Universidad de Huelva

Departamento de Filología Inglesa

Of men and cyborgs : the construction of masculinity in contemporary U.S. science fiction cinema

De hombres y ciborgs : la construcción de la masculinidad en el cine de ciencia ficción estadounidense contemporáneo

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"OF MEN AND CYBORGS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN CONTEMPORARY U.S. SCIENCE FICTION CINEMA"

"DE HOMBRES Y CÍBORGS: LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA MASCULINIDAD EN EL CINE DE CIENCIA FICCIÓN ESTADOUNIDENSE CONTEMPORÁNEO"

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Hollywood mainstream cinema has, for much of the last century, offered portraits of masculinity and manhood which have helped Western culture to construct certain notions of masculine identity. However, movie images of manhood have normally been sustained by male-oriented power structures, contributing to reinforce traditional concepts of gender identity. The analysis of popular male images in films brings about important cultural debates and helps to better understand the social construction of masculinity in U.S. society at each specific historical time. During the last decade, a great number of works have been published—particularly in the United States of America (U.S.A.)—on the study of the representation of masculinity in movies from many different angles.

Of Men and Cyborgs: The Construction of Masculinity in Contemporary U.S. Science Fiction Cinema concentrates on Science Fiction[1] films to analyse recurrent "types" of masculinity represented in this influential discourse in the U.S.A. Today, the SF film has become one of the most important cultural referents that foregrounds questions of gender and identity at work in U.S. society. The major complication of this study of masculinity is its multidisciplinary nature, since it comprises different branches of learning, namely Gender Studies, Men's Studies, Film Studies, Sociology, Psychology, Narratology and Literary Criticism, theoretical tools to inform the critical analysis of the films proposed for discussion in this dissertation.

The great impact of feminism over the last thirty years or so has contributed positively to provide the Gender Studies discipline with a

[1] Henceforth SF

wide range of academically respectable texts, most of them women-centred. Not until very recently, though, the analysis of masculinity has been considered essential for any gender study. Indeed, it did not enter the academic sphere until the decade of the 80s, favoured in part by men's movements and by public debates on the meaning of masculinity and its cultural implications. An important sector within the Men's Studies discipline follows feminist tenets for the study of men and masculinity and recognises the subordination and "invisibility" of women over the years. This branch of study is known as "pro-feminism" and includes influential scholars like Michael S. Kimmel, R.W. Connell, or Jeff Hearn, to mention a few. In general terms, they believe that U.S. society is still grounded on a system that discriminates women and greatly affects men's lives. This is precisely the approach taken up here for the study of masculinity and SF cinema.

One of the premises in this dissertation, shared by many pro-feminist scholars, is that masculinity is a culturally constructed concept and as such, it is subject to changes. Following this argument, male images depicted in Hollywood cinema are affected by historical and cultural especificities, which have an effect on the way masculinity is portrayed in films. Nevertheless, a "normative" definition of masculinity—constructed around notions of power and privilege—works in every filmic genre, proposing models for the depiction of ideal masculinities. In this light, the idea that gender identities are "performative" (Butler, Brod) seems to work. Hence, the history of cinema proposes specific types of masculinity for each genre and period which respond to dominant beliefs and which are sometimes used to calm tensions brought about by social conflicts. Obvious examples are action movies starring actors like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone or Bruce Willis in the conservative decade of the 80s that show images of a dominant masculinity linked

to strength and violence. In them, the body becomes an instrument of power and control that constructs a "solid" masculine identity. Critics like Susan Jeffords have read these Reaganite "hard bodies" as signs of a masculinity in crisis. They serve to calm anxieties caused partly by the appearance of the "New Man" in U.S. society and by the times' insistence on new gender definitions. Stereotyped male bodies continue to appear in Hollywood films and spectators still see these images as cultural ideals.

At the same time, there are genres in which the portrayal of masculinity does not rest on dominant constructions but that somehow "violate" the rules of male heroism. This is the case of soft, sometimes feminised characters starring in genres like the musical, comedies or dramas and which have been the centre of much critical discussion. In addition, it should be taken into account the fact that every male image is subjected to historical and cultural circumstances. Focusing on the U.S.A, the traditional concept of masculinity has been recently revised and redefined both by Men's Studies and by film theories on masculinity. Academics from both disciplines normally agree in denouncing the manipulation of this category throughout history, especially in feminist circles. Consequently, they offer new models of masculinity and deconstruct the existing ones. Likewise, postmodern debates, due to their emphasis on the blurring of frontiers, preclude the abandonment of rigid gender stereotypes and encourage the adoption of more fluid notions of masculinity, in this case. All these new meanings of masculinity also find representation in recent U.S. cinema. These facts evidence the difficulty that any study about images of masculinity encompasses.

The present analysis of masculinity concentrates on SF cinema, which is one of the most popular film genres nowadays. My initial inclination towards this genre was partly grounded on the idea that

filmed SF was a privileged medium for less conventional depictions of masculinity and the male hero, at least aesthetically. The SF film has certainly borrowed from other genres—like the western, the adventure film, the fantastic and horror movies—and has incorporated many elements from popular culture. This clashing of gender features and tendencies allows for a flexibility in many senses. It is commonly agreed that SF presents new ideas and a new imagery. Therefore, SF films would make ideal candidates in offering new gender proposals and in including instances of unconventional masculinities. Indeed, they are populated by man-machine hybrids, men terribly frightened by menacing "others", androgynous men trapped in cyberspace, and, after all, male images that can be categorised as "out of the norm". Yet, this new imagery proves problematic after a closer look, as the supposed "deviant" depictions of manhood offered in most SF films still show to be at the service of normative masculinity. With some exceptions, images of masculinity in SF do not account for the wide range of masculinities present in U.S. society. Instead, they tend to be constructed depending on conventional patterns of representation for the male hero.

This is not to say, however, that SF does not depict contemporary gender concerns or that it does not allow for any innovations. On the contrary, SF films engage critically with dominant ideologies and analyse socio-cultural concerns in the U.S.A. Moreover, and in clear opposition to other genres, SF films manage to offer notable gains that are worth mentioning. For instance, SF films dealing with space exploration and conquest normally present the white heterosexual hero, yet in close consonance with "other" types of masculinity, which are of great importance for the future of the hero and of humankind. Also, alien invasion movies frequently show menaced men confronted with aggressive and unknown forces. In spite of their final victory, these male images do not follow strictly

heroic conventions, and are often regarded as vulnerable and weak. Many times, men themselves become the site of "otherness" in many SF films, which causes identity crises in them. Male cyborgs appearing in many SF films from the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century become key figures for the exploration of new values ascribed to manhood. Especially, virtual reality films, in which technology plays an essential role, contribute to this idea of innovation.

The main objective of this work is to provide a map of the representation of masculinity within SF cinema in the U.S.A. This study of masculinity on screen thus establishes four general patterns throughout the history of SF in the U.S.A. These will be, namely, the "menaced man", the "conquering man", the "artificial man" and the "virtual man". This four-sided categorisation does not mean to cover every single representation of masculinity in SF but it is intended to offer general tendencies of representation. Furthermore, and taking into account the constructedness of gender, the types evolve adapting to cultural and historical specificities. Thus, these dominant trends of representation mirror, in a higher or lesser degree, society's perception of gender, which inevitably affect the representation of masculinity.

In order to illustrate these issues, the present work is organised into five chapters. The first three chapters provide the theoretical framework of Men's Studies, Film Studies and SF. They aim to establish key concepts and to include relevant criticism dealing with masculinity and SF and to delineate the four patterns of masculinity under discussion here. Chapters four and five concentrate on the analysis of four contemporary SF films, with the purpose of illustrating the classification of masculinity proposed here. The films chosen for discussion show the construction of masculinity in SF while opening debates on the degree of permissiveness of the genre.

The first chapter, "Men and Masculinity in Contemporary U.S. Culture", provides an overview of the different men's groups and movements in the U.S.A. The importance of the Men's Studies discipline for the construction of masculinity will be especially emphasised. Also, the chapter aims to bring to the foreground the idea that masculinity is culturally constructed and, therefore, it changes due to historical and cultural assumptions.

Chapter 2, "Masculinity and Representation in U.S. cinema" looks at U.S. mainstream cinema to concentrate on the ways masculinities have been constructed in film. The chapter adopts the terminology used by Susan Jeffords' influential book *Hard Bodies. Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (1994) to refer to two tendencies in the portrayal of masculinity throughout the history of cinema in the U.S.A. Taking Jefford's classification of "hard" and "soft" bodies as a starting point for my analysis, the present chapter proposes that Hollywood masculinities can be roughly divided into two opposed categories. Manhood can be constructed following dominant definitions of it and perpetuating traditional gender roles or, on the contrary, it can contest those roles.

The third chapter, "Masculinity and U.S. Science Fiction Cinema", moves to SF and, specifically, looks at the four patterns that, in my view, have characterised the representation of masculinity in the genre: the "menaced man", the "conquering man", the "artificial man" and the "virtual man". A brief history of the genre will be offered first, together with an overview of the main themes and critical approaches that have been of use for the analysis of SF in this work. The binary opposition system has been commonplace in SF films, and categories like "the one", "white" or "male" have been normally read in opposition to "the other", "black" or "female". There is a general tendency in SF films to show a terrifying, different and subordinate otherness as opposed to familiar, healthy and reassuring depictions of

the dominant "one". This tendency is likely to be modified with the coming of postmodernism and its emphasis on the deconstruction of binary thought, which becomes especially relevant for the depiction of gender in contemporary SF movies.

This chapter adopts, then, a double focus. On the one hand, it is assumed that gender is both socially and culturally biased and, therefore, the depiction of masculinity in SF mirrors U.S. historical and social conflicts. Special emphasis will be given to the times in history when masculinity is perceived to be in crisis, namely the decade of the 50s, the 80s and the turn of the millennium. It is at these moments when the depiction of masculinity seems to allow for wider interpretation. Contextualising masculinity becomes, then, a useful key for the interpretation of certain filmic images. On the other hand, it is important to notice that images of masculinity in SF films tend to follow certain formal and aesthetic conventions that make their "classification" into types possible. For instance, heroes in virtual reality films of the late 90s share certain traits and behavioural codes that spectators expect and/or assume as "typical".

The pattern of the "menaced man" shows male characters that are threatened and weakened by a destructive "other". In these films, otherness can be regarded as encompasing metaphors for threats or challenges to traditional social order, and has been consequently read from many different perspectives. Men may fight against the "other", as in *The War of the Worlds,* or become the site of otherness themselves, as it happens to the main protagonist of *The Fly*, who undergoes an identity crisis. The pattern of the "conquering man" normally refers to space exploration films whose heroes stand in privileged social positions. This type of masculinity is easily recognised in sagas like *Star Wars* or *Star Trek* where the construction of manhood is more static and predictable. The pattern of the "artificial man" acquires popularity in the films of the 80s and portrays

mechanically or genetically created male characters that reflect contemporary debates on the construction of gender and the posthuman body. Clones like the one at work in *Blade Runner* or mechanical cyborgs like Robocop illustrate this tendency of representation. Lastly, the pattern of the "virtual man" refers to androgynous men who, like the protagonists of *The Matrix* or *eXistenZ*, are trapped in virtual scenarios and stand as the ultimate metaphor for the postmodern.

To illustrate the value of this classification, the last two chapters move on to analyse influential SF movies in U.S. contemporary panorama, offering a reading of the problematics of masculinity in each of the types suggested in this work. In chapter 4, "Men and the "Other"", the two patterns that are more aligned with classical SF are discussed: the "menaced man" and the "conquering man". The notion of the "other" and its multiple—sometimes controversial—connotations will become especially relevant in this chapter. For such a study, two recently released films have been chosen: Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005), which depicts the contemporary version of the "menaced man", and Baird's *Star Trek. Nemesis* (2002), which portrays the classical pattern of the "conquering man" in the 21st century. Both filmic texts depend heavily on previous texts and problematise the relationship between "one" and "other". They allow for a discussion of gender issues, such as men's new roles within family dynamics, like the figure of the "New Father", the changing vision of gender and family relations that foresee altering definitions of male identity, and the depiction of a masculinity in crisis.

The main discussion in the last chapter, "Men and Technology", centres on the relationship between men and latest technological advances as portrayed in the SF film. The image of the male cyborg, considered as a site where anxieties over technology and gender identity are conceived, is the centre of this analysis. The patterns of

the “artificial man” and the “virtual man” show different versions of this hybrid being made of technology and organism. Cameron’s *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) offers one of the best illustrations of the “artificial man”. The character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger seems to evoke an artificial man-machine link which, nevertheless, will progressively give way to more “natural” fusions. The Wachowski’s *The Matrix* (1999) presents the “virtual man”, a more androgynous type of man found in numerous virtual reality films.

In conclusion, it is the purpose of this work to explore how the representation of masculinities can be productively studied in the context of U.S. SF cinema. Nowadays, SF has the power to break with established boundaries in many senses, what can be applied positively to the depiction of gender within this influential cultural icon of the 21st century. According to many critics, our culture is at present unstable, plural and schizophrenic, separated from history, and outside “human time” (Jameson 119). It is in this context that SF cinema should attempt for new and challenging depictions of masculinity.

CHAPTER 1:
MEN AND MASCULINITY IN CONTEMPORARY U.S. CULTURE

1.1. INTRODUCTION

It is generally acknowledged that Men's Studies emerged in the U.S.A. as a later effect of the development of second wave feminism in the 70s. Following the feminist impulse, many male consciousness-raising groups started to vindicate men's rights in different fields, as they considered themselves the "excluded middle". In this attempt to make masculinity visible in the US, a proliferation of debates about men's issues started to gain popularity all over the First World. It is important to note here that the present analysis concentrates mainly on the U.S.A, where many of the pioneer debates about men and masculinity took place. Hence, this chapter starts by providing an overview of different men's groups in the U.S.A. and the impact that some feminist premises had on a number of them. Likewise, I will deal with some of these groups' basic claims as well as the most representative journals, periodicals, books and recent research on Men's Studies published in the U.S.A.

In spite of their different nature, these claims help establish new critical interpretations addressing the concept of "masculinity". In the second part of this chapter, I will deal with the most representative critical approaches regarding the issues and notions of masculinity. One of the goals in this section is to draw attention to recent criticism that argues in favour of the cultural construction of the concept. At this point, it becomes necessary to trace back the historical background of the concept as it is helpful to better understand the sociological context that shapes its definition. Also, all these issues concerning men and masculinities can be contextualised within the framework of one key discourse in contemporary U.S. society: postmodernism. The postmodern concern with the transgression of established boundaries becomes the basis for the decentralisation of normative masculinity and thus new definitions of men and

masculinity can be analysed as challenges to the taken-for-granted notion of masculinity. Likewise, new definitions of the male body are to be found in contemporary discourses and new meanings ascribed to it.

1.2. MEN'S STUDIES AND MEN'S MOVEMENTS

In this section, I will try to trace the origins of men's movements and Men's Studies to show how they are interrelated and cannot be considered—or at least analysed—separately. It was not until very recently that men started questioning their natural—and superior—status in different social and domestic spheres. At the end of the 20th century numerous debates around the issue of masculinity were taking place not only in the U.S.A. but also all over the world. They basically discussed the increasing need for men to understand a world in constant transformation and urged them to think about gender issues. The discipline called Men's Studies originated in the 1970s as a consequence of earlier critical discourses provided by feminism and Gay Studies, which, for the first time, questioned the patriarchal notions of femininity and masculinity. Some male liberation movements especially showed this need to revise the traditional concept of masculinity.

Thus, feminism contributed to the creation of this new discipline as it made men aware of their involvement in the issue of gender inequalities and of their position in contemporary society. Specifically, second-wave feminists opened up a new critique in the study of men since they "began to challenge the 'cultural arrangements', male power and maleist assumptions increasingly recognized as sustaining gender injustice" (Whitehead 31). Most men responded to the women's liberation movement with texts such as Warren Farrell's *The Liberated Man* (1974) or Marc Feigen Fasteau's *The Male Machine* (1974), which became key stones for men's liberation discourse. In the same way, gay male liberation movements of the late 60s also contributed to the development of Men's Studies since they struggled, together with other "others" like the black or the lesbian movements, against a dominant white, male heterosexual constituency. This influence has been

admitted by many scholars who, like Brod, Kimmel or Morgan, among others, argue that Men's Studies developed "out of earlier critical perspectives, concepts, and methods developed by Women's Studies and Gay Studies, in conjunction with the women's movement, and the gay liberation movement" (Brod 18-9).[2]

Eight perspectives or tendencies are normally addressed to describe men's reactions to feminist tenets. Kenneth Clatterbaugh's *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity* (1990) is one of the earliest works dealing with men's groups' responses to the feminist movement.[3] Clatterbaugh examines the main perspectives which have taken form in response to modern feminist movements in the U.S.A. since the 1970s, and that have contributed to the development of a literature on masculinities. These perspectives are, in the order in which they appeared historically, the following ones: the Conservative Movement, the Pro-feminist perspective, the Men's Rights Perspective, the Mythopoetic Perspective, the Socialist Perspective, Gay Male Perspectives, African American Men's Perspectives and the Evangelical Men's Movement. Yet, and since they are social movements, many of these groups' original ideologies have changed with time, and internal controversies and paradoxes have arisen provoking the appearance of new tendencies which have, at the same time, contributed to the growth of this literature on men and masculinity. An analysis of

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[2] However, and as Morgan states in the first chapter of *Discovering Men*, the relation between men and feminism is not always clear, but there exist many implied difficulties, as for example the fact that not all studies about men—some studies of crime and delinquency—show a direct feminist impact (Morgan 20).

[3] In *Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (1983), Barbara Ehrenreich deals with male revolts and finds traces of early rebels in the 50s and 60s. Accordingly, the Beats declined in the 50s the responsibility required for men and, likewise, the sixties counterculture rejected traditional assumptions of masculinity. With this, Ehrenreich is suggesting that men started rebelling earlier than women. However, these rejections did not figure at the beginning as organised responses to established gender assumptions.

contemporary men's movements becomes, then, a difficult issue to address, especially since it entails, as suggested above, paradoxes and contradictions.

In *Politics of Masculinities* (1997) Michael A. Messner considers men's movements as following three directions: some support feminism, some are against it and others simply avoid feminist issues (Messner 1997, 2). Messner organises his study with the premise that these groups have prearranged their practices around masculinities as a response to current shifts in the power relations between men and women (13). In this sense, he differs from other approaches that, like Connell's, use life history methods to demonstrate how individual men have responded to these crises by creating varied practices of gender and sexuality (Messner 1997, 11). Instead, Messner's survey of public masculinity politics in the U.S.A. concentrates on organised responses to power relations. For this purpose, he divides men's movements into four groups: essentialist retreats; movements that aim for a reform and restoration of the male-sex role theory; pro-feminist engagements; and movements which are mainly concerned with racial and sexual identity politics. As for the contemporary terrains of the politics of masculinity, Messner ultimately proposes a progressive coalition politics based on social justice. The recent discourse of feminist women of colour seems to provide the perfect point of departure for this coalition-building politics.

In contrast to many popular accounts, Judith Newton includes in her analysis marginalised and subordinated men's efforts to theorise and transform masculine ideals. In *From Panthers to Promise Keepers* (2005), Newton attempts to create a mixed-race analysis and explore the mutual histories of white and black men to refashion masculine ideals. She focuses upon commonalities between groups rather than differences, arguing that political disparate groups share—or have shared in the past—similar concerns.

Thus, dealing with men's movements is a complex task that entails the adoption of different and sometimes controversial points of view. At the end of *Masculinity and Culture,* the scholar John Beynon includes a glossary of terms pertinent to his study of masculinity. In it, he defines men's movements as "attempts by groups of men world-wide to address masculinity" (Beynon 163). In doing so, he continues, some groups adopt a pro-feminist stance while others tend to masculinist ones.[4] While this classification between pro-feminist and masculinist stances might seem simplistic at first glance—especially due to the complexities these movements entail—it accurately describes the two basic male reactions to feminism from which many theorists have developed their discourses in the U.S.A. This has been noted by many theorists that affirm that "writings roughly divide between these of the 'men's rights movement' and those of the 'pro-feminist men's movement'" (Petersen 8).

Masculinist discourses or the politics that Messner classifies as occupying the terrain of anti-feminist backlash include the Christian Promise Keepers, the Mythopoetic Men's Movement and Men's Rights discourses.[5] They share a generalised discontent towards feminist premises and do not consider feminism as a liberation movement.[6] Specifically, the Christian Promise Keepers and the Mythopoetic

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[4] These attempts include the Promise Keepers, the 'mythopoetism' of Robert Bly, anti-sexist, pro-feminist groups in both the U.S.A. and Britain, the Canadian White Ribbon Campaign of men against male violence towards women, and the far right Militia Movement and militant fundamentalists and misogynists like the Afghan Talibans (Beynon 164).

[5] The concept "masculinism" is defined by Beynon as "the culture of 'being a man', traditionally based on physical power, aggression and competition" (Beynon 163).

[6] Following Messner's study, Christian Promise Keepers are very unlikely to support and collaborate with other men's groups. However, the Mythopoetic Movement is located at the counter edge of this same anti-feminist terrain, mainly due to its possibilities for dialogue and coalition with other groups. Messner gives the example of the recent dialogues between mythopoetic and pro-feminist leaders.

Movement accuse feminism of contributing to the erosion of the traditional model of masculinity, which, they think, it is worth recovering. These two anti-feminist movements are characterised, then, by their belief in an essential masculinity and are also known as the neo-conservative men's movements.[7] On the contrary, Men's Rights activists, while in favour of an antifeminist backlash, do not plea for a return to patriarchal notions but "are critical on the ways masculinity has entrapped, limited, and harmed men, and they want to reconstruct a masculinity that is more healthful, peaceful and nurturing" (Messner 1997, 44).

Men's Rights advocates challenge feminist premises about men's privileges and find evidence of men's oppression in their shorter life-span, health problems, divorce and custody laws, military conscription, etc (Messner 1997, 41). They believe, therefore, that the social construction of masculinity has not benefited men at all but, on the contrary, has resulted in oppression and constraint and, therefore, it needs to be reconstructed in a more accurate way. From the 70s onwards, Men's Rights advocates began to gain strength in various organisations and their leaders produced books devoted to these beliefs. Significant contributions to this literature are Herb Goldberg's *The Hazards of Being Male* (1977), Aaron Kipnis's *Knights Without Armor: A Practical Guide for Men in Quest of the Masculine Soul* (1991), and Warren Farrell's *The Myth of Male Power* (1993), books that denounced men's oppression.[8] One of today's major Men's Rights

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[7] In a research study on the roles of Promise Keepers fathers Silverstein, Auerbach, Grieco and Dunkel establish as a starting point two broad social movements which they consider are attempting to reconstruct the fathering-role in the U.S.A: the pro-feminist men's movement and the neo-conservative men's movement. The latter includes organizations like the Mythopoetic Men's Movement, the Promise Keepers, and the Milton Man March (666).

[8] Warren Farrell becomes an example of the afore-mentioned splits and contradictions among men's groups. As commented before, Farrell was the foremost

organisations—National Coalition of Free Men—examines the ways sex discrimination affects men, and is responsible for the publication and edition of the journal *Transitions: Journal of Men's Perspectives* six times a year, sponsors activities and promotes books and articles that can be purchased from their webpage www.ncfm.org.

Characterised by a reliance on the myth of male power, the so-called Mythopoetic Movement draws on Jungian and other psychoanalytic theories to argue that masculinity is inscribed deep in the male psyche. Robert Bly is considered to be the father of the Mythopoetic Men's Movement and his many followers look to a mythical past to find the models for contemporary manhood (Petersen 7).[9] Bly's work *Iron John* (1990) is the most significant text for the movement. The author analyses the nature of the male condition to affirm that contemporary masculinity is in crisis because men are nowadays detached from the "wild man". Some authors have considered this work a "plea for modern men to 'heal their grief' and renounce contemporary images of adult manhood in favour of a mythological 'Wild Man'; an Arthurian warrior figure, connected with the earth and inner mysticism" (Whitehead 28-9). This reliance on what they call nostalgic past has been criticised, especially by pro-feminist scholars who, like R. W. Connell, affirm that in an attempt to find "cross-cultural proof of the deep masculine", Bly and his followers "raid non-Western cultures for stories and symbols of masculinity

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spokesperson for the men's liberation movement in the 70s, the author of *The Liberated Man* (1974), devoted to male values and the expression of masculinity in different fields. However, and as his book *The Myth of the Male Power* (1993) suggests, he now admits men's powerlessness and supports the Men's Rights movement.

[9] Michael Meade and James Hillman followed Bly and tried to direct men on spiritual journeys of themselves (Messner 1997, 17).

which they rip out of context in a startling display of disrespect" (Connell 2000, 6).

Another group sharing this antipathy towards feminism is the religiously conservative movement Christian Promise Keepers, founded by Bill McCartney in 1990 in the U.S.A. Among the compromises of a Promise Keeper is the creation of a strong family life based on traditional gender roles where men should be providers and family heads. This neo-conservative ideology promotes, then, a hierarchical power relationship of male dominance over women in families (Silverstein *et al.* 667).[10] Like the Mythopoetic Movement, Christian Promise Keepers advocates also believe in an essential masculinity and combine a "right-wing Christian fundamentalism with an anti-gay, anti-lesbian stance, all presented and packaged under the image and ideal of a traditional male breadwinner family" (Whitehead 67-8).[11]

Both Christian Promise Keepers and the Mythopoetic Movement, which critics have also referred to as cases of "essentialist retreat"

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[10] It is interesting to recall here how the neo-conservative ideology of the Christian Promise Keepers coincides in time with the end of the anti-feminist backlash in the U.S.A, which meant a reaction against the radical feminism of the 70s. As Raquel Osborne argues, radical feminism was highly concerned with the marginal place women had within the traditional family, and emphasised the positive side offered by free relationships (195-6). As a reaction to these thoughts, the New Right promoted a patriarchal family life in the 80s. Thus, the emphasis on the traditional family on the part of the Promise Keepers can be also understood as the success of Reagan's conservative philosophy concerning the family.

[11] While rejecting the group philosophy of male dominance, the anti-gay/lesbian bias and the biologically-linked definition of complementary parenting roles, Silverstein *et al.* support the elements of the neo-conservative ideology which encourage responsible, nurturing fathering behaviours (667-8). In their research they explore the ways in which becoming a member of the Promise Keepers had affected their roles as fathers. They reach the conclusion that Promise Keepers fathers, in their individual effort to create what they consider an ideal family, tried to be actively involved with their children and to be more respectful to their wives. They conclude their research affirming: "we have adopted a 'both/and' position: rejecting the male dominance and heterocentrism implicit within the ideology; while supporting the efforts of individual men to become more emotionally accessible and actively involved fathers" (Silverstein *et al.* 686).

(Messner 1997) can be, therefore, considered as pleas for an essential and traditional concept of masculinity. They share the belief that in our society the feminist movement has gone too far and has oppressed and emasculated men. Leaders of both groups share an aversion to what they see as a recent "feminisation" of men. The Mythopoetic Movement, though, is inclined to blame modernization for this feminisation of men, whereas Christian Promise Keepers is more apt to blame feminism, gay liberation, sexual liberation, and the "breakdown of the family" for men's crises (Messner 1997, 17).

In relation to this issue, Michael S. Kimmel in his article "Global Masculinities and Resistance" describes the emergent global hegemonic model of masculinity against which all "local, regional and national masculinities are played out and to which they increasingly refer" (Kimmel 2002, 25).[12] These recent processes of globalisation, he continues, find resistance on the part of many collectives, especially of religious manifestation that, paradoxically, are often revealed as gender revolts and include a return to patriarchal structures (26). To illustrate these resistance groups, he names some political movements whose aim is to achieve economic autonomy, reassert political power or to revive traditional domestic arrangements (Kimmel 2002, 26).

Thus in the U.S.A, Christian Promise Keepers, together with some Men's Rights and father's rights groups, Kimmel affirms, "all respond to the perceived erosion of public patriarchy with an

[12] Carrigan, Connell and Lee introduced in 1985 the concept of a dominant form of masculinity that they denominated "hegemonic masculinity", which remains, according to them "a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relations that generate their dominance" (579). Hegemonic masculinity recognises, then, domination, sustained by social institutions such as the state, education, or the family. As it will be argued in the following section, the analysis of hegemonic masculinity became meaningful and influenced forthcoming debates about masculinity.

attempted restoration of some version of domestic patriarchy" (26).[13] The above-mentioned Mythopoetic Men's Movement "responds instead to a perceived erosion of domestic patriarchy with assertions of separate mythic or natural space for men to experience their power—since they can no longer experience it in either public or private spheres" (Kimmel 2000, 26). As these movements took part in gender revolts, he states that gender becomes one of the chief organizing principles of local, regional and national resistance to globalisation (2000, 26).

Pro-feminist men's movements include groups of men who, on the other hand, feel identified with the feminist movement and are devoted to "bringing men in gender-equity work" (Kimmel 2002, 30). Their basic claim is to challenge patriarchal power relations of sex and gender or, in Kimmel's words "to engage men in challenging public and domestic patriarchy and men's entitlement to power" (Kimmel 30).

Some of the most influential pro-feminist theorists are R.W. Connell, Jeff Hearn, Michael S. Kimmel, Michael A. Messner, Peter Nardi, Stephen Whitehead, Bob Pease and Lynne Segal. They share the conviction that "American society is sexist, that women are discriminated against and dominated by men, and that women are objectified sexually and excluded from many, if not most, areas of power that are open to men" (Clatterbaugh 41). They also maintain that "men's lives, too are greatly affected by this system of male dominance and that men are competitive, emotionally isolated from

[13] Previously in this same article, when dealing with masculinity and power, Kimmel has referred to "public patriarchy" as "the institutional arrangements of a society, the predominance of males in all power positions within the economy and polity, both locally and nationally, as well as 'gendering' of those institutions themselves" (Kimmel 2002, 23). As for "domestic patriarchy" he considers "the emotional and familiar arrangements in a society, the ways in which men's power in the public arena is reproduced at the level of private life. This includes male-female relationships as well as family life, child socialization and the like" (2002, 23).

one another and their families, and overtly involved in work and sports" (41).

Scholar Bob Pease, co-founder of an organization against women's violence called Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA), considers himself a pro-feminist man and in the introduction to his work *Recreating Men. Postmodern Masculinity Politics* he gives a number of reasons why pro-feminist men's experiences are important to study:

> First, profeminist men are not exceptional. They still occupy positions of dominance and they continue to embody much of the internalized domination of ordinary men. They are only different through their attempts to confront both their internalized domination and their dominant position. Secondly, profeminist men's awareness of their privilege and their socially legitimated oppressive behaviours are minimal requirements for a progressive politics of change among men. Thirdly, the attempts of such men to change will give some evidence to women as to whether men can potentially become reliable allies in the struggle to transform gender relations more broadly. Fourthly, because these men are attempting to create a collective politics of gender among men, they are, or can be, at the 'cutting edge' in changing dominant masculinities. Finally, such men's experiences give a useful insight into the determinative factors of gender constructions and its associated structural components to see whether men who want to change actually can do so. (Pease 3)

With this he is stating that pro-feminist men also constitute a marginal group within patriarchy. He proposes what he considers the most appropriate stance for pro-feminist men to take:

> to hear feminist critiques of patriarchy, to research men in light of feminist theoretical insights and developments in methodology, to understand the origins and dynamics of these critiques from 'within' and to make the results of this research available for dialogue and critique, as a basis for working in alliance with women against men's social dominance. (Pease 6)

There are many pro-feminist groups and organizations devoted to these issues. Particularly in the U.S.A. we find the "National Organization of Men Against Sexism" (NOMAS) that, according to Kimmel, is the most comprehensive pro-feminist men's organization in the world (Kimmel 2002, 30). This organisation sponsors conferences and workshops and, as one can read from its webpage (http://www.nomas.org), NOMAS advocates "a perspective that is pro-feminist, gay affirmative, antiracist, dedicated to enhancing men's lives, and committed to justice on a broad range of social issues including class, age, religion, and physical abilities". Likewise, Messner affirms that the current antisexist men's movement, represented mainly by NOMAS in the U.S.A, "is a potential nexus for the development of progressive alliances among those who are working for social justice" (1997, 90).

Apart from NOMAS, we find in the U.S.A. organisations like "Men for Change", "Red Men", "National Organization for Changing Men" or "International Association for Studies of Men", among many others. Moreover, we have recently being witnesses to the appearance of many men's groups not only in the U.S.A. but also in different countries—Australia, Canada, The Netherlands, Norway, and Great Britain—whose aims are, like those of feminists, to achieve an equal status in society. This task, they affirm, is not easy, as they do not have an "enemy" as women had, but only the conventional image of masculinity, which they try to revise. Among them, we have IASOM (Norwegian-based International Association for Studies of Men) or the "European Pro-feminist Men's Network", to name just a couple of examples. Other efforts to achieve gender equality include many

health and educational programmes, or, more recently, pro-feminist men's organisations work to confront men's violence.[14]

Likewise, we find popular journals like the quarterly *Men Studies Journal* or the NOMAS-sponsored magazine *Changing Men,* and Internet sites devoted to men's issues such as "MensNet", PROFEM mail list, *XY* Magazine or the web page www.cromenet.org, where pro-feminist information resources can be traced.[15] Also, many public events and conferences have recently been held on these issues. Connell points out the conference held in 1998 in Chile on the issue of masculinities in Latin America, which drew researchers and activists from many parts of South America (Connell 2000, 4).

Yet, when considering whether NOMAS or other men's organisations constitute models for a progressive men's movement, different opinions can be heard. While most critics agree with the idea that NOMAS is an important organization, others see its limitations and paradoxes (Connell 2000). In spite of placing NOMAS in the terrain of progressive coalition politics (together with Socialist Feminist Men and Multiracial feminism), Messner does not consider it the

[14] In the U.S.A. we find organisations such as PAHO (Pan American Health Organization) to give a significant example. Other groups like RAVEN (St Louis's Rape and Violence End Now) or MOVE (Men Overcoming Violence) show their concern with violence. Likewise, "Men for Change" fights to put an end to sexist violence and "Meninist" supports the feminist principles of women's social, economic and political equality.

[15] The Radical Men's Magazine *Aquilles Heel* made its appearance in the UK in 1978 and in 1982 ceased publication in England due to Thatcherism. Its collective was involved in men's movements and aimed to challenge traditional forms of masculinity and male power and create alternative social structures. Its first issue dealt significantly with men's health and sexuality and a long essay on masculinity and fascism.

centre of this political discourse precisely because of its limited practical utility.[16]

Men's movements constitute, then, effective tools for understanding the debates on masculinities and, consequently, for analysing contemporary gender-related concerns. Although summarised here in two main tendencies in terms of their relation to the feminist movement, men's movements are, as explained above, far more complex and, as social movements, we find radical versions of it (for example radical feminist men), movements more concerned with class, racial or sexual politics, as well as internal contradictions and tensions. It has been the aim here to delineate these two main trends and their relation to the feminist movement and to illustrate their sometimes multifaceted nature, a complexity which, nevertheless, reflects U.S. contemporary panorama where traditional thinking is progressively being put to the test. Thus, although some of the theories by these men's groups may seem extremist, radical, naïve or simply false, they are useful in the sense that they have contributed to a new understanding of gender and power relations in our society.

[16] Nowadays, Messner claims, only the discourse of feminist women of colour can provide us with the potential to effectively deal with the intersecting systems of domination and oppression and to see the connections between separate groups (103).

1.3. GENDER IDENTITY AND MASCULINITY

In this section, the notion of masculinity will be further developed and questioned. Over the last few years, there have been many attempts from different fields to approach this sometimes controversial and complex issue. A generalised tendency is, nevertheless, to consider masculinity as a cultural creation, which is also one of the basic premises in the present work. Following this argument, the concept "masculinity" is culturally biased and, therefore, it is subjected to change. That is why many scholars have considered the term "masculinities" as more appropriate when addressing the issue. In order to illustrate this, the main key terms and different approaches to masculinity will be first debated in this section. Masculinity has been traditionally associated to power in most Western cultures, the male body being the site of contention of these privileges that are translated into both private and public spheres, suggesting a gendering of certain institutions.[17] Since masculinity and culture are closely linked, we believe that an analysis of the history of manhood in the U.S.A. concerning cultural events is more than pertinent for any analysis on current U.S. masculinities.[18]

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[17] Early critics on Gender Studies soon realised that the category "gender" implies not only difference but also a notion of power (Edley and Wetherell 97), and/or dominance (Kimmel 2000,16). Kimmel affirms at the very beginning of his book, *The Gendered Society*: "gender is not simply a system of classification by which biological males and biological females are sorted, separated, and socialized into equivalent sex roles. Gender also expresses the universal inequality between women and men" (Kimmel 2000, 1).

[18] Such an analysis is precisely my intention in the second section of this chapter entitled "Masculinity in History".

1.3.1. MASCULINITY: KEY CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

The notion of "gender" suffered a revision due to the activism and scholarship carried out by feminists in the 60s and 70s. The notion of "Gender Studies" reached the status of independent discipline in the 1980s. Men and masculinity play a crucial role in feminist theory and as some commentators have suggested "[m]isogyny created feminist theory, and feminist theory has helped create masculinity" (Gardiner 36). Accordingly, the constructed nature of the concept of "masculinity" seems unmistakable. After the revision of the term "gender" carried out by early and second wave feminists, many scholars started to analyse gender identity from other perspectives and, gradually, issues about masculinity acquired a great importance not only among gender specialists but also in the public arena.[19] The essentialist view that gender is concerned with biology was soon rejected in favour of a social construction of the term. Sex difference, accordingly, does not determine what is to be a man or a woman, but other considerations such as race, ethnic or cultural background, are considered constructors of gender.

In relation to this issue, in *The Gendered Society* Kimmel distinguishes those theories that consider sex difference as the main cause for oppression—"biological determinism"—from those that maintain that gender differences are socially constructed—"differential socialisation". Both groups of theories assume that a difference between men and women exists. However, many scholars have

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[19] R.W. Connell in an article called "The Social Organization of Masculinity" deals with the different strategies commonly used to define masculinity. They are (1) essentialist definitions, which usually pick up a feature that defines the core of the masculine, and hang an account of men's lives on that; (2) positivist social science which looks for a simple definition of masculinity, what men actually are; (3) normative definitions which offer a standard, masculinity is what men ought to be; and (4) semiotic approaches define masculinity by contrast with femininity (Connell 2001, 30-4).

reconsidered these precepts and have adopted others instead. Kimmel particularly argues that the difference between women and men is not based on gender but on the social position they occupy (4). This is as important as the differences among women themselves and, consequently, gender difference becomes a product of gender inequality and not vice versa.[20] The so-called cultural approach, which claims that culture constructs men and masculinity, is nowadays the perspective that, according to many scholars, best explains the complex ways in which masculinity and power interrelate.

The 80s saw the emergence of the sociology of masculinity, which some authors have denominated "social-scientific research on masculinity" (Connell, Kimmel, Edley and Wetherell). This approach of reinterpreting gender includes psychoanalytic perspectives, role theories, anthropology, biological and genetic studies, among other fields. Critics agree in affirming that these sociological perspectives generally assume that gender identity is either a fixed or a socially determined trait that is beyond our control. This sociology of masculinity has, in Connell's words, a "pre-history", and finds its origins in psychoanalytic research carried out at the beginning of the 20th century by Freud and his followers and in another framework that became influential around the mid 20th century: sex-role theories.

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[20] The critic Judith Butler goes further in her analysis, affirming that sex is a socially constructed category and forcibly materialised through time (1993, 2). Her argument is that "the regulatory norms of 'sex' work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative" (1993, 2). Sex, then, becomes one of the norms that "qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (1993, 2). In this sense, the category of gender, very much like that of sex in Butler's analysis, becomes a cultural performance, that is, the effect of a set of contested power relations based on "such defining institutions" as phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality (1990, viii). Butler proposes a performative theory of gender that disrupts the categories between bodies, sex, gender and sexuality.

According to classical Freudian theories, which began in the late 1890s, man was the natural and superior sex, while woman, in her obsession with her lack of penis, was the insecure and fragile sex. These ideas will be soon rejected and revised by gender theorists, especially by feminists such as Firestone, Friedan, Millet, Chodorow or Olivier, among others. Nevertheless, this psychological attempt to explain gender differences will, as paradoxically as it may seem, open fields of study and influence many theoreticians since it will encourage them to develop new and less oppressive psychological visions on gender identity.

Sociologists of the 1950s introduced new approaches to the study of gender. Talcott Parsons was one of the most prominent sociologists, especially as he defended the concept of "functionalism", which entailed that the roles of men and women were naturally different but complementary. Rejecting the biological difference argument, functionalism tried to explain gender inequalities by presenting them as natural and necessary for the proper functioning of the social system. Functionalism saw its decline in the 60s, partly as a consequence of the feminist dissatisfaction with this role division which, they argued, was based on dominance and not on complementariness.

Role theories had a great impact on both sociology and psychology during various decades. A non-essentialist view was adopted by most role theorists, who argued that gender is a role and not a biological condition. The notion of role was taken from the theatre "in which an actor's part was at one time indeed literaly written on a roll and handed to him, to be unreeled as it was played" (Brod 14). A role, then, is "a performance, an enactment of a persona different from that of the actor" (14). Brod argues, then, that to believe in the existence of gender as a role is to assume that gender is not part of one essential self and, as a consequence, "the concept of

gender as a role greatly undermined the theoretical foundations of traditional views on gender, which assumed continuity rather than rupture between biology and culture" (Brod 14).

According to role theories, then, men and women are required to perform culturally prescribed roles and, in doing so, they may tend to reproduce ideal models of behaviour and transmit dominant stereotypes, which can be problematic (Whitehead 19). One of the opponents to this theory, Connell, considers role theory as intellectually weak since it "explains gender patterns by appealing to the social expectations that define proper behavior for women and for men" (18). Accordingly, exposing the "irrationality" of these norms, or their oppressive effects, has been "a key to the popular success of feminism in fields like girls' education" (Connell 2000, 18).

A variation of role theory is the so-called sex-role theory, concerned with notions of biological difference and gender dichotomy. This socio-psychological version of role theory, which also emerged in the 50s possibly influenced by social and economic transformations of the Western world, tried to account for the changing roles of men and women after the Second World War. According to sex role theorists, masculinity is a mere role men have to play in order to survive in a hostile and difficult world. Sex roles were understood, then, as "patterns of social expectation, norms for the behaviour of men and women, which were transmitted to youth in a process of 'socialization'" (Connell 2000, 7). Consequently, social behaviour "was explained as a massive display of conformity—which somehow seemed appropriate in the 50s" (7).

Lewis Terman and Catharine Miles are considered by many to have laid down the foundations of such theory in the 1930s. In their influential *Sex and Personality* (1936) they analyse, by means of a test, the differences between men and women affirming that the list of

characteristics ascribed to the masculine role had its opposite in the feminine one. Accordingly, they affirm that "[i]n modern Occidental cultures, at least, the typical woman is believed to differ from the typical man in the greater richness and variety of her emotional life and in the extent to which her everyday behavior is emotionally determined" (2). From this moment onwards, a number of scholars have attempted to describe the male sex role. One of the most outstanding efforts was made by Pleck and Sawyer (1974) who explained how the masculine roles effected male behaviour and reduced the male sex role to the dual maxims 'get ahead' and 'stay cool' (Edley and Wetherell 101). Similarly, Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon selected the articles for their volume *The Forty-Nine Percent Majority: The Male Sex Role* (1976) according to the four basic groups of the male role: 'no sissy stuff', 'the big wheel', 'the sturdy oak' and 'give'em hell'. They believed in the idea that the male role shaped the social structure more deeply than any other single influence. Four dimensions defined then, the male sex role:

> No Sissy Stuff: The stigma of all stereotyped feminine characteristics and qualities, including openness and vulnerability.
>
> The Big Wheel: Success, status, and the need to be looked up to.
>
> The Sturdy Oak: A manly air of toughness, confidence, and self-reliance.
>
> Give 'Em Hell: The aura of aggression, violence, and daring. (12)

Likewise, and particularly up to the 70s, many different variations of the sex role theory can be found, which account for the importance of these theories for Gender Studies. Critics like Hacker, Bandura, Hartley, Fasteau, Fein, Mischel or Fagot gave new directions to these theories. For example, social learning theorists Mischel and Bandura argued that sex-typed behaviour is consciously learnt

through observation and imitation. Hartley exposed in his 1959's "Sex Role Pressures and the Socialization of the Male Child" that socially created symmetrical (but unequal) sex roles trapped men into alienating lives. His ideas became a foundation in men's liberation discourse, practice and scholarly work in the 1970s (Messner 1998, 260).[21] This evidences the importance of sex-role theories for some discourses about men and masculinity.

However, by the late 1970s and into the 1980s the sex role idea was radicalised by feminism, and, consequently, their previous premise of 'gender as conformity' became an object of dismay rather than celebration (Connell 2000, 7). Thus, by the mid 80s critiques of role theories, influenced by second wave feminism, were common among sociologists of masculinity. Scholars like Brod, Connell, Kimmel, Messner and Hearn, believing that role theories could not provide valid explanations for sex difference, proposed new visions in the critical study of masculine identity. The sex-role paradigm was understood then as ahistorical and apolitical and these pro-feminist critics adopted the social constructionist vision of masculinity, making a great contribution to the understanding of gender power relations. There was a shift, then, from a sex role framework to the language of gender relations and power.[22] Social constructionism, according to Connell, includes many approaches but the

[21] Messner, in the article "The Limits of the Male Sex Role" (1998) aims at analysing the practical operation of the language of sex role theory in the context of the men's liberation movements of the 1970s, and urges the study of contemporary organizations based on that language.

[22] Yet, and as Messner argues, there are still defenders of the sex role theory in the 1990s (he gives the example of Mirra Komarovsky's study of the concept of social role). The language of the sex role theory is present in the general public and the media, as well as in most men's rights organizations (Messner 1998, 259).

> key intellectual underpinnings are the feminist analysis of gender as a structure of social relations, especially a structure of power relations; sociological concerns with subcultures and issues of marginalization and resistance; and post-structuralist analyses of the making of identities in discourse, and the interplay of gender with race, sexuality, class and nationality. (Connell 2000, 8) [23]

Most social scientists agree with the feminist argument that any adequate theory of men and masculinity has to deal with the concept of power (Connell, Kimmel, Brittan, Segal). However, these theories also face the "danger" of adopting feminist visions about men, what has gripped the left wing of men's sexual politics since the mid 70s (Carrigan *et al.* 578-81).

Connell names this structure in which gender has been coined as "power relations" and affirms that "[t]he main axis of power in the contemporary European/American gender order is the overall subordination of women and dominance of men—the structure Women's Liberation named 'patriarchy'" (Connell 2001, 36). He believes that this model still persists despite resistance of many kinds. This structured domination that favours men has been internalised thoughout the years, and issues of male power have been avoided in much of the early literature written by men, as Barbara Ehrenreich already noted in her 1983's *The Hearts of Men*.

That is the reason why some scholars have urged for different approaches to issues of gender and power. For example, critics Carrigan, Connell and Lee proposed a strong radical analysis of

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[23] In relation to this issue, Connell gives many examples of studies with ethnographic and life-history methods as key research techniques, like the one made by Herdt in 1981 about a highland community in Papua New Guinea or, more recently, the one presented by Mood in 1994 about a gold mine in South Africa under the apartheid, to name just a few.

masculinity in their 1985's article "Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity". In it, they insist on a new body of work that faces the facts of sexual power without evasion or simplification. Three steps, they believe, open this possibility up: first, sexual power should be considered as part of the sex categories; second, the analysis of masculinity has to be related to other currents in feminism; and third, the analysis needs to consider the developments in social theories in previous years (552). Taking into account the year this article was written in, 1985, these critics' proposal remain innovative in the sense that it urges for a new sociology of masculinity, a realist sociology that, according to them, "converges among feminism, gay liberation and contemporary socialism, psychoanalysis, and the history and sociology of practice" (553). These coalitions among feminists, gay men and progressive heterosexual men are necessary for the reconstruction of masculinity.

Thus, a developing debate of the literature on masculinity and power deals with the implications of the concept "hegemonic masculinity". The notion was first analysed formally by Carrigan, Connell and Lee in the previously mentioned article, which extensively critiqued the "male sex role" approach. The concept of hegemonic masculinity was soon integrated into sociological studies of gender, and Connell's *Gender and Power* (1987) became the most quoted source for the term. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as a gender strategy that assures the dominance of men and the subordination of women. This scheme generates dominance not only over women but also over other—subordinated or marginal—masculinities. While it is commonly agreed among scholars that this concept of "hegemonic masculinity" entails an ideal form of masculinity connected with the institutions of male dominance, it has been the origin of many debates and objections. Much of this literature considers hegemonic masculinity as negative, violent and

dominating, something Connell himself has denied in his response to these critiques. Moreover, many scholars use the term to indicate a type that is easily reproduced in mass media, literature and advertisement through the figure of the hero. Yet, Connell's intention was, I believe, to define a strategy that changes along with dominant institutions. In any case, Connell's use of the term provoked confusion among scholars, in spite of its utility.

In *Masculinity and Power* (1989), Arthur Brittan sees the necessity of differentiating three terms which often tend to be confused in many discourses: masculinity, masculinism and patriarchy.[24] While masculinity, as it was previously suggested, "refers to those aspects of men's behaviour that fluctuate over time" (3), masculinism

> is the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination. As such, it is the ideology of patriarchy. Masculinism takes it for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres. Moreover, the masculine ideology is not subject to the vagaries of fashion—it tends to be relatively resistant to change. In general, masculinism gives primacy to the belief that gender is not negotiable—it does not accept evidence from feminist and other sources that the relationships between men and women are political and constructed nor, for that matter, does it allow for the possibility that lesbianism and homosexuality are not forms of deviance or abnormality, but are alternative forms of gender commitment. (Brittan 4)

Brittan assumes, then, that masculinism is a dominant ideology that naturalises male domination and that is reproduced and

[24] I have previously mentioned masculinist ideology when I referred to some men's movements. Beynon associates this term to physical power, aggression and competition (see section 1.2 in this work).

reaffirmed in the household, in the economy and in politics (6). He believes that masculinism has never been under attack, not even when there was a great deal of gender and sexual experimentation, as was the case in the sixties and the early seventies, because gender relations have remained relatively constant (6). Thus, "[t]he great amount of attention given to the increased participation of men in the household chores and the emphasis on 'democratic' family relationships did not, in any marked way, alter these gender relations" (Brittan 6). As an example he refers to the return, despite the feminist analysis and demystification of patriarchy, to conservative politics in the U.S.A. and England just when his book was being written—the 80s.[25]

Brittan's words lead me to think that, in spite of the different range of individual masculinities we may construct, there is still a dominant definition of masculinity, based on power structures, that is very difficult to dismantle and, that, inevitably, constructs all those "out of the norm" definitions. When Brittan refers to the existence of a "hierarchic heterosexuality" (18) that structures gender relations and that is always in the process of being interpreted and subverted, he is, in a way, reinforcing this idea. Again, what gives this hierarchical heterosexuality the appearance of durability is "the way in which it is taken for granted and reproduced as if it were normal and natural" (Brittan 18).

Taking into account the gendered nature of institutions, and the changing nature of the term, Connell has recently proposed that the hegemonic form of masculinity in the current world order is the one

[25] Precisely in the 80s, and in order to avoid an emasculation of masculinity, the New Right vigorously constructed aggressive and dominant models of masculinity in the U.S.A, which can be understood as a reaction against the radical feminism of the 70s.

associated with those who control its dominant institutions which he denominates: "transnational business masculinity", a fairly innovative term which defines the business executives who operate in global markets, and the political executives who interact with them (Connell 2001, 369). After all, hegemonic masculinity consists of norms and institutions that actively aim at keeping men's power over women.

Marxist and feminist materialist analyses can be, then, used to understand men's identity. The approach which Edley and Wetherell refer to as "social relations perspective on men" views masculinity as "a set of distinctive *practices* that emerge from men's positioning within a variety of social structures—such as work and the family" (102). Thus, a man's identity depends on the institutions in which he is placed. Researchers who are to adopt this perspective analyse how a man's social class, race and gender can affect his identity (102). Most of this work has focused on social class and the consequences of capitalism for both working and middle class men (Edley and Wetherell 102). Following this argument, men's aggressiveness, competitiveness and lack of emotions reflect the ways in which they are situated within our current mode of economic production (103). Capitalism encourages, then, men to behave in ways we consider typically masculine. Critics like Tolston and Seidler affirm that working class men are more likely to dominate the private sphere than middle class men because the former do not feel powerful enough at work. As Petersen argues in his account of the male body superiority:

> the concept of the working body/body at work is a heavily gendered one, although it has been increasingly politicised through feminist efforts to make visible the non-visible, unpaid work undertaken mainly by women in the private sphere, and to make men take a greater share of domestic labours. (Petersen 49)

Tolston recognises Western society's tendency of defining masculinity within the frameworks of work:

> In Western, industrialized, capitalist societies, definitions of masculinity are bound up with definitions of work. Whether it is in terms of physical strength or mechanical expertise, or in terms of ambition and competitiveness, the qualities needed by the successful worker are closely related to those of the successful man. As individuals, men are brought up to value work, as an end itself, and to fix their personal identities around particular occupations. The roots of gender identity are interfused with expectations of achievement—'becoming someone' through working, 'making something of yourself'. It is this personal identity that insists on 'the right to work', to be a breadwinner for the family, and which is threatened by layoff or redundancy. (Tolston 12-13)

There is now a substantial body of research about the significance of the public/private division of labour for the domination of men over women. Petersen, for example, asserts the idea of 'success' for males in the modern West "is bound up with paid labours, and with being the breadwinner and head of the household" (Petersen 49). Although the notion of male-as-breadwinner is being threatened in the late twentieth century due to changing gender definitions, Petersen and many other authors consider that nowadays successful masculine identity is still strongly linked to paid labour.

In contrast to Marxist perspectives, feminist materialists point out that the sexual division of labour within the home is as important for defining masculinity as class division in paid work. A number of feminist theories, like Hartmann's or Delphy's, argue for example that men's distance and empathy towards others is due to their lack of involvement in childcare, since they never have to develop these qualities (Edley and Wetherell 104). Both Marxist and feminist materialist theories "share the view that to understand men we have to understand their material and economic position and their social practices both at home and at work" (Pease 23).

There are different approaches to power that contribute to the understanding of gender relations. Connell highlights two main approaches that, according to him, are not exclusive but inclusive. On one hand, and as it has already been suggested, we have power operating through institutions and, on the other, we should consider discursive power, the one that operates through the ways we talk, write and conceptualise—the latter one popularised by Michel Foucault (Connell 2002, 59). Foucault's account that bodies are discursively constructed within systems of power has influenced many theories on men, and thus, many scholars have studied how some discourses "have classified, represented and helped to control human bodies, emphasising how systems of knowledge function as part of an apparatus of power" (Connell 2000, 19). This approach has been particularly useful in relation to sport. Scholars like Petersen or Butler have relied on Foucault's power/knowledge theory to develop their own gender analyses. [26]

One of Petersen's starting premises in his controversial work *Unmasking the Masculine* (1998) is that masculinity has been "essentialised" and that this has provided a major impediment to theoretical and political work (3). He argues in his book that "essentialism and universalism are intrinsic to Western thought" and, therefore, "their elimination will require a radical change in epistemology" (Petersen 6). He claims, then, for a critical analysis of the epistemology of masculinity. For such an analysis, he considers necessary an account of how male bodies have been considered objects and sites of power, and how this affects men's identity.

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[26] According to Connell, of all materialistic analyses of men and masculinity, the most original one is the work of the Norwegian scholar Holter in the 70s. Holter's analysis considers masculinity and femininity as historically specific features of social life in modernity (Connell 2000, 22). An emphasis on institutions is the key, then, to the problem of gender.

In relation to the topic of the male body and its connotations of power, Connell has argued that "[t]he social definition of men as holders of power is translated not only into mental body images and fantasies, but into muscle tensions, posture, the feel and texture of the body. This is one of the many ways in which the power of men becomes 'naturalized'" (Connell 1987, 85).[27] In the chapter entitled "Male bodies that matter" Petersen assumes that there are some male bodies which 'matter' more than others and, therefore

> [t]here is a need for a more systematic analysis of how male bodies have been constructed through scientific and cultural practices as 'naturally' different from female bodies and how particular male bodies, namely the bodies of white, European, middle-class, heterosexual men, have been constructed as the standard for measuring and evaluating other bodies. (Petersen 41)

He is urging, then, for methods of deconstruction to expose the ways in which power configures some male bodies as normal or natural and others as unnatural.[28] The bodily ideal that has come to dominate the definition of masculinity is linked to muscles, and as Kenneth R. Dutton has explained, the muscular body has been both a power and a pleasure symbol for Western cultures (Dutton 16). Moreover, this muscular body has, especially from the end of the 19th

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[27] The traditional idea of the body as a site for reflecting power works in mainstream Hollywood cinema. Hence, strong male bodies are normally aligned with powerful heroes. Moreover, and as it will be argued in chapter two of this work, images of the masculine in Hollywood cinema tend to be depicted either as "hard" or "soft" depending on their connotations of power. Probably, one of the most notable examples of the hard body in Hollywood cinema is the armoured character of The Terminator as embodied by muscular actor Arnold Schwarzenegger. His body has been the target of numerous readings and interpretations. Issues about the male body and identity will be also taken up later in this work when dealing with the types of masculinity in contemporary SF cinema. As these films show, male identity is affected by conventional readings of the male body. Images of the body on screen stand, then, for contemporary gender politics.

[28] The idea of the body as a cultural performance was already exploited by Butler in *Bodies that Matter* (1993).

century onwards, signified both sexual power and potency. This innate masculine sexual power contributes to the perpetuation of masculinism which, according to Brittan, tends to give a special status to male sexuality:

> It is often regarded as being some kind of primordial force which sweeps everything before it. It is sharply distinguished from feminine sexuality which, until very recently, was seen as being passive and male dependent. Male sexuality is constructed as autonomous, adventurous and exploratory. Of course the reality is far different from the image. Very few men are sexual athletes who can meet the Hollywood performance requirements popularized by Clint Eastwood and Burt Lancaster. (Brittan 46)

Hollywood provides, then, models of masculinism.[29] We find a discrepancy between cultural expectations and men's actual behaviour.[30] Precisely because of this demand, some mature men feel the need of taking power tools such as Viagra. Bordo contends that Viagra for men, like cosmetic surgery for women, is not about restoring reproductive function or sexual pleasure but "about meeting and keeping up with the cultural standards and expectations of masculinity and femininity" (Bordo 42-3).

Men's possession of a "primordial force" is linked to the naturalisation of male aggression. Petersen argues that in contexts such as competitive sports, military and organisational life, male competitiveness, toughness, and desire to control are taken as indicative of a natural male aggressivity:

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[29] Some of these models—like the muscular action type or the western hero—will be taken up in chapter two in this work.

[30] Other accounts on male sexuality rely on the cultural force of sexuality. Andrew Tolston in *The Limits of Masculinity* (1977) affirms that "although certain aspects of sexual behaviour are obviously functions of biological sex (including genetic aptitude and physical development), by far the major part of sexuality is cultural (encompassing personality, social behaviour; and involving symbolic meanings transmitted in linguistic communication)" (Tolston12).

> The idea that men are biologically predisposed to fight, as a survival mechanism, and in defence of their 'property' (for example women), has been an enduring one in the twentieth century, having gained credence with the development of Darwinian-inspired instinct theory in the late nineteenth century. (Petersen 55)

The idea that male aggression was a consequence of the frustration of the "fighting instinct" or "hunting instinct" was supported by some psychological accounts of the 19th century which claimed that, when aroused, this instinct "was likely to burst forth, often in unpredictable ways, and to override other instincts such as 'sympathy' and even the 'paternal instinct'" (Petersen 55-6).[31] This line of thought influenced a range of new psychological theories about aggression in the 20th century based on the idea that observed sex differences in aggression have a biological basis (56). Apart from these psychological accounts, hormonal theories and human genetics have also provided us with biological explanations for male aggression. Even from the 70s and 80s onwards, when biological accounts started to be displaced in favour of social learning theories, there is "an innate predisposition to seek appropriate role identity which, for men, includes expressions of aggressive behaviour" (Petersen 57).

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[31] Competitiveness, as I suggested before, is another feature traditionally associated to men that has been celebrated in Western literature, art and the media and that, and as Brittan suggests, has been accepted as the truth, not only by audiences but also by many politicians, academics and intellectuals (Brittan 77). Nineteenth-century social Darwinism, for example, taking the "man-the-hunter" thesis as a starting point argues that "[i]nstead of competing directly with each other for the best game and sexual prizes, men now compete in the political and economic arenas" (Brittan 78). This ideology is still present, according to Brittan, in the literature of the extreme Right, and in the arguments of the anti-feminist backlash. Likewise, it is given credibility in the pronouncements of politicians who "see competition as being a law of nature underpinning economic life and social and individual well-being" (79). According to this perspective, this would justify men's primacy in the political and economic arenas.

Many sociologists and social theorists have demonstrated, then, how masculinity is socially reproduced within the context of gender relations. Yet these perspectives have been critiqued and it is worth mentioning the fact that, despite the important developments occurring since the 70s, many authors agree in affirming that the influence of functionalism remains and thus "the nature-nurture dualism continues to bedevil not only the 'everyday world' but also many of the sociological and psychological explorations of men and masculinities" (Whitehead 42).

As paradoxically as it seems, and despite the success of the social sciences after the 70s, the essentialist approach is present in some contemporary analyses of masculinity which still rely on men's biological superiority. These essentialist views assume a "natural" dominance of masculinity, which is reflected in men's physical power, male sexuality, aggression and competitiveness. As the psychiatrist Anthony Clare assumes at the very beginning of his book *On Men. Masculinity in Crisis* (2000), "[t]he one biological difference between the sexes on which everybody is agreed is that whereas women possess two X-shaped sex chromosomes, men possess one X and a little Y-shaped chromosome" (Clare 6). The Y chromosome, he continues, means "superior male strength, stature, mass of muscle, sleight of hand, speed of foot" (6); attributes that "have been of considerable value in a world dominated by a need for physical power and energy and a raw, brutal, martial strength" (6). Thus,

> [w]e have become accustomed to thinking of 'real' men as those who labour in the iron, steel and coal industries, in shipbuilding, lumberjacking, pre-mechanised farming. Our martial heroes have been almost entirely male, in the fantasies

> and the realities of hand-to-hand combat, of sheer physical guts, the will to survive, athletic derring-do. (Clare 6-7)[32]

In exploring the challenged state of contemporary masculinity, Clare has referred to the "phallus" as an anthropological term that refers not only to the penis but also incorporates notions of potency, virility, manliness, strength and power (Clare 9). His premise is that the phallic man, authoritative, dominant and assertive is starting to die, and now "the question is whether a new man will emerge phoenix-like in his place or whether man himself will become largely redundant" (9).

According to many scholars, a perspective that avoids determinism and tries to understand the ways in which masculinity and power interrelate is, as suggested before, the cultural perspective on men. The basic premise of this cultural perspective is that every culture in the world must contain its own specific set of ideas or themes that relate to men and masculinity (Edley and Wetherell 195). This implies, then, that there is not a singular pattern of masculinity but contradictory representations of it instead, as it will be debated in following sections. Yet, this cultural approach that prevails within the most recent work on masculinity is not, in Connell's words, free of controversy.[33]

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[32] This topic will be at stake in Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005), when the protagonist—Ray (Cruise)—is firstly characterised as a crane operator worker. Nevertheless, and as it will be contended in chapter four, he is never considered as a "real hero" but rather as a frightened and vulnerable man, unable to handle his "particular" familiar situation.

[33] Connell refers to some critics that have recently emphasised such problems. Hearn (1996), for example, has raised doubts about the usefulness of the concept "masculinities" and Petersen (1998) has charged Men's Studies with "epistemological naivety, narrow mindedness and lack of concern with power" (Connell 2000,15).

When dealing with recent study, Connell refers to a series of conclusions from the new social body of research about masculinity. A key conclusions is that there is not one pattern of masculinity and, therefore, we need to speak of "masculinities" instead. This leads to the second deduction that argues that there are still relations of hierarchy between the different masculinities and, as a result, some of them are considered dominant while others are subordinate. This fact also implies that there is generally some hegemonic form of masculinity that is the most honoured or desired. Another conclusion derived from recent research is that masculinities are defined collectively in culture and are sustained in institutions. Furthermore, he refers to "bodies as arenas", which implies that men's bodies are addressed, defined and disciplined, and given pleasures by the gendered order of society. Connell also refers to the fact that it is lately admitted that masculinities are "active constructions" and, therefore, they are not programmed in our genes or socially fixed but they come into existence as people act. The last conclusion that the critic points out is the internal complexity and contradiction of the term as well as its dynamic nature and tendency to change.

The vast amount of recent research about gender identity, men and masculinity accounts for the gradual importance of these issues not only within academic circles but also in the public arena, while evidencing the problematic nature of the very term. As previously suggested, the prevalent cultural approach has led many authors to talk about "masculinities" and to rethink assumptions upon which identities have been constructed.[34]

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[34] John MacInnes in *The End of Masculinity* (1998) argues that masculinity as a gender trait does not exist, since it is not a property of persons at all. His starting point is that we must be aware that gender is something that is socially constructed and not naturally ordained and, therefore, "we must also become aware that it is not determined by sex" (64). If we follow this awareness to its logical construction, he

1.3.2. MASCULINITY IN HISTORY

As mentioned above, it is commonly agreed that culture is responsible for the construction of the concept of masculinity and that, therefore, there is not a "single, consistent image of manhood, but a range of quite different, even contradictory representations" (Edley and Wetherell 106). This fabricated image of masculinity varies, then, depending on context and historical time and therefore many different configurations of maleness may coexist at the same time and place. However, a certain definition of masculinity always tends to predominate above the rest, which comes to stand as the most accepted and which some authors have referred to as the "masculine stereotype". George Mosse in his pioneering work *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1996) deals with the history of the masculine stereotype and its political consequences, addressing a widespread manly ideal. This ideal of masculinity is basic, he claims, for the self-definition of modern society. He focuses on the meaning of modern masculinity asserting that this concept could serve a variety of causes but, nevertheless, it was concrete and definite enough, constituting a coherent system that can easily be examined (3). One of the basic claims in his book is that during its relatively short time—from the second half of the 18th century onwards—the "manly ideal changed very little, projecting much the same so-called manly virtues, such as will power, honor, and courage" (3-4). There have been, then, no dramatic transformations, "even if towards the end of the twentieth century the pace of change has accelerated" (4). He believes, then, in

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claims, "we must realize that if is not determined by sex, then gender, at least in the sense of properties possessed by men and women because of their biological sex, cannot exist" (64). Since MacInnes sees the concept of masculinity as an invention, he does not make any attempt in this book to define different types of masculinity or to trace their historical relations.

the durability of the late 18th century masculine ideal in modern times.[35]

In the previous section, the definition of hegemonic masculinity as linked to notions of power and domination was stated. The next logical step for this analysis is to contextualise this hegemonic masculinity and to show how it is adapted to certain historical periods and to specific places. Thus, in this section I will deal with the constructions of masculinity that have been considered as the most accepted ones through the years in U.S. culture. Hegemonic masculinity, Tosh contends, has a political side since it can de identified as "the masculine norms and practices which are the most valued by the politically dominant class and which help to maintain its authority" (48). As previously noted, Connell describes the contemporary hegemonic masculinity of our capitalist society as transnational business masculinity. Thus, this identification of masculinity with the dominant class has many implications for society in general. For practical purposes, I will offer a brief overview of U.S. hegemonic masculinity from the 16th century to the present. Since the meaning of hegemonic masculinity is, as stated in the previous section, sometimes controversial and problematic, I will tend to use the terms "normative" or "masculine stereotype" when referring to this universally constructed category.

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[35] Mosse's survey of the "manly ideal" in Western Europe is essential for understanding how this model is, in a sense, universalised and, in spite of the different interpretations that society establishes for the ideal manhood at each time, it does not suffer any considerable change from its origins—end of the 18th century—till the end of the contemporary era—the end of the 20th century. Following his account, the stereotype of modern masculinity "was regarded as of one piece from its very beginning: body and soul, outward appearance and inward virtue were supposed to form one harmonious whole, a perfect construct where every part was in its place"(5). This stereotyping meant that men were not considered as individuals but as types, which, in turn, has to do with the interest that the new sciences of the 18th and 19th centuries showed towards classification. All men were, consequently, supposed to "conform to an ideal masculinity"(6).

I have already suggested that some scholars agree that the existence of a fixed pattern of masculinity has always worked, and is still alive in many different societies.[36] This male ideal was adapted by different cultures, but the U.S.A. especially imposed and universalised its own images of virility, mainly through its representations on screen, as we will see in the next chapter. This forced image of masculinity is what Anthony Easthope calls "the masculine myth", a myth "imposed by the stories and images of the dominant culture" out of which men cannot entirely live since it pervades the culture (167). In this sense, the normative masculinity or masculine stereotype, although bound to be altered by socio-cultural factors, stands as a more fixed term in contraposition with what Mosse denominates "exceptional definitions of manliness" (12), which also exist at every time and that do not correspond to this manly ideal.

When dealing with a historical periodisation of masculinity in the U.S.A, many approaches and focuses have been taken into account. This seems logical if we consider the diversity of factors and historical experiences that have affected men's lives throughout the history of the U.S.A. The evolution of the concept of masculinity responds, then, to socio-cultural factors and, therefore, different interpretations and focuses have been developed depending not only on the historical time, but also on other factors such as region, place, context, etc. The term masculinity carries, then, an uncountable cultural baggage and its dominant or normative definition at each time constitutes the starting point for any gender-based criticism, since this model can be questioned, challenged, imitated or appraised.

[36] Badinter associates this model of masculinity with "the tough guy", defined by her as a "sexual animal with women, but who does not become attached to any woman; a creature who meets his male counterparts only in competition, war, or sports" (130).

Although attempts to write the history of masculinity began in the U.S.A. in the 70s as a historicisation of men's roles, it is a broad issue nowadays which includes many approaches.

Joseph and Elizabeth Pleck in their volume *The American Man* (1980) identify four general periods of masculinity, which are (1) the Agrarian Patriarchy, 1630-1820, (2) the Commercial Age, 1820-1860, (3) the Strenuous Life period, 1861-1919, and (4) the Companionate Providing period, 1920-1965.[37] While recognising the arbitrariness of their periodisation, they accurately include in their anthology topics dealing with power relations in these four periods of U.S. history. Apart from this contribution, two works are considered fundamental in illustrating the history of manhood: Rotundo's *American Manhood* and Kimmel's *Manhood in America*. Both works assume the construction of manhood and deal with the different phases through which notions of masculinity have developed up to the present. Taking as a starting point that manliness is a human invention, Rotundo deals with its history, assuming three phases, each of which includes its own images and expectations of men. The first phase, which he calls "communal manhood", developed in the social world of colonial New England, that is, before 1800. The second phase he refers to is the so-called "self-made manhood", emerging at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century and becoming the dominant cultural form up to the end of the 19th century. It is at the turn of the century when a "new passionate manhood", more related to passion and aggression, emerged in the U.S.A.

[37] Clyde Franklin uses and examines each period in his book *The Changing Definition of Masculinity* to show the shifting definition of masculinity depending on the historical context.

While it is commonly agreed among scholars that Rotundo makes a great contribution to the study of the history of masculinity in the U.S.A. (Griffen 960; Griswold 103-4), the limitations that this study entails have also been noted, since the voices he uses to describe northern middle-class men "are too few to determine the significance of variations in outlook and experience between groups of the same class" (Griffen 960). Apart from that, Rotundo's analysis is of immense value for this present work, and I quite agree with Griswold when he affirms in a review of *American Manhood* that it "will become one of the classic studies of American manhood and masculinity" (104).

Likewise, Kimmel divides into different phases the history of manhood. He starts his classification with the period between 1776 and 1865 when it is the time of, in Kimmel words, "the making of the self-made man in America". This type of manhood is to be followed by "the unmaking of the self-made man at the turn of the century". Kimmel goes further in time than Rotundo and deals with the first half of the 20th century and "the new man in a new century" to finish with the contemporary crisis of masculinity.[38] Kimmel bases his study of masculinity on three male role models that he takes from Tyler's play *The Contrast*. These are the "Genteel Patriarch", the "Heroic Artisan" and the "Self-Made Man". Of the three it is the last one that prevails until the close of the 19th century.

[38] This book, also destined to become a classic and appraised by many scholars (Coltrane, Cohen), is not exempt from weaknesses. In a review by Gail Bederman, it is criticised for the fact that, while Kimmel denounces a normative construction of manhood, he exclusively uses examples of white, middle or upper class men. Thus, Bederman affirms that "by taking only white, privileged men as historical actors, and positioning "others" as simple "excluded", Kimmel's narrative misleadingly implies that black and working-class men have not actively defined "American Manhood"" (1997, 21)

Both works, although obviously stressing different aspects, offer a similar vision of manhood, the turn of the century being a key point for the development of a model of manhood which will pervade in the next decades.

Before the 19th century, life in the colonies was based, in Pleck and Pleck's terms, on an agrarian patriarchy by which men were favoured within the few institutions that formed the colonies. Rotundo recognises the prevalence of the "communal manhood", a model which assumed that "a man's identity was inseparable from the duties he owed to his community" (Rotundo 2). Men's superiority was especially expressed in man's role as the head of the household, which was socially significant. At this point, Rotundo affirms: "[i]f there was one position in society that expressed the essence of manhood for early New Englanders, it was man's role as head of the household. Every person—young or old, male or female—had to find a place within a family, but the family head could only be a male" (Rotundo 10). Thus, being masculine before 1800 meant being an aggressive and competitive man who believed in the familiar "double standard" regarding male and female sexual activities (Franklin 6; Pleck and Pleck 1980, 8). Kimmel recognises that the real problem was that while the colonies remained in British hands "it seemed to all that manly autonomy and self control were impossible" (18).

This communal manhood started to change at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th giving way to what critics refer to as "self-made manhood". Specifically, Kimmel places the appearance of the self-made man between the years 1776 and 1865. It is at this moment when "[a]n old standard rooted in the life of the community and the qualities of a man's character gave way to a new standard based on individual achievement" (Kimmel 1996, 18). This new model of manhood is characterised by "success in the market, individual achievement, mobility, and wealth" (23). There were

multiple events and ideological developments at the turn of the 18th century and this new model "emerged as part of a broader series of changes: the birth of republican government, the spread of a market economy, the concomitant growth of the middle class itself" (Rotundo 3). The economic and political life was now based on the free play of individual interests (3). This was a time for opportunities where the individual developed his initiative and became the most important unit of society. Values on which this competitive economy depended became identified with ideals of manhood. Rotundo argues that this shift in thinking from community to individual greatly affected the notions of manhood:

> Men rejected the idea that they had a fixed place in any hierarchy, be it cosmic or social. They no longer thought of themselves as part of an organic community from which they drew personal identity. And they ceased to see themselves as segments in an unbroken line. The metaphors by which men had defined themselves were losing their power in the new century. (Rotundo19)

Male passions were now given freer rein and a "man defined his manhood not by his ability to moderate the passions but by his ability to channel them effectively" (Rotundo 3). As Pleck and Pleck notice, males were now considered as the more passionate sex and the goal of the good woman was to help them control these aggressive passions (1980, 14-5). Accordingly, any man who could not control his aggressions was not a man but rather was considered a woman or a boy. Thus, "throughout most of the nineteenth century, manhood was a matter of age *and* gender" and therefore "[m]any of the traits that marked a man were found wanting in both women and boys" (Rotundo 22). All these differences between men and women promoted the foundation of the doctrine of the separate spheres, which evolved in the early 19th century. According to this doctrine, the husband's sphere was the public life and home was the woman's domain. The

emerging middle class shaped, then, the concept of manhood.[39] *Manhood in America* also recognises that this new middle class home also served as a balm to soothe men from the roughness of public life outside the feminised space of home.

At the end of the 19th century, we find what Rotundo calls a new "passionate manhood". Kimmel also describes men's experiences from the end of the Civil War (1865) to the first decades of the twentieth century, which he refers to as "the unmaking of the self-made man at the turn of the century". In that era, bourgeois manhood embraced new ideas and men had to come to terms with a new industrialised

[39] In Europe, the coming of the bourgeois culture occurred a bit earlier and therefore, a similar model was at work in England as early as the 18th century. At this time England saw a revival of interest in the ancient Greek ideal of male beauty. The archaeologist and art historian Johan Joachim Winckelmann (1717-68) helped to establish the young Greek athlete as the embodiment of the ideal man. This idea of beauty linked physical and spiritual perfection and was also found in earlier times. Mosse refers to the medieval times when notions of chivalry prevailed by the medieval knight and the ideal man were associated to physical strength, courage, and loyalty. Also, the Renaissance saw the emergence of a model of masculinity built on this early ideal but which took the attributes of the courtier: good manners, cultivation, and liberty of spirit. The 18th century saw, then, a reworking of these earlier ideas and emphasised features like balance, proportion, moderation and control, which formed part of the "ideal man". The adjustment of older aristocratic ideas of manhood to the middle-class sensibility was an important step in the construction of modern masculinity (Mosse 19) and "[i]f the characteristic of courage, sangfroid, and even compassion remained as ideals, they were now changed, stripped of much of their remaining violence, and embedded in moral imperatives" (19). The triumph of the bourgeois culture at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries meant a new moral and religious enterprise, and therefore, the creation of what some authors have referred to as "Christian manliness" (Segal 104-5). This model stressed moral and spiritual precepts over autonomy and independence becoming manly values worth praising (105). Providing the family with a proper moral and religious life became the main aim of the marketplace, and therefore of society, which established a male public sphere and a female private one at home. This image of the intellectual moral man pervaded in prose and poetry and lead to the emergence of a "New Man" of this age: an intellectual, refined, emotional and tender human being. Mosse believes that the structural changes that modern society experienced did not affect the male stereotype, which was apparently not dependent upon a specific economic, social and political constellation. However, masculinity was in fact "dependent upon a certain moral imperative, upon certain normative standards of appearance, behaviour, and comportment" (8).

and urban society. According to Rotundo, the most dramatic change was in the positive value put on male passions (Rotundo 5):

> In the closing years of the century, ambition and combativeness became virtues for men; competitiveness and aggression were exalted as ends in themselves. Toughness was now admired, while tenderness was a cause for scorn. Even sexual desire, an especially worrisome male passion in the nineteenth century, slowly gathered legitimacy. Indeed, the body itself became a vital component of manhood: strength, appearance, and athletic skill mattered more than in previous centuries. (Rotundo 6)

Thus, the dominant definition of masculinity varied again and became more associated with physical strength and activity. This change of attitude in the U.S.A. and Great Britain may be the result of the anxiety created after the American Civil War and the Crimean War. Both countries aimed at defending their nations and thus, the exaltation of the male body and strength was highly accepted by society as a whole.[40] At this time it was believed that by strengthening the body, one could also strengthen the will (Petersen 47). Competitive sports and bodybuilding were believed to offer benefits in every aspect of life. As Petersen notices, in Britain, sports and athletics gradually became compulsory in public schools between 1860 and 1880 (47-8). Also, the celebration of muscular manliness was articulated by many authors of that time.

As Clyde Franklin comments when explaining Pleck and Pleck's (1980) classification of masculinity:

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[40] Moreover, there was in Great Britain a great development of manufacture and industrialisation, and therefore, a movement from country to town. Darwin's theory of evolution became the scientific basis for the praising of a strong human being and the elimination of the weak species and, thus, he claimed in *Origin of Species* (1859) that natural selection functions for the good of each being and that all corporeal and mental endowments tend to progress towards perfection.

> Masculinity during this period [1861-1919] continued to imply that males had questionable moral standards, control over most affairs in the business world, male subcultures, and an emphasis on being physically active and fit (with the rise of organized male athletics and the founding of the Boy Scouts of America by Ernest Seton, who blamed females for boys' flabby muscles). (Franklin 7-8)

This ideal of manhood associated with tough masculinity was also interpreted by many critics as a crisis produced as a reaction to the emerging power of the "New Woman" and by the growth of an outstanding gay subculture. In relation to this issue, there are many historians and gender scholars that have concluded that the modern vision of masculinity at the end of the 19th century is problematic (Mosse, Badinter, Carnes, Bederman, Kimmel, among many others). Definitions of maleness have always been in constant change but at specific moments masculinity becomes seriously questioned. The 1890s (together with the 1950s and the present times) are believed to be key moments for the development of new visions of masculinity and the consequent reassertion of toughness as a mechanism to overcome such an anxiety. Badinter argues that male anxiety was aroused as a consequence of the new demands of industrialisation and democracy. Men's lives changed and new feminist demands were heard. This anxiety varied depending on the country, but it became more evident in the U.S.A.[41] Women in the States, in the same way as they did in

[41] According to Badinter, this state of restlessness was not the first one. In the 17th and 18th centuries the so-called French *précieuses*—ladies of refined sentiment and language—questioned for the first time the role of men and male identity, and made efforts to create a new ideal of womanhood (10). The appearance of these women demanding freedom and the inversion of traditional social values, can be considered, following Badinter, the first expression of proto-feminism in France. They demanded a reversal of the dominant model of masculinity, which overvalued men's physical strength and implied men's total dominance over women, especially that of husbands over their wives (Badinter 11). Due to the social influence these emancipated women had, some noblemen adopted what were considered "feminine traits" in their external appearance and behaviour. Thus, rejecting the traditional concept of virility, they accepted the rules suggested by the *précieuses* and they

Europe, claimed the right to fulfil roles other than those of mother and housewife (18). Consequently, this emerging "New Woman" provoked a crisis of male identity, since men did not know how to be "worthy of the name" (Badinter 19). As a result, men tried to show more concern with activities that could reaffirm male superiority. Thus, football and baseball became very popular at that time, as they exalted men's physical strength; boy-scouts also contributed to turn children into "manly men" (19). Theodore Roosevelt in the U.S.A. and Baden-Powell in Britain were considered the incarnation of traditional manly values, and therefore, they were praised as national heroes. They exemplified "the sporting, hunting, patriotic and conformist virtues of the new imperialistic all-conquering white manhood" (Segal 111). In the same way, literature and cinema were provided with new powerful heroes—the figure of the cowboy for example—in order to calm that male anxiety.[42] In the U.S.A, Ernest Hemingway, according to many critics, embodied at that time the North American "true virility", not only because of his works, based on action, but also because of a life of hunting, boxing, and manly activities. Edgar Rice Burroughs novel's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912) became an icon representing the contrast

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appeared more delicate in speech and attitude, more civilised, and, on the whole, more feminised. A similar crisis took place in Great Britain between 1688 and 1714, when masculinity was the main subject of many debates that tried to redefine the roles of men and women in marriage, the family and sexuality. The English advocates not only demanded women's freedom, as the French did, but also a whole redefinition of sexual equality. Women, then, wanted to invert traditional gender roles completely, claiming the need for a more "feminine" man. This portrait of the "New Man" caused a fear of homosexuality, and consequently, a general crisis of masculinity.

[42] Gail Bederman in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (1995) discusses the historical meaning of the term "masculinity". She argues that historians are wrong when they refer to the crisis of masculinity of the early 20th century since, first, the term masculinity itself was invented at that time and second, there was no crisis at all but only another step in the making and remaking of gender identities. Middle-class men really believed that men with healthy and strong bodies were superior and hence their interest in achieving it.

between modern civilization and the strong man's control of the natural world.

It would not be until the entrance of the U.S.A. in the Great War in 1917 when this crisis, according to many critics, was finally resolved, as this became "a test of manliness" (Badinter 20). This new ideal of masculinity associated with muscles, pervaded up to the beginning of the 20th century. The period 1920-1950 is covered by Kimmel in the third part of his book "the new man in a new century".

The 20s, which Dunphy defines as "fast, free, and easy", are characterised in the U.S.A. by a gradual dismantling of power structures between the sexes. Women worked outside the home and men's roles as defenders and providers were over. Although the independent woman was still characterised as perverse, traditional notions of masculinity were changing. During the 30s, new assaults on traditional manhood came with the Depression:

> Jobs were scarce; homes and families fell apart. The diaphragm was invented. Birth control was a reality. Restless, rootless men—"hobos"—rode the rails of the United States. Men could no longer provide. Governments began to usurp this traditional role with the beginning of the welfare state. Industrial progress also has a sham, another betrayal. Labor proved powerless. The cowboy was dead and there was no "Home on the Range". (Dunphy 8)

But male heroism re-emerged with the outcome of World War II and "there was a resurgence (albeit brief) of the role of man as defender and protector of woman" (Dunphy 9). Joe L. Dubbert in his book *A Man's Place. Masculinity in Transition* analyses the perils of the masculine mystique since 1940. The entrance of the United States into another world war was essential for the delineation of the American character. Dubbert quotes the words of Jonathan Daniels, who was to become President Roosevelt's administrative assistant, right after the U.S.A. decided to take part in this war and become "magnificently

male again". The 40s, according to Daniels, are times when "Americans stand on a continent as men—men again fighting in the crudest man terms" (quoted in Dubbert 230). Others saw the war as another test of "America's character, perseverance, and courage" (230):

> Manliness during the war encompassed the traditional attributes of courage, endurance, toughness, and a lack of squeamishness when confronted by the dangers of a raging battle. Other features of the masculine image during World War II were a reticence about emotional or idealistic matters and a high regard for sexual competence. (Dubbert 231)

He compares this attitude with the prevailing one during World War I affirming that "there was much less covert community pressure on individuals to enlist in military service to demonstrate their manliness" (231). The real test of manliness during the 40s "was how well a person filled whatever role he chose, regardless of what he did. Combat obviously presented as the situation that still tested manliness most severely and in the most revealing ways, as it had done in all wars" (231). Hollywood also promoted the war "in which American servicemen were gallant, brave, and all, had guts" (Dunphy 233).

Mosse does not refer to change but to variation when dealing with the manly ideal during WW2. Although he recognises that "the war did not pass entirely unnoticed as far as the male stereotype was concerned", he continues affirming that the male stereotype "did not, however, change but once again in immediate terms strengthened some aspects of normative masculinity" (181-2). After all, the masculine stereotype that was constructed in advertisements, film, and literature was linked to the traditional idea of manhood: "clear-cut and fit" (181). A tougher manliness was in fashion, then, after the war ended, reflected by movie stars like Humphrey Bogart or John Wayne,

popular not only in the United States but also in Western Europe (Mosse 182).

After this brief reassertion of traditional role boundaries during the war, another cultural anxiety over gender identity emerged in many countries, especially in the U.S.A, which Kimmel refers to as "the contemporary crisis of masculinity". In the 50s many social and cultural changes started to question traditional roles associated with gender and, therefore, men's superiority in society. Among those changes, women's access to the workplace is, according to Kimmel, what may be considered the greatest transformation of American society in the 20th century (Kimmel 2000, 112). This fact, apart from producing many social and economic consequences, affected men's consciousness, producing a dismantling of the traditional nuclear family of the 50s. This universal family pattern was based on a heterosexual monogamous marriage, in which women's duty was to do the housework, to perform the task of mothering, while men were the money providers. The fact that women started to work outside the house meant that men were not considered the "breadwinners" any longer and that women did not necessarily have to be dependant on them. Apart from this, demands on the part of gay groups were starting to be heard, questioning even more strongly the traditional concept of masculinity. The notion of a second crisis during the 1950s as a response to the changes in that decade has been the object of study of many academics (Gilbert, Cohan, Horrocks, etc) and configures much of the discussion of culture and representation at work in this decade.

Since the 70s, then, many political, social and cultural events, together with a growth of gender consciousness, improved women's situation. Yet, and as some critics have pointed out, by the 80s, precisely when the figure of the hypermasculine man began to appear in the media, "the category white, middle-class, heterosexual and male

was still a privileged category but a much less secure one than before" (Newton 9). As suggested above, the normative construction of masculinity seemed difficult to dismantle, in spite of the social and cultural developments.

By the 90s these economic and social changes meant that women were occupying "spaces" traditionally associated to men, and they no longer dominated economic activity. This caused, according to many critics, a feeling of loss in men, not only of employment but also of a lifestyle and of a privileged position that had placed them over women. It is in this context where a reversal of traditional roles started to be observed, especially in their representations in the media. Thus many adverts were shown depicting unemployed men taking care of their children while their wives became the breadwinners. Men's employment changed in the sense that it did not, in most cases, encourage them to show physical strength and toughness. This new employment opportunity enabled them to enjoy a more direct relationship with women and children, and provoked a change in the meaning of certain male roles. The previous attempt to "masculinise" society decreased little by little.

Messner deals with three significant changes in recent normative U.S. masculinity: the New Fathering, the mythopoetic men's movement and the increase in the prevalence of successful men weeping in public. Yet these shifts in U.S. masculinity do not, he concludes, undermine conventional power structures but they only represent "a shift in the style—not in the social position of power—of hegemonic masculinity (Messner 1993, 733). A lament towards old values of manhood is also perceived by many people who, like Robert Bly and his followers, believe in "the spiritual warrior", one more symbolic ideal of contemporary manhood (Rotundo 287).

As the new millennium approaches, Kimmel contemplates the contemporary crisis of masculinity:

> As we face a new century, American men remain bewildered by the sea of changes in our culture, besieged by the forces of reform, and bereft by the emotional impoverishment of our lives. For straight white middle-class men a virtual siege mentality has set in. (Kimmel 1996, 330)

Consequently, "the Self-Made Man, that model of manhood we have inherited as the only marker of our success as men, leads more than ever before to chronic anxiety and insecurity" (Kimmel 330).

At the beginning of the year 2000, many debates about masculine values developed. These debates are based on men's use of violence against their wives at home, on their use of medical treatments such as Viagra pills in order to reassert their masculinity, or in the increasing number of men who now wish to change their external appearance by means of surgery. The construction of masculinity and its representation through different discourses also shape men's consciousness and attitude towards gender behaviour in society.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning the importance of some contemporary discourses like posmodernism for the challenge of traditional masculinity in U.S. society. Postmodern thought has gradually influenced U.S. culture. In general terms, postmodernism is characterised by the decentralisation of hierarchical values promoted by binary thinking. This has provoked a general sense of uncertainty, dissolution, loss of boundaries and an experience of fragmentation. In this light, it can be argued that postmodernism becomes the foundation for the decentralisation of normative masculinity. David S. Gutterman in "Postmodernism and the Interrogation of Masculinity" deals with this issue and argues that postmodern theories of shifting subjects, indeterminate identities and ascribing agency can be useful

not only for rethinking existing values but also as a framework for seeking social change. In this sense, postmodernism "provides an extraordinary basis for interrogating the cultural scripts of normative masculinity" (Gutterman 61).

Gutterman focuses on two areas where normative masculinity is interrogated: gay male gender identity and the subversive potential of pro-feminist men. He finishes his article by addressing the political and activist implications of postmodern subjectivity and refers to two strategies normally employed when seeking social change: identity politics and coalition politics. Thus, by supporting the belief that the self is indeterminate and subject to change, one can denaturalise traditional markers of identity and create a space where fluidity is maintained. Likewise, the fact of accepting the ambiguity of mobile subjectivities can enable a group to work in coalition in order to achieve a common goal. One can, then, perform fluidity and work in coalitions with others in a contingent world.

Postmodernism becomes, therefore, a useful tool for the search of the destabilisation of traditional gender norms. In the 80s and 90s, Gender Studies were influenced by postmodern thinking, and also dealt with the representation of gender in different postmodern contexts. The term "gender" itself becomes troublesome and unstable if we take into account its artificiality and concern with deconstruction. As suggested earlier, postmodern feminists like Judith Butler have sought to deconstruct binary systems by reconceptualising gender as unstable and performative.

The fluidity of gender can easily be appreciated in bodies where sexual difference becomes problematised. Androgynous bodies, transsexuals, polymorphous bodies, cyborgs, posthuman and hybrid beings in general can be said to epitomise the postmodern concern with gender blending. Moreover, the above-described "New Man"

emerging at the beginning of our current century erases some of the traditional gender markers. In relation to this issue, Mosse, while admitting the existence of the modern male stereotype, recognises that all the cultural changes at the end of what he calls "the new *fin de siècle*" constitute "an unprecedented menace to the masculine stereotype and seemed to threaten its erosion over a period of time" (189). Still, he believes that the old masculine stereotype is present and even the "New Man" shows sometimes nostalgia for so-called real men (190). Likewise, Messner recognises that men are changing in multiple directions (724).

The figure of the androgyne, as either a man with female sex organs or a woman with male genitals, regarded as a monster at the end of the 19th century, becomes another statement directed against normative masculinity and femininity (Mosse 185). Mosse refers to popular American and English entertainers of the 80s and 90s such as David Bowie or Michael Jackson as key figures for the spread of this look far beyond their nations (Mosse 186). Moreover, during the 70s and the 80s a gay subculture established itself affecting the "dominant normative culture" (Mosse 189) and encouraging to make gayness public:

> this was no longer a love that dared not speak its name; newspapers covered almost all aspects of gay life and, above all, advertisements used obviously gay figures to market men's fashions. The homosexual was still stereotyped, but now sometimes in a more positive manner, not exactly manly but still beautiful. (Mosse 189)

Gay male identity becomes, as stated before, another area where normative masculinity becomes interrogated. As Gutterman states, "[t]he conflicts between individual nonnormative sexuality and cultural conceptions of normative maleness create interesting places of slippage where the standards of gender are undermined or contested"

(63). Gutterman gives the example of some facets of gay male culture that are rooted in self-conscious effeminacy, which achieves its clearest manifestation in the figure of the drag. The testimony of a self-identified drag queen serves Gutterman to show how drags, in imitating gender, intend not to mock women, but to show their detachment from normative masculinity. This foreshadows, once more, Butler's performative consideration of gender.

1.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced the origin of studies on men and masculinity while stressing the importance of literature by pro-feminist scholars. As it has been contended here, within the hierarchy imposed by gender, masculinity has been historically "structured" in a dominant position over femininity, and this imposed dominance of men over women gave rise to the feminist movement in the first place. As suggested before, feminists tried to rescue women from the oppression they had experienced throughout history and they developed a consistent theoretical frame. After a period of time of pioneering work by feminist scholars, public opinion became aware of the centrality of gender, in so far as it shapes social life and culture. Men's movements have given new meanings to the concept of "masculinity", which suggests that the term is culturally constructed. Thus, many perspectives and approaches contribute to undestand the meaning of gender and power relations in U.S. society. We have seen how most debates about masculinity and power have tended to be either biologically or culturally biased.

Nowadays, issues of men and masculinity occupy an important place in gender accounts and cultural theories. After so many discussions about masculinity that assume that it is a social creation, one might ask whether it really exists or if it is simply an "invention", as McInness already proposed in 1998. Yet, and if we think of masculinity as an ideology, it does not necessarily mean that it does not exist. Indeed, masculinity has proved to be constructed within the matrices or race, class, and sexual orientation, and grounded on historical factors affecting these constructions. As it has been argued in this chapter, the concept of masculinity has shifted throughout history, evidencing its constructed nature and assuming a number of characteristics.

Important topics discussed here have been male identity and power relations. Still nowadays we can find men occupying privileged positions within society. As Kimmel has pointed out "everywhere we look, we see the institutional expression of that power—in state and national legislatures, on the boards of directors of every major U.S corporation or law firm, and in every school and hospital administration" (Kimmel 2001, 282). Yet, and partly thanks to gender activists, male power starts to be seen as challenged in the 21st century, and the image of the "New Man" emerges as a fresh way of understanding men in a time of technological change and globalisation.

As the next chapter aims at illustrating, the concept of "masculinity" has remained complex and entailed contradictory readings in many fields. When focusing on the construction of masculinity in U.S. cinema, one needs to be acquainted with the conventions of the Hollywood industry and its biased dictations about gender. It seems hard to break with masculinist ideologies in popular film. In general terms, and as the remaining of this dissertation looks to explore, contemporary Hollywood films suggest the generalised panic occurring in the coming of the so-called "New Man" in the U.S.A. and the critical interpretations of the clash between the traditional and the "New Man".

CHAPTER 2:
MASCULINITY AND REPRESENTATION IN U.S. CINEMA

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Images of men have been the centre of many debates concerning gender representation in different media, such as cinema. After the great outburst of feminist film critics, that were able to rescue women from the invisibility they had been forced into for many years, images of masculinity were, consequently, left aside and sometimes became stereotyped. Efforts on the part of academics and film critics to reconsider the cultural, social and personal implications of these images have contributed, in part, to make masculinity visible. The pioneering critical approaches that sought to explain men's cinematic representation have provided, then, the ideal forum for recent debates about masculinity. Precisely because of this, this chapter aims to offer an overview of how masculinity is represented in popular Hollywood cinema, which becomes necessary in order to understand the construction of masculinity in the SF film.

In the same way that Men's Studies developed upon the basis of feminist goals, the analysis of masculinity on screen emerged as a consequence of a series of feminist film critiques, which argued for the need to revise cinematic images of women. A number of debates involving masculinity on screen were raised in the early 80s as a response to the relevant issues exposed by Laura Mulvey in her controversial article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). Her analysis considered the disadvantaged position of female spectators and the biased images of women in Hollywood cinema, though her project seemed to leave issues such as male representations on screen, or the male body as spectacle, unquestioned. It was up to male theoreticians, then, to analyse these images and to challenge existing preconceptions about the nature of gender and its representation on screen. So far, contemporary film theory, influenced by feminist thought and psychoanalysis, had equated masculinity with activity and the male gaze with visual

pleasures such as voyeurism, sadism and fetishism. Male images on screen, when talked about, became a social construction, especially in U.S. culture.

The pioneering articles which dealt with these issues were Steve Neale's "Masculinity as Spectacle" (1983), which analysed how Mulveys's tenets could be applied to both images of men and male spectators, and Richard Dyer's "Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up" (1982), which anticipated many forthcoming debates about masculinity on screen. Masculinity was to be studied from this moment onwards in relation to notions of spectacle, masochism, passivity, masquerade and the body as gender contender, issues that feminist film theory had always related to the feminine. Moreover, another important debate that was raised by this concern with the new representations of masculinity was that of homosexual desire, both as a source of identification and also in relation to issues of spectatorship.

As suggested above, mass media and cinema are responsible for constructing social identities. By proposing certain masculine and feminine models, cinema has contributed to create an idea about how gender should be represented. This gender representation on screen used to perpetuate patriarchy and in so doing, it has followed a specific model of masculinity that, according to many recent theories on men's representations, is not adequate. Hence, the need to rethink the representation of masculinity, as real men do not feel identified with this imposed universal concept. As Tim Edwards accurately argues in *Cultures of Masculinity* (2006), media studies of masculinity are based on the following foundations:

> First, that representations of masculinity like masculinities per se are perceived as social constructs that vary from time to time and place to place; second, that there is then no direct connection of representations of masculinity with the realities of

> masculinity as lived acts, practices or identities; and third, that there is, conversely, a likely connection with wider prevailing motivations and ideologies concerning sexual, racial and gendered identities. (123)

As I will attempt to show in this chapter, genre and culture highly influence representations of masculinity on screen. I will make use of the above mentioned critical tools for the analysis of the representation of masculinity in Hollywood mainstream cinema. For that purpose, I will refer to some male stars, to types of masculinity traditionally delineated by specific genres such as westerns or film *noir* and to more challenging versions of the male hero as concerning gender representation.[43] As outlined in the first chapter, hegemonic masculinity is partly constructed by popular images. In this sense, Hollywood mainstream cinema offers images of masculinity that, on the one hand, change with time and are intended to reflect contemporary gender concerns and, on the other, do not correspond to the spectators' individual gender considerations but to oversimplified types instead. Hollywood masculinities become, due to their popularity and influence on spectators and vice versa, the starting point for any criticism on gender representation on screen. The analysis of masculinities in the SF genre needs, therefore, to take into account such conventions. The general vision of Hollywood masculinities offered in this chapter will ultimately help to understand the way manhood is depicted in SF, specially because, as it will be argued in the next chapter, SF is a hybrid form that incorporates features from many filmic genres like westerns, war films, horror and action

[43] When defining "genre", a French word meaning "type" or "kind", Steve Neale points out that it has occupied an important place in the study of cinema for many years. Discussions of it have tended to focus on mainstream, commercial films in general and Hollywood films in particular. Sometimes "genre" has been exclusively identified with this kind of films (Neale 2000, 9).

adventure films, among others. This combination of features also allows us to speak about multiple models of masculinity for SF.

2.2. HOLLYWOOD MASCULINITIES: "HARD MEN" AND "SOFT MEN"

In *Hard Bodies. Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (1994), Susan Jeffords believes that the male body is central to popular culture and, accordingly, is classified into two categories, hard and soft, arguing that there has been a change between Reagan hard-body movies and Bush soft-body images in films from the early 1990s. Taking Jeffords's terminology of soft and hard bodies, I will divide this section into two headings: "hard men" and "soft men". It must be taken into account, however, that this classification is general and does not intend to include every single representation of masculinity on screen. It would be impossible, and unpractical, to categorise the broad scope of masculinities that Hollywood offers under this division. Yet, it is true that there has been a tendency to represent masculinity either as a dominant and strong figure or, on the contrary, as a rather weak and inhibited one. This pattern corresponds, at the same time, with the two prototypes that have delineated and defined U.S. masculinity through the years.

Under the heading "hard men" I intend to include images of powerful men, not only those with hard or muscled bodies but also strong, violent and controlling men that have somehow helped to perpetuate traditional assumptions about masculinity. Thus, the western hero and action movies' leading figures can be included within this group. On the other hand, by "soft men" I refer to male images that, in one way or another, challenge conservative ideas about representation. This does not mean, however, that soft men break with patriarchy but that, at least in some aspects, violate tradition and are linked with what we called marginal masculinities in chapter 1. Thus, male dancers appearing in musicals, romantic heroes capable of caring and loving women, or more androgynous hero-types could be

included under the label "soft bodies". As it will be argued in the next chapters, the SF film normally offers several types of masculinity, which combine features both from hard and soft men. The different tendencies of representing men in SF will be the focus of the following chapters. Previous to that, the panorama of hard and soft men proposed by mainstream U.S. cinema finds more than useful for the present analysis of masculinity.

As stated before, Richard Dyer and Steve Neale were first to examine an aspect that Mulvey's article left unexplored: the implications of the male character as object, and not subject, of the look. After them, many scholars have considered these issues and have analysed the implications of images of men in different genres. Neale's "Masculinity as Spectacle" (1983) begins by denouncing the lack of critical analysis regarding the representation of men over the preceding years. Only the Gay Movement, he recognises, had made an attempt to analyse it but, in most cases, merely in relation to stereotypes of gay men on screen (277). In this article, he seeks to apply Mulvey's considerations about women's images to images of men.

Taking "Visual Pleasure" as the starting point of his discussion, he aims to examine three structures, namely identification, the voyeuristic look and the fetishistic look. In order to do so, he assumes, in the same way as Mulvey did, an exclusively male gaze in cinema. Films, he affirms, involve gender identification, and as dominant ideologies associate power and mastery with the masculine, the male spectator experiences fantasies of omnipotence and control when looking. This is called "narcissistic identification" and works in many films, especially in those where the hero is powerful to an extraordinary degree (Neale 1992, 279). Yet a relationship between the male image on screen and the male spectator, he affirms, has been denied by the heterosexual and patriarchal society that dictates that

the male as erotic object must be repressed and disavowed (281). Then, although male bodies are offered as spectacle, the fetishistic look is not present, and their images become the "unmarked objects of erotic display" (285). Mainstream cinema, he concludes, has investigated women, since they are considered the "problem" and the "mystery". Men and male images, by contrast, are said to be the "norm" and the "known" terms of the binary, and this is one of the reasons why the representation of masculinity has not been discussed so far.[44]

By the time Neale's article was written new representations of masculinity were being accepted by a society clearly influenced by the cultural debates at work in the early 1980s, mainly by feminist and gay politics. Sexuality, they tried to demonstrate, is also a social construct. These emergent images of masculinity could be appreciated, as Neale also observed, in Travolta's character in *Saturday Night Fever* (1978), in which the male protagonist becomes the erotic object of the look. It allowed women, then, to look pleasurably at images of men. Neale considers this image as a "feminised body" rather than as a shift in the social definitions of masculinity, as other critics later assumed (286).

Another article that aimed at examining the position of the male character as object and not subject of the look is Dyer's "Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up" (1982), mentioned earlier. Dyer explores the conditions under which the eroticisation of the male body becomes

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[44] This consideration of woman as the unknown was already explored by the feminist French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in her work *The Second Sex.* In this work, she affirmed that the subject is always masculine, conflated with the universal and the norm, differentiating itself from the feminine, considered as the "Other": "[woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute–She is the Other" (De Beauvoir 16).

acceptable, and the conditions under which women are allowed to look. He believes that the different codes of looking are used to reaffirm gender roles and he explores the ways to achieve this. He is especially interested in Nancy M. Henley's *Body Politic*s, particularly in her discussion of eye contact. Images of men aimed at women, star portraits, pin-ups or paintings of men, he claims, are in a particularly interesting relation to these eye-contact patterns (1992, 267).

Men as spectacle, Dyer argues, betray conventional codes of looking, and he deals with the problematic image of the male pin-up. First, there is a contradiction on the part of the male model between the fact of being looked at and his attempt to deny it. Secondly, there is a violation on his part of the association object of the look/passivity and subject/activity. The male image, although an object, is associated with activity and action. Even when he is posing and relaxed, his muscles are emphasised and he still promises activity (1992, 270). The last problem arises from his impossibility to become the phallus, which has always been considered a symbol of male power. The penis has always provided an association with the phallus and power, as only men can faithfully represent it, but his point is that the penis cannot achieve all the power suggested by the phallus. That is the reason which explains the emphasis on muscles and phallic symbols, which attempt to represent the "phallic mystique", something difficult, if not impossible, to achieve (Dyer 1992, 275). Hence in this article Dyer deals, in the same way as Neale did earlier, with the male image as object of the look and visual pleasure, something Mulvey did not take into account. In opposition to Mulvey's

and Neale's conception of an exclusively male gaze, he assumes, however, a female spectator or look.[45]

A number of essays appeared after Neale's and Dyer's influential analyses, including areas that these pioneering articles had not taken into account. These essays, published mainly in the 1990s, aimed at bringing together social and biological issues, and were, therefore, highly concerned with cultural and social events. Among many cultural theories, including postcolonialism, postmodernism or queer theory, film theorists began to concentrate on more specific issues. Particularly interesting is their concern with the representation of homosexuality on screen.[46] As a result, there is a considerable number of influential works dealing with different aspects of masculinity and representation within the world of cinema (Jeffords 1994; Cohan and Hark 1993; Krutnik 1991; Tasker 1991; Mitchell 1996; Donald 1992, MacKinnon 2003; etc). Yet, and as Edwards affirms, there is a tension nowadays between media and cultural studies of masculinity in films and sociological accounts of gendered identity (2006, 139). Indeed, Mulvey's influential essay is ignored by many contemporary

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[45] Mulvey herself considered the issue of female spectatorship in a second article called "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)" (1981). In it she suggests that the female spectator either identifies herself with the woman as an object of the look, or suffers a process of masculinization and identifies instead with the active male protagonist (70). This solution, however, leaves many identification issues unresolved as she never considered that women could experience pleasure in looking.

[46] Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) clearly influenced many subsequent debates about the representation of gay and lesbians in film. She claims that as a result of many contemporary feminist debates dealing with the meanings of "gender", the term itself led to the creation of a sense of trouble. She applies a critique of fixed gender identities and seeks to decenter the main defining institutions: "phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality" (1990, ix). She takes for granted the constructed nature of sex and therefore, affirms that the term "female" no longer appears as a stable notion. Concerning homosexuality, she affirms that it is associated, within some psychoanalytic discourses, with "forms of cultural unintelligibility and, in the case of lesbianism, with the desexualization of the female body" (1990, x).

sociologists of gender and masculinity. Edwards proposes an analysis of contemporary media examples with the aim of considering whether such a study is properly located within media studies or the social sciences more widely (2006, 129).

2.2.1. HARD MEN

As referred to above, some genres are more prone than others to represent powerful heroes. In addition, some characters like popular superheroes have been traditionally linked to certain aspects of masculinity we associate with power and dominance. Criticism has interpreted these images of men in different ways. Neale dealt with this issue arguing that there was a conflict between men in, for instance, western gunfights where heroes were characterised by their silence and reticence, which implied notions of masochism.[47] These men's attitude has been frequently considered as conscious repressions of homosexuality. There have been many contradictory readings of these hard men on screen especially because they are seen to invoke homoerotic desire or identification, or whether there is a conscious effort to depart from it. This has been the case of the male action hero of the 80s, which has been interpreted in many different ways. Thus, the characters embodied by Schwarzenegger and Stallone have been broadly discussed. Tasker (1993) analyses this male icon of the 80s as a "commodified spectacle" which leads to mockery. Jeffords considers this hard hero as a metaphor of the militaristic politics of the times. Holmlund (1993), however, makes a queer reading of muscular men, like the characters embodied by Stallone and Russell in *Tango and Cash*.

[47] Neale referred to heroes like Clint Eastwood and Charlton Heston in *A Fistfull of Dollars*.

Genre also becomes crucial when analysing hard men since there exists a strong link between certain film types and the images we expect as spectators. Violence and hardness are, therefore, expected in epics, westerns, war films, action movies, gangster and cop films, although, as stated before, different readings are to be made. Moreover, it must be added that these hero types also evolve with time and are adapted to socio-cultural popular visions of masculinity. The tough guy in the film *noir* of the 40s is, logically, quite different from the hero at work in contemporary gangster thrillers, due to the changing definition of toughness throughout history. We need to bear in mind the strong link between culture and the normative definition of masculinity at each specific time.

In this section I will deal with hero-types delineated in different genres and with individual characters that I consider hard men, as a result of their close association to traditional powerful masculinity. "Hard men", in this sense, share a number of traits:

Heroism. These characters are delineated as heroes; they hold self-sacrifice, endurance and are willing to become the real protagonists. They are generally omnipresent and powerful within the narrative.

Strong bodies. They usually have muscular white bodies that become their basic instrument of power and control over others.

Violence. They are able to use violence effectively and become successful because of it. Violence is conceived as a form of endurance.

Tough appearance. They constantly show their tough nature by means of their behaviour and costume. Moreover, they are also encouraged to reiterate their leading position within the narrative. Thus, clothes, weapons, bruises and many other aspects of the *mise-en-scène* help delineate this tough appearance.

These hard men correspond to U.S. popular and traditional images of dominant masculinity, embodied by characters like Eastwood, Stallone, Schwarzenegger and Willis, just to name a few. Hard men have always dominated the screen with different purposes, sometimes to foreshadow gender worries, some other times to offer alternative ways to calm the anxiety or crisis of masculinity. They are ultimately socio-cultural constructions.

2.2.1.1. The Gangster and the Hard-Boiled Hero

Images of gangsters and hard-boiled heroes are found throughout the history of Hollywood, yet they become especially relevant in the 30s and 40s. During the Depression, which affected mainly male investors because public life and finances were male-dominated, men were frequently depicted as competitive and aggressive. This hardened male image could also be a result of the relaxed mood of the censorship that governed the early 30s just before strict regulations on matters of sex and violence were imposed by the Hays Code.[48] By the end of the decade, heroes were individualistic, self-assertive, and aggressive. Rarely did they have any trouble

[48] This pre-code period is deeply analysed by Thomas Doherty in his book *Pre-Code Hollywood* where he affirms when referring to the films released during this short period of time: "more unbridled, salacious, subversive, and just plain bizarre than what came afterwards, they look like Hollywood cinema but the moral terrains is so off-kilter they seem imported from a parallel universe" (Doherty 1999, 2). And then he gives some examples: "Sexual liaisons unsanctified by the laws of God or man in *Unashamed* (1932), *Blonde Venus* (1932), and *She Done Him Wrong* (1933); marriage ridiculed and redefined in *Madame Satan* (1930), *The Common Law* (1931), and *Old Morals for New* (1932); ethnical lines crossed and racial barriers ignored in *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1932), *The Emperor Jones* (1933), and *Massacre* (1934); economic injustice exposed and political corruption assumed in *Wild Boys of the Roads* (1933), *This Day and Age* (1933), and *Gabriel Over the White House* (1933); vice punished and virtue unrewarded in *Red Headed Woman* (1932), *Call her Savage (*1932), and *Baby Face* (1933)—in sum, pretty much the raw stuff of America culture, unvarnished and unveiled" (Doherty 1999, 2-3).

controlling women, other men or their environment. The reaffirmation of traditional gender roles is achieved by means of both visual and technical devices when representing this tough image on screen. The first images of the gangster fighting the police forces can be said to represent the tough guy. Working class heroes or criminals such as Paul Muni in Hawks' *Scarface* (1932) and James Cagney in Wellman's *The Public Enemy* (1931), become heroes in this context of the depression precisely because of their endurance, individualism and toughness. This social hero aims to embody polarised gender roles, reaffirming then, conventional assumptions.[49]

Activity and control of the narrative are assigned to this male character, and costume and setting work likewise to delineate and define this specific image. Well-dressed heroes in suit and hat appear on screen always following pre-stablished patterns. We see them smoking and driving cars. Michael E. Starr in "The Marlboro Man: Cigarette Smoking and Masculinity in America" (1984) argues that "the gangsters' crude bravado combined with violence and sexuality in a heady mixture scented with smoke and whiskey" (51). Cinema, an effective entertainment medium helped, then, to promote the cigarette as "the symbol of tough, proletarian virility" (51). As concerning behaviour, these gangsters show endless vitality and lack of feelings when doing their jobs as sadistic killers, which reaffirms the long-held association of violence with masculinity.

This image slightly changed in 1934 when the Production Code, often called Hays Code, emerged as a consequence of a period of self-

[49] However, and as Lucy Fishes tells in "Mama's Boys: Filial Hysteria in *White Heat*", Cagney's character in later appearances in film *noir* is both a macho criminal and a feminised hysteric figure suffering from pathological migraine. This duplicity represents the cultural fears of returned war veterans transformed either in sadistic killers or psychoneurotic characters.

censorship in the U.S.A. It influenced the representation of masculinity on screen, imposing an image that did not reflect the American way of life. This code, in an age of conservative moral assumptions, forbade the depiction of crime, sex, homosexuality, violence and other controversial subjects such as abortion, incest or miscegenation. These regulations, which were going to last for almost thirty years, affected a great deal of genres but specially gangster films and sex pictures.[50]

The typical social hero of the post-war period is the tough guy appearing in film *noir*, a popular genre of the mid to late 40s. Most critics agree that this genre is a reflection of the social and cultural upheavals of the decade. Yet, its mechanisms differ from the ones at work in other genres such as in war films since, and as Frank Krutnik affirms:

> Films do not somehow spring magically from their culture, for they are both economically and ideologically determined. For example, the noir 'tough' thriller address only certain of the cultural and social transformation of the 1940s, and, furthermore, they tackle these in a highly trammelled and conventional manner (that is, subject to narrative, narrational and generic 'rules of engagement'). (Krutnik 57)

Hence, the post-war society's wish to redefine the masculine role is carried out by means of a hero that looks, in so many aspects, conventional. Krutnik points out the difficulty involved in this work of

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[50] Thus, as Doherty affirms, "Hollywood's vaunted 'golden age' began with the Code and ended with its demise" (Doherty 1999, 1). That could be the reason why some critics affirmed in relation to stardom that male heroes of the 30s were represented as "good democrats, personifying the New Deal brand of liberalism" (Walker 312) and their best-known roles "emphasised unquestionable virtues and the non-controversial attributes which pioneer Americans had brought with them as they pushed the frontier west: in short, human values that were too broad to be classified as political" (312). Censors feared that young spectators could copy their behaviour and become dangerous citizens in a Puritan society.

reconstruction, which, according to him, is what makes these films especially interesting (Krutnik 65). In the third part of *In a Lonely Street* (1991), Krutnik analyses the representation of masculinity in the *noir* tough thriller. For that purpose, he divides these films into three categories, structured around a testing of the hero's prowess. He considers that the hero consolidates his masculine identity through his success in his mission, a fact that ensures his culturally acceptable positions of masculine identity and desire. For the three categories he establishes—the investigative thriller, the male suspense thriller and the criminal-adventure thriller—the hero's superiority has to be proved and asserted, rather than being simply assumed, something linked to the 40s specific codifications of masculine identity. Thus, Krutnik observes that in the *noir* thrillers

> the depiction of the hero tends especially to be subjected to a process of structural instability, despite the fact that these films are characterised by an overt masculinisation of both language (the aggressive and competitive 'hard boiled' banter) and action (the predominance of violence). (Krutnik 88)

The conventional figure of the tough hero, then, invokes a kind of reversal in his persona since it becomes not so much a model of realistic achievement but more a worrying mark of what is precisely lacking (90). This inversion is, then, achieved in this genre. The appeal of these films may well have rested, in Krutnik's words, "in the ways in which, within the context of a fictional mode which had the glorification of masculine achievement as its apparent aim, they were able to open up potentialities which are conventionally repressed within the culturally delimited regime of masculine desire and identity" (91). He suggests that this fact is perhaps the result of some kind of crisis of the contemporary male dominated culture (91). As explained in chapter 1, in post-war U.S.A, critics and experts talk about a crisis of masculinity which influenced not only men at the time but, and as reflected in film *noir*, the hegemonic definition of

masculinity. Thus, tough images of men often show some signal of weakness, although this is not to affect the hero's mission or his condition as hard man. At the same time, a conscious effort to reinforce traditional masculinity is also perceived in many films. Without question, the most important male icon of this decade is Humphrey Bogart, featuring in many *noirs*. As Mellen puts forward "[a] chain-smoker with cynicism etched onto his homely face, his hands virtually shaking, his head balding, his eyes knowing and sad, Bogart was a perfect embodiment of the post-war mood" (140). Thus, and precisely because of these images' reflection of the contemporary mood, the traditional image of the tough guy had to be altered in some ways.

Of all the films analysed by Krutnik in his study, Huston's adaptation in 1941 of Hammet's *The Maltese Falcon,* which belongs to "the 'tough' investigative thriller", is characterised by the "unproblematic validation of the detective as masculine hero" (93), something untypical of 1940s *noir* "tough" thrillers. In this film, Sam Spade (Bogart) is the hard-boiled detective and remains faithful to male codes. Thus, he is invulnerable, self-assured, potent and uncontaminated by corrupting forces. Once more, cigarettes become a sign of masculinity and are used in the film as tools for expressing toughness and disillusioned scepticism at a world overrun with duplicity (Starr 53). Moreover, elements of the *mise-en-scène* also contribute to reinforce traditional masculinity. Thus, Spade's Spartan and simple apartment embodies a tough, masculine ethos while the decorated rooms of the other characters (Brigid and Gutman specifically) are, on the other hand, feminine and luxurious (Nanemore 124). Spade's ruthlessness in this film has also made some critics consider Bogart's character as a problematic hero, which would contrast with Krutnik's assertion. Rubin considers Huston's films as operating in the antiheroic mode, "in which anticonventional heroic

traits provide an expanded basis for heroism, although at times these traits are pushed to the brick of the alienating and/or aheroic" (142). Spade's ruthlessness is an example of this (142).

However, it is in other films which also belong to the investigative thriller, such as *The Dark Corner, Out of the Past* and *The Killers,* where masculine authority and masculine identity are easily seen as less controlled and stable, and therefore, problematical. Likewise, in the so-called "tough suspense thriller" (*Dark Passage, The Blue Dahlia, Out of the Past, Somewhere in the Night, The Stranger on the Third Floor, Cornered)* the hero, Krutnik assures, lacks control precisely because he is in a position of disadvantage in many senses (even the spectator can see what the hero cannot). In "the criminal-adventure thriller", which includes films like *The Postman Always Rings Twice, The Lady from Shanghay, Double Indemnity* or *Pitfall,* the hero, "through his adulterous, often murderous trajectory (…) establishes himself in revolt against Oedipal law" (Krutnik 137). That is, through the criminal adventure, the hero seeks to test his masculinity in relation to the castrating power of the law.[51]

The tough nature of these heroes is, therefore, as ambiguous as the world they are placed in. Heroes or anti-heroes, corrupt characters and villains include conflicted hard-boiled detectives or private eyes, cops, gangsters, government agents and murderers needing to prove their superior masculinity in one way or another. These protagonists are often morally ambiguous characters facing a world of violent crime and corruption. They become a reflection of socio-cultural worries in post-war U.S.A, a time when the definition of masculinity is meant to be changing. Thus, film *noir* contains many elements favouring the

[51] As it will be suggested later on in this discussion of masculinity, the new hero in SF leads to test his power against the alien "other", or even against his double.

representation of hegemonic masculinity: *mise-en-scène*, plot, the characters' attitude and even the conflicted hard-boiled detective.

The so-called post-*noirs* appeared after the classic period with a revival of the themes of film *noir*. After the 40s, we find films about famous gangsters like Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, John Dillinger, etc. They are to inherit the violent and ambiguous nature of the tough guy, yet their image, behaviour and condition will be adapted to the times. For example, *tech-noir* refers to a hybrid of high-technological SF and film *noir* portraying a decayed, unpromising, dark and dystopic future. Their heroes' embodiment of the tough guy is obviously quite different and adapted to the postmodern context. That is the case of films like, for example, *The 13th Floor* or *Strange Days*. I will deal with such films in chapter 3 when focusing on masculinity and SF cinema.

2.2.1.2. The Western Hero

The western may be one of the best genres for the depiction of the hard man, as far as it provides the perfect scenario for violence, male potency and control. Precisely because of their celebration of patriarchy, it has been considered the masculine genre *par excellence*. The cowboy holds a number of traits that have, on the other hand, opened debates about the representation of masculinity in this genre. Indeed, westerns have been analysed from different perspectives in relation to gender relations. Cowboys are alleged to be heterosexual, violent men in control of women and the whole narrative. Yet, as many authors have noted, cowboys are normally accompanied by male sidekicks or work in intimate relation with other men, what has led to different analyses concerning homoeroticism and repressed homosexual desires (MacKinnon, Horrocks, Smith). Moreover, his invulnerable body has also been analysed in terms of spectacle and object of the look (Neale, Burt, Mitchell). Many of these discourses,

however, do not take into account a crucial issue in relation to any image of masculinity: it is a constructed concept and as such it is affected by socio-political issues. As previously suggested, hegemonic masculinity proves to be affected by contemporary gender concerns. If we consider the body of scholarship dealing with gender issues within this genre, many contradictory views are assumed in relation to images of men. The tough western hero has led, then, to conflicting interpretations.

The hero as a violent frontiersman has favoured interpretations dealing with the wish for the return to old traditional values concerning masculinity. As MacKinnon argues in *Representing Men,* the model of the frontiersman animates a nostalgia for a time where male supremacy was unquestionable:

> [i]n times when men feel that masculinity has been diminished and that there are question marks over their value to the social organization, they can enjoy in fantasy a return to social conditions where strong, independent masculinity had unquestionable relevance. (2003, 42)

Likewise, Burt suggests that these films depict a way for overcoming the crisis affecting masculine traits by returning to a natural masculinity (103).[52] Heroes are seen from the beginning as beings coming from the wilderness and adjusting to society and the law, represented by the institution of marriage. Costume helps to delineate their image, hats, Indian clothing, boots and guns becoming mere props for the genre's portrayal of the hero. Another element of the *mise-en-scène* which reinforces the natural male representation is

[52] Burt believes that a clear example of a hero embodying the natural male in this genre is John Wayne's character in films like Hawks' *Red River* (1949), or Alan Ladd's in Steven's *Shane* (1953).

the character's expression and movements. He is characterised by a marked emotional reticence and silence, showing no feelings, because, as Burt points out "what has been proposed so far is that, increasingly since the 19th century, it has been considered appropriate for men not to appear soft and not to appear emotionally expressive" (Burt 22). This type of hero can be affirmed as the embodiment of the norm, his powerful position over the rest of the characters being achieved by means of both visual and technological devices, such as the frequent use of a low angle camera for shots.[53]

According to male body theories, the male body is celebrated in westerns by means of different visual mechanisms—it usually occupies the centre of the frame—what suggests its desirability. Lee Clark Mitchell argues at this point that "especially for good-looking stars who appear in so many other roles, western films focus not simply on attractive men but on their pleasing features in ways considered essential to the delineation of masculinity" (156). The camera frequently frames certain attractive male attributes such as the clear eyes, broad shoulders, strong jaws and chins, handsome faces and, in general, virile bodies.[54] In this sense, the representation of the western hero is linked, then, to the idea of the body as spectacle, reinforced by the often static quality of western plots, which explains that the "fetishizing gaze tends to lose interest in narrative complications because sated with what it already sees" (161-2). The cowboy becomes, then, an object of the look, due to his appealing

[53] Neale's argument is that the cowboy is characterised through his silence and reticence to the point of masochism.

[54] As an example of this bodily performance, Lee Clark Mitchell points out Gregory Peck's role in *Duel in the Sun* (1946) where its male hero "flaunts a virile assurance in matching his body against that of Jennifer Jones, whether stretched out on hitching rails or positioned on rocks, in athletic poses more common in fitness studios than on the range" (157).

costume and to his characteristic silence and inexpressiveness, which contribute to the spectator's concentration on his body. Yet, and as Lee Clark Mitchell argues, the hero's costume has a double function, since it can either invite or change the direction of our gaze: "the eye is trapped and held up by fetish items associated with parts of the body, as our gaze is directed from eyes, chins, chests, legs, and various groups to articles instead that either cover or exaggerate them" (165). Hence the cowboy's elaborate costume can momentarily distort our attention since it "permits the eye to roam across the male body without seeming to focus on that body as flesh" (165). Lee Clark Mitchell argues that this "oscillation" (of aimlessly gazing/not gazing) upon which costuming is based marks a potential for disrupting the body into costumed parts and anticipates the ways that manhood will be emblematically stretched, distorted, and slowly rehabilitated" (167).

Following with this argument, this body needs at one point to be beaten and distorted. Violence, so celebrated in western films, has a specific purpose for the construction of masculinity. Western heroes are seen beaten and knocked down just to allow them to recover, regaining their strength and becoming men again. The paradox lies in the fact that "we watch them become what they already are, as we exult in the culturally encoded confirmation of a man again becoming a biological man" (Lee Clark Mitchell 174). Thus, on the one hand, westerns show how men are always there, "biologically fixed by the accident of genitals" but, on the other hand, the genre depends on plots "that demand instead the creation of manhood, then its re-creation" (174).[55] Lee Clark Mitchell disagrees with film critics that,

[55] This beating of the male hero only to see its recovery and finally reassert his initial potency is also at work in action films, as many other authors have pointed when dealing with this genre. Paul Smith, taking Clint Eastwood as example, contends that the action hero follows three stages, from erotisation, through destruction, to re-emergence. I will allude to Smith's theory later on in this work when dealing with

like Neale, believe that the western's concentration on the male body is a sign of an inadmissible homosexual pleasure and, consequently, the so often beating of the hero is to be understood as the punishment of the audience for something it cannot, at least openly, be enjoyed.[56]

Instead, Lee Clark Mitchell argues that whenever a man is beaten in the western, audiences feel identified with that suffering figure and "with the masculinizing process itself as one of American culture's most powerful (and powerfully confused) imaginative constructions" (187). It is by means of the hero, a figure to be looked at, that we watch men still in the unfinished process of making themselves, "even as we are encouraged to believe that manhood doesn't need to be made" (Lee Clark Mitchell 187).

The western's contradictory vision of masculinity is shared by many authors. Horrocks argues about the existence of "covert" subtexts of the westerns, for instance male love, male suffering and a defiance of bourgeois values (1995, 56). The western foreshadows, according to him, the contradictions of U.S. masculinity: "it is required to be 'tough', but not too tough or it becomes outlawed; it must exercise the need for love and tenderness, yet it helps to construct a world in which these can flourish; ultimately, as 'the desert turns into a garden', it makes itself redundant" (Horrocks 1995, 56). Moreover, when dealing with homoeroticism, Horrocks sees the western building a space that rejects both heterosexuality and homosexuality. Thus he argues: "This is a space that exists between categories, and, therefore, if only a fantasy, enables men to float for a while, unencumbered by

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the representation of masculinity in cop action films. Films starring Sylvester Stallone, like *Rambo, Demolition Man, Rocky* or *The Specialist* are also clear examples of this reassertion of male potency.

[56] Neale is assuming an exclusively male audience for the western, ignoring female spectatorship. This may be the result of this genre's association with men.

the ferocious demands of patriarchy and the either/or rigidities of gender and sexuality" (Horrocks 1995, 66).

To sum up, westerns offer a wide scope for the analysis of masculinity, favoured in part by the depiction of the omnipresent hard hero, the cowboy. Next, I will briefly deal with some examples to show how the portrayal of traditional masculinity is altered in the western to conform to socio-cultural especificities.

The association of maleness with violence is a recurrent motif in westerns and can be seen as early as in Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), which shows males in physical conflict with each other. The pattern of the strong male hero associated to power is found in many films of the 20s and will lead to emblematic figures like John Wayne and Charles Bronson.[57] The western provided male heroes with environments in which "they could exercise potency free of emasculating restrictions, those imposed by class, law, and education" (Mellen 33). William S. Hart is considered by many to be the originator of the authentic western film and to create the masculine model later imitated by male stars like Gary Cooper and John Wayne: a strong powerful cowboy for whom physical and moral courage were wholly natural.[58] Yet, the individualism of the Hart male in the West allows him to choose freely an integrity which for Hart was the mark of a real man (37). Hart is the emblem, then, of the noble frontiersman, "violent only when necessary, physically strong, and possessed with the dignity of a man who always knew who and what he was and how to

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[57] Following Mellen's account, with Cecil B. De Mille's *Male and Female* (1919) the issue of male sexuality was out in the open in the American film. Its hero, William Crichton, is tall, handsome, wavy-haired, and novel in demeanour, and possesses all the ingredients for power and success (32).

[58] Hart featured in films like *The Toll Gate* (1920), *The Taking of Luke McVane* (1915), *Keno Bates, Liar* (1915), *The Return of Draw Egan* (1916), *Hell's Hinges* (1916) or *Tumbleweeds* (1925).

handle himself in the most precarious circumstances" (40). Other westerns of the 20s like *The Iron Horse* (1924) and *Three Bad Men* (1926) by John Ford, and Raoul Walsh's *What Price Glory* (1926), presented men of action whose rough masculinity provided early models for later male images. These films offer the theme of male bonding: men who frequently travelled together as buddies, excluding meaningful relations with women from their lives (Mellen 41). This has provoked many interpretations, specially concerning homoeroticism, as suggested before.

In the late 40s, westerns were to be influenced by the pessimism that defined the decade. In them, the hero is, despite the perils and obstacles, able to rise above it.[59] One of the most popular westerns of the forties is Howard Hawks's *Red River* (1948). In it, two definitions of masculinity are advanced: "the indestructible toughness of John Wayne with the sensitivity and fairness of spirit of his surrogate son, played by Montgomery Clift" (175). The result would combine, then "the virtues of the paternal, the youthful, and the man at the height of his powers: a gentle superman" (175). The film attempts, then, to humanise the male image. Likewise, in *Fort Apache* (1948) two alternative male postures are shown, this time embodied by Henry Fonda and John Wayne. As Horrocks has noted, the post-war westerns become paradoxical in the treatment of masculinity and "the toughness that is required for the drive westwards is seen as dangerous once social stability has been established, and more feminine values are needed" (1995, 58). Following the western plot, two friends turn into enemies, one supporting constitutional law while

[59] The western *Ox-Bow Incident* (1943) is considered an anti-western since Henry Fonda, an important male figure for the genre, is hardly a hero although he remains masculine in other aspects.

the other follows his "old wicked ways" as in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1995, 58).

Yet, in the 50s, the western still provided the audience with strong heroes. Gary Cooper is seen in many westerns as a strong male with physical superiority whose duty is to save the town from the villains. Alan Ladd's character in Stevens' *Shane* (1953) is another example of a western hero following a classical formula. In spite of the apparent distance that every western provides, many critics perceive the reflection of contemporary values. Trice and Holland look at *Shane* not just as a western but as the most complete representation of 1950s family values. It shows "a blending in the values between those of the period depicted and those of the period in which it was made" (114), since it is set, they contend, in a period where the traditional image of masculinity is to be questioned (114). Thus, while reaffirming typical assumptions like the presence of violent male behaviour, this film fairly depicts the situation of many 1950s families, set in the dilemmas of a previous period: "there is a full-time homemaker wife, and work-involved father, and an only child. In their suburban farm, they are cut off from their extended family" (115). The presence of subtle messages about gender relations beneath *Shane*'s surface has also been noted by many authors. Horrocks, for instance, finds a covert story conveyed in the visual images of men: "they are not simply all conquering heroes: a terrible price is paid for their assumption of certain duties. In the end Shane has made a kind of living sacrifice of himself" (1995, 70).

In the 60s it was very frequent to display groups of men working together, a consequence of the social emphasis on corporate work from the business world (Horrocks 1995, 63). Moreover, the male hero suggests a kind of nostalgia, as if in remembrance of things lost. Implicitly they suggest that the world in which the audience lives precludes belief in a frontier-era ethic (Mellen 257). An example of this

mood is *The Magnificent Seven* (1960). Mellen argues that this film attempts to resurrect a masculine strength and a manly fortitude no longer possible, while insisting that these alone make life worth living, being a measure both of despair and desperation in the Hollywood of the sixties over the profound disaffection with these values (258). Another example she gives is John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), which shows the nostalgia of the sixties cinema for a lost machismo. Clint Eastwood, considered Bond's equivalent in the 60s and 70s instructs us, like Bond does, "in what is necessary to revive the male image" (Mellen 266). A typical work by Eastwood in the 60s is *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) directed by Sergio Leone and belonging to the so-called spaghetti western. In it, Eastwood plays an impassive and inexpressive character.[60]

The decline of the westerns began in the 60s and seemed to die in the 80s. Yet, the 90s brought popular titles such as *Unforgiven, Dancing with Wolves* and the year 2006 was witness of the popular (yet polemical) western *Brokeback Mountain*. It is in the latter where homosexuality becomes the recurrent and open topic of the whole film, something unthinkable in any mainstream westerns in the previous decades. This is a clear example of how images of cowboys can provide us with non-normative visions of masculinity while still following western conventions. In this sense, one may question here the very meaning of masculinity.

[60] Clint Eastwood as a star has been analysed from many different angles and considered a masochistic object (Smith 1995), a reflection of the spectators' own preoccupations (Bingham 1994).

2.2.1.3. Men at War

War films explore violence and present us with hard men that, as happened with westerns, have opened up different ways of interpreting masculinity in this genre.[61] Ralph R. Donald's "Masculinity and Machismo in Hollywood's War Film" stands as a key work in the exploration of masculinity in war films. Donald acknowledges the similarities between war films and westerns, also noted by other authors. Both genres, Donald affirms, "are essentially melodramatic portrayals of men performing virile, courageous deeds designed to protect helpless civilians from some sort of aggressor" (Donald 125). The basic formula of good men fighting evil forces is, after all, repeated in both types of films.

Donald stresses some characteristics of war films pertaining the depiction of male images. First, the role of rites of passages from the sexless existence of a child into the adult community of their sex becomes in war films a test for the hero's manhood. This transition implies the candidates' separation from their families and from the world of women, the change of their former clothes and hairstyles and the instruction in the behaviours of adult warriors. Second, war films see women as inferior beings who are, consequently, undervalued. In this world governed by men, homosexuality is intensely rejected and denied. Third, Donald establishes the characteristics of the American male warrior in war films: he must be a man of few words, tough, brave and following ideals. It is crucial for his success to deny any

[61] SF takes many elements from the war film, especially its formula of the "good" ones fighting the "bad" ones. In chapter 4, we will see how *The War of the Worlds* makes use of the war film conventions to illustrate humankind at war with an alien enemy. Likewise, the topic of the war between opposed civilisations becomes the central topic in *Star Trek Nemesis,* also discussed in this chapter. In addition, films under analysis in chapter five, *Terminator 2* and *The Matrix* centre on the war between humans and machines/technology and its consequences for humankind.

kind of feeling or emotional expression. Lastly, Donald stresses the male fixation with winning, something that can become dangerous in our changing world. Thus Donald finishes his article by affirming:

> if half-century-old governments and political philosophies can give way, if all the world is changing and adapting, perhaps the macho, uncommunicative, unemotional, pseudo-athletic misogynists America seems intent on turning out should also consider some fundamental alterations. (Donald 136)

With this, Donald may be urging, then, for a change in the stereotype of the macho man in war films, a change that, on the other hand, is evident in other genres and seems to be more persistent in this one, probably due to the fixed misogynist connotations related to war heroes.

The impact of World War II and the crisis of values that this conflict had produced in U.S. lifestyle caused the optimism of previous eras to be replaced by a critical vision of life.[62] Thomas Doherty in his *Projections of War, Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* observes a change of attitude in the films after the war:

> Before the war, American movies were mainly considered an amusement or an investment. A few academics dissented, arguing for a profound if intangible "sociological" influence (…). Not until Hollywood enlisted as an active agent in the Second World War did the ephemeral popular art dedicated to "mere entertainment" suddenly and seriously matter—to the War Department, to the Office of War Information, to spectators made

[62] This situation was reflected in a more socially concerned cinema in which a bitter portrayal of contemporary society can be appreciated, dealing with issues such as racism, alcoholism or political corruption. The topic of war was especially present during the period 1941-45, not only in war films but also in musicals and melodramas. Likewise, one of the most typical post-war genres of this decade, film *noir*, was also socially-oriented. In this sense, the representation of masculinity in the 40s suggests the decade's attempts to redefine gender identities in an era when many values have been lost due to the war.

> sensitive to the educational import and ideological impact of the movies. (Doherty 1993, 5)[63]

Doherty claims that the alliance between Washington and Hollywood generated not only new types of films but also a new attitude towards them: "Hereafter, popular art and cultural meaning, mass communications and national politics, would be intimately aligned and commonly acknowledged in American culture" (Doherty 1993, 5). Although they were not vehicles for change, these films "carried the news and softened the shock of the new" (6). Hence, and in spite of the political and cultural transformations of 1941-1945, Hollywood promised "continuity alongside the transformations, permanence beneath the reorientation of values" (Doherty 1993, 6).[64] This complex task encouraged spectators, then, to sometimes look deeply into the film in order to find contemporary references.[65] The message sent in many films of the 40s was the need to define male behaviour. While "proper" war films of the early 40s drew upon the

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[63] Robert Fyne in *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II* also considers this change from entertainment to social commitment in films during the World War II period. Thus he affirms that "[a]t first, a few propaganda films trickled out of Hollywood (...) [b]ut December 7, 1941, changed everything" (Fyne 9). While America was getting ready for the War, Hollywood realized that days of escapist entertainment were over. From this moment onwards, "the motion picture industry, like everyone else, was on a war footing. Hollywood was now part of the fight" (9). He gives some examples: *Mrs Miniver, Yankee Doodle Dandy* and *Air Force*. In order to show the importance of these films, Fyne mentions the fact that after the Pearl Harbour attack President Roosevelt cited Hollywood for its role during this wartime period.

[64] I dealt with this issue when referring to the figure of the hard-boiled hero in film *noir* of the 40s.

[65] That could be the case of the musical, a genre that, according to many authors, emerged with escapist purposes but that also contains implicit references to the need of gender reaffirmations after a difficult time.

establishment of the male hero as saviour, in other post-war genres male superiority is not so easily evoked.[66]

As suggested above, in war films the male hero fulfils the usual demand made for the male star: to achieve success and evoke manly prowess. The glorification of maleness becomes commonplace in these films, in which a belief in the ability of men to master their environment is assumed. When referring to the 40s, Mellen affirms that war films which take place in theatres of combat are far cruder in their treatment of maleness (Mellen 148). She gives some examples like Edward Dmytryk's *Back to Bataan* (1945), where John Wayne plays a single-minded military leader bent on winning the war (148). Another example of what was expected of men in wartime appears in Delmer Daves's *Destination Tokio* (1944). Trice and Holland notice that the end of the decade, especially the year 1949, saw the return of movies about World War II, *Battleground* and *The Sands of Iwo Jima* being outstanding examples (80). These two critics distinguish these two combat films from the classic war films made earlier since they show frightened soldiers, mistakes which entail losing lives, personal conflicts and unexpected deaths (80). The message, according to them is that "such demands are necessary in the reality of combat against enemies as lethal as Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan" (80). However, Donald's interpretation of this fear is that when a war movie hero

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[66] Propaganda films, which appeared in early 1942, appealed to many people, and some of them became classics—*Casablanca* and *Since You Went Away*. Others carried the label of controversy—*Mission to Moscow* and *The North Star* for their favourable treatment of communism, or *The Moon is Down* for its sympathetic portrayal of a Nazi officer (Fyne 11). Thus, "since effective wartime propaganda aroused a viewer's sympathy, emotions, and intellect in a manner that remained subtle and unobtrusive, audiences were unaware of the manipulative qualities of the images on the screen" (11-2). Audiences now had two reasons to watch a double feature: a night out at the show was both entertaining and patriotic" (Fyne 13). According to Fyne, the ten best propaganda films are *The Purple Heart, The Fighting Sullivans, Sahara, Wing and a Prayer, Bataan, Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo, Gung Ho, Flying Tigers, Guadalcanal Diary* and *Wake Island.*

admits to being frightened, it is normally to highlight the fact that fear is intentionally hidden (131). In *Sands of Iwo Jima* and *Destination Tokyo*, the young troops confess to John Wayne and Cary Grant that they are frightened:

> Much of the amazement of these youngsters, Wayne and Grant admit to being afraid themselves before a battle, and to steer clear of men who say that they are not. Implicitly, both heroes show by example that one routinely hides any emotions counterproductive to the belligerent objective. (Donald 131)

Thus, if a warrior gives in to this fear and commits an act of cowardice, the war film plot urges them to pay some price for the offence (Donald 131). Yet, the need for a new idea of masculinity becomes evident in many forthcoming war films. Therefore, the call for contemporary values concerning images of men will gradually affect the representation of male war heroes.

This problematic view of masculinity will increase with time and becomes quite clear in films like Ashby's *Coming Home* (1978). In it, soldiers return from Vietnam and "reintegrate" into society. Once the war veteran Luke returns and gets rid of his ego, he is able to enjoy life, becoming sensitive, non-violent and caring. He has, in Jeffords words, "been 'feminized'" (1988, 528). Feminine characteristics are ascribed, then, on to the reintegrated Vietnam veteran. In "Debriding Vietnam: The Resurrection of the White American Male" (1988), Jeffords deals with men's transformation in Vietnam films. She argues that the image of the Vietnam veteran suffers a cultural debriding or ideological transformation whose aim is the display and a regeneration of a victimised American masculinity. This display and regeneration aims both to respond to feminist challenges and to reinforce patriarchal structures through the reassertion of traditional values and definitions. Thus, this process of debriding begins by cleaning the veterans' cultural association with the loss of the war and finish with

films like *Rambo: First Blood, Part 2* (1985) where the loss of the war is identified with U.S. government (526). Feminine characteristics are applied first to the Vietnam veteran who, like Luke in *Coming Home*, has changed the battlefield for a pleasant life in society. In later films, the feminine is associated to U.S. government figures who, like *Rambo,* are meant to be deceptive, vulnerable and un-resourceful. It is in these films where U.S. males are identified as victims. In *The Deerhunter* (1978) we are urged, then, to sympathise with the victims: the young naïve men who lost all control over their own lives. This process encourages, then, the redefinition of the Vietnam veteran and the war as well as a regeneration of American manhood, a resurrection of the American white male perfectly embodied by the victimised Rambo character. The structures of patriarchy are, then, reinforced by this reassertion of values carried out by the male hero.

However, in films like Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), Scott's *Top Gun* (1986) or Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), the character of the male hero is somehow re-examined, informed with more contemporary values. That is why some authors have talked about Stone's film to be an exception to the rule that Vietnam films reinforce patriarchy. Instead of promoting patriarchal domination over feminised others, the movie shows "the damage done to individuals by 'masculine' attitudes based on an amalgam of patriotism, religion and an emphasis on the importance of winning, with its demand for physical strength" (MacKinnon 2003, 49). Mark Simpson analyses Tom Cruise in his role as Maverick in *Top Gun*, arguing that Cruise is the embodiment of the narcissistic male hero. While playing an arrogant and patriotic macho pilot, Cruise also suggests ambiguity:

> Stocky and square-jawed he gives a semblance of no-nonsense masculine virtues, while his round face, baby blue eyes and surprisingly high-pitched voice send out an ambiguous undertow; an undertow that is the real appeal of his screen presence, which makes him both desired and desiring: a Dream

> Boy that both men and women can entertain in their slumber. (Simpson 230)

Cruise becomes, in this sense, the object of the look and an idealised reflection of the audience's narcissism. Yet this ambiguity is not too blatant since this would threaten his virility. In Simpson's words, Cruise's achievement is to "pass off passivity (narcissism) and activity (the military), exemplifying the recent revolution in masculinity at the same time as masking it" (Simpson 231). Thus, he exemplifies some of the ambiguities that a normative image of masculinity can evoke.

Tasker considers films like *Heartbreak Ridge* (1986) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) as belonging to a sub-genre of the war film, the training camp movie, in which young male rebels are made into marines, instructed in masculinity (1993, 121). In such a panorama, individuality and choice are relegated to the background. Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* perfectly fits within this formula, "subjecting the audience to an analogous experience through its relentless use of abusive language and images" (121). *Heartbreak Ridge* demonstrates, partly through language and the incessant verbal references to homosexuality, a certain awareness of the cultural context. Thus, the film "struggles to maintain an unproblematic, heterosexual male group, with Eastwood's character barking out reminders to his charges that he did not join the army to take long showers with his men" (121). The language of relationship and nurturing used in these films is placed in a context that makes it seem comical (121).

Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) has been interpreted, unlike *Top Gun,* as an antiwar film that emphasises the humiliation of the war. It has also been considered as an account of a crisis of masculinity (Simpson 238) suggesting that war castrated the boys and left them alone and unloved. This film also stars Cruise and, in spite

of their opposite aims, both *Top Gun* and *Born on the Fourth of July,* "represent Cruise as the all-American boy and in both films the narcissism of the American male/Cruise takes centre stage, crowding out the political message" (238).[67]

Lastly, in the 90s, and coinciding with a time when masculinity was meant to be in crisis, topics of sexual desire and men's fear and anxieties are treated in a more open way, yet following the classic formula of the war genre and its tough treatment of masculinity. For instance, in Reiner's *A Few Good Men* (1992) the boyish narcissism of Tom Cruise and the audience's relationship to it has been interpreted by Simpson as an open act, which "finally comes out of the closet" (249) and thus "his autoeroticism, his cheeky grin, and his baseball bat are openly and exclusively available for the consumption of the audience, from whichever subject position they prefer" (249). The film can be read as an unwitting allegory for lesbians and gays in the military (250). Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) can be said to show us a nostalgic and sentimental rewriting of postwar masculinity that "masks the very real anxieties that accompanied the return of the wartime heroes" (Baker 1). Many of these men returned to their wives or families changed, not capable of communicating what they had experienced (Baker 1).

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[67] Tim Edwards argues that the character played by Tom Cruise in films like *The Firm, Born on the Fourth of July* or *The Last Samurai* represents the contemporary crisis of masculinity. All these films, although in different ways, Edwards affirms, "see Cruise going into crisis with a given highly successful, white, Western and masculine identity and needing to reconstruct his life according to a series of alternative values and ideals" (2006,138). As it will be contended later on in this dissertation, Cruise's character in *The War of the Worlds* (2005) also goes under an identity crisis.

2.2.1.4. Cops and Vigilantes

Cop action movies provide us with heroes who can be classified as hard men due to their use of outrageous violence, which they use to fight against the villains. As it happens with every image of masculinity, strong and omnipresent heroes are analysed from different points of view and their built body interpreted either as a reaffirmation of conservative values or as a sign for hidden values such as homoeroticism or male spectacle. Neal King's *Heroes in Hard Times: Cop Action Movies in the U.S.* (1999) analyses cop action movies as expressions of the pain and confusion among working men at the end of the 20th century. The hero, a straight white working-class male professional, is proficient at his job but not morally and socially competent, since he feels misunderstood by women and mistrusted by other social groups. Many critics have considered these movies as racist and homophobic but Neal King argues that these cop heroes are conscious of their privilege and face a world where white male prestige is under threat. Thus, Neal King defends cop heroes by arguing that they end up killing big white villains and by doing so, they are distancing themselves from visible whiteness. This contradiction, he argues, makes the cop-hero seem a halfway civilized and honest man.

Due to its topic and setting, the cop action movie became quite significant in the 70s where a return to more conservative ideas was appreciated in the U.S.A. The decade was marked, among other issues, by disillusionment due to the Watergate scandal. Nixon's presidency was characterised by the decline of counterculture, because of the diminishing prominence of young people's activism and by economic difficulties, which contested U.S. supremacy in the world

and caused a generalised feeling of uncertainty.[68] Yet, and in spite of this financial depression, the 70s meant a creative high point in the U.S. film industry, often referred to as "the Renaissance of Hollywood", and built upon some of the traditional film genres of Hollywood successful past with big investment.[69] The early 70s, Lev states, "were the period of youth culture on film, they were also the period of right-wing cop films starring Clint Eastwood and Charles Bronson" (xviii). These conservative films, among which *Dirty Harry* is a good example, "feature a lot of action, a lot of anger, and a studied indifference to the rights of minority groups and other social outsiders" (xviii). So, it is at the beginning of the decade when a "split" can be appreciated in the social and cultural values presented by American films, "rather than focusing on an experimental and socially critical "New Hollywood"" (Lev xviii). This split corresponds to the political divisions in the country around 1970s. Obviously, he does not believe in a complete "binary opposition" and recognises the great variety of interests of cinema creators and cinema audiences, especially as the decade progressed (xviii).

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[68] The paranoia of this economic crisis, declining since 1929, was reflected in films like Guillermin's *The Towering Inferno* (1974), Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975), or Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977).

[69] The post-Nixon period was characterised by a self-understanding of the world, which made people fulfil their own physical and spiritual potential. Hence, the proliferation of sport, health food, body-care as well as a spiritual revival and relaxing new practices such as Zen or yoga. This also came to be reflected in many films, mainly in action and adventure ones in which an exaltation of the male body is, as we will see, fundamental for the development of the film narrative. Another feature of this era is the great variety of genres and their heterogeneity. Peter Lev's *American Films of the 70s: Conflicting Visions* looks at several genres (cop movies, disaster films, teen movies, war films, SF and feminist films), giving examples of each genre into each historical context. He analyses hit movies like *Apocalypse Now, Dirty Harry, Star Wars,* and *Jaws,* among others, concentrating on politics, ideology, and the ways they reframe the issues of the day. In the midst of this heterogeneity, he mentions the numerous action movies which propound conservative social values.

Apart from this right-wing cop films, the 70s are also characterised by a great diversity of films by and about the African American community, films questioning new technologies or films dealing with gender issues. A good example is the so-called blaxploitation genre, including movies with an African American ambience and context in mind. Gordon Park's *Shaft* (1971) became the model for blaxploitation films to come. In it, John Shaft, a character comparable to Dirty Harry or James Bond, is a black and muscular detective in charge of finishing with corruption. These films were regarded as racist by many and criticised for their use of stereotypes. Indeed, as Tasker argues, the black male body has been represented in terms of extremes within Hollywood symbolism "either radically sexualised, active, or passive and desexualised" (1993, 127). Referring to Shaft, Tasker affirms that " [t[he jockey but tough use of the 'buck' as a stereotype in *Shaft*, plays off against the various 'castrated', passive figures who operate as buddy to the white hero" (127). Thus, in spite of its use of stereotypical masculinity, the genre was appraised by many film scholars for its inclusion of African Americans on screen.

Right-wing cop films, on the other hand, emphasised white supremacy. Mellen believes that, in response to the mood of the sixties, American films of the seventies frequently insist that changes in the social order are beyond our control (Mellen 293) and that, therefore, the male hero is acclaimed in so many films as "the sole defender against the bestial criminal who mindlessly attempts to destroy all that is sacred" (293). Mellen considers that, since the concept of reform has lost credibility, Hollywood has turned "to a virtually fascist endorsement of the tough cop who will solve all our problems and whose flagrant violation of the civil liberties of those he hunts is glorified as necessary for the survival of the community" (294). Clint Eastwood stands as a model for this ideology. *Dirty Harry* (1971) portrays a morally questionable cop, Harry Callahan

(Eastwood), who is called "Dirty Harry" precisely because of his "general misanthropy, because he takes all of the police department's dirty jobs, and because he does not stay within the limits of law and custom" (Lev 31).

However, and as the film progresses, we discover that Harry is a complex, and not always heroic, character due to a past personal tragedy (34). That is the reason why Lev considers him an ambiguous type, "half embittered detective and half Superman" (35). Not agreeing with some other film critics who have labelled Dirty Harry as a fascist, Lev calls him a vigilante instead:

> [h]is agenda is not racist or dictatorial; it is, in American context, right-wing, conservative, law and order. In the second half of the film Harry disobeys a series of orders and solves the Scorpio threat using his own values and methods. He becomes a police vigilante. (Lev 36)

As suggested above, Neal King also believes in the cop-hero's dubious morality when fighting corrupt white men. What becomes clear is that the hero of *Dirty Harry* became a powerful image, a masculine myth of the decade and the model for many other films in the 70s.

Moreover, the figure of Clint Eastwood has served as an example for many discourses about the erotic display of the male body. One of the most relevant studies has been carried out by the scholar Paul Smith. In his article "Eastwood Bound", Smith deals with the implications that looking at the male body produces in western cultures and takes Eastwood's films as examples. He points out how the hero acts as a serviceman for the culture, especially western protagonists or action heroes of the 80s such as Eastwood in *Heartbreak Attack* (1986) or Gibson in *Lethal Weapon* (1987). Yet, it is interesting to see how

> this brand of male protagonist in all such cultural productions is always in some ways marked (and is made enjoyable or at any rate consumable for audiences) by precisely his inability to act as the ultimate solution to the narrative and social contradictions in which he is involved. (79)

Thus his point is that action movies exceed the familiar processes of narrative contradiction and leave what he denominates "hysterical residues". Eastwood's movies raise contradictory questions about the representation of masculinity and leave "unmanaged and resistant representations of a male hysteria" (80). Smith further suggests that the action hero follows three stages, first he is eroticised through the spectacle of his body, then he is destroyed and finally, the hero "is permitted to emerge triumphant" (Smith 81). Thus, he argues that the

> two-stage exhibitionist/masochism process *must* always be followed by a narrative reivindication of the phallic law and by the hero's accession to the paternal function and patronizing function of the third stage of the orthodox action-movie codes. (84)

Another frequent strategy that many of these action films follow and that can clearly be found in the second Dirty Harry film, *Magnum Force* (1973), is the marked antihomosexual sentiment. Smith refers to this as the pleasure/ "unquiet pleasure" dichotomy that these films imply. Even in films where there is not a feminisation of the male body, a defence against possible disturbance in the field of sexuality is appreciated (85).

It can be argued, then, that vigilante or cop films offer many interpretations concerning the representation of masculinity. Some authors like Mellen have included within this category films that follow a similar pattern of behaviour on the part of the male hero. In this sense, Mellen deals with *Taxi Driver* (1976), a film that views New York with revulsion through the eyes of a former Vietnam veteran, played

by Robert De Niro. This taxi driver is so sickened by the decadent image of New York that he turns to violence. Mellen argues:

> [i]f *Dirty Harry* and *Walking* attacked the Bill of Rights, *Taxi Driver* glorifies its vigilante avenger by giving us a hypocritical politician named Palantine, a McCarthy-McGovern composite who won't clean up the "mess" of New York. It remains for our Vietnam veteran to do the job with his 44 Magnum, a lone assassin practicing with guns in the mirror in a scene that is barely satiric. (310)

The blockbuster *Jaws* follows the same formula, yet vigilantism on behalf of the community is directed against an animal predator. In it, we find three male types: "the egotistic, self-assertive loner (Robert Shaw), the policeman who must be initiated into the need from greater violence (Roy Scheider), and the intellectual, who is ineffectual without stronger men by his side (Richard Dreyfus)" (310). However, this film proposes, Mellen notes, a powerful reversal from the typical American film because the cop appears here as a rational and self-sacrificing human being and not as our hero and protector. It is the lawman who defeats the forces of chaos and disorder threatening society. According to Lev, "*Jaws* is an interesting transition between the backward-looking disaster movies and the neoconservative films of the late 1970s and early 1980s" (Lev 49). Lev considers that the disaster films of the early 70s, *Jaws* included, are ways to displace contemporary problems into "simple, physical confrontations" which are resolved "via old-fashioned virtues: hard work, individual initiative, [and] group cooperation" (49). The disaster movie can be considered, then, "a conservative response which "solves" the 1970s malaise by drastically simplifying and reframing it" (49).

During the 80s, the violent cop offered an idealisation of traditional masculinity in America. In a time where traditional values were starting to be questioned, the cop hero functioned as an icon of indestructible masculinity. Physicality and the spectacle of the strong

male body were valued in the 80s. Thus, films like *Lethal Weapon* (1987) and *Die Hard* (1988) offered imperishable traditional heroes in possession of muscular bodies. Their inner weaknesses and feelings are hidden and projected into external violence. Thus, Philippa Gates affirms:

> Riggs and McClane's bodies (...) become the canvas upon which their masculine trauma is inscribed. Rather than expressing his emotions, which would be interpreted as a sign of weakness, the action-hero channels his emotionality into violent retaliation.
>
> (www.crimeculture.com/Contents/80sCopFilms.html)

Yet, the repeated insistence on heterosexuality in some cop-action movies like *Tango and Cash* and *Lethal Weapon* threatens to draw attention to homosexual desire, something these films apparently seek to deny (Tasker 121). Moreover, the power ascribed to these heroes is reinforced in action SF films where muscular bodies are intermixed with technology in the form of cyborgs, like the protagonist of the popular *Robocop* films (1987, 1990, 1993).[70]

The popular 80s TV crime series *Miami Vice*, which was taken to screen in 2006, provide us with two Miami police detectives working under cover (Sonny and Rico). The series has also been a point of reference for discussions about masculinity and postmodernism. The critic Andrew Ross considers the construction of the male body as pure sexual spectacle in the show. However, Benjamin King considers that *Miami Vice* offers the repeated re-enactment of narratives of failure, what he locates within the context of contemporary

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[70] I will deal extensively with this kind of man-machine hybrid in chapters three and five.

articulations of masculinity (Tasker 114). Crockett is unable to perform his work—getting the bad guys—in a context where he has no control. This lack of control, accompanied by a sense of placelessness is

> a defining feature of the action hero in films such as *Die Hard*, in which John MacClane finds himself in an impossible situation controlled by an incompetent bureaucracy. It is perhaps the failure of work, the lack of effectivity of his efforts that allows for an understanding of the cynical outlook of the populist hero who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, and who remains central to the contemporary action picture. (Tasker 114)

In short, cop films heroes, so popular in the 70s and 80s entail many contradictory visions regarding the representation of masculinity. In our contemporary panorama, the formula of the omnipotent white cop eradicating impurity is not as frequent although it is still present in films like *Miami Vice* (2006). From the 90s onwards, a "normalisation" of the above-mentioned figure of the "New Man" has given way to a lessening of external toughness and the appearance of new models of heroes, as it will be argued later in this chapter.

2.2.1.5. The Muscular Action Hero

Undoubtedly, if there is the prototype of a hero that epitomises what it has been referred to as hard man so far, it is the muscled hero at work in many popular action films of the end of the 70s and 80s. The action film is one of the most studied genres in relation to the representation of masculinity and its cultural and political implications. Especially relevant for these studies are images of built male bodies like those provided by two key muscular stars, Schwarzenegger and Stallone. Susan Jeffords' influential work *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (1994) and Yvonne

Tasker's *Spectacular Bodies. Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (1993) become key references for any analysis of the muscular hero during Reagan times. Jeffords contends that the "Reagan Revolution", with its conservatism and militarism influenced the representation of the hero in many action films of the decade. Thus, white male heroes with hard bodies came to represent the country's solution for all its internal and external conflicts. For this purpose she analyses films that, like *Rambo, Die Hard, Robocop* or *Terminator,* present us with an image of masculinity that accurately supports the political agenda of the Reagan Era. These films become metaphors, then, for the symbolic outcome of broader political and social troubles.

Tasker includes new approaches, such as postmodernism when dealing with the relationship between star image, genre and masculinity. Her point is that recent action cinema responds to the shifts in gendered, sexual and racial identities that took place during the 1980s, also reflecting the influences of other media such as the new video culture. For her analysis of the muscled hero she takes into account not only gender but also race, class and culture. In the chapter entitled "The Body in Crisis or the Body Triumphant?" she deals with the implications as well as with the different critical perspectives of the masculine body, and more specifically, of the existing film theories addressing the muscular male hero. She considers this muscular body as revealing a complexity in the action film. This image has been, according to her, polarised and critically interpreted both as a triumph of traditional masculinity or, on the contrary, as a hysterical image pointing at a crisis of masculine identity. An "either/or" opposition has framed critical discussions about images of masculinity. But whether "critics view the muscular male body on screen as triumphant or crisis-ridden, he is generally taken to represent a 'new man', functioning as a symptomatic figure who can be read as a sign of the times" (Tasker 109). Yet if we take

into account the historical time in which these images emerge as well as their class and race connotations, it seems, Tasker proposes, more appropriate to circumscribe the analysis to the "both/and" terms. This perspective proposes, then, a discussion of the multiplicity of meanings that the term "masculinity" implies. In this sense, postmodernism stands as a useful tool for analysing such a flexible and ambiguous concept, and terms like "performance" and "masquerade" remain at the centre of recent feminist writings on cinema and gendered identity (Tasker 110). Masculinity has been insistently denaturalised, rendered multiple by criticism and popular images (111).

If we consider action films of the 80s, it is not difficult to perceive a strong backlash movement in gender representation. Susan Faludi points out that movie studios in the late seventies finally woke up to the profit potential in the struggle for women's independence (153).[71] This unconventional behaviour on the part of women did not, however, last long. In many films of the eighties, Faludi notes, it is "as if Hollywood has taken the feminist films and run the reels backwards" (156). Women return to the house, their new quest being to achieve traditional marriage and to escape the workplace, something they had been fighting to enter not so long before.

This backlash in the movies was supported by a powerful political force that campaigned against feminism and, therefore, against the Equal Rights Amendment, the Gay Liberation Movement and abortion demands. The 1980s backlash in cinema meant a return to traditional roles, embracing what Faludi calls "the Pygmalion tradition", and thus, during this period, we see men redefining women,

[71] She names some films in which housewives leave home to find their voice such as *Up the Sandbox, Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More* or *The Turning Point.*

and reclaiming them as their possession and property (167). This return to traditional roles can be clearly seen in action films which display violence and in which men are seen as superior figures, and women, consequently, are reduced to a secondary position, as it happens in films like *Predator, Die Hard, Robocop,* and *Lethal Weapon,* among others. In them we see that independent women are silenced by being pushed off screen (169).

It is, then, in these action movies of the end of the 70s and the 80s where the notion of masculinity is more conventional, not only by the male protagonist's behaviour and adjustment to traditional gender roles, but also—and especially—by means of his body. Thus, heroes played by Stallone or Schwarzenegger become icons of ideal masculinity in U.S. society at the time. The male body is, then, a site for the display of muscles and beauty, which is closely linked to body cult. Yet, the idea of bodybuilding raises questions about the denaturalisation of masculinity and/or the fabrication of male identity. In relation to this issue, Tasker affirms that

> men have become, during the 1980s, more overtly targeted as consumers of lifestyle. The invitation extended to western men to define themselves through consumption brings with it a consequent stress on the fabrication of identity, a denaturalising of the supposed naturalness of male identity. (110)

Bodybuilding did not become fashionable until the 70s with the emergence of the beauty and health industry. Yvonne Wiegers deals with the social construction of male bodybuilding and affirms that this ideology "which espouses personal responsibility for one's physical and psychological well-being, coincided near perfectly with the individually-oriented nature of bodybuilding and its promises of superior strength, health and beauty" (150). Especially relevant is the film *Pumping Iron* (1977) since it helped introduce the bodybuilding subculture to mass audiences and signalled the first step for the film's

protagonist, Arnold Schwarzenegger (150). After this, films like *Conan* and *The Terminator*, television series like *The Incredible Hulk*, and some promotion of fighting men provided by famous sportsmen, together with the health and fitness trend, favoured bodybuilding to be recognised as a legitimate occupation (Wiegers 150).

In relation to this issue, Tasker affirms that the moves through which bodybuilders became movie stars in the 80s, while other stars start to build their bodies, "offers a site through which to explore the changing articulation of masculinities in the contemporary action cinema" (73). For that reason she differentiates three categories within muscled heroes performing in action movies: stars, actors and performers. They bring different connotations of both masculine and artistic identity. Schwarzenegger and Stallone are considered stars since they are complex personas that allow for the construction of the body as spectacle. They are male pin-ups and the action movie becomes a privileged space for the display of this male body. Chuck Norris and Jean-Claude Van Damme are considered as performers, "their talents in the cinema deriving from a showcasting of martial-arts skill" (74). Yet there are possibilities to change categories, as happened with Schwarzenegger, who initially started as a performer and later became a star. Harrison Ford can be considered as an actor, since he has shown an ability to develop along his career the portrayal of a complex character.

The over-muscled body suggests notions of power and dominance over the opposite sex, which, as stated before, is silenced in these movies.[72] The body has been considered as a power contender

[72] Traditionally, tough bodies have been associated with world saviours, and abilities like power, strength, and a sense of leadership have been exalted. We find many examples in which the hero is represented in this way, such as John McClain in *Diehard*, Indiana Jones in *Indiana Jones* and Rambo in *Rambo*, among others.

by many critics and theoreticians (Connell, Bordo, Petersen). As I argued in chapter one when dealing with issues of power and masculinity, hard male bodies have been culturally considered objects of power.[73] The social definition of men as holders of power is not only translated into an ideal and mental body but also into muscle tensions, posture and the texture of the body (Connell 1987). The cult of hardness, especially relevant in the 80s, stands for the need for some armour to feel protected in society since, and as Bordo argues, "[a] culture that idealizes, fetishizes, is addicted to the hard and impenetrable, is a cold and unforgiving place to be" (Bordo 59). Bordo insists on the fact that the way we experience our bodies is powerfully affected by the cultural metaphors that are available to us (38). This social need of armour becomes quite apparent during the 80s. Muscularity does not only imply notions of social power but also sexual potency and power.

However, this excessive mark of masculinity as represented by the male body leads to many interpretations, other than those of power differentiator. A mockery and humiliation of the male condition can be effected by means of a visual exaggeration and, thus, "critics have seen stars like Stallone and Schwazenegger as 'performing the masculine', drawing attention to masculinity and the male body by acting out an excessive caricature of cultural expectations" (Tasker 78). This over-muscled body on screen stands, then, for an ideal utopia that does not correspond to the actual realisation of average men in daily U.S. life. Through the exaggeration of traditional male

[73] In relation to the power of bodies, Klaus Theweleit argues in *Male Fantasies* that there are two types of bodies: the hard and muscular body of the German fascist warriors and the soft and vulnerable body of the "other". I will take up Theweleit's theory when analysing the cyborg body of the Terminator in chapter five.

traits, the hero in action movies becomes, then, the ideal and unreachable man.

This is closely linked to the idea of role-playing that Steinem suggests when affirming "men are made to feel they must earn their manhood by suppressing emotion, perpetuating their superiority over women […] and imposing their will on others whether by violence or by economic means" (153). This representation of male identity is directly related to violence, something many critics have understood as the inability of male heroes to face up to and deal with personal feelings. It is this repression of feelings that leads them to violence (in Burt 17). Therefore, the violence of the characters in action movies can be interpreted as an externalised response to the crisis of modernity. Jonathan Rutherford deals with violence and its cultural context in the 80s and affirms that films of destructive masculinity such as *First Blood* (1982) and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985) were a response to a specific set of circumstances (1992, 173) and "the focus on the Vietnam War signified the crisis of American world hegemony and its gradual economic decline" and thus "the geo-political changes paralleled shifting gender relations and attitudes to sexuality in American society" (174). Rutheford concentrates on the two Rambo films to explore how their use of violence and revenge provides powerful images of identification and pleasure. They depict a man "in a state of catastrophe and the male fantasies of violence which constitute his attempts to resurrect a reflexive intelligibility and a sense of personal dignity" (177).

This extreme mark of masculinity represented by the muscled body has also been analysed in line with theoreticians dealing with the body as erotic object. This male figure becomes the mere object of the look, especially in those scenes in which he is displaying his physical power. In them the flow of the narration stops, and his body is permitted just to be looked at. This becomes evident in films showing

the bodybuilder as hero and star, following Tasker's account of stars, performer and actors. The break of the traditional Hollywood structure—activity/male, passivity/female—has been interpreted by some critics, such as Neale, as a spectacular form of masculinity, also found in western gunfights, coliseum combats in Roman epics, or the performative display of men in musicals. In all these sequences male figures are subject to the voyeuristic look, both on the part of the spectator and on the part of other male spectators. Technical devices such as fragmentation of the male body by means of close ups or other camera movements allow for the enjoyment of these stylised bodies. [74] As argued at the beginning of the chapter, Neale contends that this pleasure in looking involves "fantasies of power, omnipotence, mastery and control" (1992, 279), implying a homosexual hint between male spectator and the male figure which is, nevertheless, repressed by patriarchal society. Many other authors have analysed masculinity as an erotic display of the male body.[75] This appeal for men to occupy women's places in cinema coincides with the emergence of Men's Studies and the conception of gender as a social construct, which helped to dismantle the assumptions associated with men and women. As previously suggested, their appearance on screen as mere spectacle has been considered by some critics as a "feminisation" of the body. In action movies, male protagonists, although also part of the spectacle, are not feminised, at least apparently, due to the excessive masculine traits displayed by their bodies. Yet they still need to reaffirm in some

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[74] Roger Horrocks deals with male images and stereotypes in a section of his book *Masculinity in Crisis*. When analysing the rich body of images about men that are provided in recent years in Schwarzenegger films, he refers to his physique, which reflects "the considerable amount of narcissism about the male musculature in our culture" (160). However such a body, he later continues, "can be seen both as a massive penis, but can also be construed as quasi-female" if we consider the body-building enlarging of pectorals and narrowing of hips (160).

[75] I have referred to Paul Smith's discussions of the male body when analysing the figure of Clint Eastwood in cop action films of the 70s.

way the activities traditionally associated with masculinity. Images of men aimed at women, Dyer affirms, need to keep that sense of activity and thus they are usually captured in movement or associated with action (1992, 270). Hence in action films heroes are in constant movement, and their superior physical force and activity are never contested.

The combination of male action with male spectacle in filmic texts came to develop into a new kind of sub-genre of action adventure films that Christ Holmlund calls "the buddy body movies" (1993, 225).[76] Popularised in the 80s, this sub-genre includes films like *Locke Up, Tango and Cash, Beverly Hills Cop, Die Hard, Twins* and *Internal Affairs,* among others. Holmlund affirms that these films deal with questions of race, class, sexuality in ways that other critics did not take into account. She makes a queer reading of the Stallone character in the films *Tango and Cash* and *Locke Up,* applying the theory of the masculine masquerade to his representation. She concludes by affirming that the "insistence in both films on the inviolability of heterosexual masculinity has a hysterical ring to it" (1993, 224). All the doubling at work in these action films reinforces

[76] The overt representation of friendship among men is something Smith alluded to in the article mentioned above when dealing with the marked antihomosexual sentiment present in action films. Films featuring this male bonding are popularly known as "buddy films" and respond to the 70s generalised tendency of deviating contemporary social problems, in this case the prominent emergence of the strong woman. Mellen argues that "[t]o spend one's waking hours and intimate moments with another male of masculine demeanor becomes less threatening to the basically heterosexual male than to be paired with a woman of strength with whom a man is constantly forced to measure his adequacy" (312). We find many examples of this male bonding. Mellen analyses some of them like *The Sting, Mash, Husbands, Carnal Knowledge, Deliverance, The Last Detail, Pat Garrett, Billy the Kid*, pointing at their variants. Interestingly she includes, "[i]n the mid—seventies, a lunatic asylum (*One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 1975) and the newsroom of a big city newspaper *(All the President's Men*, 1976) serve equally as congenial environments for buddy relationships to flourish" (324). With this she is showing the 70s generalised tendency of depicting or hinting at this friendship among men, which does not frequently suggest homosexual relations.

the idea that "masculinity" can be also a multiple masquerade, something only thought for women.[77]

Another reading of these prominent bodies, closely linked to the theories just exposed, is the one provided by Rebecca Bell-Metereau in *Hollywood Androgyny* (1993). She considers these over-muscled bodies of action film heroes of the 80s and 90s as androgynous ones due to their insistence on attaining "female traits". At first glance, the highly muscled, sculpted forms of Sylvester Stallone, Chuck Norris, Steven Segal, and Arnold Schwarzenegger, appear as the antithesis of androgynous types, due to their emphasis on strength. Yet she argues that

> [a] closer analysis of their appeal reveals the striking oppositions held in tension within the gleaming images of their bodies. Shots and publicity stills of these figures often highlight the chest of the hero—smooth, hairless, with bulging pectorals, key lit in such a way that it emphasizes a cleavage some women would envy. Backlighting or high spotlighting of the head adds a reddish, golden shimmer to the hair and features. Standing postures reveal the forward-thrust pelvis, a pose that is typical of female runway models. Like the stereotypical female, these heroes are loners, operating on instinct, intuition, and emotion rather than on reason. Their dress may be stock military, but more often it has out-of-the-ordinary fashion touches—black leather, snakeskin buckles, tasseled headbands, a pony tail, or imitation American-flag cloth—all items one would ordinarily associate with the feminized use of costume as more symbolic than merely functional. (Bell-Meterau 240)

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[77] In another more recent work, *Impossible Bodies* (2002), Holmlund analyses issues of gender and ethnicity focusing on those bodies which are unusual because "they exceed the parameters within which we think of "ideal" or even "normal" physiques" (2002, 4). For this purpose, she analyses three kinds of impossible bodies: the first set is formed by those actors and actresses that have "outrageous" physiques and are known for any prominent part of their bodies, like the muscles in the case of Arnold Schwarzenegger or the breasts in the case of Dolly Parton; the second group is formed by constrained figures like lesbians or Afro-Americans; and the third group of bodies remain largely invisible and is formed by Asian-Americans, Latinos or older actors (2002, 5).

This trend of melting female and male traits in an androgynous body refers, according to Metereau, not only to a subtext created by a significant gay population but also to a "taste preference of mainstream consumers, a group conditioned by positive, powerful images of androgyny" (241). One of the appeals of these androgynous bodybuilders may be their self-sufficiency since these stars "have their own austere beauty, and their characters' lack of need for women fits the image of invulnerability" (241). This fantasy of invulnerability goes, she considers, hand in hand with the decade of the 80s. This trend will continue and become even more fashionable in the films of the 90s with the proliferation of androgyny not so closely linked to hard bodies, but to all variants of gender-bending, as I will argue later in this chapter when dealing with androgynous heroes.

In short, all the theories briefly commented here foreshadow the complexity of the male action hero for the analysis of masculinity. Images of the built hero in these action movies have been interpreted and analysed from many different perspectives, positing questions about desire, spectacle, performance and identification, and invocating cultural and political issues. In spite of the generalised critical characterisation of muscular cinema as simplistic entertainment for "dumb people", their success and the proliferation of critical work about these movies evidence their significance. The articulation of masculinity through the muscled hero in these texts is, as explained here, a rather complex issue that is normally considered, following Tasker's account, either as a body in crisis or as a body triumphant.

2.2.2. SOFT MEN

Soft men include those images of men that, in one way or another, violate conventional representations of powerful heroes or male protagonists of mainstream Hollywood cinema. In this sense, we

can include under this label vulnerable and sensitive men capable of expressing feelings and emotions and that can be found in genres like, for instance, melodrama. Comedians and male dancers in musicals also differ from normative constructions of masculinity due to their overt connotations of spectacle and passivity. Moreover, stars like Valentino or Hudson are considered as embodying characteristics linked to the feminine, suggesting homosexual overtones. All of them can be considered soft men since they do not rely, or at least do not reinforce, traditional features linked to mascilinity such as overt hardness, activity, control over women, resistance or rigidity.

When dealing with hard men, it was pointed out that they could also evoke a homoerotic desire disguised under a built body, hardness and invulnerability. Yet, a difference between the homoerotic desire evoked by hard men and soft men should be highlighted here. While hard men on screen are considered by recent media studies of masculinity to evoke a contradiction in the sense that their "open" masculinity may lead to notions of masquerade, spectacle, performance or homoeroticism, soft men do not rely on such a contradiction, and issues of gentleness or smoothness are overtly and consciously shown. Thus, these soft and sometimes feminised bodies have been at the centre of many discussions about masculinity in genres where, like melodramas, comedies or musicals, images of masculinity are detached from conventional representation.

These images of soft men become quite common at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st when Hollywood movies offer new ways of representing masculinity on screen and therefore the display of the male body as an object of desire, although still present, is less obvious.

2.2.2.1. Male Stars of the Jazz Age

The 20s, known as the Jazz Age, offered a number of stars that became positive references for the representation of masculinity since they accurately reflected the possibility of non-conventional figures to become icons of ideal masculinity. These soft figures are indeed positive expressions of the collective imagination.

Gaylyn Studlar in her book *This Mad Masquerade* (1996) considers the phenomenon of stardom in the 20s and focuses on the circulation of meaning created around a selected group of male stars of the Jazz Age, namely Douglas Fairbanks, John Barrymore, Rudolph Valentino and Lon Chaney. With her case study of these male stars she aims to explain their relationship with U.S. culture and to evidence how American masculinity negotiated various social and sexual dilemmas of the time (5). Hence these male figures suggest the "rebellion" of women against sexual and domestic norms, the ethnic threat of new waves of immigrants, and the alteration of middle-class lifestyles by modern industrial economics (5). For this purpose, she analyses each of the four previously named stars in relation to particular cultural events. More specifically, she examines the construction of Douglas Fairbanks's stardom in the contemporary context of a cultural movement aimed at reforming "American boys" into "American men". Likewise, John Barrymore is analysed in terms of theatrical construction of a male star for a female audience. Rudolph Valentino is also constructed for female audiences, since he is linked to dance, a form of entertainment which suggests the unleashing of women's sexuality during this period. Lon Chaney's association with the grotesque and the monstrous deviates the sex appeal that most stars of the time enjoyed, suggesting a rejection of the boy's reformers' emphasis on the possibility of physical perfection. Together, she affirms,

> all four stars demonstrate how different modes or styles of masculinity could be popular with a range of filmgoers at the time, even as they also suggest overlaps and, especially in the case of Fairbanks, Barrymore, and Valentino, convergence. All of them raise questions about the period's emphasis on a transformative masculinity, a conception of masculinity that seems to have had particular symbolic resonance during the early twentieth century. (Studlar 9)

This "transformative masculinity" has to do with the period's rapid cultural changes, since the 20s were a time when a "preoccupation with the polarities of transformations and stasis, the future and the past, tradition and modernity underscored much social discourse" (9). This sometimes-contradictory representation of the male figure also hints at the changing nature of gender patterns at the time. Barrymore and Valentino, for example, played men accessible to women promoting an image of masculinity constructed by and for women's desires in the 1920s (Studlar 94).[78] Rudolph Valentino is, according to Trice and Holland, "the one male actor of the silent era who remains an icon of masculinity" (9).[79] His emergence as an idol has been widely interpreted as the "result of women's perverse search for a new model of masculinity with an erotic promise that made him much more dangerous than the physically passive mollycoddle or effeminate sissy boy" (Studlar 151). He is, in his numerous roles as a dancer, a stereotype of a "transgressive masculinity" (Studlar 151).

The 20s offer, then, a great variety of male images that do not conform to the conventional representations of masculinity on screen

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[78] Barrymore's image involves an adaptation of existing cultural discourses on the male body from the 19th century, specifically from the post-Victorian theatre, which was constructed in relation to a demanding feminine desire.

[79] Valentino appeared in many films including very successful ones such as *The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse* (1921), *The Uncharted Seas* (1921), *Camille* (1921), *The Sheik* (1921), *Blood and Sand* (1922), *Monsieur Beaucaire* (1924), *A Sainted Devil* (1924), *Cobra* (1925), and *The Son of Sheik* (1926).

and that can therefore be called soft men for the purposes of this work. These images will, nevertheless, disappear with the coming of the 1929 Depression.[80] Mellen affirms at this point that "the male who was tender and emotionally strong, intellectual and physically active, non-violent and yet determined, would but rarely reappear in American films" (70). So, gone was the hero "possessed of an infinite amount of time to explore the byways of his personality, test his strengths, and laugh at his many weaknesses" (71). These embodiments of soft men become positive icons for an idealised yet approachable and actual reflection of masculinity on screen.

2.2.2.2. Men in Comedies

Comedies tend to show soft men as far as their protagonists are vulnerable, sometimes absurd men capable of satirizing traditional masculinity and other aspects of life that are contradictory and ambivalent. It can be affirmed that, in general terms, comedies transcend the traditional definition of masculinity. When analysing male sexuality in the media in *The Matter of Images* (1993), Richard Dyer affirms that sex comedy, although not inherently subversive, can "get away with making fun of things that other genres with a more straight-faced attitude cannot" (Dyer 2002, 92). Comedy, he further suggests, is "fertile terrain" for considering images of sexuality and he analyses comedies and comedians, whose "humour plays on the anxiety caused by the gap between what male genitals are actually like and what they are supposed to be" (92). Humour, he continues, "can

[80] After a period of vital optimism known as "the happy twenties", the roaring Wall Street Crash marked the beginning of the 30s, which was a difficult era until president Franklin Roosevelt created in 1933 the so-called "New Deal". This program sought to revive the economy from its deplorable situation and thanks to it, the country was equipped to face the shock to come in 1939: The Second World War.

touch on male fears about the inability to live up to what penises claim for them and can endorse female derision about the patriarchal overestimation of the penis" (93). Yet he concludes that in spite of this undermining of traditional male sexuality, most comedies insist on asserting as natural the prevalent social definition of that sexuality (95).

As early as the 1920s, the hero in comic films lacked the traditional male qualities that are supposed to appeal to women. Comic personalities such as Keaton, Chaplin, Lloyd or Langdon presented gentle or tender males. In the 30s, the so-called Screwball Comedy meant for many an expression of relief and escape from contemporary reality. This term was applied to films where values were juxtaposed: educated/uneducated, rich/poor, intelligent/stupid, and many times, male/female. Hence, when referring to the representation of the male hero in this genre, Mellen affirms that "in order to divert attention from the economic violence in society, these major male personalities engaged in less physical brutality on screen than did heroes of the early thirties—or than would screen males of the forties, sixties, and seventies" (98). Yet, the representation of masculinity in this genre also foreshadows gender concerns in U.S. society at the time. In his account of the genre in *Screwball* (1989), Ed Sikov attempts to show that Screwball Comedy, like any other genre, "expresses a whole range of meanings—the news of the day, cultural obsessions, psychological dynamics and aesthetic conventions" (Sikov 1989, 17). Sikov therefore disagrees with those who think that Screwball Comedy grew out of the Depression only as an escapist mode (16). This genre flourished precisely at a time when censorship suppressed any overt expression of sex and violence, a fact that explains some of the characters' behaviour and sexual patterns. Sikov argues that overt suggestion of physical love was removed and screenwriters and directors created comic characters who "found

themselves doing verbal and physical cartwheels as a way of dealing with frustrated passions" (Sikov 1989, 22).

Thus, Screwball Comedy addressed mainly love and marriage involving a sexual confrontation between an initially antagonistic couple whose ideological differences heightened their animosity (Lent 315). In the article "Romantic Love and Friendship: The Redefinition of Gender Relations in Screwball Comedy", Lent argues that departing from the traditional depiction of love and marriage, Screwball Comedy is built upon three major sources: a redefined image of woman, a redefined view of marriage and a redefined idea of cinematic comedy (316). She analyses such redefinitions to conclude that these films, like movies in general, provided an escape to a world that, paradoxically, was not so distant from the real one.[81] This redefinition of women's images suggests the consequent redefinition of the male image. This time the hero is depicted in a very different way than it used to be only a few years before in other genres, for example, in the gangster movie. A case in point is Hawks's portrayal of an unconventional male hero in *Bringing Up Baby* (1938). In the film, and following the conventions of the Screwball Comedy, a reversal of roles can be observed in the romantic couple (Hepburn/Grant), which can be interpreted as a consequence of the demands of society for equality between men and women. It is by this time that men's lives had started to change and feminist demands were heard. The values of traditional masculinity—reason, rationality, professionalism and physical supremacy—are gradually missing in the male protagonist, David, during the course of the film. The female character, by

[81] Thus, women in these comedies had the same objective as the middle-and working class female spectators: "to find an emotionally satisfying, sexually exciting, physically compatible, fun-filled companionship" (Lent 331). The Screwball Comedy created, then, an understanding of the new expectations for love and marriage, which is achieved by means of the films' discourse on the ideal relationship (331).

contrast, is an active and powerful woman who dominates him completely and contributes to his "feminisation". As in other Screwball Comedies, traditional assumptions of male/activity and female/passivity are reversed in this romantic couple, and in their place equality between the sexes is achieved. In so doing, the film takes this role reversal to an extreme and humiliates and ridicules the male figure. Faithful to the principles of comedy, the film suggests the need for equality between the sexes and the positive traditional elements of masculinity.

Other very different yet popular comic stars of the 30s were the Marx Brothers and W.C. Fields. For some authors they were

> less male images than explorers of the comic absurdity of social institutions. Groucho and Fields might be perfunctorily lecherous, but they were not treated as models of male behavior; even when Groucho was involved in a romance, sexuality gave way to satire and the games between men and women became one more object of ridicule. (Mellen 78-9)

In the 50s, comedies suffered a decline as a consequence of the difficulty of the times and the rejection of some writers to deal with comic issues. Ed Sikov in *Laughing Hysterically: American Screen Comedy of the 1950s* (1994) relies on the assumption that comedy, as much as any other genre in the 50s, is political. He justifies the genre's apparent detachment of U.S. real life affirming that it is "filled of historical and aesthetic meaning that cannot be quickly traced back to self-evident generalizations about real life America" (Sikov 1994, 6). He dismisses those critics who, like Sayre and Biskind, have in a way ignored the political connotations of comedy. Looking for social consciousness and cultural significance in the comedies of the 50s, he

believes, has never been a priority.[82] Sikov points out comedy's power of mocking the real world. Comedy was, among many genres, absolutely significant in a period of extraordinary repression and hysteria, and thus "when certain sources of pleasure were rendered especially inaccessible, comedy was absolutely critical" (Sikov 1994, 33). With all this, he reaffirms the idea that sex, gender, politics, economics, and art were "all stewing together on the modern electric range of the 1950s," and "that certain comedies not only brought these tensions and contradictions out into the open but specifically brought them into the gratifying glare of hilarity" (1994, 37-8). After having analysed various comedies of the 50s by different directors (namely Hawks, Wilder, Hitchcock, Tashlin) he concludes that comedy is escapist in the best and most utopian sense of the word, in the sense that it singles out the sensitive issues of the day and makes them ridiculous (244).

If we relate this to gender, it can be said that comedies glorified maleness more subtly. Among the most important comedies reflecting the previously mentioned ideological struggle we could include films like *Adam's Rib* (1949), starring Spenser Tracy (Adam) and Katherine Hepburn (Amanda) as husband and wife. Released at the end of the 40s, it gives the impression that in order to create a pleasant life together, neither men nor women have to be submissive to one another (Mellen 171). In *Dream Wife* (1953) Cary Grant plays a desirable male in search of a perfect mate. *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (1956) starring Paul Newman as Rocky Graziano is, according to Mellen, "in the service of the conformity of the fifties", dictating men that "they should enlist all their strength in a quest for success with

[82] Nevertheless, he admits some of these critics efforts to illustrate the comedies' socio-cultural meanings, like the analysis of Thomas Doherty of teenpics or Jackie Byars' analysis of gender in 50s melodramas.

the established order" (245). Once more, the tension between new and old values is reflected in gender relations in this popular genre.

Thus, comic and absurd men on screen have served to illustrate, hidden under absurdity and nonsense, the existence of alternative ways of representing the traditional hero. Precisely because of these films' supposedly detachment from reality, these new representations of masculinity are perfect embodiments of challenging gender roles.

2.2.2.3. The Male Rebel

This type appeared mainly in the 50s, a time characterised by a general innovation in the film industry. Moreover, this decade was witness of the appearance of new stars like Marlon Brando, James Dean, Montgomery Clift or Marilyn Monroe. In addition, from the 50s onwards, and as Thomas Doherty argues in his book *Teenagers and Teenpics. The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (2002), films were no longer "the mass medium of choice of a vast, multigenerational audience that motion picture industry officials invariably envisaged as "the public"" (Doherty 2002, 1). The rise of television and the collapse of the old studio system destroyed, according to Doherty, that universality that movies prior 1950s used to have.[83]

Besides, a gradual concern for gender identity aroused in this period, and with it, the traditional U.S. association of masculinity with

[83] That shift in marketing production initiated what Doherty calls "juvenilization" of film content and the film audience that is today a reality of the motion picture business (Doherty 2002, 2). Since, according to him, film production responds to the laws of consumer demand, it would be appropriate to consider the 'teenpic' a genre that begins around 1955, a "product of the decline of classical Hollywood cinema and the rise of the privileged American teenager" (Doherty 2002, 12).

toughness, which started to become problematic at the turn of the century, was dismantled by the end of the 50s. Gender roles and family patterns began to be seriously questioned, as well as the meaning of the categories male and female. Many factors seemed to undermine the traditional concept of masculinity, the impact of the Second World War and the Cold War being the prevailing ones.[84] This situation caused a move to more realistic genres in cinema and a tendency to show everyday problems.[85] Nevertheless, it shows them obtusely rather than directly, as socially-concerned cinema was "dangerous" due to the witch hunt or "purging of the non-anticommunist" which, in Mellen words, "left Hollywood deleted of much of the talent of the forties" (Mellen 189). Hence we have seen how many film *noir*, westerns, musicals, melodramas and romantic comedies in which their heroes, although sometimes completely opposed to each other, reflect, in a more or less direct way, the paranoia that characterises the 50s.

A general tendency was to present the figure of the male rebel, who allowed for inner explorations of his human qualities, something we already noted in the decade of the 20s. A whole new generation of actors began to subvert the traditional masculine image in an open and positive way. Roger Horrocks in *Masculinity in Crisis. Myths Fantasies and Realities* (1994), talks about a new kind of acting, provided precisely by Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando and James Dean:

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[84] Moreover, the war also had a decisive impact on the development of gay and lesbian communities in the U.S.A. and, as Burt contends, homosexual behaviour became commonplace for many people (104).

[85] This tendency can be affirmed to be inherited from Italian Neorrealism, which was first observed in the early 40s in the writings of American Italian critics.

> neurotic, dangerous, searching for authenticity, not afraid to look weak or clumsy. And these three actors also projected a narcissism, a femininity, that produced something highly charged and intense on screen they seem locked in some private self-dialogue, fascinated in their own bodies, their eyes full of veiled meanings, uncertain about what kind of man they are. (Horrocks 1994, 154)

The rebel, according to many critics, appeared for the first time as a positive male model in Hollywood and his presence produced "a real deepening of the image of men in film" (190). The rebel was, then, humanised and the psychological male space stressed out, what served, in a way, to distract an audience shocked by contemporary political and social troubles. As Mellen points out "[t]he assumed definitions of the male sex role were challenged as films discovered the male capable of sensitivity and an open expression of tenderness, feelings which in the forties were ridiculed as effeminate" (192). Mellen perceives a great paradox between real U.S. men and the representation of this tender rebel figure on screen:

> In the world of America, men could neither move nor think freely or without inhibition. On celluloid the male, driven inward, returned with a heightened consciousness. For the first time since the advent of the sound, men in films were sentient, thoughtful, understanding of weakness (including their own), and quietly perceptive. (Mellen 193)

In this sense, Marlon Brando becomes for many a male ideal since he is capable, in most of the films he features, of expressing feelings in an open way.[86] Likewise, James Dean in films like *East of Eden* (1955) or *Rebel Without Cause* (1955), just to name two significant ones, gives the image of a sensitive and gentle male. Susan Bordo in *The Male Body* deals with the representation and cultural

[86] The most notable exception Mellen notes is Brando's role as Stanley Kowalski in Kazan's *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

implications of the male body in Hollywood films. She considers two competing prototypes for men in the fifties, one embodied by Marlon Brando in his role as Stanley Kowalski in Kazan's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1950) and the other by Spenser Tracy in his role of Stanley Banks in Minnelli's *Father of the Bride* (1951).[87] Kowalski represented the violent and misogynist action hero while Banks was the forerunner of a type who loses "the battle of sexes" (Bordo 111). She sees the two Stanleys as progenitors of images of masculinity that have endured through the nineties (111).[88]

Yet, cultural change, as suggested before, is also to influence masculinity on screen, and even "Marlon Brando's portrayals of macho consistently maintained a high self-conscious, critical eye (…) and were also to inspire a generation of actors and directors (…) bent on "deconstructing" macho rather than playing it straight" (Bordo 111-2). The rebel embodied by Brando became, then, a positive model since it allowed for an inner exploration that goes further than the mere physical attractiveness. Bordo argues that Brando, apart from his advantaged physicality,

> also brought an emotional expressiveness, a willingness to portray male need, helplessness, dependency, that helped to shape a very different kind of romantic male ideal than the violent action hero. Even with Kowalski—as brutally heterosexual as they come—Brando was "queering" masculinity in ways that James Dean and others would develop still further,

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[87] Bordo's use of the word "prototype" reaffirms the thesis I have delineated so far, arguing for a difference between U.S. expectations about maleness.

[88] Bordo considers a typical genre of the fifties, which she denominates the "vigorous male animal comes to town" genre. It includes films like *Picnic, Elmer Gantry, The Long Hot Summer* and *A Streetcar*, in which the heroes are sexually dynamic men who "smell like men" and wear big boots (Bordo 148). These vigorous men usually come to towns full of repressed women they finally "liberate" by means of their pure maleness. This "genre" reaffirms one of the current male prototypes she considers as belonging to the decade: the misogynist violent male.

> and that have remained a constant undercurrent of macho masculinity. (112)

This negation of the violent action hero is also hinted by the figure of James Dean, another rebel and one of Brando's followers. Yet, Dean

> took Brando's legacy in the direction of this more sensitive, vulnerable, and ultimately sexually ambiguous masculinity. "Before James Dean," remarked Sal Mineo, who played alongside Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, "you were either a baby or a man. There was nothing in between." Actually, as we've seen, it was Brando who first challenged that opposition. But Dean elaborated the alternative—the child-man straddling the poles of neediness and manliness—in terms of the struggles of a teenager and for an audience composed predominantly of teenagers. (Bordo 141)

For the first time since the advent of the sound, rebelliousness and childish sensitivity are bound together in an attractive body which, while suggesting an ambiguous masculinity, became an admired one. Unlike Dean, according to Bordo, other descendants of Brando, like Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino or Robert De Niro "didn't bring an androgynous element to their roles, but their interpretations of the aggressively male elements of the characters they played was ironic, slightly detached, bringing out the false bluster and under-the-surface pathos of the characters" (Bordo 142). In one way or another, the previous tough male ideal changed in the 50s, giving way to new male models, clearly linked to the soft pattern.

2.2.2.4. Men and Melodrama

Melodramas became very popular in the 50s and 60s. These movies have been frequently interpreted as being female-oriented and addressing female spectators. Yet, this generalised understanding that

melodrama is aimed at a female audience has led to controversies within Men's Studies, since this association, McKinnon argues, "has much more to do with the history of feminist film scholarship than with the movie industry of the 1950s and 1960s" (MacKinnon 2002, 87). Family melodrama, it is argued, is a feminist label. There are many claims, however, in favour of the female orientation of this genre:

> Showcasing of women's fashion; importance of certain stars; explorations of problems concerning domestic life, the family and the children, self-sacrifice; primacy of emotionality and intimacy, combined with a dread of separation from loved ones; emphasis on dialogue as opposed to action; on "excess" as opposed to repression—all these have been identified as hallmarks of the female-oriented movie and thus of the melodrama. (MacKinnon 2002, 87)

MacKinnon poses some questions concerning these claims, as for example, what happens if a "melodrama" omits one or more of these claims? Should we talk about other generic labels to refer to those movies which omit or alter this formula? These questions show the complexity entailed by the labelling of this type of movies and their delicate relationship to spectatorship theories. Many feminist debates have centred, then, on the relevance of melodrama and the pleasure given to the female spectator, leaving aside considerations such as male spectatorship or pleasure.

In terms of representation, the heroes of particular romantic melodramas appear to be feminised and with troubled identities (McKinnon 2002, 95). According to critic Steve Neale, a feminisation of the male body can be perceived in some melodramas and romantic comedies. Neale names Rock Hudson's character in Sirk's melodramas, where his body becomes the object of the erotic look, as it happened with male dancers in musicals (286). Neale's affirmation has been attacked by many critics who, like Pumphrey, do not see this

fact as a feminisation of the male body but as a sign of shifts in social definitions of masculinity, which were after all, taking place at that time (in Burt 62). In Gordon's *Pillow Talk* (1959), the character played by Hudson, Brad, embodies at the same time two opposite types of men. He stands, on the one hand, for the figure of the playboy, who represents the assumption of male dominance over women and, on the other, for the naïve, passive, kindly gentleman without sexual energy. This interplay of two opposed sex roles, standing for the tension of traditional values in society, will enable him to achieve the love of the female character, Jan (Day). This would exemplify the genre's allowance for the display, within the same character, of two opposed male prototypes.

Jackie Byars in *All that Hollywood Allows: Reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama* (1991) traces the ideological patterns of the melodramas in this decade and urges for the use of different critical approaches for analysing the varieties of the genre. Thus, for social problem melodramas she privileges social and racial issues over other questions and for female oriented family melodramas, for example, she defends the use of psychoanalytic tools. Her conclusion is that melodramas in the 50s have both conservative and subversive potential:

> [b]ecause mainstream texts are produced both to reinforce dominant ideologies and to appeal to large numbers of people, it is far from surprising that we see in them a tendency towards conservatism and the very emergent and preemergent (and sometimes residual) forces that challenge dominant ideologies; cultural texts are, after all, primary sites for ideological struggle. That struggle goes on not just within the texts but also in their readings. (Byars 264)

Her idea of ideological struggle fits perfectly, I would say, with the image of masculinity in this decade. Thus, melodramas of the 50s provide audiences—whether male or female—with a different type of

hero, an icon of masculinity at that specific time. Despite its controversies, the melodrama normally offers soft and sentimental heroes whose images, as it happened with comedies, become symbols of subversive masculinity especially at times when traditional masculinity seems to be threatened.

2.2.2.5. Male Dancers

The musical is a genre that, although emerging in the 20s, flourished mainly in the 40s and continued its popularity throughout the 50s and 60s.[89] After this time, a slight rebirth of the genre can be appreciated in contemporary cinema, translated in the popularity of films like Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* (2001), winner of two Oscars, or Marshall's *Chicago* (2002), awarded with six Oscars. Male dancers are good examples of soft men since their image on screen problematises the traditional assumptions of violent heroism. Moreover, their performances as male dancers have been considered from many different perspectives, leading therefore to various interpretations.

Dyer defines the musical as a "type of performance produced for profit, performed before a generalized audience, by a trained, paid group who do nothing else but produce performances which have the sole (conscious) aim of providing pleasure" (Dyer 1985, 222). This pleasure is achieved by means of the representation of a utopian vision of society, which aimed at assuring the subject's stability in a period of decadence of values. In films like Minnelli's *Meet Me in St*

[89] According to Higham and Greenberg "since its resplendent début with *The Jazz Singer* in 1927 and *The Broadway Melody* in 1929, the American film musical had been dominated by two strains: backstage themes, dealing with the struggles of young and talented entertainers fighting their way to the top, and stories of singers and dancers pitched in exotic location: Canada, Vienna, Rio, Berlin" (170-1).

Louis (1944) male figures are seen as reversals of conventional notions of masculinity on screen, especially in those scenes when they are being looked at. As dancers, they become objects of the look, instead of taking an active role within the narrative. Thus, they dismantle the traditional association passivity/woman and activity/man established for mainstream cinema. Following the same tenets that Mulvey and other film critics created for female actresses, male performance in musicals produces a lapse in the narrative flow and neglects plot.

This challenging role reversal can be interpreted, nevertheless, in a very different way. Indeed, I consider this reversal as an urge on the part of U.S. society to redefine gender values. Yet these gender reversals are, in a way, detached from the narrative line, suggesting a softening of "the shock of the new", while offering a utopian vision of gender in a time characterised by pessimism. In other words, the musical, in its submission to certain structural and plot patterns, subtly proposes a new and controversial model of masculinity—a passive, sensitive man. This is achieved by means of spectacle, which suggests the constructed nature of masculinity. The male dancer's body becomes, then, a mere source of pleasure. It is precisely because of this, and because art has traditionally been associated with the emotional and the feminine, that these male dancers have often been considered as "effeminate", a prejudice spread partly by the mass-media. Male dancers do not follow the behavioural norms that patriarchal society establishes for "proper men", but embody instead feminine qualities such as sensitivity, passivity, sentimentalism and inner self-consciousness. This suggests a deviant masculinity, that is, these characters' association with homosexuality. Although it is true that, according to Burt, the 20th-century dance world is predominantly feminine, and that there are a lot of gay men involved in it, the association male dancer/gay man is culturally constructed.

Not coincidentally, musicals proliferated in the forties and fifties, when a sense of loss began to affect the traditional construction of masculinity, and new proposals were invading U.S. culture. That is why it can be affirmed that the male protagonists of musicals also have social roles and embody, in this case, contemporary fears. This social role is reinforced in musicals where plot and setting refer directly to contemporary social themes such as the war, as it is the case of many musicals of the 40s, namely *Yankee Doodle Dandy, This is the Army, Stage Door Canteen, Going My Way, Anchors Aweigh* or *The Bells of St. Mary's*.[90] Yet, it has been argued that in spite of lacking conventional features regarding body and behaviour, the male dancer manages somehow to achieve supremacy over women.

An often studied example is John Travolta's character in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and his connotations of eroticism, which provokes, according to Neale's account of the sexual objectification in musicals, his feminisation. Likewise, it is in our contemporary panorama when a crisis of values is said to affect images of men on screen, offering reversals of established conventions. Thus, recent musicals, although still relying on traditional assumptions, offer new ways of representing masculinity. A clear example of how male dancing is not necessarily associated to homosexuality but to professionalism is the main topic of Daldry's *Billy Elliot* (2001), which declines to deal with explicit issues of sexuality.

[90] Trice and Holland consider Michael Curtiz's *Yankee Doodle Dandy* a film that confirms straightforward U.S. values (43).

2.3. CONCLUSION

After this account of soft and hard men, it can be concluded that U.S. culture constructs the concept of masculinity and vice versa. Several types of heroes can be traced depending on the historical time and the image each filmic genre intends to offer. These figures can be labelled under two headings, hard men or soft men, depending on whether they openly perpetuate traditional masculinity or, if on the contrary, they somehow challenge conservative characteristics ascribed to male images. Thus, we have seen how cowboys, war heroes, or built action men are linked to notions of violence and strength and therefore to traditional masculinity. On the other hand, soft men are detached from traditional representations of masculinity. These figures will acquire notoriety especially in the 50s and later in the 90s. On the contrary, at conservative times influenced by militarism and external conflict, as is the case of the 80s, a proliferation of over-muscled actors (or performers) are seen on screen.

Male figures that embody the traits of the traditional hero—hard men—are still considered more "masculine" than those who do not adjust to this behavioural pattern. Hence, physical strength and endless activity, depicted also in the male body have become the dominant definition of masculinity in the last few years. However, recently, and due to many critical approaches, the representation of these heroes has started to change and their qualities are not interpreted in the same way.

Yet, I would like to finish this chapter by referring to a recent trend within the range of Hollywood masculinities that affects the way gender is understood in many genres, especially in SF. It is widely acknowledged that the beginning of the 90s saw the appearance of a new type of hero on screen, whose image does not show the more traditional notions associated with masculinity and that becomes one

of the best exemplifications of what I have meant by soft man in this chapter. Thus, soft bodies, androgynous characters and aging sex symbols allow for more permissive representations of male images. President Clinton is believed to inspire the model of the conflicted masculinity characteristic of the 90s, "embracing a kind of new, sensitive, non-traditional masculinity at the same time that it sought to demonstrate a powerful, thoroughly established sense of "real American manhood"" (Malin 7-8). This paradoxical version of masculinity is closely linked to U.S. acknowledged crisis of masculinity.

In "Behold the Man" Edisol Wayne Dotson also deals with the new ways of representing the male body in contemporary Hollywood cinema. Hard and muscular bodies have been replaced by soft and emotional heroes. Thus, the bodies of Kevin Costner, Daniel Day-Lewis, or Tom Hanks are less muscular, and their personalities are less tough, too. They are not meant to be action or adventure heroes but emotional heroes (69). Still this new concept of soft bodies must fit in, however, within accepted standards of male beauty. Dotson also deals with films like the Batman series, whose main actor falls in the category of the typical Hollywood male sex symbol. His body is not important since the strength and musculature of Batman comes from a rubber suit which becomes the object of display (71). He argues that mature long-time sex symbols like Clint Eastwood in *The Bridges of Madison County* can also become a beautiful object. With this he concludes that the defined or thin male body in films remains an indicator of accepted masculinity in U.S. culture (73). Stereotyped male bodies continue to appear in Hollywood films and spectators still see male images as cultural ideals. The result, he claims, is that "ultramuscular bodies are best, slight muscular bodies are adequate, overweight or otherwise out-of-shape bodies are unacceptable" (Dotson 73).

At this point, one may infer that the new hero embodies, then, hegemonic masculinity, that is, the most frequent pattern of representation during the 90s and the first years of the 21st century. Of course variations—some of them considerable—exist between the different genres. Precisely because of the great variety of representations that the times offer, many different depictions of the male hero coexist from the 90s up to the present, being the softer type, as stated before, the prevalent one, especially in certain genres. Regarding behaviour, then, many of the male protagonists appearing in films of the late nineties break with conventional masculine traits as they do not show an extraordinary physical power, or a superiority over women. Many tendencies collide, then, from the 90s onwards, and we are presented with new types of hero almost in every filmic genre. Moreover, the 90s are characterised by a general eclecticism, and, consequently, everything is possible and permitted in a society where the deconstruction of traditional values had already taken place. The possibilities for representation include almost endless variations between styles, genres and tendencies in every cultural product. In music, architecture, literature, painting, fashion, theatre, cinema and every cultural product there is no prevalence of one style over the rest. We have instead a wide range of influences in each manifestation, sometimes impossible to differentiate from one another, due to the complete transgression of boundaries which used to set them apart. All these issues affect the representation of masculinity on screen.

Many of the male protagonists appearing in films of the nineties break with conventional masculine traits as they do not show an extraordinary physical power. Many tendencies collide, then, from the 90s onwards, and we are presented, almost in every filmic genre, with new types of hero. In comedies, we find clumsy and passive heroes like Hugh Grant's character in *Notting Hill* (1999), or the intellectual and

irrational character of Woody Allen in *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995). In adventure and action films, heroes are not so prominently powerful and invincible as they used to be, but show their feelings as in the case of the protagonist of *One Good Cop*. Horror movies parody men's supposed lack of fearful sentiments as in Johnny Deep's character in *Sleepy Hollow*.

As it will be contended in the next chapter, this new type of hero finds a perfect place in the SF genre, a hybrid form which, at least apparently, allows for more challenging depictions of gender. Indeed, we get ambivalent characters in most SF films, like the ones embodied by Keanu Reeves in *The Matrix* and *Johnny Mnemonic.* Moreover, actors traditionally performing indestructible roles have lessened their activity and adopted softer ones, as in the case of the Schwarzenegger character mentioned above.[91] A gender closeness seems to be at work in this decade and, therefore, virilised heroines also start to appear in every genre, especially in adventure, action and SF. Their powerful physicality is present in many films of the 90s, like Linda Hamilton in *Terminator 2*, Sigourney Weaver in *Alien: Resurrection*, or Angelina Jolie in *Tomb Raider,* to give some outstanding examples.

This collision of gender features is also visible in the external appearance of the protagonists. Thus, androgynous bodies, cyborgs and, in general, a mixture of physical traits, contribute to their visual non-differentiation of the sexes. The figure of the new hero is, then, at least apparently, quite different from the canonical concept of hero

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[91] Next chapter deals with this multiplicity of possibilities for combination, reflected in the figure of the cyborg, which, especially from the 90s onwards, is seen as embodying features from many different discourses. Thus, machine–human combinations are seen in Call from *Alien: Resurrection*, the unisolds in *The Universal Soldier*, the cyborgs of *Judge Dredd* or the creatures of *Virus*. In the same way, we can observe combinations of animal-human in *Blade*, Nicholson and Spader in *Wolf*, the enemies in the *Batman*'s series, the mutants of *X-Men* or the protagonist of *Spiderman*.

outlined above, a constructed image reflecting contemporary U.S. concerns.

CHAPTER 3:
MASCULINITY AND U.S. SCIENCE FICTION CINEMA

3.1. INTRODUCTION

As outlined in chapter one, the concept of "masculinity" is culturally biased and, therefore, socio-cultural contexts shape its definition. As recent research has demonstrated, there is no fixed pattern for masculinity but hierarchical relations are normally established within the different manifestations of "masculinities" that vary in each culture and historical moment. However, there tends to be a "normative" definition of masculinity—or masculine stereotype—that implies notions of power and privilege and that is likely to prevail.

Images of masculinity are widely spread by cinema. Specifically, mainstream Hollywood films provide us with certain visual patterns that become starting points for any gender criticism, due to their popularity and influence on spectators around the world. Many times, images of male characters on screen do not correspond to spectators' individual gender considerations but rather to oversimplified types, which entails problems of identification. I believe that any analysis of masculinity on screen should take into account these aspects.

SF has become one of the most popular film genres. As in the case of other genres, it has provided us with certain gender models that, as paradoxically as it may seem, faithfully reflect socio-cultural concerns pertaining different periods in U.S. history.[92] To give a significant example, after the Second Word War U.S. anxieties over nuclear attacks and the disintegration of the traditional family are clearly evoked by means of massive alien invasion films of the 50s,

[92] As part of the globalised effect, U.S. film directors propose certain models of representation in SF that become influential both within and outside its borders. Specifically, Cornea refers to the prevalence of certain images of masculinity in SF cinema in the 80s. The blockbuster and the high-budget aesthetics were closely associated with SF cinema in the 80s and, consequently, it became very difficult for less well-funded national cinemas to engage with the genre (Cornea 130).

where male characters are depicted as being under threat. The decade of the 80s displays a particular concern with the male subject in SF cinema. In this decade, images of hypermasculine bodies can be read as signs of a masculinity in crisis. For Susan Jeffords, the representation of muscular masculinity is an emblem not only of the Reagan presidency but also of its ideology and economy. Jeffords attempts to define this type of masculinity and situate it within the films of this decade.

One of the key oppositions found in SF films is that between the "human" and the products of "science" and "technology". The elements of SF might be lined up on one side of this opposition or the other (King and Krzywinska 11). There exists a general tendency in SF films to show a terrifying, different and marginalised "otherness" as opposed to familiar, healthy and reassuring depictions of the dominant "one". The latter is normally linked to the human being, and specifically to the male hero. In *Screening Space,* Vivian Sobchack argues that the SF genre is characterised by its effort to create an estranged world. Images and sounds in SF films are classified into three categories: the alien, the familiar, and an intermediate category that fuses them. The tension among these three categories is what is specific to SF films (Sobchack 1987, 87). Versions of the "other", adopting the form of the friendly alien or the alienated human character, are also inserted in many SF films. As I will mention later, Sobchack is of the opinion that the alien "others" are no longer as threatening as they used to be since they "have become our familiars, our simulacra, embodied as literary alienated images of our alienated selves" (1985, 137). Consequently, more recent SF "embraces the alien Others as 'more human than human'" (137). This positive categorisation of the alien figure, which she calls "postmodern alienation", is at work in many films of the 80s and 90s. Technology is both familiar and strange in our contemporary panorama, which implies that it turns our attitude to difference, and

therefore "it is often the items of technology that have the most metaphorical potency in a SF text" (Adam Roberts 147).[93]

My analysis will centre on the patterns of masculinity that account for dominant trends in the history of the SF film in the U.S.A. They exemplify how masculinity is constructed in the SF genre. I will refer to them as the "menaced man", the "conquering man", the "artificial man" and the "virtual man". In doing so, I do not intend to include every male representation within these four parameters but to show general tendencies when depicting masculinity in SF films. Not coincidentally, these categories mirror the dominant debates on masculinity existing at each time. It was before the 70s, when SF was mostly considered a B-genre, when the representation of masculinity in these films was consistently different from popular constructions of it. The hero was normally depicted as a man with limitations, and was detached from the image provided by comic-books superheroes. Favoured by the emergence of the blockbuster, the 80s allowed for the return of hard bodies, superheroes and powerful representations of masculinity—many times fused with potent machines—performing in more conservative and popular films. At the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, when postmodernity has already permeated the cultural arena, a dominant tendency within SF cinema has been to set male characters in virtually created spaces, where models of traditional masculinity are contested.

My analysis of masculinity in SF films follows, then, a double focus. In line with theorists that claim that the representation of masculinity on screen is a masquerade and erases the many social, racial and cultural differences existing in the U.S.A. (Butler, Brod), it

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[93] Among the key technologies that consistently appear in SF texts, Adam Roberts refers to three: the spaceships, robots and cyberspace (147).

is contended here that SF offers instances of normative masculinity. Indeed, many SF films follow the "white heterosexual norm" for the representation of masculinity. Yet, my analysis also takes into account the contemporary socio-cultural context, which invariably affects the representation of masculinity. This double approach helps me to show how these masculine types are subjected to change in a higher or lower degree and develop with time.[94]

In order to illustrate this four-sided classification of masculinity, I will first deal with the origins of the genre. For that purpose, I will offer an overview of the history of the SF film in the U.S.A from its origins until the present day, focusing on the most popular and recurrent themes. This evolution will show how the genre has gradually acquired notoriety among critics and film experts. Today, the SF film has become one of the most important cultural blueprints while offering accurate portraits of both gender and cultural anxieties at work. Next, it will be stated that the concept of otherness becomes one key concern in SF. This dichotomy offers many different readings. Special focus will be given to the postmodern context and its emphasis on deconstruction, since it closely affects SF and the way gender is reflected in the visual medium.

I will then concentrate on the four patterns of masculinity proposed for the SF film. The division offered here does not correspond, then, to thematic classifications or to chronological order but to the way the male protagonist, and masculinity in general, are portrayed in filmed SF. Nevertheless, thematic or chronological divisions help both establish common tendencies when depicting

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[94] The type is according to film critic Dyer "any character constructed through the use of a few immediately recognizable and defining traits, which do not change or 'develop' through the course of the narrative and which point to general, recurrent features of the human world" (Dyer 2000, 13).

masculinity and offer a linear evolution of the hero according to the times. I will use these tools with the purpose of presenting four groups of masculine types that, although sometimes very distant in time and performing in completely different scenarios, still share a particular construction of masculinity. These types are, nevertheless, subject to change and depict contemporary gender worries.

The pattern of the "menaced man" suggests different readings. Films and television series like *The War of the Worlds* or *Alien* show male characters that are threatened by an unfamiliar force. The "other" is normally a metaphor for a collective fear prevailing in U.S. contemporary society and, as such, can have several interpretations according to the socio-political moment. The pattern of the "conquering man" is frequently depicted in space or time exploration films. These films are more concerned with the hero and his relationship with new and unexplored worlds. Heroes performing in space exploration films frequently follow behavioural patterns that can be aligned to the mythical quest structure. In this sense, the depiction of gender roles becomes more predictable. The pattern of the "artificial man" offers a mechanically or genetically "created" character that becomes the centre of the narration and the key for plot development. Human-machine couplings and genetically created human simulations reflect the times' numerous debates over the construction of gender and the postmodern body. Lastly, the pattern of the "virtual man" stands for the ultimate representation of the posthuman aesthetic of the blurring of frontiers. Male characters performing in virtually created scenarios normally share a series of traits concerning their physical appearance and behaviour.

With this, I intend to show the peculiarities of each pattern of masculinity and stress their evolution and possible adaptation to the times. With that purpose, I will make use of SF films that have depicted these patterns and have somehow contributed to create

tendencies for the portrayal of masculinity. Special focus will be given to remakes or adaptations of classical movies and to popular sagas. The alterations that these patterns of masculinity suffer account for contemporary U.S. gender anxieties, as I will attempt to illustrate.

3.2. THE U.S. SCIENCE FICTION FILM

3.2.1. KEY CONCEPTS AND CRITICISM

The term "Science Fiction" has proved difficult to define. Indeed, influential critics (Darko Suvin, Mark Rose, Robert Scholes) have offered controversial definitions of SF as a literary form. Additionally, these critics have changed their own vision of SF with time. Suvin reads SF as a popular subgenre that defamiliarises reality and distances readers from the real world. In his 1989's "Novum Is as Novum Does", Darko Suvin revises the earlier optimism exposed in his well-known essay "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre" (1972). In trying to situate the SF genre at the end of the 20th century, characterised by an "apocalyptic panic", he revises many of the defining characteristics he had earlier ascribed to it. He further claims that we need a space of dynamic alternatives that must go "beyond our pernicious polarities of personal vs public, male vs female or inner vs outer (and so on *ad nauseam*) (...)" (1989, 21).

The same controversy is found when film critics have attempted to define SF (Brooks Landon, Vivian Sobchack, Carl Freedman, Rick Altman, Susan Sontag, among others). In her classic essay, "The Imagination of Disaster" (1965), Sontag laid out the narrative devices and the psychological meaning of SF. She contended that from a psychological point of view the "imagination of disaster" did not differ from one period to another but that it did from a political and moral one (224). In her aim at delineating the genre's formal conventions, Sontag takes films of the 50s and early 60s to pay attention to artistic form and the "effects" of film imagery. She also seeks to understand the "pleasures" offered by these films, concluding that SF is not about science but about destruction.

There are different ways of understanding SF films. In the early 90s, Landon claims that we need to redefine what we call SF as a filmic genre, since SF film is not literature and the two media pursue very different goals (14). He insists on the non-narrative tradition of film as spectacle and on the importance of special effects in SF films (63). Before Landon, critics like John Baxter or Richard Hodgens pointed out that the nature and emphasis made in literature and films were rather different. Baxter's argument, however, assumes that literature supports logic and order while films support confusion and chaos (10). This assumption does not take into account the ideology of the times, and ignores historical connotations. Sobchack denounces Baxter's reasoning and claims that both literature and film change with time (21). In a later work, Sobchack argues that SF films do not have a specific iconography (1987, 66-7), but that offer instead many variations to keep its novelty in our culture, becoming one of the most flexible popular genres. Rick Altman (1984) outlines a structural model and makes a distinction between semantic and syntactic ways of understanding SF films. Adapted from linguistics, the semantic approach deals mainly with the visual style or the special effects while the syntactic one is concerned with how different elements of meaning are organised. Altman proposes a combination between these two approaches for the analysis of SF films. More recently, Philippe Mather (2002) took Suvin's analysis of the forms of estrangement found in literature to propose a semiotic analysis of SF films. He focuses on a typology of figures of estrangement to show that they affect every level of SF film discourse, and not only images and sounds.

The SF film is indeed a category difficult to define. However, I believe that there are certain themes that conform the genre's identity. There seems to be a general agreement among film critics about SF's emphasis on the encounter with difference. Discussing the difficulties of categorising a film as SF, Telotte has suggested two approaches. In

general terms, one approach has been to postulate an essential nature for the form and exclude works that violate the type. Another approach has been to work from a common consensus and accept for the purposes of analysis works that have been previously included in the genre. The latter approach is more inclusive and allows discussion (Telotte 2001, 8). The difficulty to distinguish between horror and SF in a series of films has been frequently noted. This is especially the case of some "monster films" of the 50s, as it will be argued later in this dissertation. In this light, Cornea argues that "[f]ollowing two world wars, the distinctly dystopian turn in science fiction films of the 1950s led to the genre borrowing from horror in its depiction of science in a less positive light" (7). Thus, we get some SF hybrid films which include elements typically ascribed to horror ones, as it could be case of *The Thing from Another World.* In my view, we should accept the hybrid nature of these works and not attempt to categorise them as belonging to either SF or horror. In this work, I tend to offer an inclusive approach of the films considered as belonging to the SF genre.[95]

SF has also borrowed from other filmic genres, such as fantasy.[96] Indeed, part of the difficulty in defining the SF genre lies on the fact that it shares characteristics and images with other forms such as TV, comics, video games, myth, philosophy or science. Also, it has already been mentioned that SF cinema shares traits with the literary genre. Moreover, SF is adapted to technological innovations and scientific

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[95] Indeed, the films under discussion in chapters four and five show this fusion of filmic genres and tendencies.

[96] Cornea has stressed on the genre's borrowing both from musical and horror films. As concerns the musical, she points out the structural similarities between both genres, being nevertheless easy to distinguish one from the other. As for the horror film, it becomes more difficult to distinguish between both genres in the case of a number of films. She does not attempt to separate these genres but to suggest that some films might always oscillate between both forms (7).

discoveries, which gives contemporary relevance and, as Sobchack argues, keeps the genre vital to our culture. SF suggests socio-cultural worries. SF has become, then, a cultural icon with a vast number of fans.

In spite of its popularity, it was not until the mid 70s when SF film criticism acquired notoriety, not only in film-related periodicals but also in many academic fields. John Baxter's pioneering history of the genre, *Science Fiction in Cinema* (1970), stands as a source for forthcoming critiques of SF. In 1972 William Johnson was one of the earliest critics in arguing the necessity to include this kind of criticism in academic circles and, thus, he edited the volume *Focus on the Science Fiction Film*. This critical anthology on various aspects of the genre can be considered as the precursor of a body of significant material.[97] J.P Telotte, one of the key recent critics on SF films, acknowledges Johnson's legacy and includes among the main approaches of the genre humanist, ideological, feminist, psychoanalytical and postmodern critical vantages. Nowadays, there exists a great number of theoretical perspectives or critical approaches that can be used in the analysis of films. I am particularly concerned with the way these films address contemporary issues and portray masculinity.

3.2.2. THE HISTORY OF THE SF FILM

As suggested above, early SF films released in the U.S.A, as opposed to what happened with SF literature, were not regarded as

[97] SF writing, as Johnson points out in the early pages of his volume, has been given more critical attention from its origins, although by the time he was writing his book it was not "fully respectable" (Johnson 1).

"high quality" films, especially if we compare them to other more consolidated Hollywood genres like comedy or the musical, or to early European SF.[98] Broadly speaking, it can be argued that from its origins in 1895 up to the release in the mid-to-end 70s of big budget films, SF can only be said to acquire a considerable popularity during the 50s, and still this boom can never be compared to the popularity of other contemporary films.[99] In relation to this issue, many authors coincide in establishing a before and an after of films like *Star Wars* (1977) or *Jaws* (1975) when dealing with the history of SF.

Early film-makers explored the new medium to find original ways to create "alternative realities". SF elements were to be found, then, in the numerous trick films of the early cinema. Nevertheless, these films, like the Lumière brothers' *Charcuterie Méchanique* (1895) were considered comic, in spite of their fantastic elements—in this case, a machine transforming pigs into sausages. The French film *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) by Georges Mèliés is considered by many to be the first SF film, probably based on Jules Verne's *From the Earth to The Moon* (1865) and H.G. Wells's *The First Man in the Moon* (1901).[100]

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[98] To the common question "Why has it taken nearly 60 years for the SF film to be accepted as legitimate cinema?", in his introduction of *Science Fiction Films of the Seventies,* Craig W. Anderson answers that, since SF films are to produce visions of the future, the technology of film-making or the lack of it, has been "the major stumbling block for the representation of convincing filmed science fiction" (5).

[99] The great popularity of films like *A Streetcar Named Desire* or *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, starring acclaimed actors like Marlon Brandon or Paul Newman, engaged almost all the public attention of the 50s, leaving genres like SF nearly unnoticed.

[100] Much criticism considers H.G Wells and Jules Verne as the "fathers" of SF literature. Indeed, both writers had an enormous influence on the consolidation of the SF genre in the 20th century. Thus, if we consider SF as a response to the particular historical and cultural phenomena of the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 19th century, Wells's and Verne's works are considered as starting points for SF (Adam Roberts 47-59). It is also commonly assumed that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is the most direct ancestor of the SF genre. Yet, some SF criticism considers a few selected texts from earlier periods as precursors of the genre. This criticism believes in the antiquity of SF and speaks to something more durable, the human desire to imagine worlds other than the one we inhabit (Adam

The great achievement of this work, apart from the fact that it lasts about twenty minutes in a time when most films took only one or two, is its success in breaking with space-time conventions by means of technology. It inaugurated, at the same time, the theme of the "fantastic voyage". This new aesthetics will be soon imitated by U.S. film-makers in films like *A Trip to Jupiter* (1909), *A Trip to Mars* (1910) or in 1916's version of Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.*[101] Early U.S. SF cinema introduced new special effects, which offered new visual possibilities to the audience. This spectacular cinema, although it never acquired the status of Hollywood comedies of the 10s and 20s, opened the path for later cinematic SF.

From these early examples until the outcome of World War II, a general trend dominated SF films around the world: the impact of technology. Telotte has referred to this period as "The Machine Age," due to the mechanical supremacy in every aspect of life (2001, 81). He summarises the narrative concerns and generic types in this age: "utopian and dystopian tales, stories of marvellous inventions and mad scientists, hybrid concoctions of horror and science fiction, and the serials" (81). Yet, we should take into account the sometimes stark difference—especially from the 20s onwards—between European and U.S. filmed SF.

During the 20s, European supremacy was a reality, not only as the production of SF films is concerned, but also in scientific research,

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Roberts 48). Examples of this proto-SF can be found, according to this criticism, in the works of the Syrian novelist Lucian, writing in the second century AD, or in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). Likewise, there is a whole trend in the English literary tradition during the late Renaissance and the Restoration period dealing with the topic of imaginary travels, like Francis Bishop Godwin's *The Man in the Moon* (1638).

[101] In Great Britain, Méliès's fantastic voyages became less fashionable and were substituted by what Phil Hardy calls "future-war sub-genre", which includes films that reflect real fears of invasion during a pre-war period. Among these films, he counts *England's Menace* and *If England Were Invaded*, both of 1914.

especially if we consider certain films which contain, using Telotte's words, "utopian and dystopian tales". In Germany, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) stood as one of the most influential visions of a futuristic city, while denouncing the harsh conditions of workers. Likewise, in the Soviet Union, films like Lev Kuleshov's *Aelita* (1924), also offered a new kind of society on Mars, where nevertheless, freedom and technological progress were not totally achieved. These instances of social analysis were absent, for example, from U.S. SF films of the 20s, and, as Phil Hardy argues, "gadgetry, fast-paced action and melodrama held sway" (62). It will not be until the 30s when social problems were especially reflected on the American screen, usually in a negative light.[102] Telotte attributes this fact to the effect of The Great Depression and to the transformative promise of the technological (Telotte 2001, 87). The futuristic musical *Just Imagine* (1930) is, according to this critic, the "key American entry in this utopian-dystopian vein" (85). The film speculates about the future offering a magnificent vision of New York in 1980. It will influence the aesthetics of many later SF films and TV series in the United States.

It is commonly agreed that the so-called "mad scientist theme" dominates the decade of the 30s, reappearing in several films during the following decades. Presented sometimes as part of the horror genre, these films reflect the individualistic rather than the universal fear towards technology, by means of a mad scientist working on his own. The most outstanding examples in this decade are the literary adaptations *Frankenstein* (1931), *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1932) and

[102] During the 30s, utopian visions of society were a commonplace in European SF films. The British *Things to Come* (1936) or the German *Der Tunnel* (1933), to name just a few, honour progress by showing a technologically advanced future.

The Invisible Man (1933), as well as *Mad Love* (1935) and *Island of Lost Souls* (1933).[103]

All of them reflect the concerns of the times, while hinting at the need of safety and caution when technological progress is concerned.[104]

At the end of the 40s, and as a consequence of the outcome of WW2 and the anxiety aroused by it, other themes will be introduced in U.S. SF panorama, like the UFO or the alien invasion, topics that will dominate the big screen during the following decades. As suggested before, the 50s were an important age for SF cinema since it became a powerful vehicle for mirroring U.S. socio-cultural anxieties. Moreover, it was quite a prolific period, at least compared to immediately previous ones, which encouraged many critics to consider a "rebirth" of the genre. The diversity of topics and themes makes a further division in sub-genres necessary.

Indeed, the fear of the atomic bomb and the nuclear threat which originated with the Cold War are reflected in films depicting

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[103] These films are sometimes classified as horror or fantastic films, due to the features both genres share. As mentioned earlier, in 1972 Johnson delineates broadly the limits of SF. He includes in the genre all the films that are intended to introduce any change in the world as we know it (10). The changes, he continues, may be caused by the human being, or they may remain outside his/her control. In many cases, changes depend on dislocations of space or time: humanity visiting other worlds or aliens visiting the earth. In them, "the smaller the displacement, the less likely the film is to be accepted as SF" (10). Apart from these changes, we find others related to environment and identity: catastrophes, machinery, human mutations, loss of individuality. In them, "the less widespread, or potentially widespread, the change, the less likely the film is to be accepted as SF" (11). This is precisely the reason why films like *Frankenstein* and the "mad doctor movies" of the 30s and 40s are generally excluded from the genre.

[104] Anderson argues that SF films of the 30s and 40s perfectly reflect the sobriety and darkness of the times as efficiently as did gangster films: "the dark, wet, gloomy, sharply angled images of the *noir* films of the 40's were represented within the science fiction genre but these science fiction efforts were not seen as being especially indicative of their times" (3).

deformed creatures, awakened monsters and world catastrophes threatening with nuclear holocausts. Among the most outstanding films are: *Them!* (1954), *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957), *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), *When Worlds Collide* (1951), *Godzilla, King of the Monsters!* (1956) or *Day the World Ended* (1955). Monsters, not only those created or awakened by atomic bombs, appear in numerous SF films of the decade, as is the case of those made from the human-animal combination like the ones appearing in *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), *The Fly* (1958) or *Werewolf* (1956). Again, and as it happened with the mad-scientist cycle, many of these films featuring monsters are considered horror films, or SF horror films. Another typical anxiety reflected on the screen in the 50s is the fear of the communist menace, translated into alien invasions from outer space. The threat is normally resolved by the destruction of the "strange" or alien. This topic is depicted in films like *The Thing From Another World* (1951), *The War of The Worlds* (1953), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *Earth Vs the Flying Saucers* (1956), or *The Man from Planet X* (1951), just to name a few.[105]

SF films in the 50s, especially in the first half of the decade, became the perfect medium for reflecting the terror of a society threatened by atomic power. Monsters, mutants and world cataclysms stand for the fear of the unknown. Still, we find in the 50s some SF films which depict the positive side of technology by means of space exploration, a motif that was taken from the first instances of the genre and that will pervade in big-budget productions till present day.

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[105] Apart from alien invasion films, we can also find deviations from the theme. Telotte contends that *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) mocks Earth's cultural differences and urges, by means of an alien presence, a peaceful coexistence throughout the universe (97). The topic of the threatening invasion is further modified in *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), since the alien visitor is on Earth by accident, being its only wish to return home.

In fact, the first coloured SF film which inaugurated the decade, *Destination Moon* (1950), stands—with its documentary style—as a celebration of man's conquest of space. As stated before, the positive mood of the film towards technological development was not followed by the majority of films of its decade, which depicted nuclear threats and alien invasions. Likewise, in *Forbidden Planet* (1956), space travel helps its protagonists to become aware of the dangers of an irresponsible use of technology developed on other planets. *Conquest of Space* (1955) follows the documentary style of *Destination Moon* and, including religious connotations, also offers a positive vision of space exploration. By the end of the 50s the fears and anxieties were gradually lessening among the U.S. population, and consequently, they were disappearing from filmed SF. It is at this time when the genre experienced a decline, leaving the monsters of the horror film the "task" to show these fears. Horror films, in the line of *Frankenstein* or *Werewolf* dominated the screen and relegated SF to a secondary place during the next decade.

In spite of its decline during the 60s and the first half of the 70s, some "mainstream" film-makers, following this documentary trend of the 50s, took the topic of the fantastic voyage as the means to speculate about humanity's future in their productions. Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) is considered the most influential film of the 60s.[106] Kubrik's epic journey with its technical superiority and its emphasis on spectacle anticipates the aesthetic to be followed by directors Lucas and Spielberg in the late 70s and early 80s.[107] *2001* stands, then, as a key SF film of the 60s, a decade when a generalised

[106] Before 1968, the decade only left us with a few influential films, being *The Time Machine* (1960), *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964) and *The Planet of the Apes* (1968) the most outstanding ones, yet never as celebrated as *2001*.

[107] *2001* won the 1968 Academy Award for Special Visual Effects.

pessimism towards the future dominated the screen. Catastrophes and apocalyptic visions of the future were, then, commonly represented. Bruce Frankling in his "Visions of the Future in Science Fiction Film from 1970 to 1982" argues that

> By the late 1960s, visions of decay and doom had become the normal Anglo-American cinematic view of our possible future, whether in the over-exposed sterile whiteness of George Lucas's *THX 1138* (1968) or the shattered Statue of Liberty sprawled across the end of the aptly named *Planet of The Apes* (1968). Our only hope for salvation seemed to lie outside ourselves, perhaps with the godlike aliens who might remould someone to rescue us from the killer apes wearing the uniforms of U.S. generals in *2001* (1968). (Frankling 19)

Space in *2001* is still presented as something distant from the human reach. Slight references to cultural concerns, such as the fear of the unknown, appear in the film, in spite of its apparent detachment from reality. Telotte, in his study of the trajectory of the SF film, includes other films of the 60s and 70s which turn away from the fantastic voyage topic and examine in a quite direct way how the latest scientific developments may affect human identity. These films deal with environmental concerns like the ones exposed in *Logan's Run* (1976) and *Silent Running* (1972); personal anxieties or troubles caused by technology as *The Stepford Wives* (1975) and *Demon Seed* (1977) show. As these films attest, "the science fiction genre had pointedly become a popular and effective vehicle for addressing important cultural concerns, even ones that, in various ways, offered a subversive view of the status quo" (Telotte 2001, 104).

At the end of the 70s, and partly as a consequence of the success of Kubrick's *2001*, the SF genre became more and more attractive, not only because of its subject-matter—capable of offering all kinds of new realities—but also because of the quality of the special effects. The referential film was Lucas's mega-hit *Star Wars* (1977),

which, relying on Kubrick's *2001*, will create a trend to be imitated by uncountable forthcoming films. In it, the exploration of space seems to be an easy task for the human being, who, making use of the latest technology, succeeds in crossing space at high speed. Its setting in far away places and its narrative based on the hero's quest have led many authors to consider the film as one more instance of the archetypal "monomyth".[108] Its achievement is significant enough since it is precisely the great response of the young audience to *Star Wars* in 1977, which "sparked an unforeseen renaissance in the popularity of science fiction films" (Bergstrom 33).[109] Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, of the same year, is—in a lesser degree—another influential film of the late 70s, relying on similar epic concerns as Lucas's. Spielberg's later success, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) became a significant step in introducing new topics in filmed SF. This mega-hit provides us with an unusual yet positive image of the alien: the pleasant and cuddly extra terrestrial.

Moreover, we should take into account the fact that at the end of the 70s, especially after the release of Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975), the so-called "New Hollywood" emerged as a consequence of the creation of a new kind of cinema quite different from earlier practices. This new filmmaking produces, according to Schatz, three different types of movies:

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[108] As it will be argued in the next section, Joseph Campbell's *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* explores the archetypal journey undertaken by the hero, a structure present in many texts.

[109] In *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, Robin Wood suggests that the 1980s were greatly influenced by "the Lucas/Spielberg Syndrome" which "construct[s] the adult spectator as a child" (205). Wood summarises the major areas in which films provide reassurance. Although Wood's arguments are based on the *Star Wars* films, we can, Wood affirms, apply these arguments to many mainstream films of this decade. These characteristics are: childishness, special effects, imaginary/originality, nuclear anxiety, fear of fascism and restoration of the father.

> the calculated blockbuster designed with the multimedia marketplace and franchise status in mind, the mainstream A-class star vehicle with sleeper-hit potential, and the low-cost independent feature targeted for a specific market and with little chance of anything more than "cult film" status. (Schatz 35)

Blockbuster SF films like *Star Wars* or *E.T,* among many others, were conceived as "multi-purpose entertainment machines that breed music videos and soundtrack albums, TV series and videocassettes, video games and theme park rides, novelizations and comic books" (Schatz 9-10). The popularity of these blockbuster films made their consideration as "mainstream hits", and, thus, stars, genres, and cinematic innovations the new Hollywood implied had to be "established" and "refined" (Schatz 10-11). Following this argument, many critics agree in affirming that complex character traits and character development were replaced in these blockbusters by plain stereotypes and plot lines which only linked action sequences (Buckland 167). This has provoked in a way, the consideration of the blockbuster, especially Lucas's and Spielberg's ones, as a return to more classical conventions and their emphasis on pure "entertainment".[110] Yet, and as Geoff King affirms in *Spectacular Narratives*, the prevalence of spectacle and special effects in these blockbusters do not eclipse narrative, which, although relying on classical patterns, still tell reasonably coherent stories (2). One of the oldest and most familiar American narratives is the myth of the frontier, which offers thematic oppositions that are present in many films. The frontier is "a point at which proximity to the untamed wilderness (or its contemporary equivalents) is supposed to keep

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[110] Andrew Britton, in his influential "Blissing Out", points out this conservative revival in the Reagan era, and the films' emphasis on entertainment if they are to become popular. Reaganite entertainment, he assumes, is "the quintessence of entertainment: it creates the pleasurable obviousness of feelings that it tells us are untenable" (7).

civilization fresh and sharply attuned" (Geoff King 5).[111] In relation to *Star Wars*, Geoff King affirms that it "appears to have been a conscious attempt by George Lucas to revivify not just a particular blend of spectacular narrative but also the frontier myth damaged by the repercussion of the Vietnam war and other events in the late 1960s and early 1970s" (79). In this respect, and in spite of the film's dependence on more classical forms of narrative and its emphasis on spectacle, U.S. social and political panorama is subtly and inevitably hinted in it.

Although Lucas and Spielberg produced the greatest hits of the end of the 70s and 80s, other personalities won gradual recognition, such as James Cameron, Tim Burton, Ridley Scott, David Cronenberg or David Lynch. All of them made good use of the popularity that SF enjoyed and attempted to become commercially successful making "medium-budget pictures with widely known stars" (Bordwell and Thompson 469). James Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984), *Aliens* (1986) or *Terminator 2* (1991), Ridley Scott's 's *Alien* (1979), or *Blade Runner* (1982), David Cronenberg's remake of the 50s classic *The Fly* (1986) or Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1991), are cases in point.

Many SF films were released in the U.S.A. during this conservative age, which lasted until the beginning of the 90s. During this period, and as suggested before, classical patterns of narration and traditional characters' behaviour were commonplace in SF,

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[111] Geoff King analyses the relationship between spectacle and narrative in the Hollywood blockbuster, with the purpose of showing how the mythology of the frontier is reasserted in it. SF, he states, "is well equipped to explore and offer some imaginative resolution to a number of pressing social issues, including the broad issue of the relationship between 'humanity' and that for which science, technology and rationality are deemed to stand" (70). Since the SF film imagines new worlds, technologies and beings, it becomes the ideal arena in which to reflect the spectacularity of big-screen entertainment (70).

especially in the blockbusters. Yet, and as a consequence of the influence of postmodern aesthetics, many directors adopted a totally different point of view which will anticipate the prevalent one in many films of the mid-to-end 90s and of the early years of our current century. In "Androids and Androgyny" Janet Bergstrom points out a number of SF films which, released in the midst of the 70s genre revival, do not follow, nevertheless, the Lucas or Spielberg strain but adopt instead a "deviant" one. They combine, she argues, an emphasis on "visual/aural style with a less classical form of narrative" (33). Films like *Blade Runner* (1982), *Alien* (1979), *The Road Warrior* (1981), *Liquid Sky* (1982) and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), are some examples. Yet, both types of films, the canonical and the deviant, she continues, emphasise spectacle over story and are related to advertising (1991, 33-4). Thus, the importance of visual effects is evident and will be a defining factor for SF films of the 80s, both mainstream and deviant.

SF films at this time start to explore the consequences of the latest achievements in technology: the machine intelligence. Films like *The Terminator*, *Robocop,* and most notably, *Blade Runner,* introduce characters so close to their "models" that the difference between original and copy is often hard to tell. This leads us to consider Jean Baudrillard's theory exposed in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) where three orders of "simulacra" or imitation of the real were established.[112] The principle of simulacra will become prevalent in SF films of the mid-to-end 1990s, especially in those reproducing cyber worlds. From this moment onwards, computer generated imagery starts to

[112] I will focus on Baudrillard's theory later on in this chapter when dealing with postmodernism and SF. In the same way, Baudrillard's account finds useful for the analysis of *The Matrix* in chapter 5.

predominate in SF films. In relation to this issue, Michele Pierson argues that:

> The aesthetic project governing the production of CGI [computer generated imagery] effects for science-fiction films is frequently represented as being geared towards simulation, but this period of special effects production also marks the emergence of popular, techno-futurist aesthetic that foregrounds the synthetic properties of electronic imagery. (Pierson 158)

Normally in films showing virtual reality the common topic is the confusion created by a world where what seems "real" happens to be controlled. This tension is seen in films like *The Matrix* (1999), *The Lawnmower Man* (1992), *The 13th Floor* (1999) or *Strange Days* (1995).[113] We can state that these films use a new language, virtual reality, where the real and the imaginary become one. It is the task of the postmodern artist, Gloria Pastorino observes, to find "new, original expressive modes in a saturated age, when everything has already been said, written, filmed and distributed to an immense audience by mass communication" (100). Likewise, the film industry is in constant search for innovation. Still, many films from the end of the 90s and our current century rely on classic topics like alien invasions. David Sanjek argues at this point that as the *fin the siècle* approaches, a common tone of exhaustion is present in SF and horror films:

> The profusion of sequels, remakes, and narratives that amalgamate familiar elements into various forms of pastiche results perhaps not in contempt on the part of consumers but a weariness bred of sensory overload and intellectual understimulation. (Sanjek 111)

[113] These films suggest that virtual reality is in some way dangerous. In this sense, Geoff King affirms that there exists a contradiction between the dimensions of narrative and spectacle and, thus "the appeal of the spectacular visions of virtual realities seems to be at odds with the concerns expressed by the narrative" (189)

These films' themes and ideology, Sanjek contends, have not undergone significant transformation. Yet, if we concentrate on gender representation and, more specifically on the depiction of masculinity in these SF films, it is significant to point out that, in spite of their reliance on classical parameters, their conscious modelling—or mocking—of traditional representations of masculinity is significant for the analysis of contemporary gender issues. Remakes like *The War of the Worlds* or films that rely on classical topics like alien invasions revisit gender stereotypes, as it will be commented below.

3.2.3. BEYOND BINARIES: GENDER, POSTMODERNISM AND THE SF FILM

Binary oppositions are often employed and/or transgressed in SF cinema. Oppositions are essential for creating images of the "other" but are also crucial for defining the "one". The most striking opposition is that between the familiar and the "other", the latter being an alien, a cyborg, a mutant or a computer. As many critics recognise, these oppositions are frequently gendered and provide much of the dramatic and ideological tension (King and Krzywinska 39). On the other hand, SF provides the perfect scenario for boundary breaking. Indeed, the consequences of the integration sameness-otherness are explored in most SF films. Apart from the alien invasion theme, other metaphors of boundary breaking, such as time-travel, replication or mutation help to undermine binary structures. Specially in more recent SF films, the postmodern thought has influenced the way the genre deals with boundary breaking and we are offered simulated spaces where the frontier between the real and the imaginary is blurred.

Binary opposition has been defined as "the theoretical model on which language makes its sense: black/white, male/female, left/right, dark/light, night/day and so on. Every signifying term has its opposite, against which it defines itself" (Tauchert 181). This abstract model can be applied to any cultural language and it exposes a tendency to polarise categories in order to make sense of the world and one's identity. Many debates on the nature of the binary model conclude that in order to oppose it there are three possible responses:

> - to invert binary weightings and values (…)
> - to disturb the binary process by introducing a third term (…)
> - to undermine the binary as an allusion imposed on a more general and de-hierarchized web of 'difference' between a whole range of embodiments and identities, and replace it with the floating free-play of the signifier that is the hallmark of postmodernism. (Tauchert 182)

Taking into account the binary model, many theories have condemned the subordination of women in different discourses. They place women as the "other", the term of the system of binary oppositions that is considered as marginal or alien. Hence, within the polarities white/black, masculine/feminine, hetero/homosexual, there is one term which is always dominant and another one which is subsidiary, as French feminism made clear.[114] Likewise, the binary model has been used to denounce the subordination of "non-Western" values. On those lines, Rutherford affirms: "in the hierarchical language of the West, what is alien represents otherness, the site of difference and the repository of our fears and anxieties" (1990, 10).

[114] One of the most frequently quoted sources for French feminist's critique of gender binarism is Hélène Cixous's essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975).

Influenced by poststructuralist theory, many critics propose responses to the binary gender model.

The rupture with binarism should also be understood as a typical postmodern device. Postmodern thought has gradually influenced U.S. culture, especially from the mid 20th century onwards. Moreover, postmodernism has become probably the dominant theoretical vantage of the SF film (Telotte 2001, 54). Despite its complexity, it can be affirmed that, in general terms, postmodernism is characterised by the decentralisation of hierarchical values that used to privilege one term of the binary opposition system and marginalise the other. This has provoked a general sense of uncertainty, dissolution, loss of boundaries and fragmentation. In *Writing and Difference* (1978) Jacques Derrida claimed for the deconstruction of binary thinking. Taking as a starting point Derrida's theories, many critics have dealt with issues of multiplicity and difference. The classic text by Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) was one of the first ones to theorise postmodernism. The movement is described in terms of a crisis of knowledge, involving incredulity toward "metanarratives". Other influential theorists of postmodernism are Fredric Jameson and Scott Bukatman and their work is relevant for the purposes of this analysis. In his essay "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (1991) Jameson takes a neo-Marxist perspective and considers postmodernism as the cultural dominant of late capitalism. Postmodernism is characterised by a "schizophrenic temporality" and "spatial pastiche" (Jameson 184). In his book *Terminal Identity* (1993) Bukatman applies posmodernism to the dissolution of the "self". Many other theoreticians have adopted different approaches, which show how the concept can be analysed from very different perspectives.

If we centre on SF films from the 50s up to our days, the dichotomy one/ other has served different and varied purposes. Many

films explore the danger of boundary breaking and depict the "other" as an evil alien. In this sense, the divisive dichotomies of gender and race are endangered. The "other" threatens to break with the repressive structures of dominance and subordination. The disruption of "order" suggested by the binary opposition system becomes indeed a basic feature of many SF films.

The encounter with difference in SF has also been the object of analysis of part of the criticism. The alien presence in SF films has undergone many changes and has become a basic metaphor, a primal allegory that can be reworked in many ways (Sardar and Cubitt 10). The depiction of the alien presence as a threat has been used to offer political and ideological readings. The cold-war paranoia of a communist invasion is implied in many films of the 50s, such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* or *The War of the Worlds.* In an article entitled "Pods, Blobs, and Ideology" Peter Biskind reads SF films of the 50s ideologically and sorts them into two camps: centrist and radical. The former includes films like *Them!, Attack of the Crab Monsters, The Thing, The Fly* and often presents America "in the grip of an emergency" (58) attacked by the "other", which was everything the centre was not, like the communist, the ancient, the primitive or the insane. According to Biskind, centrist films attacked utopias and utopians, dreams and dreamers. On the contrary, radical films, among which *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* can be counted, suggest that it is possible to attack the centre. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* belongs to the right-wing radical film, suggesting that the centre is the enemy since, "taken over by aliens, it becomes alien" (Biskind 68).

Specifically, the figure of the antagonist monster of the 50s has been analysed as an embodiment of nuclear anxiety or fear (Sontag, Kane, Murphy, Baxter, Hodgens, Hess Wright, among others). The old *angst* about communism, totalitarian regimes, and nuclear war gradually disappears to suggest contemporary threats of different

natures in more contemporary alien-invasion movies. As Robin Wood argues, stories about alien abduction and invasion can work to set up clear boundaries between "us" and "them" and contribute to evoke the paranoia about the other's attack. Films like *Alien, Species, Mars Attacks!* or *Independence Day* "identify the inhuman with the monstrous, gloopy, insect-like otherness, and leave no doubt that the only good alien is a dead alien" (Kaye and Hunter 2). Instead of metaphors for invading communists and the dangers of conformism, they are "simply and conveniently "other"—all-purpose outsiders against which the warring chaos of American identities can muster and unite" (2).

The image of the alien as a "foreigner" is at the centre of many ideological readings. In colonial discourse, the "other" is constructed as that which is unfamiliar to the dominant ideology of the West. In this sense, the limits between civilisation and barbarism lie on the production of a conflicting difference between "black" and "white" (Loomba 57). In his influential *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said interrogates colonial power and argues that representations of the Orient in European literary texts were based on the binary opposition European self and non-European "other". This fact contributed to maintain European hegemony and power over the "other". The construction of the "other" as an outsider prevails in many SF films, where the alien invader is associated to images of barbarism, aggression and difference. This difference needs to be eliminated since it threatens to enter and disrupt Western society. As Adam Roberts argues, SF "comes out of the Age of Empires because it is a necessary part of the official ideology of Empire-forming that difference needs to be flattened, or even eradicated" (65). SF serves, then, the dominant ideology of the twentieth-century American Empire. An often cited example is *Independence Day* (1997), where the alien is constructed as "other". That way, U.S. hegemony is maintained throughout the whole

movie. In this light, Rutherford affirms that the "centre" invests the "other" with its terror. The threat of the dissolution of self ignites the irrational hostility, as the centre struggles to secure its boundaries (Rutherford 1990, 11). The maintenance of the polarity one/other has become a synonym for order.

The idea of border crossing implies threat and disruption in many colonial and postcolonial discourses. The very notion of the border has been defined as follows:

> Arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural, and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the self; places where claims to ownership—claims to 'mine', 'yours' and 'theirs'—are stated out, contested, defended, and fought over. (Lewis and Mills 625)

This fear of border crossing is also related to the myth or the ideology of the frontier, which "displaces internal social class conflicts into racial wars on the borders" (Slotkin 51). This traditional narrative framework offers a series of oppositions that are delineated in many SF films. Civilization *versus* wilderness is a narrative drive in many contemporary films in which new frontiers, both imaginary and real, are trespassed by the white American hero. As previously suggested, Geoff King argues that mythic narratives can be seen to serve the particular interests of the dominant groups or classes and "[m]ythic oppositions are often drawn up in such a way as to short-circuit the real issues to more pointed effect" (10). In relation to this topic, Rushing and Frentz argue that since the U.S.A. began as a frontier, most of the heroes are either associated with or descendants of the frontiersman (3). One of the early guises is the white frontier hunter

which influenced many later heroic types, including the cowboy, the gangster and the astronaut (4). [115]

In this sense, the alien presence can be used to define the Western civilisation as we know it. Hierarchical divisions with the white American hero occupying dominant positions are to be found in many SF films set in outer space, like *Star Trek* or *Star Wars.* In them, patriarchal values remain intact and women are relegated to secondary positions. The binary allegory is crucial for creating the "right" image of the "one". The hero's encounter with the "other" is made through the structural principles of the mythical quest. Northrop Frye pointed out the importance of the quest story in his well-known work, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). In it, he affirmed that "romance, tragedy, irony and comedy are all episodes in total quest-myth" (215). From the very beginning of his analysis he classifies all kinds of fiction according to the hero's power of action. The hero's actions shape, then, every mode of fiction he refers to, and myths become "the structural principles behind familiar literary facts" (215). Likewise, Joseph Campbell in his 1968's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, defined the morphology of the monomyth as "a magnification of

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[115] Rushing and Frentz analyse what they call "American myth". They denominate the first phase of this myth the "Indian Hunter". In this phase, the hero performs courageous deeds under the direction of a shaman, and hence can be equated to Hercules, Lancelot, Odysseus, Robin Hood, Superman or John Wayne (1-3). The middle stage of the myth is "The Frontier Hunter", in which the hero, free from the shaman's restraints, adopts the Indian hunting myths to fit his purpose, which, paradoxically, includes the destruction of Indian culture. The last stage of this American myth is the "Technological Hunter", which traces back to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which is the point at which our tools become autonomous and turn against us (4). The analysis of these critics centres on the evolution of the hunter weapon into a cyborg, which now "hunts the hunter" (5). The result, they claim, is a "threatened technological apocalypse in which humanity is replaced or destroyed by what it has made" (5). This motif can be traced back from the Greek Prometheus and other cultural myths about stealing the source of technology from the gods (4), and is repeated in many variations. In them all, "the maker is then threatened by the made, and the original roles of master and slave are reversed" (Rushing and Frentz 67).

the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation-initiation-return*" (30). The hero, a "personage of exceptional gifts" (37), he affirms,

> ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder; fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won; the hero comes back from his mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (30)

In his departure stage the hero is called to an adventure and receives supernatural aid. Afterwards, he crosses the threshold that would lead him to an unknown world, symbolised by entering "the belly of the whale". Then, in his initiation stage, he has to overcome different tests and trials, he usually encounters with a temptress and meets a mother-goddess. Finally, in his return stage, he re-crosses the threshold and comes back home, conscious of his success (36-8).

The repeated appearance of this story of male dominance in many different discourses has led, then, to the establishment of a pattern in the form of a quest. In these stories the hero's quest consists of an adventure involving superiority, dominance and success in his persona. This adventure, always implying a man, provides "a powerful metaphor for the human capacity to endeavour, risk and win through" (Dawson 55). This quest structure inevitably involves male dominance over women and over other beings considered "inferior", which privileges the hero's superior body and action. It is, then, the reiterative appearance of male heroes in folk tales, mythology and popular culture that has perpetuated traditional values as ascribed to manhood. In all of them, we find a similar heroic quest pattern which implies a brave, powerful, virtuous and, on the whole, superior male figure.

The relationship between the "one" and the "other" can be analysed in psychoanalytic terms. SF imagery can be interpreted as

reflections of personal repressions. Freud and Lacan dealt with the human relation with their primitive subconscious. This repression can take up different shapes and forms, and precisely SF allows for its visualisation. The figure of the monster has normally been analysed in this direction. Margaret Tarrat, for instance, gives a Freudian interpretation of the SF films and, argues that they dramatise the individual's anxiety about repressed sexual desires, which threaten the harmony of civilised life. More recently, in "Time Travel, Primal Scene and the Critical Dystopia" (1986), Constance Penley argues that "primal scene fantasies" are employed in SF, especially in time travel narratives where we find a desire involving the possibility to witness one's own conception (120-1). Vivian Sobchack also takes psychoanalysis to discuss issues of sexuality and eroticism in SF. In an article entitled "The Virginity of Astronauts: Sex and the Science Fiction Film" (1985), Sobchack notes a general de-emphasis on human female sexuality in SF films and also a tendency of denying sexuality to male heroes who dominate the genre.

Another tool to analyse the dichotomy one/other in psychological terms is the archetypal approach. James F. Iaccino takes up a psychological analysis of SF and fantasy archetypes based on Jungian theories. One of Jung's most significant models is the persona/shadow archetype. The persona is our conscious outer face whereas the shadow is one aspect of the self we tend to ignore and repress from consciousness (xiii-xiv). Jung explored the shadow archetype and concluded it is the most powerful and dangerous image of the lot. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* evokes the persona/shadow archetype simultaneously. Patrick Lucanio also reads SF from the archetypal perspective, concentrating on alien-invasion films. This theory seems valid to analyse the hero's encounter with the antagonist, or "shadow" presence. In *Star Wars,* for instance, the

hero's final confrontation with his father can be seen as evoking this persona/shadow archetype.[116]

As Robin Wood contends, "otherness" represents "that which bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with (…) in one or two ways: either by rejecting and if possible annihilating it, or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself" (Wood 65-6). Wood's concept of "otherness" functions in many ways in the sense that it is not only something external to the culture or to the self but it also represents what is repressed in the self (66). Some "versions" of the figure of the "other" as it operates in U.S. culture are, in Robin Wood's words:

- *Quite simply, other people. (…)*
- *Woman. (…)*
- *The proletariat (…)*
- *Other cultures (…)*
- *Ethnic groups within the culture (…)*
- *Alternative ideologies or political systems (…)*
- *Deviations from ideological sexual norms –notably bisexuality and homosexuality. (…)*
- *Children (…)* (Wood 66-7)

With respect to the horror films, Robin Wood affirms that both the concept of the "repressed" and the "other" can be met in the figure of the monster. In the horror movie patriarchal capitalism confronts

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[116] Psychoanalysis becomes useful for the interpretation of the relationship between the hero and the "other" in *Star Trek. Nemesis*. As it will be contended in chapter 4, Jung's theories of the shadow archetype can be used to refer to the film's antagonist, a dark presence which is but a clone of the hero.

the monster. Critics like Margaret Tarratt explain how in horror and SF movies the monster must be defeated by the male hero so that he can win the attractive woman. In an article called "Cruising against the Id" Tim Youngs contends that the topic of the beast against which humanity identifies itself is Protean and shifts as its environment changes: "[a]lterations in the intellectual and social context, combined with the generic influences of representation, will affect its appearance" (215).

Gender-specific monsters are present in both SF and horror movies. Hyperbolic images of sexual difference dominate the screen, and the threat to masculinity in films like *The Incredible Shrinking Man* or *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* is more than evident. Feminist film criticism has usually dealt with the genre's feminine representation. The approach that Creed denominates "The Monstrous Woman" deals with those feminist theories that consider the female representation on screen as an active, terrifying and castrating figure. Mary Ann Doane, for instance, sees the maternal as a primary site of cultural contention. Creed herself went on to deal with this issue in an article entitled "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine: *An Imaginary Abjection".*[117]

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[117] As regards spectatorship theory, Mary Ann Doane's "The Woman's Film: Possession and Address" (1984) discusses the existence of a female spectator, especially in those films labelled as women's films. Directed to a female audience, these films with female protagonists attempt to represent a female subjectivity. Due to the long-held notion of the supremacy of the male gaze, these films need to show certain instability in the construction of female fantasy (69), which is associated with persecution by a husband or lover. The female protagonist is usually represented as deviant from the norm of mental stability or health and is always associated with hysteria, paranoia or other "feminine" mental diseases. Female subjectivity is not dominated by sadism or fetishism, but on the contrary, it is associated with "masochism". Women's films are obsessed with scenarios of masochism, which is "a symptom of the ideological crisis provoked by the need to shift the sexual terms of address of a cinema which, as Laura Mulvey has shown, is so heavily dependent upon masculine structure of seeing" (1984, 80).

In her analysis she follows Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject exposed in *Powers of Horror* and applies it to the SF horror movie. Kristeva takes up Lacan's psychoanalytic theory and rereads it from a feminist point of view, introducing the concept "abject", which "confronts us with our earliest attempts to release the hold of maternal entity even before existing outside of her, thanks to the anatomy of language" (13). Thus, the abject is formed before the acquisition of language, being the object of our primal rejection. This first rejection, she argues, remains in the unconscious as it cannot be assimilated. The monster figure is, therefore, the replacement of this fear or phobia.

Creed criticises Lacan, Freud and Kristeva for ignoring the archaic mother and mystifying the figure of the woman. Abjection, Creed affirms, works in these texts in three senses. The first are "bodily wastes" such as "blood, vomit, saliva, sweat, tears and putrefying flesh" (1989, 67). The second construction of the abject is everything that crosses "the border":

> in some horror films the monstrous is produced at the border between human and inhuman, man and beast [...]; in others the border is between the normal and the supernatural, good and evil [...]; or the monstrous is produced at the border which separates those who take up the proper gender rules from those who do not [...]; or the border is between normal and abnormal sexual desire. (Creed 1989, 67)

Lastly, the third way in which SF horror films illustrate the work of abjection is by the construction of the maternal figure as abject, as her body becomes a site of conflicting desires (1989, 68). Creed believes, then, that one of the major concerns of the SF horror film is the "reworking" of the primal scene in relation to images of the mother. She applies her theories to the film *Alien* (1979), and argues that in it a complex representation of the monstrous feminine is embodied by

this maternal figure as perceived within a patriarchal ideology (Creed 1989, 70).

As it has been my attempt to demonstrate so far, the polarity one/other can be analysed from many different perspectives. Human beings can eventually become sites of otherness, breaking the boundary between the "one" and the "other". Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston define posthuman bodies as "the causes and effects of postmodern relations of power and pleasure, virtuality and reality, sex and its consequences. The posthuman body is a technology, a screen, a projected image; it is a body under the sign of AIDS, a contaminated body, a deadly body, a techno-body; (…) a queer body" (3). Accordingly, this "posthuman monstrosity and its bodily forms are recognizable because they occupy the overlap between the now and the then, the here and the always: the annunciation of posthumanity is always both premature and old news" (3).

Yet, apart from painful metamorphosis—like the one the male protagonist of *The Fly* suffers—we get instances in SF when a more pleasurable experience is taken up by heroes entering cyberspace as shown in films like *The 13th Floor*. In these cases, the difference between "self" and the "other" becomes less clear. Kirk Junker and Robert Duffy argue that the Kiplingesque world of fixed meaning on East and West, on the self and the "other", has now been replaced by a postmodern one where, following Oscar Wilde's words, "most people are other people" (147). Junker and Duffy see a lack of distinction between "yours" and "mine" in the TV series *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.

Contemporary SF tends to collapse, then, the categories of normal bodies and monstrous bodies, breaking with the binary opposition system. The monster becomes familiar. This makes us think that what or who is labelled as the "other" varies according to

the prejudices of those who project the "other" onto the margins. In this sense, it is interesting to note the gradual assimilation of "otherness" by U.S. popular culture. The old fear of the "unknown" alien is parodied in more contemporary movies, which signals that the extraterrestrial has been assimilated by U.S. popular culture and that the boundaries between "them" and "us" are not so clearly cut. Indeed, an indication of this incorporation of the alien into popular culture is its reiterated appearance in the media. The alien "sells" from toys to snacks and has become a marketing product. The absorption of the alien further implies U.S. gradual tolerance towards the "unknown".

Thus, the hybrid, which in colonial discourses was a matter of abuse and agony, has the possibility to become a positive instance of resistance in contemporary SF. As we read in "Theorising the Hybrid", Bakhtin attacks Western reliance on the binary opposites centre/margin, civilised/savage and proposes hybridity to dislocate the process of colonization. Hybridity has become, then, a key tem in postcolonial discourses, allowing for a critique of cultural imperialism. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha analyses hybridity as an ambivalent site, an in-between space for new forms of cultural meaning (38). Cultural hybridity can alter the authority of power and opens the way towards an international culture (38). Rutherford recognises that hybridity acts as a focus for the fears, anxieties, confusions and arguments that accompany change but it also functions as "an approach to cultural politics it can help us make sense of what is happening: it can be a jumping-off point for assembling new practices and languages, pulling together a diversity of theories, politics, cultural experiences and identities into new alliances and movements" (Rutheford 1990, 11). In other words, the margin resists and discovers its own words, it decentres the dominant and transforms its meaning. It invades the centre with its difference and it is open to internal differences. Thus, Rutherford's proposal of

otherness as a site of difference and resistance can be used for the analysis of many contemporary SF films in which difference ceases to threaten, or to signify, power relations.[118]

As it has been contended, the SF film has proved to be open to the postmodern thought since, as Telotte affirms, it focuses on technology and because its fantastic nature helps the subversion of our sense of reality (Telotte 2001, 54-6). The postmodern concern on deconstruction has been applied in the analysis of SF films. In relation to this issue and when dealing with film and postmodernism, scholar Robert Stam argues:

> How we see postmodernism, and its relation to film theory, depends very much on whether we see it as (1*) a discursive/conceptual grid*; (2) *a corpus of texts* (both those which theorize postmodernism—Jameson, Lyotard—and those which are theorized by it—*Blade Runner* for example; (3) *a style or aesthetic* (characterized by self-conscious allusiveness, narrational instability, and nostalgic recycling and pastiche); (4) *an epoch* (roughly the post-industrial, transnational information age); (5) *a prevailing sensibility* (nomadic subjectivity, historical amnesia); or (6) *a paradigm shift*: the end of Enlightenment meta-narratives of Progress and Revolution. (Stam 301)

Postmodernism as a discursive-stylistic grid becomes quite significant since, Stam affirms, it enriches film theory and analysis by "calling attention to a stylistic shift toward a media-conscious cinema of multiple styles and ironic recyclage" (304). This strategy of recycling becomes a constant in many contemporary films and in general in U.S. society, during a time when everything has already been said, seen, read, and done.

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[118] Issues of difference and power are also analysed by post-colonial feminist thinkers like Gayatri Spivak (1989).

Specially relevant is Jean Baudrillard's account of simulacra, exposed in his 1981 influential essay mentioned previously. There, he establishes three orders of "simulacra". To the first order, he considers, belongs the imaginary of the "utopia", and to the second corresponds what is considered as "science fiction". As for the third order, simulacra of simulation, he refers to something else that "is in the process of emerging", once the distance between the imaginary and the real is abolished. When our world used to be controlled by the reality principle, the imaginary was considered "the alibi of the real". However, it is controlled nowadays by this principle of simulation, and, consequently, the real has become "the alibi of the model" (1994, 122). The most difficult task today in SF is, according to him, to "unravel what still complies (and a large part still does) with the imaginary of the second order, of the productive/projective order, and what already comes from this vagueness of the imaginary, of this uncertainty proper to the third order of simulation" (1994, 126).

In the 80s and 90s, Gender Studies dealt with the representation of gender in different postmodern contexts. Postmodern feminism proposes the replacement of unitary notions of women and gender identity with plural conceptions of social identity (Fraser and Nicholson 35). The term "gender" itself becomes troublesome and unstable. In this sense, SF texts and movies seem to offer the perfect site for this innovative representation of gender. Braidotti uses SF as an appropriate way to illustrate the complex cultural context and emphasises the importance of "fantasy" transformations to erode traditional binaries.[119] Also, the alternative worlds and microcosms

[119] Although feminist theorising relies increasingly on a discourse that is sceptical about essences and the stability of meaning, one should refer here to the tendency of feminist theory that subscribes to the humanist precept of the essential self that is stable and unchanging, implicit in the biological essentialism of some feminist discourses or in the form of a universal language that speaks women's experience as

represented in SF become the perfect sites for this challenging portrayal of gender. Thus "domed spaces colonies, orbiting space stations, subterranean cities, cities in flight and the like" (McHale 248) have been the privileged sites for gender reflection. Tauchert, for instance, offers a model which she calls "fuzzy gender", that is, "a conception that moves beyond the binary either/or, without collapsing into the chaos of free floating subjectivity in difference (183). Gender is not totally essential, but somewhere in between (Tauchert 185).

In terms of spectatorship, many works have challenged the binary Hollywood code by which male is associated to activity and vouyeuristic gaze and female to passivity and objectivity, among them Creed, Gledhill and Clover.

Likewise, in contemporary U.S. society, as many critics have pointed out, this context of blurred frontiers between mind and machine, body and machine, and human and nonhuman, which is precisely the basis of cybernetics, provides new grounds for analysing gender as represented by automated machines. In this sense "cybernetics simultaneously maps out the terrains for both postmodern discussions of the subject in late capitalism and feminist debates about technology, postmodernism, and gender" (Halberstam 1998, 468). Undoubtedly, the most striking example of a positive image of a machine both female and intelligent is that proposed by Donna Haraway. Within this context dominated by contradiction and

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some quintessential or transcendental truth. Rosemary Tong's *Feminist Thought. A Comprehensive Introduction* (1989) demonstrates the societal and historical influences on the seven different forms of feminism: liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, psychoanalytical feminism, existential feminism, postmodern feminism and ecofeminism. Some trends like existential feminism oppose postmodern thought.

dissolution of boundaries, the cyborg figure incarnates the concerns held by postmodernism, feminism and SF.[120]

Donna Haraway in her "Cyborg Manifesto" (1985) used the image of the cyborg for social purposes as she considered it not only as a fictional hybrid of machine and organism, but also as a "creature of social reality" (149) suggesting "some fruitful coupling" (150). The cyborg is our ontology as "by the late 20th century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs" (150). In its figure, the boundaries between body and technology are socially inscribed. By the late 20th century in the U.S. scientific culture three boundaries have been dissolved: that between human beings and animals, that between animal and human organism and machines, and that between the physical and the non-physical (Haraway 151-3). It is precisely this dissolution of boundaries which leads to a positive image of the cyborg identity as its condition transgresses gender dualism that privileges man over woman. This hybrid identity, she suggests, is the only possibility for women in the late 20th century. The cyborg is then, "a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (150). However, taking into account the social purposes of this figure, the cyborg is not considered harmless, since it is conceived as "oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence" (Haraway 151). This transgression of boundaries and change of perspective evoked by the cyborg body means a break with the traditional dualistic thinking that positioned women as "other". The technological world, then, frees women's

[120] I will expand on these concerns when dealing with men and technology in chapter five.

representations, in a sense, from patriarchal domination: "cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves" (181). Cyborg imagery can be used as "a powerful heteroglossia", and hence her last remark "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" (Haraway 181).

Haraway's cyborg image has become, then, a key concept for academics dealing with gender, postmodernism and SF of the subsequent decade, as it incarnates

> a perfectly crafted image for a 1980s vision of a late 20th century oppositional consciousness, especially since it embodied all of the contradictory characteristics of a decade which defined its cultural and political practices, in the context of radical academic theory, in terms of postmodernism and post-colonial criteria of partiality, hybridity, pastiche and playful irony. (Tomas 37)

The utopian association gender/technology is, nevertheless, questioned by many gender specialists. For example, in the 80s, advocates of a spiritually-oriented strand of feminism called ecofeminism started to argue that the return to ancient matriarchies would help overcome contemporary problems in the U.S.A, like sexism, racism, and so on. Apart from it, a common agreement among contemporary feminists was that SF offered in many ways a traditional vision of gender relationships, and women were still relegated to a secondary position in such texts. This awareness has partly caused the emergence of a strong feminist concern about these issues—especially about gender representation in SF texts—called feminist SF. This sub-genre considers that male desire orders the SF narrative and it proposes texts in which traditional assumptions are reversed in

terms of gender representation.[121] Even in cybernetic contexts, where the blurring of frontiers is taken to an extreme, gender inequalities are to be found, as will be shown in chapter five with the analysis of *The Matrix*. This concern about cybernetics, postmodernism and gender has been recently matter for a discipline known as "cyberfeminism".[122] Within such theory, issues like "identity and subjectivity have no fixity, and are perceived across more complex webs and networks of the cultural, the social—and also the molecular and the technological" (Kennedy 284-5).

The relationship between SF, feminism and postmodernism, and their mutual intersections, have led to many contradictions and, therefore, the task of feminist SF is to explore how gender is reflected within this complex context. Wolmark argues that these intersections

> allow for movement between and across the boundaries of intersecting sites, creating a space within which genre, gender and identity can be redefined and even while the specificity of those sites is recognised, so too are the changes taking place within them. (26)

In this context, it can be affirmed that the conflation of gender, postmodernism and SF has also been analysed by feminism. In this sense, no substantial body of research can be found within Men's Studies addressing these controversial issues. This does not mean, however, that images of men in SF, or postmodern notions of representation are out of the scope of analysis but that they are

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[121] Specifically, the estrangement and physical distance that SF allows, have provided the ideal forum for any criticism on gender biased societies and behaviours. Novels like Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974), Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975) or Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1975) are innovative cases of how to surmount gender inequalities in future worlds.

[122] Work dealing with this issue can be found in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, edited by Linda Nicholson or in Mary Daly's *Gyn/ecology,* in a section entitled "From Robotitude to Roboticide: Reconsidering", among many other sources.

mainly addressed by feminists. Yet and recently, work by academics dealing with masculinity and representation have considered these male images appearing in SF movies. They normally agree with feminist tenets about male domination in these contexts. However, as the present analysis aims to show, male images in contemporary SF also suggest challenging views of masculinity. Indeed we find portrayals of men who are deeply affected by the coming of the "other", androgynous male figures trapped into cyberspace and proposals of friendly hybrid beings that somehow break with the strong opposition one/other.

3.3. PATTERNS OF MASCULINITY IN U.S. SF FILMS

As suggested before, it is the aim of this dissertation to illustrate how the construction of masculinity functions in filmed SF. In order to do so, I have established four patterns that, in my view, dominate the way masculinity is portrayed throughout the history of the SF genre in the U.S.A. I have labelled these types the "menaced man", the "conquering man", the "artificial man" and the "virtual man". As it will be argued here, SF films tend to offer challenging definitions of gender, sometimes detached from the reality of spectators. The aesthetics of the SF genre favours especially this disengagement.

But, as it was argued before, depictions of masculinity are grounded on contemporary beliefs. One of the purposes of this chapter is precisely to relate the depiction of masculinity in the different patterns to their immediate socio-cultural context. In this sense, for example, it should be noted that the pattern of the "menaced man", represented in uncountable B-films of the 50s, addresses quite different socio-cultural concerns from the one found in films of the 90s, in spite of their conformation to the same identity parameter.

These four patterns dominate, then, the depiction of masculinity in SF films. In this sense, SF films that follow a particular pattern for the representation of masculinity also share a number of traits. For this reason it is very important to define each pattern accurately, not only in terms of the male character but also in the way this depiction affects the whole narration.

The patterns of masculinity proposed here are subjected to a similar criteria system. I tend to be more inclusive than exclusive in the selection of films and characters. After setting the context for these types, the general traits that define each pattern of masculinity are first established, together with the peculiarities of possible sub-types. In order to illustrate how the different patterns are also subjected to historical specificities, a chronological account of films that have used this model for the representation of masculinity will be offered. I will focus on the alterations these models undergo when addressing contemporary concerns. In order to do that, I will refer to representative films within each of the four patterns with the aim of illustrating how contemporary gender anxieties are implicit in their depiction of masculinity.

3.3.1. MASCULINITIES IN CONTEXT

Gender is a cultural construction that is subjected to alterations. In this section I will attempt to outline the U.S. socio-political context from the 50s up to the present in general lines, in order to examine the representation of masculinity in SF films. Also, it is commonplace to recognise the ever-increasing presence of science and technology in our daily lives. Hence, the themes, topics and ideologies traditionally associated to SF have been imported to popular culture. Accordingly,

> [m]any SF fictions, films, videos and games have crossed over into mainstream venues that mix politics and entertainment, which are no longer considered separate as television news executives seek to expand their audiences, attracting readers, computer users, and television watchers. (Colatrella 556)

Colatrella gives the example of the phrase "Star Wars" which has multiple referents. Politics, commerce and entertainment converge, then, in the U.S. postmodern world. She recognises the power these narratives have in predicting scientific discoveries and techniques within the traditional domain of utopias, alternate worlds, cloning or robots. Colatrella has also talked about the power of SF to track and to motivate political and social change (Colatrella 557). As suggested before, the four masculine types presented here rest on gender assumptions and, especially, on the culture's perception of masculine identity at each time.

The many changes that have taken place in U.S. contemporary society have redefined the perception of gender and have opened up questions about gender identity. As a consequence, it was mentioned in chapter one, many men were reported as suffering identity crises. Tania Modleski argues that male power is consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolutions, whereby men deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it (7). The different crises of masculinity and men's responses to them are suggested in SF films, in more or less obvious ways.

The 1950s were times of mass hysteria and paranoia where traditional sexual and family dynamics were strongly questioned. They were also key moments for the development of new visions of masculinity. As many critics have argued, the 50s crisis was a response to socio-political changes (Gilbert, Cohan, Horrocks). The term "containment" dominated U.S. culture during the 50s. This term

was coined by George Kennan in 1947 to propose an effective U.S. foreign policy regarding the Soviet block. But the term can also be used to refer to U.S. domestic policy and family dynamics.

The political paranoia about a communist infiltration during the McCarthy era was one of the most potent U.S. worries during the decade of the 50s, together with the latent threat of an atomic war. It was a time when people were publicly condemned for not showing "typical" American values. U.S. economy was based on the principles of "Fordism". Mark Jankovich explains in *Rational Fears* that Fordism was a system of centrally ordered administration which relied on an elite of experts. They regulated social, political, economic and cultural life, mainly through the use of scientific-technical rationality (19).[123] Science then invaded cultural life. But the fear of scientific misuse was also present, especially after the atomic spy scandals and the suspicions of those who claimed to be experts.

The Cold War domestic ideology was based on the belief that a "home filled with children would create a feeling of warmth and security against the cold forces of disruption and alienation" (May 23). Heterosexual monogamous marriage was an idealised means to save society from the hostile outside world. Women's duty was to do the housework and perform the task of mothering while men were the breadwinners. As Mary Ryan notes, "the domestic unit was an emotional refuge in a bureocratized and routinized society" (83). Yet, many women in the 50s started to question the dynamics of this family life. During the Second World War, millions of women had

[123] "Fordism" has been a matter of revision in contemporary fiction written in English. Two cases in point are *A History Maker* (1995) by the Scottish writer Alasdair Gray and *Middlesex* (2002) by Jeffrey Eugenides. Both authors raise questions about gender crises, the former in a dystopian 23rd century in Scotland, and the latter in the U.S.A. from the mid 20th century until the present day.

entered the labour force, encouraged by the U.S. government to help the war effort. Many women discovered then that they could perform "men's jobs" and could earn the higher salaries associated to these jobs in industrial factories. It then became clear that the majority of women did not want to give these jobs up once the war was over. This worried U.S. male leaders, businessmen and war veterans, who wanted to return to their former places. Hence, the U.S. government campaigned and encouraged women to return to their roles as wives and mothers at home. Moreover, millions of women in the 50s started to work outside the house, what favoured a new concept of family since men were not considered the only "breadwinners".[124] Thus, little by little, the realm of the family was also invaded by this containment theory and women started to demand a revision of traditional sexual roles. Another threat to normative masculinity was the public presence of homosexuality. Male supremacy was "endangered" both in the public and domestic spheres.

SF films about alien abduction and invasions dominated the screen during the 50s and were at the service of the Cold War ideology. Invasive aliens provided a metaphor for the communist threat to U.S. democracy. These films established a clear boundary between "them" and "us" and contributed to validate the conventional notion of the "other" as aggressive, dangerous and different. The pattern of the "menaced man" articulates this distinction by placing the male by the side of the familiar and normative. The male hero needs to use force in order to finish with this menace. In relation to this cycle of SF films in the 50s, Lianne McLarty argues that "[a]bsolutely different from 'humanity' and responsible for sheer irrational savagery, the alien Other both ignites and justifies the

[124] Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is one of the first texts to support women's liberation movement in the streets.

violence enacted upon it. Social conflicts are displaced onto it and "resolved" in the "lawful" employment of force" (346). The fear that "everybody is susceptible to invasion" is a common topic in alien abduction films of the 50s.

The discovery of DNA in 1953 helped to increase the fear concerning mutation, reproduction, and genetic deviation, as depicted in what Gonder calls "body rebellion films" (35). In these films, unhealthy and abnormal are usually associated to racial difference. The monster is, then, the threat of racial difference or the problem to determine it. Consequently, in the 50s the non-white, homosexual, disabled or anything that could be deemed genetically "deviant" from the standard norm is constructed as "unhealthy" (Gonder 39). This is suggested in films like *The Thing* or *The Fly*.

Another key moment for the display of new visions of masculinity was the decade of the 80s. Political, social and cultural developments, together with a growth of gender consciousness, improved women's situation and gave rise to new male identity crises. This was a time of male resurgence and public culture encouraged images of violent, aggressive men. The popular image of a tough masculinity reflected the contemporary political and social atmosphere. The 80s are known for a return to the kind of morality that had dominated U.S. culture before the social upheavals of feminists and other minority groups from the 60s. Ronald Reagan, elected president in 1981 and re-elected in 1984, became the symbol of this decade, characterised by a turn to the right. Susan Jeffords in her *Hard Bodies. Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* argues that this president "became the premiere masculine archetype for the 80s, embodying both national and individual images of manliness that came to underlie the nation's identity during his eight years in office" (1994, 11). His foreign policy was driven, according to Norton, by five beliefs rooted in America's past. First, he considered the Soviet Union

and its communism as the source of every world trouble. Second, he believed that an American military supremacy would finish with the Soviet threat and, thus, he encouraged an immense investment in defence forces and systems. Third, Reagan considered the need for a more interventionist, militarised foreign policy with the aim to make Americans feel good about their supremacy over the world. Fourth, he believed in the privatisation of managed economies. And the last force is what was known as the "Reagan doctrine" in 1985, by which the U.S.A. announced its support of any anti-Communist movement in the world (Norton 592-4). Reagan's foreign policy caused many reactionary responses due to its emphasis on military expansion and the insistence in gaining a total arm control over the world. It also provoked the emergence of many international debates about the U.S. use of nuclear weapons, as a result of his insistence in achieving nuclear supremacy. Nevertheless, by the end of Reagan's presidency the Soviet-American relations improved and the end of the Cold War was beginning to be announced.

Among the most outstanding social and popular issues affecting male identity at this time, we could point out the gradual spread of drug traffic, and, for the first time, the awareness of AIDS in 1981, which caused a general panic and was mainly associated with homosexuality and male drug consumers.[125] Many SF films of the 80s manage to portray accurately contemporary fears towards newly discovered diseases that were contagious and sexually transmitted and that threatened to dismantle normative masculinity. These new gender concerns are especially reflected in the remakes of classic SF movies of the 50s, where the male protagonist is depicted as terrified.

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[125] Paula Treichler in her "AIDS, Identity, and the Politics of Gender" argues that for many years after the discovery of the disease, AIDS has been considered as a "gay male disease" and she denounces, therefore, women's lack of information about it.

John Carpenter's 1982 remake of *The Thing* and Cronenberg's 1986 *The Fly* present male protagonists menaced by contemporary gender and cultural collective fears: AIDS, homosexuality and contagious diseases. Edward Guerrero analyses AIDS as the monster in these two remakes. Guerrero considers *The Thing* as representing the epidemiology or the origins of the disease, and *The Fly* as an allegory of the etiology of AIDS, or the causes and progress of the disease in the body. Also in space-exploration movies, the issue of AIDS is present. For instance, in Lynch's *Dune,* the evil enemy-baron Harkonnen-constantly represents a threat for a pure society in his appearance, linked to the abject, and in his killing instincts. His predilection for blood, insistently evolved in the film, constitutes the menacing presence of AIDS in U.S. society, reinforced by the fact that only men compose this enemy race.[126]

Another way to cope with the crisis at work in the 80s is by representing hypermasculine bodies. As already suggested when dealing with the muscular action hero, the health and fitness ideologies were fashionable in the 80s. This is linked, after all, with Reaganite government's emphasis on the military and Hollywood's portrayal of hard bodies. The muscular male hero has been

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[126] With the passing of time, critics have observed a change of attitude when representing AIDS on screen. A number of recent films, like *Dying Young,* have been read as displaced treatments of AIDS. However, in "Disease, Masculinity and Sexuality in Recent Films", Robert Eberwein claims that many recent films that depict sick or incapacitated heterosexual males can be read "as aggressively negative statements about the disease and its victims" (155). He is comparing two kinds of films depicting sick males. On the one hand, the sickness of heterosexual males in films like *Born on the Fourth of July* or *Dying Young*, which are not able to destroy the heroes' masculinity permanently, even if the result is the death of the male character. On the other hand, he analyses films that portray homosexual males deeply affected by AIDS, such as *Philadelphia* or *Savage Nights*. In them, their sexuality is "paralysed" and even "in films in which diminished sexual power is an issue, sexual potency is still shown as thinkable within a heterosexual framework" (156). In recent SF cinema the issue of AIDS is suggested in films where an emphasis on blood and materiality is present, as it can be case of Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999).

interpreted either as a reassertion of male power or, on the contrary, as a metaphor of masculinity in crisis. This coincides with this conservative period in the U.S.A. when feminist voices started to question traditional gender values and when the discipline called Men's Studies started to demand, among other issues, new forms of identity representation. SF also follows this tendency and offers over-muscled characters fused with potent machinery. The pattern of the "artificial man" presented here shows this tendency in SF films of the 80s.[127]

Lastly, our contemporary panorama has been considered a key moment for the interrogation of traditional masculinity. In the 90s and 2000s we get a plurality of new cultural anxieties that affect the way masculinity is understood. The 90s Gulf War crisis, the threat of the new biological and chemical weapons, the terrorist attacks to New York's Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, and the more recent Iraq intervention reveal a situation of social and political unease. Once more, the paranoia of an attack from the non-Western "others" promotes a general feeling of uncertainty. Moreover, these are times of economic and social change, which cause, according to many critics, a feeling of loss and anxiety in men, a crisis in identity.[128] By the 90s, men were no longer the ones that dominated economic activity, which caused a feeling of loss of male supremacy at certain levels in society, and provoked a change in the understanding of certain male roles.

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[127] In an attempt to emphasise men's supremacy, these films reinforce men's physical traits traditionally associated with the tough guy. A striking example is Schwarzenegger's character in the Terminator's series, as will be discussed in chapter five.

[128] For more information about the crisis of masculinity, see chapter one of this present work.

This era is also witness to the appearance of the so-called "New Man". Masculinity has become a topic of discussion in many fields.[129]

Information and technology have achieved supremacy in our lives over many other values. Due to the highest technology and latest scientific advances, the creation of spaces such as virtual reality, the Internet or cyberspace, has allowed for the representation of the human body, conceived as pure information. The concept of space, then, seems less stable than in earlier discourses. In *Terminal Identity* Bukatman affirms that space age has given way to the information age in which technology has become largely invisible, and space has been interiorised (5-6). Due to this lack of a fixed linear concept of space, we no longer, John Clute has suggested, "penetrate the future; futures penetrate us" (Clute, in Bukatmann 143). The disappearance of physical borders that delimit the concept of space as an enclosed world has to do further with postmodern notions of the blurring of frontiers in a world dominated by chaos theory.

The questioning of established borders causes an inability to distinguish real from imaginary and male from female. As a consequence of this inability to distinguish the real from the imaginary, Baudrillard hints at an emptiness. In "Astral America" he suggested, in a nostalgic way, how all forms of U.S. social and political life are fake and reduced to "simulacra" and, consequently, the distinctions between public and private, inner and outer can no longer be sustained in any way:

> American culture is heir to the deserts, but the deserts here are not part of a Nature defined by contrast with the town. Rather they denote the emptiness, the radical nudity that is the background to

[129] As it was suggested in chapter one, scholars like Segal, Connell, Clare or Kimmel advocate the replacement of the word masculine with its plural form "masculinities", precisely in an attempt to include new gender identities.

> every human institution. At the same time, they designate human institutions as a metaphor of that emptiness and the work of man as the continuity of the desert, culture as mirage and the perpetuity of the simulacrum. (1988, 63)

This context of dissolution and uncertainty prevails nowadays and men are frequently depicted as undergoing identity crises. These are suggested in many SF films, especially in those where male characters are threatened by unknown forces. The pattern of the "menaced man" normally shows weak and disoriented male characters.[130] On the other hand, "virtual men" also depict men in crisis, especially in those movies where the hero's personality is defined by his link to new technologies.

3.3.2. THE "MENACED MAN"

Of all the patterns I have established for the depiction of masculinity in SF films, the "menaced man" is one of the most prolific ones. It can be affirmed that it is characterised as follows:

- A male character is assaulted by an unfamiliar presence.
- He is disturbed by his encounter with difference.
- He normally plays the role of a vulnerable man who needs to consolidate his masculinity in some way.

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[130] In "Kissing Becky: Masculine Fears and Misogynist Moments in Science Fiction Films", Thomas Byers analyses key SF films belonging to four moments when the instability of male identity and the vulnerability of male hegemony become more apparent: *Metropolis* (1926), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *Alien* (1979) and *Blade Runner* (1982). Byers states that they share a common characteristic: the presence of at least one instance of misogyny (1989, 77).

- His confrontation with the unfamiliar may be twofold. Either the "menaced man" needs to fight the alien force, in which case he adopts the position of the "one" and the unfamiliar is depicted as the "other"; or, on the other hand, he becomes the unfamiliar himself. In both cases the alien menace affects his social and public life.

- In his encounter with difference, he problematises the supremacy of the "one". Films showing this pattern of masculinity stress the opposition existing between familiar/unfamiliar.

- Female sexuality is normally depicted as an added threat for the male character, especially issues of reproduction and authority.

Many examples of this pattern can be found throughout the history of the genre in the U.S.A. The fear of transforming bodies or of the imminent alien presences were common in B-movies of the 50s, suggesting men's subordination to alien forces. In these films there was a stark difference between humanity and technological or alien presences. Films like *The War of the Worlds* (1953) or *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957), although relying on quite different subject matters, offer similar representations of masculinity: men assaulted by unknown and unexpected circumstances. Significantly enough, this subordination of men coincides with a time when traditional masculinity and the power ascribed to this category were being seriously contested by feminist claims. In addition, in many SF films of the 50s women are depicted as "threats". In this respect, Wells argues that in them "the male body collapses into nausea when confronted by the alien, or impotence when faced with women. The alien exposes the man in his socio-cultural brief and the woman

threatens him in his social and familiar role" (Wells 184). Men are, on many occasions, doubly menaced.

Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), Sears's *Invaders From Mars* (1953), Arnold's *It came from Outer Space* (1953) or Fowler's *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (1958), depict alien beings who invade and/or penetrate human bodies, causing identity problems. This process of possession depicted in the films threatens to destabilise familiar distinctions between the "one" and the "other", human and alien (King and Krzywinska 51). In them, there are no physical fights or battles against the aliens but an invasive appropriation of the body which affects both the space of the family and the relationship of the heterosexual couple.

Huge mutants—normally due to atomic experimentation—also destabilise male identity since they can be interpreted as physical representations of the confused state of men in crisis. This is the case of the monsters Godzilla and King–Kong, which appear in several films throughout the history of SF, or of the beast at work in *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), the giant animals in *The Cyclops* (1957), the huge insect in Sear's *The Giant Claw* (1957), the giant locust in *Beginning of the End* (1957), the huge ants in *Them!* (1954), the spider in Arnold's *Tarantula* (1955) or the huge crabs in *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957). These figures transmitted fears and anxieties about scientific misuse, especially after WW2. Yet, they can also be read as signs of the anxiety created by the emergence of new cultural values in the U.S.A.

We also find in films of the 50s many creatures made from the combination of a human and an animal, which on most occasions provoke the same feeling of fear and insecurity in the male protagonist. These creatures have been denominated "organic cyborgs" or "monsters of multiple species" (Gonzalez 57) and, especially at the

time, serve the same purposes as the alien. Thus, they represent "otherness" and the threatening presence of new values concerning gender patterns. We can consider them cyborgs because in them, as Haraway affirms, "the boundary between human and animal is transgressed" (152). We could include under this label the male protagonist of Sears's *Werewolf* (1956), Neumann's *The Fly* (1958), Arnold's *Creature From the Black Lagoon* (1954), Del Ruth's *The Alligator People* (1959) or Clarke's *The Hideous Sun Demon* (1959). In them, the tension between animal and human becomes the key for plot development. Yet, a distinction must be made between those hybrid creatures which, like the antagonist half-fish/half-man of *Creature From the Black Lagoon*,[131] stand as real and constant dangers for the hero, and those whose "temporary" condition as threatening hybrids obeys to painful metamorphoses, like the man-fly protagonist of *The Fly* (1958).[132]

The threatening nature of the "other" and the consequent inferiority of men will be also explored in later films. The series *Alien* (1979, 1986, 1992, 1997) stand as an outstanding example. Belonging to different decades and cultural moments, the Alien series show a progression in representing the disappearance of male supremacy. By offering a strong and resourceful female heroine, Ripley (Weaver), traditional gender issues are at stake and, consequently, men are seen under threat and relegated to a secondary position in all the films. Men's power is contested both by the presence of the monster and by female authority. In the first two movies, Scott's *Alien* (1979) and

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[131] This threatening presence will also be at work in the film's sequels *Revenge of the Creature* (1955), and *The Creature Walks among Us* (1956), comparable to the hero's adversary in Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975).

[132] The man-wolf of *Werewolf* (1956), the human/reptiles of *The Hideous Sun Demon* (1959) or *The Alligator People* (1959) are, in a high or low degree, aware of their painful transformation into brutal "others".

Cameron's *Aliens* (1986), the monstrous alien terrifies the whole crew. In opposition to previous alien movies, we find a female protagonist who is in control of the situation and is depicted as rational, intelligent, active and aggressive. This is significant if we consider the 80s tendency towards political conservatism and the feminist backlash. In later years, Fincher's *Alien 3* (1992) and Jeunet's *Alien: Resurrection* (1997) raise questions about androgyny, hybridisation and male anxiety.

In the 1990s and 2000s, we find a number of films that, in very different ways, also suggest men's pains to stop alien invasions. *Species* (1995), *Mars Attacks!* (1996), *Independence Day* (1996) or *Men in Black* (1997), among others, are cases in point. Normally placed in fairly recognisable scenarios, these heroes manage, frequently with the help of a group of people from different ages, races and social positions, to fight alien forces. In the 90s, unconventional representations of masculinity are more familiar and, consequently, do not provoke such a strong feeling of insecurity as they did in the 50s. Moreover, the use of parody and the films' mockery of the traditional type of the "menaced man" also contribute to the erosion of the threatening nature of the alien.

The pattern of the "menaced man" at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century works mainly in two directions. On the one hand, men are represented in many films as menaced by threatening and malevolent alien forces. Yet, the inclusion of issues like angrogyny and the depiction of new gender traits account for the normalisation of such values in our society. Still, topics like homosexuality, androgyny, or strong women produce disorientation and disturbance to male characters, what echoes the nostalgia for lost values and male supremacy. Apart from the last movie of the *Alien* quadrilogy, films like Del Toro's *Mimic*, Donaldson's *Species* or Emmerich's *Independence Day* can be said to follow this trend. They

enforce the classic SF plot of the "menaced man" but also include non-normative instances of masculinity as its focus. On the other hand, we find the tendency to depict the "menaced man" as a parody of traditional representations of masculinity in the SF movie. Gender (and racial) issues are seriously questioned and revisited by means of humour and direct allusion to how SF has traditionally presented the "other" as a threat to normative masculinity. Films like Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks!* (1996), Sonnenfeld's *Men in Black* (1997) and *Men in Black II* (2002), or Reitman's *Evolution* (2001), are the most representative ones belonging to this group. Whatever direction these films take, a conscious update of the treatment of gender roles can be appreciated. The image of the "menaced man" is, consequently, different from previous representations, since it accounts for the changes that contemporary times grant to representations of gender. Yet, these films do not break with tradition outright and, precisely because of their reliance on a classical pattern, they normally end up favouring normative masculinity.

Lastly, a quite recent trend within SF cinema is to adapt superheroes of popular comic books into the big screen. A renewal of issues of androgyny and metamorphosis, something we saw with *The Fly,* take a new dimension. Thus, movies like *X-Men* (Singer 2000, Ratner 2006), *Spiderman* (Raimi 2002, 2004, 2007), *Hulk* (Lee 2003), *Daredevil* (Johnson 2003) or *Batman* (Burton 1989, Nolan 2005, 2008) could be included within this category. These heroes have mutant bodies and superhuman abilities, which sometimes generates identitity crises.

3.3.2.1. Men against the "Other"

This subtype accounts for a male character that is threatened by the presence of the unfamiliar. The confrontation of the male character with "difference" works at large in many SF movies. Issues of

national identity, cultural specificities and sexuality are included in films that picture hostile alien invasions, monsters or mutants. Consequently, the male character is disoriented and disturbed. He occupies the privileged term of the binary system. U.S. hegemonic white patriarchy is threatened by the cultural metaphor of the alien and/or monster.

In films following this pattern, the "unfamiliar" can take up different forms. Aggressive alien colonisers can be read "as metaphors for a range of perceived threats to humanity, or particular groups, ranging from 1950s communism to the AIDS virus and contemporary 'illegal aliens' of human origin" (King and Krzywinska 31-2). This fear becomes more evident in films where the alien appropriates human bodies, as is the case of alien abduction films. Likewise, huge mutants or monsters become metaphors for the male character's most inner fears, which reflect, at the same time, U.S. collective anxieties. Significantly, the fear of female sexuality is generally suggested, especially in those films in which there is an association between the monster and women's reproductive functions. The portrayal of "other" masculinities also disrupts the white heterosexual male hegemony. The concept of "blackness" is depicted as unfamiliar, especially in films that picture alien invasions, which accounts for Robin Wood's theory that these films establish clear boundaries between "us" and "them". In order to illustrate the evolution of this subtype of the "menaced man", some particular movies will be considered, extending from the period shortly after the WW2 to the present. The movies' treatment of the "menaced man" against the "unfamiliar" ranges from extraterrestrial abominations (*Alien*) and huge mutants (*Them!*) to body abduction (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*). The source of fear changes according to socio-cultural specificities.

Issues of men's health are suggested in many SF films, addressing questions of identity and the body. Films dealing with the

topic of alien invasion or infestation can be read as allegories of political destabilisation but also as disruptions of the "norm". Nyby's *The Thing from Another World* (1952) portrays the type of the "menaced man" through the topic of the alien attack. In it, a blood-sucking alien menaces the male protagonist. In Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), the source of fear is the invisible aliens that threaten to take up human bodies with the purpose of transforming them into hostile beings. The male character is, consequently, assaulted by this corporeal infestation that is comparable to that of a lethal virus. In both films, the alien presence can be read as the "unhealthy other". According to Gonder's account of genetics and race in horror films of the 1950s and early 60s, the fear of changes in genetic science, fostered by the political and social climate, finds expression in films which offer a conception of the body as a collection of rebellious parts. He refers to them as body rebellious films, and includes within this subgenre films like *The Fly, The Man with the X-Ray Eyes,* or *The Thing,* among others.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers invokes a neurotic world that confronts "us" (the U.S.A.) *versus* "them" (alien invaders), and where the hero—Doctor Miles Bennell (McCarthy)—is alarmed. Apart from the common reading as a representation of the anxieties of communist infiltration and atomic conflict, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* can be analysed as a disruption of "healthy" male patriarchy.[133] The alien menace is depicted as a force that invades human bodies and turns individuals into hostile, emotionless and asexual pod people. The body

[133] Katrina Mann analyses the film in this light and contends that it makes use of xenophobic tropes of racial and sexual difference to dramatise the social, political and personal disruption of U.S. hegemonic white patriarchy (49). She might be referring to the film's suggestion that the status quo of the "American way of life" is disturbed by this alien-enemy which infiltrates U.S. society and turns individuals into hostile and emotionless beings.

becomes, then, a site of suspicion, since anybody can be one of "them". In this light, infested male bodies fail to spot the connotation of social power. It is precisely this alien takeover what produces an identity crisis in the male protagonist. Fostered by the 50s social climate of paranoia, the "other" represents disease and contamination, since it spreads like an infection among the population. The monstrous "other" penetrates its victims while they are sleeping, causing them to surrender their identity. The "healthy" values of U.S. society become threatened by aliens that literally transgress the limits of the human body.

In this sense, the "infected body" can be linked to the abject as described by Kristeva, since it disturbs identity and order, and does not respect borders, positions and rules (Kristeva 4). For Kristeva, not only filthiness and lack of cleanliness cause abjection but also the in-between, the ambiguous or the composite. Especially, Becky's (Wynter) dispassionate response to Miles's kiss, meaning her transformation into "one of them", highly contributes to his profound crisis of identity. In the context of the political and social unsteadiness of the 50s, the film's allusion to contamination serves as a repository for projected fears of contagion as well as desires for health and stability.[134]

The Thing depicts a man, Captain Hendry (Tobey), whose body and personality are threatened by a hostile alien presence. In order to escape this, Hendry needs to assure his hegemonic position within

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[134] Apart from this, the film suggests many allegorical readings, from the consideration of the confrontation us/them as competing masculinities at work in post-war U.S.A. (Mann), to post-war anxieties about sexuality and female reproduction roles (Hendershot, Byers) or as the dread of sameness between "us" and "them" (McLarty). Critics have read invasion films as allegories "of the entire range of modernism" (Roth 109), including "fear of miscenegation" (McLarty). In any case, the drastic change experienced by almost the whole of Santa Mira's population is seen in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* as negative and dangerous, ultimately disquieting the male protagonist, Miles.

society. Apart from being a stereotype of the soviets, the Thing threatens the whole community with its different "sexuality". Indeed, the Thing is a kind of asexual vegetable which is able to spread like a contagion. In relation to this issue, Sam Umland suggests that Hendry embodies the early 1950s image of healthy sexuality, in contrast to the asexuality embodied by the Thing (226). Hendry's romantic relationship with Nikki (Sheridan) works to assure his heterosexuality and, therefore, his "normality". Their relationship has been considered as "the healthy 1950s alternative to the bizarre, threatening asexuality of the Thing" (Umland 226). Moreover, the concept of the traditional nuclear family, which starts to be threatened in the 50s, assures comfort and a friendly environment against the rough context of invasion. Apart from this, Henry is positioned on lead of a group of people that is defined as opposed to the Thing. There is a relationship of camaraderie among the members of the group.[135] Thus, the consolidation of the heterosexual couple, together with the destruction of threatening outsiders, seem to be a must for the "healthy" society to continue.

Given the state of anti-communist paranoia in which alien invasion films of the 50s were released, the topic of body infestation hints at the monstrosity of uncontrollable disease and biological contamination. Later, films are more specific when suggesting fear of disease and homosexuality. In Cronenberg's 1982 remake of *The Thing* the fear of difference takes a further step. Contrary to what happened

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[135] In this context, the group of men has been interpreted as an allegory of the "American Dream", a nation capable of facing the challenge of the unknown and its own diversity and division, not only by using strength but also through affection (Phillips 50). Even cinematography indicates their closeness and "the film is filled with tight shots, focusing on the men in close proximity to each other" (52). They share jokes, care for each other, forgive each other and bond together in the face of adversity. This idea of the group against a common enemy is present in myths where the community represents the norm and the "other" everything that threatens the norm.

in the original movie, the all-male group is not represented as an idyllic community but, however, homosocial bonds are depicted as dangerous and unhealthy. Indeed, the film suggests one of the most important cultural concerns of the 80s: the spread of AIDS. The alien being has the power to invade and absorb any creature it touches. Guerrero sees an analogy between the Thing's behaviour and "what was known of the epidemiological behavior of the agent causing the "gay plague" and very soon to be identified as the AIDS virus" (88). The importance of non-contagious blood is stressed throughout the film, as when the protagonist (Russell), in a moment of fear, ties up his crew and forces them to get their blood analysed in order to discover what "the Thing" is. Moreover, and in contrast with the 50s original, in Carpenter's remake the sub-plot of the heterosexual couple is removed and, instead, we find a crew that is composed of black and white males, what further suggests that the invading monster is the result of the crew's homosociality:

> *The Things*'s bi-racial, isolated homosocial world in which the men of the crew overindulge in alcohol and open pot smoking and which is infected with a relentless, rapidly spreading pollution becomes a nearly literalized microcosmic model consonant with how the "gay plague" was perceived in the media and the public imagination at the time of the film's circulation. (Guerrero 89)

This reinforces the 80s idea that AIDS is a disease affecting minorities and male homosexuals.[136] According to Kristeva, marginalised groups are labelled abject since they threaten contagion from "outside". In this context, the hero becomes menaced and frightened of being infected by this unknown monster which is an

[136] Likewise, Kaufman's 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* does not include the heterosexual relationship maybe with the purpose of insinuating the danger of male bonding.

allegory of AIDS. The hero is not safe in this community where the "unfamiliar" resides.[137]

The encounter with difference is also suggested by the representation of blackness. As Adam Roberts rightly argues, representing blackness is not simply a question of representing black characters or protagonists but something to do with the encounter with difference. Thus, such representation needs to be contextualised politically (121). In the context of the 80s backlash against feminism and other minority groups, the savage hunter in John McTiernan's *Predator* (1987) can be interpreted as a stereotypical signifier of blackness, since it "inhabits the jungle, preying violently and barbarically on the "Western" colonisers, be they American, 'Dutch' or Hispanic" (Adam Roberts 119-20). The construction of the "other" in colonial discourse relies on stereotypes. Hence black Africans were considered bestial by the European travellers "both because of the medieval and religious associations of blackness with filth and dirt, and also because this provided a justification for colonising and enslaving them" (Loomba 71).[138] *Predator* seems to deal with the racial stereotyping of blackness, and the alien hunter becomes an image of barbarism.

The threat of difference is resolved this time by portraying hypermuscular male heroes, a typical device in action films of the 80s. From the beginning of the movie, Dutch's (Schwarzenegger) physical

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[137] The question of masculinity and science is also present in more recent films like Shyamalan's *The Happening* (2008), in which nature is mysterious, in spite of scientific development.

[138] As Loomba notes, stereotyping "involves a reduction of images and ideas to a simple and manageable form; rather than simply ignorance or lack of 'real' knowledge, it is a method of processing information" (60). It should be taken into account that racial stereotyping is not the product of colonialism from the modern period onwards alone but it goes back to Greek and Roman periods which provide models for later European images of outsiders (105).

supremacy is stated and his tough manners are highlighted. Likewise, the rest of the military men that go on the mission share his courage, toughness, and hard attitude. They are all equipped with huge weapons that can be recalled as phallic symbols and their bare and muscled chests are constantly framed. Nonetheless, and when confronting the physically superior and extremely aggressive alien predator, they show evident signs of fear and weakness. Indeed, at the very end of the movie, we see them sweating with horror, trembling and worried about their fates. In spite of that, the movie's hero manages to survive and kill the creature. In a clear allusion to the racist reading of blackness, the savage hunter threatens white male hegemony.

The menace of non-Western values is suggested in many films. The topic of the extraterrestrial invader that threatens U.S. institutions specially privileges this reading. In Emmerich's *Independence Day* (1996) the source of threat is the extraterrestrial "other", which is considered as evil and dangerous. The film seems to suggest that the eradication of outsiders is necessary for the whole world to survive and for U.S. supremacy to remain intact. In this sense, and taking into account the 90s Golf-War crisis over U.S. political and social integrity, and the general unease towards illegal immigration, the radical "other" might be associated with the negative concept of blackness. In relation to the film's "dark" aliens, Mair argues: "During the Middle Ages, Islam was the darker Other of Europe (…) During the Cold-War, communism acquired the mantle of alien Other. The post-Cold War West returns to Islam" (Mair 37). A plea for "Americaness" is suggested and, for that, the eradication of alien "outsiders" seems to be necessary.

Significantly, Americanness is apparently constructed as plural in the film. Its two main protagonists are detached from the typical American white hero. Steve (Smith) is an African American pilot who

epitomises the brave, strong and military man with the mission of saving the world. His strength and physical superiority are stressed throughout the film, and thus he is seen bare-chested and wearing either military outfit or tight garments that show his muscular body. David (Goldblum) represents the so-called "new hero", a Jewish computer science genius whose knowledge—but not his looks—will become instrumental in saving the world. David is accompanied and protected by his father, gets motion sickness and, in opposition to Steve, is weak, slim and wears big glasses. Both opposed stereotypes cannot work separately to save the world from the "other".

As suggested before, female sexuality and authority have often meant an added threat for the "menaced man" in SF, a topic inherited from 19th century SF literature. In "Gender in Nineteenth-Century Science Fiction: The Female Alien and the Woman Ruler", Robin Roberts argues that it is the female alien's ability to reproduce that makes her so threatening to the male protagonist and to patriarchal society (1993, 20).[139] By encountering the female alien, the male hero recognises and defines his own masculinity and that of the dominant culture (26). An instance of how female sexuality graphically threatens humanity in the 1950s is evoked in Nathan Juran's *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (1958). Nancy (Hayes) is abducted by a giant and is grown to fifty feet, discovering she does not need to put up with her husband's infidelity any more.[140] Other films in this decade depict both the female alien and the female ruler as imminent threats. For Robin

[139] Robin Roberts mentions *Frankenstein* as an example of how reproduction is depicted as a filthy process (20-1).

[140] The most striking difference of the remake by Guest of *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (1983) is the female protagonist's empowerment due to her giant size and her contemporary comments of the kind: "I'll stop when I find Harry, I am just looking for a little closure, that's all…I've tried to be modern and adult and post-feminist and look what it's got me".

Roberts the female ruler asserts female subordination by first supplying women with social, economic, and political dominance only to demonstrate how women would abuse such power (1993, 28).

In Gordon Douglas's *Them!* (1954), apart from the clear menace of the huge insects, another latent threat should be added: the emerging powerful woman, embodied here by Dr Pat Medford (Weldon). Her role is crucial during the whole film, since she takes part in the scientific team led by her father, the veteran scientist Dr Harold Medford (Gwenn). Because of his advanced age, Harold constantly relies on his daughter for his investigation, which makes her indispensable for plot development. In relation to this issue, Christine Cornea argues, "a growing respect for Patricia Medford's expertise and active involvement is matched by the growing horror of the situation" (51). Moreover, the threatening nature of female sexuality is also explored in the film through the ants' capacity for reproduction. The two giant queens that scientists and FBI are searching for become the most threatening presence in the film due to the possibility of a massive and continuous spread of the "other". Consequently, men need to reinforce traditional gender patterns in the face of the threat of these "symbolic" forces. Thus, the "menaced man" is seen as being surrounded by props evoking phallic symbols, especially when the situation becomes uncontrolled. The film uses the theme of atomic power to express a concern about the threat of "new values" in 1950s U.S. society.[141]

Fear of women's authority and reproductive roles are present in later films that follow the topic of the aggressive alien extraterrestrial.

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[141] The topic of the threat of female reproduction, which may also be a reflection of the massive increase of births following the Second World War, (the "Baby Boom"), will be taken up by many forthcoming films. Guillermo del Toro's *Mimic* (1997) follows the topic of the huge insect invasion to suggest this idea.

The *Alien* saga becomes an often-cited example. Feminist film criticism has largely dealt with both the figure of Ripley and the monstrous alien in the *Alien* series—Creed, Newton, Hills, Church Gibson, Tasker, Sobchack, among others—providing us with different and contradictory readings. Psychoanalytic theories (Kuhn, Penley, Sobchack, Creed) have significantly analysed the first two movies, probably due to the fact that around the 80s, Film Studies were dominated by this theory. This female protagonist evokes the power of the emergent new woman. Ripley is a powerful woman who does not simply adopt traditional roles assigned to men and "imitate them", she becomes a rather different and positive type, a new representation of woman as a female hero. This new image of woman is what threatens male hegemony, since traits normally associated to male characters (like subjectivity, activity and resolution) are "taken up" by a female character.[142] This positive representation of a tough woman has stressed men's fears. In the *Alien* quadrilogy, men are doubly menaced: by the alien/aliens and by Ripley's supremacy and courage as a strong female hero.

Many critics have considered the alien as a masculine phallic symbol of patriarchy (Kavanaugh, Doherty, Sobchack), as a mixture of both (Wood) or as neither (Hurley). I tend to agree with the latter since the alien functions, in my view, as an allegory of new gender values that menace traditional masculinity. In this sense, the alien's hybrid condition and sex change throughout the whole quadrilogy becomes the main source of horror, "a human/non-human subject, a posthuman subject, speculations on alternate logics of identity that

[142] In this sense, I agree with Elizabeth Hills's concept of the "transgressive character of the action heroine". Hills contends that these characters, of whom Ripley is an example, open up questions about the fluidity of gendered identities and contributes to change popular cinematic representations of women (38). Ripley has the capacity, then, to adapt to the new and negotiate change.

rupture and exceed the ones we know" (Hurley 220).[143] Both Ripley and the alien evoke a fear of androgyny and new gender values in the *Alien* movies, and are depicted as fluid beings.

The menaced nature of men is emphasised in the films both by their irrational fear to deal with the alien and by the leadership of a woman who undermines male power. For instance, in the first movie of the series—*Alien* (1977)—the apparently fearless Captain Dallas (Skeritt) is finally depicted as a weak character, his authority challenged by Ripley at the end. In opposition to her, Dallas makes the wrong decisions, as when he insists that Kane (Hurt) should enter the spaceship after having probably been infected by the alien. This wrong decision will make the situation worse and provoke the alien's takeover of the spaceship. He ends up showing ineptitude and inability to control the alien. This is emphasised by his unexpected death, leaving Ripley as the only survivor of the *Nostromo*. Dallas's death breaks with conventional representations of heroism on screen and reinforces her leadership. As the movies develop, fear of hybridisation becomes more apparent. The last film of the saga—*Alien Resurrection*—proposes a commodification of the "other" by means of two feminine hybrids: Ripley and Call (Ryder). Their bodies, containers of alien genes and mechanisms respectively, suggest gender ambiguity. Hybridisation remains a constant threat, especially for the male characters in the film. Ripley's identity is ambiguous and even her motherly condition is presented as disturbing and connected to the alien's. Hence, issues of hybridity become the main source of threat in the movie, combined with a rather traditional representation

[143] It is also helpful to comment on Ripley's association with the alien mother in the quadrilogy, as many critics have remarked. The ever-threatening presence of the alien queen and its motherly condition suggest its similarity with Ripley. After all, Ripley "mutates, alters, and changes throughout the films in the same way as the Alien. She, too, is Protean" (Church Gibson 38).

of the monster. The difference with other invasion movies is that Ripley has assumed partly the monstrous nature of the alien. This new kind of "familiar" alien, or in Linton's words, "an alien who is and is not other" (185), depicts society's absorption of the alien. Contrary to other movies of the 80s and 90s, Ripley's more than intimate link with the "monstrous other" is not, as it has been suggested here, exempt from danger. The "menaced man" is, then, disturbed by this powerful woman who embodies the "unfamiliar".

Lastly, and as pointed out above, another recurrent way of representing the pattern of the "menaced man" in recent alien invasion movies is through the use of laugh and parody. Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks!* (1996) stands as a clear example of this tendency. The film makes use of traditional "fears" and revisits them through parody. From the beginning of the film, the Martians' flying saucers invading the Earth are not meant to be threatening for humankind, that is seen dependent on TV and mass-media. Human beings seem to be more worried about their external image, fashion programmes and their love affairs than by the presence of hostile beings. Indeed, the Martians are believed to be peaceful and the president of the U.S.A, James Dale (Nicholson), prepares a warm welcome for them twice. Against any predictions, the small Martians attack and kill the civil population, unveiling their evil purposes. The population is seen running and trying to escape from these evil creatures. Popular SF movies like *The War of the Worlds*, *Earth vs the Flying Saucers, Godzilla* or *Alien* are parodied in the movie. Moreover, the "menaced man" is presented here as an irony of the traditional representation of masculinity in SF films. Neither president James Dale nor the famous professor Donald Kessler (Brosnan) initially show any apprehension but, on the contrary, believe in the Martians' peaceful nature. They are so confident about their own scientific and political superiority that they see no real reason to worry about the Martians' threat. However, the

aliens humiliate and betray them, what can be analysed as human incapacity to deal with and understand the condition of the "other". They attribute the Martians' first attack to a "cultural misunderstanding". Thus, the film makes allusions to the disorientation still at work in U.S. contemporary society caused by the growing presence of new values and by its inaccuracy to deal with them. Cultural misunderstandings, fostered by a context of uncertainty and paranoia towards an alien attack, echo the U.S. panorama at the turn of the millennium. Socio-cultural worries are seriously questioned and revisited by means of humour and by ironic allusions to how SF has traditionally depicted the "other" as a threat to privileged masculinity.[144]

3.3.2.2. Man as Site of Otherness

This subtype of the "menaced man" accounts for a male character that feels disturbed because of his close link with the "other". Films showing this subtype emphasise the male character's "transformation" into the "other", which ultimately produces an identity crisis. He needs to fight against the "normality" of the world

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[144] Another example of a parody of the representation of the "menaced man" by an alien invasion is Ivan Reitman's *Evolution* (2001). Professor Harry Block (Jones) feels frightened by the evolving alien species he is studying after a meteor crashes into the Arizona desert. We see him in need to show "his brave masculine side". Thus, he continually makes sexual and racial jokes. He finally feels as a real hero when undertaking—and finally succeeding—his valuable mission of saving the world with a fire trunk full of shampoo. In Sonnenfeld's *Men in Black* (1997) and *Men in Black II* (2002) agents Kay (Lee Jones) and Jay (Smith) are in charge of saving the world from hostile alien attacks. For the restoration of order, the MBI agents ironically imitate the physical appearance, behaviour and traits of the traditional secret agent in the manner of 007. Moreover, the movie introduces jokes and constant touches of humour, what revisits the classic pattern of the "menaced man" when confronting the alien forces. The topic of the woman as threat is also parodied. Agents are not allowed to be emotionally involved with them, since it would weaken their strength and would result in disastrous consequences for the whole of humanity.

surrounding him. His anomalous condition normally makes him reaffirm his human side through violence. The identity crisis is mainly provoked by his need to redefine himself into a "non-normative" position, which echoes the dangers of crossing boundaries between one/self. As happened with other "menaced men", powerful femininity, ethnic difference and hybridity are depicted as threats to the male character. Yet this time, these fears are not projected into an outsider "other" but into his body, which is taken as the repository of this process of becoming.

An example of this subtype of the "menaced man" can be found in the cycle of films that Sobchack calls the SF-Monster film. In them, the human being becomes a monster—normally as a consequence of scientific experiments—and, although he/she may go mad at the end of the movie, also shows instances of rationality (1980, 50). These kind of movies were especially popular during the 50s and have also been categorised as "atmospheric Monster films" that show the struggle between good and evil (Denne), or as films that use the "Contamination-Mutation theme" to stress the isolation of the protagonist/antagonist (Kane). The message of these films, Sobchack recalls, seems to be more anti-Faustian than antiscience (Sobchack 1980, 51-2). They remind late gothic literature in the manner of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and films of gothic horror which stress the Manichaeism of good/evil within us. The isolation of the main character is the focus of terror in these texts.

The issue of body transformation and the Manichean allegory "one" and "other" can be seen in SF films in which the main protagonist suffers a painful process of metamorphosis. A clear example is Newmann's *The Fly* (1958). Andre (Hedison) is mixed up with a fly as a consequence of his experiments with teletransportation. Because of his menacing appearance, he feels impotent and vulnerable up to the point of going mad and pleading his wife to finish with his

life. Apart from the protagonist's identity crisis, the nuclear family is also seen at a crossroads in the film, especially after Andre's physical transformation. Thus, his metamorphosis may be interpreted as his inability to deal with family life. His "grotesque" mutation becomes a metaphor for his troubled marriage with Helene (Owens) and his fear of the feminine. Andre feels repressed because of his role as a family man and needs to displace an erotic drive which, according to Knee, "might be beyond the limits of what fifties familiar mores allow" (Knee 22). Following this argument, Andre's mixing-up with the insect can also be analysed from a psychoanalytical perspective. In Freudian terms, the resulting monster recalls the "return of the repressed", that is, the projection of the protagonist's forbidden desires. In relation to this issue, Edward Guerrero argues that "the monster clearly represents the return of repressed or forbidden sexual energies in the form of the suburban father/husband with a fly head and a long, black, phallic arm menacing his innocent, white-clad wife" (Guerrero 90). Yet, Guerrero also argues, the evocation of repressed sexual desires has other connotations, among them racial since "the monstrous fly head with its jerking, erect phallic arm are inscribed as black, Sambo-like, hypersexual, and, […] acting out aggressive erotic behavior toward the vulnerable, terrified beauty of the white woman" (Guerrero 91). Since the fly body parts are black and bestial, its union with the white and vulnerable man has resulted in a racial mixture that needs to be finally destroyed.[145]

[145] I tend to agree with Guerrero's suggestion that Andre's hybrid body is a reflection of the racist fear of miscegenation, which, as in many colonial discourses, is seen as an aberration. Images of black Africans have been stereotyped and linked to bestiality and barbarism in colonial discourse (Loomba 71). This fear of hybridisation and the dangers of boundary crossing—denounced by Bhabha and other postcolonial critics—are suggested in the movie by Andre's monstrous body.

Yet, especially relevant, in my view, is the film's focus on the consequences of this transformation. The change of status from a hegemonic to an alienated non-hegemonic position results in a deep crisis of identity for the male protagonist. The fear of loosing long-held privileges is that way dramatised in the movie. This trauma is visibly reckoned by Andre's body, which is indeed a projection of what he fears. In this sense, Freud's theory of the repressed results appropriate. The fear of hybridisation, of losing privileged sites within society, affects both his personal and public life. Andre cannot cope with the new values affecting gender relations in the same way as men in the 1950s experienced fear towards the appearance of new gender values and family structures. The process of animalisation and brutalisation of Andre's body is but a metaphor of his fears, evoking the Jekyll-Hyde paradigm of the beast within. The evil side threatens to dismiss the good side. The impossibility of reconciling opposites is suggested by the film's radical ending.

Cronenberg's 1986 remake emphasises, however, not the result of the transformation but the gradual deterioration of the protagonist's body. This fact hints at the film's allusion of the danger of recently discovered diseases. Guerrero reads the film as an allegory of AIDS and points out differences in relation to the 50s original:

> What we have is a shift from disruptive threats of repressed erotic desires, racial projections, and the effects of experimental technologies to the 50s nuclear family to the exploration of upscale, singles sexual liberation and the detailed visual inscription of its dreaded pathological consequences, all of which draws upon public alarm over new sexually transmitted diseases emergent in the 1980s. (Guerrero 91)

Seth Brundle (Goldblum) experiences a conscious agony due to his body's gradual transformation, which at the beginning he considers as a contagious disease. Seth is the victim of his own experiment and, at the same time, is clearly affected by this mutation,

as when he pleads his girlfriend for help. Moreover, his painful metamorphosis brings to the fore apprehension related to sexual intimacy. Seth is single and has a relationship involving sex with Veronica (Davis). Seth displays a progressive and aggressive sexual appetite, and the film is explicit in showing many lovemaking scenes. It finally suggests, then, the danger of sex outside the traditional monogamous family (Guerrero 92). The problems regarding the destruction of the nuclear family in the original have been replaced by the problems of liberal relationships and the fear of sexual intimacy. Accordingly, Knee has argued:

> while the earlier film portrays a patriarchy in crisis and articulates anxieties regarding the family (…) the later film reveals anxieties over a social framework more entangled with the corporation and, in conjunction with these, concerns over the wages of intimacy—in economic, physical and emotional terms. (Knee 32)

Seth undergoes a critical process as a consequence of his slow and painful transformation into the "other". One way to counteract this crisis is by showing rather aggressive behaviour, which is linked to his evil, animal side.

Following my definition for this subtype of the "menaced man", we could include within this group films that show the physical transformations that involve the reduction which menace men's physical integrity. The change of scale especially allows for this interpretation. The most striking example in the 1950s is Jack Arnold's *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957), a topic we had seen earlier in *The Invisible Man* (1933) by Whale and which will be the precedent of various forthcoming films.[146] In the former, the anxiety

[146] Subsequent films inspired in Arnold's work include *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957), *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (1958), *Attack of the Puppet People* (1958), *The*

produced by contemporary atomic experiments is evoked. The main protagonist, Scott Carey (Williams), is worried about his shrinking body, to the extent that the spectator shares his condition since we see life through his eyes. Seriously let down by his body—traditionally seen as a source of power—he feels inferior to his wife Louise (Stuart) and even sexually diminished since, as Wells suggests, "[f]rom being mild-mannered, married and manly, Scott becomes frustrated, freakish and famous" (188). This anxiety over gender and authority echoes his inability to deal with his family life, as it happened to the male protagonist of *The Fly*.[147] Women start to rule the domestic sphere during the 50s and patriarchy is at stake. In relation to this issue, Rosenheim believes in Scott's inability to "wear the pants in his family" and in an infantilisation of this character: "[Scott] grows more childish as he shrinks—an infantilization represented by his dwarfed occupations of a chair, and, finally, by his unhappy residence within a dollhouse" (18). This playful and childish nature reminds us of Alice's innocent change of scale in Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland.*

Scott's transformation allows for the depiction of a gigantic female alien, which further suggests a mother/son conflict. From husband and wife they turn into mother and child. That way, the wife/mother becomes a threatening presence for Scott. The psychoanalytic dynamics described by Nancy Chodorow in which the male child must repudiate his mother to assert his masculinity is

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Thirty Foot Bride of Candy Rock (1959) or *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* (1981), among others. Family comedies like *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* are also inspired in Arnold's work.

[147] Both Andre in *The Fly* and Scott in *The Incredible Shrinking Man* are isolated in many senses. As a consequence of these characters' metamorphosis, nuclear family lives are shattered in both films. An interesting fact is that neither of these couples have children, which may be interpreted as another instance of the impossibility of these characters to have a conventional family.

metaphorically dramatised in SF (Robin Roberts 27).[148] This underlies the link between the woman and the alien. The smaller Scott becomes the more assertively he treats his wife, which should be understood as his need to strengthen lost male power over women. Moreover, and only when he is in the basement, Scott has to adopt a "primitive" masculinity in order to survive. In that way, Scott manages to become a hero, in spite of his shrinking body and weak appearance. Thus, Scott survives in this hostile environment and secures the masculinity undermined by Louise's maternal dominance "only to find that his human hunger is gone" (Rosenheim 18). He comes to realise at one point (after having defeated the spider that menaces him) that his masculinity has not disappeared, but it has only been redefined and "to be reduced is not to be diminished, rather it is to be enhanced" (Wells 191). This is further emphasised at the very end of the film. Wherein Scott disappears down to atomic size, he feels confident about himself and says "my fears melted away. In their place came acceptance. All this vast majesty of creation. It had to mean something. And then I meant something, too. To god, there is no zero. I still exist". In my view, this end suggests Scott's final acceptance of new gender and human values in a scientific new and uncertain era, and the overcoming of his identity crisis. He has experimented, through a painful body transformation, that acceptance is, after all, a solution for his anxieties. The problem is that he has realised too late.

In conclusion, I have attempted to argue in this section that the encounter with difference is one of the most important cultural and social debates in contemporary U.S. life and, as such, it is reflected in many SF films. U.S. society's perception of gender, and specifically of masculinity, is underlined in these films in which the "menaced man"

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[148] In *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) Nancy Chodorow claims that the self is inextricable from interpersonal relationships.

has to deal with the danger of the unfamiliar. Sexual and racial differences disrupt the heterosexual white hegemony and are normally depicted as "threats" in the form of aliens, monsters or mutants.

The common feature all these films share is that they rely on the hero's confrontation with the "other", which becomes the basic plot structure. Men are menaced and their bodies sometimes become the product of terrible physical mutations, which underlies a deep identity crisis. Communists, feminists, homosexuals and other subversive "others" detached from the "American norm" have been traditionally read as threats to the hegemony of the white heterosexual man.

3.3.3. THE "CONQUERING MAN"

The pattern that I have coined the "conquering man" presents characters that may include many of the following features:

- The male character trespasses known frontiers and enters new and unexplored worlds.
- His behaviour and characterisation are aligned to the traditional hero as described in ancient Western mythology, folk tales and other literary forms.
- The "conquering man" has domesticated technology for his own benefit.
- Travels in space, time and scale offer the perfect scenario for the conquering hero.
- Films showing this pattern stress the hero's relationship with the new world he encounters and/or discovers.

- Unlike the pattern of the "menaced man", the conquering hero does not normally show any frailties in his encounters with "the other" and does not feel the need to stress his superiority at all times.

- Women and non-hegemonic masculinities are relegated to a secondary position.

- Depictions of the "other" take up many forms and shapes, apart from the bad alien. Non-hostile androids and friendly non-human beings are frequently included within the multicultural teams led by the white hero.

As stated before, most SF films of the 50s follow the tendency of portraying menacing alien invasions and dangerous physical transformations due to the effect of atomic power. Yet, remarkable films of the 50s like *Forbidden Planet* and *Destination Moon* exemplify how the pattern of the "conquering man" starts to appear on screen suggesting men's superiority in outer space. The 50s' paranoia and general uncertainty about the end of masculine privileges is present in the earliest representations of the pattern, together with the general sense of uncertainty about the existence of other worlds. Likewise, it is in 1960 when *The Time Machine* opens a path for subsequent films about time exploration. Before the age of the blockbuster, dystopian views of the future are present in many movies. Many times, outer space is depicted as inhospitable, and adventurous men find difficulties in "conquering" it. For instance, *The Planet of the Apes* (1968) and its sequels present an aggressive animal kingdom which rebels against explorers.[149]

[149] Films like *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970), *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971), *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1972) and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* (1973) deal with the time-travel topic, while reflecting the U.S. political chaos

It is not until Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) that this pattern is to be widely followed, imitated, and adapted to the U.S. context. *2001* differs from its predecessors mainly in its aesthetics and use of special effects, while it establishes a pattern for the post 1968 SF film dealing with space exploration. This tendency engages with socio-political change, although in a rather veiled way. The "conquering man" is to provide the heroic characterisation of popular blockbuster films of the 70s, 80s and 90s, like the *Star Wars* trilogy and the *Star Trek* movies. In the late 70s, the film industry experiences a general backlash as gender representation is concerned. Yet, it is precisely in the SF genre where new concepts of masculinity acquire an amazing popularity, especially among young spectators. Following the tradition of the genre, films like *Star Wars* and other blockbusters of the time offer conquering heroes in search of mythical quests. These heroes are considered at all times as powerful and dominant, yet they do not show, as opposed to most action heroes of the times, an extraordinary—and artificial—body. Hence, their superiority is stated in the accomplishment of their mission, the domination of space-travel and technological development and their ability to defend and protect people from malevolent alien forces. In this sense, movies like the *Star Wars* trilogy (1977, 1980, 1983), the *Star Trek* movies (launched in 1979, and continued up until our times) or *Dune* (1984) offer this peculiar version of traditional heroes and may be interpreted in this light. These conquering figures reinforce U.S. conservative rules yet in a different way from the over-muscled heroes of other genres. Because of their resourcefulness and ability to dominate outer space, conquering heroes are considered superior and, as such, do not need to show off by means of muscles or huge

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and corruption of the 70s, where assassination, wars and scandals dominate the social panorama. Inevitably, the depiction of gender in these movies is not a topic at stake. Therefore, positive gender challenges are normally absent from them.

weapons as other Reaganite heroes do. Although we see an inclusion of women aboard the space-ships and multicultural teams fighting a common enemy with the help of friendly aliens on their side, conquering heroes are ultimately the ones who accomplish their mission, which mirrors the supremacy of men in SF. Paradoxically, it is in movies like *Star Wars* where the representation of masculinity can be rather flexible.

As stated before, the popularity of these movies dealing with space explorers also influenced other films where the heroes travel through time exploring new and unknown worlds. The most striking examples are the *Back to the Future* movies, released in the late 80s (1985, 1987, 1990), which became successful and gave a boost to time-travel movies after Pal's *The Time Machine* (1960).[150]

The 90s general tendency towards gender blending and the depiction of a masculinity in crisis can be also perceived in many movies from the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the present one. Thus, and as it happens with every representation of masculinity on screen, gender concerns determine the depiction of the "conquering man", although, as suggested before, traditional masculinity becomes the rule for it. Sequels, remakes, TV and video-game adaptations, and pre-sequels, display most of the examples of the "conquering man" in our contemporary times. *Star Wars* pre-sequel (1999, 2002, 2005), the last of the *Star Trek* series (1991, 1994, 2002), the remake of *Planet of the Apes* (2001), *Solaris* (2002), *Stargate* the movie (1994), *Lost in Space* (1998) and the remake of *The Time*

[150] Another successful movie dealing with time travel in the 80s is *The Terminator* (1984), which I include under the label "artificial man" in this present work. After Pal's and before the *Back to the Future* series, a couple of movies followed Wells's subject matter, such as *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* (1964) or *The Time Travelers* (1964).

Machine (2002), are cases in point. Both the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* phenomena, Sanjek argues, "embody a set of values that audiences have come to depend upon to deliver a sense of surety amidst a chaotic quotidian reality" (115). Sanjek is suggesting, then, that these films work as a kind of reassurance for the contemporary spectator. If we apply this to the gender question, the reliance on traditional gender structures would also mean a reassurance for a society governed by chaos and where no real frontiers seem to be at work. It is interesting to note, however, how these remakes and sequels try to include new gender values in a more open way than they used to do before, in spite of their dependence on convention.

Another group of films following the pattern of the "conquering man" include comedies and/or parodies. Carpenter's *Dark Star* (1974) follows *2001* and offers a comical view of conquering men in outer space, a trend which will be followed by films like *Spaceballs* (1987) or *Galaxy Quest* (1999). Through the use of parody and irony, they make constant references to popular culture and to the tropes of television SF.

Other instances of conquering men are provided by *Starship Troopers* (1995), *Final Fantasy. The Spirits Within* (2001), or *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* (2004). They offer some sort of innovation when dealing with gender role assignment. In them, the hero continues to embody hetero-normative masculinity, but there is an attempt to neutralise gender differences somehow or, at least, to blur some of the traditional assumptions about the sexes. In other words, conquering men are meant to be inserted into more flexible contexts.

The conquering hero's encounter with new worlds may be deliberate or accidental. If deliberate, the "conquering man" is depicted in a conscious pursuit of other worlds and frontiers, where he aims at

imposing his own social and cultural values—or those of the world he belongs to. However, if accidental, the hero happens to enter other worlds which he "explores". His adventure consists in discovering and exploring the new land. A more appropriate term to name this latter variation would be "explorer". I will nevertheless use the inclusive term "conquering man" for both groups of films, although this remark should be taken into account.

The "conscious" conqueror accounts for a male character who explores unknown spaces, usually as part of a heroic task he is endeavoured to perform in the benefit of his own world. In his conquering mission he encounters other peoples or civilizations. These films stress the hero's relationship with this new environment, which is depicted as unfamiliar for the audience. One of the early instances of this tendency is found in Irving Pichel's *Destination Moon* (1950). The film depicts the positive side of technology by means of space exploration and man's conquest of space. Yet, its positive mood and optimistic vision is not followed by the majority of films of its decade, which are playing out the pattern of the "menaced man" due to nuclear threats and alien invasions. The film follows a documentary style to offer a detailed and realistic account of space exploration. The depiction of the Moon becomes interesting enough, since by that time the first moon landing had not yet taken place. Moreover, the four heroes on board the "Luna" space-shuttle become models of companionship and provide real solutions for unexpected problems. Moreover, they do not behave in an aggressive way when they try to solve those problems but, on the contrary, they confront them rationally and resourcefully. Thanks to these heroes, outer space becomes accessible to human beings. These men occupy a privileged position and their superiority is seldom endangered. They take up a mythical journey to the unknown and, after having overcome several trials, finally return to the familiar world of the Earth. As opposed to

other films of the decade where women represented a threat to the hero's condition as such, in this movie men do not encounter such perils and, consequently, they do not need to be scared. Indeed, women are almost absent or relegated to men's helpers. Male superiority pervades, then, the whole film.[151]

Wilcox's *Forbidden Planet* (1956) offers another clear example of the pattern of the "conquering man". In fact, the film presents two conflicting conquerors. In this revision of Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* Commander Adams (Nielsen) and his crew are sent on a rescue mission to the distant planet Altair 4 and, although warned by the planet's chief colonist to leave, they choose to land and check if everything is in order. The planet is only inhabited by a former explorer, Dr Morbius (Pidgeon), his innocent daughter Altaira (Francis) and their mechanical satisfying servant, Robbie the Robot. They seem to live a pleasant life when Commander Adams and his crew land on the planet to accomplish their mission. Due to her lack of contact with any human being but her father, Altaira—like Miranda in *The Tempest*—is an extremely innocent girl who does not have a clue about social and gender rules on Earth. She lives in a kind of false paradise surrounded by domesticated wild animals, her over-protecting father and a mechanical servant that is willing to give her whatever she may need or want. Harmonious life in this seemingly ready made paradise relies on rather traditional and conventional gender assumptions.

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[151] Selander's *Flight to Mars* (1951) and Haskin's *Conquest of Space* (1955) similarly follow the documentary style of *Destination Moon* and offer a realistic account of space exploration. In the case of *Flight to Mars*, the ordinariness of space flight is achieved by the fact that the crew wear casual clothes rather than futuristic space suits and are untroubled by effects such as zero gravity (King and Krzywinska 24). The credibility in *Destination Moon* was claimed, however, by going to some trouble to take seriously the implications of zero gravity (King and Krzywinska 24). The unknown space is, therefore, depicted as approachable.

Yet, as Worland and Slayden argue, *Forbidden Planet* is a movie that encodes many historically intriguing icons, images and social themes which beset the U.S in the atomic age (139). In spite of its apparent utopianism, this paradise still echoes prevalent social concerns at the time. The presence of technological appliances, paternal authority, threatening viruses, space travel, missions and external perils are familiar topics for the 1950s audience. It can be also argued that this paradise initially stands as a utopian place of male hegemony, a planet governed by a man and his innocent and angelical girl devoted to domesticity, together with her pleasant servant. Even in worlds where social rules do not seem to apply, audiences can recognise contemporary concerns about gender assignment and the "domestication" of society. In this context, Altaira does not understand the effect she causes on these men and misinterprets their reactions. Her total ignorance of gender norms inevitably turns her into a sexual object and, indeed, some members of the crew attempt to take advantage of her until she gets emotionally involved with Commander Adams. Thus, the supposedly idyllic environment is going to be disrupted by the arrival of another "conquering man". Moreover, the awakening of Altaira's sexual impulses when kissing commander Adams becomes the turning point which initiates the destruction of the false Eden in which she has always lived. While kissing him, animals start to behave in a wild manner and a strange force begins to kill the members of the crew. This hints at the dangers of female passion and sexuality. Breaking with the natural and cosmic order of things brings disorder and social disruption, and thus, the space transforms into a hostile environment.

At the film's climax Adams discovers the dangerous and destructive power of the repressed unconscious, the so-called monster from the *id,* Caliban in Shakespeare's play. Dr Morbius fails to realise the great power of the monster, in spite of his expertise on the

previous superhuman civilisation. Apart from the psychoanalytic and colonial interpretations, the topic of the "enemy within" hints at U.S. paranoia about the secrets of conspiracy and the infiltration of communists during the Cold War. As a site of "otherness", the monster stands for the dark "other", and therefore, needs to be destroyed in order for the heterosexual couple to join at the end. In spite of his dedication, Morbius is unable to discover the monster's existence and ruthless aims. Adams will be the one who discovers the real nature of the monster and rescues the heroine from the false paradise she has inhabited so far. This "enemy within" is finally destroyed by Morbius. Like Prospero, the male scientist turns out to be a tyrannical figure with utopian pretensions for the planet he rules. The utopian world Morbius had meant to create has only one limitation which should be ignored and/or destroyed: the existence of the *id* monster. Its extinction necessarily entails Morbius' end as well. Thus, the film offers two conquering men: Dr. Morbius and Adams. While the former stands as the old tyrannical conqueror who attempts to perpetuate male hegemony in the planet, Adams may suggest a more positive type of the conqueror/explorer type, since he "liberates" the girl from this false "paradise". With Morbius' death, the chief colonist gives way to the new "conquering man".

Yet, we get a rather conventional ending with the triumph of the heterosexual couple returning home and the destruction of the monster. *Forbidden Planet* depicts, then, an apparent innocent and ideal world whose fake nature is discovered when the girl's sexuality is awakened. It is an asexual paradise which resembles Eden in the Bible. The heroine is removed from this place to ironically perpetuate paternal hegemony in another context. In this light, cultural and social rules become necessary for the survival of tradition. The film seems to suggest that the supremacy of male privileges needs to be contextualised and felt as real, and not as a utopia bound to be

destroyed and eliminated. After some encounters with hostile forces, Adams manages to destroy the "threats", rescues the heroine and returns to Earth, where he would be able to exert his "learned privileges" over the woman. In this sense, there seems to be no real evolution from the old to the new conqueror.

Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) has been considered a celebrated masterpiece of the SF genre. It stands, with its almost documentary style—similar to that of *Destination Moon*—as a realistic portrayal of space travel, in spite of special effects.[152] The space race of the 60s is mirrored in this celebration of space travel. The emphasis on the ordinariness and familiarisation of outer space makes the film, in spite of all its innovative aspects, rely on contemporary conventions, which inevitably results in the frustration of any gender role re-assignment. In other words, spectators need to recognise familiar structures in order to believe in the conquest of space and, in this sense, Kubrick's movie can be affirmed to preserve established gender conventions. Men are the unquestionable masters of the universe and the ones who have managed to control the latest technology for the benefit and progression of humankind.

Moreover, *2001* has been considered a film of ideas and, as such, has opened up many different and contradictory interpretative paths, remaining on the whole a rather ambivalent piece of work. Precisely because of its portrayal of the "conquering man", the representation of the evolution of humanity and the emergence of the superhuman, the movie can be interpreted as an optimistic vision of

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[152] Precisely this concern with providing an approachable and ordinary outer space has delineated many of the film's characteristics, such as the slow camera-movement, its minimal editing, or its banal use of language, while providing us with familiar images.

the future.[153] Nonetheless, if the vision of the future of humankind is presented as positive, it is partly thanks to the supremacy of men over space and technology, what makes this movie remain rather traditional from a gender viewpoint.[154] Thus the positive mood of the movie, reinforced by elements of the *mise-en-scène* like music or camera movement, and men's control of space contribute to safeguard their supremacy. The movie becomes a clear example of how conquering men stand as embodiments of traditional manhood. In *2001* women aboard the Discovery are mainly represented as air-hostesses, dancing and serving the astronauts, while men are seen in charge of their great responsibilities, and running and exercising in their free time. As for their behaviour, men proceed in a rational, cold way, and are always shown to be educated. They are prudent and think twice before acting.

When heading to Jupiter in the third act, Frank Poole (Sylvester) and David Bowman (Dullea) coexist peacefully with technology until the humanised computer HAL turns out to be more "intelligent", shows its competence and rebels against human beings. Once HAL has killed the crew, it is Bowman who manages to disconnect its memory bank, lands on Jupiter and, after finding out the truth about

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[153] Mackey-Kallis claims that this optimistic view is latent in the movie's implication of the evolution of humanity from ape to human, to superhuman (193). Thus, "[t]he individual is submerged in the universal, the ego dissolves into the unconscious, and all things are connected in the harmonious unity of time, space, and being" (194). Thus, technology, although serving as a source of discord and distrust (in the sense that one group dominates over the other), also offers the possibility of transcendence and the evolution of consciousness to a more enlightened state of being (196).

[154] Yet, in the 1984 sequel *2010*, the optimistic tone of the movie changes drastically as we get to know that the true villains are the men working for the government, who have sabotaged the computer HAL.

the evolution of humankind, initiates his journey back home.[155] Bowman embodies, then, the mythical hero and his journey is one more instance of the film exploiting the popular image of man as explorer.

As previously mentioned, Sobchack argues that sexuality is denied to male heroes in SF and thus astronauts are cool, irrational and sexless. These qualities make them the heroes of the genre, as they are the heroes of our popular culture (Sobchack 1985, 107). Sexuality, which belongs to the private domain, is inhibited since they fulfil mythical quests in order to insert themselves into the public world, both as individuals and as types. In this light, women occupy secondary positions and, in the case of *2001*, substituted by the mysterious nature of space travel. Men 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 caesarian birth" (Sobchack 108).

The *Star Wars* trilogy is considered by many critics as the hero quest films *par excellence* and as compendium of a number of different cultural myths, such as the American Western, the Arthurian romance, or the Japanese Shogun warriors stories. Luke Skywalker (Hamill) represents at all times the embodiment of the traditional hero. Interestingly enough, for the accomplishment of his mission he needs to undergo a series of stages that correspond to the monomyth quest. Thus, the trilogy can be analysed following Joseph Campbell's

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[155] Mackey-Kallis argues that the film's final image of the child archetype implies "that despite technology's potential to divide and destroy, it may ultimately provide the best tools for healing ourselves and for unifying us with each other and with god/spirit" (197). Thus Bowman's arrival on Jupiter signifies his unification with the universe, his transformation into a "child of the universe" and thus his "return" to a transcendent home (197).

account. In the first movie of the trilogy, *Star Wars* (later entitled *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*), Luke accepts the call to adventure made by the Jedi Master, Obi-Wan Kenobi (Guinness), and, like any mythical hero, initiates his journey, proving his superiority and extraordinariness. He leaves his world and crosses the threshold towards the unknown to fight the evil forces of the Empire. Luke initiates his adventure aided by warrior Han Solo (Ford). In the second film, *The Empire Strikes Back,* Luke enters the "belly of the whale" and begins his training as a hero. He starts to understand his powers and the meaning of the "Force". Once the hero enters into adventure, Campbell affirms, he encounters unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of them threaten him, others help him. In the organic planet of Dagoba, Luke is tested. According to Campbell, the hero may defeat or reconcile the "shadow presence". In the last movie of the trilogy, *The Return of the Jedi,* Yoda tells Luke that his quest as a hero consists in confronting Darth Vader in a father-son battle. Confronting Vader, Yoda tells him, is the last requirement for him to become a Jedi.[156] Campbell deals with the hero's final reward, that is, the hero's triumph, which can be represented as the father's atonement or as the hero's own apotheosis. In the case of Luke, Mackey-Kallis notes, the triumph is twofold (219).[157] Luke successfully overcomes, then, this final stage and, destroying the evil force of the Empire, returns to a

[156] The father quest occurs in three separate scenes in the trilogy: the first one takes place in *The Empire Strikes Back* in Dagoba when Luke confronts his father image and "slays" Vader/himself. The second occurs at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back* when Luke and Darth battle. And the final confrontation and reconciliation between father-son occurs at the very end of *The Return of the Jedi* when Luke and Vader meet and Luke refuses to kill his father. Thus, love "the most powerful force of all, allows Vader to be saved, and allows Luke to become a Jedi Knight" (Mackey-Kallis 210).

[157] In relation to this issue, Mackey-Kallis argues: "Looking upon Luke with his own eyes allows Vader to acknowledge Luke as his son, thus offering Luke "father atonement". Luke's second triumph, becoming a Jedi knight by facing his father, can be seen as a form of "divinization" or "apotheosis"" (219).

pleasant life with his people.[158] Luke follows faithfully, then, the basic stages proposed by Campbell when he describes the mythical quest and, thus, overcomes the three mythical stages—departure, initiation and return—that become the structural basis of the trilogy.

The first film of the trilogy, Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977), consolidates Luke as the unquestionable white hero and continues the tradition left by previous conquering heroes. Interestingly enough, the film also allows for the depiction of a more approachable model of masculinity. Thus, Luke is considered a passionate, youthful and loyal hero who does not emphasise his condition as such but that seems to be humble and real. Examples of this can be seen in his relationship with the droids, which he treats as equals. "Call me Luke", he tells C3PO, when the droid insists on calling him "Sir". Also his relationship with other characters is one of equality and respect. He admires his mentor, Obi-Wan and respects Han Solo, in spite of the latter's pretensions of money and power. He does not ultimately seek dominance or power but only the end of evil forces and the goal of a peaceful galaxy. These characteristics make him a quite approachable hero, in opposition to other popular male models. Drawing on classical legends and traditions, the portrayal of women relies likewise on conventional traits.[159] It is in the Empire where oppressing, traditional

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[158] Moreover, and as many scholars have pointed out, the trilogy has been also read as a recreation of the Western frontier tradition and many other mythical and classical traditions.

[159] Princess Leia (Fisher) is depicted as a woman who, like the typical fairy-tale princess, is captured by the villains and needs to be saved by the hero. She does not intervene in the final and crucial attack against the Empire. Her role in such a battle is a passive one as supporter of the male warriors. Yet, some aspects of Leia's behaviour can be said to foreshadow the values ascribed to the emerging powerful woman. Indeed, her performance departs in some ways from conventional representations of the heroine. Helped by her status as a princess, Leia is depicted as a woman with a strong character who gives orders to men and who makes the right decisions when in trouble. She likes being on lead and is resourceful and helpful. She heads a rebellion against the static and established power of the

values are at work and Lord Darth Vader represents excess. As opposed to Luke, Vader is at all times armoured and wearing his black helmet, symbols of strength. The Empire's solemn scenario with impenetrable shields, powerful weapons, and technologically-sophisticated ships contrasts with the small ships of the alliance, which ultimately result triumphant. The truth is that the heroic rebels succeed by virtue not of technological advance, but through commitment, diversity and justness of cause (Meyer 101). Thus, the motto 'size does not matter' is a recurrent motif throughout the whole trilogy and foreshadows the importance that body cult and the muscle culture have for the followers of traditional values.

In the second movie, Kershner's *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), the same issues concerning the hero are presented. The matter of size is again raised when Luke is being trained by Yoda on planet Dagoba. Luke argues that he is unable to raise his ship from the swamp because it is too big, after having failed to recognise Yoda as a master Jedi because of his small appearance. Yoda makes him see size does not matter and that he should not judge things by appearances. Once Luke understands this, he will be ready to become a Jedi. The opposition between old static traditional values and the emergence of fresh new values is seen in the father-son battle between Luke and Vader at the very end of the movie. This echoes the 80s socio-cultural confrontation between the more conservative ideas proposed by the Reagan presidency and the movements that demanded new and less oppressive social laws. In this battle, Darth cuts off Luke's hand and invites him to join the Empire (and therefore tradition), arguing that they will be so powerful together as to rule the whole galaxy. Luke screams and rejects him. With this, Luke is denying the pretensions of

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Empire. That is why some scholars have referred to her as a confusing character or as a "phallic woman" (Gordon 1986, 201).

joining an oppressive and dark power. Traditionally, the father-son relationship reinforces patriarchy or "male dominance" (Britton 24) and is, at the same time, a recurring structure in popular films of the Reagan era. The tension posed here by the father-son bond means an assault on established patriarchal power structures and de-authorises, in a way, patriarchal continuity in the movie. The father rule can also be equated to U.S. militaristic expansion and the colonial enterprise undergone during the decade of the 80s.

In the last movie of the trilogy, Marquand's *The Return of the Jedi* (1983), Luke identifies himself as a Jedi, and as such wears the proper robes of a Jedi Master. He has acknowledged his power but he will not use it for personal benefit or social pretensions but for a common goal: to save the galaxy—and his friends and family—from the evil forces of the Empire. The final battle between father and son becomes significant as well, since the traditional and oppressive values represented by Vader and the Emperor are finally substituted by the new values embodied by Luke. Yet the hero does not win this Manichean battle by fighting or using his superior force but by showing love and respect towards his father refusing to kill him. Respect and tolerance seem to be, therefore, the clues for harmony and reconciliation between old and new values. Lastly, the previously mentioned issues of size and technology also appear in the last movie of the trilogy. Hence, it is the tiny Ewoks with their primitive technology who finally defeat the Imperial troops and their superior technology. The return to nature and simple values seems to be idealised in the movie, the perfect scenario for the closing of the cycle.

The *Star Wars* trilogy offers, then, challenging gender readings under the veil of tradition and the mythic plot structure. It is in this context where new values are precisely embodied by the conquering

hero. The so-called new hero on screen can be argued to appear in the 80s, a decade governed by the right and populated by hard heroes.[160] *Star Wars* became widely imitated and thus, a similar characterisation is to be found in other movies of the 70s and 80s.[161]

The *Star Wars* trilogy and David Lynch's *Dune* (1984) share many characteristics in relation to the representation of the conquering hero. Indeed, a striking feature of *Dune* is its peculiar use of a model of masculinity, embodied mainly by the hero, which does not correspond with the one at work in most popular films of this decade. This leads us to consider the film's challenging vision of masculinity. Yet, the "strong militaristic foreign policy position" (1994, 13) that Jeffords clearly associates to the hard body is also depicted in the film. In this sense, *Dune* represents one of the primary themes of Reaganism, which, according to Jeffords, is the display of the hero in defiance of their governments and institutional bureaucracies (1994, 19). Its hero, Paul Atreides (McLaghan) is the figure in charge of liberating the oppressed—the Fremen—from their evil leaders, the Harkonnens. This task constitutes the fulfilment of his down-to-earth

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[160] For more information about the new hero, see my study *New Heroes on Screen. Prototypes of Masculinity in Contemporary SF Films* (2006).

[161] Of all the *Star Wars* imitators, Colla's *Battlestar Galactica* (1978) is one of the most obvious ones in the 70s. It offers a quite similar subject topic and characterisation. This time, three space pilots are the embodiments of conquering men in a galactic conflict that is setting the human race at risk. Referring to various classic allusions and Judaeo-Christian iconography, Captain Apollo (Hatch), Lieutenant Starbuck (Benedict) and Boomer (Jefferson Jr), aided and controlled by the father figure Commander Adama (Green), manage to finish with the evil robot Cylon Empire and save the human race. Class and gender hierarchies are clearly established within the base ships and, although we get a multicultural team, conquering men are ultimately responsible for the human race's fate. Thus, the warriors' superiority is at all times assumed and, especially Captain Apollo becomes the embodiment of loyalty, courage and justice. Apollo is a good son (he respects and admires his father) and a good father (he becomes the father figure for Boxi, a boy who dreams of being a hero). In this sense, he embodies all the characteristics of the traditional hero. Yet, and as it happened with Luke Skywalker, Jeffords's hard features are not stressed in the movie, which again gives us the idea of assumed superiority and opens challenging gender readings concerning the male protagonists.

messianic condition. Patriarchal societies are present throughout the whole film. The threat of homosexuality posed by the all-male and evil Harkonnen race, together with the hierarchical structure of the different societies, and the presence of traditional families, do not enable defiant readings regarding gender relations. Moreover, Paul follows faithfully the mythic quest structure of initiation, departure and return.

Yet, and as happened with Luke Skywalker, Paul's supremacy in the film is not established by means of muscles and actions but by means of the privileges and status associated to male figures of authority. Indeed, in his last duel with the Harkonnen Feyd-Rautha (Sting), Paul uses a small knife to defend himself in a hand-to-hand combat. In addition, his victory results, not from his superior physical force, but from his special gifts, as he represents the highest authority within the Known Universe.

This leads us to consider Paul as closer to femininity and as the embodiment of the kind of masculinity that was starting to appear in the U.S.A. in the 80s. This is reinforced by his voice, which is not that of a "proper" man of action. It is so soft and sometimes imperceptible that he seems to be whispering throughout the film, if compared with the assertive and mostly deep and low tones of heroes displaying similar functions. Besides, the film clearly emphasises Paul's subconscious, which is, nevertheless, a typical Lynchian device. The subconscious, as it implies the mysterious and unknown part of the human being, has been traditionally associated with the feminine, and seen as something private and opposed to the male public sphere. Paul's visionary dreams do not only deal with his private life, but also with social and political issues and, therefore, they are meant to be key elements for plot development. Apart from envisioning the woman he will fall in love with—Chani (Young)—and the insides of his mother's womb, he also anticipates many events concerning the

political future of his House, such as the Harkonnen's attack, the hidden secrets of planet Dune or the threatening presence of the Emperor. This could be interpreted as the consequence of the film industry's need to adjust the figure of the hero to conventional patterns. A complete dissolution of the traditional gender divide cannot be granted, even in the case of a character like Paul.

These elements hint at an anticipation of the kind of hero that we will find in SF movies of the late 90s. In a similar way, the *Star Trek* movies—based on the popular TV series—can be also affirmed to be symbols of the decade in terms of popularity and influence. Especially the series have been widely analysed following mythic, psychoanalytic and sociological perspectives, offering many different and varying interpretations. When dealing with *Star Trek*'s gender representation, many of these analyses coincide when arguing that, despite the series' supposed interrogation of traditional SF conventions, it is still supported by patriarchal formulas that privilege men over women. I will further develop these theories in chapter four when commenting on *Star Trek. Nemesis*.

Lastly, it might be of interest to mention a group of films that depict male adventurers that happen to enter worlds unknown to them. These films normally rely on time travel, often playing with past and present dimensions. In them, the male character is curious about the new land, which he explores and where he sometimes tries to found a new civilisation. One of the earliest examples of this tendency is to be found in Pal's *The Time Machine* (1960), based on the popular book by H.G Wells of the same title. Following the model of previous space exploration movies, the mythic hero, George (Taylor), is to explore the Earth in the future, where he finds a hostile civilization, and after having come back to his familiar world of 1900, decides to travel to the future again with the aim of restoring this civilisation to humanity.

In this movie, its protagonist, a Victorian inventor, moves through time in his own elegant time machine. He travels forward into the future and explores a world where two races—the villain Morlocks and the innocent, passive and submissive race of the Eloi—are at a class war. The dichotomy one/other is strongly established in this future world, which questions the topic of evolution. Among the Eloi, George meets beautiful and innocent Weena (Mimieux) and feels attraction towards her. Since George feels angry because of the Eloi's assumed and passive submission to the villains, he suddenly adopts the guise of the muscular and moral hero and helps them defeat the oppressing Morlocks. George embodies, then, the model of masculinity at work in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century: the muscular and morally correct scientist.[162] George embodies, then, this new concept of intellectual, refined and moral man, capable of defeating evil menaces. George has scientific inclinations and believes in a just world based on moral values. He also shows to be more agile than the Morlocks. He is related to the social and public sphere (in opposition to the private world, which is the realm of George's maid). Thus, he embodies normative masculinity and, therefore, his superiority is never contested and/or questioned.

In opposition to George's individuality and self-sufficiency, the Eloi race is depicted in the future world as a homogenous group with a number of recognisable physical traits: all of them are young, wear similar clothes and have the same hair style. This uniformity may recall communist ideas about the equality of individuals. The portrait of the Eloi has also been interpreted as the deadly consequences of

[162] As I explained in chapter one, the triumph of the bourgeois culture at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries meant a new moral and religious enterprise that some authors have referred to as "Christian manliness" (Segal 104-5). This model stressed moral and spiritual precepts.

sexual equality for human evolution, Robin Roberts argues in relation to Wells's work. Moreover, their behaviour is similar, which reinforces the idea of sexual equality. As a group, the Morlocks are also depicted very similarly. Hence, the difference in the future is not based on gender but on class and race, and George is seen as the saviour who is to finish with this unjust hierarchy. Once the menace of the Morlocks is counteracted, George stands as the messiah who has come to save the Eloi from the hostility of submission and help them recover what makes them human. The supremacy of the "conquering man" is, once more, stated in future worlds. However in George's time, gender spheres are clear-cut. He lives in the bosom of a patriarchal society where science and exploration are considered as male pursuits. In this sense, George embodies the type of the "real man", a "hardy male explorer" (Robin Roberts 33). Humanity is presented as on the verge of extinction, a topic shared with alien films that threaten to finish with "our world".

Other striking examples of films presenting "conscious conquerors" are the *Back to the Future* (1985, 1987, 1990) series. They have been analysed from different perspectives, yet they clearly follow the pattern of the "conquering man" who explores past and future worlds. The three films depict a past, a present and a future bound to be explored by the hero, Marty McFly (Fox). The father-son relationship, a popular topic in films of the decade, is crucial for the trilogy. In the original movie Marty travels back to 1950s where he intervenes in his family future, creating a better world for himself. Cornea argues that Marty tries to create an ideal father. Marty sees his father at the beginning of the movie as weak and unsuccessful, then, by the end of the film he has created a true patriarch: "a man who is masterful and in control, a figurehead that he can respect" (Cornea 119). What Marty is doing, then, is re-establishing patriarchal authority. The film also enables him to develop a stable and faithful

relationship with his girlfriend. Further films in the series follow these concerns.

In short, and as opposed to the pattern of the "menaced man", which focuses on the direct confrontation between the male character and the "other", what is at stake in conquering men's films is that they are set in these new or imagined worlds. Films portraying the positive side of technology and space exploration show a committed multicultural crew working together to explore and conquer the universe. This pattern relies on tradition and mythic structures, and, therefore, no significant evolution in gender role assignments is normally offered.

3.3.4. THE "ARTIFICIAL MAN"

The type of masculinity referred here as the "artificial man" presents many of the following traits:

- The male character is intimately linked to technology and science. The differentiation between them becomes troublesome.
- This figure complicates traditional dualistic thinking and challenges established models of representation. The male body becomes a site of disruption.
- Films showing this type centre on the character of the "artificial man".
- One representation of the "artificial man" is a coupling between a human being and an electronic mechanical apparatus, normally resulting in an aggressive over-muscled body fused with technology. Another model is a

genetically created or manipulated human simulation, where no real difference can apparently be perceived between the original and the copy.

- Both models of the "artificial man" are partly grounded on contemporary concerns about androgyny and hybridity and become useful tools for the analysis of the postmodern body.

This pattern can be said to emerge in the 80s as a consequence of the need to reinforce patriarchal values in an age of a masculinity in crisis. Popular images of artificial men provide us with different representations of masculinity which account for the times' concern for the construction of gender and the postmodern body. Especially after the release in 1977 of *Star Wars,* a proliferation of artificial men pervaded the screen. *The Terminator* (1984), *Blade Runner* (1982), *Robocop* (1987), *Eve of Destruction* (1991), *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), *RoboCop 2* (1990), *Universal Soldier* (1992) or *Judge Dredd* (1995), to name just a few, are cases in point. As forerunners of these artificial men, Hodges's *The Terminal Man* (1974) or Chichton's *Westworld* (1973) and its sequel, Heffron's *Futureworld* (1973) could be included.

The word "cyborg", Tomas affirms, represents "a radical vision of what it means to be human in the Western world in the late 20th century" (21). This figure of the cyborg has gradually acquired notoriety in academic circles and in popular film culture, and its representation ranges from "machine-based military model" to "genetically tailored human simulation" (21).[163] As previously

[163] Apart from these two representations of the male cyborg, we get another notorious account for it, which I call the "virtual man", the result of a fusion of men and the

commented, the cyborg entails a dissolution of boundaries which may lead to a positive image. Male cyborgs represented in some influential SF films of the moment are ironically based upon traditional gender conventions. Films like Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) or Verhoeven's *Robocop* (1987) offer violent male cyborg figures whose exaggerated bodies and behaviour favour their consideration as gender ironies.[164]

Likewise, examples like Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), considered a cult movie of the 80s, offer aggressive cloned men whose representation is based on traditional gender patterns, leaving virtually no space for innovation. *Blade Runner* provides the model for later artificial men as seen in movies such as Gibbins's *Eve of Destruction* (1991), Verhoeven's *Total Recall* (1990), Emmerich's *Universal Soldier* (1992), Brambrilla's *Demolition Man* (1993), Cannon's *Judge Dredd* (1995), Niccol's *Gattaca* (1997) or Spottiswoode's *The Sixth Day* (2000). It is during the 80s when SF films start to explore the consequences of one of the latest scientific achievements: the manipulation of human genetics.[165] Films like *Blade Runner* introduce characters so similar to their "model" that to differentiate them is sometimes a hard task.

Male cyborgs complicate, then, traditional models of representation while ironically relying on them. In this sense, it is

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latest cybertechnology, as it will be analysed in the next section. The cyborg image can be, then, interpreted in different ways.

[164] Other less remarkable movies of the "artificial man" representing a man-machine fusion can be included within this group. Thus Pyun's *Nemesis* (1993) and its sequels, the *Cyborg* films (1989, 1993, 1994) or *Cyborg Cop* (1993) are cases in point.

[165] Yet, early examples of human manipulation for specific purposes can be seen in films like Forbes's *The Stepford Wives* (1975) or Crichton's *Looker* (1981).

interesting to refer to Claudia Springer's definition of cyborg as opposed to "robots":

> while robots represent the acclaim and fear evoked by industrial age machines for their ability to function independently of humans, cyborgs incorporate rather than exclude humans, and in so doing erase the distinction previously assumed to distinguish humanity from technology. (Springer 1998, 486)

Ironically, and as it will be argued, this attempt of eradicating the human-technology difference is inevitably going to widen the gap between genders in terms of representation. As Cornea argues when referring to the cyborg film of the 80s, "because the cyborg is defined by a breakdown in the boundaries between self/Other, the hypermasculinity on display becomes a hysterical attempt to recuperate the traditional distinctions that this figure threatens to erode" (125). This very statement could be applied to cloned men. In them, technology is interiorized and made invisible. Nevertheless, they rely on—or exaggerate—classical patterns of gender representations, what problematises the utopian permissiveness of these cyborg figures.

3.3.4.1. The Man-Machine Hybrid

This subtype corresponds to a combination of a male character and a machine. This intertwining has led to different and numerous interpretations, and accounts for the complexity of the so-called figure of the cyborg. Popular characters like Terminator or Robocop have been, then, widely analysed from different perspectives. They are considered to embody the dominant ideology and conservatism of the times.

Many popular SF films of the 80s and beginning of the 90s offer a great number of images of artificial men. Especially, images of men fused with technology evoke the so-called figure of the mechanical cyborg. In them, the muscles of the human flesh are intermixed with steel or mechanisms. Clynes and Kline already used the term "cyborg" in 1960 to refer to a "self-regulating man-machine system" (in Tomas 36), capable of surviving hostile non-earth environments (Tomas 36). This human-machine coupling takes place within the body and represents violence. Springer has observed that during this conservative period "steely hard muscular cyborgs" (1999, 203) were predominant in SF films, "putting human beings to shame with their indomitable strength and superior logic" (1999, 204).

A generalised tendency at this time is to associate cyborg imagery with violence. Claudia Springer argues when referring to films like *The Terminator* or *Robocop* that what separates cyborgs from humans is the cyborg's greater capacity for violence, combined with enormous physical prowess (1998, 492). Thus, "[i]nstead of representing cyborgs as intellectual wizards whose bodies have withered away and been replaced by computer terminals, popular culture gives us muscular hulks distinguished by their superior fighting skills" (1998, 493). The insistence on this association of powerful cyborg with masculinity has resulted in its commodification and its subsequent mockery, as is the case of the evolution of the Terminator character. Moreover, these cyborg couplings, in spite of their reflection of high technology and scientific development, still follow patriarchal conventions when dealing with role assignment.

Fear of technology, a recurrent topic in early SF films like *Metropolis* (1926) will be, nevertheless, lessening with time up to the point that it disappears and the interface with technology produces a pleasurable experience instead, as it will be argued later when dealing with the "virtual man". The gradual erosion of fear evoked by

armoured cyborgs is perceived in the *Terminator* series. Thus, the destructive Terminator that is sent from the future with the programmed mission to kill Sarah Connor in the 1984 film becomes a protective figure in charge of defending the heroine from the "real monster", the frightening T-1000 in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991). He will be the protagonist again in the last film of the series, Mostow's *Terminator 3. The Rise of the Machines* (2003). By the time this last film was released, the traditional fear of technology was quite an exploited topic, and consequently, another "fear" had to be added to the menacing cyborg character: the condition of woman. The inclusion of the woman cyborg seems to reflect U.S. current crisis of masculinity due to the increasing power of women.

Hypermasculine hybrids of films of the 80s and early 90s suggest, then, the terrible consequences of human technological progress. Apart from this, they have been also interpreted as embodiments of the political ideology of the times. As noted in chapter two when dealing with hard bodies, this highly popularised portrayal of the masculine, linked to hard bodies and endless activity, will offer visual pleasure to mass audiences and will also help the construction of U.S. popular culture (Jeffords 1994, 12). Jeffords is, then, justifying the visual need for these demonised hard bodies during Reagan times. The hard body of these blockbusters is also in consonance with the 80s popularity of the health and fitness industry. The extreme conservatism of the Reagan times has been noted by many authors and "the Hollywood film was actively promoting the new conservative movement on several fronts" (Ryan and Kellner xi). As it will be contended in chapter five, Schwarzenegger's character in *The Terminator* (1984) contributes to shape the popular vision of masculinity in Reagan times. It evokes, thanks to both its close link with technology and to its exaggerated masculinity, notions of power and supremacy. In this sense, the "ungendered" ideal proposed by

Haraway is far from reach. The Terminator's change from a bad cyborg in the first movie to a good one in the second and third responds, as suggested earlier, to the normalization of technology in U.S. everyday life. The Terminator's cyborg body epitomizes, then, the mood of the times while hinting at the constructed nature of masculinity. His techno-body reflects the incredulity of masculinity, considered as something abstract and hard to find. Moreover, all these different readings of the hypermasculine cyborg suggest the complexity of this figure and the great amount of theoretical debates it arouses concerning gender. The intertwining of organism and machine is, then, a rather complex issue. I will expand these theories in chapter five when dealing with the discussion of the film *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*.

Similar issues concerning gender can be seen in the *Robocop* films (1987, 1990, 1994). In the original movie, police officer Murphy (Weller) is brutally assassinated and mutilated by criminals. His remains are used by a company working for the Detroit Police Department to literally build a man-machine hybrid. This is done by adding powerful mechanical units to a human upper body and by implanting software programmes that can be controlled by the company. This resulting cyborg of flesh and machinery suggests notions of superiority, rightness and reassurance for Detroit's corrupted society.

Robocop's constructed nature becomes evident from the very first moment he appears on screen and this fact is constantly emphasised throughout the whole series. Indeed, Robocop is initially presented by one of the creators, Bob Morton, as "the best of both worlds. The fastest reflexes modern technology has to offer, on-board computer assisted memory, and a lifetime of on-the-street law enforcement programming". Moreover, we are also told that "it doesn't have a name. He's got a program. He is product". Robocop becomes

this way the embodiment of masculine law. Yet this law is socially constructed and this is reinforced precisely by the movie's emphasis on Robocop's mechanical nature. Cornea argues that this mechanised masculinity is especially acted out in the succinct use of his dialogue and the way he moves (126). Thus his movements are separated from his speech and "when he turns corners, his head or his body turns first, like an articulated truck" (127). Moreover, "these movements are underlined by "hydraulic" sound effects which further emphasise the character's alignment with construction and transport machinery" (127). His mechanical side is emphasised, then, by means of his robotic appearance, which ultimately suggests masculine strength and power. Thus, it is precisely this display of armoured strength that makes Robocop the reassuring representative and upholder of the law (Cornea 127). He is, then, the embodiment of a created masculine law.

Yet, trouble—or hope, if we consider its effects—appears when Robocop begins to show his human side and we as spectators get flashbacks of his dreams about his previous life, which means that his programming begins to fail. Apart from suggesting the human's lack of control over science and its unpredictability, Robocop's sudden appearance of feelings can be analysed from different points of view. Telotte affirms that the film makes use of a SF motif (seen in movies like *ET* or *Terminator 2*) that emphasises the importance of feelings or emotions in understanding and maintaining our sense of humanity even in the most technologised environment (Telotte 2001, 172). From coldness and apparently devoid of any emotion, Robocop shifts in the narrative to independent action and offers a sense of triumph (173). This change has also been noted by Hassan Melehy who believes that Robocop undergoes a type of individualism which is triumphant since he finally recovers his identity and therefore "[t]he production of a cyborg identity in the corporate structure gives way to the possibility for the subjected body to become something quite different" (321). As

Telotte rightly notes, Robocop's development of his human side becomes evident in the scene at the old factory when his former partner Anne Lewis embraces him, holds his hand and directs his raised gun/phallus while telling him that had to be about right (2001, 174). From this moment onwards, Robocop becomes human again. Telotte interprets this as a collapse of the limits between matter and mind, which is a natural reflection of U.S. anxieties about the proliferation of thinking machines and biomedical engineering (174). At the very end of the movie, the Robocop's subjectivity becomes evident when he is asked his name and he answers "Murphy". Nonetheless, the victory of subjectivity, partly marked by Robocop's removal of his helmet is, according to Telotte, rather weak since Murphy "remains a strange hybrid, more machine than human, a Frankenstein's monster for a new age, and still bound by that series of prime directives programmed into his very makeup" (Telotte 2001, 177).

Taking into account Telotte's latter statement, I believe that Robocop's dreams and fantasies entail, especially in terms of gender issues, an irony. His constructed nature remains intact in spite of his supposed subjectivity. Moreover, this device indicates that Murphy's masculinity is also constructed and based upon another fantasy (Cornea 127). Cornea bases her arguments on the fact that "the human Murphy is given the armoured body to back up his macho posturing, at which point his 'natural' humanity, along with his 'natural' masculine identity, are shown to be questionable" (127). With this, Cornea is implying that the body which Murphy is modelled into is also a social construction. Once more, and as it was commented when dealing with the figure of the Terminator, the hypermasculine cyborg is meant to provide an ironic gap between powerful masculinity and subordinated masculinity. Robocop's memories of his human side include Murphy's continuous imitation of his son's TV hero, T.J.

Lazer, another mass-media product. In this sense, reality is intermixed with fantasy and mass media, resulting in the need to stress lost male privileges in a world governed by confusion.

The questioning of reality is suggested in the movie by its constant allusions to TV advertisements and sensational news programmes which provide key narrative information. Moreover, we get recurring shots showing Robocop's point of view mixed with TV images which form part of the film's narrative. This evidences a world based on mass media which provides a biased representation of reality. Since reality is not trusted anymore, Robocop embodies the 80s insistence on providing overstated male figures on screen.

Like in the second Terminator movie, in *Robocop 2* (1990) the male cyborg Robocop confronts another hybrid, created this time by a corrupt businesswoman upon the model of a popular criminal. As in the first movie, cyborgs stand as cultural constructions of masculinist ideas. Rob Wilson claims:

> this handsome cyborg can be decoded not just as a transitional figure embodying nomadic "identities [that] seem contradictory, partial, and strategic", as Donna Haraway cunningly contends, but as another masculinist fetish replicating, in many aspects, the commonsense patriotism of a sublimely interpellated male American subject. (Wilson 291)

This male American icon is a masculinist fetish that glorifies male power. As happened with *Robocop 1*, and despite (or precisely due to) the movie's emphasis on a world governed by corruption, drugs and social nihilism, the figure of the good male cyborg offers, once more, an ironic social reassurance. On the contrary, the bad cyborg does not show any signs of human weakness (apart from his addition to the popular drug called Nuke) and evokes notions of impassive destruction and law breaking. In *Robocop 3* (1993), a similar characterisation of the positive good cyborg is employed. Robocop's

external and internal features are the same as the ones we saw in the first movie of the series. Yet everything else changes. The continuity of the masculinist ideal is, then, suggested by Robocop's consistent characterisation. According to Cornea, "the consistency of these bodily figurations throughout the sequels suggests that this mechanical and hyper-masculine form is a requirement in these societies, as though the muscled cyborg warrior is somehow reassuring in a changing America" (129). This mechanised masculinity entails similar concerns than the ones we saw with the Terminator character and accordingly embodies the cultural expectations of the masculine law in a conservative yet boundless society.

Both *The Terminator* and *Robocop* should be analysed as portraying artificial men that lead spectators to problematise gender issues. They suggest society's need to feel protected and secure when the arms race was taking place in the U.S.A. due to overseas conflicts. The cult of hardness becomes especially relevant in the 80s and stands for the need of a weapon in order to feel protected in society since, and as Bordo argues, "[a] culture that idealizes, fetishizes, [and] is addicted to the hard and impenetrable, is a cold and unforgiving place to be" (Bordo 59). Bordo insists on the fact that the way we experience our bodies is powerfully affected by the cultural metaphors that are available to us (38). Society's need of protection becomes quite apparent during the 80s. Muscularity does not only imply notions of individual and social power but also sexual potency (Dutton 16).

3.3.4.2. The Clone Man

Another representation of the "artificial man" is embodied by genetically-manipulated men. These total or partial human replicas are normally designed to strengthen some aspect of human behaviour

and are visually undistinguishable from their creators. They are meant to provide some sort of benefit to humans, who are ultimately responsible for their creation.[166]

This leads us to consider Jean Baudrillard's proposal in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). As it has been contended here, male replicas contribute to reproduce masculinist gender stereotypes. Yet, and as it happened with the characters of Terminator and Robocop, many controversial readings are made in relation to genetically created or manipulated men and their modelling of gendered assumptions. In Scott's cult movie *Blade Runner* (1982), replicated bodies or replicants are made in the image of humans and designed to serve their creators. Intended mainly as combat or entertainment models, these replicas begin to develop emotions, what problematises the dichotomy human/clone. Replicants come to Earth to rebel against their patriarchal creator, Tyrell (Turkell), where they are at risk of being "retired" by hunters or blade-runners like Deckard (Ford).

Placed in a context of visual pastiche, clones merge with humans in a dystopian future. This ambivalent boundless world does not present a visual differentiation between humans and replicants. The female replicant Rachael (Young), for instance, turns out to be "more human than the humans" and, if we pay attention to the director's cut (1992), even the main character, blade runner Deckard is suggested to be another replicant. This confusing scenario of blending frontiers creates a general feeling of uneasiness, and leads to the film's use of conventional gender traits. If the replicants are meant to simulate human beings, they must therefore rely on culturally accepted views of

[166] Note that I will only refer here to genetically created clones in which no alien presence is provided. Yet, and as it was commented when dealing with the "menaced man" and the last movie of the *Alien* series, human-alien hybrids also problematise gender conventions.

masculinity and femininity. Paradoxically, gender is stereotyped in the movie.

Replicant Rachael has been implanted memories originally belonging to Tyrell's niece and believes herself to be human until Deckard reveals her true nature, which creates a feeling of anxiety within her. The construction of human subjectivity is made explicit by this female character. As many critics have suggested, Rachael's "manufactured" identity is compared with the *femme fatale* of film *noir*. Like Robocop, Rachael's behaviour and her gendered identity are based upon a cultural fiction (Cornea 154-5). Rachael is not what she appears to be. As Williams comments, sex hierarchies in film *noir* are established by presenting viewers with two recognisable types of women, one sexual and treacherous, and the other good and passive, to symbolise the male's hero conflict between himself and the world he needs to clean up (Williams 390). While Rachael represents the good type with her innocence and frail humanity, the stereotypical threatening and sexual type is clearly embodied by replicants Zhora (Cassidy) and Pris (Hannah) (390). Likewise, Deckard's ambivalence relies on the fact that he feels the need to exacerbate the traditional dominance of male heroes in film *noir* in his relationship with Rachael. In other words, Deckard's masculinity needs to be asserted outside his role as a killer and he needs Rachael for that. In this sense, Rachael incarnates values akin to traditional femininity and becomes, throughout the film, the object of male sexual pleasure. In this way, she functions as the fetishistic object of Deckard's desire. Deckard's need to reassert his masculinity is explicitly seen in the scene in which Rachael and Deckard are in the latter's apartment and Deckard uses violence to kiss and be kissed by Rachael.

As for the other replicants, while their behaviour differs from the one adopted by Rachael, they still rely on gender patterns. Conscious of their nature, they take advantage of culturally accepted gender

norms precisely to achieve their goal: to rebel against their creator and to live longer. The body of the female replicant Zhora provides entertainment, since she is an exotic dancer. Pris is likewise designed to provide pleasure, what she knows and uses to approach the genetic manipulator, JF Sebastian (Anderson). Moreover, there is a heterosexual traditional romance between Pris and Roy (Hauger). Thus, the film shows clones to be problematic figures in the sense that they do not only reverse the traditional distinction between technological and biological narratives of identity but also because they emphasise precisely such similarities. This fact seems to abolish this paradox through traditional heterosexual relations (Yaszek 58). The romance between Rachael and Deckard, although blurring some significant distinctions, "it does reassert social order by redefining successfully subject positions as those in line with conventional, "natural" sexual identities" (58-9). The scene mentioned above stands, then, as an example of such redefinition of traditional sexual identities.

Replicants are meant to be so close to their mysoginist models that they inevitable fall into gender traps. This fact becomes evident when we discover the "God" of genetic engineering, Dr Tyrell. He lives alone and shows to have no feelings. Indeed, in the scene where the replicant Roy begs him to provide a longer life and change the DNA codes, Tyrell coldly refuses, unveiling an impassive man only concerned with science. This scene has also been commented as a retelling of the heterosexual Oedipal complex. In this sense, a disruption of the traditional conventions of sexual identity can be traced. In particular,

> the choreography of Baty's physical behaviour subverts the dynamics of the father-son relationship: before he murders Tyrell, the replicant gently cradles the scientist's face and slowly kisses his lips. Baty's highly stylized actions destabilize the sexual dynamics of the Oedipal scenario, positioning the two

> men as both rival subjects and the objects of one another's desire. (Yaszek 58)

Yet, and as mentioned previously, Roy's homoerotic fantasies are erased by his heterosexual relationship with Pris and by the fact that the kiss is immediately followed by the killing of his master. Moreover, feelings towards Roy's creators have been defined throughout the whole movie as linked to hate and vengeance. Roy's gender identity is, hence, not contested by this killing-kissing passionate act. This supposed disruption rather corresponds, I believe, to the film's insistence on the closeness between machines and humans, which is explicit in this scene where creator and creation melt in a kiss.

The film's insistence on boundary breaking is not achieved, then, in terms of gender. This gender distinction becomes necessary, on the other hand, for the film's plot believability. As Bergstrom argues, "the representation of sexual identity carries a potentially heightened significance, because it can be used as the primary marker of difference in a world otherwise beyond our norms" (Bergstrom 34). Yet, she continues, the value of sexual difference is postclassical in many films, in the sense that it is unpredictable and "[t]he standard use of female identity to reinforce male (dominant, institutional) identity is no longer a regular pattern of narrative development" (36). *Blade Runner* follows many post-classical devices in its depiction of a boundless world. Yet, whether unpredictable or not, it relies on culturally accepted gender rules.

In the case of Emmerich's *Universal Soldier* (1992), heroic techno-culture is employed by Luc Devereux (Van Damme) to defend home and family. The so-called unisolds or Universal Soldiers are technologically created and given abilities like the capacity of healing their wounds rapidly and superhuman power, which makes them almost invincible. Again, the film's use of culturally accepted norms is

taken to an extreme by means of violence and the soldiers' own bodies. The protagonist, Luc, is an "artificial man" who, after reacting against their creators, manages to escape and adopt a protective role. Yet his aim is to kill the malicious assassin Sergeant Scott (Lundgren), another unisold. Their respective subjective memories of Vietnam lead them to disobey and react against their creators and start a particular confrontation between them in the contemporary U.S.A. The display of the hero's muscular body, reinforced by means of different technical devices such as exposure and fragmentation by means of close-ups, together with his superhuman physical ability of fighting and his artificial movements, are instances of the constructedness and intangibility of the masculine ideal. Once more, we get a cinematic performance of utopian masculinity.

In Brambrilla's *Demolition Man* (1993) the visual emphasis of masculinity is achieved by means of its two main characters who are genetically manipulated and used for specific goals. John Spartan (Stallone) embodies the typical prototype of tough cop of the 80s. He is defrosted from cryogenic prison and after undergoing a rehabilitation programme implanted on his brain, he is re-introduced into a version of the 21st century where violence and crime have been eliminated. His aim is to finish with the villain of the movie, a runaway dangerous criminal and former enemy from the 20th century, Simon (Snipes). Stress on violence and the need for hypermasculine bodies are suggested in this world where sex, kissing, sexual intercourse and swearing are prohibited.

Police officer Lenina Huxley (Bullock) is a fan of action heroes of the past and collaborates with John to capture the criminal Simon. While John becomes the main supporter of the law, he is constantly breaking the rules that govern this world and he is seen swearing, aiming for sexual intercourse, smoking and eating spicy food. This hints at the absurdity of a politically correct world while it suggests

the need of aggression to end corruption. For that reason, a hypermasculine body and the stress on violence and heroic masculinity are musts. Apart from this, the film also makes a parody of a world where no gender roles are apparently assigned. Indeed, the population is depicted as soft, fragile, and their androgynous governors are unable to cope with violence. This world is said by Simon to be governed by a fistful of sissy men. Accordingly, John Spartan, who is presented from the beginning of the movie as possessing a hyper masculine and strong body, even after having been frozen for more than 36 years, is considered a man of the caverns, a man of Nearthental, since he does not seem to appreciate this supposedly civilised society and is constantly using rude language, and striving for leadership. Hence, the triumph of heroic masculinity and the need for masculinism is suggested in *Demolition Man*.

As in *Robocop*, the pleasurable fantasy of the masculine law embodied by hypermasculine bodies is depicted in *Judge Dredd* (1995). Hardness gives way to subjectivity, which again problematises issues of hybridity. This time, Dredd (Stallone) is initially presented as someone necessary to re-establish order. His first appearance on screen makes it explicit, since the camera moves from feet to shoulders, allowing for the depiction of his armoured body, while his robotic voice utters "I am the law". Thus we get a fusion and a further identification of image and words. His hypermasculine body, together with the heavy link to technology and his exacerbated wish to defend the law above everything else reinforce his artificial nature. Nevertheless, and as happened with Robocop, Dredd gradually loses confidence in the system of the law, especially when he discovers the corruption within it. Moreover, Dredd finds out that his body and his life are lies, mere fabricated imitations of humans by human beings and for human benefit. It is then when his subjectivity starts to appear on screen and when we as spectators associate Dredd's

persona with the unattainable masculine ideal proposed by a masculinist society under identity crisis.

As shown so far, both man-machine artefacts and genetically manipulated beings are depicted during the decade of the 80s and beginning of the 90s as violent beings that somehow disrupt pre-established notions of representation. The generalised tendency to depict them as possessors of "impossible bodies" becomes a parody if we take into account their purposeful imitation of real masculinity. Rather, their over-muscled body, together with their innate aggression and violent aims, make us see a gap between "real" masculinity and an idealised one. Apart from the models exposed above, and as a direct consequence of society's progressive commodification of technology, our contemporary panorama tends to provide us with artificial men who do not stress violence—at least not in such a straightforward way—and whose internal conflicts tend to gain strength for the sake of plot development. In these films, the attainment of masculinity does not seem to be an issue, as much as the attainment of humanity. These characters' internal crises rely precisely on their artificial nature. Either/or categories are still at work, but applied this time to the label "human" and "non-human".

Thus, movies such as Spielberg's *Artificial Intelligence* (2001), Columbus's *Bicentennial Man* (1999), or Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) are cases in point. In them, artificial men are depicted struggling with their construted nature to fit in the world. Moreover, and as opposed to the previously exposed models for the "artificial man", the public external body is not as necessary as it was for the judges of *Judge Dredd,* to give an example. For instance, in *Edward Scissorhands*, the strange Edward (Depp) is depicted as an alienated being who needs to adapt to society if he wants to get the human girl he secretly falls for. Likewise, in *Bicentennial Man* the artistic human-like Andrew (Williams) shows to be in crisis and needs

to be considered as a human being to marry the girl he loves. In *AI*, David (Joel Osment) is an artificial boy programmed to love his adoptive mother. Rejected and abandoned by his family, David's only dream is to turn into a real boy to get his mother's love.

This supremacy of human qualities over technological rationality accounts, among other issues, for the humanization of the cyborg. This device is not new but it is seen in characters like the monster created by Dr Frankenstein, the replicant Rachael of *Blade Runner*, C5 in *Short Circuit*, C3PO or R2D2 in *Star Wars*, the machine human combination Call in *Alien. Resurrection*, the android Andrew in *Bicentennial Man*, the android Data in *Star Trek* or David in *AI*. What is interesting to note, however, is how these characters consciously include issues of hybridity, not only between man-machine but also between genders. Their ambiguous nature makes them more vulnerable, which also suggests their identity crisis for feeling different and/or freaks. In *AI*, for example, this ambiguity does not only refer to the artificial boy but it impregnates the whole movie and, as Rosenbaum makes explicit, the movie's final paradox about the real boy or the dead robot is not the only one:

> Similar paradoxes—soft and hard, warm goo and icy dryness, mother-love ocean (the first thing we hear and see in the film) and chilly waves that drown cities—are in force throughout. The cruelty of humanity and the warmth of David's yearnings are established as constants, yet it's the nature of Spielberg's fuzzy styling that we don't always immediately recognize the cruelty—or all the paradoxes in David's warmth. (221)

The film's ambiguity also includes androgynous human-model characters, like Gigolo Joe (Law), who, in a way, questions masculinist visions of gender as depicted by the "artificial man". They stress and impose a traditional account of masculinity because they are created for human consumption and pleasure.

The evolution of the pattern of the "artificial man" is, as it happened with previously exposed patterns, shaped by U.S. gender concerns. In this sense, traditional masculinity is beginning to be contested to some extent. The notion of hybridity, once more, is felt as a social phenomenon that needs to find its expression in SF film somehow. Artificial men provide the perfect scenario for this depiction of hybridity, which should be present, I consider, in forthcoming representations of artificial men on screen.

3.3.5. THE "VIRTUAL MAN"

Male depictions of this type of masculinity offer the following characteristics:

- The male character is set in virtually created spaces.
- He has a softer appearance than previous men linked with technology.
- Virtual men cross the boundary between physical and non-physical sites.
- Films showing this pattern share many aspects and devices when representing this dehumanised body. They centre around men's relationship with virtually created worlds.

Virtual men are embodiments of posthuman aesthetics present in uncountable films of the mid-to-end 90s and the beginning of the 21st century. Contemporary cinema makes use of androgynous bodies, and consequently, the long-held association of certain external traits with masculinity is completely reversed in these figures. According to Springer, "rampaging muscle-bound cyborgs were replaced by slim

young men and women jacked into cyberspace, inspired by 'console cowboys' in cyberpunk fiction of the 1980s" (Springer 1990, 204). Hence, *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995), *Hackers* (1995), *Virtuosity* (1995), *The 13th Floor* (1999), *Strange Days* (1995fre), *Dark City* (1998), *eXistenZ* (1999), *The Matrix* (1999), *The Lawnmower Man* (1992), *Nirvana* (1997) or *The Cell* (2000), offer significant representations of the pattern of the "virtual man". Postmodern awareness invades the 90s onwards, and the male character is normally depicted as a boundary trangressor. Particularly interesting is the recurrent representation of the "virtual man", which equates Haraway's third distinction of the cyborg typology.

"Cyberspace", has been defined as a "computer-generated space mentally experienced by computer operators whose nervous systems are directly interfaced with the computer system" (McHale 252). Gibson denominates this cyberspace "matrix", and describes it as "a 3D chessboard extending to infinity" (Gibson 70). In fact, this new concept of space has led to a different visual representation of men in such innovative sites. The novelty resides precisely in the relationship between a physical and real body and its virtual realisation. Adam refers to this space as "a shared virtual hallucination where the body that one chooses to enter within cyberspace has bodily sensations and can travel in the virtual reality" (Adam 281).

The tension between the physical and the non-physical is a recurrent motif in contemporary SF, although we also find it in earlier films like Lisberger's *Tron* (1982), or *Videodrome* (1982). In *Tron,* the goal of the main male character, (Kevin Flynn), is to escape from a computer-generated space in which he has been trapped. However, it is in the mid-90s when these cyborg figures are frequently represented within these new spaces. Hence, *Johnny Mnemonic, Strange Days, Hackers, Virtuosity* and *The Net*, all released in 1995, have been classified by Claudia Springer as "new cyberthrillers" (1999, 204). This

motif has been adapting itself to the contemporary social and cultural needs and has been represented in many recent films.

Johnny, the male leading character in *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995), shows a deep identity crisis due to his close association with technology, which still hints at the dangerous association between man and technology. Johnny is paid high prices for smuggling the most important data of the 21st century, information that he stores in his brain by means of implants. The problem is that, this time, he is carrying a massive amount of information in his head and must find the secret codes to download it if he wants to survive. To make things worse, a criminal organisation is desperately seeking the same data Johnny keeps in his head. Because of this, Johnny feels frightened and is physically and mentally impaired. The close connection with the machine is not a simple process but a complex one which results, in this case, in a negative and painful experience for the film's male protagonist. Ironically, only a computer can provide him with relief and put an end to his identity crisis. Cyberspace stands, then, as a utopian solution which enables John to replace the decadent world he is living in, a fact that is explicit when Johnny shouts "I want to get out of this rate hole! I want to get online! I need a computer!". Sentences like this suggest that Claudia Springer is quite right to hold in her article "The Pleasure of the Interface" that

> [r]ather than portraying human fusion with electronic technology as terrifying, popular culture frequently represents it as a pleasurable experience. The pleasure of the interface, in Lacanian terms, results from the computer's offer to lead us into a microelectronic Imaginary where our bodies are obliterated and our consciousness integrated into the matrix. (Springer 1998, 486)

In his blending with technology Johnny becomes, then, a cyborg. This fusion of men with electronic technology represents, in Springer's words, a "paradoxical desire to preserve human life by

destroying it" (Springer 1998, 498). This desire is a consequence of "late twentieth-century post-nuclear threats to the body: nuclear annihilation, AIDS, and environmental disasters" (1998, 488). Springer emphasises the paradoxical nature of cyborg imagery, something latent in most contemporary SF films and perfectly suggested by Johnny's contradictory and problematical stance in relation to technology.

Johnny embodies the postmodern values of crossing frontiers and fragmentation while accurately reflecting, as inconsistently as it may seem, real men at the end of the 20th century, a time when everything is bound to chaos and dissolution and when the blurring of frontiers is a constant in our lives. Johnny is lost in a depraved and sick world, perfectly suggested by the decadent *mise-en-scène*, in which he feels betrayed and alone. This situation hints, I assume, at the contemporary crisis of masculinity at work in U.S. society at the end of the 20th century. Johnny's androgynous appearance is not only a consequence of his "more neutral" body but also, his complex personality identifies him rather with those characters delineated in postmodern works in which the status of the self is problematised. Johnny could be said, then, to preclude the contemporary concept of masculinity as the new millennium approaches. This "New Man" is, however, lost and undergoing an identity crisis. The film does not seem to rely on conventional gender assumptions but, anyway, shows the picture of a vulnerable man. He is, then, a product of postmodernism.

Rusnack's *The 13th Floor* (1999) claims for the existence of three worlds that collide in time and space. In these virtual worlds, gender is considered as something created and therefore artificial and banal. Yet, and since these worlds are meant to be copies of our present or past worlds, the representation of gender is still based on old

stereotypes, what becomes a paradox if we take into account the film's display of innovative spaces.

Hannon Fuller (Mueller-Stahl), stands for the author of a fictional space which is a recreation of his own past life. Set in Los Angeles in 1937, this virtual reality enables Fuller to adopt another identity. Most aspects of the *mise-en-scène*, mainly costume, setting and character's behaviour, help to reproduce the atmosphere of the U.S. in the 1930s, which Fuller, now Grierson, uses for maintaining sexual relationships with young women. All the details recreated in this fictional world, so close to their "model", are but mere products of simulation. Its existence is accidentally discovered by the waiter Ashton (D'Onofrio). In this context of imitation it seems improbable that a representation of challenging gender patterns could be possible. Indeed, women are mainly depicted as pleasurable objects of the male gaze, which reinforces traditional film theories about the supremacy of the male look in Hollywood cinema. Thus, most women are seen singing, dancing or performing a spectacle. This is clearly perceived in a sequence where Hall, once within this illusory world for the first time, discovers the place where Fuller used to fulfil his hidden passions. He is asked at one point by waiter Ashton if he sees something he likes, in reference to women. Immediately after, we get a subjective shot showing a blurred image of beautiful young women dancing. The consideration of women as objects of men's desire is also hinted at when Hall enters this virtual space for the second time and asks Grierson (modelled on his creator, Fuller) about his fantasies with young beautiful women. These fantasies are mixed with reality and therefore, can be perceived by his wife, who claims that she can smell these young women's perfumes. When both Grierson and Hall enter the hotel in search of the truth, and the former explains to the bellboys and waiters that Hall comes this time with him, their shocked expressions show the surprise produced by Fuller's male

companionship, another more instance of the film's emphasis on normative gender relationships.

In the simulated world of 1999 a reproduction of gender stereotypes is also suggested. The film's constant association of men with technology reinforces binary thinking. Indeed, the male figure of the "mad-scientist", in control of technology and science, a commonplace throughout the history of SF films, is suggested by Fuller and his team. Fuller is the responsible figure for the creation of virtual identities which are designed to look like their creators and, therefore, each of them has an "alter ego" they can use and literally "embody". The film takes Baudrillard's simulation principle to an extreme when we discover that what is considered from the beginning of the film the controlling and real world (1999) turns out to be again a mere recreation of the past.

Paradoxically, everything seems to mingle in the film but gender. Real is confused with unreal, physical with virtual, people can transfer from one world to another, feelings are confused but the limits between masculine and feminine traits remain, I believe, very well defined. In this sense, there seems to be no difference between 1937 and 1999. Apart from the plot, the similarity between these two simulated worlds is suggested by the *mise-en-scène*. Hence, when presenting spectators with what we believe is the real world of 1999, a similar scenario to that of 1937 is presented, which inevitably leads us to relate both worlds. A pub with pop music, a waiter, Fuller ordering a Martini and a woman meant for man's pleasure are our first perceptions of 1999. In this sense, the world does not seem to have evolved much.

Moreover, men are the sole users of the software they themselves had designed and created. Women are left out, then, from the technological world. Jane Fuller (Mol), supposedly Hannon's daughter,

reinforces from her first appearance in this world the traits traditionally ascribed to women and argues to be scared of technology. Jane is a delicate and beautiful woman, sweet, vulnerable, smart and with a mysterious personal life. Once her real identity is discovered—she is transferred from the future world—inspector Baine affirms that he has made the biggest mistake ever: to trust a beautiful woman. At this point, Jane reminds us of a *femme fatal*. She uses her physical attributes to seduce Hannon and achieve her goals.

Yet the last—and supposedly real—world, that of 2024, seems to open a path for hope and innovation in terms of gender evolution, and we see how a woman, Jane, is capable of entering cyberspace. Likewise, in contemporary U.S. society, as many critics have pointed out, this context of blurred frontiers between mind and machine, body and machine, and human and nonhuman—which is precisely the basis of cybernetics—provides new grounds for analysing gender as represented by automated machines. The utopian association of gender/technology is, nevertheless, questioned in the movie. Although Jane enters cyberspace she recognises she is mainly moved by love and deep feelings, since she affirms to have fallen in love with Hall, although she is aware of his artificial nature. This still hints at the impulsive and whimsical nature that patriarchy has attributed to women. While her husband uses cyberspace for accomplishing violent actions and Fuller for having sexual relationships, Jane's reasons for entering this simulated space are far more spiritual. After all, they all look in cyberspace for what they cannot have in their actual lives. Moreover, Jane constantly shows a need for love and affection, which she cannot find in her husband anymore. She looks for deep love, which she seems to have found in her husband's cybernetic alter ego.

Another impediment for the film's evolution from traditional gender patterns, derived from the fact that worlds are imitated, is that these cyberspaces merge with the physicality of the real, a recurrent

motif in some films at the end of the 20th century and beginning of our current one, like *The Matrix* or *eXistenZ*. In *The 13th Floor* the imaginary and the real merge and the resulting space, cyberspace, becomes inhabitable and, consequently, it is felt as real. That is precisely the reason why in these virtual worlds, where its users can adopt different personalities, the stress on body sensations becomes very important. In the film, simulated worlds can be inhabited and felt, what breaks with the traditional consideration of cyberspace as a place for the mind. In this context, gender is not imagined but it becomes real, which prevents in a way challenging representations of it.

The blurring of frontiers between masculine and feminine does not take place in the film, precisely because of the characters' need to reproduce the gender stereotypes at work at each specific time. Thus, characters still follow gender conventions and are constructed around certain popular models. The idea of simulated worlds does not apply, then, to gender representation.[167]

In Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999) the presence of created cyberworlds allows its characters to enter and play in them as if they were inside virtual games. Characters become mere virtual reflections, and consequently, they are sometimes unable to distinguish what is real from what is not, what causes an anxiety on the male protagonist, Ted (Law). During the testing of her new virtual reality game, the popular game designer Allegra Geller (Leigh) becomes the failed object

[167] Similar concerns are seen in Bigelow's *Strange Days* (1995). This time, the clips smuggler Leny Nero (Fiennes) fears for his former girlfriend's murder. He sells personal feelings and experiences, such as happiness, sex, emotions and, in short, everything a person can feel, a reflection on the misuse of high technology. This playing with human memories is also present in Proyas's *Dark City* (1998) in which the protagonist, John Murdoch (Rufus Sewell), is left without a past, and becomes the victim of creatures whose aim is to rob human beings of their memories.

of an assassination plot. She manages to escape with corporate assistant Ted Pikul and both start an adventure where reality is mixed with fantasy. It is then when Ted is asked to have his body penetrated in order to create a new bioport—a small hole drilled into the spinal column that will allow him to play the popular video game known as eXintenZ. This fact ultimately puzzles him while allowing spectators to share his adventure inside cyberworlds.

In contrast to films showing wounded bodies as a result of heroic deeds, Ted's body is initially represented as vulnerable, fragile and pure. His constant doubts and fears do not end with the creation of the new bioport but they continue within the virtual game, which suggests that cyberspace is not a realm for the liberation of constraints, as some authors have suggested. Ted departs, in a way, from conventional U.S. representations of male leading figures on screen. Yet, and in spite of all this novelty when representing the male figure, the film does not break completely with traditional assumptions in terms of gender representation and men are, as we discover at the very end of the film, the real controllers of technology, and eventually of women.

The film does not "naturalise" male power through muscles or postures, despite Ted's evident superiority at the end. Ted's body is not indicative of a natural male aggression and his behaviour does not satisfy the demands of masculinism. On the contrary, he would account for a type of body and behaviour that departs from traditional codes of heroic representation. His initial departure—and fear—from technology and his constant doubts and paranoia make of him, then, a different kind of male hero. Lia M. Hotchkiss deals with the film's balance between two attitudinal extremes: "she [Allegra Geller] manifests a naïve celebration of virtual reality with little attention to the ways in which it can affect materiality, and he displays a naïve paranoia over the ways in which technology does penetrate human

materiality" (27). This gender reversal results, if we concentrate on traditional gender assumptions, in Ted's feminisation, which is reinforced by his androgynous appearance, his passive attitude and his vulnerable body.

In an article entitled "Becoming Inorganic" (2003) Teresa de Lauretis analyses Cronenberg's movie in the line of what she denominates new gender and sexual economy. She considers the characters' bioports as erogenous zones (559). Thus, and in the case of Ted's orifice, it functions halfway between a rite of initiation and a rape. This bioport, she argues, "has taken over the erogenous functions of both anus and vagina, of which it is not a metaphor but a replacement, signaling a new sexual economy of the human body" (559). This new sex economy, she argues, is made possible by means of technological innovation and also corresponds to a certain economy of gender. In spite of its technological advancement, this gender and sex economy has not eliminated the old body economy. For example, Freud described sex economy as one in which the skin, the mouth, and specially the activity of sucking are as important to erotic life as the so-called genital areas, now superseded by the bioport. Sexuality, "in Croneneberg as in Freud, is not a function of anatomy or biology but a product of fantasy" (567), De Lauretis claims. Likewise, the old-fashioned values, masculine and feminine gender roles, are also present in a reality in which new bio and communication technologies accomplish mutation on both animal and human organisms (565). Lauretis is alluding here to the postmodern tendency of frontier crossing that allows any kind of mixture and favours gender equality. While gender blending is, in a way, hinted at in the film, gender equality is not achieved in terms or roles and/or behaviour. In this sense, Ted is a reflection of real men who, like some women, are scared of technology and the unknown. This is reinforced by the fact that in the movie the female character seems to be stronger and closer

to technology than the male hero. In opposition to idealised versions of manhood, a new naturalisation of masculinity far from muscles and aggression is proposed by Ted's character.

Yet, and in spite of Ted's atypical male body, his roles are well defined in the film. The film's plot still relies on his actions, while his point of view is imposed, what favours the spectator's identification with him. Moreover, at the very end of the movie we discover that this supposedly menaced man is but another virtual reflection, and ultimately, the killer of a—this time male—popular game designer. The fact that worlds are imitated prevents the film's evolution from traditional gender patterns. The apparent permissiveness of cyberworlds is, then, negated in the film precisely because of its dependence on patriarchal imitations of the real world.

3.4. CONCLUSION

The mixture of filmic tendencies, the inclusion of multicultural characters who are in the lead and the references to other SF movies are signs of the hybrid character of the SF, what favours new depictions of masculinities. As I have attempted to show, each of these alternatives for the representation of masculinity are not static but they change according to the culture's perception of gender at each specific time. The "menaced man", the "conquering man", the "artificial man" and the "virtual man", together with their respective variations, show various tendencies for the representation of masculinity within the SF genre. Each pattern interacts with other depictions of masculinity and each representation of masculinity has its own specific cultural meaning. Yet we should not forget that patterns normally rely on the most accepted perception of masculinity at each moment and, therefore, they tend to obscure and/or exclude certain depictions of masculinities that are considered "out of the norm". In most cases, the general tendency has been, then, to show a white heterosexual middle-class hero.

To a higher or lower extent, the representation of masculinity in SF films is inevitably affected by contemporary issues. At times when masculinity is meant to be in crisis, topics like sexual desire and men's worries are treated in a more open way. A "normalisation" of the figure of the "New Man" has given way to the appearance of new heroic models, characterised by their androgyny and gender fluidity.

My next objective, which I will expand on in the remaining two chapters, is to analyse masculinity as portrayed in four influential SF films. Each of these films presents one of the types of masculinity defined in this chapter. Chapter four, entitled "Men and the Other" deals with the pattern of the "menaced man" and with the pattern of the "conquering man". As previously suggested, the issue of otherness

is of great importance for both types and will therefore be emphasised in the analysis of masculinity. Chapter five, entitled "Men and Technology" consists of the analysis of the "artificial man" and the "virtual man". In it, I will mainly deal with issues of male identity and technological advance. The term "cyborg" becomes especially relevant for such an analysis.

CHAPTER 4:
MEN AND THE "OTHER"

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of "otherness" and its socio-cultural implications have been analysed from many different perspectives. The term is normally used to denote that which resides out of the norm, outside the margins of dominant cultural representation. Especially, many feminist theories have denounced the subordination of women in different discourses and their omission from such texts. The Freudian construction of the "sign" woman as the unknown was already reassessed by the feminist French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir in her work *The Second Sex* (1949).[168] Likewise, psychoanalytic interpretations dealt with similar issues. The patriarchal subject is represented in them as an imaginary signifier and, consequently, lack is displaced onto the "other" (*Screen* 10). Accordingly, "[s]ubjects who represent other forms of difference—based on race, class, colour, sexual preference—are almost always constructed as the "Other" whose presence threatens to disturb the boundaries of civilization and rationality" (10-11). Difference is, then, linked to the "other" and repressed within the signifying practices of the texts (*Screen* 11). In a similar way, Freud considered women as "void", limited and often paralysed by "penis envy".[169] As commented in previous chapters, the

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[168] See chapter two of this work where film theories on masculinity are discussed.

[169] The representatives of French Feminism attacked Lacan's rereading of Freud's theory and its relation to language. They contributed to assess the nature of women's oppression, the construction of sexual difference and the specificity of women's relation to language and writing. In their theories, the female body acquires a great importance, becoming corporeal imagery a device frequently used by them. Cixous in *The Newly Born Woman* reviews the hierarchical system of binary oppositions (culture/nature, father/mother, head/ heart, man/woman) that organises the Western world and explores the sources of oppression of female consciousness (63). Cixous claims that the only "way out" of this phallo-logocentric system is the escape from the patriarchal tradition and its imaginary. She encourages the exploration of female sexuality and the unconscious, and analyses how these elements shape women's writing, or *écriture feminine,* which should reconsider all the negative connotations traditionally linked with female desire.

representation of sexual difference has been widely analysed by many gender, film and cultural scholars.

Postcolonial discourses have also dealt with the topic of the "other". Colonisation and the imperialist discourse have also been contemporarly assessed in the light of poststructuralist readings of otherness. Drawing on Foucault's critique of disciplinary knowledge to Orientalism, Edward Said in his influential work *Orientalism* (1978) examined the ways in which colonial discourse worked as an instrument of power.[170]

In the same way, and as I suggested in chapter two, film criticism has also relied on issues of power and marginality to deal with gender representation on screen. Laura Mulvey's polemical article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) explained how cinematic representation was based on patriarchal notions and women were, consequently, relegated to an inferior level merely as objects of the look. Mulvey assumes the figure of a passive spectator on whom a certain identity is imposed by the filmic text. This identification is gender specific. Mainstream cinema, she affirms adopting Freud's stance, offers a number of pleasures. One is "scopophilia" or pleasure in looking, which she considers of male dominance. The female figure, consequently, is fantasised by an active male gaze. The other pleasure Mulvey refers to is that of identification, by which the spectator identifies with the male protagonist in the story. This active character is the one who controls events in the narration and leads the action to proper closure (20). Mulvey states, then, that there is no place for

[170] Frantz Fanon and Edward Said initiated a new field of study known as "theories of colonial discourse" (McLeod 17), which later evolved into postcolonial studies. In general terms, these theories "explore the ways that *representations* and *modes of perception* are used as fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep colonised peoples subservient to colonial rule" (McLeod 17).

women in mainstream cinema, as it perpetuates the patriarchal system ordered by sexual imbalance, in which the active man looks and the passive woman is looked at.[171] After this pioneering article, many different theories have appeared dealing with the marginal place of women in mainstream cinema. One such line of thought, directly related to horror and SF, is to consider the active woman as a different and dangerous "other". Barbara Creed's influential article "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine: *An Imaginary Abjection*", deals with the female representation on screen as an active, terrifying and castrating figure.

Otherness is, then, a constructed symbol that one needs to deconstruct through different strategies in order to liberate it from its marginal and subordinated position. Especially SF films have provided us with popular images of otherness, normally in the shape of threatening aliens, monsters or alienated beings.

Diverse discourses deal, then, with the concept of the "other" and therefore, the need to specify its meaning becomes crucial for the understanding of the different analyses of masculinity offered in this chapter. For the purposes of this work, and following the focus adopted here so far, the "other" is considered as the marginal and subordinated counterpart of the dominant ideology. In other words, the "other" includes everything that has somehow been regarded as deviant. In this sense, otherness does not only entail issues of difference and subordination, but it normally includes notions of danger and disruption. In this sense, Kristeva's notion of the "abject" also applies here. As it was argued in chapter one when dealing with masculinity and power, there are many ideologies that justify male

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[171] As I explained in chapter two, Mulvey herself dealt with the issue of female spectatorship in "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'".

domination socially and culturally and that contribute to "masculinism", or that ideology that naturalises male power and takes for granted that hierarchical heterosexuality is the norm (Brittan).

My premise asserts, like that of many recent cultural analysts, that masculinity is a culturally created term and, as such, there is no single definition for it but a wide range of variations depending on many factors and, therefore, we should talk about "masculinities" in plural. Different aspects conform the relationship between men and power. This cultural approach is quite useful when explaining the ways in which masculinity and power interrelate. However, I also agree with many scholars in that there is a normative definition of masculinity, reinforced by certain institutions (like Hollywood cinema), that entails notions of power and advantages over the "other", as it was argued in chapter one.[172]

The dangerous "other" threatens to dismantle the "natural" and "normative" definition of masculinity. Each pattern of masculinity delineated in chapter three of this dissertation responds in a different way to the presence of the disturbing "other". Yet, especially relevant for the present chapter are the first two patterns, namely the "menaced man" and the "conquering man".[173] In the former pattern, the "other" is depicted as an embodiment of the forces of chaos that

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[172] That is the reason why some scholars have focused on non-conventional cinema, since they consider that any analysis of the "other" from commercial cinema only serves to continue to prop up homogeneous identity (Plate and Jasper 8). Indeed, in their book *Imag(in)ing Otherness* (1999), these critics collect different analysis of the "other" and its religious allusions in films produced outside the industrial production companies of Hollywood.

[173] The remaining two patterns, the "artificial man" and the "virtual man" will be analysed in connection to men's problematic relation to technology in the next chapter. Although issues of otherness are also present in the shape of virtual spaces and cyborgs, they acquire another dimension since men are somehow amalgamated with it.

threaten our world. The "other's" colonisation aims imply the potential destruction of the dominant culture, giving rise to a general feeling of insecurity and loss. However, in films following the pattern of the "conquering man", members of the dominant culture explore, discover and sometimes colonise new and unknown spaces. Consequently, in the latter, the "one" has a privileged position. In this sense, the terms "colonialism" and "imperialism" as described by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), are evoked by these patterns since, as Said argues, "'imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism', which is almost a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (Said 1993, 8). This is especially true in films set on distant planets that show conquering heroes. They suggest that dominant men wish to achieve supremacy over the unknown world and, therefore, over the evil "other".

Men's relationships with the "other" work, then, in different ways. Menaced men show the inadequacy and fear on the part of men to adapt to new gender prototypes proposed by their contemporary society. For that reason, the threatening "other"—normally in the shape of alien invasions or huge monsters—is considered as a malevolent force that aims at finishing up with the established hierarchical structure. In *Skin Shows* Judith Halberstam explains how monsters are constructed both in literature and film around various representations of non-normative sexuality, race, ethnicity and national identity (1995, 3). The breaking with "natural" hierarchies is precisely what causes uncertainty and panic to these menaced men. In order to avoid that disruption of power, and as shown in the previous chapter, men try somehow to reinforce traditional power structures by means of different visual devices.

Conquering men, on the contrary, do not show any apparent weakness when confronting the "other" and do not need, therefore, to stress their superiority, since their domination is assumed and justified in most cases. Men are normally depicted as controllers of space travel and as conquerors of far away planets or worlds. Within this safe context of men's superiority, new visions of masculinity and gender blending are sometimes included and, paradoxically, new paths opened in terms of gender representation. This is clearly stated in films depicting multicultural teams and friendly aliens joining human beings on a common mission. These non-normative characters can be considered as instances of familiar and friendly otherness. Yet, and as I attempted to demonstrate in chapter three, these gender "slips" are controlled and never mean a real threat for the hero, who is depicted as the maximum authority within hierarchical organisations. The menacing "other" is normally represented in these films as aliens from distant planets that must be either controlled and/or defeated by conquering men and their teams.

The problematic relationship of men with the "other" accounts for the diverse reactions against the erosion of patriarchal structures. Frightened because of it, or undergoing a kind of "safe assimilation" of new values, both menaced men and conquering men perpetuate the dominant definition of masculinity and prove that this power structure is very difficult to dismantle, even in the furthest contexts of the SF film. The popular framing of these texts is another obstacle for the challenge of imposed gender patterns. Nonetheless, and as it was argued in chapter three, these patterns of masculinity are not immune to change and they also tend to mirror contemporary tendencies. This becomes evident if we consider the movies' concern with the construction of gender in different contexts and periods of U.S history. Economic and social changes affect the representation of gender on screen at each specific time.

When dealing with the depiction of contemporary masculinity, the notion of the "New Father" grows in importance. The recent interest in this figure is evidenced by the multitude of researches, conferences, forums and websites dealing with the practice of contemporary fatherhood. Graeme Russell has identified and described the common themes in the analysis of fatherhood:

> A focus on fatherhood.
> The practice of fatherhood. (What do fathers do?)
> Explanations of the current emphasis on fathers.
> Policies to support fatherhood. (Russell 53)

Russell has highlighted the influence of globalisation in this practice. Moreover, a current male identity crisis, as it was argued in chapter one, also affects the depiction of masculinity in the 21st century. In an article published by *Newsweek* in March 1993, men's response to social turmoil over race, gender and sexuality has been denominated "white male paranoia" (48). These issues are inevitably reflected in the contemporary versions of the patterns to be considered in this chapter, the "menaced man" and the "conquering man", which show in a very clear way men's relationship with the "other" and the implications that this relationship entails for male identity. For the former pattern, I will consider Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005) and for the latter I will analyse Baird's *Star Trek. Nemesis* (2002). Both films clearly reflect men's reaction towards the erosion of traditional power structures. Released in 2005 and 2002 respectively, the films chosen here for analysis include contemporary values ascribed to society's perception of masculinity. Thus, they reflect issues such as the new concept of family, fatherhood, and hybridity while proposing a

new kind of hero, or at least one that cannot be categorised either as hard or as soft.[174]

For the analysis the contemporary versions of the patterns of the "menaced man" and the "conquering man" as represented in these movies, it is important to refer to their immediate social contexts. Both are adaptations of earlier popular texts. In the case of Spielberg's, it is an adaptation of the classical text by H.G. Wells and a remake of a previous filmed version of the 50s. In the case of *Star Trek. Nemesis*, it is the 10th filmed adaptation of the homonymous TV series. This somehow guarantees the continuation of a certain representational pattern and inevitably limits the innovation.

In both films, their respective male protagonists, Ray (Cruise) in *The War of the Worlds* and Picard (Stewart) in *Star Trek. Nemesis*, are depicted as complex characters. As previously explained, the question of difference is dealt with in opposite ways by each of the two types. The "menaced man" is threatened by the disturbing and dangerous "other", which foreshadows the contemporary crisis of masculinity produced by the erosion of traditional gender structures. In addition, the "conquering man" suffers identity crises as a result of his problematic relationship with otherness. On the other hand, innovations can also be hinted, especially if we consider the heroes' behaviour. Thus, issues of hybridity and gender closeness will be at stake in both movies. The relationship between men and otherness is manifestly contradictory and ambiguous.

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[174] See chapter two of this present work where a classification of hard and soft men is provided depending on their following or departing from identity traits. In the case of contemporary SF cinema, and specially in the two patterns under discussion, issues of hybridity and gender melting clearly problematise their strict "classification" under any of these "labels".

4.2. THE CONTEMPORARY "MENACED MAN": SPIELBERG'S *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS* (2005)

The pattern of the "menaced man" is widely exploited in the SF genre, as commented earlier in chapter three. Male characters are threatened by forces they are unable to cope with, and need to face the dangerous "other"—which normally takes the form of beasts, unknown menaces, aliens or monsters from outer space. Despite the power of the "other", male characters normally succeed in overcoming at least some of the obstacles and become "exceptional" men in some way.

The binary opposition system impregnates SF and becomes especially significant for the portrayal of this type. The "other" often occupies a marginal position, normally depicted as an intruder or as an evil alien, violating the boundaries of the self. The antagonism between the "menaced man" and the "other" is especially emphasised in films following this pattern. This conflict can be analysed adopting different lines of thought, since the category "other" offers many ideological and/or psychoanalytic interpretations. In general terms, it has been argued that the "other" stands for social and cultural fears.

The topic of aggressive extraterrestrial invasions suggests the conflict man/other, which is a variant of the "menaced man" type.[175] Political, cultural, family and gender issues are raised in these films that picture aggressive alien invasions, where an unfamiliar presence threatens male characters in their socio-cultural contexts. The hero's antagonistic relationship with the "other" conditions plot structure. In particular, this topic was especially relevant in SF and horror films of the 1950s. Indeed, influential films of this decade, like Haskin's *The*

[175] In chapter three, I suggested two subtypes for the pattern of the "menaced man", "man against the other" and "man as site of otherness". Spielberg's movie adopts the former through the topic of the extraterrestrial invasion.

War of the Worlds (1953) or Nyby's *The Thing from Another World* (1952) portray this type of the "menaced man" through the topic of the alien attack. Suggesting the Cold War ideology of "containment", these films reproduce the typical anxieties of the times. The extraterrestrial monster of *The Thing* and the Martian tripods destroying the Earth in *The War of the Worlds* seem to evoke the latent collective fear towards changing values. Both heroes are confused and disoriented and must struggle not only against the invading alien but also against the inefficacy of the ruling system. In this sense, both Captain Hendry and Clayton Forrester may epitomise the man of the 50s, whose long-held superior status starts to be seriously questioned. As in many alien-invasion movies, the hero is depicted as threatened and worried, evoking men's anxieties about the loss of privileges. As a result, the hero needs to reaffirm his patronising role in his relationship with the heroine so that he can overcome his identity crisis.[176] These heroes search for the comforts of domesticity, symbolised in the movies by the triumph of the heterosexual couple. Indeed, the struggle to engage in a romantic relationship with the girl is commonplace in both movies.

As it will be shown later, Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005) offers a contemporary version of the pattern of the "menaced man" against the "other". The film's dependence on this model significantly conditions the protagonist's antagonistic relationship with otherness and his behaviour. Plot development is also affected by it.

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[176] The male need of facing a superior enemy in the form of a massive alien invasion was also seen in many other SF films of the 50s. Although a less remarkable example, Sears's *Earth versus the Flying Saucers* (1956) also shows the need to fight a devastating and powerful enemy, this time in the form of UFOS landing all over the Earth. Masculine aggression is also necessary, together with technology, to fight the alien threat. Cornea argues in this sense that "the male scientist certainly picks up the mantel of power, but only once he has demonstrated that he can fight like a man and assure the survival of the world" (49). As it was pointed out in chapter three when dealing with the evolution of the pattern of the "menaced man", influential movies showing men against the "unfamiliar" include the Alien series, *Predator* (1987), *Independence Day* (1997), or *The Mist* (2007), to name just a few.

Unfamiliar presences assault humanity and, consequently, Ray Ferrier's way of life is disturbed. He shows to be vulnerable to the attacks of the "other", represented here by aggressive aliens. In the end, however, he manages to survive and reunite his family. Like other films displaying this pattern of masculinity, *The War of the Worlds* is centred on the opposition between self/other. Following the conventions of the type, the film places the main male character at the privileged side of the binary opposition and the extraterrestrial beings that invade the Earth at the deviant side. Hence, the "other" is depicted as fearful and repulsive.[177]

Following the evolution of this type, *The War of the Worlds* engages with important socio-cultural concerns such as the fear of terrorism and the uncertainty produced by a shifting concept of family. Gender identities are inevitably affected by these changes. Specifically, the film is notable for showing the contemporary man in crisis. Ray comes from a dysfunctional family and is far from being the perfect family man and the traditional breadwinner. Contrary to what happened with the 1953 version, he is not a renowned scientist but an ordinary working class man. The coming of the extraterrestrials has given Ray new parental duties and, out of necessity, he has to take up childcare. This "odd" situation heightens his fears and makes him start a journey towards domestic safety. He does not conform, then, to the middle class, sensitive "New Father" models proposed by critics like Pleck and Pleck in "Fatherhood Ideals in the United States" (1997). Ray does not behave either as the modern Hollywood father, sometimes weak but usually morally upstanding, like the one embodied by Michael Douglas in *Fatal Attraction* and *Traffic* (Bruzzi

[177] As it was argued in chapter three, the history of SF sees "softer" versions of extraterrestrial "others", as shown in films like *Cocoon, The Day the Earth Stood Still, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, E.T* or *The Abyss*, to mention a few.

153). Instead, Ray's behaviour escapes conventional heroic patterns. The film makes allusions, then, to men's disorientation and inability to cope with recent social changes, which have precipitated them into identity crises. It also foresees the problematic contemporary depictions of masculinity and fatherhood in the SF genre.

My aims in this section are twofold. On the one hand, I will try to show how Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005) follows the pattern of the "menaced man" against the "other". The durability of the pattern is somehow guaranteed by the fact that Spielberg's is an adaptation of a previous film that has also followed this tendency of representation.[178] Thus, it seems pertinent for the purposes of this analysis to refer to the 1953 filmed version to see the different contexts in which masculinity and, especially this pattern of the "menaced man", are placed. Such a comparison may help us understand the evolution of the pattern and the hero's change of social and family roles.

My second aim is to define Ray as a complex and controversial character who epitomises a society at a fracture, in which new family units are implemented. The malevolent "strangers" that threaten humanity in the film become allegories of U.S. collective fears. As a consequence, Ray feels disoriented and unprotected. Additionally, Ray is overwhelmed by his new responsibility as a nurturing father. The safety of his "private realm" is likewise endangered. The lack of a nuclear family and his new paternal duties add confusion and instability to the main protagonist. Thus, Ray's condition as a

[178] Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* is an adaptation of H.G. Wells's 1898 novel with the same title, which was adapted for the radio in 1938 by Orson Welles and taken to the big screen in 1953 by Byron Haskin and producer George Pal.

"menaced man" is also provoked by his new family situation. In this sense, his kids have become supplementary "intruders" or "strangers".

It can be affirmed that the film hints at the end of masculine hegemony in both private and public spheres, and at the disorientation caused by this situation. The family is not excluded from socio-political concerns and conflicts in U.S. society but it becomes a mirror of them. In relation to the reading of family dynamics, Sobchack observes that rather than serving bourgeois patriarchy as a place of refuge from the social upheavals of the last two decades, it has become their site and serves as a sign of their representation (1991, 5). Ray's fractured family cannot stand as a place of escape from the problems of the outside world, but it becomes an allegory of them. Bemused and unable to find any alternative, Ray starts a journey towards stability still at hand by the promise to be a responsible father.

Henceforth, Ray can be analysed as the emblem of the contemporary man in crisis. The film acts out the debates around the emerging figure of the "New Man". The political context of paranoia and fear of the foreigner, together with the inability to face family life, affect U.S. society in general, male hegemony and the representation of the "menaced man" in SF in particular. Masculinity has its roots in socio-political change. The film revisits gender roles and gender identities, which are central to U.S. existing social order.

4.2.1. *THE WAR OF WORLDS* NOW AND THEN: MODELS OF MASCULINITY IN CONTEXT

Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* is a narrative dominated by the fear of otherness, which takes the shape of huge tripods. The "other's" malevolent and frightening side is stressed throughout the film. As

previously suggested, the "other" can be read as a metaphor of contemporary fears. Ray must confront the hostile enemies and protect himself and his children from them.[179] In this sense, the film does not disrupt the traditional dichotomies between the one/the other, centre/periphery, dominant/marginal.[180] The alien is the oponent which produces anxiety both to characters and viewers. This uneasiness can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the tensions produced by political, religious and social problems in U.S. society at the beginning of the 21st century. Moreover, the power men used to enjoy within masculinist discourses is already seen to be destroyed in times of technological change, globalisation and ambiguity. Normative masculinity is consequently seriously menaced. The film follows a popular pattern for SF, that of the "menaced man against the other", to suggest a masculinity in crisis.

The film relies on the tension between the one/the other and reflects immediate socio-political concerns. As suggested previously, Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* is a version of one of the most popular SF films of the 50s and is, at the same time, an adaptation of

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[179] The negative characterisation of the enemy has always been a constant motif in many films and in different genres. Thus, in westerns we find the figure of the villain or rioter whose appearance is sinister, and his traits clearly delineated from the beginning of the film, as are the gangster's or the criminal's in detective and action films respectively, to name just a few. In SF, the enemy has been constantly aligned as non-human, dangerous and destructive, as were all the monsters, aliens, beasts, or menacing androids found in many films, especially in the earliest accounts of the genre.

[180] In many other SF films, the alien becomes an element of contradiction between the "one" and the "other". An often quoted instance is the cyborg body, which appears in uncountable movies. In this alien or unfamiliar body, the limits between one and "other" are not clearly established, leading to contradiction. I will deal with the ambivalent figure of the male cyborg in chapter five, when analysing the relationship between man and technology in *Terminator 2* and *The Matrix*. In these films, both main characters—The Terminator and Neo—can be considered as cyborgs because they somehow disturb the boundaries between the physical and the non-physical.

the novel written by H.G Wells.[181] Although the 1953 film and Spielberg's work make use of the same pattern for the portrayal of masculinity, notable differences can be observed between these two filmed versions. Thus, the context of panic and insecurity reflected in both films respond to different threats that destabilise people's confidence at each historical moment. While Haskin portrays the 50s generalised context of the Cold War paranoia, Spielberg re-imagines Wells's scenario to provide us with a metaphor of the terrorist threat in the U.S.A. after September 11. Interestingly enough, the collective panic evoked by the "other" also makes allusion to identity crises in both films. Many gender critics assume that the second half of the 20th century is characterised by the appearance of notorious crises of masculinity that cause men's uneasiness.[182] These identity crises are partly caused by men's awareness of the imminent loss of their long-held power in society and are informed by different historical conditions. The portrayal of this masculine type is adapted to each film's immediate contexts and is therefore affected by the economic, social and political events of the times. The different social contexts in which Wells's novel has been remade inevitably condition their representation of masculinity. Influenced by our contemporary panorama of globalisation and uncertainty, Spielberg includes a revision of traditional gender roles to show a man threatened both in the public and private spheres.

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[181] H.G Wells's novel has been adapted on various occasions for radio, film, TV and video-games. Apart from Haskin's and Spielberg's adaptations, Jeff Wayne's 1978 musical version of *The War of the Worlds* inspired later musicals and computer game versions.

[182] See section "Gender Identity and Masculinity " in chapter one of the present work.

4.2.1.1. Patriotism and the Readings of the Nation

In order to deal with Spielberg's contemporary version of the "menaced man", it seems appropriate to refer to Haskin's *The War of the Worlds* (1953). On the whole, Haskin's version reflects how emerging socio-cultural values can affect and destroy everyday "normality" and become real threats for a hierarchical order.

Haskin's version mirrors the socio-political issues that were under threat during the 50s implying that the "others" are pernicious beings with colonial aspirations and, therefore, should be exterminated. The decline of U.S. world power and the Cold War ideology of containment against "intruders" are implied in the film.[183] Scientist Dr Clayton Forrester (Barry) feels disoriented because of the meteors that are invading the world. His first reaction, shared by most of the population, is to hide and to warn others about the forthcoming danger. Humanity reacts in a negative way against the appearance of these alien presences, with the exception of a couple of men who try to approach the visitors and, as a result, are immediately killed. Consequently, the whole community is scared and the first reaction is to be distant and sceptic. This behaviour can be interpreted as a product of their disorientation and anxiety towards the "foreigner" and society's inability to deal with the appearance and acceptance of disturbing "others". This is reinforced by reiterative sentences like "it is the oddest thing I've ever seen" and by the Martians' association to an annoying sound. Like many other films of the 50s, the alien is represented as a malignant force, intent on destroying human civilisation.

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[183] As I argued in chapter three, many academics have dealt with SF Cold War films of the 50s, emphasising the complex political and cultural panorama in which the genre flourished (Sontag, Biskind, Hendershot, Jancovich, Shapiro, among others).

As a way to overcome this political crisis, one needs to fight against the enemy and, for that purpose, the military forces are called. The army is a sign of authority and power at times when a decline of U.S. world power is evident. It also evokes the destructive technologies used in previous world wars while showing contemporary advances in arms manufacturing. The political context of terror and the fear of a communist invasion are unmistakably materialised.

Likewise, Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005) portrays both the anxiety of mass hysteria and the individual confrontation with contemporary fears. The film becomes an allegory of the trauma and panic felt in the U.S.A. as a consequence of the devastating attacks of the World Trade Centre in Manhattan and the Pentagon in Washington DC on 11 September 2001. The film makes use of images of devastation and scenes of massive destruction, suggesting an apocalyptic scenario that is typical of disaster films. As Cornea argues, they encourage a comparison with the earlier world war period. Indeed, the "[p]aranoia and political undercurrent might be seen to return in the serious remakes of recent years, as set against the political protectionism marked by so-called 'war of terror' and the threat from a somewhat nebulous al-Qaeda" (33). Disaster films proliferate especially in times of crisis and have renewed their popularity after the terrorist attacks of 2001.

The alien attack triggers a rupture of the national border. The geopolitical concept of nation is a Western idea that emerged under specific economic circumstances. It has become one of the most important modes of social and political organisation in the modern world (McLeod 68) and has been defined as an "imagined political community" by postcolonial criticism (Anderson 6). *The War of the Worlds* breaks with the so-called "myth of the nation" which, in McLeod words, has the following defining features:

> Nations are imagined communities.
>
> Nations gather together many individuals who come to imagine their simultaneity with others. This unified collective is the nation's 'people'.
>
> Nations depend upon the invention and performance of histories, traditions and symbols which sustain the people's specific identity continuous between the past and the present.
>
> Nations evoke feelings of belonging, home and community for the people.
>
> Nations stimulate the people's sense that they are the rightful owners of a specific land.
>
> Nations standardise a unitary language accessible to all people.
>
> Nations are often narrated through forms of representation which promote the unities of time and space.
>
> Nations place borders that separate the people 'within' from different peoples outside. (McLeod 74-5)[184]

The feeling of defending the "nation" has proved to be a powerful symbol to many anti-colonial movements against the colonial rule. In Paul Gilroy's words,

> nations are created through elaborate cultural, ideological and political processes which culminate in [the individual's] feeling of connectedness to other national subjects and in the idea of national interests that transcends the supposedly petty divisions of class, region, dialect or caste. (In McLeod 75)

To construct a national consciousness is essential for the struggle for independence.[185] Although the "myth of the nation" might

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[184] As Timothy Brennan contends in "The National Longing for Form", the "myth of the nation" is ambiguous since it does refer, not to the idea that nations are mythical, but to the way that various governments invent traditions to give permanence and solidity to a transient political form (47).

[185] Fanon is of the belief that writers and intellectuals should be responsible for resisting colonialism in their works. The construction of a specific national consciousness should be accompanied by the creation of a distinctly national culture, which, according to Fanon, moves through three phases. In the first phase, the writer or artist attempts to "assimilate" the dominant trends. In the second, he/she is dissatisfied with copying the coloniser and turns backwards to the history

function as a valuable tool for the pursuit of liberty and progress, it also encompasses a conflict which Partha Chatterjee calls "liberal dilemma" (4). For the achieving of this ideal community, undemocratic forms of government are sometimes employed. Moreover, nationalism is normally associated to aggression, violence, domination and irrationality and, as such, it has proved to be a problematic term.

In *The War of the Worlds* (2005), borders are threatened. Yet, the feeling of connectedness to pursue "liberty" from the colonising alien tripods does not work. Instead, people are seen in fight for individual survival, what does not fit into the "national myth" described by McLeod. The attack is taken by surprise and the population does not really know what is happening, especially at the very beginning of the movie. When the first lightning appears, Ray does not seem to be frightened since he believes it to be something "cool", even funny, a mere product of the season. Little by little people start to worry about "weird" lightning, including his daughter Rachel, who confesses her fears and pleads for fatherly protection. Thus, no real struggle against the enemies is at first appreciated in the movie, apart from one taken up by the army and police forces. The construction of a national consciousness seems to be at a very early stage.

Self-reliance combined with mutual assistance, which has been remarked as a fundamental American virtue, is absent from the movie.[186] Indeed, individuals are mainly concerned with their own

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of the people. The third phase is the fighting phase in which he/she becomes involved in the struggle against the colonial rule (Fanon 179-82).

[186] Indeed, regarding the effects of the rising equality of social conditions on the individual in the context of early 19th century America, the French political thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1835 that "Americans (…) are fond of explaining almost all the actions of their lives by the principle of interest rightly understood; they show with complacency how an enlightened regard for themselves constantly prompts them to assist each other, and inclines them willingly to sacrifice a portion of their time and property to the welfare of the state" (647).

interests and self-survival. There is no unified collective or sense of belonging to any imagined community. Apart from showing the evil nature of the "other", Spielberg's film demonstrates the insanity that can infect us all at moments of tremendous crisis (Vest 70). Indeed, the most frightening moments in the movie involve not the conflict between aliens and humans, but those depicting humans fighting for survival, which accounts for a situation of mass insanity. This corresponds, on the other hand, to Wells's belief in the destructive nature of civilisation *per se* (Aoun 233).

The film stresses selfishness. As a consequence of the invasion, cars do not work, except Ray's friend's, which he manages to get without consent. Leaving his friend behind, Ray drives away with his two kids. From this moment onwards, this car becomes the target of many people who would use any means to get it, since it entails a hope for survival. Humans are mainly concerned with individual salvation, what increases paranoia and confusion. Aggression, chaos and hysteria are especially recreated in the sequences of the ferry when everybody tries to cross the Hudson River. The chaos is reinforced by Rachel screaming and people running and fighting for survival. The use of weapons helps to reassert power and to establish who is the strongest and, therefore, who is to cross the river to a supposed salvation. Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest seems to be a rather "relative" concept here. At these tough moments, Ray is seen crying and feeling desperate. He manages, however, to get his two kids on the ferry with him. However, this kind of "heroic" deed is soon to be undermined by Ray's inability to help a friend and her daughter, whom he meets just before embarking the ferry. He is not able to take care of friends either.

Hence, the film portrays an unorganised and selfish society, victim of the attacks of a devastating enemy. Patriotism, or the proud feeling of belonging to a nation, can suggest an effective way to

contribute to fight against a common enemy.[187] However, in the film this collective responsibility is denied in favour of self-interest.[188] Vest affirms that the film "is a vibrant, terrifying, and observant examination of how American democracy, generosity, and liberty are the most precarious of ideas and institutions when under assault by alien aggressors" (68). Vest believes in the film's critique of the patriotic fervour that has recently characterised the United States and sees the film's political subtext in different sequences. At a climatic moment, the son's protagonist, Robbie, spurns fatherly authority and protection. Vest studies the political subtext in this sequence, arguing that these different generational attitudes towards military service in times of war resonate with contemporary discussions of the appropriateness of recruiting high school students for service in Irak and Afghanistan (69). Apart from echoing recent debates about military policies, the sequence denounces the false or dubious patriotism that has characterised the U.S.A. after the terrorist attacks in 2001.[189]

Robbie's decision to fight for the nation can be interpreted as a product of his disorientation and family problems. Previously in the movie, Robbie's relationship with his father has been depicted as troublesome and distant. He even admits wanting to see the war with

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[187] In "Notes on Nationalism" (1945) George Orwell makes a distinction between a virtuous "patriotism" and an aggressive "nationalism". Nationalism is a feeling of superiority about one's way of life, country or ethnic group whereas patriotism is a feeling of admiration for one's way of life and the willingness to defend it against any attack. The post-war context for Orwell's article results meaningful for his theories about nationalism.

[188] This topic is also explored in contemporary works like Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters.*

[189] A fervent patriotism is present in the other film under analysis in this chapter: *Star Trek. Nemesis.* In clear opposition to Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds,* this film focuses on the positive idea of colonialism to suggest a shared idealised notion of the nation.

his own eyes. He needs to feel better with himself and he sees an opportunity to do so by enlisting in the army. That way, he will not depend on his father's decisions and will be able to show determination and courage. Also, he will stand out from a mass of people only interested in self-survival. Robbie's supposedly patriotic feeling is partly grounded on individual interests as much as on the lack of a stable father figure.[190]

Another instance of an ambiguous "patriotism" comes from the mentally disturbed character of Ogilvy, who openly claims he would die for the country. In the basement, Ogilvy confesses that he has a "plan" to fight the tripods and in doing so, liberate his country from this threat. This sequence in the basement accounts for the different reactions towards the coming of the "other", suggested by Ray and Ogilvy's attitudes towards the aliens. Indeed, and as Ogilvy himself confesses, they "are not on the same page". Ogilvy has a plan to create a resistance movement against the aliens and Ray prefers to continue unnoticed and hidden, in an attempt to save his daughter from harm. Ogilvy is firm to stop the "occupation", as he himself denominates the alien plan. He states that they are going to be the ones coming from the underground this time.

After they witness an alien capturing a human being and draining all his blood, they both panic. Ogilvy turns mad and starts shouting "Not my blood" and digging a tunnel in a frenzy, while Ray's behaviour is far from heroic. Afraid that Ogilvy's screams may attract the aliens, Ray decides to kill him. In Wells's novel, the narrator kills the curate accidentally when trying to calm him. This act is intentionally done in Spielberg's film and, far from being a heroic deed,

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[190] I will expand the father-son troubled relationship in the next section when dealing with the model of the "New Father".

demonstrates the character's hysterical reactions produced by the presence of the "other". Ray and Ogilvy's irrational behaviour show a lack of understanding and organisation when struggling against the "other".

The military forces stand, then, as the only instance of a joint struggle against the enemy. As the film develops, however, it becomes evident that the military forces cannot deal with the enemy in an effective way. The superiority of the tripods is latent, especially in sequences where we see them in comparison with masses of people who shiver with terror when encountering them. Still, at chaotic moments, some sort of authority seems to be needed, embodied here, as happened in Haskin's film, by police forces and the army. With this, the film denounces the idea that force and violence are effective ways to reduce the anxieties of a nation. According to Brian M. Jenkins, the best way to increase the nation's ability to respond to disasters is "to enlist all citizens through education and engagement, which also happens to be a very good way to reduce the persistent anxieties that afflicts [the United States]" (156). In reference to the terrorist attacks of September 11 and the policies adopted after them, Brian M. Jenkins claims that the U.S.A. has not responded to them in an effective way. He claims for public education, information and the need for a reasonable "patriotism" to strengthen U.S. society after the devastating attacks. In a similar way, the film uses the topic of the hostile alien invasion to suggest this uncertainty and lack of agreement and engagement to face the problem of an aggressive invasion.

As happened with Haskin's, we find several differences between Spielberg's text and the original novel. Kim Newman affirms that Wells's novel is difficult to adapt "in that it is like a compilation of personal experiences and second-hand news items, with a nameless narrator whose only plot function is to be there" (Newman 83). Yet and in spite of Wells's and Spielberg's framing the story from different

angles, critics argue that Spielberg is more faithful to the original than Haskin. Spielberg's film is complicated with family problems, which also echo the dynamics of Wells's book (Vest 68). Following this line of thought, Vest affirms that "[t]he end of the world evokes a morbid fascination for Spielberg's audience no less than for Wells's readers, rehearsing some of American's most fundamental cultural anxieties to suggest that our lot in life is to endure civic insecurity, political ambivalence, and fractured family relationships" (Vest 71). Faithful to its sources, Spielberg manages to mirror contemporary anxieties and denounce false instances of patriotism.

Steven Aoun affirms in *Metro 149* (2006), that while Wells "used the book as a vehicle to teach Western civilization the lesson of 'natural selection'", Spielberg's *War of the Worlds,* nonetheless, "manages to be more adaptable by looking East and West simultaneously" (233). Specifically,

> Spielberg's movie is a colonial object that may be directed towards culturally specific anxieties (…) Given the cinematic language, Spielberg's film can speak to (and reassure) conflicting worldviews regarding the rise of terrorism or spread of imperialism. (233)

Accordingly, the movie gives expression to both left and right wings critiques in relation to terrorist and imperialist matters. Aoun is of the opinion that producers decided to include both approaches in order for the film to become a success in an international context. The resulting product is, I believe, an expression of the times' uncertainty and political and cultural specific worries.

Released in a context of urban terror, the film reflects the view of everyday U.S. citizens towards the dangers of terrorism and the crisis caused by it. Significantly enough, the alien tripods erupt from beneath the Earth surface and are controlled by alien creatures that

aim at a massive destruction of the world. Once the cells emerge from the underground, a general mood of chaos and destruction permeates the film, reinforced by the reiterative use of close-ups of Ray's terrified face. As opposed to the 1953 version, the church is the first building to be destroyed by the menacing "other". While in Haskin's version the church served as an element of union, salvation, and romantic encounter, in Spielberg's the first alien cell emerges precisely from it. Religious beliefs do not seem to have a place, then, in the globalised world that the disturbing "other" plans to get hold of by means of aggression. The impious destruction of this symbol adds tension to the narrative. With it, Spielberg shows the contemporary situation of the Western man, who has lost credibility as a father and as a world international policeman. Religion is not a refuge any more. Men are to do by themselves and cannot get comfort in religion or in the traditional nuclear family.

We get sequences which strikingly resemble the events that took place on 11 September 2001. Vest sees this and argues that "[t]he parallel to the images of New York City residents covered in the dusty ash of the collapsed Twin Towers on 9/11 is unmistakable, and Ray reacts with the same horror that we saw etched across too many faces on that fateful day" (68). Ray arrives home covered in dust and ashes and, in a clear Lacanian allusion, looks himself in the mirror, getting a terrible image of a frightened and desolated Ray who realises about his fears. His defensive strategy is to take his gun, a rather ridiculous act if we take into account the overwhelming supremacy of the tripods. Yet Ray needs to "feel" male power.[191] From this moment onwards Ray heads for the stability and equilibrium suggested by his ex-wife.

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[191] As mentioned in chapter two, the influential film critic Richard Dyer believed that visual ways of getting the power of the phallus (symbol of male power) were by means of muscled active bodies or by the use of phallic symbols. Still, Dyer believed

George W. Bush spoke of the "war of terror", which entailed an effort on the part of the U.S.A. to combat terrorism and finish with radical organisations like Al Qaeda (Brian M. Jenkins 77). Al Qaeda's war aims are basically political, and it is widely believed among U.S. citizens that this terrorist group has an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. The question "Are we safer now?" has become frequently asked in the U.S.A. (Brian M. Jenkins 145). *The War of the Worlds* makes allusions to this social terror. Rachel is constantly asking her father about their safety and about the origin of the attacks. Significantly, the children's first reaction towards the coming of the tripods is to think of a terrorist attack, what implies their familiarisation with these matters. This is especially seen in a sequence that shows the moment after Ray discovered about the existence of the tripods and is driving towards his ex-wife's house with the children. After Ray has taken his two kids to their mother's house, he decides to hide in the house's basement for protection. In the midst of his disorientation and insecurity, Ray resorts to his gun. His insecurity is suggested in a scene in complete darkness after another alien attack, and only Rachel's whisper is heard: "Are we still alive?" Sequences like this suggest human's powerlessness in the face of the massive attacks, what resonates with religiously-based terrorism. Moreover, events like 9/11 provoked trauma and shattered the sense of national identity. Even those who did not lose friends or loved ones or were not in New York that day experienced secondary or vicarious trauma via the media (Gordon 2007, 254). Trauma revises, then, a whole vision of masculinity and patriarchal culture. In relation to this topic, Cathy Caruth proposes that there is a deep disconnect between what is experienced and what is assimilated and, therefore, the

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in the virtual impossibility to get, in his words, a "phallic mystique" (Dyer 1992, 275).

trauma "is not experienced as a mere repression or defence but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment" (7-10). Experiences of trauma are best understood by a process of discovery. Literature, films and sociology, among others, are ways of thinking about and responding to the experience of trauma. Caruth is of the contention that in a catastrophic age trauma can provide the link between cultures not only because we can recognise the past of others but because it enables us to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves (11). In our encounter with trauma we can, then, rethink our notions of experience and get a new understanding of history.

After September 11, 2001, the paranoia of a possible terrorist attack in the U.S.A. has caused the use of controversial strategies and campaigns against terrorism. One of the largest obstacles to dealing with threats from terrorism came from the 9/11 Commission, whose final report of July 2004 remarked a "failure of imagination". According to such report, the U.S.A. needed to anticipate and prepare for what terrorists might do next:

> Sending waves of suicide bombers to America's shopping malls, demolishing Boston's waterfront with a sabotaged liquefied-natural-gas (LNG) carrier, bringing down the George Washington Bridge in New York City, crashing a plane into the White House or a nuclear reactor, spraying a major urban center with anthrax, sinking tankers to block narrow straits, unleashing hoof-and-mouth disease, bringing down the banking system, spreading smallpox, vaporizing Manhattan with a nuclear bomb, all once considered far-fetched, became presumptions. (Brian M. Jenkins 149)

The belief in these presumptions has led to a panorama of paranoia and mass hysteria, as reflected in Spielberg's film and in other cultural products. Moreover, the advance of globalisation, which encourages the lack of borders, and technological developments like the Internet or mobile phones contribute to facilitate terrorist communication. Danger can be anywhere and potential terrorist

attacks help to keep the country on edge. Mass media and the public domain of the existence of these threats further help to construct and extend social terror. Organisations like Al Qaeda had openly manifested to be hostile to Western civilization: "its cosmopolitanism, secularism, materialism, sensuality, arrogance, support of women's rights, and obsession with technology" (Patterson 380). Brian M. Jenkins rightly points out an added problem when taking action against terrorism in general. Terrorists are normally denounced "as mindless fanatics, savage barbarians, or, more recently, "evil-doers"—words that dismiss any intellectual content" (53). The United States has defined terrorism according to the quality of the act, not the identity of the terrorists or the nature of their cause (54). These angry rhetorics and the desire to see the terrorist as evil impede any effort to understand the enemy and to consequently formulate effective responses to terrorism.

All these factors create a sense of frenzy, which is reflected in the film. As Hoberman affirms in *Sight and Sound* (2006), the film went into production immediately after Bush's election and "like the president, Spielberg sought to invoke the trauma that precipitated America's current war and, not coincidentally, scare the bejeezus out of the U.S. public" (22). Spielberg talked about "an ultra-realistic" film with clear references to terrorism and war that "ultimately resolves the horrible events it represents":

> Its narrative trajectory is informed by a particular political logic. In tracking the emotional development of the frightened child's father (Tom Cruise) from callow, immature hotshot to responsible mensch, *War of the Worlds provides* an allegory of George W. Bush's crisis-inspired growth into leadership—or at least of the audience's willingness to grant him that growth. (Hoberman 23)

Yet, Ray is somehow obliged to develop his "responsible" side as a consequence of the desperate situation he is living. Whether the film finally resolves the events it echoes or not, the extended presence of

trauma and the depiction of a population in crisis affects the male character, who is depicted as a "menaced man".[192]

4.2.1.2. Normative Masculinity under Threat

As suggested before, Haskin's *The War of the Worlds* depicts a generalised context of paranoia and hysteria, which affects the depiction of masculinity. Unable to handle the situation, the male protagonist feels intimidated by the appearance of the Martian ships. As in other films of the 50s, the anxieties concerning masculine identity are treated under the veil of a massive alien invasion. Apart from the popular reading of the film as the performance of a communist invasion, the peril of the "other" can be interpreted as a reflection of the concerns of the times, as other critics have made clear. One of the ideological changes affecting masculine identity in post-war America is the crisis of the traditional family unit. In relation to this issue, James B. Gilbert affirms that the film renders two themes that are intrinsically connected: the Cold War, on the one hand, and the crisis of domestic relations, on the other:

> the film hints that a decline of family unity and the weakening of the religious fibre is related to the mysterious

[192] Camera movement helps create this generalised feeling of disorientation and uneasiness. Quick camera stresses subjectivity on spectators and adds realism. We get a series of shots with unusual framing. For instance, before getting to know the cause of the lightning, Ray and his friends are followed by a long tracking shot while they are heading towards the gathering of people. Yet they do not occupy the front of the frame but its back, with people, shadows and objects in constant movement passing in front of them. Camera position stresses group paranoia and the uncertainty produced by actions that seem hard to predict. The threatening nature of the "other" is further reinforced by sound and by its huge and unconventional proportions. At first, people stay deadly silent in shock and do not manage to react, then they resort to running and looking back in anger. Subjective shots and a fast moving camera provide realism to the scenes.

> decline of American world power. The resolution of either crisis presumes the resolution of the other. (327)

Both the fight with the enemy and the threat to U.S. domestic values are visually accomplished, Gilbert argues, especially by shots at the end of the film that show an intersection of the Martian ships and the churches, to give just an example. As Gilbert rightly contends, the film hints at the idea that the solution for both crises is the resistance to the enemy and a reconstitution of the family in religious terms (Gilbert 336). The film emphasises the union of the heterosexual couple as a solution since "only when the family is symbolically reconstituted, which is the promise of the romantic theme, can the war end" (335). In my view, this argument can be further explored if we take into account the fact that, as the film progresses, Forrester shows an urge to protect "his girl". For that purpose, he is constantly seen shielding and embracing Sylvia, both of them signs of his need to accentuate his leading role in their relationship. In this sense, the film supports Gilbert's contention that the assimilation of social and ideological changes needs to be done progressively (336).[193] Unable to save the world from a bleak fate, the hero is still dominant at least within the safe realm of the domestic scene. The final union of the romantic couple is especially emphasised in the film. However, in Spielberg's not even domesticity is safe from the distressing menace of the "other". As it will be discussed below, the main protagonist is directly assaulted both by the aliens and by his responsibility to take care of his two kids, a task for which he proves to be inept. Haskins', on the contrary, puts an end to the threat posed by the disintegration of the nuclear family by focusing on the heterosexual couple.

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[193] This can be related to Thomas Doherty's assertion about the "shy" change undergone by post-second-war films. See chapter two of this work.

In the face of new circumstances and changes, religion does not seem to provide an answer, as Haskin's movie implies. At the very beginning of the movie, Christian beliefs are threatened by the presence of the Martians. Indeed, Reverend Matthew Collins, the heroine's uncle and protector, tries to understand and communicate with the alien forces and, as a consequence, is immediately killed. This fact makes clear that the "others" do not understand religious codes. Yet, the Reverend's death also means that from this moment onwards, Sylvia is left "unprotected" and will find in Forrester a convenient romantic partner. The resulting heterosexual union will favour the reaffirmation of traditional family values in accordance with religious terms. Affected by the global crisis suggested in the film, Christian faith is still depicted in a positive light.

The film presents a tension between traditional Christian faith and scientific rationalism. New and traditional values share stage in the film. Thus, Forrester is an astro-nuclear physicist who epitomises the man of science. He replaces the Reverend in his role as a protective figure at the very beginning of the movie. This may suggest the victory of scientific rationalism over Christian faith. Yet, as Cornea accurately notes, Forrester's devotion to scientific rationalism is gradually replaced by his devotion towards Sylvia (Cornea 47).

Moreover, the church, a symbol of Christian faith, becomes a place of harmonious union and a romantic encounter as it is made explicit at the very end of the movie. Not coincidentally, the church is free from the attacks of the extraterrestrials. As we learn at the end, the aliens do not finally invade our world thanks to their lack of immunity to humans' bacteria. The survival of the traditional heterosexual couple becomes a condition for existence. In relation to this issue Cornea argues that the final message of the film is that "science can safely be used as an analytical tool as long as it does not challenge what is understood as a natural and divine order" (47). By

natural and divine order Cornea might be including the relationship between Forrester and Sylvia. The continuation of tradition seems to be the safest way for a contemporary U.S. society in crisis.

As it has been suggested, in Haskin's film alien-invaders stand for threats that make humankind in general feel menaced and frightened. All these crises—political, domestic and religious—affect male supremacy in society and especially the hero seems to be concerned with them. This is particularly relevant if we take into account the anxiety present in the 50s due to the appearance of new gender values. In chapter seven of *Manhood in America* Kimmel affirms that the 50s were an era "of anxiety and fear, during which ideas of normality were enforced with a desperate passion" (1996, 236). Many men tried, then, to recover former masculine values at a time when its definition became unclear. "Normal" masculinity was defined as opposed to "gender failure", the latter term usually linked to communism and homosexuality. Considered as nonconformists, these new men were allegories of the disappearance of real manhood:

> On the other side of the tracks from respectable middle-class conformity lurked the dangerous men, the rebellious nonconformists, who threatened social stability, domestic harmony, and corporate responsibility. The decade's preoccupation with juvenile delinquency and the dishevelled rebelliousness of the beatniks, or the new fears of effeminate homosexual men, provided several negative stereotypes against which American men played out their yearnings. (242-3)

Thus, the nonconformist as a negative role model described by Kimmel is evoked by the aliens that threatened U.S. stability in SF films of the 50s. The menacing Martians in Haskin's *The War of the Worlds* hint, then, at the conformist society's fears of dangerous, rebellious or effeminate men Kimmel referred to in his study. As commented in chapter three, many SF movies of the 50s foreshadowed this imminent threat of the "other". Paul Wells argues to this respect:

> [M]en in the sci-fi B-movie demonstrate ineptitude in their attempt to secure power and take control of their circumstances. They have inherited the frontier myth and its patriarchal lore but they find themselves in a society where these values are subject to change and re-definition. Men can no longer trust their status and position. (Wells 182)

Wells's statement can be applied to Haskin's *The War of the Worlds*, where the main obstacle for the hero's attainment of mythical power is the alien threat, considered in this film as a representation of otherness. Consequently, many heroes are, in Wells's words, left "gripped by uncertainty, powerlessness and a tendency to behave absurdly" (185). Wells concludes his article by saying that "[a]lthough these images of 'otherness' have been perceived as warnings about incipient Communism or the nuclear threat, they can be read as signs of personal redefinitions and the emergence of new socio-cultural options" (187). Emerging values threaten male hegemony and contribute to shape the type of the "menaced man". In this sense, the aliens can be interpreted as symbols of the fear of the disappearance of traditional gender marks.

This fact finds a parallelism with the times' urge for reaffirming conventional gender roles, which can be recalled in a climactic sequence that shows Sylvia and Forrester on a deserted farm. She is cooking dinner for both of them and Forrester is trying to comfort her with sentences like: "Don't worry" or "they'll be stopped. Somehow". Whilst eating she confesses her fears and worries and both discuss their childhood. Gilbert has observed that this scene suggests that "American domestic relationships, the virtues of small-town life and the community of vague, but compelling religious values were subjected to challenge and possible extinction" (334). Moreover, I contend further that this scene represents at its best the hero's need to reaffirm traditional values, in spite of his eminent fear of the "other". Another way of establishing the hero's superiority and power

is by means of framing. In this particular sequence, Forrester occupies the central position within the frame while Sylvia is relegated to a secondary position. These power dynamics continue in the next sequence when the alien enters the farmhouse and Sylvia sees it. She shouts and looks very scared, irrational and emotional, all of them predictable procedures of traditional gender beliefs. On the contrary, Forrester is able to save his girl twice and, in spite of his fears, is on lead and has to beg her for calm. The way Clayton kills the alien also becomes meaningful for this argument since he chops it in two with an axe, a manifest reference to castration, which has been traditionally linked to the loss of power.

This context governed by hysteria, the shock of invasion and a generalised feeling of panic, favours the depiction of the pattern of the "menaced man". Especially in the 50s, the crisis of traditional institutions and the disturbing political panorama affect the way masculinity is represented on screen. What becomes significant about Haskin's film is its insistence on the reaffirmation of traditional values as a solution for these problems.

As commented before, in Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005), the alien invasion topic also has political overtones and contributes likewise to recreate a state of mass hysteria. It suggests culturally specific anxieties, such as the dissolution of national borders, terrorism and gender trouble. That way, the film serves the purpose of posing some critiques of U.S. society and beliefs. Thus, the film evokes symbolic commentaries about the concerns present in the U.S.A at the beginning of the 21st century, which include questions of gender identity.

The idea that the aliens are evil creatures linked to the "other" is reinforced by "reading" them from the perspective of abjection theory. Contrary to Haskin's version, a visual emphasis on blood is employed

in many sequences, like the one at the very end when Ray and Rachel are captured by one of the tripods and we see how the extraterrestrials literally suck blood from human bodies. In a very similar way, images of devastation and desolation recall the fatal consequences of environmental pollution. Specifically, this is suggested at the very end of the movie, when Ray and Rachel are to arrive in an apocalyptic Boston, where statues are reduced to ashes. From the moment they cross the Boston sign, a feeling of peace and quietness seems to dominate the scene, since the menace has disappeared. The aliens are dying as a consequence of their incapacity to adapt to our polluted natural environment. As we learn at the end, they cannot colonise the Earth because of bacteria, as can explicitly be appreciated in a scene that shows an alien dying as soon as it comes in contact with our atmosphere. This implies, nonetheless, that human beings are helpless in reducing the aliens.

Informed by political, cultural and social upheavals, the film recreates a feeling of general turmoil given by the appearance of "alien" forms. As stated previously, the evil aliens behave as a destructive group whose aberrant behaviour is not understood by humans. In this sense, they are placed at the deviant side of the binary opposition system. The film warns us against the failure to adapt to changing values. Apart from political and economic shifts, new gender roles in society and emerging interpretations of manhood and fatherhood affect hegemonic masculinity and create a feeling of disorientation.

The "other" is considered in the film as a collective fighting for a common cause, in opposition to human beings' particular interests. As Sally Robinson argues, identifying with a collective entails the sacrifice of individuality and unmarked normativity: "in American culture, a group of collective identity is claimed primarily to argue for rights or

restitution" (Robinson 8).[194] The problem arises when the "other" needs to make use of an authorising narrative in order to claim its social visibility. This authorising narrative is constructed in the film in terms of size, destruction and tyrannical power. On the one hand, according to a traditional reading of gender politics, male values are taken as the norm and stand as "invisible" in society. As Robinson argues, much recent work on the representation of masculinity and whiteness has taken for granted that invisibility perpetuates male dominance. Since one cannot question what is not visible, the privileges of masculinity are preserved. On the other hand, and as many other critical accounts have contended, not every man is happy and/or feels at easy with this "unmarked" position.

In a society where masculinity has been made invisible by all those discourses arguing its implied superiority, it is difficult to find a way of making it visible again without resulting tyrannical. These difficulties are discussed by many Gender Studies specialists and show the implications of the representation of masculinity on screen.[195] In order to account for this contradictory assumption, Robinson argues that "what calls itself the normative in American culture has vested interests in both visibility and invisibility" (3). Invisibility can mean a privilege enjoyed by certain groups but it may

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[194] Sally Robinson's *Marked Men. White Masculinity in Crisis* aims to show how white men and white masculinity both resist and welcome the marking of their bodies and minds. By means of this duplicity, Robinson argues that power is not absolute and that white men are attracted by the possibilities of bodily pain and the crisis. Thus, "the wounded white male man stakes a claim to an entire set of cultural conventions originally designed to identify those bodies and subjectivities made to suffer so that white men could retain privileged access to a disembodied norm" (20). With this, she is recognising her contribution to the perpetuation of the male crisis, which she believes to have contradictory effects.

[195] For instance, Fred Pfeil's *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination and Difference* (1995) and editors Berger *et al.*'s *Constructing Masculinity* (1995) analyse these issues.

also be felt as "a burden in a culture that appears to organize itself around the visibility of differences and the symbolic currency of identity politics" (Robinson 3).

Spielberg's film mirrors these discussions about men and (in)visibility. Ray is a victim, reduced to a literal invisibility by the power of the "other". Ray is depicted as a menaced and fragile man who needs to defend himself against the "other". As commented in earlier chapters, one of the ways to inscribe discourses of superiority on screen is by displaying a muscled body, which is, nevertheless, neutralised here by the presence of the huge tripods that make Ray appear as weak and ineffectual. In other words, Ray's physical vulnerability is highlighted by the gigantic alien machines. Yet, there are some sequences in which the notion of invisibility is tempting. The sequence at the ambulance driver's basement echoes the one in the 1953 film that presented the hero and heroine on a deserted farm. At its climax, Ray, Rachel and Ogilvy are hiding first from the sneaky alien searching for any human trace and then from the three aliens that enter the basement. This section is characterised by an agonic silence and an economy of movement (Vest 70), which turns out to be quite symbolic for the purposes of this analysis. Ogilvy's first reaction is to take an axe and try to chop the alien's long neck in two, to what Ray persuades him—using body language—not to do so.[196] Yet, he tries again and Ray is forced to kill him. The need of invisibility for survival is urged, then, in this sequence. Hence, apart from this social concept of invisibility, the film's plot also suggests the need of becoming invisible in order to survive. Ray—and humankind in general—needs to hide from the enemies if they want to live.

[196] This sequence recalls the *Alien* films, where the monstrous "other" hides in the spaceship and humans become anxious by the possibility to come across it.

As it has been argued so far, the coming of the evil aliens evokes different fears and anxieties present in the U.S.A. at the time of the film's premiere (2005). Whereas the "other" is read as an allegory of Islamic terrorism, or as hints of current changes concerning masculine roles, or as mere allusions to pollution and disease, it has always been taken as marginal. Indeed, and following the conventions of the "menaced man" type, Ray is in crisis precisely because of the presence of this foreign "other". Ray is frustrated as a consequence of his fear, anxieties and notorious inability to deal with the "other". As it happened with Haskin's adaptation, the menace of the "other" is far greater than the hero's capacity to end with the unknown presences. Once the aliens have disappeared, there is a feeling of hope for the re-establishment of the status quo. At the end of the film, not coincidentally set in puritanical Boston, the family is reunited and we learn about the stability suggested by tradition. The movie's reliance on previous texts also contributes to the emphasis on the reproduction of certain gender types. In addition, the presence of some actors and actresses in Haskin's 1953 version—Gene Barry and Ann Robinson—as the protagonist's ex-parents-in-law at the end of Spielberg's film also fosters the continuity of tradition, which is an instance of Spielberg's debt to his predecessor.

As it will be expanded in the next section, at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, men are specifically "menaced" by their new responsibilities as nurturing fathers. Contrary to what happened in Haskin's film, in Spielberg's the male character cannot find peace and comfort in the private realm of his family and is detached from the pleasures provided by a romantic liason. Traditional family values, religious beliefs and romantic union are absent from Ray's life. He cannot face the reality surrounding him and behaves frantically in the face of difficulties. Ray's failure to finish with the aggressive enemy is reinforced by his inability to deal with his new

familiar situation, which prevents him from fitting into the conventional heroic type. Far from being a site of comfort and safety, his family becomes a source of agitation. Otherness is also present within his familiar context. Spielberg's concern with the revision of traditional gender roles can be seen in the film's portrayal of a man menaced both by unfamiliar and familiar "others".

4.2.2. FATHERHOOD REVISITED: CLASS, GENDER AND FAMILY RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

New patterns of masculinity emerging at the end of the 20th century constitute a clear menace to long-held definitions of the masculine. The threat posed by the alteration of former gender relations has led to many reactions and discourses on the part of men's groups and disciplines such as Men's Studies. As contended in chapter one, many authors are of the belief that men are changing in multiple directions and that, consequently, there are several types of masculinity in contemporary U.S. society, among them the emotionally-expressive "New Man" (involved in fathering) and the inexpressive, hypermasculine "Traditional Man" (Messner 1993, 724). Since the 80s, the figure of the "New Man" started to occupy spaces traditionally associated to women, like their new roles as family men and domestic subjects. Nevertheless, as many critics have pointed out, this transformation was "neither absolute nor simple but highly paradoxical" (Harwood 73). The emerging image of the so-called "New Father", which threatens to obliterate traditional visions of fatherhood, disrupts many actual men's private and public lives in practice. Consequently, representations of the father in Hollywood cinema since the 90s are extremely varied, and most of them seem to displace the traditional paternal role model. This diversity accounts for the contemporary concern about masculinity in crisis (Bruzzi 153). The

image of the father becomes problematic in contemporary cinema and, especially in the SF genre, usually entails the representation of a man assaulted by the "other", which is not necessarily found outside family life.

Interestingly enough, and as it will be argued in this section, Spielberg's protagonist in *The War of the Worlds* is neither a depiction of the so-called "New Man" nor is he an embodiment of the traditional hypermasculine one. He is, in this sense, an in-between character that epitomises contemporary men's difficulties to deal with the times' reworking of fatherhood and family dynamics. Ray feels at a loss in his new—and imposed—role as a father and his frustrations and anxieties clearly reflect other men's reaction towards this new image of masculinity. All these aspects contribute to consider Ray as a version of the "menaced man" in the 21st century.

Spielberg's peculiar depiction of the patriarchal family in previous films is repeated in *The War of the Worlds.* As Robin Wood argues "[i]n *Jaws* the family is tense and precarious; in *Close Encounters* it disintegrates; in *E.T.* it has already broken up before the film begins" (156). The traditional bourgeois family is seen in terms of failed paternity in Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977). The film portrays a father figure who is alienated from traditional family structures. Misunderstood by his wife and unappreciated by his kids, Roy Neary abandons his paternal responsibility and creates a surrogate family unit with Gillian, a widow raising her son as a single mother. As Sobchack contends, both Roy and Gillian join together to regain the innocence of the lost child. Roy attempts to regenerate his childhood, and Gillian wants to regain her child, who has been taken by extraterrestrials. That way, "the film reconciles differences in the mythology and figure of the child, in the physical relocation of personal innocence and cultural simplicity (Sobchack 1991, 16). Likewise, in *E.T.* surrogate families, childish

fathers and adult children are found in this SF drama in which the domestic absence of the father and the presence of the extraterrestrial are related phenomena that favour a dangerous domestic space (22).

However, as many other films evidence, they end up reconstructing the image of the traditional family, and "all [Spielberg] can do is reassert the 'essential' goodness of family life in the face of all the evidence he himself provides" (Robin Wood 157). Likewise, the end of *The War of the Worlds* suggests the essential goodness of family unity. Thus, a deep feeling about the self, the family, love commitment, and ethics are the territory of Spielberg's film (Gordon 2007, 8). Spielberg poses the problem of the appearance of new visions of fatherhood but no real change can be appreciated at the very end of the "hero's" journey, when order is restored. Ray is depicted as a frightened man both by the extraterrestrials and by his new responsibilities as a father. The depiction of the frightened hero also works in many of Spielberg's movies. In relation to this issue, Newman affirms that *The War of the Worlds* is a return to the Spielbergian hero of the 70s: "Dennis Waiver in *Duel*, Roy Scheider in *Jaws* or Richard Dreyfuss in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*—men who are (…) as drawn to unknowable monsters as they are terrified of them" (84). Spielberg, in an attempt to reflect contemporary U.S. society, portrays a disintegrated family, which is depicted as a site of crisis. The pattern of the "menaced man" in the 21st century is clearly affected by the emergence of new understandings of fatherhood.

Family is one of the "most complex arenas within which the greatest sense of concern relating to a perceived crisis of masculinity resides" (Edwards 2006, 12). Accordingly, men's future roles within the family are seen in a rather pessimistic light. Edwards gives several reasons for this. One is the undermining of men's role as breadwinners, which displaces them from their privileged social status. Moreover, the rise in rates of divorce also undermines any

notion of traditional nuclear families. The status of fatherhood has also been attacked, partly because the judicial processes tend to favour mothers as carers of children. Yet, Edwards continues, such a view is disputed from several fronts. First, it oversimplifies the notion of fatherhood as it evades class, race and sexual orientation. Second, men are often reluctant fathers and resistant to change in their domestic duties, what slows down the process of change. And third, men's position within the family is not necessarily undermined *per se* but it should adapt to shifting situations and favour both men's and women's lives (Edwards 2006, 12-13).

As I mentioned in chapter one, scholars like Messner argue that the early 80s saw the emergence of the "New Father" image, "a man who placed family relationships—especially the care and nurturance of children—ahead of careers goals" (Messner 1993, 726). Precisely because of this changing definition of fatherhood with the appearance of the so-called "New Man", a new notion of masculinity started to develop and be depicted in positive terms in the popular media. This new image showed a man closer to nurturance and family duties.[197] The "New Man", Edwards affirms, was a "new form of masculinity that was more caring, nurturing and sensitive—or alternatively, more narcissistic, passive and introspective" (Edwards 1997, 39). This new definition of man included, then, the father's concern with nurturance and child care. Illustrations of this new masculinity appeared everywhere and the "New Man" was not simply a product of the media or a response to second-wave feminism but, in the critic's words, a "crystallisation of consequences in economics, marketing, political

[197] Indeed, and as Edwards notices, the advertisement for Calvin Klein's Eternity, which shows a man cradling a baby, is a good example of the iconography representing the "New Man".

ideology, demography and, most widely, consumer society in the 1980s" (Edwards 39-40).

The popular media has provided a dominant discourse on fatherhood that is, on many occasions, far from real. As evidence proves, "despite the cultural images of the 'new fatherhood', and some modest increase in participation by men, the vast majority of child care, especially of infants, is still performed by women" (Messner 1993, 726). This fact has opened up research on fathering in recent dates (Segal, Eliansoph, Hertz, Pleck, Jump and Haas, Adams and Coltrane, McMahon, Sobchack, Bruzzi, among others). One possible explanation for this gap between what many men say and what they do is their need to construct publicly an acceptable image of the "New Father". According to critics, other factors influencing paternal involvement are psychological fears, emotional limitations or social constraints such as the demands of men's paid labour. Consequently, this image of the "New Man" has been accused of being a mere illusion created by the media:

> [t]hough the New Man promised a new dawn in men's inner emotional happiness and expression, as typified in the now overtly common imagery of men holding babies, this often proved to be little more than a media invention and myth. (Edwards 2006, 13)

Despite this contradiction between the cultural image of the "New Father" and everyday reality, what becomes clear is society's awareness of this changing definition of fatherhood and the problems it encompasses.[198] Indeed, the domestic sphere, Kimmel argues, is one

[198] Proof of this awareness is the increasing number of social movements dealing directly with the issue of fatherhood. One of today's most successful political movements is the "Fatherhood Responsibility Movement" which advocates for a masculinisation of fatherhood as a response to social and economic changes that have affected men's position within the family. Anna Gavanas analyses the core of

of the major arenas in which changes in the definition of masculinity have been taking place (Kimmel 1987, 17).

Likewise, Hollywood movies are changing in the way they represent masculinity and fatherhood, as it was commented on in chapter two. Significantly enough, and as Lupton and Barclay observe, the genre that has most often featured the image of the "New Father" is comedy. Thus, movies like *Mr Mom* (1983), *Three Men and a Baby* (1987), *Baby Boom, Parenthood* (1989), *Look who is Talking* (1989), *Kindergarten Cop* (1990), *Mrs Doubtfire* (1993), allow for emotional heroes who are more concerned with parental roles. These comedies focused "on the transformation of unreconstructed men into 'new men' through fatherhood" (Bruzzi 118). One popular movie that departs from the comic effects of the "New Father" depiction is *Kramer vs Kramer* (1979), a drama that depicts a sensitive and nurturing man. These fatherhood films portraying the archetype of the "New Father", Lupton and Barclay argue, offer a gentle image of men in relation to their children and are opposed to the popularised films showing the tough guy image. The fatherhood film

> replicates the heroic narrative of other films (and popular texts) about men, in that it portrays the (male) heroes undergoing tests, overcoming obstacles and chaos and finally emerging triumphant, restoring order. Unlike most heroic narratives, however (…) the men in fatherhood films are portrayed as heroic in their very desire to be good fathers—that is, to seek a closer and better relationship with their children, and in most cases requiring others' help to do so. (Lupton and Barclay 71)

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this movement in her book *Fatherhood Politics in the United States* (2004). In it, Gavanas revisions the wide range of responses to the changing conditions for fathers and investigates the movement's great paradox: how do you masculinise domesticity and simultaneously domesticate masculinity? (Gavanas 6).

Thus, according to this definition of the fatherhood films, a common theme throughout them is that the men are left taking care of the baby by accident rather than by choice, and have little idea of how to take parental tasks. In addition, another typical feature is that fathers are normally depicted as belonging to the middle-class since, as Lupton and Barclay contend, "perhaps because it is expected that middle-class men have reserves of sensitivity that the working-class male stereotype tends to deny" (71). As explained below, although Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* cannot be considered as a proper fatherhood film, the problematic image of a working-class father in relation to his children permeates the whole narrative.

Apart from these father-centred films, we can find many others that indirectly show the problematic nature of the new values ascribed to masculinity and fatherhood. As some critics have argued—Traube and Harwood, among them—, although the Hollywood cinema of the 80s brought the "New Man" figure to the screen, fathers were contradictory figures. The "New Father" roles were represented as problematic, jeopardising the stability of the family (Harwood 73). Central to it are two related tensions: the problems of patriarchal succession and individuation. The former exemplifies the tensions existing between father and son, "in which the father is caught between a desire for his progeny's success and a fear of being superseded (74). Examples of movies showing this tension within the SF genre are *Back to the Future* and *Total Recall.* On the other hand, paternal anxieties around selfhood and subjectivity are key features of films in the 80s, as can be seen in movies like *Rocky IV* and *The Jazz Singer* (Harwood 74).

The father-son bond has been a recurrent topic in action and SF films for a long time. As suggested earlier, Jeffords analyses some of the most popular narratives of the 80s based on this bond, as the *Star Wars* trilogy, the *Indiana Jones* or the *Back to the Future* films to claim

that the continuity from one generation to another and the tension that sometimes these characters generate between them portray U.S. anxiety for the cultural dynamic taking place at that time, that is, the continuity or not of the Reagan Revolution. Therefore, she argues that the 80s drew great attention to questions "which reinforced the conservative movement's concentration on "family values" as a mechanism for asserting the primacy of the father/son relationship to the operation of the culture as a whole" (Jeffords 1994, 65). In relation to Hollywood cinema of the 80s, Robin Wood argues that the "Restoration of the Father" constitutes its dominant project. The father, understood in all senses (symbolic, literal, potential) permeates all genres (152).[199] As it will be argued in the next chapter, the role of the Terminator cyborg figure in the second movie of the series can be read as the need of the father figure to provide securiry to the nuclear family.

In Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005) the issue of fatherhood becomes meaningful for plot development and constitutes the representation of the "menaced man". In significant contrast to previous versions of the type, Ray is a divorced man who needs to take care of his two kids for the whole weekend while his ex-wife is out in Boston with her new boyfriend. Ray's temporary role as a father clashes with his search for individual survival and is to affect his characterisation. Ray's complicated relationship with his family conditions the whole movie. In this sense, he can be affirmed to epitomise the myth of men's inability to cope with new roles ascribed to emerging versions of masculinity and fatherhood. Ray shows to be inept for this task from the very beginning of the movie. Yet, when the dangerous "other" becomes an imminent threat, Ray progressively

[199] As mentioned in chapter three, the coming of the Lucas-Spielberg blockbuster marked a reactionary change for Hollywood.

feels anxious to protect his family, and is afraid of his new task as a figure of nurture and protection.

Moreover, the father-son relationship becomes especially troublesome, as it exemplifies the conflict between new and old values. When Ray's son—Robbie—is away from his mother, he becomes a father to Rachel. In spite of his apparent rejection of parental duties, Ray seems to develop a kind of emotional bond with his daughter Rachel, especially in situations of stress and danger (in Robbie's absence). The presence of the "other", as well as the temporary absence of a surrogate father figure, benefits, in a way, the relationship father-daughter. We cannot forget, however, that Ray is in a continuous search for the protection provided by the mother figure, as Robbie accuses him at one point in the movie. Only when he manages to reunite the traditional family and find the mother, can Ray decline his responsibilities as a father, and forget about his fears.

Thus, Ray's impersonation of the father mirrors contemporary debates about the problematic nature of new perceptions on fatherhood. Although he cannot be compared to the popularised and positive image of the "New Father", he does not embody the old notion of the patriarchal father, either. Yet, he does not adopt "feminine", nurturing, and affective qualities in the domestic terrain as the mystique of the "New Father" has suggested. Neither does he stand for the traditional breadwinner or authoritarian father. In this sense, and following Harwood's account on the failure of the father figure in popular films of the 80s, he does not succeed in his duties as a father. Ray looks as if he has been detached from parental duties all his life and has been concerned with other circumstantial issues. His condition as a non-custodial father after divorce is also meaningful, since it represents another added obstacle in his relationship with the kids, freeing him from responsibilities at the same time. In a sociological piece of writing, Mary Lund comments on the issue of the

non-custodial father in the U.S.A and the U.K, arguing that he "faces many challenges in establishing a new relationship with his children after his marriage ends" (212). After divorce, this non-custodial father "may find emotional and practical obstacles to continuing a relationship with his children from a distance which require him to make more of a direct commitment to parenting than he did before the separation" (212). Yet many fathers do master the struggle and have good relationships that benefit both their children and themselves. However, Ray's relationship with his children is detached from this positive image. Once more, Ray's ambivalent character as a father also suggests the previously mentioned gap between what men think and what they do in relation to fathering in contemporary society. In order to see Ray's ambivalent nature in performing the father's role, it is necessary to refer to some specific sequences in the movie. Especially relevant for this study are those sequences where Ray's conflicts are heightened by domestic duties and parental responsibilities.

One such key sequence appears at the very beginning of the movie when Ray's ex-wife brings the kids to his house. Ray is depicted as a narcissistic and arrogant man who does not seem to care about anybody/anything but himself. He is initially characterised as a handsome man who shows to be inept for child caring. His first encounter with the children results meaningful, especially with his teenager son, Robbie. To his father's affective offers of "getting a hug, a confusing handshake or a kick in the teeth", Robbie ignores him and continues listening to his MP3 and heading towards the house door. Their lack of understanding is stated from the very beginning. Moreover, Ray does not seem to know how to behave with them, as when he fails to offer help to his daughter with her suitcase, and her pregnant mother has to do it instead, or when he asks his daughter to order dinner while he goes to bed before sunset.

In all these instances, Ray fails to conform to the "New Father" figure. Mary Anne, however, in her brief appearance in the film feels comfortable in her mother's role and shows to have everything under control. The film does not question her ability for nurturing. She gives instructions to Ray and gently attacks him for having run out of milk—and everything else. She shows to have a good relationship with the children and we hear Robbie declaring his love for her. Ironically, Ray assures her he can handle the situation and that she should not worry, something that we as spectators—and probably his children—doubt. In general terms, the position of women in Spielberg's movies is, according to Robin Wood, rather ignominious: "[l]argely denied any sexual presence, they function exclusively as wives and mothers (especially mothers), with no suggestion that they might reasonably want anything beyond that" (157). Although Wood is referring to movies like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* or *E.T,* this argument can be perfectly extended to later films in which, like *The War of the Worlds,* women are still strongly limited by their role as mothers. Yet, Ray's ex-wife only appears at the opening and closing of the film. In this sense, the spectator can even feel "disappointed" for Mary Anne's absence in the film. Due to her brief appearance, she has "failed" as a mother and, unlike other heroines, she is not the "hero's" helper but only his goal and destiny. Her function in the film is basically to give instructions to Ray on how to take care of the children. Moreover, her only role in the film as mother is reinforced by her pregnancy state, which, in Ray's words, looks good on her.[200]

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[200] This specific scene at the very beginning of the movie suggests that women are predisposed toward nurturing infants, a traditional view that Nancy Chodorow already challenged in her influential *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978). In this work, Chodorow uses psychology and sociology to address assumptions about mothering, namely the idea that the psychological identity and social role of mothering gets passed on from mother to

Sex role stereotypes and traditional assumptions about mothering are meaningfully stressed at the beginning of the movie. Moreover, Ray's house needs to be tidied up and re-organised for family life—his daughter and son share the room, there is no food in the fridge, he has a huge engine on the dinner table and the whole house looks dirty and in a complete mess. Moreover, we later discover he does not pay for the children's school fees, alleging that they are half of what he earns for a living. Instead, it is Mary Anne's new boyfriend—Tim—the one who takes responsibilities, as Robbie tells his father. In this sense, Tim is depicted as the family's breadwinner, which has been defined as a distinctively male responsibility since the 19th century. Apart from this, Tim shows to have a close and intimate relationship with the children. Ironically, and in spite of his brief characterisation, these facts place him, as a member of the middle-upper class, far closer to the idealised image of the "New Father" than the one provided by the biological father. As Lupton and Barclay affirm when describing the image of the "New Father" in popular cinema, the working class father is "far more often held up as a figure of fun and even contempt, as lacking the skills to relate to his family and win their respect" (71). Ray's belonging to the working class favours, then, his detachment from the popular image of the "New Father". The film's first sequence shows Ray at work. He is depicted as an arrogant man who does not want to do a favour for one of his colleagues and change shifts with him. He looks confident when walking and talking and drives aggressively. The very next sequence shows Ray arriving late to his appointment with his ex-wife, who is waiting for him outside his house with the children and her new boyfriend. Again, he does not seem to care about this fact and does not even apologise. In this

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daughter through generations. She claims that women's psychological mothering is a feauture of social structure and requires an explanation in such terms.

sense, Ray may suggest the stereotype of the working-class father detached from family life.

The basis of a traditional—and stable—family is provided, then, by Mary Anne's new family where children seem to have an adequate and favourable atmosphere for growing up. Conscious of that, Robbie, who significantly calls Ray by his name, thinks his father cannot tell him to do his homework, since he has never shown any interests in his children's education. Robbie accuses him of not having cared about them and calls him "an asshole", a sign of the lack of patriarchal authority and respect inspired by Ray as a father figure.

Yet, and in the same way as his self-confidence decreases as a consequence of the alien menace, his duties as a father will be changing as well. Against any predictions, the presence of the "other" makes Ray start to feel aware of his role as a protective father. However, this is done progressively and under other circumstances. He takes his friend's car and heads for his ex-wife's house, searching for the equilibrium and order provided by a united family. Again, the domestic sequence at Mary-Ann's house becomes meaningful for the depiction of Ray's anxieties as a father. The sober and elegant look of his ex-wife's house clearly evokes this feeling of security as it contrasts with Ray's untidy and disorganised home. Once they arrive, the kids desperately shout looking for both their mother and Tim, only to find out they have already left for Boston. Ray also uses the safety suggested by the house to provide assurance to them, affirming that nothing can happen to them and that they are safe there.

At this moment, Ray tries to control his familiar situation but, again, he is not successful and feels frustrated because of that. First, he tries to calm his daughter down from her claustrophobic fears in the same way his son has done before, only hearing from Rachel "dad, that is not how it goes". Then, he tries to make some sandwiches for

dinner with some of the remaining food he had brought from his house: peanut butter. He is not aware of his daughter's allergy to it and does not know how to cook dinner. Moreover, he fails to provide comfort to his daughter who is constantly screaming and asking questions, which annoys him.

Scenes like this one shows that Ray is at odds with his role as a father. His children become alien to him, which recalls the dissolution of the nuclear family. In "Child/ Alien/ Father: Patriarchal Crisis and Generic exchange", Vivian Sobchack deals with the cultural meanings of the child and how this figure has contributed to a generic convergence between contemporary SF, horror and family melodrama. Indeed, many films have been "marked" as contemporary not only because of their release dates but by "their mutual figuration of the alien or Other as somehow implicated in family life" (4). Sobchack argues that American bourgeois family has experimented a crisis since the 60s and this is shown in films like *The Terminator*, *E.T.* or *Close Encounters*. The family and its members are seen as subjected to dissolution, transformation and redefinition: "A man's home in bourgeois patriarchal culture is no longer his castle (…) It is no longer possible to avoid the presence of Others—whether poltergeists, extra-terrestrials, or one's own alien kids" (Sobchack 1991, 4). The figure of the child condenses a cultural drama that seeks resolution in the three genres. Whereas SF manages to offer a promise to resolve the conflict, there are no such resolutions available to either the horror film or the family melodrama—both playing out patriarchal impotence.

Accordingly, otherness can be found both outside and inside the family. The film shows a "menaced man" who is unable to cope with this situation. It is Rachel's older brother who best manages to calm her down and seems to really care about her. As a result, Rachel is constantly looking for brotherly protection. The patriarchal/Oedipal trajectory is, like in many other Spielberg's movies, never quite as

simple or untroubled but takes deviant routes (Robin Wood 156). Traditional family relationships are seen as disturbed by an absent father, a feature that became common in the Lucas-Spielberg's blockbuster movies of the 80s. As Cornea argues,

> even though these films are very much *about* traditional masculinity, the kind of compliant consumption that they have come to represent, along with what is understood as the nature of their mode of address, challenges the very model of masculinity that the oedipal narratives espouse. (Cornea 118)

The father-son conflict is evident when Robbie makes clear he wants to join the army. As Homi K. Bhabha contends in "Are you a Man or a Mouse?" the destiny of masculinity with its hard boiled, tough image of manliness has been disturbed and therefore "[t]o speak of masculinity in general must be avoided at all costs" (102). The need to show its contradiction, conflict and anxiety is, then, urged. The anxiety about the domestic scenario of problematic father-love can be displaced into another kind of anxious love—*amor patriae*—which is the naturalistic, phallic identification with the service to the nation. The instinct for respect—central to the civic responsibility for the national service—comes from the father's severity, which is an effect of his "peripheral" position in the family. In this sense, the father is a kind of "phallic peripherality". For it is the absence of the father which constitutes the principle of national self-identification and the service of a nation. This gendering of the nation's domestic metaphor makes its masculinism neurotic (Bhabha 2000, 103-4).

The father's peripherality Bhabha referred to is clearly evoked by Ray. Likewise, as suggested above, the problematic father-love is displaced to the service of the nation. Robbie wants to project his anxious love to the nation and join the army. He argues that he wants to see the battle with his own eyes. Yet, in an attempt to recover his lost authority within the family, Ray prevents Robbie from doing so. It

is then when Robbie accuses his father of being a selfish person, since the only reason to head for Boston is to dump them on their mother and, that way, he will only have to take care of himself. Indeed, Ray is constantly threatening the kids about telling their mother—"I am making a list"—if they do not behave and listen to him. Ray needs to somehow reaffirm his authority as a father, something he has probably never done before, remaining in a peripheral position. Ray needs to feel he offers protection. When Rachel finds out about her brother's plan of joining the army she cries hugging him and asking him who is going to take care of her if he goes. Scenes of Rachel looking for brotherly assistance are recurrent throughout the film.

As previously suggested, the father-son conflict takes many dimensions in Hollywood films. In Spielberg's it functions as a mechanism to show Ray's condition as a helpless and ineffectual father and to pose questions about patriarchal authority. In the same way, issues of masculine and paternal failure are also common in Spielberg's earlier SF films. Accordingly, the portrait of masculinity in *Jaws* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* is linked to madness and eccentricity (Bruzzi 99).

It is only at the climactic sequence in Ogilvy's basement when there seems to be a father-daughter link. Ogilvy has got food and water for weeks and offers them to stay. The domestic space is reduced, then, to this dirty basement. From this moment on, Ray's actions are not only motivated by his own interests but also by his daughter's benefit. For the first time, Ray shows some glimpses of a responsible father. When they arrive at the basement, Ray looks worried about Rachel and asks her to close her eyes, since she needs some sleep. He tries to comfort her telling the whole family is worried and waiting for her. Also for the first time Ray shows concern about the child's worries as when he asks about the medal she is carrying with her. On her part, she asks him to sing some songs for her, to

what Ray apologises for not knowing any. He tries, though, assuming for the first time his role as a protective father. In contrast to previous scenes, Rachel is seen holding him and looking for her father's assistance. When Ray decides to kill Ogilvy he cares for his daughter's feelings. Moments later, he will risk his life to save hers. As this scene shows, Ray is a transitional figure who can also play the role of a sensitive father under extreme circumstances.

The hope of a possible change of attitude is, nevertheless, undermined by Ray's constant search for the mother figure, which means the end of his journey towards a new fatherhood. At the end of the movie, Ray succeeds in reuniting the family and, as predicted throughout the whole film, once they arrive in Boston, stability reappears. The extraterrestrial aliens start to die and Ray's "mission" has been fulfilled. His responsibilities as a family man—and the fears derived from this role—have come to an end and, as a consequence, a general feeling of relief and serenity impregnates the scene. The failure of the new parental role is normally depicted through the motif of the journey, being the destination of such journey "the restitution of a nuclear family and the mythical serenity of a domestic space" (Harwood 73). Indeed, the journey towards stability is a key motif in the movie.

As it has been illustrated here, Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005) portrays a male character whose relationship both with the extraterrestrial "other" and with his also menacing familiar world is rather ambiguous and problematic. In this sense, Ray evokes contemporary worries concerning the depiction of masculinity in the context of SF. The notion of the "other" is constructed within the traditional negative parameters associated to what remains outside the norm. Ray's controversial relationship with the "other" has contributed to stress notions of anxiety and insecurity. In order not to be exposed as soft—one of the worst things a man can "suffer" in our

culture (Bordo 55)—Ray feels an identity crisis since he is unable to prove his strong manly core. At another level, Ray's relationship with his familiar world is, likewise, far from trouble-free. Indeed, he has got a difficult relationship with his family and does not know how to play the father's role in the chaotic world surrounding him.

In this sense, Ray can be seen as a product of disorientation, affected by the coming of the "other", which also affects his familiar and private life. He can be said to epitomise the contradictions posed by the media figure of the "New Man". As Rowena Chapman affirms, the images of the "New Man" are in our midst:

> Child of our time, the new man is all about us—rising like Venus from the waves or Adonis from the shaving foam, strutting his stuff across posters, calendars, magazines and birthday cards, peering nonchalantly down from advertising hoardings, dropping his trousers in the launderette. He is everywhere. In the street, holding babies, pushing prams, collecting children, shopping with the progeny, panting in the ante-natal classes, shuffling sweaty-palmed in maternity rooms, grinning in the Mothercare catalogue, fighting with absentee mums and the vagaries of washing machines in the Persil ad. (Chapman 225-6)

Nevertheless, a contemporary man like Ray is not ready for such a change, which causes trouble and anxiety to his everyday normality. Like many other men, Ray experiences a shift in his life in relation to parenting but shows to be still frightened of facing this new role. Chapman has argued that men do change but "only in order to hold on to power, not to relinquish it" (235). The effect of the emergence of the "New Man", Chapman continues, "has been to reinforce the existing power structure, by producing a hybrid masculinity which is better able and more suited to retain control" (235). As shown here, Ray epitomises this problematic representation of the "New Man" by means of his difficult relationship with his children and his wish for stability. Yet, the shy developments in his role as a nurturing and

caring father also foreshadows his condition as an in-between character, a man constantly fighting between tradition and innovation, a reflection of our time in crisis beset by political instability.

The film further suggests the difficulty of dealing with the representation of masculinity in contemporary times. It shows that the crisis is the best way to understand the contemporary condition of white masculinity (Robinson 9). Men's contradictory reactions to this crisis of masculinity and the different attempts to resolve it clearly evoke doubts and anxieties about gender identity nowadays. In this light, it is important to ask whether Ray can be considered a new type of hero or a 21st-century variation of the "menaced man" type. Due to the general feeling of panic and anxiety in his private and public life, Ray cannot evolve into traditional heroic patterns. Rather, he is an ambivalent figure which perfectly epitomises a man in crisis.

4.3. MEN CONQUERING SPACE IN THE NEW MILLENIUM: BAIRD'S *STAR TREK NEMESIS* (2002)

This section will deal with the contemporary version of the pattern that has been previously referred to as "conquering Man". As commented in chapter three, this pattern involves men that somehow show to have a dominion of the latest technology and normally use it for the exploration and/or conquest of unknown spaces or uninhabited worlds. The relationship between the "conquering man" and the "other" is, as pointed out before, of a different nature from the one adopted in films portraying the "menaced man". So far in this chapter I have discussed antagonist encounters with aliens that come from outer space as threats. On the contrary, space exploration films allow for more complex visions of otherness. Exploration and travel have been considered as necessary effects to development and progress, which "involved an exchange with distant ethnic groups, cultures, and nations, either through colonization or 'development cooperation'" (Van Ginneken 206). By the late 50s, superpowers like Russia and the U.S.A. had already run space programmes. As nations had already explored in all geographical directions, the domain of the unknown shifted to space (206). Conquering men in SF films manage to evoke the positive side of space exploration and the advantages of getting "where no man has gone before".

Despite this positive depiction of space exploration, encounters with "strangers" in outer space still evoke notions of danger and destabilisation, which resonates with encounters among human cultures, ethnicities and nations. Moreover, and as it will be discussed here, there is no significant change in gender relations in these films set in outer space. The presence of the evil "other" further helps reinforce the hero's qualities of endurance and success. The hero's final triumph over it grants him a quasi-mythic status. Thus,

connotations of power and superiority normally go hand-to-hand with these heroes, who follow traditional mythical patterns.

Moreover, we should also note that otherness is explored in different ways. One of the most traditional embodiments of the "other" is the destructive and malevolent alien that aims at ending up with established and hierarchical civilisations. Negatively characterised, this evil "other" accounts for the enemy or villain, whose wish is to impose—by force—his or her views and break with order and hierarchical rules. The hero's mission is precisely to end up with this threat. Apart from this negative figure, SF films that follow the pattern of the "conquering man" normally offer a very different version of "otherness". This is usually embodied by a friendly alien who wishes to contribute to a just society and does not mean a menace to tradition. This "gentle other" is often part of a multicultural team and, on many occasions, becomes the hero's helper in his critical task.

In order to illustrate these issues, this analysis will focus on one of the most representative SF phenomenon from its beginning in the decade of the 60s to the present time: *Star Trek*. Particularly, I will concentrate on its 10th filmed adaptation: Baird's *Star Trek. Nemesis* (2002). It is the fourth film to portray the cast from "Star Trek: The Next Generation" TV series (consisting of 176 episodes).[201] This time, the hero—Captain Jean-Luc Picard (Stewart)—follows the pattern of the "conquering man".

For this analysis of masculinity, it is essential to understand the scope of the *Star Trek* phenomenon and measure its evolution and the difficulties to supersede certain codes of representation. Indeed, the characters obey certain expected features and heroes follow mythical

[201] The saga continues with the 11th filmed version, released in May 2009.

conventions. This narrows, in a way, the depiction of innovative aspects in relation to the representation of masculinity. Picard follows, after all, traditional heroic formulas that are characteristic of the *Trek* universe. Moreover, the *Trek* universe is hierarchically organised, what affects the portrayal of the "conquering man". Not coincidentally, Picard occupies privileged positions within all these hierarchies. In spite of these "limitations", the film manages to "update" the pattern of the "conquering man" and includes aspects that mirror subtly contemporary gender anxieties.

The second part of this section will deal with the different visions of otherness that are offered in the film.[202] The Captain of the Enterprise has complex relationships both with the evil enemy and with the friendly alien, which affects him in different ways. Especially, the hero's inner conflicts resulting from his confrontation with the villain add unforeseen tensions to the movie. For that reason, the film relies on the topic of the clone and its devastating effects both for the hero's and the villain's identities. The danger of the "other" adds, then, new concerns to the film. Unlike *The War of the Worlds,* where evil aliens from outer space were directly associated to the "other" and the uncanny, *Nemesis* proposes an unforeseen intimate connection between hero and villain. Precisely, the film's novelty resides in the fact that Picard must face and fight an enemy that is but a clone of himself. The topic of the double suggests that only one of the couple can remain, which poses questions about genetic determinism, individuality and identity.

[202] Many theories deal with the concept of the "other" and the binary opposition one/other from different perspectives. Especially relevant for this study are those approaches that try to deconstruct the binary. See chapter three of this work: "Beyond Binaries: Gender, Postmodernism and the SF Film".

The concept of the double dates back to ancient times. Double identities, second selves and psychic phantoms appear in primitive religions and myths. Later on, psychoanalysis appropriated these beliefs. For Freud, doubling involves the infantile second type of the uncanny, a primitive fear of death. In *The Uncanny* (1919) Freud explained how the familiar becomes unfamiliar and creates a sense of the "uncanny" or *umheimlich,* as he named it in German. The uncanny, in Freud's words, "is something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (363-4). The uncanny can be produced out of the return of repressed infantile complexes or from the recurrence of primitive beliefs which have been repressed. The repressed produces horror and anxiety and becomes threatening. It is embodied in the form of the monstrous "other" in many texts.[203] Freud's theory of the double and the uncanny is not free from controversy and has opened numerous debates on these subjects.[204]

The figure of the *doppelgänger* has also been commonplace in Western literature and film. Literature reflected this fascination with the double in works like R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), adapted to the screen on many ocassions. Jekyll and Hyde represent a dual personality, and Hyde becomes Jekyll's monstruous self. Even before Freud formulated his theories, the story "suggests Freudian-Darwinian ideas about an untamed

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[203] The monster as a portrayal of the psyche is present in many Gothic tales and horror films. The creature of Shelley's *Frankenstein* has been analysed in this light, as have also been many monsters appearing in horror and SF movies. Shelley's grotesque creature possesses all of the unacceptable traits that humans suppress as children, like villainy, murderous thoughts and revenge.

[204] Among such debates lies the idea of the double as psychological security against death. Freud's theory is that the threat of death or destruction of the ego experienced during primary narcissism is combated via the creation of a double, which serves as a psychic policy (Schneider 109).

animalistic beast that lurks within the most civilized and sophisticated human" (Packer 145). Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) also deals with the topic of the double, this time around a narcissistic young man whose portrait ages while he does not. Filmic depiction of doubles became favourites of German Expressionism of the 1920s, like *The Cabinet of Dr Caligary* (1920) or *Nosferatu* (1922). Expressionism, in turn, influenced film *noir*'s dark topics some decades later, and doubles resurfaced at the end of the twentieth century, when the computer age renewed interest in double identities. Filmmakers took note of these trends and emphasised them (Packer 140-1).

Many SF and horror films have depicted doubles in the form of malevolent clones, murderous *alter-egos*, monstrous shape-shifters and maniacal twins, among others (Schneider 106). In them, doubles often make for disturbing, uncanny, even horrifying presences (107). As Schneider recalls, the double has been defined by most theorists and psychologists as "the experience of seeing or otherwise sensing, feeling, or believing that there exists another 'you', from inside your own self" (107). This broad definition includes many types of doubles that are represented in movies and literature. They nevertheless fall into two basic categories: *doppelgängers* (physical doubles) and *alter-egos* (mental doubles) (110). In the former category, a person's physical features are duplicated in another's, whether through biological, technological, or supernatural means. *Doppelgängers* can themselves be divided into two types: replicas—or natural *doppelgänger*—and replicants—or non-natural *doppelgängers* (110). Following Schneider's categorisation, the film's villain—Shinzon—falls

into the group of the replicants, and within it, he specifically belongs to the type of horrific clones.[205]

In spite of being physical doubles and sharing the same "raw material", hero and villain are depicted as binary opposites rather than as integral parts of a whole. Like Jekyll and Hyde, they have become what Otto Rank calls "opposing selves", two aspects of the self which are fighting against each other and provide the raw material for one's personality (65).[206] In *Nemesis* Shinzon recalls the shadow image and becomes an omen of death.[207] This fact foreshadows the film's inability to depart from traditional notions associated to the marginal "other" or the uncanny. In psychoanalytic terms, "sibling rivalry"—the antagonism between brothers and/or sisters that results in physical fighting and hostility—has been interpreted as a competition for parental attention, love and recognition. Freud saw the sibling relationship as an extension of the Oedipus complex. This competition to seize power lies at the centre of Baird's film.

The topic of the double adds, then, instability to the conquering hero. Following SF conventions, *Nemesis* also depicts positive images of otherness, which include hybrids, friendly aliens, cyborgs and transgendered beings. As happened with previous *Trek* movies and series, the good characters in *Nemesis* include multiracial team members that coexist with friendly aliens and other "assimilated"

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[205] Other types of replicants are robots, cyborgs and apparitions according to Schneider's classification.

[206] In *The Double* Rank refers to the pathological fear of one's self, leading to paranoid insanity and appearing personified in the pursuing shadow, mirror-image, or double (85).

[207] Although no physical doubles, the participants in the typical western duel resemble this image of two beings confronting death.

beings.[208] Other instances of "being masculine" are included within the narration provided they do not destroy the conventional power associated to the hero. In this sense, the film evokes a positive context of integration, assimilation and hybridisation among the members of the Enterprise. While the integration with the tyrannical "other" is not desired, the film emphasises the hero's intimate relationship with android Data.

On the whole, the latest of the *Trek* films shows a tension between tradition and innovation, which, according to Andreas Huyseen, is the basis of postmodernism (48). At this point, one may employ the concept "negotiation" as defined by Gledhill, which implies the "holding together of opposite sites in an ongoing process of give-and-take" (244).[209] Accordingly, ideologies are not imposed but are subject to continuous (re)negotiation. In relation to this issue, one may argue that *Nemesis* is a dialectical confrontation of opposites, which suggests this idea of negotiation in terms of gender representation. The contradictory pressures towards recognisably familiar structures—like the conquering white hero—and the new definitions of manhood depicted in the film—the sensitive prosthetic character—lead to a complex process of negotiation in this cultural product. Transgendered, posthuman and challenging depictions of gender coexist with more traditional representations.

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[208] The film's emphasis on assimilation can be seen in its predecessors. Thomas B. Byers notes when analysing the visionary debates of some movies of the 80s that *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982) while reaffirming traditional values, erases systematic racial, national, class, or gender conflict (1990, 45). Thus, the good characters include a black captain, an Asian, a Russian, and a woman, all of them successfully assimilated (45-6).

[209] According to Christine Gledhill, negotiation can be used to rethink the relations between media products, ideologies and audience. The term "negotiation" conceives cultural exchange. Meaning is never imposed, not inhibited, but negotiated (248).

In addition, the film is based on a conflict of opposites, which is basically constructed on the struggle between good and evil. The main opposition is enacted by means of the conflict between the hero and the villain. Yet, the ultimate challenge of this film is that hero and villain are but the same, which increases the anxieties posed by this traditional Manichaean conflict. The boundary between familiar and strange is threatened to be destabilised when it is discovered that both "us" and "them" are essentially the same. As it will be discussed in this section, *Nemesis* follows the pattern of the "conquering man" to explore current cultural tensions such as the confusion of the real and the created, a typical postmodern account.

4.3.1. *STAR TREK* IN CONTEXT: THE EVOLUTION OF THE PATTERN

It can be affirmed that *Star Trek* movies—based on the popular TV series—are icons of U.S. society, particularly during the 80s. There is a whole culture about the *Trek* universe and it has become a popular subject of study among academics.[210] Its implicit ambiguous ideologies can be read in many different ways, as a reflection of everyday reality, as a critique of them, as neither, or as both (Van Ginneken 210). Many scholars claim that these texts reinforce patriarchal conventions. My contention here is that the tenth of the *Star Trek* feature films—*Star Trek. Nemesis*—(released in 2002) offers a panorama of hybridity, simulacra and multiplicity wide enough as to enable innovative gender readings but that is, nevertheless,

[210] As Van Ginneken notes, apart from the DVDs, videos, books and magazines, there are many products and activities related to the *Star Trek* phenomenon, such as toys, calendars, vocabulary and encyclopaedias of *Star Trek* terms, Internet sites, chat rooms, fan clubs, conventions, and so on (208).

constrained by mythical and classical patterns. The film is based on familiar characters embarking on a new space adventure. The representation of masculinity follows the prototype previously described as the "conquering man". Additionally, the film relies heavily on hierarchical structures that portray the hero favourably. Still, contemporary gender worries can be recognised within an ambiguous panorama of false appearances.

4.3.1.1. Gender and the Mythical Structure in *Nemesis*

Many analyses have centred on *Star Trek*'s use of classical mythical structures and their identification with the Western frontier myth (Selley, Blair, Tyrrell, Worland, Kennelly).[211] Indeed, the films' heroes—Kirk (Shatner) in the first six films and Picard (Stewart) from the seventh to the tenth—might undergo the three stages established for the mythical quest story.[212] In this sense, it seems logical to affirm that these heroes cannot really evolve in terms of the representation of innovative gender patterns and are, therefore, aloof to the times.[213]

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[211] After Greek philosophers like Plato, myth acquires a renewed popularity with critics like Barthes, Propp, Campbell or Frye. After them, critics like Foucault and Derrida take a different approach to myth. In *The Republic*, Plato used myth and employed the simile of the cave to set out differences between the world of appearances and the real world of forms.

[212] As it was explained in chapter three, Campbell (1968) and Frye (1957) pointed out the presence of the quest story and its three stages of *separation-initiation-return* in uncountable texts.

[213] Thus, in "Sexism in Space: The Freudian Formula in "Star Trek", Mary Jo Daegan takes up a Freudian analysis of the series to argue that some episodes are structured around the Romantic myth, others follow the Oedipal myth (she includes here the films *Star Trek II* and *Star Trek III*) and others are structured around the Armageddon Myth (she includes within this category *Star Trek: the Motion Picture*). In them, male characters become the leaders to face the dangerous unknown while women are still depicted either as their helpmates, as temptations for the leading men or as aliens who know their proper place.

In their exhaustive study of the series, Wagner and Lundeen recognise that, deprived of key characters and premises that might have allowed the inclusion of a more challenging exploration of gender, the series "drifted with the prevailing cultural currents, reflecting America's unexamined gender assumptions more often than it challenged them" (82). It is only in later series where the treatment of gender is more complex. Thus, in them are justified current concepts of gender (82-4). Although the series evolve in many senses from more essentialist views to a more liberal outlook in the later ones, the "liberating changes apparent in the sexuality and gender roles of the *Trek* universe are biased in favour of those that remove irrational barriers to male freedom, male friendship and male fulfilment" (Wagner and Lundeen 115). With this, critics are suggesting that, as Simone de Beauviour had argued, it is the lack of imagination concerning the future of gender what makes us rely on essentialist views. *Star Trek*'s attempt to explore the possibilities of gender "leads us to a recognition of how far we still have to go" (115). Therefore, the series falls into cultural essentialism not because it is "especially conservative" but because "some version or other of this essentialism is pervasive in American thought, whether conservative or liberal" (Wagner and Lundeen 182).

Based on the adventures of the Original Series (1966-69), the first six movies were basically released during the 80s (*Star Trek. The Motion Picture* in 1979; *Star Trek II. The Wrath of Khan* in 1982; *Star Trek III. The Search for Spock* in 1984; *Star Trek IV. The Voyage Home* in 1986; *Star Trek V. The Final Frontier* in 1989 and *Star Trek VI. The Undiscovered Country* in 1991). The films are faithful to the classical mythical structure and follow recognised formulas like the American Frontier Myth, a fact that, according to Rick Worland, guarantees the enduring popularity of *Star Trek* (19). Kirk's supremacy lies on the achievement of his goals in the film. As an articulator of the hero

myth, Kirk is seen as an exceptional man from his first appearance in Wise's *Star Trek. The Motion Picture* (1979). He is daring, brave and is presented as the maximum authority in the Enterprise. Like the hero of American romance, Kirk is independent and conservative and his main threats are "temptation" (from the passions) and "jeopardy" (from the unknown) (Selley 90). He embodies the characteristics of a proper man of action and shows endurance and agility at all times.

Family ties are also limited by narrative conventions concerning the mythical quest. Therefore, "in order to undertake the heroic quest the archetypal hero must quit the comfort of health and family (…) Domestic and personal comforts are, at least until the quest is completed, dangerous distractions and temptations" (Wagner and Lundeen 100). This explains why the main characters in *Star Trek* do not enjoy intimate relationships.[214] Indeed, American mythic heroes, like Kirk and Natty Bumppo, have no family and "only vague origins" (Selley 99). Although Kirk does have a family, he is not emotionally involved in his role as husband and/or father, as they mean distractions. When referring to *The Original Series* Wagner and Lundeen note that it shows a negative portrayal of marriage and family life. Marriage, when it appears, is portrayed as a digression, an escape or a punishment (98). Accordingly, Kirk's only son dies in *Star Trek III*. Spock does have a family but his bond with Kirk seems stronger than with his real father, Sarek. In *Star Trek II,* just before dying, Spock significantly tells Kirk "I have been, and ever shall be, your friend". In a similar way, Kirk's emotional response towards his friend's death seems to be more intense than his response to his own son's.

[214] As it will be argued below, in *Nemesis* we find instances of a more intimate relationship within the heterosexual marriage.

Precisely the male bond Kirk-Spock has been widely analysed. Mr Spock is half-human, half-Vulcan but his alien nature does not represent any threat to the hero but precisely the opposite. He is Kirk's closest mate and supporter. Spock's otherness is at all times depicted as positive and comforting. Male friendship has been regarded as part of the quest structure. Selley considers that the relationship between Kirk and Spock fits the archetype of the "Sacred Marriage of Males" of the American male romance. A clear example of the importance of the male bond for the achievement of the quest can be observed in *Star Trek III. The Search for Spock*, which shows the closeness of Kirk's and Spock's friendship: "[this closeness] illustrates that the closest thing to paradise is man's harmony with his friends, achieved in a word where, as in Eden, time does not seem to exist since one has no parents or children whose ageing reminds one of one's own mortality" (Selley 100). Eden must be found in relationships. These characters' close bond is another result of the mythic theme, according to Selley.[215] As an element of the American romance, male friendship does not constitute an escape from responsibilities but an escape from time and its limitations (Selley 89). Neither does it constitute a threat to heterosexuality.

Spock's masculinity is, paradoxically, represented as extreme in the sense that it does not show any sign of ambiguity. He is threatened by emotions and is always moved by logic and rationality. Spock's suggestion of a sensitive masculinity is undermined, then, by his overstated coldness. Old and stoic male values seem to be needed in order to calm down the tensions that the depiction of a new type of masculinity might pose. In this way, his relationship with Kirk cannot go beyond friendship. This is just one interpretation, since much

[215] Both Tyrrell and Blair have also commented on *Star Trek*'s reliance on the mythic theme of Paradise.

critical attention has been given to male bonding in the series and movies, especially to the intimate relationship between Kirk and Spock. The issue of homosexuality derived from only-male relationship has been addressed by recent scholarship on *Star Trek* (Hegarty 1995; Helford 1996). Homosexuality, homoeroticism and even instances of homophobia have been detected. Even the text, Wagner and Lundeen note, refers to this possibility at times, as in *Star Trek V. The Final Frontier,* when Kirk embraces Spock after they are reunited and the latter protests "Please, Captain, not in front of the Klingons" (106).[216] In spite of the different interpretations, what becomes clear is that male friendship and union are essential for the films' plot development.

While the topic of the male bond may rely on conventional quest structures, it also adds something new to the meaning of the movies. In my view, the male intimacy shown between Kirk and Spock has homoerotic overtones. The ambiguity of these first six films in relation to these issues reflects the 80s concern with the coming of the "New

[216] Jungian analyses of the films and series have also been proposed by some critics who believe gender stereotypes are intrinsic to the human psyche (Blair, Woods and Harmon, Helford). That way, masculine and feminine gender traits are found in the various male characters. Blair, for example, relies on this approach and associates Spock with the masculine or "animus" archetype, Doctor McCoy with the feminine or "anima" one, and Kirk with the mediation of male-female. Jungian analyses believe in the union of contrary aspects, which would explain for the unity of these three characters. Another psychoanalytic interpretation of the male bond in *Star Trek* is offered by Ilsa Bick, who focuses on the developmental structure known as "latency" as the primary foundation for the original series and the first six movies. She argues that *Star Trek*'s preoccupation with the "circle of men" represents the "latency" stage or preadolescent stage, which is characterised by the inability to negotiate sexuality in a successful way (Bick 44). The films' conclusion is that change is not desirable or necessary, since things remain much the same. The only exception is *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. In it, Spock and Kirk openly touch one another, suggesting one of the few homoerotic moments of the *Star Trek* films. This film, the one that most clearly suggests a change in Spock which would mean an irreversible shift in this "never ending circle of men", is treated as it did not exist, ignoring thus, this implied change (56).

Man" and U.S. society's difficulties to assimilate new patterns of representation.

The second set of films, based on the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* series (1987-1994), were released mainly during the mid-to-end 90s and beginning of our current century. *Star Trek VII. Generations* (1994), *Star Trek VIII. First Contact* (1997), *Star Trek IX. Insurrection* (1998) and *Star Trek X. Nemesis* (2002), also follow mythical structures. Picard, the new hero of the saga is a "conquering man" and stands as a contemporary version of the mythic hero. Thus, we can find examples of his determination and courage in all the movies. His condition as the proper man of action is never questioned. In *Generations,* Captain Picard is introduced to spectators for the first time once Kirk has made his initial appearance and has died. Seventy-eight years pass, in an idyllic context of detachment from reality simulating a "freer time" without technology aboard a traditional ship, Picard is firstly characterised as a sober and impassive man who strictly follows the rules, cares about the proper garments to wear and does not want to share his intimacy with other members of the crew. Yet, and as it will be argued here, a softening of his manners is also appreciated from this moment onwards throughout the films.

As a mythic hero Picard is resourceful, and he normally has effective ways to beat the enemy. Also, in his search for truth he seems impassive on many occasions, as when in *Star Trek VII. First Contact* he orders to kill all members that had been "assimilated" by the malevolent Borgs. He is at all times brave and loyal, and does not hesitate to risk his life for the benefit of the members of his crew or the Federation. Picard is likewise faithful to his moral principles, as in *Insurrection* when he decides to defend the "Bakoos" against the Federation's plan to occupy their valuable planet for other purposes, once they discover the planet's regenerative properties. On some occasions, Picard takes this pattern to an extreme and is shown as a

real action hero. The most striking example is the climactic sequence of *First Contact*, when Picard appears, for the first time, without his uniform in a sleeveless tight T-shirt and his chest covered in sweat. It is precisely at this point that he uses violence to get rid of the Borg queen.

An added threat was included in films where aliens were associated to the feminine. In *First Contact*, to give a significant example, the "other" is portrayed as an unidentified being in the shape of a Borg Queen, a sexually aggressive figure that aims at "assimilating" human beings. The Borg Queen is considered the most powerful and pure villain to appear in the *Trek* universe, emphasised by her own personal desire to seduce Data and Picard (Wagner and Lundeen 104). This invasion of the body, this penetration of the self by an other "is what makes the Borg, to a Western mind raised on the credos of individualism and an absolute distinction between self and other(s) so suspect, so alien, so Other" (Wertheim 75). Moreover, the Borg Queen's association with the "other" is reinforced by her condition as an active and sexually aggressive woman who takes men as passive objects. Wertheim links her to the prototype of the whore, "a real other, a woman who upsets the 'natural' order by turning herself into a subject and putting men in the position of objects" (85). Cornea has also dealt with this controversial figure of the Borg Queen, taking her as an example of a *femme fatale*. She can be understood as an embodiment of those aspects that threaten to upset the order achieved by the Federation (Cornea 158). The danger that this literal melding of human and machine encompasses is reinforced by its affiliation with the feminine and the blurring of boundaries (159).

Female sexuality has meant a threat in many SF films and texts: "[i]t is by encountering the female alien that the male hero (and presumably the male reader of the text) recognizes and defines his own masculinity and that of the dominant culture" (Robin Roberts 26).

Hence, in SF texts we find many examples where women are associated to reproduction, danger, and are depicted as threats to men. As Robin Roberts argues, "the obsession with woman that is present mythically, but diffusively in Victorian science fiction becomes a central focus in twentieth-century science fiction" (40). Of course if we translate that to Hollywood SF, we also get many examples of the depiction of the alien woman as a threat. Maybe the most evident one is *Alien* (1979), in which a terrifying and fecund female sexuality threatens to end up with humanity.[217] To be alien is, then, a significant marker of social identity that normally implies marginality. In addition, the films' treatment of sex is, in spite of the storytime in the movie—the 24th century—strikingly conventional, and references to non-normative relationships are rarely suggested in them. The far away galaxy does not seem to be, then, a proper place for homosexuality or other "disturbing" relationships.

Yet, one instance of the films' need to adapt to contemporary notions of masculinity is seen in the hero's occasional detachment from traditional heroic behaviour. Picard is sometimes moved by emotions, fears and irrationality. The first sequences of *First Contact* show Picard suffering from nightmares as a consequence of his past link with the Borgs. Later, he decides to act in a rather irrational way, just to take personal revenge upon his former enemy and risking his crew's security. Conscious of his troubled subconscious, Picard admits envying the android Data for his lack of emotions. The theme of "assimilation" is central in the film, implying the threat that the absorbing Borg race poses for the whole of humanity. This race has a

[217] Feminist film theory has dealt with this topic of the woman as alien or "other". Especially relevant is, as commented in chapter three, Creed's psychoanalytic approach of the monstrous feminine in horror films using Kristeva's account of abjection (1990).

collective personality, what can be interpreted as a representation of contemporary fears towards the lack of boundaries. It actualises our inmost fears of the posthuman (Collado 75). This topic will be re-addressed in *Nemesis.*

As explained above, the hero's lack of a family links Picard to the context of myths. In the more recent *Trek* films, though, the family gets a singular importance. The melancholy of lacking a proper family is present as early as in *Generations,* where the hero's wish for a family is of vital importance for plot development. Very early in the movie, Captain Kirk is introduced to the daughter of ex-commander Sulu, who now forms part of the new crew of the Enterprise. At this point, he seems to feel nostalgia for the family he never had, precisely due to his condition as an integral hero. From this moment onwards, a certain destabilisation of old patterns is suggested, advancing one of the key themes in the movies: the family. Indeed, we soon discover that Picard is, in spite of appearances, quite affected by family matters. Although he tries to hide the overflow of his emotions, we see him cry in an early sequence when he remembers his recently deceased family and his frustration for not being able to continue with his lineage. It will be in *Insurrection* when Picard develops a sentimental relationship with a local woman from the planet he and his crew are defending. Picard's imperative need of creating a family becomes evident, although he is finally moved by his heroic nature. This inability to abandon the dictations of the mythical pattern and form a family shakes Picard's nature.

Family ties, limited in uncountable heroic quest narratives, find a place in Baird's *Nemesis* (2002). The film offers a favourable environment for romantic couple relationships and the intensity of the

family.[218] Unlike previous *Trek* movies where potential lovers like Troi and Riker did not express their feelings openly (Wagner and Lundeen 100), *Nemesis* gives freer rein to their expression. The opening sequence showing Troi and Riker's wedding celebration aboard is an illustrative example of the film's concern with feelings and personal comforts. Instances of their mutual love are explicitly shown and they are seen kissing and admiring one another. Another sequence showing these advances is the one that displays the intimate atmosphere at Troi and Riker's wedding night right before Shinzon's rape. Intimacy is suggested by romantic music, mood lighting and sexy garments. Although this sequence is meaningful for plot development since it shows the consequences of Shinzon's bond with Troi and her subsequent rape, it also depicts an unusual treatment of intimate couple relationships within the *Trek* universe. In previous movies, Riker's choice of his career over his relationship with Troi was unmistakable. In *Nemesis,* as this sequence shows, Riker still proves to be responsible with his duties with the Federation (he is working on his computer until very late on his wedding night), but this time he succumbs to "temptation" and confesses he needs some honeymoon. Indeed, next shot shows Riker and Troi having sex in bed.

Troi's characterisation is slightly different from previous ones. She is for the first time wearing a suggestive silken night gown and, as counsellor of the ship, sweetly "recommends" Riker to go to bed. Yet dreams of intimacy are shattered when we discover that Shinzon has taken up Riker's body to rape Troi. In spite of these advances, sexual

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[218] The family gets a singular importance in many contemporary SF films. As it has been argued so far, family ties are regarded as obstacles for the father-figure in the *The War of the Worlds*, which conditions plot development. In contrast, *Terminator 2* portrays the father-figure as necessary for the protection of the family and of humankind in general. Two different versions of the father's role are inscribed into these SF texts.

activity is still associated to danger and only allowed within the context of heterosexual marriage. Moreover, the sequence does not recreate intimacy but serves as a key point in plot development. Troi's extra-sensory abilities link her once more to femininity.

Hence, family life and domestic wellbeing do not seem to disturb the quest structure in *Nemesis.* On the contrary, and following the conventions of the pattern and previous *Trek* movies, *Nemesis* relies on strong mythical components. The film shows the circular plot structure typical of myths, and includes elements taken from classical literature. The festive atmosphere of the wedding celebration at the beginning of the narration and the farewell to Riker at the end are instances of conventional openings and endings of classic myths and literature. Besides, the film's strong antagonism between "races" is also based on a classical myth.[219] Moreover, one of the key topics of *Nemesis* is that the villain Shinzon is a clone of the hero. The existence of "doubles" and "masks" is based on classical myths like Plato's, and plays an important role in identity formation.[220] A motif common in Greek mythology is the combat between a champion of order—god or hero—and a monster, which embodies chaos. In an echo of this, the film's fight between the Federation and the Remans (aided by the Romulans), led by hero and villain, ends with Picard's victory, what reasserts his power as a mythic hero.

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[219] According to mythology, twin sons Romulus and Remus were nursed by a she-wolf after being left on the banks of the River Tiber. Afterwards, they founded the city of Rome, and ended up fighting over the control of it. Finally Romulus killed his brother. In a significant retelling of the myth, the Remans and the Romulans, sharing the same planet, have always been in conflict, since the former have been used by the Romulans as slave labour. Finally, Remans and Romulans fight over the control of it.

[220] I will develop these issues in the next section when dealing with Picard and his problematic relationship with otherness.

As concerning the hero, Picard follows the quest structure that Campbell established for folk tales, myths and religious fables. Accordingly, and following the mythical journey, Picard is "called to adventure" to planet Romulus, and needs to overcome different tests and trials before confronting the villain. Picard is captured by the enemy and rescued by his helper in an act of heroic friendship. Once Picard has defeated the villain, the mythic hero re-crosses the threshold and comes back home, conscious of his success. Like Kirk in the previous movies, Picard becomes another example of the typical hero of romance that Frye referred to when analysing archetypal images in literature. The form of the romance is also that of the quest and covers three stages: the perilous journey and minor adventures, that he denominates *agon*; the crucial struggle or *pathos,* and the exaltation of the hero or *anagnorisis* (Frye 187). The central form of the romance, Frye claims, is the conflict between the hero and the enemy, and hence "the hero of romance is analogous to the mythical Messiah or deliverer who comes from an upper world, and his enemy is analogous to the demonic powers of a lower world" (187). The main subject of *Nemesis* is the antagonism between the hero, who belongs to the "upper" world of the Federation, and the enemy, who comes from the dark and dangerous side of planet Romulus. Moreover, Picard embodies the features established by the romance hero and is associated, therefore, to "spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth" (Frye 188). Although in a lesser degree than in previous *Trek* movies, gender roles are affected by myth and intensely polarised in *Nemesis*. In the strict hierarchical order of the Enterprise, women are still depicted as subjected to male authority and power, whereas men are seen as ultimately responsible for the wellbeing and security of the galaxy.

Prieto Pablos in his "Estructura Ritual y Estructura Narrativa: Participantes" analyses the existent correspondence between rite and

literature, especially between the participants of ritual celebrations and some literary texts. Picard could be identified with the hero of such narrative texts, a character who suggests change, in the same way as the protagonist of a "rite of passage" does. The hero is identified with the ritual period of the transition. Prieto Pablos also refers to someone who has not passed the transition period yet and that, in literature, is represented by the hero's helper. The figure of the helper is evoked by Data, an android with human aspirations that assists Picard in his adventure.[221]

Thus, with a couple of exceptions, the film relies on recognisable mythical motifs and structures. Gender roles are predictable in this context. Myths have become part of our culture, of our discourse and language and, as such, are reflected in popular products. According to Adam Roberts "the tension between literal—for instance, science—and the metaphorical—fiction—is particularly appropriate to SF" (Adam Roberts 50). He emphasises the metaphorical power of SF, it tends to signify more than itself, it is open to multiple significations. In this sense, SF functions as a kind of meta-language, "one which is spoken more or less competently depending on how much of the symbolic and metaphoric content of the troops is understood" (50). Thus, "speaking" SF well depends upon understanding the references and allusions to other texts. The mixing of different sources, advocated in postmodern works, is observed in the *Trek* films' re-appropriation of classical motifs. Elements from fairy-tales, mythology or the Bible are inscribed in the far away context of SF. In this light, the newest *Trek* films play

[221] Prieto Pablos concludes his article by affirming that these ritual references are present mainly in sub-genres such as adventure, detective or SF. He is aware, nevertheless, of the necessary adaptation on the part of literature to the time being. Yet, the consequent changes that may have derived from this adaptation have not sufficiently affected the original ritual structure in a lasting way (75).

with cultural conventions of narrative and visual representations to include cultural trends.

4.3.1.2. The Hierarchy of the *Trek* Universe

Like other films following the conventions of the "conquering man", *Nemesis* makes a strong defence of hierarchical values. The stories of the *Trek* films focus on the adventures of human and aliens who serve in the Federation starfleet. The *Trek* universe is organised in planets, and the Federation intends to provide peace, democracy and order. Inevitably, the culture of the Federation dominates others in the galaxy, which has imperialist overtones. Although the Federation is also composed of alien races, the films regard the starship Enterprise as the most representative unit of this alliance of planets. It is led by a white, middle-class hero who embodies the ideal of power. The superiority of the white male also works among the members of the Enterprise, whose crew is organised in military ranks that position women and non-human beings below the white male supremacy. Picard is the absolute protagonist in the movie, not only in terms of plot but also at a technical level. Plot places him as the hero and as such, he stands for the superiority of the human race. Moreover, filmic language considers him a central character in many senses. Light, framing, costume, shot sequencing and other technical elements give him an advantaged status.

Power relations are, then, affected by hierarchies in the *Trek* universe. As it was pointed out in the previous section, the mythical component favours the supremacy of the white male hero. In *Mythologies*, (1957) Roland Barthes sees myth as serving the ideological interest of the bourgeois culture. The function of myth is, therefore, social. By myths Barthes refers to signs rather than stories.

Taking into account Barthes's definition, the conquering heroes of blockbusters like *Star Wars* or hits like *Star Trek* can be read as ideals or icons for bourgeoisie culture. These heroes are culturally created to reflect the beliefs that sustain current power relationships. Not coincidentally, Picard is leading all these hierarchies, which gives him social, class, political and gender advantages.

Hierarchies are established among the different species that inhabit the *Trek* universe. The Federation functions in the film as the "desired" form of government: a democracy whose leaders, moved by the need of peace and order, share an idealised vision of the world. It has a multiethnic nature and humans and non-humans work together in common missions. At this point, one can perceive the political dimension of the films and series, echoing instances of fervent patriotism that have traditionally characterised the U.S.A. The idea of the perfect nation—suggested by the Federation, especially by the crew of the Enterprise—is emphasised in every movie, including *Nemesis.* The Enterprise works as a metaphor of the First World, led by a white hero in opposition to other tyrannical and/or "dangerous" forms of government.[222]

As in other *Trek* movies, the supremacy of the Federation is not questioned in *Nemesis*. Rather, it is assumed by spectators, especially by those familiarised with the *Trek* adventures. The Federation has the mission to restore order and provide a peaceful atmosphere to the known galaxy. Its colonising and conquering aims are, then, justified and the dominion of other cultures and ethnicities understood as something necessary to achieve peace and order. Apart from the elite

[222] In clear contrast, in *The War of the Worlds* the nation is depicted as disunited and shattered by the attacks of the aliens. Instead of promoting a desired nation, the film focuses on individual interest, as has already been commented before in this chapter.

of the Federation, *Nemesis* presents two civilisations that inhabit Planet Romulus: the Remans and the Romulans. The Remans have been subordinated to the Romulans and have lived on the dark side of the planet, as they were considered the undesirable caste in the hierarchy of the Empire. Shinzon—although a human—belongs to this place. At one point in the movie, Shinzon relates the story of his dark origins to Picard. According to his account—which we get from subjective shots—he has lived surrounded by hate, darkness and brutality. Shinzon's wishes to govern the universe imply the destabilisation of this hierarchy of civilizations led by the Federation, what should be avoided at all costs.

The film suggests a political reading from the very beginning, thus justifying the need of the Federation to restore order. Hence, the very first sequence of the movie shows a *coup d'etat* at the Romulan Imperial Senate, just after Shinzon's proposal of becoming the leader of both Romulan and Reman races has been rejected. This particular sequence also functions as an anticipation of Shinzon's illegitimate ways of getting power and gives spectators a clue about his future intentions. Later in the movie, Janeway orders Picard, and with him the Enterprise, to go to planet Romulus on a diplomatic mission which she considers dangerous. The "duties" of the Federation are established, then, from the very beginning of the film.

The antagonism between hero and villain recalls the two main political systems that are opposed in *Nemesis*: the authoritarian and tyrannical system under Shinzon's rule and the democratic one represented by the Federation. Forms of non-democratic governments are regarded negatively in the film. Indeed, the Remans are depicted as a dark caste that threatens stability and represents imminent danger for the galaxy. Once Picard is aware of the mission he has been sent to, he affirms that they are sailing into the "unknown", which somehow anticipates the threat that is to come. While waiting for the

coordinates to land on Romulan soil (which oddly enough takes more than seventeen hours), another clue about Shinzon's evil intentions is provided by the sudden appearance of his ship—a warbird, a "predator". The presence of Shinzon's viceroy, of grotesque physical appearance and "unconventional" behaviour, reinforces this association of the Remans with the obscure and the alien. Shinzon's presence is compared to all the menacing "others" Picard and his crew had to face in the past, namely the Klingons and the Borgs. The soundtrack also works here to strengthen the idea of danger. All these elements set the stage and somehow present the danger of illegitimate forms of government. Shinzon's malevolent intentions become increasingly evident as the narration unfolds. He shows to be disloyal to his people and adopts a tyrannical attitude towards them. Shinzon is indeed the real threat for the whole universe.

The dichotomy one/other hints at imperialist discourses. In relation to this issue, Adam Roberts is of the opinion that "one of the ways in which an Empire establishes itself, justifies itself and continues is by putting out the cultural message that the dominant culture in that Empire is best, and that (therefore) other cultures should conform to it" (66). *Star Trek* films and TV series suggest the superiority of the Federation by raising up its values and by attacking the "other". Depending on the cultural and historical specificities, history has given us different versions of the "other": "as Jew, as Black, as Arab, as East Indian ('the Yellow Peril'), and as Woman" (Adam Roberts 66). Shinzon is regarded as the villain of the movie even before his first appearance. Once Picard and the four closest members of his crew (Worf, Troi, Data and Riker) land on planet Romulus in order to meet Praetor Shinzon, darkness invades the setting, since, as Shinzon's voice-over makes clear, he is not comfortable in the light. This association of the "other" with darkness and the mysterious is a topic derived from gothic literature, common

in many texts.[223] SF film has incorporated this device into its typical iconography.[224] Although Shinzon's body is not deformed at the very beginning of the film, it will increasingly become repulsive and his skin disgusting. Kristeva uses the concept of the abject to refer to the ways in which we rebel against aspects that are considered deplorable in our society. The abject is something that disgusts us, a strong feeling "which is above all a revolt against an external menace from which one wants to distance oneself, but of which one has the impression that it may menace us from the inside" (Baruch 118). Especially in the last sequences of the film, Shinzon is the embodiment of the abject.[225] On the other hand, Adam Roberts argues, "history's verdict on the Same has been remarkably consistent: The Same has tended to be male, white, Western, and associated with military power and technology" (66). Picard represents all these values that Adam Roberts enumerates.

The final sequences that dramatise the attack and direct confrontation between the "one" and the "other" are especially significant for the purposes of this analysis. Although Picard makes several attempts to persuade Shinzon to become a "better" being, he does not succeed and by the end of the movie we find out that the

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[223] As Cavallaro contends, in early Gothic fiction, "darkness is the locus of torment, punishment, mystery, corruption and insanity—the place in which, as in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1976), defenceless victims are trapped, often in the unwelcome company of dismal apparition and abject creatures" (27). This *topos* has endured over time and is still present in many contemporary writers as diverse as Anne Rice, Stephen King, Clive Barker and Peter Straub (27).

[224] Indeed, in *Star Wars* the universe is permeated with a Machichean opposition: the Light and the Dark sides of the Force. The Dark side is a moral concept that is depicted as the evil aspect of the Force, feeding anger and normally used by villains to seize power. The evil character Darth Vader is directly linked to this dark and malignant force.

[225] See chapter three for a more detailed discussion of Kristeva's definition of abjection.

binary opposition cannot be dissolved. Picard's last mission involves Shinzon's destruction and the restoration of universal order and stability. Just before the final confrontation, Picard shows his power to read the enemy's mind. He confidently demonstrates his ability to predict Shinzon's next moves, stating his superiority. Successive close-up shots of Picard and Shinzon help reinforce the tension between them at this critical time in the narration. This sequence leads to the final battle, when the categories one/other are extremely polarised. The need to "end up" with the evil enemy—who has undergone a remarkable physical transformation—becomes a necessary requirement for the consolidation of the hero's power. It is not until Picard ends with the "threat" that his authority is granted. In the last confrontation with Shinzon, Picard proves to have better skills for fighting and more developed technological abilities. The enemy stands as a constant threat, and its destruction constitutes, together with salvation of the universe, key goals for the hero.

Hierarchies also work within the realm of the Enterprise. The crew forms a kind of community organised in ranks similar to airships and ships. Captain Picard stands at the highest position within this hierarchy. This way, the film suggests a "safe" environment for the traditional hero. Picard's superiority is further reinforced by means of framing, editing and technical devices. His first appearance on screen becomes meaningful for his characterisation, in a sequence that begins with a shot of lengthy duration (long take) of Picard's face, while giving his speech as best man at Riker and Troi's wedding. Picard presents himself as a hero involved in many deeds and dangerous missions but, as he himself declares, nothing of this compares to his solemn duty as best man. Picard's role as protagonist is clear in these first scenes where he occupies the centre of the frame, of the narration and the object of all the looks. Thus, after the long take of his face, we get an establishing shot that reproduces the

environment in which the action takes places—the wedding reception. In fact, he is the only character who leads the action. His "safe" position as Captain and hero is, then, reinstated from this very early moment.

The only two women aboard, Commander Deanna Troi (Sirtis) and Commander Dr. Beverly Crusher (Mc Fadden), are subordinated to other male officers within the hierarchy of the starship.[226] They are less seen or heard and do not normally make decisions. In this sense, the film reinforces typical values associated with the feminine. As Robin Roberts argues in reference to medical officer Crusher, she is "shaped more by her femininity than by her medical, scientific training" (8). Troi—half human/ half Betazoid—is the ship's counsellor. Her role as care giver is far from innovative. Moreover, her main function in the ship is to make use of her telepathic abilities in order to finish with the enemy. Her extra-sensory empathy is especially emphasised in the movie. She establishes a bond with villain Shinzon and is raped by him. Perceptions, senses and intuition, implying the mysterious and irrational part of the human being, have been traditionally associated with the feminine, and usually considered as belonging to the realm of the private and domestic.[227]

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[226] The movie suggests that women do not seem to conform to the hierarchical system of the military. Holly Allen in "Gender, Sexuality and the Military Model of U.S. National Community" exposes the arguments of those who favour the exclusion of homosexuals and women in the military. According to those, both women and homosexuals are ill equipped to deal with the military since their individual desires and interests are subordinated to the accomplishments of the military missions (320-1).

[227] Sherry B. Ortner in her well-known article "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" (1972) affirmed that women are universally oppressed and subordinated to men because women are identified with nature and men with culture (493). She argued, however, that there was nothing "essential" in women, this category being a social construct. Ortner's article was later accused of being essentialist, as it took for granted that the subordination of women was a universal condition, found everywhere and at all times.

Ethnic and racial differences are also visibly marked within the crew. An adopted Klingon, a rational robot, and a black Commander serve under the authority of Picard. *Star Trek* premises a peaceful exploration of outer space and a gradual expansion of a Federation of planets into a quasi-universal alliance (Van Ginneken 213). This "inclusive" alliance is still dependent on the traditional conquering hero, which hints at a subtle ethnocentrism. The hierarchy human/ non-human is more than evident, and this is stressed by Data's pretensions to be better, in order to become a human being. In spite of the film's emphasis on the blurring of identities, to be human seems to be the "best option". In a significant sequence, Data gives Picard the best lesson of all: his enemy has the same "raw" material as him, but, since Shinzon has never tried to be better in life, he cannot be defined as human but as something else, in spite of his claims. To be human means a wish to improve and Shinzon does not fit into this pattern, so he is clearly positioned as non-human.

In general terms, and like previous *Star Trek* films, hierarchies work in *Nemesis* to place the conquering hero in a privileged position. Provided hierarchies are not broken and/or endangered, positive depictions of otherness in the shape of friendly aliens and automatas are commonplace in the *Trek* universe. As I will argue in the next section, the novelty of *Nemesis* is precisely that the high status of the "conquering man" is to be seriously affected by his close—and unexpected—bond with the evil "other".

4.3.2. VISIONS OF OTHERNESS AND THE QUESTION OF MALE IDENTITY IN *NEMESIS*

As it will be debated here, *Nemesis* ultimately focuses on the ambiguous relationship between the film's hero and otherness to

successfully exploit questions of male identity. It should be taken into account that two clearly different views of the "other" are at work here. One corresponds to the malicious and evil enemy, which the hero—with the help of his crew—needs to end up with in order to achieve his mission and restore order.[228] Significantly enough, in *Nemesis* an additional tension is found when we discover the hero's intimate link with this menacing "other". Indeed, Picard and the enemy—Praetor Shinzon—share the same DNA. The enemy is but a clone of the hero, which drives plot development and adds a striking internal conflict to the protagonist. Although still relying on SF conventions, *Nemesis* includes novelties in the representation of the traditional mythic hero. In the same way, Shinzon is full of contradictions and ambiguities. He is a copy of a human being, raised by Romulans and later rejected by them and disposed of on Remus. Conscious of his "troubled" nature, he also undergoes an identity crisis.

Posthuman characters like Data offer a more challenging vision of otherness and adequate contexts for the display of renewed gender values. As it happened with previous *Trek* movies, the inclusion of gentle versions of the "other" affects the relationship between binary opposites. Interestingly enough, in *Nemesis* the android Data finds his "double" in his physically identical prototype B-4, what sets a context of confusing identities. The purpose of including doubles seems twofold. On the one hand, the primitive idea of the double as "shadow" is employed to destabilise both the hero's and the villain's identities. On the other hand, the film's insistence on the double provides a metaphor for the postmodern idea of the fragmentation of the self. Within the postmodern milieu, doubling evokes the "squizoid reality"

[228] In this sense, the depiction of the "other" is similar to the one found in movies following the pattern of the "menaced man". In them, a dangerous and disturbing force threatened to break with the stability of tradition.

described by Fredric Jameson (1991). The film emphasises the idea that stability can be only restored if the evil clone is eliminated. The movie echoes and raises the discussion about men in crisis in contemporary U.S. society.

Following earlier examples of the saga, Baird's film offers the classic representation of the figure of the "other" as a menace. In this sense, *Nemesis* works as many other horror and SF texts, where "the copy or double is peculiarly prominent, usually as a threat to the human realm in which it phenomenally claims a place" (Telotte 1990, 154). Probably due to the film's need to include new ideas, the enemy is not a physical monster, nor a dangerous woman but a human being that is, strikingly enough, a copy of the hero.[229] At the beginning of the film, Shinzon insistently claims his wish to tear off differences and become "one", a direct invocation of the "two as one" metaphor in twin narratives (Tranter and Stratham 374).

Shinzon proposes that he and Picard have an intimate dinner, a time when they seem to have a rather friendly conversation, talk about their past lives and about the idea of political union. In this specific sequence, they also comment about their external appearances. Apart from their blood, they share little physical attributes. Shinzon explains he has been the victim of numerous violent attacks and that is why they do not look exactly the same. This difference can be interpreted in psychoanalytic terms. In her book *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (2003), Juliet Mitchell offers a Freudian model to argue that twins demonstrate mutability of psychic position, a play of sameness and difference. She draws a connection between sibling relationships and

[229] In *Star Trek. Generations,* for instance, the evil "others" are Klingons governed by repulsive women, who ironically display symbols of traditional femininity like long loose hair and provocative dresses.

the main human drives—love, fear, violence, etc. Even identical clone type twins show differences; life experiences facilitate their differentiation. Thus, twins—or clones like Picard and Shinzon—are both similar and different. Shinzon recalls the eyes, which he is sure Picard recognises well. Apart from the eyes, both are bald and look alike. Their tastes are also suggested to be similar and therefore at some point in the movie both are seen drinking the same kind of tea (hot Earl Grey). These images of similitude between Shinzon and Picard are reiterative in the movie, allowing for this visual association and widening the tensions that their likeness entails. This is a strategy to offer ambiguity, while raising questions about identity.

A close and personal relationship between the two male characters is perceived during this dinner sequence, which seems to break with the conventional antagonism between hero and villain. Just before leaving, Picard confesses he is trying to believe him, and that nothing would make him prouder than to take his hand in friendship.[230] Hope for peace and union is slightly suggested. Yet, as we will soon find out, Shinzon is using Picard's democratic beliefs and vulnerability to achieve his evil aims. Significantly enough, as soon as Picard returns to the Enterprise, a new threat appears: a Thalaron radiation. Picard deduces that whatever Shinzon is after, it is not peace. It can be argued that this is the only sequence where a relatively harmonious relationship between Shinzon and Picard is seen in the movie.

Precisely because of the unexpected link hero/villain, Picard falls into identity crises. He is unsettled by the appearance of his clone,

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[230] Picard's preoccupation for Shinzon is also suggested in other sequences. One such instance is when Picard is informed about Shinzon's coming death and asks if anything can be done for him, even after Shinzon has attacked them and made his evil intentions more than clear.

since he becomes aware that they are not as different as he had imagined. Hence, the topic of the double adds confusion and tension to the film. This unpredictable situation weakens Picard's condition as hero, and mirrors contemporary fears towards border crossing. This bond threatens, then, to break down with established limits between "one" and "other" and suggests that the so-called "known" can be also dangerous. That way, the film problematises the traditional oppositions hero/villain, good/bad, one/other, while hinting at other cultural worries.

From the very beginning, and partly because of age difference, spectators see Picard as the original who needs to face his copy, Shinzon. The "other" replicates the "one" causing ambiguity and identity problems. Homi Bhabha's concept of "colonial mimicry" may serve to explain the problematic relationship between Picard and Shinzon. According to Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (1994, 86). In essence, mimicry is the process by which colonised subjects are driven to imitate colonial ideas and practices without significant modification.[231] Colonial authority is rendered "hybrid" and "ambivalent" by this process of replication. Bhabha insists that neither coloniser nor colonised are dependent on one another (Loomba 178). The result is ambivalence. As Loomba argues, the process of replication is never complete, "what it produces is not simply a perfect image of the original but something changed because of the context in which it is being reproduced" (Loomba 89).

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[231] Homi Bhabha has written extensively on mimicry's crucial role in the development of the postcolonial situation. Bhabha sees mimicry as an aspect of the process of cultural projection and reflection instigated by the colonisers for the purpose of self-preservation: "[m]imicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualises power" (Bhabha 1994, 86).

In *Nemesis*, we learn how the context fosters both the hero's and the villain's differences. Although they share the "basic material", their upbringing determine their behaviour. In fact, Shinzon tells Picard at some point, "if you had lived my life and experienced the suffering of my people, you would be standing where I am" and Picard responds, "and if you had lived my life, you would understand my responsibility to the Federation". Replication produces hybridity. And hybridity ends up in anxiety and crises in this movie. This lack of frontiers does not imply a harmonious coexistence between the "one" and the "other" but rather the opposite. Picard and Shinzon have inner conflicts precisely because of this bond. Picard's unrest involves his direct and obvious link with the "other", which makes him worry about his real identity. In the same way, Shinzon shows to be in trouble emotionally because of his inability to become powerful and "visible", even sharing the hero's genes.

A key sequence illustrating these issues is the one in which Picard becomes Shinzon's prisoner. Reiterative close-ups showing Picard's face evidence his preoccupation and painful awareness of his copy's vengeful aims. Yet, as the proper mythic hero, he asks the villain to take him and leave the Federation in peace. In this significant sequence, Shinzon is marginalised by his morally superior counterpart. Shinzon does not want to be Picard's *doppelgänger* any longer. He claims that his life is meaningless as long as Picard exists. He does not want to be a shadow anymore. The only solution for the copy to have a unique identity and overcome his inferiority complex is by destroying the original, and guaranteeing thus the victory of the echo over the voice.

The twin trope is essential to SF and horror films. As in other twin narratives, Shinzon is depicted as Picard's evil twin brother, as his horrific clone. Also, their relationship reproduces archetypal twin narratives that involve the association of the double with the uncanny.

In them, twins are considered to have special psychic connections: shared memories, extra sensory perception and other mental powers, which links them to the uncanny (Tranter and Stratham 373).[232] In *Nemesis*, Shinzon, the evil twin, narrates the unusual genetically-inherited disease he suffered in his childhood: the Shalaft Syndrome, which made him hypersensitive to sound. According to Freud's notion of the uncanny, there is a blurring of the "self" and "other" in the twin sibling in which the "you" and "I" are not doubled entirely into two identical "I's". This problematic situation is explored in twin narratives, which normally represent the good original confronted by the evil double. The film's focus on the obsession of the "copy" with substituting the "original" is thus a key motif in twin narratives.

Picard's notion of the self is disrupted by Shinzon's words. Shinzon defines himself as belonging to a race bred for war and conquest and uses his condition as a clone to accuse Picard of being the same: "You are me. Look in the mirror and see yourself". At this critical point, Picard manages to use exactly Shinzon's argument in order to make him see he is also a mirror for him, and Shinzon angrily responds "not for long". This conversation on mirrors and echoes "dramatises the anxiety that comes from the manufactured nature of the clone: the fear that the existence of a copy will challenge the original's sense of self, and the fear that the copy must desire destruction of the original in order to claim an authentic identity" (Tranter and Stratham 377). Identities are fluid and fractured and borders have been transgressed. One may refer here to Jameson's articulation of "schizophrenia" as the postmodern condition. The film

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[232] As De Nooy claims in *Twins in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (2005), tales of twins are a significant motif in contemporary culture. They evolve and respond to the place and the period of their (re)telling and represent an ambiguous self and/or 'other self' in relation to issues of gender and sexuality (164-5).

insists on the problematics of the "I" and the loss of confidence in truth, both defining features of postmodernism. The possibility of being destroyed and "substituted" by his copy affects Picard seriously, as another echo of the crisis of hegemonic masculinity in the U.S.A. Men's crises are affected by this ontological anxiety in a world lacking borders, where to know what it means to be a man has become a hard issue.

Yet, and as suggested earlier, the film also offers positive instances of non-dangerous "others"—Data, Worf—who develop singular relationships with the conquering hero and contribute to erase gender, racial or class differences within the Enterprise. Characters traditionally considered as extremely dangerous, such as monsters, aliens, and cyborgs have also appeared in many SF movies evoking human feelings and behaving as "more human than human".[233] Boundary breaking may give the chance, as many feminist SF writings have done, to situate the human-alien encounter within contexts that can be re-examined and questioned.[234]

There is a conscious effort to emphasise this friendly atmosphere and positive hybridity in *Nemesis*. A clear example of this can be seen in the sequence that shows the wedding reception at the very

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[233] In chapter three, it was argued how the replicants appearing in Scott's *Blade Runner* were depicted as "more human than human", the motto used by Tyrell Corporation to create genetically these advanced clones.

[234] The gradual loss of these beings' initial threatening presence and their adaptation to the U.S. context can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the commodification of the so-called culture of the unknown. In the same way as heroes and other "dominant" characters, these alien presences have also allowed for the transmission of implied values within U.S. society, and are worth analysing. Jenny Wolmark argues that, since feminist SF occupies a marginal position in relation to other forms of cultural production, it can provide new and different meanings that undermine clear-cut distinctions between self and other, human and alien (2). The exploration of alternative and non-hierarchical definitions of identity is accommodated rather than repressed in this genre.

beginning of the movie. Illustrations of humour, jokes and, in general, a relaxed atmosphere is evoked while most characters are seen laughing, dancing, chatting, drinking and adopting a rather positive mood, reinforced by background music. Data's speech at the ceremony's dance is similarly interesting, significantly addressed to ladies, gentlemen and transgender species. Following the Betazon tradition, Data presents a gift to the couple: a song—"Blue skies"—that he himself sings in honour of the couple's "conjugation".[235] This sequence offers joyful scenes suggesting a friendly coexistence between humans and transgender species within the Enterprise. This context, inherited from earlier *Trek* movies, is taken to an extreme to show instances of positive non-normative masculinity.

Yet, one should not forget that this friendly bond among races, genders and "assimilated" aliens within the Enterprise does not undermine the hero's supremacy. The movie's emphasis on a positive hybridity and mutual understanding among races (with the exception of the enemies) favours this suggestion of a boundless space where other forms of being a man can find a place. Friendly androids, "assimilated" beings and different types of human beings work together to finish with the menacing "other". This positive depiction of the "other" is present in many other recent SF movies where the alien has lost its initial threatening presence to become "one of us". In *Nemesis*, friendly hybrid characters become the hero's most faithful supports. In line with previous movies, the android Data and the Klingon Worf are essential helpers of the hero and develop a singular relationship with him.

[235] The song is by the American composer Irving Berlin, another more instance of Data's knowledge of human culture.

Especially relevant is the character of Data, an android that becomes one of Picard's closest friends and that can be classified as a friendly alien, or in Martín-Alegre's typology, as a combination of "normal body" and "positive behaviour", as robot Bishop in *Aliens*.[236] *Nemesis* offers outstanding examples of this gentle otherness as embodied by characters Data and Worf. Data is an android with a remarkable human appearance that is programmed to serve the Federation and Worf is a key member of the crew that belongs to the once-menacing race of the Klingons and that has been "assimilated". As "others", these characters are "out of the norm" and are possessors of unconventional bodies. Nevertheless, they do not mean any threat for the Enterprise but precisely the opposite, they are faithful contributors to the establishment of order and stability, and in so doing, they serve the conquering hero.

Data is considered an alien figure because of his mechanical nature and his insistent wish to become human and improve himself. Unlike destructive man-machine cyborgs present in many other SF movies, this gentle version of otherness offers new ways of understanding our relationship with technology, while giving alternative meanings to the very concept of otherness. He is included within the group of good characters aboard the Enterprise.[237] Data is

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[236] In *Monstruos al final del milenio* (2003) Sara Martín-Alegre establishes a classification of the monster taking into account the relationship between external image (and/or body) and behaviour. According to this typology, the malevolent character of Shinzon would fit in the category she describes as the combination of "normal body" and "evil behaviour"—as are robot Ash in *Alien* or T-1000 in *Terminator 2*. The character of Worf corresponds to the category "physical monster with positive behaviour" and can be compared to the characters of ET or John Merrick in *The Elephant Man* (36). As this typology makes clear, notions of otherness comprise both positive and negative behaviour, together with deformed and/or beautiful bodies. Monstrosity and beauty, Martín-Alegre argues, are both extraordinary categories and as such, they can complement each other (36).

[237] I will expand all these subjects in the next chapter when dealing with men and technology. Nevertheless, I find it useful for the purposes of this analysis to refer to

described as a faithful, obedient and gentle character that, nevertheless, makes his own decisions and gives advice to other members of the crew. Everybody in the ship loves him. When he feels Picard is in great danger, he does not hesitate to disobey his orders and travel into the unknown to rescue him from a certain death. For that mission he must give his life. Data's presence proves necessary to prevent a tragic end and is instrumental for the salvation of the mythic hero.

Interestingly enough, one of the film's strategies used to point out Data's positivism is by means of a direct contrast with a character that is externally identical to him but that, nevertheless, is of a very different nature. Thus, very early in the movie we are presented with B-4: a prototype that is but a less advanced version of Data. While Data is the hero's ultimate support and saviour, B-4 involuntarily serves the villain's intentions. The inclusion of this inferior and malleable character shows the dangers of misused technology, while hinting at the film's fascination with the topic of the double.

B-4 is considered technically inferior to Data and this is suggested from his first appearance on screen. Thus, we are witnesses of his reconstruction from disembodied pieces that are found buried on deserted planet Colarus 3, which sets the film's context of "doubleness" and simulacra, and explains some of the forthcoming events. His body signifies vulnerability, and visibly reveals his artificial nature. During this specific sequence on the planet, Data seems puzzled when B-4's head is found and he himself notes that the resemblance is striking. Framing also helps to establish this duplicity. Data holds B-4's head with his arms and looks amazed, in an ironic

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some sequences where Data's positive qualities are especially emphasised, allowing for our acceptance of this version of the "other".

echo of *Hamlet*. This image creates confusion, which is reinforced when the disembodied head repeats "fascinating".

A very different type of relationship from Picard-Shinzon's is established between Data and B-4. Data shows to be really concerned about the incompleteness of his counterpart, whom he calls "brother". Data insists on improving B-4 and offers his memories to be integrated into his, and that way, be able to be a "more complete individual". To La Forge's insinuation that B-4 might not be like him, Data responds that at least he should have the opportunity to explore his potential. The interaction between Data and B-4 is not of good and evil but of brotherhood and equality. Data accepts their differences and shows a more reasonable attitude towards his "copy".

As Adam Roberts argues, "the robot is that place in a SF text where technological and human are most directly blended. The robot is the dramatization of the alterity of the machine, the paranoid sense of the inorganic come to life" (Adam Roberts 161). This insistence on robots and doubles strives to evoke a context of paranoia and pastiche, typical traits of postmodernism according to Jameson. Camera movement also works to emphasise the realm of the Baudrillardian simulacrum, especially the sequence that shows the ship's lab where both androids are seated in a symmetrical position wearing similar clothes and looking externally "identical". The topic of the double, as happened with Shinzon and Picard, is suggested in this sequence where Data shows to be concerned about his brother's lack of potential. B-4's inferiority is made obvious when Data asks him several questions, to which he is unable to answer in a logical way.

Thus, and as happened with the relationship between Picard and Shinzon, the topic of the double is used here to show a palpable contrast between the superior and trustable condition of Data and the compliant, less sophisticate and victimised prototype B-4. Identical

bodies serve clearly differentiating aims. The gap between these two characters is widened when we discover that the villain has "used" B-4 for his malevolent intentions and turns out to be somehow associated with him. This context of simulacra suggests the inability to trust appearances in a context where everything seems to be fake. Individuals are, however, not immune to this uncertainty and both Picard and Data feel for one another.

Aware of this blurred context of copies, originals and echoes, Data takes advantage of the situation and, when Picard is made prisoner by Shinzon, he adopts B-4's personality and, in doing so, saves the Captain from the hands of the villain. In this sequence, Data pretends to evoke the negative connotations of B-4 and is seen acting in the aggressive and vulgar manner that it is traditionally associated to the enemy. This sequence also shows the reciprocal respect and admiration both Picard and Data feel towards each other. Data offers Picard a device of teletransportation, and the latter significantly responds: "we'll find a way out together".

This is only one example of their close bond. Taking into account Picard's association to the "one" and Data to the "other", their close relationship also means they can get on in friendly terms, opening new ways of interpreting the male-to-male bond. They share an intimate relationship and Data shows to be Picard's best advisor and friend, giving him reassurance and advice when he needs it. This admiration is reciprocal and Picard does not hesitate to risk his life before letting him die. In the same way, Data disobeys the order of his Captain and gives his life for Picard, who feels afterwards extremely sad, especially

in the very last sequences when, celebrating their final victory with a glass of wine, gives a toast to "absent friends".[238]

As it has been shown here, the topic of the double adds a tension to the narration while causing anxieties to the hero, to the enemy and to the gentle "other". The fear of boundary breaking has been stated throughout the whole movie, and instances of this border crossing have been expressed in ambiguous terms. In spite of these efforts to leave intact the gap between the "one" and the "other", *Nemesis* offers many instances of confusion, gender melding and identity crisis that are meant as reflections of contemporary life. This general disorientation is further fostered by hybridity, the topic of simulacra and the inclusion of close and lovely "aliens", which threaten to end up with old patterns of representation. It is precisely because of this "pastiche" that the film shows characters in need of stability and order.

As it has been argued, *Star Trek. Nemesis* (2002) offers a contemporary version of the pattern of the "conquering man". Captain Picard follows the path led by mythical heroes. He faces the evil enemy and leads a multicultural team whose aim is to restore peace to the universe. The film uses the popular *Trek* "formula" to feature a positive vision of the conquering of space. It relies on hierarchies that position

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[238] The bond between Captain Picard and Data is not a novelty in the saga, though. Despite the generalised tendency of the *Trek* movies to avoid non-conventional gender relations, there are a couple of sequences in the whole series where homoeroticism is, in my view, indirectly suggested. The clearest one is in *First Contact* when Picard explains to Data the importance of touch for the expression of emotions. Picard and Data are seen caressing the side of spaceship Fenix in an act that could be read as homoerotic. This idyllic moment is, not coincidentally, interrupted by counsellor Troi who comes to warn them about the danger and, ironically, asks them if they want to stay the three of them alone. This sequence modifies traditional readings of friendship. Likewise, the male bond is a typical feature in the first set of movies, where Kirk and Spock developed an intimate—and rather unusual—frienship.

Picard in a privileged social position. Moreover, it suggests a positive context of hybridity and new visions of the "other", apart from the one linked to the dangerous alien.[239] As it happened with previous *Trek* movies and series, *Nemesis* offers a disparity of male prototypes that include androids, clones, hybrid men, friendly aliens and the conquering hero. It is precisely this inclusion of different versions of the masculine, together with the general positive mood of the movie, which makes us hope for more flexible gender representations. Indeed, as Henry Jenkins argues in relation to this issue, "[t]he potent mixture of romance and science fiction allows the fans to envision a world where men and women can work together and love together as equals" (Henry Jenkins 200). In the same way, the generalised affability among the different male characters guarantees a peaceful boundless world. Yet this "utopian" hybrid world only works if the supremacy of Picard is not endangered.

This is not to suggest, however, that the film is totally detached from contemporary concerns in terms of gender depiction. In this sense, one can affirm that the wide-ranging portrayal of male characters in the movie—Picard, Data, Worf, and La Forge—subtly suggests the existence of multiple prototypes of masculinity at work in a plural society. Indeed, and as any other cultural product, a reflection of the problematic of gender is, although in a rather cautious way, also present in *Nemesis*.

Moreover, *Nemesis* manages to portray a hero that eventually suffers from identity crisis. The film is articulated around the motif of the *doppelgänger* or the double to raise questions about male anxiety and men's identity conflicts. The hero's ambiguous relationship with

[239] The category "other" accounts for those beings that are outside the limits of dominant representation.

the different embodiments of the "other"—the malevolent enemy and the friendly alien—contribute to this instability where there is a final search for stability. Hence, border crossing is regarded both as dangerous and desirable.

The postmodern theory of philosophers Deleuze and Guattari distinguishes between the "arboreal" logic of hierarchical and restricted organisations and, on the other hand, the less structured "rhizomatic" organisation, which like roots under the soil, make connections in all sorts of directions. The binary logic of dichotomy has been replaced by the principle of multiplicity in the "rhizome". In line with this complex theory, the Federation in *Nemesis* can be seen as the arboreal, centred and hierarchical organisation in which the conquering hero stands at the top. Moreover, we have seen how the film is sustained by binary oppositions and dualism. The inclusion of identical prosthetic bodies and a generalised context of simulacra and "biunivocal relationships", may occasionally suggest Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome, which is contrary to binary choices. This tension, nevertheless, is finally resolved by the victory of the arboreal and structured system governed by the Federation and the hero. Moreover, the elimination of threatening and problematic male bonds, like the conflict between Picard and Shinzon, further guarantees the continuation of the pattern of the "conquering man".

As it has been argued here, the *Trek* films evolve and adapt to the times, in spite of the rigid code of representation they follow. Androgyny, gender closeness and identity crisis are mirrored in this film. The far away space resembles, then, a panorama of hybridity and gender pastiche where old values share stage with new emerging ones

but where a white heterosexual masculinity prevails.[240] In a context dominated by the culture of the postmodern, many SF films released at the beginning of the 21st century provide us with new images of masculinity which are defined in opposition to normative constructions of it. These films hint at the demise of traditional masculinity. Yet, we should not forget that these new embodiments of masculinity are not always free of controversy, since their condition is, like the character of the android Data, not always human. While the erosion of traditional masculinity is hinted at in the film, Picard is still constructed upon the traditional stereotype of the "conquering man" and, accordingly, follows many of the conventions led by previous representations of this pattern.

[240] As argued in chapter one, Mosse (1996) recognises that cultural changes approaching "the new *fin de siècle*" constituted a menace to the masculine stereotype (189).

4.4. CONCLUSION

The two films discussed here—*The War of Worlds* (2005) and *Star Trek. Nemesis* (2002)—offer images of men that develop singular relationships with the "other". Otherness implies everything that escapes the "norm". While it is true that otherness has been traditionally associated with danger and destabilisation, SF texts have also included new versions of the "other", either in the shape of gentle androids, soft aliens from outer space, or messiahs. Contemporary society offers multiple possibilities for combination and this is also reflected in the figures of the cyborg and the alien, which are seen as embodying features from many discourses. Thus, we have different representations of the alien, which range from those dangerous and menacing monsters we found in typical invasion films, as those celebrated in *Independence Day*, to the more human and familiar type of *ET, Star Wars* or *Men in Black.*[241] In the films under discussion, otherness takes different shapes: destructive Martian beings, an evil human replicant, or, of quite a different nature, a gentle and friendly android with human pretensions and assimilated non-human beings.

Although in different ways, Ray and Picard need to face their alien enemies. It is precisely their relationship with the evil "other"

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[241] One of the most pervasive figures in SF films is the alien messiah. According to Hugh Ruppersberg, this figure was seen as early as in the film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). In it, an alien visitor warns the inhabitants of the Earth of the impending war and violence. In the context of the Cold War and atomic paranoia, the alien messiah "serves to resolve these problems, at least imaginatively, to replace despair with hope and purpose, to provide resolution in a world where solution seems impossible" (Ruppersberg 32). A number of later films invoke a messiah figure as a religious character that comes from a superior planet or culture but that, paradoxically, rejects technology. The messiah is an expression of transcendence. Other recurrent figures of gentle aliens are beings from other planets that, unlike in alien invasion films, do not have conquering or destructive aims but are depicted as shy beings, as it is the case of the characters *ET,* or the extraterrestrial characters of *Cocoon.* Familiar androids like R2D2 or C3PO in the *Star Wars* saga also belong to this group of gentle others.

what causes instances of anxiety for the male characters. Ray is terribly menaced as a consequence of the attack of the "other". This anxiety increases when he needs to play the role of the nurturing father and discovers he does not know how to handle his children. In *Nemesis,* the topic of the evil clone is introduced to suggest that hero and villain are but the same, a situation that affects Picard's identity. Male instability is, therefore, more openly suggested in Spielberg's film, which is an example of the "menaced man" type.

In *Alien Chic* (2004), Neil Badmington analyses why our change of attitude to aliens has shifted from fear to love, arguing that "[w]hat once repelled is now embraced. What was once a "'Them' is now part of 'Us'. To give Freud an alien twist, where 'It' was, there *eros* shall be" (33). The lines between what is human and non-human, Badmington notes, are increasingly blurred by scientific and technological advances and our love for alien forms (narratives of abduction, alien-themed toys) could mean a wish to reaffirm our human side in a time of uncertainty. Thus, Neil concludes by affirming that we love aliens at a distance, and according to the familiar hierarchy of humanism: "while aliens are allowed to invade 'our' lives on a daily basis, 'we' love 'them', quite simply, as a 'them'. They are desired only ever *as aliens*" (Badmington 152). Thus, otherness still remains, an alien is still an alien.

This argument seems valid for the analysis of the positive images of the "other" in *Nemesis.* Transgendered beings, gentle cyborgs and, after all, unconventional depictions of masculinity are allowed so far as they do not threaten the supremacy of the mythic hero. In this sense, the "other" remains, in spite of all the ambiguity it entails, on a secondary position. Badmington's idea of the need of the alien for a self-definition of the human is, thus, confirmed here. In any case, all these embodiments of otherness—negative in *The War of the Worlds* or

more positive ones in the case of *Nemesis*—are disturbing presences for the narration and for the hero.

The themes of patriotism and the nation play an important role for the depiction of masculinity in both films. *Nemesis* relies on more conventional ideas of patriotism and portrays the heroic victory of the democratic system, led by the mythic hero. Picard's ideals go beyond personal interest and, that way, he manages to save his "political system" from the tyranny of the "other", understood as evil. The superiority of the Federation is never questioned in *Nemesis.* On the contrary, *The War of the Worlds* offers an unheroic character, who, moved by practical and individual interests, fails as a patriotic citizen. Spielberg's depicts a desolated world threatened by massive attacks, which revises notions of nationhood and mirrors the trauma of the U.S. population after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In both films, otherness is associated to colonising politics and the danger of border violation.

The traditional binary system seems to work in these films either to reaffirm the hero's power—in the case of *Nemesis*—or, on the contrary, to denounce the unheroic nature of its protagonist—*The War of the Worlds*. Picard stands at the top of all the possible hierarchies in the *Trek* universe. He is a white male reprentative. *Nemesis* offers a strong mythical component to highlight the return to tradition and male supremacy. Picard's condition as a "conquering man" somehow reinforces his authority on board the Enterprise. Ray, on the contrary, belongs to the working class and shows to have a disorganised life. He comes from a dysfunctional family and is unable to exert paternal authority, a fact that affects his privileged "status".

In spite of their different way of portraying the male protagonist, both films suggest that new gender values threaten—either in a violent or "gentle" way—to dismantle the dominant definition of masculinity.

What these contemporary movies show are the different reactions towards the emergence of these new values, to finally insist on the triumph of stability, order and tradition. Ray epitomises the current crisis of masculinity and the contradictory attempts to address it. He is disoriented and does not know how to behave. He heads for the stability suggested by a family reunited. Picard, while also hinting at this crisis, offers a more constructive relationship with the gentle "other". The film assumes the prevalence of the "one" over the "other"—which derives from mythical narrative conventions. Men's reactions towards the erosion of traditional power structures are foreshadowed in both texts.

These two versions of the "menaced man" and the "conquering man" illustrate that they have developed from previous representations. The films discussed here have consciously included contemporary gender anxieties concerning the representation of masculinity in SF dealing with alien invasions and space travellers. In Spielberg's, the destructive nature of the alien "other" is emphasised, which hints at the trauma prevalent in the U.S.A. after 11 September. The "other" is humanity's enemy and the general paranoia contributes to Ray's identity crisis. However, in Baird's, the "other" lies within the conquering hero. Against any predictions, Picard shows to be emotionally affected by this intimate connection with the malevolent alien. In both cases, only one term of the binary opposition remains, which suggests the continuation of the binary opposition system typical of SF.

CHAPTER 5:
MEN AND TECHNOLOGY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In U.S.contemporary context, different historical and socio-cultural events have shaped the concept of masculinity and its discursive representation from the second half of the 20th century up to the present.[242] Moreover, the fast spread of technologies and their integration into everyday life contribute to alter our understanding of the concepts of the human and the machine. Technology and postmodernism are two important forms of cultural identities at the end of the 20th century. As many critics have pointed out, they are at the centre of the latest discussions about the condition of life. In "Postmodern Virtualities" Mark Poster affirms that technological development and postmodernism delineate the human condition in the pre-millennium atmosphere: "[p]ostmodern culture is often presented as an alternative to existing society, which is pictured as structurally, limited or fundamentally flawed. New communications systems are often presented as a hopeful key to a better life and a more equitable society" (Poster 79).

Men's relationship with technology and its depiction in contemporary SF films are of great value for this analysis of masculinity. Technology has been traditionally considered as belonging to the masculine realm and masculinity defined in terms of technological competence (Wajcman 447). Nevertheless, current discourses have provided new definitions of technology, of gender identity and of what being human means, inevitably challenging traditional power associations between men and technology. In our technological society, classical dichotomies body/mind, human/machine, natural/artificial are dissolving. As Barbara Becker

[242] For more information about masculinity in history, see chapter one, section 1.3.2.

argues, the "difference between natural and artificial, real and virtual, material and immaterial phenomena is not an ontological one, but changes according to technological improvements and methods of communication" (Becker 361). In the same way, definitions of masculinity also change with time, affected by several factors, including technological developments. Additionally, the postmodern ideological panorama, characterised by plurality, openness, the revaluation of traditional notions, fragmentation, and, on the whole, uncertainty about reality, is to shape the concept and representation of masculinity. It proposes new cultural imagery which plays an important role in the portrayal of men linked to technology.[243]

The effects of technology on human subjectivity start to be widely analysed from different points of view. Visual culture presents new ways of portraying the fusion of the human body with technology by means of the cyborg figure, which offer several interpretations. The topics of subjectivity, body materiality and identity, among others, are explored in this partly human/partly machine being. This chapter deals mainly with cyborgs, considered here as hybrids made of technology and organism. The figure of the cyborg encloses many different and contradictory aspects and, therefore, its analysis becomes a difficult task. The cyborg was introduced to the academic

[243] Postmodern critics do not tend to base their arguments, then, on binary thought but, on the contrary, they take into account the multiplicity and otherness that characterise the postmodern condition. That is why, for example, many scholars have used postmodern theories of subjectivity "not only for rethinking governing cultural values but also as a framework for actively seeking social change" (Gutterman 61). Likewise, many philosophical debates show a general non-conformity towards the universal system of thought and explanation. Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* becomes a very influential source for later critics, as it rejected claims to universal foundations of knowledge. In this sense, postmodernism has also been considered a discourse about "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard 37) and, in a way, a reaction to modernism, as this early 20th century tendency took for granted the stability of the human self in order to understand the world.

community as a critical concept by Donna Haraway in 1985 with her "Cyborg Manifesto", under discussion earlier in this work. In it, Haraway argued that the cyborg was a creature without origins, where borders between humanity and machine were confused. This figure allows us to imagine beneficial couplings that erase gender differences. From this moment onwards, emerging theory has dealt with this complex idea within different fields of knowledge, creating a literature on postmodernity and the so-called cyborg culture. Especially, feminist SF has emerged as the need to address all these issues. The postulates questioned and discussed by these works mirror contemporary concerns about the interface between gender and technology.

The cyborg acts as a site where anxieties over technology and gender identity can be reflected and, therefore, it has become a cultural icon. Indeed, it is synonymous with the "millennial threshold" (Bolstic 358). Especially troublesome are identity matters and how these posthuman bodies contest conventional oppositions. At the turn of the millennium, many developments prove the body as open to reconfiguration. Christine Ross has commented on the mutability of the body due to:

> [t]he fast-expanding integration of technologies of information into everyday life, the corollary blurring of work and non-work, the perfecting of eco-and biotechnologies that increasingly confuse the human with the non-human (such as genetic engineering, robotics, reproduction technologies, pharmacology, plastic surgery, and body fitness), and the underlying problematic belief in our ability to predict, control, conquer, and improve nature via technology. (Ross 28)

Ross claims that these technological developments make the body be conceived as non-authentic and vulnerable to change, yet they also reveal how these reconfigurations are multiple, ranging from creative to normative. In this light, Braidotti affirms that cyborgs are

no longer the space of SF but that they define our social framework at all levels: from medicine, to telecommunications, finance and modern warfare (2002, 17). She uses a multi-layered definition of the cyborg, which includes today fragile bodies that interface with computer technologies at posthuman levels. Moreover, the new technologies offer prosthetic extensions to our bodies in the form of mobile phones, Internet networks and the like, which open new ways of challenging the classical humanist mode of representation (Braidotti 18).

The growing importance of new computing and communication technologies shapes, then, social order. The world is dominated by technological images that have become part of our daily life and have opened new spaces for representation, such as the virtual world or cyberspace. As commented earlier in this work, Baudrillard and other poststructuralist critics suggest that we live in a word ruled by "simulations", or hyperreality. This world has no reality beyond itself and the real has become our "true utopia—but a utopia that is no longer in the realm of the possible, that can only be dreamt of as one would dream of a lost object" (Baudrillard 1994, 123). Wrapped in this hypermedia society, subjectivities seem to be disturbed and unable to distinguish reality from simulation.

As cultural icons, cyborgs are affected by technological and social changes, becoming metaphors of our contemporary state of mind. In this chapter I will concentrate on the amalgamation man-machine that appears as a dominant character in recent SF cinema. This cinematic intertwining includes both the hypermasculine action hero—those instances of man-machine coupling that result in an aggressive, over-muscled body fused with potent technology—and the virtual hero, a male character that goes beyond "physical" frontiers and enters computer-generated spaces. Following with the patterns of masculinity in SF described previously in this work, I will refer to

them as the "artificial man" and the "virtual man", respectively. Both types show the ambiguous relationship between men and technology.

The artificial—and normally dangerous—link between human and technology offered by armoured bodies is progressively eradicating in virtual bodies that are, consciously or not, immersed in hyper-real or simulated worlds. Thus, and as I intend to illustrate, the initial threatening appearance of the blending man-machine gives way to more "natural" fusions. For that, I will make use of two illustrative examples of SF depicting the relationship between men and technology: Cameron's *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) and the Wachowski's *The Matrix* (1999). Released at the beginning and at the end of the 1990s respectively, these two films present two different types of male cyborgs that account for the blurring of frontiers between men and technology. The hyper-muscular body of the Terminator, significantly played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, evolves into the more androgynous figure of Neo (Reeves), a hero that moves from reality to illusion and vice versa. This softer heroic type becomes the norm of films based on virtual realities.

In order to expose these issues, I will first deal with the man-machine hybrid as depicted in Cameron's *Terminator 2.* As it will be debated, the intertwining results more complex than in the previous movie, Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984). Although still violent and "hyper-genderised" (Braidotti 2002, 247), Schwarzenegger plays this time the role of a protective and "good" cyborg that has undergone a transformation from the murdering type to a quasi-paternal figure who learns human values. In this second film of the series Cameron proposes an armoured male body to pose questions about male identity and body materiality. Spectators become aware of the Terminator's transformation, which can be read as U.S. "internalisation" and "normalisation" of the new technologies connected to the human subject. Moreover, the Terminator's sensitive

side can be seen as a metaphor of the appearance of new proposals about masculinity in U.S. society at the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s, anticipating the representation of softer types of male cyborgs in SF cinema.[244]

Next, I will concentrate on the "virtual man". This man-machine combination becomes the perfect embodiment of the posthuman aesthetic. There is a group of films that follow a specific typology for the representation of the relationship between men and technology. These are films showing virtual reality and men into cyberspace. In *The Matrix* (1999) the existence of a wholly artificial world where everything is bound to dissolution contributes to the idea of gender blending, mainly seen in the characters' androgynous appearance and in their posthuman condition. In this sense, and as several critics have pointed out, cyber-worlds offer resistance to traditional gender roles. Yet, the Wachowskis present a fake world, called The Matrix, which is meant to be a simulation of contemporary U.S. society at the end of the 20th century, a dimension which still follows the principles of patriarchal rule. With that, the film portrays the ambiguity of gender in the hyper-real environment, which in the film is but an imitation of a globalised, capitalist and masculinist world.[245]

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[244] In the complex panorama governed by a new and challenging system of thought, the image of man as represented in contemporary discourses is consequently revised. A big step is appreciated in the depiction of masculinity from the 80s up to the moment. In the 70s and 80s sentimental heroes did appear publicly, and were represented in the media, yet they were not fully accepted as the embodiment of contemporary "real" masculinity. That is precisely the reason why emasculated heroes like Schwarzenegger or Stallone dominate the big screen at the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s. Over-muscled and tough heroes came to stand as the embodiments of true masculinity. That is a natural response to the crisis of masculinity that many authors have referred to. But the image of the "New Man" begins to be internalised and accepted progressively, and values like sentimentality start to be depicted in the media in a more natural way.

[245] As Zizek affirms, virtuality is an ambiguous realm. The difference between simulation and imitation should be remarked in order to understand the complexity

One of this chapter's aims is to illustrate how the depiction of the male cyborg evolves following technological changes. As it will be argued, the cinematic image of the cyborg is used to pose questions about how technology has affected traditional views of nature and identity. With the passing of time, the concept of cyborg tends to be more inclusive, and therefore more complex, since the difference between natural and artificial is gradually dissolving. However, and in spite of this development, human being's initial negative response to technology is also present in many recent SF films showing this association of man and machine.

Moreover, it should be taken into account that the transformation of the male cyborg body does not only depend on technological changes but also on the way gender, and specifically masculinity, is culturally understood at each historical moment. In this sense, I agree with those critics that affirm that the cyborg is a cultural icon. In one way or another, the SF films under analysis propose uncoventional ways of depicting masculinity on screen. The "artificial man" and the "virtual man" illustrate society's love and hate relationship with technology while offering clues of how gender identity is grasped at the end of the 20th century.

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of virtual reality. It does not imitate reality, it simulates it by generating its resemblance. Thus, "imitation imitates a preexisting real-life model, whereas simulation generates the semblance of a nonexistance reality—it simulates something that doesn't exist" (Zizek 1999, 100).

5.2. THE MAN-MACHINE HYBRID: CAMERON'S *TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY* (1991)

In order to show the evolution of the type of masculinity I have referred to as the "artificial man", I will make use of the male cyborg figure as depicted in the popular Terminator films.[246] I will concentrate specifically on the second film—*Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991)—since it presents a more challenging vision of masculinity, especially if compared to the original 1984 film. The pattern of masculinity changes from the evil machine-based cyborg to the protective and more sensitive cyborg-type. The same cyborg body, performed by muscular actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, addresses clearly different purposes. He changes from evil to good cyborg, from the monstrous "other" to the more "humane other". Yet, he remains "other" because the limits between man and machine are disrupted.

Apart from the revision of man-machine interactions, social and gender relations also seem to be altered in the second film. In this sense, the female protagonist—Sarah Connor (Hamilton)—has suffered a physical and psychical transformation from the first to the second movie. She has experienced a "masculinisation" and can be defined as a "female hero". Moreover, the sequel presents pre-teen John Connor (Furlong). His presence becomes meaningful for the whole film, since it suggests a conscious effort to include an unconventional father-son

[246] Artificial men whose link with technology is dangerous and whose artificiality is more than evident—violent replicants, malevolent clones, armoured man-machine—are going to evolve into softer and gentle beings which, although still mechanised and visually artificial, seem closer to us. An example is the character of Bicentennial Man, a mechanical being with feelings. Other examples are sensitive robots. We have already commented on the character Data in *Star Trek*, a totally artificial being which aims at having human feelings and emotions and whose man-machine link is not offensive or dangerous for the hero but precisely the opposite.

relationship within the narrative, mirroring the times' concern with the new parental duties of the "New Man".

From the mid-to end 90s, the figure of the cyborg starts to suffer a process of digitalisation, and anxieties over technology will be suggested in films presenting the "virtual man" inserted in cyberspace, as will be debated below with the analysis of *The Matrix*. That is precisely why Mostow's *Terminator 3. Rise of the Machines*, released in 2003, can be regarded as a step back in terms of the depiction of the cyborg. The film exploits the topic of the mechanical cyborg in times when SF cinema is more concerned with offering less "graphical" representations of the cyborg body. In my view, the third film of the series over-exploits the topic of the violent cyborg and does not add anything new to the depiction of masculinity.[247]

I have centred my analysis on *Terminator 2* and on how the character of the Terminator embodies many of the cultural concerns ascribed to the "New Man". For this purpose, I find it useful to establish a comparison with the original 1984 movie. The ideologies of the times and the cinematic tendencies that govern SF during the decade of the 80s and beginning of the 90s are thus worth mentioning. The first Terminator film was released in 1984 under the Reaganite presidency, whereas its sequel, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) did so when the so-called "New Man" appeared publicly in the U.S.A. New definitions of masculinity started to recur in the mass media and

[247] In this sequel, the bad cyborg—Terminatrix—takes the female shape and is after John Connor, who is now twenty-years old and, as he himself confesses, has been living off-the-grid in Los Angeles. Schwarzenegger stars once more the T-101 model that is sent back from the future to protect John and his future wife. Contrary to what happened in the previous film, the character of the Terminator is, as John himself realizes, distant and practical and does not "remember" anything John taught him in the past. In fact, he is not the same Terminator. This will be Arnold Schwarzenegger's last role before taking up his duty as governor of California.

cinema in a positive way, which was to influence the way this male cyborg figure is portrayed.[248]

As in *The Matrix*, the complexity of this type of masculinity relies precisely in its hybridity, which is still linked to notions of otherness. The high-tech masculinity offers many readings. It is contended here that this hypermaculine type, which implies initially a strengthening of cultural expectations as a backlash against "softer" types of masculinity appearing in U.S. society, incorporates the iconography of the "New Man" into his muscled body. By doing so, values like fatherhood and sensitivity are considered qualities of the "good cyborg". However, the film's exaggerated portrayal of masculinity linked to industrial machinery—which is the basis of its commercial success—seems rather obsolete and artificial. Be as it were the cyborg remains a contradictory figure in the end.

5.2.1. OF MEN AND TERMINATORS AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

This section deals with the human/machine opposition as it is shown in *Terminator 2.* In general terms, the film recalls the human fear of being replaced by technology. The male cyborg is a conflicted image which echoes anxieties over gender identity at the end of the 20th century. In *Terminator 2* the hypermasculine cyborg contrasts with the one at work in the first film of the series. Although the body is

[248] As I commented in chapter two, this division corresponds to Jeffords's identification of two different periods in the representation of masculinity in Hollywood films. One is the Reagan times, with the prevalence of the so-called "hard body". The other begins with Bush's presidency and presents a new version of masculinity which incorporates emotions and family-oriented values (Jeffords 1994, 13).

the same, the Terminator's masculinity has been redefined in this second movie.

5.2.1.1. The Man-Machine Interaction

SF cinema of the 80s frequently associates the male cyborg with violence. This type of cyborg has been denominated "mechanical cyborg", due to its techno-human amalgamation, and regarded as "other", as it has been stated in previous sections. That is the reason why many cyborgs from SF movies in this decade have been read and interpreted as evil. Hypermasculine hybrid beings of the 1980s and early 1990s owe part of their image to comic book superheroes and suggest the terrible consequences of human technological progress. Whereas the cyborg figure unsettles the border that separates human from machine, cyborg films normally stress the traditional opposition between organic and mechanical.

A common topic in 1980s films like *Blade Runner* (1982), *Runaway* (1984), *The Terminator* (1984) or the *Robocop* series (1987, 1990, 1993), is the strong opposition between the "artificial body" and the "natural body". As these films suggest, the human body is loosing its private dimension to become a mere image that is constantly reconfigured and presented for display. This condition of the human body is what Telotte denominates "the Tremulous Public Body", a subversive character that reflects our "increasingly schizophrenic sense of technology itself" (1995, 150). SF films of the 80s evoke this pattern of blurred frontiers to which responds as a tension between a private, anatomical body and a machine-like public body. The robotic figures of these films are public bodies that reveal an image of a masculine empty nature (149-51). Nevertheless, after his analysis of various cyborg films of the 80s, Telotte sees a hope in the self's sudden

re-emergence, in the integration of the constructed body with the human spirit. Although these images of human artifice respond to the cultural need to suggest a world where everything, including human nature, is already constructed, they do so by proposing bodies that are both exposed and vulnerable in many ways (166). Telotte's argument becomes useful for the analysis of the cyborg as the uncanny reflection of the self, as the "other".

Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) presents certain themes that will be at stake in the second movie of the saga, and that are worth highlighting here. These are: the artificial nature of the cyborg, the rebellion of technology against humankind, and the complex interaction man-machine.

The 1984 film focuses basically on the character of the "artificial man" and foregrounds the opposition between organic and mechanical in a rather traditional way. The Terminator lacks any human motivation. We find many instances in the film that reveal his artificial nature. Apart from being impervious to bullets and flames, his movements are mechanical. His constructed nature is further emphasised by means of subjective shots that allow spectators to perceive that what he sees is but pure information. As Reese reveals at some point in the movie, he is an exterminator, he does not feel remorse or piety. His only goal is to kill his target, Sarah. Unlike other artificial men, his murdering instincts do not stem from personal revenge (as happened with artificial replicants in *Blade Runner* or the evil clone of *Star Trek. Nemesis*) but by a pre-programmed function. A gradual unmasking of the Terminator's constructed nature is appreciated as the movie unfolds. He is little by little loosing flesh as a result of the aggressive fights he is involved in. At the very end of the film the Terminator has lost all of his "organic" side to become an example of a "technological other" in pursue of his victim.

The technology of the Terminator is comparable to the industrial mode of production of classic capitalism (Byers 1995, 9). While the Terminator units grow more advanced in each film, tools of destruction become more primitive (Larson 66). As Cornea notes, the Terminator's character is more aligned with industrial machinery than with technologies associated to a post-industrial age (124). This is reinforced by the film's reiterative use of images of industrial age machinery, like vehicles and the factories where the closing sequences of both the first and the second film are set. With this, Cornea may be suggesting that, even though the Terminator is described as a cyborg, he is visually represented as "a kind of 'old-style' aberration":

> an outmoded masculinity confronted by a cybernetic world that requires a rather more communicative and fluid subject: the very characteristics that he is forced to face in the literally fluid T1000 in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* and the acrobatically agile female cyborg of the third film. (Cornea 124-5)

In this light, the Terminator can be equated with Klaus Theweleit's description of the fascist male soldier or *FreiKorps* as an invincible armoured fighting machine. This armoured body plays against the vulnerability of the human body. In fact, several critics, among them Springer, Dery or Foster, have analysed cyborg imagery in line with Theweleit's psychological analysis of the *FreiKorps.* These men externalise their fear by killing what is not "them" (Bukatman 303). The fulfilment of the ideal fascist body, according to Theweleit, is a machine incorporated into a male body and facing an extra-technological and fluid enemy, the latter suggested in *Terminator 2* by the liquid model T-1000 (Larson 59).

With this, the Terminator in the first movie proposes a rather old-style and artificial type of masculinity. This is to change slightly in the sequel movie since, although the same machine imagery is used,

Schwarzenegger's character evolves towards sentimentality and emotions, which adds a subversive meaning to this "killing machine".

Another key topic in the movie, also found in subsequent Terminator movies, is the rebellion of technology against humans. At the end of the 20th century, the fear of being replaced by technology is frequently suggested by the cyborg body in many cultural products. *The Terminator* can be read as a response to the late 70s and early 80s debates over "new technology", which was perceived as ushering in a new form of society, which, according to Jancovich, was called by various names, such as postindustrialism, postmodernism, or the information society. Much of the arguments for this debate rested on the idea that this new technology could replace human labour with automated production lines or even replace standardised production (Jancovich 1992, 6).

In *The Terminator* the "technophobic" theme is more than visible.[249] Rushing and Frentz read the film as following the hunter myth, by which the male hunter looses control over his weapons and becomes its prey instead. The Terminator is an icon of the technological weapon-turned-hunter in U.S. cinema today. He erupts violently into the present as the monstrous shadow with the mission to eliminate humans for the sake of efficiency (166). Humanity and technology have exchanged places as hunter and prey. Apart from the obvious threat of the "technological hunter" itself, the rebellion of technology is also hinted when the Terminator uses humans' own

[249] As Michael Ryan an Douglas Kellner argue, in SF films of the 70s technology was frequently a metaphor for everything that threatened "natural" social arrangements, and conservative values associated with nature functioned as antidotes to that threat (58). From a conservative perspective, technology opposes nature and the regulated opposes the free, and, consequently, many films portray technology in a negative way. Ryan and Kellner note that from the mid eighties onwards there was a marked decline in the number of conservative "technophobic" films, with the notable exception of *The Terminator* (65).

technology against them. A walkman, an answering machine, recorded phone messages "betray" humans and facilitate the Terminator's mission. In this sense, new technologies are depicted in a rather negative way, as a menace or, even, as Jancovich contends, "as parts of larger systems of communication and transportation, systems which have developed their own principles of organization and procedure to which human uses are now subjugated" (1992, 8). In the film, humans depend dangerously on machines. Indeed, the movie considers the association human-technology as dangerous.[250]

In *Replications* (1995), Telotte sees the cyborg as an image that expresses the interactions between the human and the technological (5). Thus, the Terminator can be interpreted as an allegory of human fears towards our ambivalent feelings about technology, of our growing anxieties about our nature in a technological world and of an evolutionary fear that these artificial "others" may presage our own disappearance or termination (Telotte 1995, 170). Telotte understands the cyborg as a human "double", which implies a complete separation of the two categories. Yet, and as Telotte himself notes, the cyborg figure is not totally an "other" but a melding of humanity and technology. The concepts of "self" and "other" that Telotte seems to oppose in his analysis are dissolved in the cyborg figure, which complicates this dualistic and psychoanalytic structure. This is noted by some authors that, like Cornea, are aware that the cyborg condition poses a threat to the model that Telotte proposes (Cornea 125).

Hence, the film offers a disturbing human-machine relationship. From the first few minutes of the movie, the complex opposition flesh

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[250] A monstrous, humanlike figure created by science is a common topic in many texts, like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. But while Shelley's creature is made to appear as sympathetic, we have no sympathy for the Terminator, he is but a monster (Jancovich 1992, 4-5).

versus machine is appreciated. In contrast to the Terminator's mechanical/physical superiority, Kyle Reese is characterised as deeply human from the very beginning. His spirit of self-sacrifice, his wit to resolve situations, together with his feelings towards Sarah and his capacity of improvising, make of him a very different character from the Terminator. Moreover, he is physically weaker, which adds tension to the movie. According to Forest Pyle "[w]hat *The Terminator* defines as fundamentally human is the routing of technological mastery into a rebellious subjectivity, a heroism capable of resistance and even self-sacrifice" (Pyle 232). In parallel contrast to the Terminator, who advances towards artificiality, Kyle suffers a process of humanisation throughout the film. Kyle is constantly exposed to body scars and shows to be more vulnerable as the movie unfolds. He presents a body and a soul in pain.

However, images of the Terminator and Kyle cannot be understood as separate and epitomising the total opposition between human/machine, precisely because the Terminator is a literal melding of both categories. As suggested before, the male cyborg is a character that is so intimately linked to the machine that differences become troublesome. Thus, in spite of the film's emphasis on this character's artificiality, the Terminator remains a hybrid, half-man half-machine. He has human skin, hair and blood. He speaks English and tries to look like a U.S. citizen. He dresses in a leather jacket and punk clothes from a familiar urban group. His appearance makes him "suitable" in some settings, like the pub Tech-Noir in which he enters looking for Sarah. Indeed, the cyborg's physical side is intended to imitate human beings and become undistinguishable from them, as Kyle makes clear when defining the race of his antagonist: "they look human. Sweat, bad breath, everything. Very hard to spot". Indeed, only dogs can recognise the Terminator's non-human condition.

In this sense, the character of the Terminator could be equated to Jean Baudrillard's second order of simulacra, which he associates with the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. In it, the distinctions between image and reality begin to blur because of mass production and the proliferation of copies. Such imitation threatens to replace the original version. It is, then, a "productionist simulacra" based on energy materialised by the machine and the entire system of production (1994, 309). The film highlights the difficulty of distinguishing the human from the artificial. For this purpose, Jancovich contends, it uses the trope of the machine as monster, whose definition changes socially and culturally (1992, 4).

Thus the man-machine relation is more complex than it seems in Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984). Simulacrum is more than a copy of the original. Hassan Melehy argues that films of the 80s like *The Terminator* undermine the ideological systems in which they function (315). Melehy is referring to the film's emphasis on machinery to suggest "the cinematic machinery, in its production of images bringing the past, the future, and the present to inhabit each other, their relationship of causality, determination of meaning, and even sequence transformed" (317). Apart from this, the film produces an association of the spectator with the cyborg by means of subjective shots, which promotes the affinity between machine and human views. With this, although we get the victory of the human over the machine, the film explores a cyborg relation that tends to weaken the hierarchy of the flesh.

The contrast between the Terminator model in the 1984 film and the one found in the second movie echoes, in part, the changing relationship between humans and information technologies. With the fast development of technology, "machines have not only extended the acuity of our senses; they've nearly replaced them" (Bolstic 359). Thus, the telephone and telecommunications are not only an interface, they

are almost extensions of the human body (359). In this sense, new anxieties have flourished which affect the way we understand technology. In *The Terminator* (1984) the cyborg is violent and depicted as a site where the relations man-machine seem to be artificial. The contrast is favoured by the presence of Kyle Reese, who represents the good side of humanity. The interaction man-machine is given a new turn in Cameron's sequel *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991). In it, the intertwining human-machine as depicted by Schwarzenegger's character seems acceptable. The old Terminator model is re-programmed and sent to the present by John Connor in 2029 to protect him. A second Terminator, though, has been sent by the machines governing the future with the mission to kill John. This evil terminator is technically superior and has the ability to adopt different shapes and mimic the human voice. That way, the new model becomes practically indistinguishable from humans, and this creates confusion.

Hence, technology is depicted in a more fluid way and can have both positive and negative overtones in this second film of the saga. It presents a new type of cyborg—the benign protector cyborg—and a new opposition—the good cyborg *versus* the evil cyborg. By means of the good cyborg figure, significantly played by Schwarzenegger, the man-machine relation is depicted as more "natural" and reassuring. The figure of the Terminator suffers a total transformation, learning human values and eventually adopting the father's role. In this sense, he can be equated with the character of Kyle in the first movie, a character who evolves towards humanity. Thus, the film presents the cyborg as a kind of technological messiah, sent from the future to protect the young John Connor from the antagonist.

At the beginning of the movie, spectators are confused about the nature of Schwarzenegger's character. The opening sequences present machines as dangerous entities, constantly killing and destroying

humanity in a post-apocalyptic future. The technophobic theme opens the movie. Sequences after, and following the pattern of the first film, we get the image of Schwarzenegger coming through time, what leads spectators to associate him with the antagonist. This is reinforced by his tough manners towards a group of bikers. Soundtrack and low angle close-ups of his face help for this initial association of Schwarzenegger with the evil cyborg. It is not until he rescues John from the villain when spectators realise he is not following the pattern of the first movie.

Similarly, we get a first wrong impression of the film's antagonist, the T-1000 model. In contrast to the good cyborg, the bad cyborg has a "softer" appearance and assumes the shape of a local policeman, driving a car whose motto is "to protect and to serve". Robert Patrick's physical appearance is not as hard as Schwarzenegger's and his character seems polite and gentle, as when he asks John's foster parents about him. All these aspects make spectators assume, at first, that the T-1000 model is John's protector. He appears to be one more citizen of Los Angeles. Yet, little by little his evil intentions are revealed. He is made of liquid metal and embodies ideals of postmodernity, namely fluidity and flexibility, which contrast with the massive body structure of the good Terminator.

Initial appearances challenge our conception of established norms, and, as Telotte affirms, "we have to reassess our ability to see and read this world, even question those common signs of trust, safety, and humanity in which our culture and our popular narratives trade" (Telotte 1995, 178). This first confusion between good and bad, between real and manufactured recalls the "information-age" characterised by schizophrenic anxiety over our link to technology, as Jameson and Baudrillard have pointed out.

Yet, the most striking aspect of the movie in relation to the man-machine interaction is the humanisation of the good Terminator. Little by little he learns the rules of society, together with its ethics and morality. John is his instructor of human behaviour, in the same way as Sarah helped for Kyle's humanisation in the first movie. The boy teaches him the importance of human life ("you can't just go around killing people"), how to behave in public and to smile, etc. He begins to understand the complexity of human emotions. He even learns the value of tears. Finally, the most evident sign of the cyborg's progressive humanisation is his sacrifice at the very end of the movie, since he was not programmed to die. The cyborg "terminates" his program for the benefit of humanity in general and of his "family" in particular.

In this sense, as Pyle argues, we can adopt a deconstructive analysis of the movie since the knotting of human and cyborg is inextricable and the triumph of humans and humanism depends on the humanisation of cyborgs (Pyle 240). The opposition between "organic" and "mechanical" seems, then, unstable. The humanisation of the cyborg complicates the classical man-machine relation. As Sarah says at the very end of the film, if a machine can learn the value of human life, maybe there is hope for humankind.

The opposition flesh *versus* machine is, thus, revised in *Terminator 2* by means of the good cyborg figure and the melding becomes "acceptable". The Terminator's image challenges, then, traditional ways of representing cyborgs and offers, in my view, a kind of reassurance at times when our relationship with technology threatens to destabilise the self. The problem exposed in the film, Telotte's argues, is "[t]he self as a surface, as a set of functions, as a hard unfeeling thing, or as a subject codified by culture, 'constructed' in a certain fashion by the world we inhabit, stereotypically represented by our popular narratives" (1995, 181).

The Terminator's humanisation suggests, then, our closer and more natural link with technology. However, and as it was suggested before, this machinery seems a bit "obsolete" within the contemporary panorama governed by the latest computer technologies. This may be read as the "commodification" of basic, industrial-age technology but the inability to "face" the latest, unpredictable and more flexible information technology. In relation to this issue, Larson argues that we now understand "brutal" machinery whose strength is predictable—the Terminator—but we are still disoriented by a flexible and seemingly more human enemy who resembles a clean-cut American boy: the T-1000 model (Larson 62). Thus, the antagonist's human resemblance remains highly unsettling for spectators, who may see in this figure the embodiment of the dangers of new fluid technologies, while the good cyborg offers a comforting view of "domesticated" machinery. The electronic technology suggested by T-1000 becomes, then, a new site of anxiety, since, as Bukatman notes, it cannot be relied (Bukatman 305-6).

The contrast between the good and bad cyborg in the film has been an issue of criticism and can be read from many perspectives. In general terms, it suggests the opposition "between classical and late capitalism, between a production-based industrial and a consumption-based informational economy, between modern and postmodern culture, between paranoia and schizophrenia" (Byers 1995, 8). Emphasis has been given, then, to these contrasts. Also, and as it will be discussed in the next section, the opposition can be read to embody the male/female binary (Springer), or else as the threat of androgyny (Dery) or homosexuality (Byers).[251]

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[251] In "Terminating Bodies" Carol Mason sees a danger in embracing the cyborg as "myth". Taking into account that the cyborg in itself is a contested location, Mason resists reading the film according to the good/bad cyborg dichotomy but she

The antagonist is depicted in *Terminator 2* as a menace, as the embodiment of chaos, as a monster of some diabolically "other" nature (Larson 62). This is reinforced by his ability to become anybody/thing and by his fluid and impenetrable body. He embodies, in Pfeil's words, the semiotic mutability of a Protean villain, he is the embodiment of "amorally evil dispersion" (1992, 34). As it means a clear menace to borders, he can be equated to Kristeva's notion of abjection. We are disturbed by him in part because he "figures the dangerous fluxes of postmodern capitalism" (Byers 1995, 10). Larson adopts a political focus for the analysis of the Terminator films and considers that the Liquid Metal Man lacks anatomy and exposes ambiguities in the figure of the American body politic. He is dissolutioned into anarchy, "a nightmare image of continually overturned hierarchy" (63). As such, he is an icon of the fear of democracy in the electronic age. In contrast, the re-programmed T-101 model offers false assurances to an audience afraid of its desires, and horrified by late capitalism (68).

Almost impossible to detect, the T-1000 contributes to spread the idea of late capitalist schizophrenia as described by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983). As commented earlier in this work, Jameson also refers to the idea of schizophrenia in his essay "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism". Yet, while Jameson sees postmodern schizophrenic culture as a replication of the logic of capitalism (Jameson 125), Deleuze and Guattari see schizophrenia as part of a subversive postmodern politics with the radical potential to bring down capitalism. For them, the "schizo" is a radical, revolutionary, nomadic wanderer who resists all forms of oppressive

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emphasises cyborg social relations or "cyborgism" embodied by the characters. With this she attempts to show the "cyborgism" of a situation. Hence, the historical divisions between class, race and gender enacted in the film compromise the liberatory potencial of the cyborg. According to her, the real cyborg is not the body of the Terminator but the Connor-Dyson confrontation (227-9).

power. Schizophrenia is not, then, the identity of capitalism, but, on the contrary, its difference, its divergence, and its death (246). In this sense, the bad cyborg and his relentless aggression can be aligned with the threatening flows of capitalism and the notion of deterritorialism found in Deleuze and Guattari's work.

Furthermore, he can be read as a body without organs, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004). They use the term to refer to the virtual dimension of reality. This body without organs is not an empty body stripped of organs but a body upon which that serves as organs is distributed in the form of molecular multiplicities (34). It is composed of unstable matters, of set of flows moving in all directions at various speeds. It goes beyond any opposition between the one and the multiple (170). Deleuze and Guattari eventually differentiate between three types of bodies: cancerous, empty, and full. In the empty body all flows pass through it freely, with no stopping, and no directing. The full body is healthy and productive, but not petrified in its organ-isation. The cancerous body is caught in a pattern of endless reproduction of the self-same pattern: "each instant, each second, a cell becomes cancerous, proliferates and loses its configuration, takes over everything" (163). The fluid T-1000 is constantly regenerating and reproducing to no end, which is comparable to the cancerous body in the philosophers' terms.

The liquid antagonist embodies, then, the Deleuzian idea of schizophrenia, Kristeva's notion of abjection, and the body without organs. Hence, the enemy evokes fears of the postmodern dissolution of frontiers, which includes, as it will be argued in the next section, apprehension over gender identity. Indeed, the once killing machine of the original movie has become positively represented in the second film, in contrast to the digitalism of the electronically generated T-1000 (Bukatman 309).

In short, the Terminator's change from a bad cyborg in the first movie to a good one in the second and third ones responds partly to the normalisation of technology in U.S. everyday life. Although certain aspects of technology have been "commodified" into culture, an enduring fear is present in the whole Terminator series and this anxiety is reflected in the conflictive cyborg imagery. As it will be argued in the next section, the cyborg's subversive meaning is especially shown in virtual reality films where, as it happens in *The Matrix,* technology "penetrates" human bodies and minds to cause identity troubles.

5.2.1.2. Gender Identity and the Cyborg Body

Apart from questioning the relationship between humans and machines, male cyborgs explore problems of gender identity. Since gender provides the division into masculine and feminine traits defined in every culture in various ways, it becomes more than useful to analyse how the cyborg is represented in popular texts that mirror our relationship with technology. The body has been frequently considered as the recipient for gender. New concepts of the body and identity have been currently explored in contemporary discourses (Becker 361). The dissolution of classical differences, normally associated either with apocalyptic visions or euphoric dreams, is reflected in cyborgs, robots, transhumanists and virtual bodies found in literature (361). The traditional concept of the body is disintegrated and, consequently, we cannot reconcile it with new technological versions of it. The body has got a new ontology of its own.

In this technological context, the body, where gender traits used to be reflected, appears as a space where no limits can apparently be drawn between the masculine and the feminine, and becomes a mere

construct. Paradoxically, the cyborg body, a site of blurring frontiers between one/other, presents hypermasculine body traits in SF cinema, as we can see in the Terminator films. The hyper-muscled body has come to represent the figure of the cyborg in popular imagination, especially in mainstream commercial cinema of the 80s and beginning of the 90s.[252] This may be due to the wish to recuperate old-gendered values in times when dualistic thinking is seriously questioned and a general feeling of unease impregnates U.S. society. Yet, and as it is contended here, in the Terminator film series, one can observe an evolution undertaken by Schwarzenegger's character from the first to the second movie, which ultimately means a shy and positive attempt to inscribe new values to the construction of masculinity.

The reiterative appearance of the hypermasculine cyborg in SF films of the 80s and 90s has been read from many perspectives. As I commented in chapter two when dealing with the action hero, over-muscled bodies have been widely interpreted either as reassertions of male power or as metaphors of a masculinity in crisis.[253] Influential critics like Susan Jeffords (1994) and Peter Lehman (1993) have analysed the hard male body in popular media and argued that these depictions become part of the ideologies of contemporary life. Physicality and the spectacle of the strong male body were highly appraised during the 80s, when the notion of masculinity was taken to

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[252] From this moment onward, the image of the cyborg is associated to cyberspace, as it will be discussed in the next section when analysing the "virtual man".

[253] As it was contended in chapter 2 when dealing with the "muscular action hero", many critics have analysed these figures, focusing on the construction of these bodies as spectacle (Dyer, Neale, Fernbach), as "performing the masculine" (Creed, Tasker, Holmlund), or as a parody of masculine identity (Britton, Wood). The association between muscular cinema and the Reagan times has been pointed out (Jeffords, Lehman, Tasker), and the emergence of this muscular icon has also been interpreted as the reassertion of traditional values associated with masculinity in a time of backlash against emergent feminism (Faludi) and the "New Man".

extreme.[254] There is a clear effort on the part of popular culture to "remasculinise" the U.S.A. after Vietnam. Thus, heroes played by Stallone or Schwarzenegger become icons of ideal masculinity in U.S. society. Schwarzenegger, Martín-Alegre contends, is the literal embodiment of the American dream (1998, 87). Apart from his impressive physical appearance and his career as a film star, he has been a successful businessman and politician.

For, as embodiments of the popular vision of masculinity, muscular and healthy cyborgs can be said to disguise and/or calm male fears towards AIDS and other threats of the body. By offering a strong healthy body on screen, the sense of wellbeing that the Reagan philosophy sought to promote is somehow granted. It is at this point where critics like Tasker and Creed have highlighted what they consider to be a hysterical over-compensation for a real masculinity in crisis. The emergent new versions of masculinity are, then, undermined in the big screen precisely by means of super-powerful heroes.

The warrior cyborg of *The Terminator* (1984) can be argued to represent the ideologies of the 80s and the male identity crisis. It evokes notions of power and supremacy, thanks both to its close link with technology and to its exaggerated masculinity. He is more ruthless, has a better dominion of weapons and is physically stronger and pumped-up than his human antagonist Kyle (Byers 1995, 8).[255]

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[254] As commented earlier, it is not difficult to perceive a strong backlash against new visions of gender in SF and action films of the 80s. Thus, films like *Lethal Weapon* (1987) and *Die Hard* (1988) offered imperishable traditional heroes with muscular bodies.

[255] In opposition to Jefford's contention that male images of hard bodies like the Terminator stand for the aggressive and militaristic strategies of the Reagan administration, Doran Larson sees in Kyle Reese a more viable representation of the political body of the 80s: "he is scarred in soul and body by a foreign war (…); it is

The film presents these instances of aggressive militarism negatively. The hard body of the Terminator in the original movie is depicted as "other". Schwarzenegger's acting style recalls a perfect cyborg in the classical sense. The "metallisation" of the male body accounts, then, for the crisis of male identity. Hence, the pattern of the "artificial man" as depicted by the violent cyborg in *The Terminator* is used for revealing a male nature that has been drained of identity and that needs of "external" mechanical elements to prove powerful.

Yet, it is interesting to note at this point the evolution of the hypermasculine cyborg in terms of identity from the first movie to the second. The hard and invincible body of the Terminator shows instances of vulnerability and has accomplished a softening of his manners and behaviour. This is reinforced by the fact that he is no longer a destructive killing machine but a protector of humanity, a technological messiah. This evolution of the Terminator has been analysed by many scholars, who defend the idea that the Terminator's masculinity is constantly being defined, re-defined, re-produced or re-invented (Mason 229). Accordingly, the Terminator embodies different masculinities.

However, I am more inclined to consider the Terminator of the second film as a transitory figure, an image that means a first step towards more challenging depictions of the "New Man". This also confirms the reading of the body as a social construction. The same hard body, solidly masculine and linked to steel and weapons, appears in this second movie with very different purposes and taking unexpected roles.

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also a war it is clear "we" should by moral rights win (...); and it's a war whose continuing legacy is evident in attempts literally to rewrite the past (...) And it is a body, literally neglecting its domestic health for expenditure on defense" (Larson 61).

The appearance on screen of hypermasculine bodies as spectacle has been considered by some critics as a "feminisation" of the male body, an instance of how traditional Hollywood norms dictate that the object of the gaze must be a female figure. Men as spectacle, Dyer argues, violate conventional codes of looking, which can be illustrated by instabilities of the male pin-up. The Terminator is associated with activity and action, although he is an object of the look. The very idea of spectacle can be seen in a sequence at the very beginning of *Terminator 2*. The naked body of the character played by Schwarzenegger enters the pub and, by means of subjective shots, we notice how waitresses and people in the pub look pleasurably at his body, which we suppose beautiful and prominent. In contrast, the first movie only allowed for a much more restricted spectacle of the beauty of his body.

Following with Dyers's theory of the male pin-up commented earlier in this work, even when the Terminator is posing and relaxed, his muscles are emphasised, what evidences his need to prove powerful.[256] Moreover, the Terminator is constantly carrying huge machinery and weapons, which reinforces this theory. There is a key moment in the movie when the Terminator is holding a huge weapon and John says "it's really you". Thus the Terminator makes use of industrial machinery to evoke notions of superiority and power, and the whole makes use of technofetishes to suggest the erotisation of the male body.

Amanda Fernbach's cross-disciplinary study of the fetishisation of masculinity in SF films engages with psychoanalytic, cultural and

[256] As explained in chapter two in this work, Dyer's account of the male pin-up explains the reason for the excessive quality of the male bodies that emphasise muscles and phallic symbols.

social discourses. Fernbach's theory about fetishism is applicable to society's contemporary behaviour. Socio-cultural anxieties at the turn of the 21st century are suggested in the depiction of a fetishised masculinity. Fernbach considers two main models by which masculinity is fetishised: the hypermasculine cyborg and the console cowboy. Despite their differences, both are creations of fetishistic fantasies. The beginning of *Terminator 2*, Fernbach contends, shows us a world—2029 Los Angeles—where straight white masculinity is no longer at the centre of things, but occupies the margins. Thus:

> Ordinary masculinity lacks, and the technological Terminator represents a fetishized, idealized masculinity that is a desirable alternative. In *Terminator 2*, the Terminator represents an idealized phallic masculinity heavily dependent upon technofetishes to ward off the anxieties of the male spectator faced with the prospect of a future vision of castrated masculinity. (237)

Despite this fantasy of fetishisation, the fear of lack and castration still remains, since the Terminator's body is constantly being wounded and revealing his artificial nature. At these moments "the Terminator's performance of masculinity resists and destabilises dominant patriarchal and heterosexist positioning that would claim masculinity as self-evident and natural" (238). At this point it can be affirmed that the hypermasculine cyborg deconstructs traditional masculinity through performative excess.

Yet, and as suggested before, it is interesting to analyse the Terminator in this second movie as a sign for the development in the depiction of new gender traits. Although his body remains "impossible" for us, it is not depicted as totally alien. In order to suggest a "softer" appearance, the film uses different devices. In clear contrast to the malleable antagonist, and in an echo of the first movie, the Terminator's body is damaged, loses flesh and reveals at some moments his artificial nature. The difference is that in *Terminator 2* he

has to be "repaired" and, for this purpose he needs human help, one more instance of his notable humanisation. At this point, he can rather be compared to Kyle in the first movie, whose body had numerous scars and needed special care. This is made explicit in a sequence that shows Sarah repairing the Terminator's body, taking the bullets from his back. Thanks to these human cares, the body of the cyborg remains remarkably "human" throughout the narration, something we could not see in the first film, where the cyborg body did not show any human trace, especially at the very end when he showed his mechanical chassis. Thus, in the second film, the Terminator's body structure is solid but, according to Byers, modelled into human skeleton (1995, 9), favouring spectators' identification with him. Consequently, his vulnerable body provides a feeling of reassurance and familiarity. Since the Terminator enjoys a solid physical appearance, he is not totally "other". This clearly contrasts with the fluid body of his antagonist, who has the ability of self-regeneration. Paradoxically, Schwarzenegger's hard and "unreachable" body is closer to human nature than the apparent "average" body of the T-1000 model.

The real threat to masculine identity is embodied, then, by the cyborg hero's antagonist. As Sarah's dream of "judgement day" makes clear in *Terminator 2,* the promise of the future is the annihilation of humans because they neglect the threats of the present (Byers 1995, 6). Byers is referring to the threats of the destruction and dispersal of identity. The critic concentrates, though, on what he terms "pomophobia" or the convergence of the fears of late capitalism, namely feminism and homosexuality (6). These fears are mainly embodied by the antagonist, the bad cyborg.

As it was contended in the previous section, this malleable character opposes the armoured body. Many studies concentrate on the conflict between these two characters (Springer, Dery, Larsen,

Byers, among others). Springer argues that he represents the feminine fluidity and is less physically powerful than Schwarzenegger, and his success consists of absorbing blows and projectiles (1996, 112). She is opposing, then, male to female. The hypermasculine cyborg resists the feminisation of electronic technology and the passivity of human interaction with technology. Dery adopts a similar reading and argues that the antagonist can assume any sex and, as such, it represents androgyny, hermaphroditism and most often the feminine (Dery 105). In this sense, he connotes gender and sex confusion. Both writers stress the feared flow of the feminine.

In line with these theories, Byers considers the enemy's shape-shifting and his dangerous fluidity as instances of homophobia (1995, 17). He discovers graphic connotations of homophobia in different moments in the movie. In contrast to the T-1000 model, Schwarzenegger's character is the protector of the law, the embodiment of patriarchy and of the preservation of the family (17). A similar reading is adopted by Braidotti, who specifically suggests that the militarised aggressive cyborg is a "misogynist reaction to the potentially threatening role of electronic technologies that induce a sort of passive consumption which is culturally coded as feminine or feminized" (252). Both Dery and Springer analyse the characteristic fear of the soft, liquid elements associated with the monstrous feminine, which they relate to the previously mentioned fear of women among the *Freikorps*-men.

In one way or another, all these arguments prove that the presence of the evil antagonist becomes an imminent danger for the whole of humanity. His indeterminacy and dangerous fluidity become metaphors for the dangers of posthumanism. With this, the film is suggesting Jameson's idea that humans have not changed with that evolution. It is by means of the figure of the Terminator that the film manages to materialise this gap between the new and the old that

Jameson refers to. The film intensifies manly attributes within the good cyborg body and includes, at the same time, features linked to the so-called "New Man" in an effort to evolve into more challenging visions of masculinity in traditional contexts.

5.2.2. THE CYBORG FATHER AND THE POSTMODERN FAMILY

Terminator 2 revises the concept of traditional family. It does so by offering a mother that assumes the position of a tough masculine hero (Sarah Connor), a cyborg that eventually adopts the role of a protective father, and a boy who teaches lessons of morality to both of them. The film suggests, then, that traditional family values have disappeared.[257]

In their 1995 edition of critical essays on posthuman bodies, Halberstam and Livingston take up challenges to the traditional concept of the human body. In relation to the family, they claim that

> The human tribe can never again be family. Postfamilial bodies celebrate the end of His-and-Her matching theories that endlessly revolve around the miserable imagined unit, the imagined community of an imagined kinship in an imagined house with an imagined dog and two (if only) imagined children. (Halberstam and Livingston 10)

Halberstam and Livingston are referring to the new ways of reproduction techniques and the multiple ways to bring about the union of a sperm and egg (vitro fertilisations, ideologies of the family) or to inhibit it (operations, anti-conceptive methods, abstinence, queer

[257] In the previous chapter we have already seen how the traditional model of the family does not work in *The War of the Worlds* either, and the male protagonist, a divorced and self-centred man, does not provide his children with the expected economic and domestic safety linked to conventional fathers.

practices) and to the fact that none of them are entirely reversible or irreversible (12). Hence, this His-and-Her union has been redefined in contemporary society.

Terminator 2 dissolves this idealised union that Halberstam and Livingston denominate the "imaginary unit". It presents a cyborg figure that, apart from his function as a protector of the young boy, adopts the supplementary role of father. In clear contrast to the first film, where John Connor sent his biological father (Kyle) to protect his mother, he chooses now the hyper-muscular body of the Terminator for his own protection. John finds a surrogate father in the Terminator. In films of the 80s, fathering became an anomalous and marginalised form of masculinity and something that men performed *in extremis*, on their own (Bruzzi 117). In these films, fatherhood problematised the expression of strong masculinity. Yet, the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s were also witnesses of a re-shaping of the tough male image in some filmic genres, to fit the contemporary debates on "family values". Thus, Schwarzenegger is seen adopting the paternal role in films like *Kindergarten Cop, True Lies* and *Terminator 2*. In the latter, issues of fathering emerge as especially controversial, precisely because of his character's condition of cyborg.

In my view, the film engages with the family values debate from the beginning of the 90s when conservatives advocated for the return to the nuclear family and, at the same time, new visions of the family and fatherhood emerged in the public arena. In *Iron John,* Robert Bly deals with the "problems" of modern masculinity, claiming for a return to traditional fatherhood. He contends that "there is not enough father" in contemporary society since the father's role as breadwinner has been lost (1990, 92). In the first Terminator movie, Sarah Connor (Hamilton) is the target of the enemy since she is the future mother of the leader of the resistance movement. However, in the second Terminator movie, she has moved to the background and the focus

shifted to the ten-year-old boy John and to his protector, the benign Terminator. In relation to this issue, Jeffords contends that the film introduced the changes to adapt to the Bush presidency (1989-1993), where the family gained new importance (1994, 175).

While one can argue that *Terminator 2* supports the conservative value of the father as protector, it should be noted that the character of the Terminator does so as a consequence of his pre-established programme. His artificial nature problematises his role as a father. Moreover, his strong pumped-up body suggests a narcissistic masculinity, which is normally detached from traditional depictions of fatherhood.[258] Exaggerated masculinity has been read by psychoanalysts as a failure to paternal signifier (Creed 1987, 65). As Bruzzi has argued in relation to the performative male body in action cinema, "the flaunted presence of the male body (…) serves to displace the father, the paternal signifier as the encapsulation of hegemonic masculinity" (Bruzzi 134). Yet, *Terminator 2* can be compared to other films from the beginning of the 90s, where fathering became the vehicle to portray masculine emotions and sensitivity (Jeffords 1994, 166). The film suggests, then, the "need" for the father figure, and presents spectators with a new vision of fatherhood and the family, which engages with the postmodern condition.

Echoing the new concepts of fatherhood, the Terminator is the embodiment of the nurturing father, a character that is capable of being emotionally sensitive. His parental role develops throughout the film until he becomes the best father for John. As suggested before, the end of the 80s saw a "softening of the tough male", a time when

[258] Although Ray in *The War of the Worlds* lacks a strong pumped-up body, his attitude and behaviour link him with a narcissitic type of masculinity, which may explain his detachment from traditional notions of fatherhood.

the action hero was erasing his hard image. The Terminator embodies the prototype of the good father of this era: hard but inoffensive and caring. Indeed, the Terminator emerges as more expert parent than Sarah.

Adopting different points of view, Jeffords (1994), Modleski (1991) and Pfeil (1995) suggest that movies in which men concentrate on their families and "learn" the value of emotions reduce women's importance. Jeffords reads *Terminator 2* as a movie in which the good Terminator replaces Sarah Connor as the mother of her child, relegating her to the sideline. Thus, in "one of the film's most astounding inversions, the Terminator can now have given birth to the future of the human race" (1994, 160). She is suggesting, then, that the Terminator is more nurturing than Sarah and, therefore, he is usurping her sole function of mother. However, and as Martín-Alegre has observed, Jeffords' claims imply that women's most important role is motherhood and if men adopt this function, then women should lose their only settled privilege (1998, 92). Instead, the film plays with cultural assumptions to propose an unlikely but effectual family.

In creating this peripheral family, the film urges the presence of the father. Sarah's voiceover when she watches John and the Terminator play together suggests that the cyborg father is the best option for young John:

> Watching John with the machine, it was suddenly so clear. The Terminator would never stop; it would never leave him. And it would never hurt him—never shout at him, or get drunk and hit him, or say it was too busy to spend time with him. It would always be there—and it would die, to protect him. Of all the would-be fathers who came and went over the years, this thing, this machine, was the only one who measured up. In an insane world, it was the sanest choice.

Scenes like this make us think that Haraway's idea of the cyborg can work to suggest a positive image of a boundless being. In a way, he reverses traditional assumptions of fatherhood and adopts the "feminised" position of a self-sacrificing nurturing father. In addition, he also provides the comforting idea of male authority. He combines, then, masculine and feminine traits.

Sarah is a character that portrays excess, which has been interpreted as a reaction that results from and seeks to compensate for a lack of masculine authority (Byers 1995, 18-20). However, her tough appearance is also a consequence of her traumatic past experience, which has encouraged her to become physically stronger. Whereas in the first movie Sarah is depicted as a female victim, in the second one she has acquired the skills to use weapons and makes use of her pumping-up body to fight the enemy. From the very first sequence at the mental hospital, Sarah is depicted as a woman who trains her body to become stronger. Indeed, her first characterisation in *Terminator 2* shows a sweating Sarah Connor doing chin-ups in her cell. Moments later, she tries to strangle the doctor with his tie, since he does not think she has improved her health state. She is depicted, then, as a hard-boiled female character, in clear opposition to the soft and docile Sarah of the first film. Sarah's non-conventional female behaviour is reinforced by means of her costume, resembling on many occasions that of the guerrillas, by her rather cold attitude, by her aggressive speech and her distant manner towards her son.

From the moment she manages to escape from the mental institution, she can finally join John after many years of imprisonment. She can therefore start to regain the mother's role, something she has been prevented from doing due to her internment. Hence, when she sees John for the first time, we expect a much more nurturing and protective attitude towards him than the one she really shows. She breaks with traditional expectations of motherhood and

assumes instead a tough masculine role. Emotions and sensitivity seem to be consciously repressed by Sarah. Thus, she does not show many signs of affection towards her son throughout the film, which upsets him a great deal.

This "detachment" may be interpreted in different ways. One reason is that her function as a protector is somehow undermined by the presence of the Terminator, who is physically stronger and shows to have superior parenting skills. As Cornea argues, Sarah's newly built-up body follows the hierarchy of muscularity in which the Terminator's is obviously superior (Cornea 163). As Byers points out in relation to Sarah's physical inferiority, "mom-bashing, or too much is not enough" (1995, 17). In this sense, Sarah's heroic characterisation is destabilised. To complicate things more, the cyborg reveals a gentler side.

Sarah's physically aggressive behaviour does not fit into the standards of traditional motherhood and femininity. In the few exchanges with her son, she shows her "unnatural" feminine behaviour. Moreover, we learn that she represses sensitivity as signs of weakness and vulnerability. As John explains to the Terminator, he has seen her crying when remembering her dead lover, Kyle, but, "she denies it totally, of course". Tough women do not cry. Instead, she can be extremely violent at times. She wants to avoid soft sensitivity in order to be ready to fight against those who killed her lover and destroyed her life. She wants revenge. Thus, her behaviour is partly rooted in her troubled past. In this sense, she breaks with what we expect from a typical heroine. Her behaviour can be considered as a reaction against imposed traditional visions of women and motherhood. Yet, her performance is portrayed as extreme, close to caricature, which may also undermine any possible implication of feminist claims. Thus, her excessive "anger", Byers claims, makes feminist claims seem hysterical (1995, 20).

The need for an "acceptable" nuclear family is suggested in the very first sequences of the film, when Sarah is interned in the mental institution and John is depicted as a wild boy, brought up by inadequate foster parents. According to Bruzzi, it is tempting to interpret the film as an allegory of the backlash generation, as an illustrative example "of what can go wrong if one's father is dead and one's mother has become too masculine" (136). Thus, John is initially depicted as a rebellious boy who constantly disobeys his foster parents and knows how to steal money from cash-points, money that he spends in arcade games with his friends.

Yet, he is going to experience a transformation throughout the story. From the moment the Terminator appears in John's life, the film moves towards the construction of an alternative nuclear family. The film offers a revision of the traditional concept of family that engages with the new family dynamics of the beginning of the 90s. Once John realises the danger to come, he insists on freeing his mother from the mental institution. He longs for a mother/son bond. Additionally, and as soon as John's relationship with the Terminator develops, we see a boy that attempts to humanise both his mother and his surrogate father.

This is clearly seen in the sequence that shows Sarah's intention to kill the father of Skynet, Miles Dayson. In such a sequence, she becomes a mirror image of the murdering Terminator in the original movie. The scientist Dayson, who lives with his loving wife and children in a nice house, can be considered the icon of the American Dream of prosperity (Mason 229). He is working on his project when Sarah arrives with the intention to kill him. Unable to complete her task, Sarah shoots the scientist's ankle and collapses into tears. This is one of the few moments when we see her cry and interact with her son. She shows to be vulnerable to violence. At this moment, Jancovich contends, she "rediscovers" the importance of human

feelings and interaction and becomes a hybrid figure (Jancovich 1992, 13-14). The sequence proves that Sarah is also weak and not a mere "imitation" of the Terminator of the first movie. When Sarah insults Dyson and accuses men like him of their irresponsibility as scientists, John pleads his mother to be "a little more constructive".[259] In this enactment of radical feminist contentions, she generalises about the destructive nature of men, and John indirectly advises her not to rely on old essentialist arguments to attack men. In this sense, he is somehow anticipating the features ascribed to the so-called "New Man" of the beginning of the 90s.

Following his role as instructor of moral values, John tells the Terminator not to kill just for the sake of it. Rushing and Frentz do not consider the "moral" Terminator as a frightening "other" but simply as an extension of John's ego: "[o]nce the heinous shadow is effaced and replaced by a friendly ego-extension, it is ripe for inflation" (196). In fact, we find many similarities between them. They wear similar clothes and are seen for the first time driving bikes. John is going to follow the Terminator's precepts. In spite of their similarities, the film centres on their different ways of understanding life. The Terminator is extremely violent, something John has the purpose of changing. Moreover, and regardless of his sentimental side, the Terminator is unable to cry, and does not understand the meaning of tears until the very end of the movie, which becomes explicit in a sequence that shows John crying and the Terminator asking "what's wrong with your eyes?"

The Terminator follows John's "orders" and "moderates" violence and, while still adjusting to the role of the protector, he shoots

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[259] Sarah's vindication is in tune with contemporary ecofeminist critiques about the biogenetic experimentation, and warns against the dangers of scientific misuse.

policemen only in their knees. From this moment on, he does not kill any other human being. Significantly, there is only one "order" the Terminator disobeys. At the very end of the movie, he sacrifices himself for his family and for the sake of humankind: "It has to end here". With that purpose, he disobeys John's orders (a technical contradiction and a sign of his humanisation) and leaves John and Sarah with an uncertain future ahead of them—the father figure is still absent and the responsibility to bring up the future "New Man" (John) is only Sarah's (Martín-Alegre 1998, 92). At that moment, the postmodern father is able to take autonomous decisions, which he uses for the benefit of his family. In this sense, he becomes a postmodern hero in his own sight, which reinforces the positive image of the cyborg. However, the Terminator cannot renounce his constructed nature and his imposed traditional masculine identity.

Terminator 2 offers, then, new portrayals of fatherhood and the family. The good cyborg figure becomes a metaphor of the new image of fatherhood of the Reagan-Bush era. Sensitivity is combined with his capacity for violence. As it has been argued, his hypermasculine body and artificiality serve the purpose to calm anxieties towards the appearance of new definitions of masculinity inserted in posthuman bodies. In other words, the film attempts to add nuances within an idealised and patriarchal image of masculinity. In this sense, the film suggests that old patterns of masculinity cannot die completely to give way to new values. The Terminator's latest words before auto-terminating are quite significant for this argument. Once he has understood the value of sensitivity, he realises he must sacrifice himself to prevent his replication. "I know now why you cry. But it is something I can never do". The "New Man" the Terminator leaves behind—John—has experienced the threat of the "other" and has proved capable of crying and behaving in a sensible way. He can be said to anticipate the "New Man".

As it has been contended here, there are many competing definitions of the cyborg, but there is the proposal of the armoured man-machine which is generally accepted as the dominant one within SF films. Hence, many films have popularised this tough image of the cyborg, especially in the 80s. Nonetheless, this version of the cyborg is not static. Taken as a cultural referent, it evolves to include aspects of popular culture. As exposed in previous chapters, the figure of the cyborg has been the object of numerous debates concerning gender, raised by critics considering the female cyborg as a liberating figure (Haraway, Halberstam) to those who still remark its strong dependence on traditional patterns. Claudia Springer has argued at this point that: "[t]he contradictory discourse on cyborg reveals a new manifestation of the simultaneous revulsion and fascination with the human body that has existed throughout the Western cultural tradition" (Springer 1998, 485). In any case, cyborg representation stands, many critics have agreed, for our link with technological societies.

At the centre of Cameron's *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) is its celebrated portrayal of the armoured cyborg as a controversial figure. The character of the Terminator poses questions about male identity, the male body in postmodern contexts and men's relationship with technology. The cyborg remains, then, a site of anxiety.

As it has been shown here, there are a great number of theories that suggest that the Terminator's techno-body reflects an excessive masculinity, considered as abstract and unreachable. The image of the traditional action hero is taken to the extreme by means of the armoured body, opposing Haraway's liberating vision of the cyborg. However, notions of sensitivity, vulnerability and parental worries have been added to the original image of the armoured Terminator. Additionally, he has adopted the role of the protective father for John

and his final sacrifice differentiates him from other popular depictions of the cyborgs, resisting many traditional readings of the figure.[260]

Judgement Day is about the bringing together of humans and machines, whereas a residual fear against the latest developments is still suggested by the villain of the film. As a result of the changes brought about by the latest technology and by the new definitions of masculinity and fatherhood, there is a general disorientation of men in the U.S.A. at the end of the 20th century. In my view, the character of the Terminator epitomises the mood of the times and echoes contemporary concerns about cultural changes, especially those affecting gender. The Terminator hints that change in gender definitions has been so important that men find it hard to adjust to them. In this sense, the popular image of the hypermasculine cyborg offers instances of reassurance and stability. The power of the white male supremacy seems difficult to contest, especially if combined with industrial machinery.

[260] In clear contrast to the Terminator, Ray in *The War of the Worlds* is "forced" by circumstances to become a responsible father, which initially means a threat to his strong narcissism. Yet, both films hint at the safety offered by a united family. Ray, like the Terminator, will learn the values of fatherhood, and will develop throughout the film a responsible side to defend his daughter against the aliens that threaten to destroy humanity and its institution. At these moments of extreme panic, he constructs his "particular" family.

5.3. MASCULINITY IN VIRTUAL WORLDS: THE WACHOWSKYS' *THE MATRIX* (1999)

At the turn of the millennium, hypermedia has permeated our lives. As a consequence, nature and culture are no longer ontological categories but are blurred in technological worlds. By means of the latest special effects and computer-graphics, Hollywood has contributed to the display of this ontological crisis. The man-machine interface finds a perfect materialisation in SF films showing computer-generated spaces where virtual heroes are "jacked-in".[261] These late-twentieth-century films present a new type of hero, unable to cope with a reality that transcends rational boundaries. In this section, I am going to concentrate on the pattern of the "virtual man" as depicted in the popular film by the Wachowsky brothers' *The Matrix* (1999).

The Matrix has received a lot of critical attention, partly because it is open to many different interpretations. It means a revolution in the way of depicting the human confrontation with machines. Indeed, it is one of the first movies to popularise the portrayal of the pattern of the "virtual man". After writing the screenplay of Richard Donner's *Assassins,* Larry and Andy Wachowsky directed their first film in 1996, *Bound*, a movie that combines sex, gangsters and drama. After this first directorial joint, they achieved enormous success with *The Matrix* in 1999, which has become a hit of today's SF. In it they speculate with contemporary concerns and show human's inability to grasp reality in a world dominated by technological development and a general uncertainty. The "real" is considered as something illusory and human existence as banal. After the film's success—both critically and

[261] The term "jack in" was first used by William Gibson in his stories to refer to the action of connecting a human body with virtual reality.

popularly—two sequels were made: *The Matrix Reloaded* (May 2003) and *The Matrix Revolutions* (November 2003). In them, Neo and the rebel leaders continue to battle the machines that have enslaved humanity. Neo gradually discovers his superpowers and uses them to free people from the Matrix. Although these sequels impress spectators because of the quality of their special effects, they do not succeed in offering novelties in the confrontation between humans and machines, at least in comparison to the original movie.

Traditional models of the body are often combined with the latest technology in SF texts. Ollivier Dyens notes the difficulty of defining and delineating a living being precisely and scientifically: "[b]ecause of technology, the models of the world we now create are less and less grounded in human terms. And so it becomes increasingly difficult to define life, intelligence, consciousness, and what it means to be human in a stable way" (Dyens 3). Hence, the living body no longer has an absolute identity and this results in a generalised uncertainty about the self. When translating this to the SF film, the cyborg provides a site on which to reflect our contemporary state of mind.

In *The Matrix*, we are presented with an extended preoccupation with the limits of science and technology, framed by a postmodern context. The film uses, then, a new language—virtual reality—where the real merges with the imaginary. Communication systems and technology are important in so far as they are responsible for creating the fictional space of the Matrix where humans are unconsciously imprisoned. It is in this world, dominated by the principle of "simulation", where what seems real and perceptible turns out to be manipulated by a controlling entity, whose existence is only discovered by a group of rebels led by the tutelary figure of Morpheus. Thus, technology is essential to the narrative of *The Matrix* and special effects play an important role in it.

The male cyborg in *The Matrix* is likewise delineated in a postmodern ambiguity. He resides in a space between reality and illusion, between freedom and slavery, between consciousness and dream. He is a posthuman being. Unlike the armoured cyborg in the Terminator films, he has an androgynous appearance and his subjectivity seems troubled as a consequence of his trespassing of rational limits. The relationship between his physical body and his virtual existence remains problematic. He is a hybrid.

My aims in this section are twofold. On the one hand, it is my intention to show how this pattern of masculinity re-addresses men's relationship with technology in an era of media saturation. In clear opposition to the character of the Terminator, the interface man-machine is more fluid in *The Matrix*, where the "virtual man" breaks with conventional boundaries between the natural and the artificial. The film makes use of intertextuality and other aspects of the *mise-en-scène* to create this sense of melting. Classical motifs and traditional elements are, at the same time, present in the movie, and some of them become objects of mockery.

By displaying two different worlds that sometimes collide, the so-called Matrix and the Desert of the Real, the film illustrates contemporary fears about the lack of control over technology, and problematises, at the same time, the traditional notion of the human condition. The fusion of one's consciousness with the digitalised media is, unlike many texts where it becomes a pleasure, depicted as dangerous. Cyberspace is considered a site that suggests both imprisonment and slavery. The film exploits the consequences of disembodiment for the human self.

My second aim is to illustrate how the postmodern inclination towards the blurring of frontiers influences gender representation. Although the film follows a typical heroic narrative, it resists many

gender assumptions. It presents a new type of hero—Neo—inserted in a new space and showing identity crises. In this sense, the film offers a version of the "New Man", a human being that is trapped between the new and the traditional, between reality and fantasy. This ambivalence mirrors U.S. gender concerns at the threshold of the new millennium, a time when everything is subjected to fluidity and in which frontiers blur. Precisely because of this, many gender specialists have noted a contemporary crisis in masculinity in the U.S.A, a fact that has re-opened discussions about whether borders are necessary even just to be rejected or deconstructed.

5.3.1. MEN, IDENTITIES AND VIRTUAL REALITIES AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE 21st CENTURY.

In order to approach the analysis of masculinity in *The Matrix,* I shall first present the film as a product of postmodernism. Its hybrid nature is present in the film's plot, structure, characters and technical aspects. The second concern in this section, also aligned with the politics of postmodernism, is the issue of (dis)embodiment and the self, which affects identities and, consequently, the way gender is understood and represented on screen. All these aspects confirm the idea that the relationship between humans and technology at the threshold of the 21st century is complicated. Especially, and due to the dispersing assumptions it suggests, the nature of the male cyborg—or "virtual man"—remains self-contradictory.

5.3.1.1. *The Matrix*, Representation and the Politics of Postmodernism

The Matrix evokes the paradox of postmodernism. The film's remarkable use of intertextual references, together with the depiction of virtual reality and the emphasis on simulation, conform an ambivalent product. As it will be contended in the next paragraphs, the film makes use of Baudrillard's notion of simulacra to discuss contemporary concerns towards the impact of computing technology on humans at the end of the 20th century.

In her seminal work *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), Linda Hutcheon defines the term postmodernism as a phenomenon that takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory or self-undermining statement and whose distinctive character lies in its commitment to doubleness or duplicity (Hutcheon 1). Intended to de-naturalise some of the dominant features, postmodernism, Hutcheon argues, "manages to install and reinforce as much undermine and subvert the conventional presuppositions it appears to challenge" (1-2). Postmodernism challenges our mimetic assumptions about representation. In an article entitled "The Precession of Simulacra", Jean Baudrillard defines postmodernism as a world of "simulations" and "hyperreality". Our economies have become dependent on the production of images and information, we live in the society of the "simulacrum", where the copy has replaced the original. Consequently, the real and the imaginary collapse into each other. Mass media have neutralised reality, first by reflecting it, then by masking and perverting it, later by masking the absence of basic reality, and finally by producing simulacra of the real, destroying any relationship with reality (364-5). The result is hyperrealism, where the real and the imaginary merge. Baudrillard gives the example of Disneyland as a perfect model of all the orders of simulation, arguing that it is neither true nor false (365-6). Although Baudrillard's post-apocalyptic

nihilism has been criticised, his notion of simulacrum has remained very influential for many film analyses.

The Matrix is a hybrid product. Pat Mellencamp sees the film as mutable, "simultaneously old and new, physical and ephemeral, real and virtual, analog and digital, an intermix of western and eastern thought and practices" (84). The dissolution of frontiers and the instability of the self are suggested in the film by means of different visual and narrative devices. This is especially seen from the moment when the male hero—a hacker named Neo—learns that his world is fake and illusory, a site where what seems real is but a virtual hallucination. The leading characters of the film suggest a sense of blending and dissolution, partly due to their posthuman condition. As a consequence, their identities are troubled. Apart from the plot, the film introduces elements that contribute to create this sense of blurred reality. I am referring to the numerous and wide-ranging inter-textual references mixed with contemporary and futuristic allusions, something which shocks spectators and which characterises postmodern texts. All these factors will inevitably contribute to create a general sense of blending which, as it will be argued in the next section, is not fully achieved in terms of gender in this "blurred" text.

Jean Baudrillard's work *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) is widely acknowledged as a key reference for *The Matrix*. The book itself appears in the movie as a hollowed-up space where the protagonist keeps his illegal software. Indeed, the film depicts the difficulty to unravel the real world from the imaginary one, which hints at Baudrillard's idea of simulation. Yet, while the film succeeds in illustrating many aspects of his theory, several film critics are of the opinion that the film misrepresents Baudrillard's theories and his very concept of the hyperreal. These critics base their main arguments on the fact that the film inevitably maintains the distinctions between illusion and reality and between truth and falsehood (Lavery,

Kilbourn, Hanley, Gordon). After all, the film draws on the existence of two worlds, the illusory world known as the Matrix and the Desert of the Real. Russell J.A Kilbourn argues that the film's literal presence of the French theorist is really a red herring and does not allow us to read the film as an illustration of a quintessential postmodern hyperreality, as a copy without original (51). Instead, the film is "a throwback to an earlier, pre-cyberpunk science fiction storyline, updated in its particulars—one might say, in its accessories like cellphones, sunglasses, and personal weaponry—and of course with all the latest special effects" (Kilbourn 51). The film's visual-stylistic focus is still on the present and the ideological orientation is backwards, reinforced by biblical references. With this, Kilbourn is stating that the film is not an example of Baudrillard's third-order simulacrum. In line with Kilbourn's arguments, there are many other critics that believe in the film's inability to depict the hyperreal as described by Baudrillard.

In my view, the film suggests the epistemological issues raised by the interface between humans and machines at the end of the 20th century. I join Catherine Constable (2006) to argue that the film's imagery does adapt Baudrillardian concepts, either reinstating or challenging them (238). The world known as the Matrix is a virtual space created by the Machines that have come to dominate the world, which paradoxically simulates life at the end of the millennium. Wrapped in the latest special effects and aesthetics, the film opens up an arena for the recreation of human's anxieties and disorientation when confronted with computing technologies. The sense of disorientation is achieved at the very beginning of the movie when Neo—and spectators—are not able to differentiate reality from illusion. After a shot showing this figure's androgynous look, we get a sequence where he is asked for illegal software, and he takes it from a fake book entitled *Simulacra and Simulation.* This encourages informed

spectators to doubt the real nature of this represented world and to consider the inability of its inhabitants to perceive its created nature. From the very beginning of the movie, we get many details that reinforce a general uncertainty about the supposed reality, and consequently, "unconventional" things happen in this world, as when Neo's computer is able to anticipate the knocking on his door and the presence of the white rabbit.

Sequences later, Morpheus will tell us the "truth" once Neo has chosen to take the red pill that will allow him to understand the meaning of the Matrix. This tutelary figure informs Neo of the existence of a virtual world, known as the Matrix, controlled by the Machines that managed to defeat humans in the past and that now use them as mere batteries. Hence, the world Neo is unconsciously forced to inhabit is nothing but "a neural inter-active simulation", as Morpheus explains. The distinction between the real and the imaginary seems to have been lost, thus suggesting the impossibility to get out of hyperreality. This is to eclipse reality as we understand it, creating a sense of disorientation.

When referring to these issues, Aylish Wood argues that *The Matrix*, in spite of its portrayal of two separate worlds—which she refers to as paraspaces—offers each of them as real and unreal at the same time and, consequently, characters' identities are also questioned in them. This blurring distinction between the real and the imaginary, Wood suggests, is achieved in different ways. One of them is to consider that both spaces have uncertain claims to reality and offer *spatio*-temporal disruption:

> *The Matrix* involves a conflict between two opposing forces that seek to control and order the space-time dimensions of the world. In the light of this discussion, the paraspaces of the Real World and the Matrix are no more or less real than each other. (125)

This blurring of distinctions between the two worlds in terms of its claims to reality extends to the actions of the characters as well. Aylish Wood claims that both technologised environments equally affect the characters' identity, since they become, in one or another paraspace, dependent on technology. Moreover, and within the story-world of the film, characters operate across more than one of the paraspaces, and therefore, they can be said to be split-personae. The most striking example is that of the protagonist, he is both Thomas Anderson and Neo at the same time and "his existence as the saviour emerges in both the Real World and the Matrix, through his ability to move between the two paraspaces and to exert control over the Matrix" (126). Thus, and while the two paraspaces are initially presented as different, there are, as Wood proposes, many elements and devices that suggest that such a distinction is but another illusion.

Moreover, the film mimics many sources to create this sense of simulation and blurring of frontiers, which contributes to this feeling of mixing reality. Huyssen places postmodernism as a "field of tension between tradition and innovation, conservation and renewal, mass culture and high art, in which the second terms are no longer privileged over the first" (216). Cinematic representation, in the same way, deals with this combination of elements, and this is especially seen in those films that—like *The Matrix*—aim at portraying a futuristic society. It is common to see in contemporary SF movies, then, elements from earlier literary or popular trends, together with typical elements of cyberpunk literature and/or the most challenging and futuristic images. The mixing of totally different sources, advocated in postmodern works, is observed in the film's re-appropriation of classical motifs. Hence, elements from fairy-tales, mythology or the Bible are inscribed in context dominated by postmodern images, which are reflected mainly by means of setting, music and costume. The use of classical sources within such a recent

SF film, which aim to display the ultimate technological developments, is one more instance of intertextuality.

The presence of elements from popular fairy tales is explicit in the film's direct allusion to the most representative images of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Neo, from his earliest appearance on screen, is told by his computer to follow "the white rabbit" which, paradoxically, is tattooed on the shoulder of a woman who happens to have a heavily futuristic look. Morpheus expresses another clear reference to the tale before he explains the truth about his world to Neo. The protagonist is made to choose between two pills, a blue and a red one, in the same way as Alice had to choose which side of the mushroom to eat. If he chooses the latter, Morpheus assures him, "you will stay in wonderland and I will show you how deep the rabbit hole goes". Yet, Andrew Gordon reads this sequence as an inversion of the tale, since it implies that Neo travels from the imaginary to the real world (in Constable 239). Neo passes from the imaginary world to the reality, a world from which, unlike Alice's, there is no way back. Moreover, and as Morpheus calls it, wonderland represents the "real" in the film in a way, a plain world, if we compare it with the world represented in the tale, full of absurd events and cheerful characters. This may imply a reverse of Baudrillard's theories about the dissolution of reality into the hyperreal. Indeed, Kilbourn reads the film's use of the tale as another sign of its failure to evoke the hyperreal. The narrative's emphasis on time, inspired by Alice's books, is, however, complicated by cinematography, proving that the two worlds are divided into the "realistic filmic diegetic temporality" (the Desert of the Real) and the "bullet time" (the Matrix) where time is slowed down (Kilbourn 45).

Still, the essence of the tale is present in the film's display of an imaginary world and in the above mentioned direct allusions to the white rabbit and wonderland. Also, and as Constable points out, the

film's narrative presents Neo's taking the red pill as the beginning of adventure, paralleling thus Alice's journey (239). Indeed, Neo appears to choose between two "hallucinogenic trips": "[t]he cocaine chic of the 1980s corporate culture that is the matrix, vs the heroin chic of the 1990s grunge aesthetic that is Nebuchadnezzar, suggesting that both are equally illusory" (240). Apart from these direct allusions to Carroll's tale we are also presented with a similar imaginary world in which unimaginable things happen. The Matrix's fantastic nature and the inexplicable things Neo encounters in it, in the same way as Alice, reminds us of the illusory world represented in *Alice in Wonderland*.

In my view, the film relies on Carroll's tale, not to consciously reproduce or reverse it, or to indirectly represent—or misrepresent—Baudrillard's position, but to offer images that provide ambiguity over what is to be considered as real. The previously mentioned scene that shows Neo taking the red pill directly addresses these ontological issues. When meeting Morpheus, Neo is asked the question "have you ever had a dream, Neo, that you were so sure is real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?" Moments later, we will see how "the real world" is depicted as post-apocalyptic and suppressive.

Some critics have noticed in this film the ironic presence of fairy tales, other than *Alice in Wonderland*. Collado, for instance, establishes a similarity between Neo and the female protagonist of the classical tale *Sleeping Beauty,* and affirms that "the epic tone of the film goes *in crescendo* till finally Neo dies soon to become a parodic male Sleeping Beauty who is resurrected by Trinity's kiss" (Collado 76). He refers to a specific sequence in which Neo, shot by an agent in the Matrix, resurrects in the Desert of the Real when Trinity kisses and proposes to him. Neo is also called "Dorothy" when he is about to start his journey towards the real, and thus he is compared with the

female protagonist of Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The MGM film adaptation of Baum's fairy-tale, Paul Nathanson points out, shows how

> in the epilogue, Dorothy is forced by a serpentine tornado to leave home. Otherwise, she could not have reached the level of maturity necessary to understand the meaning of being at home with her family, being at home in the world at large and (by implication) being at home with God. In the epilogue, she is ready to take her proper place at home in the world and (by implication) with God. The main difference is to be found not in Kansas but in Dorothy herself.[262] In the epilogue, unlike the prologue, she has "eyes to see and ears to hear". (Nathanson, in Zipes 123-4)

Dorothy's journey from immaturity and ignorance to the acquisition of understanding and the return to her home resembles Neo's mission in the film. The presence of different elements taken from fairy tales is, then, outstanding in this film.[263] They contribute to evoke the essence of postmodernism.

In addition to this source, we get in *The Matrix* many mythical and biblical references. As for the mythical component, it is striking the film's narrative resemblance with the heroic pattern described in Campbell's *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Neo embodies partially some of the conditions of the traditional hero described by Hourihan. He is a hero of his own time, and his adventure quest in the film consists in crossing the threshold from one world to another, after which he becomes a useful social being. His behaviour is heroic as

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[262] He is comparing here fairy tale and film.

[263] The adoption of the classic tale element is depicted in many contemporary SF films. Rushing and Frentz noticed the influence of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* in Spielberg's *Jaws*. In the same way, they observe, the film *The Deer Hunter* draws inspiration from James Fennimore Cooper's novels. *Blade Runner*, likewise, takes many elements from the Frankenstein story (7-8).

long as he has the chance to choose his own destiny, and decides to have the red pill that will allow him to enter "wonderland". Neo is at all times the key for plot development in the film, and perpetuates the "masculine myth" in Easthope's terms the myth that aims to bring together three levels in a perfect unity: the body, the social identity and the internal tendency (166). Moreover, he is represented in the film as an image of Jesus Christ—he is told so at one point in the film—in so far as he is the one who has been elected to save humanity. Hence, myth becomes the basis on which to develop new ideas, trends, and the new concept of masculinity.

Kimball notes the film's ambivalence about mythical elements. While the story line resists at some points autochthonous motifs, the imagery and techniques reinforce this myth. In "rebegetting" its hero, the film follows the prescription of countless myths and rituals, in which the son must be reborn as a child of the father not dependent on women, symbolised here by the world Matrix, a Latin term for womb. The result is, then, "a powerful tension that discloses the strange logic of autochthony, the way this concept denies the reproductive context of human existence in order to 'conceive' another kind of advent and destiny for humankind" (176).

The characters' names are also representative in the film in so far as some of them are taken directly from diverse mythological or biblical sources. For instance, Morpheus is the name of the Greek God of dreams and he fulfils his mission as such since he is considered, even before his appearance on screen, as a superior being, whose orders—as when he gives instructions to Neo on the phone—guide the hero's actions towards the "correct path". Trinity is the name of the Holy Spirit and she also fulfils her mission, since she will save Neo's life on one occasion and will be able to literally resurrect him from death. The presence of the Oracle also has mythical connotations. There exists a strong implied meaning in the visit to this figure in

Greek mythology. Likewise, in the Wachowkys' film we expect a sacred place for the Oracle, since it represents a superior being. Instead, Neo and the spectators by extension, find a black woman cooking biscuits and wearing an apron, what reinforces even more the idea of fusion.

What seems interesting about names is again the mixture of biblical and mythological allusions with technological references suggested by the names of some characters who inhabit the Desert of the Real: Cypher (Joe Pantoliano), Apoc (Julian Arahanga), Mouse (Matt Doran), Switch (Belinda McClory) also live in a craft and inhabit this world known as the Desert of the Real. Once more, the tension between science and religion work here as a postmodern device.

Some researchers on pastoral theology and religious education have observed the film's borrowing from Christian, Hebrew and Greek symbolism and Eastern philosophy. The presence of Christian images in *The Matrix* is perceived by several authors. It is noticeable the existence of a character standing for Judas (Cypher) who sells out to the Artificial Intelligence. Also, the last surviving city is called Zion. There are numerous articles on *The Matrix* that construct the film's narrative as a Messianic trajectory, equating Neo with John the Baptist (Mercer Schuchardt, Bassham) or Cypher with a traitor that stands for Judas (Fontana) or even for the devil (Bassham). All these allusions link the film to the Christian tradition (in Constable 247).

Another re-appropriation of an old motif perceived in the plot of the film is the portrayal of the myth of the creature against the creator, which also worked in the Terminator films. In *The Matrix* the myth by which the hunter's weapon evolves and "hunts the hunter" (Rushing and Frentz 5) reappears and we find how technology dominates the people who once created the machines. After humans had made the machines, the latter became autonomous and defeated humanity in a war. As a consequence of this, human beings were

reduced to mere "batteries", that is, to static objects used for the machines' purposes. The myth is completed, since the machines have not only rebelled against their creator, but have literally turned them into their "slaves".

The Matrix takes many elements from classical tales, mythology and biblical sources, which are perceived not only visually but are also inscribed in the film's plot and structure. We must not forget, however, other influences from so-called cyberpunk literature. The definition of cyberspace that Gibson offers in *Neuromancer* is:

> A virtual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts… A graphic representation of data abstracted from the bank of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights receding. (Gibson 69)

Interestingly enough, and as Chad Barnett has suggested, reality, and not cyberspace, is a consensual hallucination in *The Matrix*. The film also echoes Gibson's consideration of the origins of this illusory world. In *Neuromancer* we are told how "the matrix has its roots in primitive arcade games (…) in early graphics programs and military experimentation with cranial jacks" (69). Characters, who, like Neo and Trinity, are conscious of the existence of the Matrix and enter this space for any specific purpose, certainly resemble the electronic beings we find in arcade games.

Especially the sequences of the "loading programmes" into which the rebels jack, resemble video-gaming. As Morpheus explains, they can load anything they need, from clothing, to weapons or training simulations, to an idealised image of a woman in red, another program meant to provide pleasure to its young male programmer. Collado sees this fact as a warning for our "dehumanisation" and affirms that:

> the fact that in its slow-down martial arts fighting scenes the protagonists resemble the electronic figures of the fighters in a video game is not simply an elaborate loop on previous culture (video game fighters had to resemble real combatants) but a warning that "real" people are already electronic devices that need to be humanized again. (Collado 75)

Precisely, the interface human-machine produces instability to the main leading characters, as it will be expanded in the next section. The *angst* against dehumanisation is suggested, for example, in the sequence that shows Morpheus and Neo inserted into a loading programme for the first time. Neo's image is, Morpheus explains, a mere "residual self-image" and his existence is banal. Then, Morpheus shows Neo a video in which "the truth" is explained. In it, the *mise-en-scène* is representative in so far as it provides us with a vast arid zone—a desert—where the brown colour predominates, and all of them contribute to create a sense of agony and lack of borders. The vision we get of this world is negative, reinforced by the stormy weather and the black sky above a rocky area.

The vertigo of duplication is present throughout the whole film. For instance, very early we discover that the protagonist is living two lives. In one life, he is Mr Anderson, programmer for a respectable software company and in the other, he lives by the hacker alias Neo. Later he will have to choose between two other different lives. Thus, the film, Mellencamp argues, takes up many influences:

> [it] eclectically blends Asian and American film genres (particularly action adventure, sci-fi, Kung Fu/ Hong Kong martial arts), live action and animation (Japanese anime, Warner Brothers cartoons), and other media (comic books, TV, and computer/video games, in the latter particularly architectural form and visual style). (Mellencamp 84)

The Wachowskis "love and know film history, particularly genre films, which they cite, mix-up, and alter" (Mellencamp 84). With this they create an ambivalent object.

Apart from intertextuality, and the intertwining between reality and dream, another device to address ontological identity crises is the reiterative use of images that suggest a nihilistic and post-apocalyptic future. Human's future is depicted as uncertain and dark. It is referred to as the Desert of the Real and becomes in the film the reflection of a possible near future life, 2119, where technology dominates everything. Technological and post-apocalyptic views well describe this world where, apart from machines, a group of rebels—Morpheus' crew—live in the craft they call "Nebuchadnezzar". As Zizek points out in "*The Matrix*, or the two Sides of Perversion", the main difference between *The Matrix* and Plato's myth of the cave is that "when some individuals escape their cave predicament and step out to the surface of the Earth, what they find there is no longer the bright surface illuminated by the rays of the sun, the supreme good, but the desolate 'desert of the real'" (2004, 406). Thus, both worlds miss the real, it is not the "true reality" behind the virtual simulation but "the void that makes reality incomplete/inconsistent" (412). This way, the film offers a juxtaposition of what Zizek considers the two sides of perversion: on the one hand, reality is reduced to a virtual domain regulated by arbitrary rules that can be suspended, and, on the other hand, the concealed truth of this freedom, where the subject is reduced to a instrumentalised passivity (Zizek 2004, 427). In this sense, Baudrillard's characterisation of the hyperreal as a realm haunted by phantoms is reproduced in the film. However, and at this point I also agree with Constable, the film's nihilism that goes with Baudrillard's definition of the hyperreal is approved by drawing on other cultural sources to create spectacular images (Constable 249).

The technological development and the machine dominion over humanity are commonplace in this realm of the "real". Immediately after Neo has decided to "see the truth by himself", he is introduced into a big room full of computers and telephones, from where he will initiate his journey towards the "Real". Before doing so, Neo looks at himself in the mirror and realises it dissolves like water, while Morpheus asks him whether he could distinguish dreams from reality. This fact anticipates for viewers the possible violation of borders in Neo's world—and ours by extension—once we become aware of its actual inexistence. Kilbourn reads this act of merging as an illustration of how Neo effaces the distinction between reality and its reflection (48). To this, Constable adds that this transformation draws on Baudrillard's simulacrum and thus "the filmic image can be seen to convey the conceptual implications of the philosophical imaginary in that dialectical opposites are rendered equivalent within the mirror space" (240).

After this, we get a sequence where the prevalence of the machine is explicitly shown, and in which we see how Neo is literally born again. The maternal, Braidotti contends, has been integrated into the techno-industrial complex and the film gives a vivid illustration of the reproductive nightmare (251). Neo gets out of the "capsule" he has unconsciously inhabited all his life and, as he is of no use for the machines anymore, an octopus-like machine throws him away. In this sequence Neo sees for the first time the endless human fields and the immense architectonic constructions housing the incubator cells in which human beings are cultivated. The sequence emphasises the machines' superiority. By means of subjective shots, which show spectators what Neo is looking at, and unconventional camera movements, we are shocked by the machines' achievement. Music also contributes to this purpose and faithfully evokes the protagonist's feeling for his big "discovery". After the subjective shots, and with the

aim of suggesting the inferiority of the human race, we get re-establishing shots, which place Neo's insignificant presence within this huge space of electronic appliances. Thus, Neo's death/rebirth does not mean liberation from the world of simulation but rather a transition into another "realm within the hyperreal". This parallelism between these two worlds "is reinforced by the presence of high-rise, metallic, architectural structures in both places" (Constable 240). After he is literally thrown away as abject, Morpheus' crew rescues him and welcomes him. Once more, the film seems to erase the frontier between these two worlds that collapse in time and space. Hence, the Desert of the Real becomes the ultimate representation of postmodernism, not only due to setting and visual devices, but also because of its main cultural implication: the consequences of the loss of control over technology.

The promise of a liberated world without the presence of machines is not, however, illustrated in the Desert of the Real. Lastly, one should not forget the film's heavy reliance on the latest SF effects, which also function as a "banal irony": it celebrates human's triumph over machines, which could not have been achieved without computer technology (Feng 152). With this, the film enacts the contradictions of our relationship with technology. As Mellencamp argues, "it decries the effects of technology on humanity, while at the same time deploying the most advanced technologies to make its point in dazzling, moneymaking images" (85). The special effects constitute an inextricable element of the film, contributing thus to its ambivalent nature.

This postmodern paronama where humans are subordinated and slaved to the machine does not seem favourable for the depiction of male domination. I agree with Jeanne Hamming when she contends that the postindustrial commodification of everything, including identity, and the anxiety of an unstable masculinity seem to have

reached a critical stage (148). She defends the idea that nature has become man's best ally in his fight against the machine and that films like *The Matrix* ironically rely on technology to suggest a critique of the hypermediacy of everyday reality (148). While this has been interpreted here as a popular representation of postmodern aesthetics, Hamming suggests that the film uses technology to service the nostalgia for a purified, natural, masculine subjectivity. The idea of nostalgia Hamming refers to is present throughout the film. The real is not what it used to be, which recalls Baudrillard's assertion that when the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning.

Hence, *The Matrix* both draws and revisits Baudrillard's notion of simulacra to suggest contemporary anxieties over the uses of technology. It succeeds in illustrating a symbiotic relationship of human and technology, which evokes destabilisation. The film's emphasis on the blurring of frontiers and the mixing of reality and dream especially reinforces this anxiety. We find many contradictions and ironic reverses in it, which constitutes the essence of postmodernism, and whose main effect is the destabilisation of the self.

5.3.1.2. (Dis)embodiment and the Self

This section will focus on the depiction of the body in virtual worlds. Dehumanisation and the troubled self are by far central motifs in *The Matrix*. These topics are intimately associated to postmodern discourses and are of great importance for the reading of the film in terms of gender identity. Precisely, a major issue in the representation of gender in virtual spaces is the question of (dis)embodiment.

In *The Matrix* human beings are mere bits of information and their bodies are nothing but pieces of flesh connected to the Machine for the latter's advantage. When Neo is aware of his created nature, he experiences a feeling of deep emptiness, which encourages him to free humanity from the bondage people are submitted to. It is only in the spaceship known as Nebuchadnezzar, commanded by the rebel Morpheus, where human beings can enjoy the freedom of their own bodies and consciousness. Yet, and as it will be contended here, life at this virtual frontier is also full of contradictions.

Human disembodiment is a key feature of cyberculture. Scott Bukatman in his notorious analysis of virtual subjects in postmodern SF argues when referring to cyberspace that "[i]t is a realm in which the mind is freed from bodily limitations, a place for the return of the *omnipotence of thoughts*" (159) and to be into such an apparatus "would be to exist in two places at once: while one's objective body would remain in the real world, one's *phenomenal body* would be projected into the terminal reality" (149). Yet, as many feminist critiques of cyberpunk have argued, virtual worlds also suggest a realm where the union between body and mind is problematised.

The experience of disembodiment causes, then, ambivalent desires. It can mean an open invitation to release the mind and body from its limitations when entering cyberspace (Lee 562). This desire of liberating the body from cultural impositions may produce a pleasurable experience (Springer 1998). When interviewing some cyber-users, Becker notices that they are motivated not only by the desire to explore new possibilities in their own identities but also to overcome the barriers of physicality and escape from the "bodily prison". Yet the body still appears in these virtual spaces under other guises: graphic representation, bodily movements and expressions, and standardised language (362). Even virtual sex has been defined as safe and filthy at the same time in these spaces, "held up as the

epitome of disembodied pleasure, contact-free sex without secretions in a zone of total autonomy" (Plant 460). According to these theories, human consciousness fuses with electronics.

Apart from providing pleasure, the experience of transcending the body and entering cyberspace can be read as dangerous since it implies the loss of the body's own biology, of becoming completely meaningless. As a cultural artefact, virtual reality can be seen as an expression of our "millennialist *angst*", functioning as a mirror for our fears, expressed in relation to our notions of subjectivity and the body (Gromala 601). Thus, the fantasy of disembodiment is attractive and repulsive at the same time.

In *The Matrix*, significantly, the mind is not totally independent from the body, as virtual worlds have traditionally suggested. Recent critics have denominated this mixture of the mind and body "hybrid reality" (De Souza and Silva 2004) or "mixed reality" (Hayles and Gessler 2004) considered as "[t]he promiscuous mingling of computationally intensive simulations with input from the real world" (482). In this sense, the film engages more with feminist critiques of cyberpunk that, like Hayles's, see the posthuman as a concept that "neither propagates a fusion with machines nor promotes a terror of technology as anti-human" (in Melzer 162). Hayles critiques the tendency in cybernetic discourse to disembody the subject, arguing that "there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (Hayles 3). Yet, she aims to move towards "embodied virtuality". As Herbrechter contends, Hayles's argumentative trajectory is similar to the logic encountered in *The Matrix* (285).

In order to succeed in the electronic space of the Matrix, one has to know about the rules that govern it, that is, one has to be aware of

the banality of this space, as a boy explains to Neo at the Oracle's place. The human body needs, then, to be adjusted to new cultural spaces, which include those dominated by postmodern values and the latest technology. That is the reason why Neo, once conscious of his hybrid condition within virtual reality, succeeds in destroying agent Mr Smith, since he forgets about the rules that apparently govern the known world and adopts instead those of the unknown. Neo will gradually develop his superpowers and his ability of disembodiment. However, it will not be until *Matrix Revolutions* (2003) when Neo discovers he is able to use his powers in the real world and that his mind can be independent from his body. In *The Matrix* the experience of total disembodiment is not achieved. The result is a troubled subjectivity.

In real life, virtual reality participants are motivated by the wish to experience other identities. Normally, users are given a choice about what she/he perceives or wants to perceive in this space. In other virtual reality films, their protagonists enter cyberspace to achieve pleasure (as in *the 13th Floor*), or merely to "play" (as in *eXintenZ*). The rebels jack in the Matrix to accomplish the heroic mission to free the world from the slavery of the machines, with the exception of the two genuine children of Zion, Tank and Dozer. The novelty of *The Matrix* resides in the fact that the people who inhabit the simulated world are not aware of its constructed nature. For that reason, it is the aim of the creators of the Matrix to hide the artificiality of this world. The setting, which shows New York typical skyscrapers and the emphasis on computing and the latest technology from the very beginning of the film, resemble, Morpheus corroborates at one point, actual New York at the edge of the new millennium.

Thus, and as Melzer argues, characters in the virtual world of the Matrix are not constructed by the user of virtual reality. Instead, they are enslaved bodies held within a state of unconsciousness.

Unlike cyberpunk texts, where virtual reality meant a liberating space, the film's main concern is resistance through conscious representation of the self, grounded on the unity of mind and body in the material world (Melzer 153). Melzer is referring to this space of the ship led by Morpheus as a space for freedom. She supports the argument that the film defines reality in terms of the unity of body and mind, reproducing, thus, a conservative individualist identity untouched by technology: "the intact human body that is in contact with, yet in control of, technology, becomes the metaphor for an autonomous subject, ultimately rejecting the radical potential of a posthuman subjectivity" (151). The film hints at the return, at least partially, to the Cartesian conjunction as a way to achieve freedom.

The risk of falling into essentialism has also been noted by theorists on new technologies, who argue that "we cannot ignore the dynamic of our own physicality while searching for new concepts of identity in respect to technological innovations" (Becker 363). Indeed, and as Herbrechter notices, the film insists on two "types" of bodies: the residual self-image as a mental projection of the digital self, Morpheus informs us, and the physical body which dies when the plug is pulled (285). Hence, an interesting point here is that the image of the physical body in the Matrix is a copy of the enslaved body. In this sense, the virtual body does not propose anything new and the created world of the Matrix does not challenge completely our basic notion of reality. This fact opposes many feminist theories that suggest a liberation of bodily constraints in virtual spaces (Plant, Springer). Springer's idea of cyberpunk characters abandoning the physical body to exist inside the computer matrix is not totally achieved in the movie. Instead, as Lee argues, the "corporeal is neither denied by technology, nor must it be reinserted into the Matrix" (Lee 564). Neo's mind is not totally freed from his body.

Sceptical of claims that cyberspace can erase gender markers, Balsamo contends that virtual reality encounters provide an illusion of control over reality, nature and especially over a gender and race-marked body (127). The user experiences virtual reality "through a disembodied gaze" (Balsamo 125) and although the body may disappear representationally in virtual worlds, it does not disappear materially in the interface with the virtual reality apparatus (126).

Intentional disembodiment is taken up by the film's protagonists and is meant to have a social purpose, instead of being depicted as a pleasant experience for them. Significantly called Nebuchadnezzar, the ship stands as a closed space populated by the "privileged" ones in possession of the "truth".[264] It is the place where the protagonists consciously jack in to set out virtual trips through cyberspace. Inhabitants of this virtual frontier follow libertarian ideas and their mission is to free humanity from mental and physical enslavement. Yet, and since virtual reality simulates the life and "pleasures" at the end of the 20th century, the experience of travelling into cyberspace may also imply a return to the pleasures of life. For instance, the traitor Cypher wishes to return to the illusory world where everything "tastes better". In this sense the world of the Matrix evokes a pleasant realm in comparison with the post-apocalyptic depiction of the Desert of the Real.

The ship is depicted as the frontier between virtuality and reality. In general terms, the very notion of "the virtual frontier" is both an imaginary and a real space on the fringe of mainstream culture,

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[264] Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadrezzar. [Heb. Nebukadnessar, and Nebukadressar, from the Babylonian Nabukudurriusur, meaning "May (the god) Nabu protect the son," or "May Nabu protect the boundary." In Greek sources, the same interchange between *n* and *r* is found in the forms Nabouchodonosor and Nabokodrosoros; Aramaic, Nebukadnessar] (http://www.nisbett.com/people/bp-nebuchadnezzar.htm).

since it simultaneously evokes a cultural symbol, and names the space of information exchange that forms part of electronic networking services (Balsamo 116). Thus, the frontier metaphor suggests many possibilities. As Helen McLure argues, the electronic frontier encompasses many of the dualities and tensions of the American West. It is significant to U.S. economic and strategic interests and also appeals on a popular level to many romantic myths about endless horizons and untrammelled freedom (457-8). Life at the verge of virtual simulation is depicted in the film both as pleasant and dangerous. While providing shelter from slavery and bondage, it is constantly threatened by octopus-like machines and, far from being a paradise, life there is austere and plain.

Life at the virtual frontier is characterised by its ambiguity. It is an in-between space. As Mellencamp argues:

> The virtual world is very bright, starkly white, perfect, sharp-edged, and sterile. It is symmetrical, mathematical, repetitive, and predictable—like computer code. The real world is old, worn-out, tattered, and eclectic; reality is dark, mystical, mythical, and messy (a young, or adolescent, man's rendition). The line between the synthetic and the real, is one of imperfection, awkwardness, and clutter. (85-6)

This is to say, the ship is the only space where body and mind are completely unified. Like the American West, the virtual frontier is the ideal stage for national drama of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness (McLure 457). In this sense, it can be considered as a Garden of Eden. Yet it is also a dangerous place where the cowboy/rebel/outlaw lives, a lawless territory (462-3).

As Hamming argues, films showing hypermedia (among them *The Matrix*) posit a return to a "primitive" nature as the only remedy for unstable identities affected by the newest media technologies. Male protagonists awake to realise how their masculine identities are

commodified by postindustrial society and nostalgically wish to return to nature. Like *12 Monkeys, Fight Club,* and *Dark City, The Matrix* offers a space where the hero "can supposedly experience life free from the cultural restraints of media or capitalist manipulations" (Hamming 148). Moreover, it is the place where the hero gets the girl (148). Indeed, Neo rejects the artificial world of the Matrix and chooses to live on the spaceship Nebuchadnezzer instead, where he can enjoy both a body (visibly damaged by its previous connection with technology) and mind freely. It is also there where he can enjoy a "real" romance with Trinity. The Cartesian idea of the union of mind and body—only experienced on the ship—seems to suggest freedom and a return to "primitive" values. The "primitivism" of the spaceship in terms of technological development is evidenced by this dark, dingy, claustrophobic space filled with computer screens and old electronic machines that clutter small spaces (Mellencamp 86).

It should also be taken into account that it is on the ship where bodies are best seen as vulnerable and subjected to the pain of disembodiment. When Neo wakes up, he feels his body in pain and, because his muscles are atrophied, he suffers "real" physical pain. His muscles have never been used before and he needs them to become "active" again. He needs to recover his "real" body, to be humanised again. When he is in danger in the Matrix, his physical body on the ship reflects it by means of blood and bodily pain. At one significant sequence, he is about to die in the Matrix, before Trinity manages to "resurrect" him from the real world, thanks to her kiss and her declaration of love. Body sensations are absent from the created world of the Matrix. The illusion of heterosexual romance seems to be the remedy to Neo's problems.

Recognised as a resistance group against the supremacy of technology, Morpheus's crew evokes life at the frontier and positive values such as reality, honesty, partnership, and equality. The

ambiguous relationship between human and technology is at its best depicted at this singular space where characters jack into cyberspace and their bodies are seen as vulnerable.

Unlike cyberpunk characters, whose relationship with technology is normally understood as complementary, the vision of the posthuman body offered in the *The Matrix* is rather troublesome.[265] Characters display troubled subjectivities as a consequence of their interface with the virtual world of the Matrix.

5.3.2. GENDER AND RESISTANCE IN *THE MATRIX*: THE VIRTUAL HERO

This last section seeks to illustrate how gender, especially as embodied by the virtual hero, is represented in the film. As it will be contended in the next paragraphs, the digital world offers a realm for the depiction of more flexible gender values. This gender resistance is favoured by the film's insistence on simulacra and border violation. Setting and costume further reinforce the idea of the crossing of gender boundaries. Hence, the film proposes a new model of masculinity: Neo's androgynous looks and his troubled subjectivity do not match conventional portrayals of the action hero. Moreover, the film also portrays a site of resistance: the ship commanded by the rebels, where we expect unbiased human—and gender—relations.[266] In this sense, the new idea of masculinity is still based on previous

[265] In a similar way, feminist critiques of cyberpunk take ambiguous approaches, either emphasising the liberating idea of cyberspace or, on the contrary, considering the posthuman as subversive and problematic.

[266] As it was suggested earlier in this chapter, the film follows the mythical structure and makes use of biblical, philosophical and classical references as a starting point for the building up of new trends and ideas.

assumptions of male heroism, although some novelties are added to this pattern. The "virtual man" is, therefore, an in-between figure. Once again, old and new values merge in a context where the line between reality and fantasy is transgressed.

Many critics have considered virtual worlds as spaces of resistance against pre-established norms, due to their emphasis on simulation. In this light, Geller affirms that we find a deconstruction of reality in the created world of the Matrix, which

> undoes the nation's ideological network of borders, exposing them as simulacra by its deployment of characterization: woman as object of desire (the "Woman in Red", the black man as criminal (Morpheus), the Black woman as "welfare queen" or "mammy" (the Oracle), and "resistance" to the national order as "terrorist" Other (Neo's transformation into a terrorist, epitomized in the final scene of his threatening phone call to the "state"). (Geller 26)

Yet, and at this point I agree with Halbergstam and Livingston, "the hyper-reality of the cyborg or posthuman predicament does not wipe out politics or the need for political resistance: it just makes it more necessary than ever to work towards a radical redefinition of political action" (245).

Characters like Neo and Trinity, with the help of costume and other aspects of the *mise-en-scène*, perform masculinity and femininity in this virtual world. In this sense, one may argue that *The Matrix* offers instances of resistance to gender features, especially if we consider the depiction of the androgynous-looking and rather weak male hero, if we compare him with earlier realisations of artificial men like The Terminator, and with the virilised female character, Trinity. These apparent gender transgressions have opened numerous debates concerning postmodernism, gender and representation in the digital medium.

Some researchers have argued that gender and other aspects of social identity are considered irrelevant in virtual worlds. Sadie Plant, for instance, argues that virtual worlds "undermine both the world-view and the material reality of two thousands years of patriarchal control", probably in reference to the differing representations of a body where sexual differences are not so sharply marked (265). This complete rupture with traditional male appearance has led to their consideration as feminised characters, reinforced by the fact that the virtual space they enter is normally associated with the feminine or "matrix". Thus, Fernbach affirms, when dealing with the fetishisation of masculinity in cyberspace, that "unlike the stereotypical figure of the male cyborg, these console cowboys are feminized by the technoprosthetics that enable them to enter cyberspace, also referred to, of course, as the matrix" (244). Console cowboys entering this space would, consequently, adopt feminine traits (Fernbach 244). Hence, many contemporary SF films depicting these created worlds often offer androgynous characters showing traits traditionally considered as "female". This idealised gender-free realm has been a basic reading of cyberpunk. However, this "genderless" utopia is, in my view, partly neutralised in the visual media and, consequently, the total rupture with traditional visual and gender behavioural codes does not take place in virtual reality films.

In *The Matrix*, Neo, as well as other characters who inhabit virtual space, display both traditionally masculine and feminine traits within the same body, thus supporting the concept of the body as a mere construct. This postmodern focus on ontological issues has consequences for literary models of the self that, like the world, is considered unstable, plural and fragmented. This plurality of the self also implies a plurality of traits resulting, supposedly, in the fluidity of gender features. Neo's representation on screen is visually different from other male heroes who have an interface with technology. Unlike

the character of the Terminator, whose muscled and healthy body stood for the relationship between man and technology, the malleable and androgynous body of Neo suggests a more "believable" notion of the action hero. The previous hefty cyborg-body has notably evolved into a more "natural" and fluid intersection man-machine. Muscles do not seem to be valuable in the digitalised medium.

The virtual hero is called Neo, and this encourages spectators to expect a rather innovative personality and/or behaviour, or at least something new concerning his physical aspect. The innovation is easily perceived in his looks from his first appearance on screen, Neo's lack of prominent male features is shown by means of an extreme close-up of his well-shaved face and angelic look. In spite of the long take showing his face, viewers get confused at first with his gender identity. This is favoured by Keanu Reeves' physical traits. According to Clover, Keanu Reeves, with his

> unassignable looks (often attributed to his genetic heritage of Chinese, Caucasian and Hawaiian) already seeming digitally smoothed, and his immediate proffering of a pure surface without depth, he's closer to the dream of a next generation—a post-national, post-modern poster boy" (Clover 21).

Reeves is miscegenated, which favours the film's portrayal of resistance.[267] In appearance, and manners, Reeves is "not to distract from the digital *mise-en-scène* but to integrate with it seamlessly" (21). Moreover, he sometimes stands as a passive object of the look, which, together with his androgynous looks, favours his association to the feminine. His appearance offer visual pleasure to spectators, especially when seen in the Matrix in his long black leather coat. That way, he is framed by the same stereotype that has been conventionally

[267] He was born in Beirut, Lebanon. His mother is English and his father is American of Hawaiian and Chinese descent.

associated to feminine beauty. He is the embodiment of the "New Man".

As opposed to traditional action heroes, a relation of subordination to other characters is observed in Neo's character from the beginning of the movie, as he occupies many times a secondary position within the frame. Thus, in his first encounter with Trinity, we first get a medium close-up showing Trinity from chest up. The following shot, however, does not show only Neo's figure, but, although he is within the frame, the front is still occupied by Trinity's back, subordinating Neo's body within the frame.

Sexual differences are in a way eradicated in Neo's androgynous look and body. In so doing, the notion of the body as site of gender difference is contested. Especially in Neo's case, but also in other heroes appearing in postmodern texts, the qualities he displays are based on computer programmes (loading programmes), which can be, in the same way, inserted into any female cyborg's memory. Yet, not only an ambiguous physical appearance characterises this seemingly new hero, but also his constant doubts and fears identify him as a different type of male character. This idea of gender fluidity within his body is emphasised in the film in a sequence where, captured by agents, his body begins to dissolve and becomes a mere melting substance. Furthermore, the loss of boundaries, a recurrent postmodern concept, does not only take place within his body but also in his mind, as he—and spectators—are sometimes unable to distinguish whether he is awake or asleep. This gender ambiguity is ever present when considering his messianic role in the film.

As a consequence of this, gender differences seem to be neutralised, which can be observed in Trinity's ability to fight, saving Neo's life twice. Her first appearance on screen, clearly opposed to Neo's, exalts the superiority of her body. Thus we can see how, after

being presented with a screen wipe we get a sequence where her physical power is exalted. This is shown by slowing down her movements, especially when she is jumping over the buildings.[268] Trinity's challenging femininity through her narrative and aesthetic roles has led to queer readings of the film. Theresa L. Geller considers Trinity and Charly Baltimore of *Long Kiss Goodnight*, with their short haircuts, cat suits and physical prowess as the "tough chick" of Hollywood (8). Geller relies on Trinity's role of action hero as a subversion of gender expectations, which is further interpreted as a resistance to dominant cultural practices. In this sense, Trinity is outside the patriarchal law and her refusal to dress and behave according to established gender patterns is the cause of the violence exerted on her. In her queerly coded femininity she is treated with hostility by the forces of the state (15). Apart from Trinity, Switch—the other woman in the resistance—is, at least visually, also a queer figure in the sense that she is also "odd" and is always with Trinity. Unlike other members of the resistance group, she is dressed in white, what makes her somewhat different.

As opposed to them, the "Woman in Red" figures as the exotic object of Neo's male gaze, and according to Geller, she is the version of the "acceptable" woman within the heteropatriarcal Matrix (16). She is designed for one of the training programmes, following conventional gender attributes and standing as an object for the male gaze. The performance of gender in the training programmes is evidenced by this nameless objectified woman. The virtual world offers, then, contradictory images of women, which, according to Springer, makes it "difficult to either condemn or celebrate them, since a single

[268] Bordwell and Thompson define wipe as "[a] transition between shots in which a line passes across the screen, eliminating the first shot as it goes and replacing it with the next one" (482).

interpretation cannot entirely explain their appeal" (Springer 1996, 138).

Trinity and Switch's condition as "tough chicks" also brings them closer to other figures of resistance or abjection, in this case exemplified by an African American male, Morpheus. Trinity's conflict with gender norms is inseparable, then, from sexual and racial norms. Following Geller's argument, Trinity's most fetishised image in black latex is explained by the film's reading of femininity as performance in order to subvert its ideological foundations in the world Matrix.

The film's gender and racial resistance has been noted by quite a few critics. Jason Haslam in "Coded Discourse: Romancing the (Electronic) Shadow in *The Matrix*" argues that the film offers two readings, one as an idealised heterotopia and the other as a reproduction of white male supremacy. Haslam reads the film as a text that uses a "disturbed and disturbing set of plots and images surrounding gender and race that can be seen to point to the performative nature of dominance as such" (94). This reading allows him a critique of enlightenment subjectivity. Thus, on the one hand, it is argued how the film criticises U.S. racism and white power mainly by means of the father figure of Morpheus. On the other hand, however, he notices how the film offers another submergent discussion on identity, in terms of gender. Thus, Neo's heroic identity is suggested as performative in the film partly because Trinity breaks with traditional gender paradigms. Moreover, this critique of white power is also undercut by means of the rearticulation of the racist film tradition of the mammy figure as played by the Oracle. Thus the film appropriates an Africanist narrative to support the dominance of whiteness while it critiques at the same time the gendered implications of a similar ontological structure (Haslam 103).

Hence, the Matrix is a created space where gender seems artificial and performed. It is in this space where Neo's heroic attitude is better portrayed. Aspects of the *mise-en-scène,* mainly costume, setting and characters' behaviour, help this simulation. The use of fashionable punk-rock music is noticeable, as well as the characters' costume, which imitates the trends in U.S. society at the end of the 20th century, and which is combined with the quite futuristic black leader outfits and extravagant accessories of the rebels. In the same way, conventional female attributes of virtual women share stage with the more androgynous types who jack into cyberspace. The mixture of trends is commonplace in the film.

In relation to *The Matrix*, Sarah Street in chapter 5 of her book *Costume and Cinema. Dress Codes in Popular Film* (2001) emphasises the role of costume for the narrative development of the film. In it, costumes are clear indications of the differences between the Matrix and the post-apocalyptic real world as depicted in the film. When referring to the world of the Matrix, she argues that there exists a stress on play and performance through costume, especially if we compare the same characters' garments when they are in the Desert of the Real. She is referring, for example, to Neo's stylish and fashionable jacket or to Morpheus' black suit and his long black trench coat with its leathery, reptilian textures. This performance, nevertheless, is also "a considerable element of the film's visual pleasure which perhaps qualifies its ostensible critique of postmodern society" (90). She further affirms that the film also uses costume to play with issues of gender identity and androgyny but this only happens in the hyperreal world of the Matrix or inside the computer programmes (94). Thus, for example, when referring to Trinity, she notices the difference between the ordinary clothes she wears on the ship when she is "serving Neo his food and saving him at the end by declaring her love for him" and "her black, shiny body-hugging cat-suits and shorts, slicked-back

androgynous haircut which typifies her appearance for most of the film when she is in the Matrix" (94). With this, Street states that the use of costume in this world is very much about spectacular display and the resulting possibilities are far more pleasurable and, from the perspective of gender, more progressive than in real life as depicted on the ship. She concludes by saying that "Neo cannot be 'the One' unless he *appears* to be 'the One'" (99).

Street's view about androgyny in the world of the Matrix is not shared by Theresa Geller who affirms in "Queering Hollywood's Tough Chick" that

> Trinity's nominative femininity is literally distanced in the narrative's explanation that the film's most fetishized image (of Carrie-Ann Moss in black latex from head to toe) is always only her projected image in the matrix, which stands in stark contrast to her embodied self outside the matrix where androgyny is the visual rule (she is clothed in torn, grey gym clothes like everyone else). (22)

Although both critics recognise the film's performance of gender in the world Matrix, I would agree with Geller in that, at least visually, clothes are clearer signs of androgyny in the world depicted as the real.

The film's visual image reinforces the idea of sameness and uniformity on the ship. Their inhabitants wear the same torn garments, eat the same food and have similar aims in their lives. The ship has been regarded as a neutral place for human relations. Accordingly, Theresa L. Geller argues that this world outside the Matrix refers to the U.S. vision of communism and, therefore

> embodies much of what the American mythology has described as the costs of communism: gender citizens, asexuality, cyborg existence bound to machinery, tasteless gruel for food, blindly following one leader who receives orders from an unknown source (only leaders are given the coordinates of Zion),

> all citizens coexisting on the same level (the white educated elite, Neo and Trinity, working shoulder-to-shoulder with "Third World" workers, such as Tank and Dozer), a complete absence of luxuries in a money-less society. (Geller 25)

Yet, her point is that the film destabilises the anticommunist discourses by structuring spectatorial affinity with this world and with the leading characters that inhabit it, namely Neo, Trinity and Morpheus. During his initial visit to the ship, Morpheus looks directly out, to the camera, as if to suggest spectators that this story is about us, about our empowerment (Mellencamp 86). Moreover, outside the capitalist world of the Matrix, concepts of truth and reality are articulated, concepts on which, Geller argues, "any coherent national story relies" (25). This post-apocalyptic world where no luxuries are found is, in fact, the one that is real as opposed to the Matrix, an illusory place. In relation to this, Aylish Wood argues that:

> Whilst the Real World may be cold and grungy, it exists in opposition to the Matrix, where humans are reduced to batteries that enable machines to function. Given that scenario it seems to make sense that humans will want to release themselves from tyranny. (123)

This post-apocalyptic real world, then, becomes a free world in preference to the enslavement and exploitation suggested by the Matrix. In this sense, the world depicted as real becomes a clear allusion to resistance, since its inhabitants are free from the bondage of the machines. As suggested before, this micro-world aims at evoking notions of non-oppression. Notions of equality—achieved by means of different visual and narrative devices—will be also present in the following film, *Matrix Reloaded* (2003) which, although not analysed here, portrays the resistance, the last human city (Zion), as a free racial and gender contender.

Nevertheless, and at this point I agree with Street, we see a failure of innovative and liberating gender relations in this supposed free world of the real. In this "rebellious" site, gender relations should be reasonably called to mind as equal and non-oppressive. This is not achieved to a great extent. Hence, hierarchical gender and social relations are established among the members aboard the spaceship. Morpheus, a strong male figure, although somehow breaking with racial expectations, is still the one in command of the crew. Likewise, the white male hero—the "chosen one"—also happens to be a young leading man following the conventions of the archetypal hero. Despite its claims of equality and freedom and its emphasis on collective missions, life on the ship still follows a rigid hierarchical system, in a similar way to the one at work on the starship Enterprise in *Startrek*. As Melzer argues, this hierarchy is reflected partly by the member's self-chosen names, which reflect their own identities (Melzer 154). This regression is not, as paradoxically as it may seem, so clearly portrayed in the Matrix, where many other types of performances are observed. Aimee Bahng contends that the apparent embrace of ethnic diversity and racial hybridity operates only at the level of aesthetics, failing to consider the social construction of race (167-92).

As discussed here, the hero in *The Matrix* represents a new concept of masculinity, which is, at the same time, a reflection of our times. His non-conventional body and behaviour reflect many of the values at work in the late 1990s, such as indeterminacy, border transgression and technological development, which imply a flexibility of gender traits. In spite of these gender reversals, Neo is not considered at any time a feminised character but, on the contrary, his male supremacy is, at all times, unquestioned. Paradoxically enough, these gender twists take place mainly in the fake world that is meant to imitate ours, which problematises even more the notions of gender allowance. Traditional heroic features, which used to link men with

power and dominance, are combined with a more unconventional image of masculinity. This paradoxical gender characterisation is ultimately linked to the postmodern emphasis on instability and dehumanization. This eventual re-appropriation of traditional behavioural patterns can be interpreted as an urge for establishing "lost" gender associations in a world where everything is, like the U.S.A. at the end of the century, up to dissolution and chaos.

In short, in *The Matrix* we find many elements that evoke the postmodern paradox. Mainly, the setting in a virtual world, the characters' posthuman condition and the banal existence of our known reality suggest uncertainty. The blurring of frontiers is supported throughout the whole film and heavily affects gender representation, since the fixed system of binary oppositions is completely put to the test. Androgyny characterises the protagonist's body, and therefore, the mixture of male and female traits are to be found in his figure. The representation of masculinity is, therefore, ambiguous and responds to the postmodern.

The virtual hero in *The Matrix* shows unconventional behaviour in the sense that he has doubts, fears and is not physically superior to his opponents. Neo embodies in this sense "the new hero", and, with it, an unusual representation of masculinity. Yet, one should not forget that Neo's task is, after all, to save his world and for that reason, the adventures he undertakes can be structured in the form of traditional quest patterns, which involve a necessary male dominance of the events. Hence, a traditional quest structure is undertaken by an androgynous-looking character, Neo, helped by a female hero, Trinity. Gender resistance is suggested in the film by means of different devices. In the illusory world of the Matrix there are many gender reversals. In the rebellious site of the hovercraft, neutrality among the sexes is achieved mainly by costume and setting. The ship evokes the virtual frontier, an in-between world where reality is mixed with

illusion, producing disorientation and body pain. Yet, total gender freedom is not achieved in any of these worlds.

The Matrix presents a clear ambiguity, which turns out to be a recurrent device in virtual reality films. Baudrillard's idea of the play of possibilities and the confusion between real and simulation clearly affect subjectivity and gender. The depiction of the "virtual man" offers a new vision of the interface man-technology. Moreover, the film offers new spaces, which are between reality and illusion, between convention and tradition and which favour this ambiguity when representing masculinity.

5.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have dealt with two patterns of masculinity that depict men's ambiguous relationship with technology: the "artificial man" and the "virtual man". In order to analyse these types of masculinity, I have made use of two super-productions within the SF genre: *Terminator 2* and *The Matrix,* released at the beginning and at the end of the 90s, respectively. Both male protagonists are—although in two different ways—closely linked to "the machine", which defines them as male cyborgs.

In general terms, the very notion of the cyborg evokes the idea of blending, confusion and transgression. The self and the "other" are no longer rationalistic opposites within this new space of representation. Our own materiality seems an effect of technology. Their appearance in many SF works has favoured, therefore, the narrativisation of some values akin to postmodernism such as "disorientation, powerlessness, fragmentation, disintegration, loss of boundaries, and hybridization" (Springer 1990, 205). Indeed, both The Terminator and Neo become sites of transgression. They evoke U.S. anxieties over the influence of technology in our daily lives. Moreover, their hybrid nature problematises traditional gender constructions. These films, apparently very different if we take into account setting and subject matter, share, nevertheless, some aspects, mainly concerning their emphasis on technology and the characters' destabilisation of the self.

The cinematic cyborg evolves adapting to the times and dominant ideologies, trying to incorporate technological advances. As it has been attempted to illustrate here, there seems to be a clear evolution from the "artificial man" to the "virtual man", which can be read as a change in our understanding and acceptance of the latest technology. Also, the difference between the hypermasculine cyborg of *Terminator 2* and the "virtual man" in *The Matrix* accounts for the

commodification in SF of certain values ascribed to the "New Man". In this light, Neo can be considered the embodiment of a new type of hero in the SF genre.

In relation to the original movie, Cameron's *Terminator 2* offers an evolution in the depiction of the cyborg figure. The bad cyborg in the 1984 version has changed into a reassuring figure, a protector. Thus, the power suggested by the armoured body in the first movie serves a very different goal in the second one. He changes from the bad cyborg into the good one. However, the most striking feature of the film is the gradual "humanization" of the Terminator, which complicates the classical relationship between man-machine, which, as commented in previous chapters, was normally associated to otherness. The good Terminator is not totally "other" and shows instances of vulnerability and sensitivity. Moreover, he adopts the role of the father and protects young John from the most feared antagonist: the T-1000 Terminator model. This characterisation of the good cyborg becomes somehow challenging. Yet, and especially if we consider the prominent hypermuscled body of Schwarzeggener, the fusion man-machine seems closer to images of the fascist male warrior. New gender values inserted into an armoured cyborg body that stresses conventional heroic features result in paradox. He embodies the gap between old and new.

The impossibility to offer more fluid forms of the cyborg has to do partly with the context of U.S. society at the beginning of the 90s, a transitory time when men experienced identity crises due to the erosion of hegemonic masculinity. This crisis was represented in many cultural products, such as cinema, advertising and art. Images of manhood in media and culture became socially crucial since they were mere "guides" of what is acceptable to be considered as a "real man". The Terminator becomes a transitional figure and evolves from old-gendered assumptions to more innovative ones, yet in a body that is

meant to calm anxieties over this change. This figure remains a paradox.

While the hypermasculine cyborg in *Terminator 2* incorporates ideas of the so-called "New Man", the protagonist of *The Matrix* offers a more challenging view of the interface man-machine. His androgynous body and rather unconventional behaviour, favoured by technical aspects like setting, light, and costume, offer a more fluid image of his fusion with the digital media. His relationship with the simulated world of the Matrix trespasses rational boundaries and causes identity crises. The film incorporates many intertextual references and spectacular special effects to make spectators participate in this collective hallucination. The film results in an ambivalent product. In this sense, some traits from the heroic narratives are added to the androgynous appearance of the male hero to propose new ideas. Thus, and in spite of his initial doubts and fears, the new hero remains invincible and follows a messianic trajectory where his power is unquestioned. Neo serves this new concept of masculinity, he is the embodiment of the "New Man".

Hence both films show that the cyborg body remains sophisticated and contradictory at once. Whereas the spectacular and mechanised body of the Terminator is absent in *The Matrix*, both films share some features, which are worth mentioning. Cyborg figures are posthuman beings whose identities become problematised in both films. The Terminator decides to sacrifice himself in the end and Neo shows a conflicted relationship with his virtual realisation. The dangers of posthumanism and the need to become human again are emphasised in these two films. The films' antagonists—the impenetrable Liquid Man in *The Terminator* and the agents in *The Matrix*—stand for humanity's worst enemy and are linked to more advanced technologies, still suggesting the dangers of "uncontrolled" technology. Indeed, both protagonists are messianic figures with the

mission to save humanity from a bleak fate dominated by machines. The post-apocalyptic vision of the future of humanity reflect our anxieties towards technological worlds where ontological issues are put to the test. The threat of technological development, especially from computing was—and it is still—affecting U.S. society at the end of the 20th century. Both films also propose new ways of depicting gender. Apart from the implications of the cyborg body, we see a reversal of gender roles in the portrayal of the two female heroes, Sarah and Trinity. They are physically strong and detached from conventional depictions of femininity and motherhood. Borders seems to have been dissolved dangerously in both films.

Hence, it can be deduced that the representation of masculinity is influenced by its cultural context. Earlier in this chapter, I analysed how postmodernism and new technologies affect the representation of masculinity on screen. Moreover, and also due to the postmodern inclination towards the dissolution and fusion of borders, many debates are currently taking place which confirm a crisis in masculinity in western society, since everything seems to be subjected to manipulation. In *The Matrix,* the superiority of the machines, translated in their ability to create an accurate simulation of U.S. contemporary society, evokes in spectators a feeling of insecurity and panic. The world of the Matrix becomes the site for the reflection of contemporary fears, in this case, for the terrible consequences of humanity's loss of control over technology. Moreover, this panic of simulated realities is also a reflection of gender concerns about the consequences of androgyny and the lack of gender boundaries at a time when men are known to undergo a crisis of masculinity.

The reassertion of masculinity at the end of the century, fostered by a general cultural malaise, is present in our society. Virtual environments do not totally undermine dominant gender values. Thus, the male hegemony is still commonplace in the cyborg film at the end

of the millennium. The eventual use of patriarchal notions of male dominance in *The Matrix* could be interpreted as a way of recovering lost values in an age where limits merge and become chaotic. From this, it can be deduced that the SF film needs a kind of hegemonic model in order to develop, support and/or contest new emergent versions of masculinity.

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Of Men and Cyborgs: The Construction of Masculinity in Contemporary U.S. Science Fiction Cinema has argued for SF cinema as a distinguished genre in the exploration of male identities in the U.S.A. Particularly, I have attempted to illustrate that images of men and male cyborgs in contemporary SF films effectively suggest gender and identity concerns and can, therefore, be taken as cultural referents. In addition, I have also intended to demonstrate that images of manhood in filmed SF are susceptible to certain patterns of representation which should be taken into account in order to approach any analysis on masculinity in this genre.

The present study has stressed the importance of the Men's Studies discipline for the creation of new concepts of masculinity, since it contributed to make people aware of the stereotypical image of traditional masculinity, and of the oversimplification that the notion of "man" entailed for many collectives. As it has been emphasised in chapter one, traditional visions of the masculine have recently started to share stage with the figure of the so-called "New Man", involved in fathering. This attempt to redefine masculinity has caused a cultural anxiety or crisis, present in many men who have felt the need to reassert their traditional male attributes in order to prove their heterosexuality and power over the opposite sex.

One of the main contentions in this work has been that masculinity is a constructed notion. Special emphasis has been given to the way gender—particularly masculinity—is generally understood in the contemporary U.S.A. Chapter two strives to illustrate that Hollywood cinema has a great responsibility in constructing social identities and has traditionally proposed the ways in which gender should be represented. The chapter's division into "hard" and "soft" men has aimed to demonstrate that the history of mainstream U.S.

cinema has employed binary categorisations to construct masculinity on screen.

I started my analysis on masculinity and SF by suggesting in chapter three that the SF film offers something new to this hard/soft division of masculinity. It has been argued that SF as a genre does not respect generic boundaries and borrows from popular culture and from other genres, like the horror or the adventure film. Unlike other genres, though, the SF film presents futuristic settings, unusual outfits and unrealistic plots, normally displayed with the latest special effects. Employing intertextuality, pastiche and eclecticism, postmodernism has found in SF a way of reproducing—at least visually—its aesthetics, especially because the genre is fond of playing with the idea of border tension. Visual, technical and narrative devices have enabled to hope for challenges to traditional visions of gender in the SF film. Especially today, this genre proposes "new" spaces of representation, such as the virtual realm or the Internet, where physical limits are disrupted and gender is expected to be free from patriarchal conventions. In particular, the analysis of the male cyborg in contemporay SF films has allowed me to illustrate how this figure breaks with traditionally-established boundaries and offers, consequently, many different readings in relation to the male body and identity.

Yet, my initial hope that contemporary SF becomes an effective way to break away with patriarchal notions when representing gender has proven naïve in many senses. After a closer look and further consideration, it has been deduced here that manhood finds supported by masculinist conventions in SF, even in the most innovative sites for gender contention, namely androgynous bodies, cyborg figures or cyberspaces. Traditional heroic formulae still guide the young middle-class white male protagonist, who normally ends up saving the world from bleak fates. The depiction of masculinity relies

on residual notions of gender, in spite of the technical and visual novelties suggested in the more contemporary movies. This makes us consider the visual media, including SF, as a gendered institution governed by patriarchy.

The main argument defended throughout this research work has been that masculinity is constructed in SF following four differentiated patterns of representation: the "menaced man", the" conquering man", the "artificial man" and the "virtual man". As any cultural product, these patterns evolve with time to include contemporary worries that affect the male condition. While the "menaced man" and the "conquering man" give us a hint about men's confrontation with otherness, the "artificial man" and the "virtual man" emphasise the consequences of technology for the future of humankind and, in particular, its effects on male consciousness.

Of all the patterns discussed here, the "conquering man" has been regarded as the most "static" and traditional in terms of gender representation. Films showing this type normally offer a white male hero that follow mythical paths to achieve his heroic goal. Paradoxically, conquering men are normally seen in distant futures and/or far away planets where outfits, customs, forms of government and life in general are depicted as potentially "different". Moreover, conquering men are frequently helped by friendly "others", which, in a way, breaks with the stark opposition one/other. In this context, even the most "traditional" patterns for masculinity in SF seems to evoke something fresh. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the "virtual man" stands as the most innovative of all the patterns under analysis. This type normally refers to androgynous heroes trapped in virtually-created spaces that undergo identity crises. The destabilisation between the physical and the non-physical is a frequent device in films following this pattern. It is the virtual hero's

posthuman nature what has initially enabled me to consider a more dynamic representation of masculinity.

Analysis of the four films selected for this study of masculinity—Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* (2005), Baird's *Star Trek. Nemesis* (2002), Cameron's *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), and the Wachowskis' *The Matrix* (1999)—has intended to illustrate how images of the masculine in SF address contemporary socio-cultural specificities. Despite the films' disparity in terms of subject matter, setting, characters and tendencies of representation, they share many traits. Hence, the four films under consideration have illustrated, in a more or less obvious way, the "reality" of the times in the U.S.A. between 1991 and 2005, a period of political, social and cultural upheavals.

In order to evoke this feeling of general confusion and disturbance, the films recreate war or rebellious situations and suggest conflicts between nations or worlds. In them, humanity as we know it is in danger of extinction and finds itself invaded, threatened and/or dominated by evil "others". The topic of war is a recurrent one in SF films that may serve as an allegory for contemporary conflicts. In particular, the films under analysis bring to mind U.S. socio-political conflicts at the turn of the millenium, portraying worlds or civilizations that find themselves "invaded" by new ideas, cultural changes and the latest technological advances that are difficult to assimilate in most cases.

Spielberg's *The War of the Worlds* reflects accurately U.S. trauma and paranoia after the terrorist attacks of September 11th. References to the devastating effects of the religiously-based attacks are evident at several moments in the movie. As in other alien-invasion films, the evil "other" in *The War of the Worlds* becomes a metaphor for conflicts that threaten U.S. social order at the beginning of the 21st century. The

film echoes the fear of terrorism and the terrible consequences that a total breaking of the nation may entail for U.S. citizens. To complicate things more, its protagonist, Ray, fails both as a patriotic citizen and as a heroic character and he concentrates on individual salvation instead. In this sense, one can argue that the dominant definition of masculinity is somehow dismantled in the film, in spite of Ray's final success in the end.

In Baird's *Nemesis* we get a structured political order with the white male hero at the top. Opposing Spielberg's film, the idealisation of this imperialistic form of government works in *Nemesis* as a call for "old" hierarchical values in times of social convulsion. The tyrannical figure of Shinzon leads the race of the Remans and threatens to take control of the whole universe and destroy the Earth. In clear contrast to Ray, Captain Picard stands as the ideal democratic leader, capable of self-sacrificing for his nation and his people. The conflict between civilizations in the film mirrors the clash between races and cultures and the dangers of imperialism in our current times. The two films included in chapter four—*Nemesis* and *The War of the Worlds*—use colonising politics and the war topic to stress different aspects. *Nemesis* concentrates on the advantages of the nation as a collective unit fighting together and proposes a hierarchical socio-political order, while *The War of the Worlds* reflects a disorganised world order unable to stop the invasion of the enemy, suggesting the negative effects of individualism.

In the two films included in chapter five—*Terminator 2* and *The Matrix*— the political reading is not as evident, yet these films underline the generalised debate on the limits of technology in machine-dependent capitalist societies at work in the U.S.A. For that purpose, they depict humanitiy at war with technology. *Terminator 2* speaks about the existence of a post-apocalyptic future in which machines dominate the world and aim at destroying the last members

of the human resistance. In a similar way, *The Matrix* proposes a world where humans are used as mere power-batteries by the machines, which are in control after winning the battle against humans.

In particular, *Terminator 2* and *The Matrix* raise the theme of the dangers of uncontrolled technology. At the end of the 20th century, the fear of being replaced by technology is frequently suggested in SF films. Humanity and technology seem to have "exchanged" places as creator and creature, and humans are subjugated to the power of the machine. The rebellion of humans against the machines becomes the central issue in *The Matrix,* suggesting that computer advances and communication technologies have completely invaded our social order. The film emphasises the idea that the inhabitants of the created world of the Matrix need to become human again. Both Neo and the Terminator have been considered here as embodiments of world's saviours, with the mission to protect humanity in *Terminator 2,* and to release humanity from the tyranny of the machines in *The Matrix*. In these wars against technology, the villains of both films take the shape of fluid, malleable characters that stand as sophisticate instances of the latest technological developments.

I have also intended to prove that the SF film has succeeded in showing substantially the dangers that the disruption of the traditional binary one/other may entail for male identity. SF has proved to be an ideal genre for depicting this opposition and the tensions derived from the crossing of boundaries. The four films under discussion make use of this recurrent topic in SF to hint at men's instability as a result of their inability to adapt to changing values in U.S. society. They illustrate the problematic relationship between manhood and otherness, the latter understood as everything that disrupts the "norm".

Specifically, the pattern of the "menaced man" in recent SF films makes an important contribution to portrayals of men in crises. The aliens in *The War of the Worlds* are constructed following negative parameters and represent the deviant side of the binary opposition system. Apart from recalling Islamic terrorism, disease or pollution, the Martians can be read as hints of current changes concerning male roles in the U.S.A. As a result of his more than direct confrontation with the "other", Ray is terribly menaced and suffer from a deep identity crisis, which increases when he eventually needs to play the role of the protective father. Ray feels disoriented both in his public and private space. This feeling of unsteadiness further suggests men's unstable situation after new proposals of maleness and masculinity found in the U.S.A. at the beginning of the 21st century.

The prevalence of the white male supremacy is still present in many current discourses. As in most SF films showing the type of the "conquering man", Captain Picard in *Nemesis* stands at the top of gender, race and politicial hierarchies. He dominates space travel and follows mythical quests. Friendly embodiments of otherness—like nice androids—also contribute to support the white male supremacy. Yet, Picard's confrontation with the evil enemy is depicted in the 10th Trek film as somehow different, since it contests the traditional opposition one/other. Specifically, the novelty of the film is that Picard finds out about his close—and unexpected—link with the "other" in the shape of his clone, which produces instability and identity problems, eventually weakening his condition of mythical hero. In both Spielberg's and Baird's the destruction of the "other" is an imperative for the "one" to survive.

By means of the figure of the cyborg, *Terminator 2* and *The Matrix* offer advances in the depiction of the traditional binary opposition, since borders are erased in this man-machine amalgamation. The pattern of the "artificial man" openly articulates debates regarding the

dangers of genetic manipulation, and of the misuse of technology for the self and the male body. The character of the Terminator in the second movie of the series suffers a process of humanisation and, conscious of his artificial nature, he decides to "self-terminate" when he realises he could be dangerous for his newly-created family, which problematises the classical relationship between man/machine.

Finally, *The Matrix* makes use of intertextuality, androgyny and other technical aspects, such as the latest computer effects, to suggest the blurring of frontiers. As a consequence of this emphasis on border crossing, the virtual hero—Neo—suffers from a deep identity crisis, once he realizes his fake existence. As many other virtual men, he epitomises the problematic relationship between men and technology at the turn of the millennium. His unstable identity derives mainly from his posthuman nature. His androgynous looks and troubled subjectivity do not match conventional portrayals of the action hero but it responds to a more flexible depiction of masculinity.

In this attempt to show contemporary concerns at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, the films propose new, or so far unseen, portrayals of the family, fatherhood and sexual relationships. Particularly, *The War of the Worlds* and *Terminator 2* offer instances of unconventional fatherhood. Ray does not conform to the new model of father proposed by the media at the beginning of the 21st century, and he does not resemble either patriarchal assumptions of the father. In this sense, we see that he becomes a metaphor for men's difficulty in adapting to the prototype of the "New Man". The section devoted to the cyborg father and the postmodern family in chapter 5 has suggested that, paradoxically, the artificial character of the Terminator embodies the positive values of fatherhood. The film's emphasis on the artificial armoured body has been read as a strategy to calm down anxieties posed by the subversive figure of the postmodern father. In very different ways, both Ray and the Terminator prove unable to fit into

the idealised model of the "New Father". In this light, they have been regarded as in-between characters that problematise the opposition between innovation and tradition. *Nemesis,* in clear opposition to previous Trek movies, breaks with mythical conventions that consider family relations as distractions for the hero's goal, and opens with Riker and Troi's wedding celebration, which provides the perfect scenario for hybridity and a positive interracial interaction. There is also space for romantic heterosexual love in the virtual realm of the Matrix.

From this it can be deduced that the four contemporary SF films suggest different ways of grasping masculinity at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st one. In this light, male identity crises, new visions of fatherhood, unstable characters, or unforeseen heroic patterns—in part originated as a result of the erosion of patriarchal rules—are brought to mind, in a more or less obvious way.

The analyses of the movies has allowed me to illustrate that they depict the contemporary crises of masculinity and men's reactions after the appearance of new definitions of manhood, being the "other"—in the shape of aliens, evil clones or misused technology—the main cause of these crises. Although male imagery in contemporary SF films is still subjected to dominant definitions of masculinity and show up the inability to offer gender free portrayals, they mirror effectively cultural anxieties concerning male subjectivities.

Lastly, it should be taken into account that the types proposed here account for dominant tendencies of representation and are not representative of a world-wide gestalt. In this light, SF seems to be at the service of a limited range of population and addressed mostly to a middle class white male audience. Nevertheless, it is my hope to have demonstrated in this dissertation the power of SF to deal with notions of men and masculinity in contemporary U.S society. I firmly believe

that SF proves to be aware of the paradoxes of gender representation. Precisely because of this, I would like to finish my work by expressing my wish as a SF spectator for totally flexible portrayals of masculinity in future films.

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ANNEX: KEY SCIENCE FICTION FILMS

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BEFORE 50s:

20,000 Leagues under the Sea. Dir: Stuart Paton. Perf: Allen Holubar, Leviticus Jones, Jane Gail, William Welsh, Ole Jansen. Universal Film, 1916.

Batman. Dir: Lambert Hillyer. Perf: Lewis Wilson, Douglas Croft, J. Carroll Naish, Shirley Patterson. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1943.

Bride of Frankenstein. Dir: James Whale. Perf: Boris Karloff, Colin Clive, Valerie Hobson, Ernest Thesiger. Universal Pictures, 1935.

Cat People. Dir: Jacques Tourneur. Perf: Simone Simon, Kent Smith, Tom Conway, Jane Randolph. RKO Radio Pictures, 1942.

Dr Cyclops. Dir: Ernest B. Schoedsack. Perf: Albert Dekker, Thomas Coley, Janice Logan, Charles Halton. Paramount Pictures, 1940.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Dir: Rouben Mamoulian. Perf: Fredric March, Miriam Hopkins, Rose Hobart, Holmes Herbert. Paramount Pictures, 1931.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Dir: Victor Fleming. Perf: Spencer Tracy, Ingrid Bergman, Lana Turner, Donald Crisp, Ian Hunter. MGM, 1941.

Frankenstein. Dir: James Whale. Perf: Colin Clive, Mae Clarke, John Boles, Boris Karloff. Universal Pictures, 1931.

Island of Lost Souls. Dir: Erle C. Kenton. Perf: Charles Laughton, Richard Arlen, Leia Hyams, Bela Lugosi, Kathleen Burke, Arthur Hohl. Paramount Pictures, 1932.

Just Imagine. Dir: David Butler. Perf: El Brendel, Maureen O' Sullivan, John Garrick, Marjorie White, Frank Albertson. Fox Film Corporation, 1930.

The Invisible Man. Dir: James Whale. Perf: Claude Rains, Gloria Stuart, William Harrigan. Universal Pictures, 1933.

The Lady and the Monster. Dir: George Sherman. Perf: Vera Ralston, Richard Arlen, Eric von Stroheim, Helen Vinson. Republic Pictures, 1944.

The Last Man on Earth. Dir: John G. Blystone. Perf: Earle Foxe, Grace Cunard, Gladys Tennyson, Derelys Perdue, Maurice Murphy. Fox Film Corporation, 1924.

The Lost World. Dir: Harry O. Hoyt. Perf: Bessie Love, Lewis Stone, Wallace Beery, Lloyd Hughes, Alma Bennett. First National Pictures, 1925.

The Man from Beyond. Dir: Burton L. King. Perf: Louis Alberni, Erwin Connelly, Harry Houdini, Frank Montgomery, Nita Naldi. Houdini Picture Corporation, 1922.

The Mysterious Island. Dir: Lucien Hubbard. Perf: Lionel Barrymore, Jacqueline Gadsden, Lloyd Hughes, Montagu Love. MGM, 1929.

Things to Come. Dir: William Cameron Menzies. Perf: Raymond Massey, Edward Chapman, Ralph Richardson, Margaretta Scott. London Film Productions, 1936.

Unknown Island. Dir: Jack Bernhard. Perf: Virginia Crey, Phillip Reed, Richard Denning. Albert Jay Cohen Productions, 1948.

THE 50s:

20,000 Leagues under the Sea. Dir: Richard Fleischer. Perf: Kirk Douglas, James Mason, Paul Lukas, Peter Lorre. Walt Disney Productions, 1954.

Attack of the 50 Foot Woman. Dir: Nathan Juran. Perf: Allison Hayes, William Hudson, Yvette Vickers. Woolner Brothers Inc, 1958.

Attack of the Crab Monsters. Dir: Roger Corman. Perf: Richard Garland, Pamela Duncan, Russell Johnson, Leslie Bradley. Los Altos Productions, 1957.

Beginning of the End. Dir: Bert I. Gordon. Perf: Peter Graves, Peggie Castle, Morris Ankrum, Than Wyenn. AB-PT Pictures Corporation, 1957.

Conquest of Space. Byron Haskin. Perf: Walter Brooke, Eric Fleming, Mickey Shaughnessy, Phil Foster. Paramount Pictures, 1955.

Creature from the Black Lagoon. Dir: Jack Arnold. Perf: Richard Carlson, Julie Adams, Richard Denning. Universal International Pictures, 1954.

Day the World Ended. Dir: Roger Corman. Perf: Richard Denning, Lori Nelson, Adele Jergens, Mike Connors. Golden State Productions, 1955.

Destination Moon. Dir: Irving Piche. Perf: John Archer, Warner Anderson, Tom Powers, Dick Wesson, Erin O' Brien-Moore. George Pal Productions, 1950.

Earth versus the Flying Saucers. Dir: Fred F. Siers. Perf: Hugh Marlowe, Joan Taylor, Donald Curtis. Clover Productions, 1956.

Forbidden Planet. Dir: Fred M. Wilcox. Perf: Walter Pidgeon, Anne Francis, Leslie Nielsen, Warren Stevens. MGM, 1956.

Godzilla, King of the Monsters!. Dir: Ishiro Honda and Terry O. Morse. Perf: Raymond Burr, Takashi Shimura, Akira Takadara. Toho Company, 1956.

I Married a Monster from Outer Space. Dir: Gene Fowler Jr. Perf: Tom Tryon, Gloria Talbott, Peter Baldwin, Robert Ivers. Paramount Pictures, 1958.

Invaders from Mars. Dir: William Cameron Menzis. Perf: Helena Carter, Arthur Franz, Jimmy Hunt, Leif Erikson. National Pictures Corporation, 1953.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers. Dir: Don Siegel. Perf: Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter, Larry Gates, King Donovan. Walter Wanger Productions, 1956.

It Came from Outer Space. Dir: Jack Arnold. Perf: Richard Carlson, Barbara Rush, Charles Drake, Joe Sawyer. Universal International Pictures, 1953.

On The Beach. Dir: Stanley Kramer. Perf: Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Fred Astaire, Anthony Perkins. Stanley Kramer Productions, 1959.

Return of the Fly. Dir: Edward Bernds. Perf: Vincent Price, Brett Halsey, John Sutton. Associated Producers, 1959.

Tarantula. Dir: Jack Arnold. Perf: John Agar, Mara Corday, Leo G. Carroll, Nestor Paiva, Ross Eliot. Universal International Pictures, 1955.

Teenagers from Outer Space. Dir: Tom Graeff. Perf: David Love, Dawn Bender, Bryan Grant. Tom Graeff Productions, 1959.

The Alligator People. Dir: Roy Del Ruth. Perf: Beverly Garland, Bruce Bennett, Lon Chaney Jr. Associated Producers, 1959.

The Amazing Colossal Man. Dir: Bert I. Gordon. Perf: Glen Langan, Cathy Down, William Hudson. Malibu Production, 1957.

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms. Dir: Eugène Lourié. Perf: Paul Hubschmid, Paula Raymond, Cecil Kellaway, Kenneth Tobey. Jack Dietz Productions, 1953.

The Blob. Dir: Irvin Yeaworth Jr. Perf: Steve McQueen, Aneta Corsaut, Earl Rowe. Fairview Productions, 1958.

The Creature Walks among Us. Dir: John Sherwood. Perf: Jeff Morrow, Rex Reason, Leigh Snowden, Gregg Palmer. Universal International Pictures, 1956.

The Cyclops. Dir: Bert I. Gordon. Perf: James Craig, Gloria Talboltt, Lon Chaney Jr. B and H Productions, 1957.

The Day The Earth Stood Still. Dir: Robert Wise. Perf: Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal, Hugh Marlowe, Sam Jaffe, Billy Grey. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 1951.

The Deadly Mantis. Dir: Nathan Juran. Perf: Craig Stevens, William Hopper, Alix Talton. Universal International Pictures, 1957.

The Fly. Dir: Kurt Newmann. Perf: David Hedison, Patricia Owens, Vincent Price. Twentieth Century Fox, 1958.

The Hideous Sun Demon. Dir: Robert Clarke and Tom Boutross. Perf: Robert Clarke, Patricia Manning, Nan Peterson. Clarke-King Enterprises,1959.

The Incredible Shrinking Man. Dir: Jack Arnold. Perf: Grant Williams, Randy Stuart, April Kent. Universal International Pictures, 1957.

The Killer Shrews. Dir: Ray Kellogg. Perf: James Best, Ingrid Gonde, Ken Curtis. Hollywood Pictures Corporation, 1959.

The Man from Planet X. Edgar Ulmer. Perf: Robert Clarke, Margaret Field, Raymond Bond, William Schallert, Roy Engel. Sherrill C. Corwin Productions, 1951.

The Thing from another World. Christian Nyby. Perf: Margaret Sheridan, Kenneth Tobey, Robert Cornthwaite, Douglas Spencer. Winchester Pictures Corporation, 1951.

The War of the Worlds. Dir: Byron Haskin. Perf: Gene Barry, Ann Robinson, Les Tremayne, Robert Cornthwaite. Paramount Pictures, 1953.

The Werewolf. Dir: Fred F. Siars. Perf: Steve Rich, Don Megowan, Joyce Holden. Clover Productions, 1956.

Them! Dir: Gordon Douglas. Perf: James Whitmore, Edmund Gwenn, Joan Weldon, James Arness. Warner Bros Pictures, 1954.

This Island Earth. Dir: Joseph Newman. Perf: Jeff Morrow, Faith Domergue, Rex Reason, Lance Fuller. Universal International Pictures, 1955.

War of the Colossal Beast. Dir: Bert I. Gordon. Perf: Sally Fraser, Roger Pace, Duncan "Dean" Parkin. Carmel Productions, 1958.

When Worlds Collide. Rudolph Matè. Perf: Richard Derr, Barbara Rush, Peter Hansen, John Hoyt. Paramount Pictures, 1951.

World without End. Dir: Edward Bernds. Perf: Hugh Marlowe, Nancy Gates, Nelson Leigh. Allied Artists Pictures, 1956.

THE 60s:

2001: A Space Odyssey. Dir: Stanley Kubrick. Perf: Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood, William Sylvester. MGM, 1968.

Curse of the Fly. Dir: Don Sharp. Perf: Brian Donlevy, George Backer, Carole Gray, Yvette Rees, Burt Kwouk. Lippert Films, 1965.

Night of the Living Dead. Dir: George A. Romero. Perf: Duane Jone, Judith O' Dea, Kare Hardman. Image Ten, 1968.

Planet of the Apes. Dir: Franklin J. Schaffner. Perf: Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter, Maurice Evans. APJAC Productions, 1968.

Robinson Crusoe on Mars. Dir: Byron Haskin. Perf: Paul Mantee, Victor Lundin, Adam West. Aubrey Schenck Productions, 1964.

Seconds. Dir: John Frankenheimer. Perf: Rock Hudson, Salome Jens, John Raldoph. Gibraltar Productions, 1966.

The Angry Red Planet. Dir: Ib Melchior. Perf: Gerald Mohr, Naura Hayden, Les Tremaine. American International Pictures, 1960.

The Day Mars Invaded Earth. Dir: Maury Dexter. Perf: Kent Taylor, Marie Windsor, William Mims, Betty Beall. Associated Producers, 1963.

The Forbin Project. Dir: Joseph Sargent. Perf: Eric Braeden, Susan Clark, Gordon Pinsent. Universal Pictures, 1970.

The Last Man on Earth. Dir: Ubaldo Ragona and Sidney Salkow. Perf: Vincent Price, Franca Betoia, Emma Danieli, Giacomo Rossi-Stuart. American International Pictures, 1964.

The Last Woman on Earth. Dir: Roger Corman. Perf: Betsy Jones-Moreland, Antony Carbone, Robert Towne. Corman, 1960.

The Lost World. Dir: Irwin Allen. Perf: Michael Rennie, Jill St. John, David Hedison, Claude Rains, Fernando Lamas. Irwin Allen Productions, 1960.

The Man with X-Ray Eyes. Dir: Roger Corman. Perf: Ray Milland, Diana Van der Vlis, Harold Stone. Alta Vista Productions, 1963.

The Time Machine. Dir: George Pal. Perf: Rod Taylor, Alan Young, Yvette Mimieux, Sebastain Cabot. George Pal Productions, 1960.

The Time Travelers. Dir: Ib Melchior. Perf: Preston Foster, Philip Carey, Merry Anders, John Hoyt, Dennis Patrick. American International Pictures, 1964.

THE 70s:

Alien. Dir: Ridley Scott. Perf: Sigourney Weaver, Tom Skerritt, Veronica Cartwright, John Hunt. Brandywine Productions, 1979.

Battle for the Planet of the Apes. Dir: J. Lee Thompson. Perf: Roddy McDowall, Claude Akins, Natalie Trundy, Severn Darden. Apjac International, 1973.

Battlestar Galactica. Dir: Richard A. Colla. Perf: Richard Hatch, Dirk Benedict, Lorne Greene, Maren Jensen. Glen A. Larson Productions, 1978.

Beneath the Planet of the Apes. Dir: Ted Post. Perf: James Franciscus, Kim Hunter, Maurice Evans, Linda Harrison. APJAC Productions, 1970.

Beware! The Blob. Dir: Larry Hagman. Perf: Robert Walker Jr, Gwynne Gilford, Richard Stahl, Richard Webb. Jack H. Harris Enterprises, 1972.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Dir: Steven Spielberg. Perf: Richard Dreyfuss, Francois Truffaut, Teri Garr, Melinda Dillon. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1977.

Conquest of the Planet of the Apes. Dir: J. Lee Thompson. Perf: Roddy McDowall, Don Murray, Natalie Trundy, Hary Rhodes, Severn Darden. Twentieth Century Fox, 1971.

Dark Star. Dir: John Carpenter. Perf: Brian Narelle, Carl Kuniholm, Dre Pahich. Jack H. Harris Enterprises, 1974.

Demon Seed. Dir: Donald Cammell. Perf: Julie Christie, Fritz Weaver, Gerrit Graham, Berry Kroeger. MGM, 1977.

Escape From the Planet of the Apes. Dir: Don Taylor. Perf: Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter, Bradford Dilman, Sal Mineo. Twentieth Century Fox, 1971.

Invasion of Body Snatchers. Dir: Philip Kaufman. Perf: Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Jeff Goldblum, Veronica Cartwright, Leonard Nimoy. Solofilm, 1978.

It Lives Again. Dir: Larry Cohen. Perf: Frederic Forrest, Kathleen Lloyd, John P. Ryan. Larco Productions, 1978.

It's Alive. Dir: Larry Cohen. Perf: John P. Ryan, Sharon Farrel, James Dixon, William Wellman Jr. Larco Productions, 1974.

Logan's Run. Dir: Michael Anderson. Perf: Michael York, Richard Jordan, Jenny Agutter, Roscoe Lee Browne. MGM, 1976.

Rollerball. Dir: Norman Jewison. Perf: James Caan, John Houseman, Maud Adams. Algonkin, 1975.

Silent Running. Dir: Douglas Trumbull. Perf: Bruce Dern, Cliff Potts, Ron Rifkin, Jesse Vint. Universal Pictures, 1972.

Sleeper. Dir: Woody Allen. Perf: Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, John Beck, Mary Gregory. Rollins-Joffe Productions, 1973.

Soylent Green. Dir: Richard Fleischer. Perf: Charlton Heston, Leigh Taylor-Young, Chuck Connors, Joseph Cotten, Brock Peters. MGM, 1973.

Star Trek. The Motion Picture. Dir: Robert Wise. Perf: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeFoest Kelley, James Doohan. Century Associates, 1979.

Starwars. Dir: George Lucas. Perf: Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Peter Cushing, Alec Guinness. Lucasfilm, 1977.

Terminal Man. Dir: Mike Hodges. Perf: George Segal, Joan Hackett, Richard Dysart. Warner Bros Pictures, 1974.

The Andromeda Strain. Dir: Robert Wise. Perf: Arthur Hill, David Wayne, James Olson, Kate Reid. Universal Pictures, 1971.

The Island of Dr Moureau. Dir: Don Taylor. Perf: Burt Lancaster, Michael York, Nigel Davenport, Barbara Carrera. American International Pictures, 1977.

The Stepford Wives. Dir: Bryan Forbes. Perf: Katharine Ross, Paula Prentiss, Peter Masterson, Nanette Newman. Fadsin Cinema Associates, 1974.

THX 1138. Dir: George Lucas. Perf: Robert Duvall, Donald Pleasance, Don Pedro Colley, Maggie McOmie. American Zootrope, 1971.

Westworld. Dir: Michael Crichton. Perf: Yul Brynner, Richard Benjamin, James Brolin, Norman Bartold. MGM, 1973.

THE 80s:

2010. Dir: Peter Hyams. Perf: Roy Scheider, John Lithgow, Hellen Mirren. MGM, 1984.

Aliens. Dir: James Cameron. Perf: Sigourney Weaver, Carrie Henn, Michael Biehn, Lance Henriksen. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 1986.

Back to the Future. Dir: Robert Zemeckis. Perf: Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thomson. Universal Pictures, 1985.

Back to the Future II. Dir: Robert Zemeckis. Perf: Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson. Universal Pictures, 1989.

Batman. Dir: Tim Burton. Perf: Michael Keaton, Jack Nicholson, Kim Basinger. Warner Bros Pictures, 1989.

Batteries Not Included. Dir: Matthew Robbins. Perf: Hume Cronyn, Jessica Tandy, Frank McRae, Dennis Boutsikaris. Universal Pictures, 1987.

Blade Runner. Dir: Ridley Scott. Perf: Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos, M. Emmet Walsh, Daryl Hannah. The Ladd Company, 1982.

Brainstorm. Dir: Douglas Trumbull. Perf: Christopher Walken, Natalie Wood, Cliff Robertson. JF Productions, 1983.

Cherry 2000. Dir: Steve De Jarnatt. Perf: David Andrews, Jennifer Balgobin, Marshall Bell. ERP Productions, 1987.

Cocoon. Dir: Ron Howard. Don Ameche, Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronyn. Paramount Pictures, 1985.

Cocoon: The Return. Dir: Daniel Petrie. Perf: Don Ameche, Wilford Brimley, Courtney Cox. Zanuch/Brawn Productions, 1988.

Cyborg. Dir: Albert Pyun. Perf: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Deborah Richter. Cannon Entertainment, 1989.

D.A.R.Y.L. Dir: Simon Wincer. Perf: Barret Oliver, Mary Beth Hurt, Michael McKean. Paramount Pictures, 1985.

Dune. Dir: David Lynch. Perf: Kyle MacLachlan, Virginia Madsen, Sean Young, Kenneth McMillan, Sting, José Ferrer. De Laurentiis, 1984.

Escape from New York. Dir: John Carpenter. Perf: Kurt Russell, Lee Van Cleef, Ernest Borgnine, Donald Pleasence. AVCO Embassy Pictures, 1981.

E.T. The Extraterrestrial. Dir: Steven Spielberg. Perf: Henry Thomas, Dee Wallace, Robert McNaughton, Drew Barrymore, Peter Coyote. Universal Pictures, 1982.

Firefox. Dir: Clint Eastwood. Perf: Clint Eastwood, Freddie Jones, David Huffman, Warren Clarke, Ronald Lacey. Malpaso Company, 1982.

Invaders from Mars. Dir: Tobe Hooper. Perf: Karen Black, Hunter Carson, Timothy Bottoms. Cannon Pictures, 1986.

Liquid Sky. Dir: Slava Tsukerman. Perf: Anne Carlisle, Paula E. Sheppard, Susan Doukas, Otto von Wernherr. Z Films Inc, 1982.

Looker. Dir: Michael Crichton. Perf: Albert Finney, James Coburn, Susan Dey Taylor-Young. The Ladd Company, 1981.

Predator. Dir: John McTiernan. Perf: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Carl Weathers, Bill Duke. Amercent Films, 1987.

RoboCop. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. Perf: Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Ronnie Cox. Orion Pictures Corporation, 1987.

Robot Jox. Dir: Stuart Gordon. Perf: Gary Graham, Anne-Marie Johnson, Paul Koslo. Altar Productions, 1990.

Runaway. Dir: Michael Crichton. Perf: Tom selleck, Cynthia Rhodes, Gene Simmons, Kristhe Alley. Delphy III Productions, 1984.

Scanners. Dir: David Cronenberg. Perf: Jennifer O' Neill, Stephen Lack, Patrick McGoohan, Lawrence Dane. Canadian Film Development Corporation, 1981.

Short Circuit. Dir: John Badham. Perf: Ally Sheedy, Steve Guttemberg, Fisher Stevens. David Foster Productions, 1986.

Short Circuit 2. Dir: Kenneth Johnson. Perf: Tim Blaney, Fisher Stevens, Michael McKean, Cynthia Gibb. David Foster Productions, 1988.

Spaceballs. Dir: Mel Brooks. Perf: Mel Brooks, John Candy, Rick Moranis, Bill Pullman. Brooksfilm, 1987.

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan. Dir: Nicholas Meyer. Perf: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koening, George Takei, Michelle Nichols. Paramount Pictures, 1982.

Star Trek III: The Search for Spock. Dir: Leonard Nimoy. Perf: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koening, George Takei, Michelle Nichols. Cinema Group Ventures, 1984.

Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home. Dir: Leonard Nimoy. Perf: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koening, George Takei, Michelle Nichols. Paramount Pictures, 1986.

Star Trek V: The Final Frontier. Dir: William Shatner. Perf: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koening, George Takei, Michelle Nichols. Paramount Pictures, 1989.

Starman. Dir: John Carpenter. Perf: William Shatner, Karen Allen, Charles Martin Smith. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1984.

The Abyss. Dir: James Cameron. Perf: Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Michael Biehn. Twentieth Century Fox, 1989.

The Blob. Dir: Chuck Russell. Perf: Kevin Dillon, Shawnee Smith, Donovan Leitch. Palisades California Inc, 1988.

The Dead Zone. Dir: David Cronenberg. Perf: Christopher Walken, Brooke Adams, Tom Skerritt, Martin Sheen. Dino de Laurentiis, 1983.

The Elephant Man. Dir: David Lynch. Perf: Anthony Hopkins, John Hurt, Anne Bancroft, John Gielgud. Brooksfilm, 1980.

The Empire Strikes Back. Dir: Irvin Kershner. Perf: Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams, Frank Oz, Alec Guinness. Lucasfilm, 1980.

The Fly. Dir: David Cronenberg. Perf: Jeff Goldblum, Geena Davis, John Getz. Brooksfilms, 1986.

The Fly II. Dir: Chris Walas. Perf: Eric Stolz, Daphne Zuniga, Lee Richardson, John Getz. Brooksfilm, 1989.

The Return of the Jedi. Dir: Richard Marquand. Perf: Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams. Lucasfilm, 1983.

The Terminator. Dir: James Cameron. Perf: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael Biehn, Linda Hamilton. Hemdale Films, 1984.

The Thing. Dir: John Carpenter. Perf: Kurt Russell, Wilford Brimley, T.K. Carter, David Clennon, Keith David. David Foster Productions, 1982.

They Live. Dir: John Carpenter. Perf: Roddy Piper, Keith David, Meg Foster. Aline Films, 1988.

Tron. Dir: Steven Lisberger. Perf: Jeff Bridges, Bruce Bokleitner, David Warner, Cindy Morgan. Lisberger/Kushner and Walt Disney Productions, 1982.

THE 90s:

Alien 3. Dir: David Fincher. Perf: Sigourney Weaver, Charles S. Dutton, Charles Dance, Paul McGann. Brandywine Productions, 1992.

Alien: Resurrection. Dir: Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Perf: Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Ron Perlman, Gary Dourdan. Brandywine Productions, 1997.

Apollo 13. Dir: Ron Howard. Perf: Tom Hanks, Bill Paxton, Kevin Bacon, Gary Sinise, Ed Harris. Universal Pictures, 1995.

Armageddon. Dir: Michael Bay. Perf: Bruce Willis, Billy Bob Thornton, Ben Affleck, Liv Tyler. Touchstone Pictures, 1998.

Attack of the 50 Ft Woman. Dir: Christopher Guest. Perf: Daryl Hannah, Daniel Baldwin, William Windom. Bartleby, 1993.

Back to the Future, Part III. Dir: Robert Zemeckis. Perf: Micahel J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Mary Steenburgen. Universal Pictures, 1990.

Batman and Robin. Dir: Joel Schumacher. Perf: Arnold Schwarzenegger, George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Uma Thurman. Warner Bros Pictures, 1997.

Batman Forever. Dir: Joel Schumacher. Perf: Val Kilmer, Tommy Lee Jones, Jim Carrey, Nicole Kidman, Chris O' Donnell. Warner Bros Pictures, 1995.

Batman Returns. Dir: Tim Burton. Perf: Michael Keaton, Danny Devito, Michelle Pfeiffer, Christopher Walken. Warner Bros Pictures, 1992.

Bicentennial Man. Dir: Chris Columbus. Perf: Robin Williams, Embeth Davidtz, Sam Neil, Oliver Platt. 1492 Pictures, 1999.

Body Snatchers. Dir: Abel Ferrara. Gabrielle Anwar, Terry Kinney, Billy Wirth, Christine Elise. Warner Bros Pictures, 1993.

Contact. Dir: Robert Zemeckis. Perf: Jena Malone, David Morse, Jodie Foster, Matthew McCounaughey, Tom Skerrit. Warner Bros Pictures, 1997.

Dark City. Dir: Alex Proyas. Perf: Rufus Sewell, William Hunt, Kiefer Sutherland, Jennifer Connelly, Richard O' Brien. Mystery Clock Cinema, 1998.

Demolition Man. Dir: Marco Brambilla. Perf: Sylvester Stallone, Wesley Snipes, Sandra Bullock. Warner Bros, 1993.

Ed Wood. Dir: Tim Burton. Perf: Johnny Depp, Martin Landau, Sarah Jessica Parker, Patricia Arquette, Bill Murray. Touchstone Pictures, 1994.

Eve of Destruction. Dir: Duncan Gibbins. Perf: Gregory Hines, Renée Soutendijk, Michael Greene. Interscope, 1991.

eXistenZ. Dir: David Cronenberg. Perf: Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jude Law, Ian Holm, Willem Dafoe. Alliance Atlantis Communications, 1999.

Gattaca. Dir: Andrew Niccol. Perf: Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Gore Vidal, Xander Berkeley. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1997.

Hackers. Dir: Jain Softley. Perf: Johnny Lee Miller, Angelina Jolie, Matthew Lillard, Marc Anthony. United Artist, 1995.

Independence Day. Dir: Roland Emmerich. Perf: Will Smith, Bill Pullman, Jeff Goldblum, Mary McDonnell. Centropolis Entertainment, 1996.

Johnny Mnemonic. Dir: Robert Longo. Perf: Keanu Reeves, Dina Meyer, Ice-T, Dolph Lundgren. TriStar Pictures, 1995.

Judge Dredd. Dir: Sylvester Stallone, Armand Assante, Rob Schneider, Diane Lane. Hollywood Pictures, 1995.

Jurassic Park. Dir: Steven Spielberg. Perf: Sam Neil, Laura Dern, Jeff Goldblum, Richard Attenborough. Universal Pictures, 1993.

Mars Attacks! Dir: Tim Burton. Perf: Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, Annette Bening, Pierce Brosnan, Danny DeVito. Tim Burton Productions, 1996.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Dir: Kenneth Branagh. Perf: Robert de Niro, Kenneth Branagh, Tom Hulce, Helena Bonham Carter. TriStar Pictures, 1994.

Men in Black. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld. Perf: Tommy Lee Johnes, Will Smith, Linda Fiorentino, Vicent D'Onofrio. Amblin Entertainment, 1997.

Mimic. Dir: Guillermo Del Toro. Perf: Mira Sorvino, Jeremy Northam, Alexander Goodwin. Dimension Films, 1997.

Nemesis. Dir: Albert Pyun. Perf: Olivier Gruner, Tim Thomerson, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa. Imperial Entertainment, 1992.

Phenomenon. Dir: John Turteltaub. Perf: John Travolta, Kyra Sedwick, Forest Whitaker, Robert Duvall. Touchstone Pictures, 1996.

Predator 2. Dir: Stephen Hopkins. Perf: Kevin Peter Hall, Danny Glover, Gary Busey. Davis Entertainment, 1990.

RoboCop 2. Dir: Irvin Kershner. Perf: Belinda Bauer, John Clover, Mario Machado. Orion Pictures Corporation, 1990.

RoboCop 3. Dir: Fred Dekker. Perf: Robert John Burke, Mario Machado, Remy Ryan Hernandez. Orion Pictures Corporation, 1993.

Species. Dir: Roger Donaldson. Perf: Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Alfred Molina, Forest Whitaker, Natasha Henstridge. MGM, 1995.

Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country. Dir: Nicholas Meyer. Perf: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, James Doohan, Walter Koening, George Takei, Michelle Nichols. Paramount Pictures, 1991.

Star Trek: First Contact. Dir: Jonathan Frakes. Perf: Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spinner, Levar Burton, Michael Dorn, Gates McFadden. Paramount Pictures, 1996.

Star Trek: Generations. Dir: David Carson. Perf: Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spinner, William Shatner. Paramount Pictures, 1994.

Star Trek: Insurrection. Dir: Jonathan Frakes. Perf: Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spinner, Levar Burton, Michael Dorn, Gates McFadden. Paramount Pictures, 1998.

Star Wars: The Phantom Menace. Dir: George Lucas. Perf: Liam Neeson, Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Jake Lloyd. Lucasfilm 1999.

Stargate. Dir: Roland Emmerich. Perf: Kurt Russell, James Spader, Alexis Cruz, Mili Avital, Carlos Lauchu. Canal +, 1994.

Starship Troopers. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. Perf: Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer, Denise Richards, Jakes Busey. TriStar Pictures, 1997.

Strange Days. Dir: Kathryn Bigelow. Perf: Ralph Fiennes, Angela Bassett, Juliette Lewis, Tom Sizemore. Lightstorm Entertainment, 1995.

Terminator 2: Judgment Day. Dir: James Cameron. Perf: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong, Robert Patrick. Carolco Pictures, 1991.

The 13th Floor. Dir: Josef Rusnak. Perf: Craig Bierko, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Gretchel Mol, Vincent D'Onofrio, Dennis Haysbert, Steven Schub. Centropolis Film Productions, 1999.

The Crow. Dir: Alex Proyas. Perf: Brandon Lee, Rochelle Davis, Ernie Hudson. Crowvision Inc, 1994.

The Fifth Element. Dir: Luc Besson. Perf: Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm, Milla Jovovich, Chris Tucker. Gaumont, 1997.

The Island of Dr Moreau. Dir: John Frankenheimer. Perf: David Thewlis, Fairuza Balk, Ron Perlman, Marlon Brando, Val Kilmer. New Line Cinema, 1996.

The Lawnmower Man. Dir: Brett Leonard. Perf: Jeff Fahey, Pierce Brosnan, Jenny Wright. Allied Vision, 1992.

The Lost World: Jurassic Park. Dir: Steven Spielberg. Perf: Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Pete Postlethwaite, Richard Attenborough, Vince Vaugh. Universal Pictures, 2009.

The Matrix. Dir: Andy and Larry Wachowski. Perf: Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Ann Moss, Hugo Weaving, Joe Pantoliano, Gloria Foster, Matt Duran, Belinda McClory. Groucho II Film Partnership, 1999.

The Postman. Dir: Kevin Costner. Perf: Kevin Costner, Will Patton, Lorenz Tate, Olivia Williams, James Russo. Tig Productions, 1997.

Total Recall. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. Perf: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rachel Ticotin, Sharon Stone, Ronny Cox. Carolco International N.V, 1990.

Twelve Monkeys. Dir: Terry Gilliam. Perf: Bruce Willis, Madeleine Stowe, Brad Pitt. Universal Pictures, 1995.

Universal Soldier. Dir: Roland Emmerich. Perf: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dolph Lundgren, Alli Walker. Studio Canal, 1992.

Virtuosity. Dir: Brett Leonard. Perf: Denzel Washington, Kelly Lynch, Russell Crowe, William Forsythe. Paramount Pictures, 1995.

Waterworld. Dir: Kevin Reynolds. Perf: Kevin Costner, Jeanne Tripplehorn, Tina Majorino, Dennis Hopper. Universal Pictures, 1995.

THE 2000s:

2012. Dir: Roland Emmerich. Perf: John Cusack, Amanda Peet, Chiwetel Ejiofor. Columbia Pictures, 2009.

28 Weeks Later. Dir: Juan Carlos Fresnadillo. Perf: Robert Calyle, Catherine McCormack, Rose Byme. Fox Atomic, 2007.

A Sound of Thunder. Peter Hyams. Perf: Armin Rohde, Heike Malkatsch, Jemima Rooper. Franchise Pictures, 2005.

A.I. Dir: Steven Spielberg. Perf: Haley Joel Osment, Frances O'Connor, Sam Robards, Jake Thomas, Jude Law. Warner Bros, 2001.

Aeon Flux. Dir: Karyn Kusama. Perf: Charlize Theron, Marton Csokas, Johnny Lee Miller, Sophie Okonedo, Paramount Pictures, 2005.

Alien Vs Predator. Dir: Paul W.S. Anderson. Perf: Sanaa Lathan, Raoul Bova, Lance Henriksen. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2004.

Avatar (Release in December 2009). Dir: James Cameron. Perf: Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Sigourney Weaver. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2009.

Babylon A.D. Dir: Mathieu Kassovitz. Perf: Vin Diesel, Michelle Yeoh, Mèlanie Thierry. Canal +, 2008.

Batman Begins. Dir: Christopher Nolan. Perf: Christian Bale, Michael Caine, Liam Neeson, Katie Holmes. Warner Bros Pictures, 2005.

Battlefield Earth. A Saga of the Year 3000. Dir: Roger Christian. Perf: John Travolta, Barry Pepper, Forest Whitaker, Kim Coates. Warner Bros, 2000.

Children of Men. Dir: Alfonso Cuaron. Perf: Clive Owen. Julianne Moore, Michael Caine, Pam Ferris. Universal Pictures, 2006.

Cloverfield. Dir: Matt Reeves. Perf: Lizzy Caplan, Jessica Lucas, Michael Stahl-David. Bad Robot, 2008.

Daredevil. Dir: Mark Steven Johnson. Perf: Ben Affleck, Jennifer Garner, Colin Farrell. Marvel Enterprises, 2003.

Death Race. Dir: Paul W.S. Anderson. Perf: Jason Statham, Joan Allen, Ian McShane. Universal Pictures, 2008.

Déjà Vu. Dir: Tony Scott. Perf: Denzel Washington, Paula Patton, Val Kilmer. Touchstone Pictures, 2006.

District 9. Dir: Neil Blomkamp. Perf: Sharlto Copley, Jason Cope, Nathalie Bolt. TriStar Pictures, 2009.

Equilibrium. Dir: Kurt Wimmer. Perf: Dominic Purcel, Christian Bale, Sean Bean, Christian Kahrmann. Dimension Films, 2002.

Evolution. Dir: Ivan Reitman. Perf: David Duchovny, Julianne Moore, Orlando Jones, Sean William Scott. Montecito Picture Company, 2001.

Fantastic Four. Dir: Tim Story. Perf: Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans, Michael Chiklis. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2005.

Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer. Tim Story. Perf: Ian Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans, Michael Chiklis. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2007.

Frequency. Dir: Gregory Hoblit. Perf: Dennis Quaid, James Caviezel, Shawn Doyle, Elizabeth Mitchell. New Line Cinema, 2000.

Gamer. Dir: Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor. Perf: Gerard Butler, Amber Valetta, Michael C. Hall. Lionsgate, 2009.

Ghosts from Mars. Dir: John Carpenter. Perf: Natasha Henstridge, Ice Cube, Jason Statham, Clean DuVall. Screen Gems, 2001.

Hollow Man. Dir: Paul Verhoeven. Perf: Elizabeth Shue, Kevin Bacon, Josh Brolin, Kim Dickens. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 2000.

Hulk. Dir: Ang Lee. Perf: Eric Bana, Jennifer Connelly, Sam Eliot, Josh Lucas. Universal Pictures, 2003.

I Am Legend. Dir: Francis Lawrence. Perf: Will Smith, Alice Braga, Charlie Tahan. Warner Bros Pictures, 2007.

I, Robot. Dir: Alex Proyas. Perf: Will Smith, Bridget Moynahan, Alan Tudyk. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2004.

Iron Man. Dir: John Favreau. Perf: Robert Downey Jr, Terrence Howard, Jeff Bridges. Paramount Pictures, 2008.

Jumper. Dir: Doug Liman. Perf: Hayden Christensen, Jamie Bell, Rachel Bilson, Diane Lane. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2008.

Jurasic Park III. Dir: Joe Johnston. Perf: Sam Neill, William H. Macy, Téa Leoni, Alessandro Nivola. Universal Pictures, 2001.

Knowing. Dir: Alex Proyas. Perf: Nicolas Cage, Chandler Canterbury, Rose Byrne. Summit Entertainment, 2009.

Men in Black 2. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld. Perf: Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Rip Torn, Lara Flynn Boyle. Amblin Entertainment, 2004.

Men in Black II. Dir: Barry Sonnenfeld. Perf: Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Rip Torn, Lara Flynn Boyle. Amblin Entertainment, 2002.

Minority Report. Dir: Steven Spielberg. Perf: Tom Cruise, Max von Sydow, Steve Harris, Neal McDonough. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2002.

Mission to Mars. Dir: Brian De Palma. Perf: Gary Sinise, Tim Robbins, Don Cheadle, Connie Nielsen. Jacobson Company, 2000.

Mulholland Drive. Dir: David Lynch. Naomi watts, Laura Harring, Ann Miller. Les Films Alain Sarde, 2003.

Outlander. Dir: Howard McCain. Perf: James Caviezel, Sophia Hyles, Jack Huston, John Hunt. Virtual Films, 2008.

Pitch Black. Dir: David Twohy. Perf: Vin Diesel, Radha Mitchell, Cole Hauser. Polygram Filmed Entertainment, 2000.

Planet of the Apes (remake). Dir: Tim Burton. Perf: Marc Wahlberg, Tim Roth, Helena Bonham Carter, Michael Clarke Duncan. Twentieth Century Film Corporation, 2001.

Push. Dir: Paul McGuigan. Perf: Colin Ford, Joel Gretsch, Djimon Hounsou. Summit Entertainment, 2009.

Red Planet. Dir: Antony Hoffman. Perf: Val Kilmer, Carrie-Anne Moss, Tom Sizemore. Village Roadshow Pictures, 2000.

Resident Evil. Dir: Paul W. S. Anderson. Perf: Milla Jovovich, Michelle Rodriguez, Eric Mabius, James Purefoy. Constantin Film Produktion, 2002.

Resident Evil: Apocalypse. Dir: Alexander Witt. Perf: Milla Jovovich, Sienna Guillory, Oded Fehr. Constantin Film Produktion, 2004.

Resident Evil: Extinction. Dir: Russell Mulcahy. Perf: Milla Jovovich, Oded Fehr, Ali Larter. Resident Evil Productions, 2007.

Serenity. Dir: Joss Whedon. Perf: Nathan Fillion, Gina Torres, Alan Tudyk, Morena Baccarin, Adam Baldwin. Universal Pictures, 2005.

Signs. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. Perf: Mel Gibson, Joaquin Phoenix, Rory Culkin, Abigail Breslin. Touchstone Pictures, 2002.

Simone. Dir: Andrew Niccol. Perf: Al Pacino, Winona Ryder, Benjamin Salisbury. New Line Cinema, 2002.

Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow. Dir: Kerry Conran. Perf: Gwyneth Paltrow, Jude Law, Giovanni Ribisi, Michael Gambon. Brooklyn Films II, 2004.

Solaris. Dir: Steven Soderbergh. Perf: George Cloony, Natasha McElhone, Viola Davis, Jeremy Davies. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2002.

Spiderman. Dir: Sam Raimi. Perf: Tobey Maguire, Willem Dafoe, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 2002.

Spiderman 2. Dir: Sam Raimi. Perf: Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Alfred Molina. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 2004.

Spiderman 3. Dir: Sam Raimi. Perf: Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Thomas Haden Church. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 2007.

Star Trek. Nemesis. Dir: Stuart Baird. Perf: Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spinner, Levar Burton, Michael Dorn, Marina Sirtis, Gates McFadden. Paramount Pictures, 2002.

Star Trek. J.J. Abrams. Perf: Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Leonard Nimoy, Eric Bana. Paramount Pictures, 2009.

Star Wars, Episode II. Attack of the Clones. Dir: George Lucas. Perf: Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Hayden Christensen, Christopher Lee, Samuel L. Jackson. Lucasfilm, 2002.

Star Wars, Episode III. Revenge of the Sith. Dir: George Lucas. Perf: Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Hayden Christensen, Ian McDiarmid, Samuel L. Jackson, Jimmy Smith. Lucasfilm, 2005.

Sunshine. Dir: Danny Boyle. Chris Curtis, Chipo Chung, Cilian Murphy. DNA Films, 2007.

Superman Returns. Dir: Bryan Singer. Perf: Brandon Routh, Kate Bosworth, Kevin Spacey, James Marsden. Warner Bros Pictures, 2006.

Surrogates. Dir: Jonathan Mostow. Perf: Bruce Willis, Radha Mitchell, Rosamund Pike. Touchstone Pictures, 2009.

Terminator 3. Dir: Jonathan Mostow. Perf: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Nick Stahl, Claire Danes, Kristanna Loken. C-2 Pictures, 2003.

Terminator Salvation. Dir: McG. Perf: Christian Bale, Sam Worthington, Moon Bloodgood, Helena Bonham Carter. Halcyon Company, 2009.

The 6th Day. Dir: Roger Spottiswoode. Perf: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Michael Rapaport, Tony Goldwyn, Michael Rooker. Phoenix Pictures, 2000.

The Butterfly Effect. Dir: Eric Bress and S. Mackye Gruber. Ashton Kutcher, Melora Walters, Amy Smart, Elden Henson. Benderspink, 2004.

The Cell. Dir: Tarsem Sing. Perf: Jennifer López, Colton James, Dylan Baker. Avery Pix, 2000.

The Chronicles of Riddick. Dir: David Twohy. Perf: Vin Diesel, Colm Feore, Thandie Newton, Judi Dench, Karl Urban. Universal Pictures, 2004.

The Day after Tomorrow. Dir: Roland Emmerich. Perf: Dennis Quaid, Jake Gyllenhaal, Emmy Rossum, Dash Mihok. Twentieth Century Fox-Film Corporation, 2004.

The Day the Earth Stood Still (remake). Dir: Scott Derrickson. Perf: Keanu Reeves, Jennifer Connelly, Kathy Bates. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2008.

The Fountain. Dir: Darren Aronofsky. Perf: Hugh Jackman, Rachel Weisz, Ellen Burstyn. Warner Bros Pictures, 2006.

The Happening. Dir: M. Night Shyamalan. Perf: Mark Wahlberg, Zooey Deschanel, John Leguizamo. Blinding Edge Pictures, 2008.

The Incredible Hulk. Dir: Louis Leterrier. Perf: Edward Norton, Liv Tyler, Tim Roth, William Hunt. Universal Pictures, 2008.

The Invasion. Dir: Oliver Hirschbiegel. Perf: Nicole Kidman, Daniel Craig, Jeremy Northam, Jackson Bond. Warner Bros Pictures, 2007.

The Island. Dir: Michael Bay. Perf: Ewan McGregor, Scarlett Johansson, Djimon Hounson. Dreamworks SKG, 2005.

The Matrix Reloaded. Dir: Andy and Larry Wachowski. Perf: Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Laurence Fishburne, Hugo Weaving, Jada Pinkett Smith. Warner Bros Pictures, 2003.

The Matrix Revolutions. Dir: Andy and Larry Wachowski. Perf: Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Laurence Fishburne, Hugo Weaving, Jada Pinkett Smith. Warner Bros Pictures, 2003.

The Mutant Chronicles. Dir: Simon Hunter. Perf: Thomas Jane, Ron Perlman, Devon Aoki. Edward R. Pressman Film, 2008.

The One. Dir: James Wong. Perf: Jet Li, Carla Gugino, Delroy Lindo, Jason Statham. Revolution Studios, 2001.

The Stepford Wives (remake). Dir: Frank Oz. Perf: Nicole Kidman, Matthew Broderick, Bette Midler, Glenn Close, 2004.

The Time Machine. Dir: Simon Wells. Perf: Guy Pearce, Samantha Mumba, Mark Addy. Warner Bros Pictures, 2002.

The War of the Worlds. Steven Spielberg. Perf: Tom Cruise, Dakota Fanning, Miranda Otto, Justin Chatwin, Tim Robbins. Paramount, 2005.

The X-Files: I Want to Believe. Dir: Chris Carter. Perf: David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Amanda Peet. Twentieth Century- Fox Film Corporation, 2008.

Timeline. Dir: Richard Donner. Perf: Paul Walker, Frances O'Connor, Gerard Butler. Paramount Pictures, 2003.

Transformers. Dir: Michael Bay. Perf: Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox, Josh Duhamel. Dream Works SKG, 2007.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen. Dir: Michael Bay. Perf: Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox, Josh Duhamel. DreamWorks SKG, 2009.

Ultraviolet. Dir: Kurt Wimmer. Perf: Milla Jovovich, Cameron Bright, Nick Chinlund. Screen Gems, 2006.

V for Vendetta. Dir: James McTeigue. Perf: Natalie Portman, Hugo Weaving, Stephen Rea, John Hunt. Silver Pictures, 2006.

Vanilla Sky. Dir: Cameron Crowe. Perf: Tom Cruise, Penélope Cruz, Cameron Díaz, Kurt Russell. Paramount Pictures, 2001.

Wachtmen. Dir: Zack Snyder. Perf: Malin Akerman, Billy Crudup, Matthew Goode. Warner Bros Pictures, 2009.

X-Men. Dir: Bryan Singer. Perf: Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, Famke Jannsen, Halle Berry. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2000.

X-men II. Dir: Bryan Singer. Perf: Patrick Stewart, Hugh Jackman, Ian McKellen, Framke Janssen, Halle Berry. Marvel Enterprises, 2003.

X-Men III: Last Stand. Dir: Brett Ratner. Perf: Hugh Jackman, Halle Berry, Ian McKellen, Patrick Stewart. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2006.

RESUMEN DE LA TESIS EN ESPAÑOL

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El medio cinematográfico como discurso contemporáneo ha sido objeto de estudio y análisis en el último siglo, teniéndose en cuenta numerosos y diferentes aspectos y adoptándose distintos enfoques. Bien puede afirmarse que esta práctica cultural ha venido "invadiendo" nuestras vidas y cobrando una importancia vital en nuestra cultura. Este trabajo de investigación se enmarca dentro de los Estudios Culturales y se aborda desde una aproximación de género. Más concretamente, comprende la evolución de los roles genéricos y cómo se construye la masculinidad en un medio tan influyente hoy en día como es el cine. Asimismo, se parte de la idea de que las preocupaciones sociales y culturales han sido, de manera directa o indirecta, plasmadas en la pantalla y, consecuentemente, los personajes en ella reflejados han sido partícipes de las tendencias y los vaivenes de cada momento. Particularmente interesante me parece la producción de textos fílmicos de Hollywood y la forma en que la masculinidad se ve reflejada en los mismos, siguiendo las convenciones que la sociedad estadounidense impone en cada momento. Así, este estudio se centra en el cine estadounidense contemporáneo, que ofrece, desde mi punto de vista, grandes posibilidades para el análisis la masculinidad en este medio.

El cine convencional de Hollywood ha venido ofreciendo imágenes que, en cierta medida, han ayudado a construir determinadas identidades masculinas en la cultura occidental. No obstante, y de manera generalizada, estas imágenes dependían de estructuras de poder patriarcales. Por todo ello, se puede afirmar que las imágenes cinematográficas de lo masculino y su repercusión socio-cultural abren importantes debates en los Estados Unidos (EEUU) y, a su vez, nos ayudan a entender que la masculinidad es un concepto

socialmente construido. Durante la pasada década, y en especial en el contexto estadounidense, han visto la luz un gran número de trabajos y estudios que versan sobre la representación de la masculinidad en el cine desde diferentes puntos de vista. El presente trabajo pretende ser una aportación más a este incipiente campo de investigación.

Se parte de la idea, pues, de que la masculinidad se construye socialmente y está sujeta, por tanto, a cambios y modificaciones. De esto se deduce que las imágenes de masculinidad propuestas por el cine de Hollywood también se han visto afectadas por la realidad histórica y cultural de cada momento. Sin embargo, debemos tener en cuenta que existe un tipo de masculinidad dominante que se ha construido siguiendo ciertas pautas de poder y que se entiende como el ideal para cada uno de los géneros fílmicos. En este sentido, apoyamos la idea ya postulada por críticos como Harry Brod o Judith Butler, de que las identidades de género son meras "interpretaciones". De hecho, la historia del cine estadounidense nos propone tipos ideales de masculinidad para cada género y época, que se corresponden con la ideología dominante y que, en muchos casos, cumplen la función de calmar las ansiedades causadas por el desmoronamiento del orden social.

Un ejemplo claro son las películas protagonizadas por actores como Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone o Bruce Willis en el contexto del conservadurismo, que nos muestran una masculinidad ligada a la fuerza extrema y a la violencia. La exaltación del cuerpo masculino en esta época fue fundamental para el desarrollo de la narrativa fílmica, y la tendencia de mostrar a héroes musculosos se llevó hasta el extremo en películas de acción y de ciencia ficción. Este culto por el cuerpo se dio en una época caracterizada por una vuelta a la moralidad existente anterior al auge del movimiento feminista y de

otros grupos socialmente marginados. En estas películas, el cuerpo se convertía en un instrumento de poder y control que ayudaba a construir un modelo de masculinidad sólida. Todo ello, apoyado por la coyuntura social, como la irrupción del sida en 1981, moldearon el tipo de héroe que aparece en los géneros predilectos del momento (acción y ciencia ficción): un héroe con un cuerpo vigoroso, sano y musculoso que lucha por su patria y es, en definitiva, un vencedor. Según Susan Jeffords, los llamados "cuerpos blandos" eran considerados como aquellos transmisores de enfermedades, de inmoralidad, de productos ilegales y de pereza, y estaban ligados normalmente a mujeres y a gente de color, mientras que los "cuerpos duros" representaban la fuerza, la determinación, el trabajo, la lealtad y el coraje, y servían como emblemas de la filosofía, la política y la economía de la época de Reagan (Jeffords 1994, 24-5).

Críticos como Jeffords han interpretado estos "cuerpos duros" de la década de los ochenta como símbolos inequívocos de una masculinidad en crisis. Teniendo en cuenta que el cuerpo ha sido tradicionalmente un lugar de contención para los rasgos que definen lo masculino y lo femenino, podemos afirmar que los héroes encarnados por Sylvester Stallone o Arnold Schwarzenegger se conviertieron en iconos de una masculinidad ideal en una época dedicada al culto al cuerpo. Desafortunadamente, imágenes estereotipadas del cuerpo masculino continúan apareciendo en infinitas películas de Hollywood en la actualidad, y siguen siendo ideales culturales.

Al mismo tiempo, creo oportuno señalar que existen géneros en los que la representación de la masculinidad se aleja de esta idealización, y desafía con ello las pautas que comúnmente se han establecido para el héroe masculino. Éste es el caso de muchos protagonistas de musicales o comedias, que rompen con ciertos

convencionalismos genéricos y han sido objeto de numerosas discusiones críticas.

Además, debemos tener en cuenta que cada imagen de lo masculino está sujeta a las circunstancias históricas, sociales y políticas de cada momento. Si nos centramos en los EEUU, el concepto tradicional de masculinidad ha sido revisado y redefinido recientemente y, así, en los últimos años hemos presenciado nuevos modelos de masculinidad en la sociedad, que también han tenido su cabida en los medios audiovisuales. Especialmente, la disciplina denominada *Men's Studies* ha contribuido a la creación de nuevas masculinidades, alejadas de los músculos y de la fuerza física. Esta disciplina defiende la idea de que la imagen del "hombre" se ha convertido en un estereotipo como consecuencia de los reiterados presupuestos feministas que denunciaban la incuestionable superioridad de lo masculino.

El concepto tradicional de masculinidad es redefinido y revisado no sólo por esta disciplina, sino también por teorías fílmicas recientes que versan sobre la representación de la masculinidad en la pantalla. Así, teóricos como Richard Dyer o Steve Neale han pretendido desmantelar las afirmaciones de las primeras críticas feministas de cine como Laura Mulvey o Mary Ann Doane. Ellas denunciaban la condición de superioridad de los hombres como sujetos de la mirada que relegaban a las mujeres a un segundo plano como objetos del deseo masculino. Estas críticas feministas asumían un modelo de masculinidad que, siguiendo a los posteriores Estudios de Masculinidad, no se corresponde con la realidad. Críticos como Dyer o Neale han estudiado, por primera vez, la imagen del hombre en la pantalla como objeto, y no como sujeto de la mirada, implicando, en muchos casos, connotaciones homosexuales.

A todo esto, habría que añadir la creciente influencia de los discursos posmodernos y su énfasis en la deconstrucción y ruptura de fronteras, que anticipan el abandono de estereotipos de genéro rígidos y abogan por la adopción de nociones más fluidas para su representación en el cine estadounidense actual.

Todos estos aspectos se deben tener en cuenta a la hora de analizar imágenes de lo masculino en la pantalla, lo que evidencia la dificultad que conlleva cualquier análisis de masculinidad y representación. De hecho, este proyecto de investigación propone una aproximación multidisciplinar, debido a la necesidad de aplicar no sólo disciplinas de estudios de género y teorías fílmicas, sino también de adoptar diferentes enfoques, tomados de la crítica literaria, la narratología, y además, atender a la coyuntura histórica, cultural y social estadounidense.

De Hombres y Cíborgs: La Construcción de la Masculinidad en el Cine de Ciencia Ficción Estadounidense Contemporáneo se ha centrado en el género de la ciencia ficción con el objetivo de analizar tipos recurrentes de masculinidad representados en este discurso tan influyente en los EEUU. Entre todos los géneros cinematográficos, la ciencia ficción se ha convertido en uno de los referentes culturales más significativos a la hora de plantear cuestiones de género e identidad en nuestros días. La elección de este género cinematográfico responde a un intento de ofrecer una visión más optimista acerca de la representación de la masculinidad en el cine estadounidense, debido a las posibilidades que la ciencia ficción ofrece, al menos en un primer momento, para plasmar imágenes innovadoras de los hombres y las mujeres. Asimismo, la selección de las cuatro películas que aquí se analizan ha estado en parte determinada por la gran influencia que éstas han tenido para la sociedad estadounidense del momento. Este trabajo adopta un enfoque socio-cultural que requiere un

conocimiento de las ideologías dominantes, especialmente con respecto al tratamiento del género, que conviven a finales del siglo XX y principios del XXI en los EEUU.

Otro aspecto a tener en cuenta para la selección de este género fílmico ha sido su carácter híbrido. Desde sus inicios, la ciencia ficción ha venido tomando prestadas características de otros géneros, como el cine de terror, el de aventuras o el fantástico, así como de otros discursos populares como el cómic, los videojuegos o la llamada literatura *cyberpunk* de los ochenta. Además, la ciencia ficción se ha caracterizado por su inclinación a implementar las últimas innovaciones en cuanto a efectos especiales se refiere. Esta mezcla de estilos, junto con la tendencia del género a proponernos mundos e identidades innovadoras parecen ideales, pues, para una representación de la masculinidad menos ligada a patrones convencionales.

De hecho, la ciencia ficción contemporánea propone, al menos inicialmente, nuevos modelos de masculinidad. Películas cuya temática principal es la exploración y/o la conquista del espacio exterior o de mundos alternativos al nuestro nos presentan frecuentemente a un héroe blanco heterosexual que establece unos vínculos íntimos con otros tipos de masculinidad, que le ayudarán a salvar el mundo y a cumplir con su misión de héroe. De manera muy diferente, las películas sobre invasiones alienígenas nos muestran hombres terriblemente amenazados como consecuencia de su directa confrontación con el alien agresivo. Al pesar de su triunfo final, estas películas no siguen estrictamente patrones heroicos convencionales y retratan al protagonista como un ser cobarde y débil en la mayoría de los casos. En muchas otras ocasiones, los protagonistas masculinos de estas películas se convierten en la "otredad" en sí mismos, lo que

les causa crisis de identidad. Así, hombres que sufren transformaciones físicas o cuyos cuerpos son invadidos por cuerpos extraños sienten el rechazo de la sociedad y se convierten en una amenaza para ésta. En definitiva, la ciencia ficción contemporánea nos propone imágenes de lo masculino que pueden ser consideradas como fuera de la norma. No resulta difícil observar la permisividad del género de la ciencia ficción con respecto a la innovación genérica de finales del siglo XX y principios del XXI si tenemos en cuenta la afluencia de seres híbridos en los que los rasgos tradicionalmente asociados con lo masculino o lo femenino no cumplen su misión diferenciadora. Los llamados cíborgs, o combinaciones de seres humanos y máquinas, aparecen en innumerables películas de finales de los años 90 y principios de nuestro siglo y se convierten en figuras claves para explorar nuevos valores ligados a la masculinidad contemporánea. Especialmente se contribuye a esta idea de innovación en películas de realidades virtuales, en las que la tecnología juega un papel indispensable y los protagonistas masculinos son incapaces de discernir lo real de lo creado.

Toda esta innovación en cuanto a la representación del género, junto con la creciente popularidad de la ciencia ficción, apuntan hacia la importancia que los valores posmodernos adquieren en nuestra sociedad, tales como la desconstrucción de nociones preestablecidas y la disolución de todo tipo de fronteras. El cine y especialmente el de ciencia ficción, es un discurso posmoderno que hace uso y refleja los valores más innovadores de la sociedad contemporánea. Todo ello hace que se considere un género privilegiado para representaciones innovadoras de la masculinidad. Debido a la pluralidad que caracteriza nuestra sociedad y al énfasis posmoderno en la desconstrucción y fragmentación, el héroe encuentra un punto intermedio entre lo masculino y lo femenino. El posmodernismo impregna todas las manifestaciones culturales y obliga al artista a

encontrar nuevas formas de expresión, muchas de las cuales están reflejadas en el cine de ciencia ficción, que nos presenta a cíborgs, androides y a seres andróginos en espacios virtuales. El género de ciencia ficción permite, pues, una representación más innovadora en el contexto de mundos tecnológicos, dominados por la realidad virtual, las grandes comunicaciones y el ciberespacio.

Sin embargo, este despliegue de imágenes innovadoras no está libre de controversia y, tal y como se argumenta en esta tesis doctoral, sigue estando al servicio de la masculinidad convencional. De manera general, las imágenes de lo masculino en la ciencia ficción no son representativas del amplio espectro de masculinidades que confluyen en el territorio de los EEUU, dirigidas principalmente a un público masculino, blanco y de clase media. Dicho de otro modo, la masculinidad tiende a seguir ciertos patrones de representación que, inevitablemente, caen en esencialismos genéricos. Con esto no se ha pretendido sugerir que la ciencia ficción esté alejada de la realidad social estadounidense. De hecho, la ciencia ficción engancha críticamente con las ideologías dominantes de cada momento y refleja las preocupaciones socio-culturales de los EEUU. Sin embargo, sí creo necesario apuntar que, después de un análisis más exhaustivo del cine de ciencia ficción contemporáneo, se puede apreciar que, a pesar de ciertos avances en cuanto a la representación del género, aún algunas categorías prevalecen sobre otras y, así, lo blanco prevalece sobre lo negro, lo masculino sobre lo femenino, lo familar sobre lo extraño y, en definitiva, la masculinidad normativa sobre otros tipos de masculinidad.

El principal objetivo de este trabajo de investigación es ofrecer una visión de la representación de la masculinidad en el género de ciencia ficción dentro del panorama estadounidense contemporáneo.

Para ello, este estudio establece cuatro patrones de masculinidad atendiendo al modo en el que ésta se ha representado a lo largo de la historia del cine de ciencia ficción estadounidense. Estos modelos son el "hombre amenazado", el "hombre conquistador", el "hombre artificial" y el "hombre virtual". Defiendo que la masculinidad se ha construido en la ciencia ficción siguiendo las características de estos cuatro patrones. Por supuesto, esta clasificación no puede ser exhaustiva en extremo, cubriendo cada una de las apariciones de la masculinidad en la ciencia ficción, sino que ofrece tendencias generales de representación en el cine de ciencia ficción estadounidense. Además, y teniendo en cuenta la naturaleza construida de la masculinidad, estos tipos evolucionan y se adaptan a las necesidades culturales y sociales de cada momento. De este modo, estas tendencias dominantes de representación de la masculinidad reflejan, en mayor o menor medida, el modo generalizado en que la sociedad percibe el género, lo que va a afectar de manera inevitable a la representación de la masculinidad.

Para ilustrar esta clasificación, el presente trabajo se ha organizado en cinco capítulos. Los primeros tres capítulos han ofrecido una aproximación teórica que cubre fundamentalmente los campos de los Estudios de Masculinidad, los Estudios Fílmicos y la Ciencia Ficción. Con ello se pretende, en primer lugar, justificar y enmarcar dentro del contexto histórico y cultural la aparición de los Estudios de Masculinidad para luego analizar la representación de lo masculino en uno de los discursos culturales contemporáneos más influyentes: el cine. Para ello, la evolución de los roles asignados a diferentes héroes a lo largo de la historia cinematográfica resulta decisiva para comprender la influencia crucial que la cultura y el pensamiento estadounidenses suponen para este medio. Una vez analizadas las implicaciones culturales y sociales que la representación de lo masculino en el cine tienen en la sociedad

estadounidense, se proponen los cuatro patrones anteriormente mencionados para la representación de la masculinidad en la ciencia ficción, que han pretendido ofrecer una visión de cómo se interpreta el género en este medio que sugiere modos alternativos de vida y de sociedad.

Los capítulos prácticos (cuatro y cinco) se han centrado en el análisis de cuatro películas de ciencia ficción contemporáneas, con el propósito de mostrar la clasificación de la masculinidad propuesta en esta tesis doctoral y su adaptación al panorama estadounidense contemporáneo. Las cuatro películas seleccionadas para dicho estudio han sido *The War of the Worlds,* dirigida por Steven Spielberg en 2005, *Star Trek. Nemesis,* décima película de la saga *Star Trek,* dirigida por Stuart Baird en 2002, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* dirigida por James Cameron en 1991 y *The Matrix,* dirigida por los hermanos Wachowski en 1999. Creo que las obras ejemplifican de manera clara la clasificación que aquí se propone y reflejan de manera fiel las preocupaciones actuales acerca de la identidad masculina. El análisis de estas películas pretende demostrar cómo se construye la masculinidad en la ciencia ficción más reciente y abre debates acerca de la permisividad de la ciencia ficción en cuanto a la representación del género.

El primer capítulo, "Men and Masculinity in Contemporary U.S. Culture", destaca la importancia de la disciplina de los Estudios de Masculinidad en la creación de nuevos conceptos de masculinidad. Además, ofrece una visión de los diferentes movimientos de hombres en los EEUU, así como sus principales postulados y líneas de actuación. Se parte de la idea de que los Estudios Feministas han tenido un gran impacto en los últimos treinta años, contribuyendo positivamente a dotar a los Estudios de Género de un corpus

académico considerable. Sin embargo, se destaca el hecho de que no es hasta hace bien poco que el análisis de la masculinidad se ha considerado esencial para los Estudios de Género. Favorecidos por los Movimientos de Hombres y por los debates públicos sobre el significado de la masculinidad, los Estudios de Masculinidad no entraron en la academia hasta los años 80. Un sector influyente dentro de estos estudios sigue los postulados feministas y los aplica al estudio de la masculinidad, reconociendo la subordinación y la invisibilidad de las mujeres a lo largo de la historia. Esa rama de conocimiento se conoce como Pro-Feminismo e incluye entre sus teóricos a críticos tan influyentes como a Michael S. Kimmel, R.W. Connell, o a Jeff Hearn, entre otros. En términos generales, la crítica pro-feminista argumenta que la sociedad estadounidense sigue estando anclada en sistemas que discriminan a la mujer y que, además, afectan sobremanera a la vida de los hombres. Ésta es precisamente la línea que aquí se ha adoptado para este estudio de masculinidad y cine de ciencia ficción.

En este capítulo también se han explorado cuestiones ligadas a la identidad masculina y a las relaciones de poder. La masculinidad siempre ha estado vinculada de alguna manera al poder, que ha legitimado el patriarcado. Incluso en nuestra sociedad actual encontramos hombres que gozan de una posición social o laboral privilegiada por el simple hecho de pertenecer al considerado sexo fuerte. Michael S. Kimmel ha destacado esta injusticia social y considera que aún existe discriminación en muchos ámbitos de la vida contemporánea. Sin embargo, debemos destacar el hecho de que gracias en parte a los activistas del género, la noción de poder tradicionalmente ligada a lo masculino empieza a perder fuerza, y la imagen del Nuevo Hombre aparece como un modo alternativo de entender la masculinidad en una época de cambios tecnológicos y globalización.

El capítulo 2 "Masculinity and Representation in U.S. cinema" se centra en el cine estadounidense para vislumbrar los modos en que la masculinidad se ha construido en este medio. Para ello el capítulo toma como punto de partida el influyente trabajo de Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies. Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (1994). Usando la terminología de Jeffords, el capítulo se divide en dos apartados, denominados "hombres duros" (*hard men*) y "hombres blandos" (*soft men*), para referirse a las dos tendencias a la hora de representar la masculinidad en el cine clásico de Hollywood. Así, se ha argumentado cómo el cine estadounidense tiende a representar la masculinidad bien siguiendo definiciones dominantes o, de lo contrario, perpetuando los roles tradicionales de género. Los "hombres duros" están ligados a la superioridad y al poder, y así se aprecia en ciertos géneros fílmicos como el *western*, el cine de acción o el de aventuras. Por el contrario, los protagonistas masculinos de géneros como el musical, la comedia romántica o el drama han sido tradicionalmente considerados como "hombres blandos" debido a su alejamiento de las ideas convencionales de la masculinidad.

Esta clasificación también me ha permitido demostrar cómo el concepto de masculinidad está sujeto a la cultura del momento y varía dependiendo del género cinematográfico del que se trate. Aunque, como he señalado, los "hombres duros" se siguen considerando más "masculinos" que los hombres que no se ajustan a este patrón de representación. Así, personajes que encarnan la fuerza física por medio de un cuerpo atlético se han convertido en imágenes idealizadas de lo masculino en los últimos años. No obstante, y gracias a estudios recientes acerca de la masculinidad, estas imágenes han sido fruto de diversas interpretaciones que desafían convencionalismos. Además, a principio de los noventa aparece un nuevo tipo de héroe cuya imagen se opone en cierto modo a la versión más tradicional de la masculinidad y que permite una visión más flexible de las cuestiones

de género, el llamado "nuevo héroe". Esta tendencia de representación en el cine de Hollywood contemporáneo afecta la forma de entender la masculinidad en muchos géneros cinematográficos, especialmente en la ciencia ficción.

El tercer capítulo, "Masculinity and U.S. Science Fiction Cinema" se concentra en la ciencia ficción y, en especial, en los cuatro patrones de representación que aquí se proponen para el cine estadounidense: el "hombre amenazado", el "hombre conquistador", el "hombre artificial" y el "hombre virtual". El sistema binario de opuestos ha sido una constante en la ciencia ficción, y las categorías de lo "uno", "blanco" o "masculino" se han construido en oposición a lo "otro", "negro" o "femenino" en este discurso cultural. Tal y como aquí se ha señalado, existe una tendencia generalizada en la ciencia ficción a mostrar una "otredad" terrorífica, diferente y subordinada en contraposición a representaciones de lo "uno" más familiares, saludables y reconfortantes. No obstante, esta tendencia se va a ver ligeramente modificada con el advenimiento del posmodernismo y su énfasis en la deconstrucción del pensamiento binario, lo que resulta de especial relevancia para las representaciones de género en películas de ciencia ficción contemporáneas.

En este capítulo se adopta un doble enfoque. Por un lado, se asume que el género está determinado por la sociedad y por la cultura y, por lo tanto, la representación de la masculinidad en la ciencia ficción refleja los conflictos y preocupaciones socio-culturales de los EEUU. Se ha prestado especial interés a las épocas de la historia de los EEUU en las que se ha percibido la llamada "crisis de la masculinidad", esto es, los años cincuenta, la década de los ochenta y el cambio de milenio. Es en estos momentos cuando la representación de la masculinidad permite una mayor interpretación. Según se ha defendido aquí, la contextualización de las imágenes de lo masculino

resulta un elemento clave para su interpretación. Por otro lado, es interesante destacar que imágenes de lo masculino en las películas de ciencia ficción siguen ciertas convenciones formales y estéticas que posibilitan su clasificación en tipos. Por poner un ejemplo relevante, los héroes virtuales de películas de finales de los años noventa comparten una serie de rasgos y unos códigos de comportamiento que hacen que la representación de la masculinidad sea predecible en la mayoría de los casos.

El patrón del "hombre amenazado" es el más prolífico de todos los tipos aquí expuestos. Se refiere a personajes masculinos que sufren amenaza o acoso por parte de presencias desconocidas y destructivas y, como consecuencia, se muestran desorientados y vulnerables. No obstante, estos personajes necesitan de alguna manera resaltar su lado masculino tradicional, ya que la supremacía de lo "uno" está fuertemente marcada en películas que siguen este patrón. Otro rasgo característico de este tipo es la clara dicotomía entre lo familiar y lo desconocido, siendo esto último una alegoría de los miedos y amenazas sociales. El miedo a los cuerpos mutantes o a las invasiones alienígenas fueron especialmente recurrentes en películas de la década de los años 50, que nos sugerían la subordinación de los hombres a las fuerzas extrañas. En todas estas películas existía una clara diferencia entre la humanidad y la presencia tecnológica o alienígena. Así, películas tan alejadas temáticamente como *The War of the Worlds* o *The Incredible Shrinking Man* ofrecían representaciones de la masculinidad muy parejas: hombres amenazados por circunstancias ajenas a su entendimiento. De manera significativa, esta subordinación de los hombres coincidía con una época en los EEUU cuando la masculinidad tradicional parecía estar en crisis y el poder tradicionalmente ligado a ellos venía siendo cuestionado por postulados feministas. Así, los hombres amenazados deben luchar contra fuerzas alienígenas, como en *The*

War of the Worlds, o incluso ellos mismos se pueden convertir en objeto de la "otredad", como es el caso del hombre mosca de *The Fly*, que sufre una tremenda crisis de identidad como consecuencia de su transformación física radical. En ambos casos, la amenaza a lo desconocido afecta de manera drástica la vida social, pública y familiar del personaje masculino. En estas películas, la sexualidad femenina suele constituir una amenaza añadida, especialmente ligada a cuestiones reproductoras y de autoridad.

El patrón del "hombre conquistador" hace referencia a héroes que pretenden conquistar o imponer su modo de vida o costumbres en otros mundos o civilizaciones que se nos presentan como desconocidos y/o inexplorados. Normalmente, los hombres conquistadores han domesticado la tecnología para su propio beneficio y viajan de manera fiable a través del espacio y del tiempo. Su comportamiento está ligado al héroe tradicional tal y como se describe en la mitología, el folklore y otras formas literarias, y normalmente sobresalen por su privilegiado estatus social. Las películas que illustran este tipo de masculinidad se centran en la relación del héroe con los nuevos mundos que descubre o explora. Con la afamada *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), de Stanley Kubrick, este patrón empieza a dominar la ciencia ficción, creando un antecedente para películas posteriores con temática similar. Aunque esta tendencia de representación no es del todo ajena a las realidades socio-políticas de cada momento, su proyección de la realidad estadounidense del momento no es tan evidente como lo era, por ejemplo, en películas que seguían el patrón del "hombre amenazado". El héroe conquistador es fácilmente reconocible en películas tan populares como *Star Wars* o *Star Trek,* donde la construcción de la masculinidad se presenta más estática y predecible y, al contrario de lo que le ocurría al "hombre amenazado", no suele dar muestras de debilidad ni necesita reforzar su lado más masculino. De la misma manera, las mujeres

representadas en estas películas están relegadas a un segundo plano o se consideran una amenaza.

El tipo de masculinidad delimitada por el denominado "hombre artificial" adquiere especial importancia en películas de los años ochenta y nos muestra a personajes masculinos que han sido construidos o manipulados, bien mediante la genética o por los avances de la tecnología, y cuyos cuerpos normalmente reflejan de manera evidente la construcción del género. La masculinidad y la tecnología están íntimamente ligadas en el "hombre artificial", siendo a veces dificil discernir entre estas dos categorías. Clones como los protagonistas del clásico de la ciencia ficción, *Blade Runner,* o cíborgs mecanizados como Robocop ilustran esta tendencia de representación. El modelo del hombre artificial es útil para analizar el cuerpo posmoderno y nos hace ver la naturaleza construida de la masculinidad. Estos seres cíborg desafían, por un lado, los modelos tradicionales de representación y, por otro, se basan en ellos.

Por último, el "hombre virtual" se refiere a personajes andróginos que se encuentran atrapados en escenarios virtuales. Estos héroes se pueden considerar como la última metáfora del posmodernismo ya que su propia existencia es relativa. La representación del cuerpo masculino es claramente diferente a la de sus antepasados y, siguiendo convenciones posmodernas, no se establece una fuerte distinción entre lo masculino y lo femenino. Además, la estética tradicional de la masculinidad se invierte al mostrarnos a héroes perfectamente afeitados con vestimentas más neutrales que no son capaces en ocasiones de discernir la realidad de la ficción. Esta innovación de género se acentúa en estas películas debido al contexto de mundos tecnológicos, dominados por la realidad virtual, las grandes comunicaciones y el ciberespacio. Esta apariencia

externa andrógina es patente en héroes encarnados por Keanu Reeves en *The Matrix* o en *Johnny Mnemonic*.

Para esta clasificación de tipos de masculidad se ha tenido en cuenta la evolución cronológica, así como la adaptación de cada uno de los patrones al contexto inmediato. Todos ellos nos sugieren diferentes formas de afrontar los cambios que afectan a la identidad masculina. Con el objetivo de ilustrar esta clasificación de manera más significativa y aplicarla al contexto contemporáneo, los dos últimos capítulos de esta tesis doctoral han analizado detalladamente películas influyentes dentro del panorama de los EEUU, ofreciendo una interpretación de la problemática de la masculinidad sugerida en dichas películas.

En el capítulo cuatro, "Men and the "Other"", se han analizado los dos patrones de masculinidad que tradicionalmente han estado ligados a la ciencia ficción clásica: el "hombre amenazado" y el "hombre conquistador". El capítulo gira en torno a la noción de lo "otro" y a sus múltiples, a veces controvertidas, connotaciones ligadas a cuestiones de género. Para dicho análisis, se han seleccionado dos películas muy representativas dentro del cine de ciencia ficción estadounidense, que se corresponden con los patrones de representación que aquí nos ocupan: *The War of the Worlds* (2005), dirigida por Spielberg, muestra significativa del patrón clásico del "hombre amenazado", y *Star Trek. Nemesis* (2002), dirigida por Baird, que nos ofrece al "hombre conquistador" del siglo XXI. Ambas películas, basadas en textos anteriores, problematizan la relación existente entre el "uno" y el "otro" y nos permiten analizar cuestiones de género. Así, este capítulo intenta resaltar temas como los nuevos roles de la masculinidad dentro de la familia contemporánea, las figuras emergentes del Nuevo Hombre y del Nuevo Padre y las

innovadoras relaciones que afectan los roles de genéro y de la estructura familiar.

The War of the Worlds nos muestra a un personaje masculino, Ray (Cruise), que se siente amenazado por la figura del "otro" amenazante, representado en la película por extraterrestres que intentan destruir la Tierra. Además, la película nos propone una relación problemática entre el "hombre amenazado" y su familia, que se convierte en una amenaza adicional, ya que Ray no sabe cómo afrontar el rol de padre en el mundo caótico que le rodea. Como consecuencia de todo ello, Ray se encuentra confuso y desorientado, incapaz de afrontar los retos sociales y familiares que se le proponen. Sin embargo, poco a poco Ray consigue ejercer con cierto éxito su rol de padre protector para con su hija, y conseguir la estabilidad de su familia. Ajustándose al patrón del "hombre amenazado", la película nos ofrece a un personaje masculino que, debido a su gran inseguridad en los terrenos público y privado, se aleja de patrones heroicos tradicionales. Se puede afirmar, pues, que *The War of the Worlds* apunta a la crisis de la masculinidad en la sociedad estadounidense actual.

Star Trek. Nemesis (2002) ofrece una versión contemporánea del patrón del "hombre conquistador". El capitán Picard (Stewart) sigue la tipología del héroe mítico tradicional y así, ha de enfrentarse con el villano, el malvado Shinzon. Picard está al mando de un equipo multicultural que lucha para restaurar la paz del universo. La película usa, pues, la popular fórmula Trek para presentarnos al "hombre conquistador", que ocupa una posición privilegiada en la jerarquía política, social, racial y de género del espacio. Al igual que el resto de películas de la saga Trek, *Nemesis* nos ofrece, además del "hombre conquistador", una disparidad de prototipos masculinos que incluyen,

entre otros, androides humanizados, clones y seres híbridos que conviven de manera afable. Con ello, la película nos propone ambientes positivos de hibridación y nuevas visiones de lo "otro" que van más allá del prototípico alienígena amenazador. Precisamente, este abanico de versiones de lo masculino, junto con el ambiente afable de la película, permite imaginarnos un mundo en el que los hombres y las mujeres pueden considerarse iguales y donde las diferencias de género y raza no estén tan acentuadas. Sin embargo, es necesario destacar que esta aparente permisividad de género ocurre dentro de una jerarquía en la que la supremacía del héroe blanco heterosexual es incuestionable. La pluralidad de estereotipos masculinos, encarnados por Data, Worf, and La Forge es posible únicamente si se establece un patrón idealizado de masculinidad, encarnado por el héroe mítico. Un aspecto relevante de la película es que Picard, de manera inesperada, sufre una pequeña crisis de identidad cuando descubre que su mayor enemigo, el villano Shinzon, es su clon y por tanto, comparten los mismos genes. La idea de que el "otro" es parte del "uno" produce tensión narrativa y desorienta al héroe, que debe terminar con su doble para poder consolidarse como salvador del universo. La película se resuelve con la destrucción del doble y la victoria del "yo" sobre el "otro", y elimina vínculos problemáticos, como el existente entre Picard y su inseparable amigo Data, lo que contribuye a reforzar la vigencia del patrón del "hombre conquistador".

Las dos películas discutidas en este capítulo nos ofrecen imágenes de hombres que desarrollan una relación peculiar con la noción del "otro", que adopta diferentes formas: marcianos destructivos, un replicante malvado o, de naturaleza bastante diferente, androides amables y seres dóciles. Aunque de maneras opuestas, Ray y Picard se enfrentan al "otro", lo que les aporta ansiedad. Ray se siente amenazado a consecuencia de los ataques del

"otro", y su ansiedad incrementa cuando tiene que hacer las veces de padre protector y descubre que es incapaz de hacerlo. En *Nemesis,* el tema del clon malévolo sugiere que el héroe y el villano están conectados de alguna manera, lo que también desemboca en una crisis de ansiedad para el héroe. La inestabilidad masculina se representa más claramente en la cinta de Spielberg y, en general, en las películas que siguen el patrón del "hombre amenazado". Por otro lado, en *Nemesis* encontramos representaciones poco convencionales de masculinidad, una vez que el poder del héroe queda patente. De este modo, el "otro" también es relegado a una segunda posición. En cualquier caso, toda la representación de la "otredad", negativa en *The War of the Worlds* o algo más positiva en el caso de *Nemesis*, son presencias que determinan la narración y el destino del héroe.

El debate en el último capítulo, "Men and Technology", recae en la relación existente entre la masculinidad y los avances tecnológicos y en cómo estas cuestiones se plasman en la ciencia ficción. Este análisis se centra en la figura del cíborg, un ser híbrido, mitad humano mitad máquina, cuyo cuerpo constituye una compleja metáfora del estado de cosas en el mundo posmoderno. El cíborg se considera como el espacio donde se concentran las ansiedades sobre el futuro de la tecnología y de cómo ésta podría afectar a la identidad humana. Donna Haraway en su famoso "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminist in the Late Twentieth Century" (1985), ya usó la imagen del cíborg con un propósito social, ya que la consideró no sólo como un ser ficticio, sino también como una "criatura de realidad social" (149). El cíborg, como ella afirma, es nuestra "ontología" ya que "a finales del siglo XX, nuestra época, una época mítica, todos somos quimeras, seres híbridos de máquina y organismo teorizados y fabricados; en resumen somos cíborgs" (150).

Los patrones del "hombre artificial" y del "hombre virtual" nos muestran diferentes maneras de interpretar la figura del cíborg en la ciencia ficción. La segunda película de la saga dirigida por Cameron, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), nos ilustra de manera clara el patrón que aquí se denomina el "hombre artificial". El personaje interpretado por Arnold Schwarzenegger nos sugiere un vínculo hombre-máquina algo obsoleto y artificial que, sin embargo, cumple el propósito de calmar las ansiedades producidas en la época por la erosión de modelos heroicos convencionales. Esta figura, sin embargo, va a dar paso a fusiones hombre-máquina mucho más naturales. La película de los hermanos Wachowski, *The Matrix* (1999), ejemplifca el modelo del "hombre virtual", que apunta a una figura más andrógina que experimenta con realidades virtuales, y que problematiza la propia identidad y existencia humanas.

Terminator 2 nos presenta al ser invencible que protagonizaba la primera parte encarnado por Schwarzenegger, pero que adopta esta vez un rol protector para con John y, en definitiva, para con toda la humanidad ya que su misión (programada desde el futuro) es asegurar la continuidad de la raza humana. Esta representación de un cuerpo masculino poderoso e invencible implica, como algunos autores han sugerido, nociones de poder sobre el sexo opuesto. A todos estos héroes, pues, se les representa con el cuerpo y capacidades físicas necesarias para conseguir su cometido final, y en ningún caso muestran sus debilidades o posibles flaquezas. La supremacía de estos héroes es más evidente cuando los músculos se mezclan con el acero, convirtiéndose en cíborgs invencibles.

Sin embargo, la figura del Terminator en la película que nos ocupa ofrece una serie de novedades, especialmente si lo comparamos con el personaje de la película original de 1984. Aquel cíborg destructivo e impasible da paso a una figura protectora de la raza

humana que destila vulnerabilidad y sensibilidad. El poder asignado al cíborg en la primera película adquiere un cariz completamente diferente en la secuela de 1991, siendo la característica más destacable de este último su progresiva humanización, lo que complica sobremanera la relación hombre-humano. Además, el Terminator adopta el rol de padre protector y, así, protege al joven John del villano más temible: el modelo T-1000. De este modo, se puede afirmar que los nuevos modos de entender la masculinidad se "añaden" a un cuerpo armado que enfatiza, paradójicamente, las características del héroe convencional.

La imposibilidad de ofrecer formas menos rígidas de la figura del cíborg tiene que ver en parte con el contexto socio-cultural de principios de los años 90 en los EEUU, un tiempo de transición en el que la erosión de la masculinidad hegemónica abocó a muchos hombres a situaciones de crisis. *Judgement Day* nos habla de la complicada relación entre humanos y máquinas, sugiriendo una situación de desorientación general y caos debido precisamente a los últimos cambios llevados a cabo por los avances tecnológicos y por las nuevas definiciones de la masculinidad y de la paternidad que tuvieron lugar en los EEUU a finales del siglo XX. De este modo, se puede afirmar que el personaje del cíborg aquí representado sugiere estabilidad en una época de cambio.

En *The Matrix* encontramos un nuevo modelo de masculinidad que, al mismo tiempo, es un reflejo de la época. Los 90 se caracterizan por un desarrollo significativo de la tecnología, lo que provocó una incertidumbre general sobre el papel de ésta en la vida cotidiana. Todo ello repercutió irremediablemente en la imagen del héroe, al que a menudo se le representa desorientado en mundos artificiales. El cuerpo poco convencional de Neo y su a veces inusual comportamiento

reflejan los valores presentes a finales de los 90, como la indeterminación, la transgresión de límites y fronteras y el desarrollo tecnológico. Neo, al igual que otros personajes que habitan el espacio virtual, reúne en su cuerpo tanto características tradicionalmente asociadas a lo masculino como a lo femenino, y por lo tanto, el cuerpo se convierte en un mero constructo. Además, la compleja personalidad de Neo hace que lo identifiquemos con aquellos personajes presentes en textos posmodernos donde se problematiza el estatus del yo. Esta pluralidad del yo implicará irremediablemente una pluralidad en los rasgos que se le atribuyen, dando como resultado la inestabilidad de los rasgos de genéro. De hecho, la representación que de Neo se hace en la pantalla es visiblemente diferente a la de otros héroes masculinos.

La presencia de cíborgs en una sociedad dominada por las máquinas y la recreación de una atmósfera posmoderna ayudan a crear un contexto donde todo parece fluir. Además, el vestuario de los personajes y su comportamiento contribuyen también a borrar los rasgos tradicionalmente ligados a la masculinidad y a la feminidad. Por lo tanto, Neo vive, al igual que el resto de la humanidad, en un mundo construido donde los valores han evolucionado hasta el punto en que las diferencias genéricas ya no parecen estar tan marcadas. Paradójicamente, el protagonista todavía sigue muchas de las convenciones heroicas tradicionales, y así, se sitúa al mismo nivel que aquellos héroes convencionales cuya misión era salvar a la humanidad de un trágico destino.

The Matrix representa una tensión entre un mundo tecnológicamente avanzado y dominado por las máquinas y la presencia de patrones masculinos de conducta, que se refleja sobre todo en la función mesiánica del protagonista. Este choque entre convención e innovación caracteriza fundamentalmente la estructura

básica del cine de ciencia ficción contemporáneo que sigue el patrón del "hombre virtual", ofreciendo una visión nueva de la interfaz hombre-tecnología.

Tanto el "hombre artificial" como el "hombre virtual" reflejan una compleja relación entre el hombre y la tecnología, de la misma manera que los patrones del "hombre amenazado" y el "hombre conquistador" lo hacían con respecto a la noción del "otro". Los protagonistas de *Terminator 2* y *The Matrix* están estrechamente ligados a la tecnología, lo que les define como cíborgs y provoca sus respectivas crisis de identidad. Tal y como se deduce del análisis de las películas, la figura del cíborg avanza y se adapta a los tiempos y así, se percibe una clara evolución del "hombre artificial" con respecto al "hombre virtual", que se puede interpretar como un cambio en nuestra manera de entender y aceptar los últimos avances tecnológicos. De la misma manera, la diferencia entre el cíborg de *Terminator 2* y el "hombre virtual" de *The Matrix* refleja la adaptación que la ciencia ficción hace del llamado Nuevo Hombre. En ambas películas, el cuerpo cíborg se considera como sofisticado y contradictorio a la vez. El Terminator no puede sobrellevar su naturaleza construida, mientras que Neo muestra una relación conflictiva con su alter ego virtual. El peligro del post-humanismo está presente en ambas películas, sugiriendo que debemos convertirnos en humanos de nuevo. Se puede afirmar que, a pesar de todas las innovaciones y el despliegue de tecnología, todavía se puede apreciar una perpetuación de los roles patriarcales en lo que al héroe se refiere. *Terminator 2* hace uso de una estética más convencional a la hora de presentar al cíborg, mientras que *The Matrix*, a pesar de la apariencia física tan poco convencional del héroe, le asigna una serie de nociones ligadas a la masculinidad tradicional, como su heroicidad.

El análisis de estos cuatro textos fílmicos ha pretendido ilustrar cómo las imágenes de lo masculino en la ciencia ficción reflejan, de manera más o menos evidente, las preocupaciones más candentes de la sociedad estadounidense actual. A pesar de la disparidad de temas, ambientes, personajes y modos de representación, las películas que aquí se han analizado comparten una serie de características y todas ellas reflejan la "realidad" de los EEUU entre 1991 y 2005, una época de cambios culturales y sociales que determinan las formas de entender la masculinidad. Así, he intentado apuntar que la ciencia ficción ha mostrado con éxito los cambios sustanciales que conlleva la ruptura del tradicional opuesto uno/otro para la identidad masculina. Las cuatro películas usan este tema recurrente para sugerir la inestabilidad de la naturaleza del hombre contemporáneo como consecuencia de su imposibilidad de adaptación a los valores que la sociedad propone para el llamado Nuevo Hombre.

Se puede señalar que estos textos ilustran la relación problemática entre la masculinidad y la "otredad", esta última entendida como todo aquello que va en contra de la norma, representada en forma de alienígenas, clones malvados o descontrol tecnológico. Además, las películas sugieren las diferentes formas de afrontar la masculinidad a finales del siglo XX y principios del XXI. Todas ellas evocan, de manera más o menos evidente y directa, las crisis de la identidad masculina, las reacciones por parte de los hombres a las nuevas definiciones de género, los nuevos roles paternos, y presentan patrones heroicos poco convencionales, como consecuencia, en parte, del cuestionamiento de los valores patriarcales en nuestra sociedad.

Aunque las imágenes de lo masculino en la ciencia ficción contemporánea siguen sujetas a las definiciones dominantes de la

masculinidad, también se puede afirmar que reflejan de manera fiel las ansiedades culturales que afectan a la subjetividad masculina.

Como conclusión, esta tesis ha intentado explorar el modo en que la representación de la masculinidad puede ser estudiada de manera productiva en el contexto de la ciencia ficción. Hoy en día la ciencia ficción tiene el poder de atravesar fronteras en muchos sentidos, lo que se puede aplicar de manera positiva a la representación del género en este icono cultural del siglo XXI. Como muchos críticos han apuntado, nuestra cultura es inestable, plural y esquizofrénica (Jameson 119). En mi opinión, el cine de ciencia ficción debería apostar por una representación de la masculinidad más desafiante e innovadora y es mi deseo como aficionada al género que esto ocurra en un futuro no muy lejano.