heralding the 1960's was emblemized in low-budget terror. In this classic, a group of alien teenagers (who appear to be at least in their late 20's) land their saucer in California. "Thrill-crazed space kids blasting the flesh off humans!" reads

the movie poster, referring to the ability of the aliens' death rays to turn our species instantly to skeletons. ¹ There also seems to be Red Scare paranoia running through the film, as one of the spacemen, Derek (David Love) rebels against the collectivist onslaught of his pals and falls in love with the very terrestrial beauty of Betty Morgan (Dawn Anderson). Is this a rather tame prototype for the invasion of the Borg, and the expectable "human" revulsion for their hive mind, in "Star Trek: The Next Generation"? If so, Middle America is here treated to yet another dimension to the aforementioned deconstruction of humanism: post individualism. The horror of this invasion is perhaps best represented by a scene when the invaders skeletonize a suburban housewife (Sonia Torgeson) as she swims in the sanctum of her private suburban pool. She is rather literally "x-rayed" so that perhaps her most private domain, her pearly bones, are exposed in an attack recalling the intrusive panopticon of medicine. As General Jack Ripper in Dr. Strangelove might say, this is worse than Flouridation! The evil Thor (Brian Grant) leads the inevitable counterattack on Derek's attempt to practice family values. The hominid invaders have brought along a crustacean food supply (offering only temporary relief to Californians who, if they are not immediately on the alien menu, are soon to be repast for their livestock): ominous crawfish called Gorgons who can grow to 1,000 times their current size - picture creatures filling a goldfish bowl who are to become hungry crawdaddys the size of houses. Luckily, Derek manages to blow up his comrades, their superlunary lobster and, unfortunately for the young couple, himself before this gets out of hand. So, we only get to see the shadow of one full-grown monster before Derek electrocutes it, the budget being what it was, but the sentiment is clear: the upswing of techno-culture in the late 50's, including no doubt the rise of Sputnik, was enough to inspire the vision of American teens, "the next generation," as alien invaders of the traditional culture.

Characteristically ominous on the horizon of alien, and commodity, futures is the prospect of alien beings who are "man eaters" (in the tradition of "Jurassic Park", "Jaws" and, of course, "Moby Dick") being generated, as Richard Preston theorizes the AIDS and Ebola viruses to be, by the planet's "immune system" in response to human invaders:

It is beginning to react to the human parasite, the flooding infection of people, the deadspots of concrete all over the planet, the cancerous rot-outs in Europe, Japan, and the United States, thick with replicating primates, the colonies enlarging and spreading and threatening to shock the biosphere with mass extinctions. Perhaps the biosphere does not "like" the idea of five billion human beings. (287)

In "Jurassic Park" the exploitative practices of the entrepreneurial research for biological capital in the form of salable creatures (shades of King Kong) loose the terror of what Othello, suggesting Europe's fear of Africa, calls the *anthropophagai* ("man-eaters," Othello I,ii,96). In "Mimic" as in "Jurassic Park", "monsters" are the result of scientific meddling with the genome. In "Jaws" as in Melville's "Moby Dick", the "sea monsters" (great white shark, white whale) are met at the verge of what a later perceptively titled sci-fi thriller, complete with undersea aliens, called "The Abyss". In the latter film we have benevolent paternalistic extraterrestrials turned submariners and wave-makers, in order to save the planet from nuclear self-destruction (see the Director's

Cut for the full wave effect). Regarding the various invaders of the Western imagination, Donna Haraway has argued that monsters, as the etymology of the word from the Latin monstrare "to show" suggests, demonstrate. That Preston's description is very close to the imagery of an alien infestation of the planet is clearly demonstrative: for this is a self-portrait drawn critically from the perspective of Gaia. To paraphrase Pogo, "We have met the aliens and they are us." This realization merges the evolutionary unconscious with the ecological one in a new morphogenic picture of self and other. It is out of this mirror that we hear the alien voice exclaim: "Wake up - the world is alive!"

Notes

1. The poster [may be viewed online](#).

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