

ASTOUNDING SHE MONSTERS



Women in Fantasy Cinema

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John Alexander

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"The seed of Hundra is in all women, so let all men beware!" Hundra, 1983.

Cover illustration: Nora in Kiss Me Deadly (1958)

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1. Introduction: Fantasy and the Feminine

For nearly a hundred years the cinema has been the source of our collective dreams. We have been inundated with stereotypical and archetypal images of the masculine and the feminine. For every Tarzan, a Jane, for every Bogart, a Bacall. In fantasy cinema our projections are no longer in the realm of the rational or identifiable - the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' take on the forms from our dreams and nightmares. They are vampires, were-wolves, ghosts and demons. They are monsters from the past or creatures from the future. Immortal women from hidden empires or hideous creatures from worlds in other galaxies. They may be grotesque, terrifying, sinister, beautiful, all-knowing, or embodiments of pure evil - these are the monsters that dwell inside our own human nature.

"That monster out there - it's you!" shouts Captain Adams to Dr Morbius, the alchemist of the Forbidden Planet, who has created an invisible monster from his subconscious mind during his hours of sleep. It is the monster that finally rises up to consume Morbius himself. Why? Because he has chosen to ignore it. Like Sleeping Beauty and the uninvited godmother who came and reeked her vengeance, so too do the personalities within us that we choose to ignore. Those monsters out there on the cinema screen may just be those unpleasant bits of ourselves we can no longer ignore as they reek their fury on the collective hapless victim.

Fantasy cinema, the cinema that is of the imagination as opposed to the films grounded in reality (if any fiction film can be said to be so), provides the opportunity to examine the creatures and monsters we project.

Since the beginnings of the commercial cinema each decade has highlighted the feminine image representative of its time; Lulu in the 1920's (primarily devised by director, G W Pabst, according to Louise Brooks); Lola-Lola in *The Blue Angel*, (1930), and variations on the Marlene Dietrich 'bad girl' under the austere direction of Josef von Sternberg; the fatales of 1940's noir, where gutsy and independent dames were cut down to domesticity, deference or death to re-emerge as the docile studio-mogul fashioned sex-kitten in the 50's and 60's; Monroe, Bardot and Barbarella. The new homogenised vamps, mere parodies of the original screen vamp, Theda Bara, one of Hollywood's early screen idols; destroying men in roles such as Cleopatra and Ayesha; She-who-must-be-obeyed.



Theda Bara, silent era screen vamp, as Cleopatra

The portrayal of the feminine examines a number of archetypes based mainly on the ideas of Carl Jung. Fantasy is a polarity

existing only in relation to how we define reality; the feminine is similarly a polarity related to how we may consider the masculine.

Male and female serve to define the biological polarities for most life forms (androgony is a consideration even in human terms); man and woman define the social roles bestowed upon human kind in a sociological context. Masculine and feminine relate to our psychological make-up, and although based on our perceptions of man and woman, are not always compatible with those perceptions.

Jung associates Eros with the feminine and Logos with the masculine, and although his writings on the subject date from a period when gender roles in Europe were far more pronounced than in the present, for Jung they were archetypal representations of masculine and feminine, regardless of historical period or cultural context. Nonetheless some analysts debate the validity of these terms, as they are applicable to both men and women. The Eros of Greek mythology is masculine, just as Logos has feminine representations; Sophia, Minerva and Athene. In this context the Logos and Eros of masculine and feminine should be considered representations of another pair of opposite forces within the individual.

The pantheon of screen goddesses through the decades of cinema-going, from the vantage of a distant observer may represent the biologically defined female of the human species, and may also represent the man's choice of women to be worshipped from the front stalls, but, if we define male - female as the biological polarities of human kind, man - woman as defining traditional social roles, and masculine - feminine as qualities expressed to a greater or lesser extent by all human kind, then they do not

necessarily represent the feminine. In a film such as Babenco's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985), the feminine is clearly represented by a man, just as, it may be argued, the Lacey half of the Cagney Lacey policewomen duo, represents the masculine. Masculine - feminine define the polarities within our own individuality, regardless of



The fantasy of entrapment - Kiss of the Spider Woman (1985)

gender. The analysis/interpretation of its portrayal in the cinema takes us a step further from male - female/ man - woman, and into the realm of catastrophe. In the fantastic cinema, the cinema of the imagination, masculine - feminine appear to us in all forms, monstrous, seductive, grotesque, deadly. Understanding the images and symbols that form many of our collective dreams and

nightmares, is ill-served by a lineal and analytical approach. Psychoanalysis, surrealism and psychology; the projections Jung referred to as the anima; 'the woman inside the man', and animus, 'the man inside the woman', the woman's projection of the masculine. Considering the dominantly patriarchal structure of the



The Vampire, painting by Philip Burne Jones (1897)

commercial film industry, the imagery of the cinema is primarily anima.

The femme fatale inspired artists of the late 19th and early 20th century; the expressionists; Munch; of which *Vampyr* is exemplary; the pre-Raphaelites; the paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, John Waterhouse and the Symbolist movement of this period which inspired art, literature and opera.

As Patrick Bade in his study of the femme fatale writes, the three most successful operatic composers at the turn of the century, Massenet, Puccini and Strauss, all wrote operas in which fatal women are all central characters; *Tosca*, ("This is the kiss of *Tosca*", as she plunges the knife into her lover's chest); *Turandot*, the princess who tests her suitors with riddles, and has them beheaded when they cannot answer, *Salome*, who kisses the lips of her lover's

severed head. By the early 1920's, the popularity of the opera was waning in favour of the cinema, where the femme fatale became the exotic creature of malevolence, portrayed by early screen vamps such as Theda Bara, Barbara La Marr and Poli Negri (see Patrick Bade: *Femme Fatale - Images of Evil and Fascinating Women*, Ash and Grant, 1979, p. 38-39)

As far as the endless search for meaning in the analysis and interpretation of fantasy cinema, it is, in the words of C G Jung, meanings that make things bearable. Wittgenstein's view on understanding more of contemporary society from the B-films and low culture, than the academic treatises and high culture dissertations. Further, nothing reveals more of a social period than its interpretation of the future.

According to Goethe, "there is a hollow spot in the brain..." where, "if Man pays particular attention... has a presentiment of objects from another world which are actually non-objects; they have neither shape nor boundary but give rise to fear as a sort of empty night spatiality, haunting those who cannot shake them off." (Goethe: *Maximen und Reflexionen IV. Nachgelassene Schriften*. Complete passage quoted in C A Meier: *The Psychology of C G Jung Vol 3; Consciousness*, Sigo Press, 1989, p. 36).

Fantasy cinema covers a broad area, and for the purpose of this study it's not intended as a genre definition, simply a means of distinguishing from the fiction film which takes reality, the known world, as a point of departure from which the story is told. Fantasy is a term which could be applied to fiction film as a whole, as the conventions of film narrative determine complexities of story and character to be portrayed within a defined time limit (ellipsis) which necessitate abandoning any attempt at realism. For even the most realistic of films require the pretence of actors, written

dialogue, narrative conventions, and the cinematic form expressed through the camera (mis-en-scene) and the cutting table (montage). Real life just isn't like that. So in this respect fiction cinema is always the portrayal of the make-believe; its very nature is based on the suspension of the viewer's disbelief. However, there is fiction film based on the world as it is, or as it has been, which attempts to portray the familiar. In regard to this essay, fantasy is used to define what is not familiar; the world or worlds which are not known to us; worlds of the imagination, not grounded in the reality as perceived by the five senses. Fantasy may encompass science fiction, the supernatural (on which many horror films, but not all, are based), the fantastic; surrealist cinema, filmic portrayal of dreams, myths, sagas and fairy tales. A film like *Brigadoon* (Minelli, 1954) in genre terms, is a Hollywood musical, but beyond that, it's a fantasy story concerning a Scottish highland village which comes to life every hundred years, based on an old folk tale. *Lost Horizon* (see Ch. 5) may be a Frank Capra film (for a director's name also serves as a means of defining a category), but it also a fantasy concerning a mythical kingdom hidden in the Himalaya, bestowing long life and happiness upon all the inhabitants. *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (Ch. 7), the conflict between an American woman missionary and a ruthless Chinese warlord, is set against the background civil of unrest in the Chinese provinces, but dream sequences make this film a case for study in considering the portrayal of the feminine - the dreams distinguish the so-called real from the unreal.

Freud maintained that; "Throughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity... " (p. 577 Lecture 23 in *Complete Lectures*) and that "The further you go from the narrow sexual sphere the more obvious will the 'error superimposition' (mistaking two different things for a single one) become." Attributing 'active' to 'masculine' and 'passive' to

'feminine', according to Freud "serves no useful purpose". (ibid. p. 579) Freud concluded that his own ideas on what constitute the 'feminine', "is incomplete and fragmentary" and that "if you want to know more about femininity, enquire from your own experiences of life, or turn to the poets..." (p. 599) Consider also, some other of Freud's (outmoded) observations of the feminine: 'woman must be regarded as having little sense of justice... 'the predominance of envy in their mental life...' 'weaker in their social instincts...' 'less capacity for sublimating their instincts than men...' 'a woman of thirty is physically rigid and unchangeable'... the list is long.

Like the poet, the film maker employs imagery, in fantasy cinema images from the depths of the subconscious mind, in order to convey concepts and dilemmas of the human condition.

The 'astounding she-monsters' of the fantasy cinema, are nonetheless portrayals on male terms, and with few exceptions (screenplays by Thea von Harbou, directed by Fritz Lang, for example) have usually been male creations; the anima projections of the collective unconscious. Most often they are the dreams of men which reach out to other worlds to contend with the rage of the suppressed feminine.

2. Femme Castratrice: The Paranoia Films of the 1950's

"Horror! Shock! Devastation! As the most grotesque monstrosity of all breaks loose..." announces a 1950's trailer for a new science fiction film; "Once a normal voluptuously beautiful woman," proclaims the announcers voice, "She drove into a nightmare of horror and saw descending from the sky a titanic monster whose fearsome touch became a frightful curse; Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman. Incredibly huge, with incredible desires for love and vengeance." As a large plaster hand wavers menacingly before a young man with his girlfriend in a highway diner, the final captions pronounce: "Death and Desire! Science fiction reaches a new high in terror!"



Attack of the 50 Foot Woman — man's fear of nuclear radiation or man's fear of a wronged woman's jealousy?

Paranoia is a mental disorder characterized by delusions and persecution. The word means 'beyond the mind' or 'beyond reason' and the science fiction films of the 1950's reveal a certain 'beyond reason' tendency bordering on delusions of persecution on the part of film makers. But what is the subject of this persecution? The Bomb? Communists? Or women?

By 1958, when *Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman* invaded the drive-in cinema circuit, a parodic element had crept into the wave of paranoia science fiction films which developed in the cold war period in the early 1950's.

At the start of the decade 'fantasy cinema' took a specifically science fiction turn; films such as *Destination Moon*, *The Flying Saucer*, *Rocketship X-M*, Howard Hawks' *The Thing*, *When Worlds Collide*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Man from Planet X*, to name just a few, were films that emphasised post war space technology, the possibility of life on other planets, and the possibility of the earth destroying itself.



Rocketship X-M; technology embraces compassion

These were films about invasions of hostile aliens, men or monsters mutated by radioactive fallout, heartless assailants infiltrating and threatening the traditional American values of freedom in the multitude of forms stipulated by various amendments to the American Constitution.

It is generally regarded that two themes dominate this period of science fiction cinema. Firstly, fear of the bomb, leading successively to fear of nuclear fall-out and radioactive mutation, and secondly, fear of subversive infiltration, specifically communists, inspired by the anti-communist purges instigated by Senator McCarthy, and the seeds of the cold war between the major powers. This was a man's decade highlighted by male struggles for technological supremacy both militarily and in space. Mighty space rockets and masterful nuclear missiles were fashioned in awesome homage to male potency.

The bleak pessimism of low-budget postwar noir cinema, flourishing on the fringe of the commercial mainstream, gave way to the low-budget science fiction picture in which the paranoia of the decade could be expressed without fear of reprisal. (According to film director, Edward Dymtryk, much noir cinema was born of a social concern in answer to the mega-productions of MGM and Warners; he was one of the Hollywood Ten imprisoned for communist sympathies in the late 1940's). Meanwhile the anti-communist witch-hunts were taking their toll in the Hollywood studios.



Sandy Sanders, Lois Collier and Walter Reed discuss strategy in Republic's "Flying Disc Man From Mars" ('50).

Previously, science fiction cinema was the domain of the serials which began with *Perils of Pauline* (1914) and *Fantomas* (1913) and attained their height of popularity in the 1930's and 1940's; *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe*, *Zombies of the Stratosphere*, *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*. *Flying Disc Man from Mars*, a Republic serial in 12 episodes directed by Fred Brannon, 1951, about a pilot who discovers that Martians are preparing to take over the Earth, was perhaps the first cinema exploitation of the invasion theme.

In *The Thing from Another World* (Nyby/Hawks, 1951) a group of polar military men successfully obliterate a an extra-terrestrial life form and in the congratulatory camaraderie of the triumphant



'Keep watching the skies,' warns journalist Spencer, while male viewers train their gaze upon the pretty girl - alone with a group of men on an arctic military base.

epilogue an on-hand journalist beams his radio message from the arctic base to around the world; "Watch the skies! Keep watching the skies!"

In the Hawks invasion scenario however, the conflict is between the 'men of action' and the 'men of ideas' (the representative of the latter group is despatched by the extra-terrestrial he attempts to save), with a single token 'pretty woman'; who's brave when the occasion calls for it, and remarkably deft with the coffee pot and looking after the 'boys' the rest of the time.

Most invasions were less straightforward; often representing insidious potential disruptions of content family life; *The Invasion*

of the Body Snatchers, The Incredible Shrinking Man, Invaders from Mars, It Came from Outer Space. Even the first victims of the giant radioactively mutated ants in Them! (Douglas, 1954) are the parents of the small girl, stumbling alone through the desert, uttering the film title to highway patrolmen who pick her up.

From Nuclear Bombs to Nuclear Families

If the 1950's was the decade of the nuclear bomb and the threat of nuclear war, it was also the decade of the nuclear family. For American cinema audiences of the 1950's extra-marital, pre-marital and homosexual relationships were as alien as flying saucers and Martians. So was divorce.

The fear of the bomb, the cold war, nuclear war, nuclear fallout, infiltration, subversion, communism and the red terror, stemmed



Invaders from Mars. The disintegration of the nuclear family; Dad's not himself, and mother is left to take care of the family

principally from the threat it represented to the family unit, with the man fulfilling his role as family provider, and the wife providing support, children and a cooked dinner every night.

In *Invaders From Mars* (Menzies, 1953) a young boy sees a flying saucer

land close by to their house, on the outskirts of a small mid-

western American town. His normally kindly father reacts violently to the boy's story. His mother is shocked by her husband striking the boy (the scene takes place in the kitchen over the evening dinner), but she remains silent and acquiescent, lest further disharmony invade the otherwise idyllic domestic scene. On the back of father's neck three tiny stitches, unseen by mother and son, indicate that daddy's violence is not his own, but that Martian intruders have possessed his form; that infiltration from beyond threatens family unity.



Monster or communist? And is there a difference?

In *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (Fowler, 1958) a newly wed woman wakes up to discover that her husband is an alien in human form with a mission to prepare an alien invasion. In *It*

Came From Outer Space (Arnold, 1953; based on a short story by Ray Bradbury), John Putnam, a writer and amateur astronomer, a city boy who leaves for the quiet life in the Arizona desert, a Sagittarian, woos young Ellen Fields, the local school teacher, a Scorpio, and at midnight as they discuss the prospects of marriage, they witness a falling meteorite. John Putnam soon realises that this is no ordinary meteorite, and concludes that a space-craft has landed. These invaders can replicate human form, and assume the identities of some of the local townspeople. Their quest, however, is not for earthlings but for earth minerals which are needed to



It Came from Outer Space. What is 'it'? The art of replication? Or the concept of marriage?

save their planet. When the aliens complete their mission they leave attempt to depart peacefully but the local townsfolk are keen to obliterate them with shotguns and pitchforks. John Putnam steps forth to reprimand the locals with a few well-chosen words

of common sense, the aliens withdraw and he and Ellen are reunited to join the pantheon of 1950's science fiction film husband wife team scenarios.

Flight to Mars (Selander, 1951), an early colour space travel film, is about four scientists' rocket trip to Mars where Martians speak

American English picked up on short wave radio. The leading scientists are husband and wife, a recurring scenario (or variations including potential husband and wife, possible husband and wife or ex-husband and wife) in films such as *Destination Moon*, *The Thing*, *When Worlds Collide*, *Earth vs Flying Saucers*, *This Island Earth*, and many others. The man is invariably the perpetrator of deeds and the wife is 'supportive'. Usually.

Femme Castratrice

The Fly (Neumann, 1958; based on a story by James Clavell) begins with the wife of a young scientist confessing to killing her husband by crushing him to death in a press. "I did not murder my husband", she tells her brother in law (Vincent Price), "I simply carried out his last wish." The scientist, Andre, had devised a means of transferring atoms by disintegrating and reintegrating matter. First he transfers an ashtray, a wedding present to Helene and Andre, then the house-cat. Meanwhile, Helene is trying to explain to their twelve year old son, Phillippe, why 'daddy' is always



The Fly (1958) Husband and wife, 'in sickness and in health, till death do us part.'

busy in the cellar. For Andre has committed the cardinal sin of forsaking family for science. When he experiments with the system using himself as subject matter, a fly enters the compartment, and Andre emerges from the re-integration chamber with his own body and the head of the fly. If his wife, Helene, can catch the fly which has his own human head he has a chance of regaining his own form by repeating the experiment. Helene's pursuit of the fly fails and his form, so hideous both to himself and to his wife, seems irreversible. Andre places his head on the press, and Helene pushes the button, crushing him to an unrecognisable pulp. She must repeat the process to destroy his one fly-like arm in order that the truth of his experiments remain unknown. "I'd never hurt Andre," she tells the investigating policeman, "but that thing - it wasn't Andre." It is the disbelieving policeman himself, who, in the film's closing minutes, espies a fly in a spider web, with a tiny human head, about to be devoured by a spider. "Help me!" cries the half-human fly, and the policeman despatches it from the world of the living with the hard end of his shoe.



*André's new perspective of matrimony. Not just what he sees, but **how** he sees.*

By comparison Canadian filmmaker, David Cronenberg's 1986 remake, rather than dwell on the affects of a grotesque

transformation on a long standing marital relationship, transfers the story to couple who have just met. The paranoia expressed in Cronenberg's adaption concerns disease within the physical form and the affect of its eruption on a casual sexual partner, just as contemporary a fear in the final years of the twentieth century, as disruption of the family was in the middle of it. "It's a small field, venereal horror," says Cronenberg, "But at least I'm king of it." (Monthly Film Bulletin, February 1987).

The central character in Neumann's adaption is the faithful and supportive wife struggling vainly to maintain family unity. At the beginning of the film she is the adoring wife:

Helene: What are you doing?

Andre: Just looking at the sky. Looking at God perhaps.

Helene: You're a strange man Andre. So precise and practical and yet so... I don't know quite how to put it.

Andre: So aware of the infinite. The more I know, the more sure I know so little.



The Incredible Shrinking Man and the man of the house - a doll's house.

As her husband is changed into something monstrous so must she transform into a person capable of monstrous deeds.

In *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (Jack Arnold, 1957; story by Richard Matheson, author of *Duel*) Scott Carey starts to shrink following exposure to radioactive gas. How can his wife, Louise, love a shrinking man, he despairs. As doctors and experts claim they are unable to retard the affect, Carey is overcome with a sense of inadequacy. His 'manliness' is diminishing, his role of provider waning with his size. Louise can do nothing to appease or console her husband. "As long as you wear that ring I'll stay with you forever," she tells him, pointing to wedding ring after a visit to the doctor. As they embrace the ring falls from his shrinking finger.

When reduced to the size of a figure some inches high, Carey's new domicile is the doll's house, and he becomes the hapless plaything of the dominating but nurturing 'mother'. His size forces him to accept a passive role.

He shrinks to the size of an insect and is left to do battle with the house cat and marauding spiders. He falls down stairs into the cellar and when Louise returns home his tiny cries for help go unheard. His wife, convinced his disappearance can only indicate his death at the jaws of the family cat, leaves the house lamenting; "He needed me and I wasn't there."

Carey, initially the stereotype husband and provider, following his contamination (a radio-active cloud passes over him while on board a boat) becomes obsessed with size and his ability to cope with his marriage. Despite his wife's assurances that she will love him regardless, he withdraws, consumed with self-doubt and anxiety. He is forced to accept the role of passive man 'doll' under

his wife's protective wing, as he is no longer capable of fulfilling traditional male/husband functions.



The Incredible Shrinking Man - from impotence to oblivion

As the plaything inhabitant of the doll's house, Carey's dependence on his wife transforms their relationship from that of husband/wife to that of nurturing mother and resentful son. When he is abandoned by wife/ mother he is left to fend for himself in a savage and hostile world of giant insects, floods, isolation and incarceration. But here, in a world free of sexual obligations and matriarchal dominance, Carey assumes the role of 'noble savage' fending for himself with his own hand crafted weapons. He becomes the natural primitive and finally freed of human perspective, contemplates the nature of infinity and his own merging with the divine spirit as he shrinks to nothingness. For Carey, woman, either as mother or spouse, prevents man realising his natural identity, the 'noble warrior', the philosopher realising oneness with the universe. As Andre, in the beginning of *The Fly*, contemplates the Infinite, Carey, as he shrinks to oblivion, does likewise, seeing before him, "...the two ends of the same concept.

The unbelievably small and the unbelievably vast eventually meet..." He concludes:

"I had presumed upon Nature. That Existence begins and ends, is Man's conception, not Nature's. And I felt my body dwindling, melting, becoming nothing. My fears melted away, and in their place came - acceptance. All this vast majesty of creation, it had to mean something, and then I meant something, too. Yes, smaller than the smallest, I meant something too. To God, there is no zero. I still exist."

'The two ends of the same concept', where 'the unbelievably small and the unbelievably vast eventually meet' no doubt refer to the making of *The Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman* (Juran, 1958), about a woman who is touched by a radio-active alien causing her to grow to the size of a skyscraper. Seemingly, her jealousy and lust for vengeance increase with her stature. When she discovers that



Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman, 1958 and 1983 - still jealous

her husband, Harry, has been entertaining a young lady at the local diner, the 'fifty foot woman' goes on the rampage. "She'll tear up the whole town until she finds Harry," observes one local resident. "Yeah, then she'll tear up Harry," says another. Harry and his lady friend get their come-uppance, suffering a devastating single blow of the 'fifty foot woman's' plaster hand. Significantly, the most male of masculine bastions, the military, are called in to contend with the woman who is clearly too large for any one man to handle. Harry is avenged and the fifty foot woman is obliterated.

Similarly *The Queen of Outer Space* (Bernds, 1958) combines adolescent male fantasy and male paranoia - solitary men on a planet of beautiful women - and vengeful women intent on destroying/castrating men. Veteran Hollywood screenwriters, Ben Hecht and Charles Beaumont, wrote the script undoubtedly with a view to parody, as John Landis has done with *Amazon Women on the Moon* (1988), with dialogue like:



Queen of Outer Space - adolescent fantasy and maternal authority

Venetian Matriarch: We know how belligerent and quarrelsome you men are.

Capt. Patterson: Why don't you girls knock off all this Gestapo stuff and try to be friendly.

Later, one of Captain Patterson's men observes, "You know, there's a certain irony in the fact that our lives, and perhaps the lives of everyone on earth, may depend on Captain Patterson's sex appeal."

The film is set in 1985, 'when man has conquered space', but in doing so has seemingly regressed to neanderthal.



The Astounding She Monster, Fire Maidens from Outer Space and She Devil from Mars, produced in the same year, are variations on the theme.

The Astounding She Monster - alluring or alarming? Alternatively DIY - below....



Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Seigel, 1956) concerns a small Californian town, a community off the main highway, typified by American virtuousness, wholesome values and kindly neighbours.

Mysterious seeds fall to the earth, and within a few days the community transforms; folk are no longer whom they seem to be. The local doctor, Miles, divorced, and his lady friend, Becky, also divorced, uncover a horrendous invasion whereby townsfolk are being duplicated in form only during their hours of sleep. Their duplicated bodies emerge from strange pods that have grown from the seeds fallen from the skies. The invaders appear identical to the victims whose bodies they have taken over, but they are without feeling. Miles, defending human values to invaders that appear in the guise of old friends, and preparing to claim his body, declares: "I love Becky. Will I feel the same tomorrow?" "There's no need for love," comes the reply.



'Never was I so terrified, as when kissed Becky!'

Miles and Becky must stay awake in order to retain their identities. The loss of consciousness results in the loss of identity and individuality permanently. The metaphor of being 'asleep' implies being oblivious to what's going on, and not surprisingly many interpretations of the film call attention to the political and social background in which it was made. The message is; 'If you're not aware of what's going on around you, you will lose your freedom, your humanness... if you are 'asleep' to reality, communism will

infiltrate and subvert.' The implication is that the sleeping millions in small towns everywhere are ready to be manipulated by whoever has the power and the will to do so. Miles learns what he has to lose by falling into 'sleep', just as he learns what is about to happen outside his own small 'anytown' community, as he watches a pod issue forth a human form resembling his own.



Interpretations of the film oscillate from anti-Communist paranoia born of the McCarthy era to anti-totalitarian paranoia, space invasion paranoia and small town USA paranoia. "The film was meant to scare us out of our greyness," claimed Don Seigel at a film festival in northern Finland, 1989. His original bleak ending was amended by the studio with an epilogue and prologue to relate the story in flashback, thereby providing at least a chance for dormant earthlings to awaken in time to save themselves.

Save themselves from what? one may venture and according to Don Seigel the oppression lay in the stifling normality of the small town where no-one dare deviate from 'normal'. Divorce is one such deviancy and Miles and Becky are advised to 'sleep' so they can wake up 'normal'. Miles stays awake and Becky sleeps. "Never have I been so terrified as when I kissed Becky!" utters Miles.

Becky has become someone else; an alien inhabits her body. Miles nightmare is fulfilled. The woman he thought he loved is someone else, no longer the person he thought he knew, a stranger in the guise of intimacy all too eager to betray him, the final deviant; the last man conscious, awake, alive amidst a host of walking dead. The 'Invasion' is as much the infiltration of estrangement in relationships as the infiltration of whatever colour peril from 'beyond'; red, yellow or grey, into the solid sobriety of the American small town.

For Don Seigel the final image was that of Miles running half-crazed onto the highway and screaming at the nonchalant drivers heading into the big city: "They're coming! You're next!" And no-one taking a blind bit of notice.



'They're coming! You're next!'

3. Mater Magna: The Great Mother

A spaceship lands on planet Altair IV, the Forbidden Planet (Wilcox, 1956) The all male crew, under the leadership of Captain Adams, discover that the only human inhabitants are the renowned scientist, Dr Morbius, and his daughter, nearly 20, Altara. Morbius is the sole survivor of an earth spaceship which disappeared almost 20 years before. They are served by a robot, Robbie, representative of a lost civilisation that once ruled the planet.

In Shakespeare's last play, The Tempest, on which Forbidden Planet is based, Captain Fernando and his crew are shipwrecked on an



Altara - childish innocence evoking paternal guilt

island and find that the only human inhabitants are the magician Prospero, and his daughter, Miranda. Ariel, an obliging airy spirit, like Robbie, is an androgonous remnant of the bygone inhabitants of this wayward world, as indeed, is the monstrous Caliban, enslaved by the intellectually dominant Prospero.

On Altair IV also exists a 'cannibal' like monster which devours men; a monstrous remnant of the planet's past. The invisible beast which rips members of Captain Adam's

crew asunder, is also ultimately a monster of the planet's secret past, re-activated through the sub-conscious mind of Dr Morbius, the 'Id'.

Just as Prospero's island does not belong to Prospero, Morbius is as much an intruder on the world of Altair IV. 'This island is mine', insists Caliban in *The Tempest*, 'By Sycorax my mother / Which thou takest from me.' (Act I) Sycorax, the witch, now gone, has left behind her magic as well as her monstrous and vindictive offspring. Sycorax represents the dark power, a power Prospero seeks to command; she is the mythical Evil Woman.

In *The Tempest*, Sycorax has a voice through Caliban, whereas in *Forbidden Planet* the utterances of the monster are a collection of electronically synthesised footsteps, growls and shrieks. Nonetheless, the presence of Sycorax is apparent; she is the Krel, the lost civilisation of millennia gone by; the underworld city with its boundless knowledge, wisdom and power. For Prospero, embodying the spirit of logos, Sycorax may be the evil woman, but she also holds the secrets of



That monster out there! It's you!"

hermetic knowledge; secret and occult powers which he wants to master. The secrets of the island which keep Prospero in permanent exile are the secrets of Sycorax; the feminine eros as opposed to his masculine logos. Similarly Morbius's self-imposed exile on Altair IV enables him to delve into the secret wisdom of the lost Krel. But just as it is his fascination, it is also his destruction. He is the unconscious adoptive 'father' of the monstrous 'Id', a monster born of the Krel, as Sycorax is mother to Caliban.

Following her mysterious death, Sycorax leaves behind a legacy of occult knowledge, seducing the magician Prospero who strives to unlock the hidden mysteries of the island. Morbius grapples with the knowledge left by the Krel, destroyed 'overnight' by an equally mysterious plague. His obsessive quest for 'forbidden knowledge' unleashes a force which illuminates the shadow he refuses to acknowledge. It is a force which animates his own repressed feelings, hidden in the darkness by his highly developed intellect.

In the final analysis Morbius, unable to come to terms with his undeveloped 'feminine' side, is consumed by it. The monster he creates to rise up and devour any man that threatens to come between he and his daughter, exists only because Morbius cannot face his own incestuous desire for his daughter. When he realises that it is he who has generated the monster tearing down the barricades outside, he utters: "My evil self is at that door and I have no power to stop it." As a man of science and intellect his repressed sensation function rises up in bloody vengeance in a form which allows him to disown it altogether. The Great Mother becomes the Terrible Mother.

"One does not gaze into the face of the Gorgon and live," warns Morbius as he shows Captain Adams a reflection of the energy

source created by the vanished Krel. The Medusa, with her hideous face and hair of writhing serpents, is a sight that turns a man to stone. It is the fury of the Medusa that Morbius unleashes through his ignorance - he has ignored and rejected the Great Mother.



Aliens: Battle of the mothers

The Terrible Mother of Aliens (Cameron, 1986) however, is not a monster created by the woman protagonist, Ripley, rather a projection of the monster she fears becoming herself.



Following Alien (Ridley Scott, 1979) where Ripley emerged the sole survivor of an onslaught by an indestructible alien monster inadvertently picked up from a space craft wreckage on a lost planet

in the depths of outer space, she must now confront the nightmare once more where aliens have ravaged an outer space Earth colony. She accompanies a military unit with the expressed intention of eliminating the monsters.

Ripley, a unisex name for what was initially conceived a unisex role, is much at home in the blue collar environment of physical labour and ascetic living. Having been dismissed by the Company for obliterating one of their cargo ships, she now drives mechanical loaders, a skill which will prove useful in the culminating moments of *Aliens'* third act. Ripley assumes a male role in a male dominated society. She is apparently stronger, more clever, more resourceful, more honest and more determined than her male colleagues. She has forsaken aspects of traditional womanhood, but it is quite possible that the entire 21st century has also done so. Whether it is just Ripley, or her age that has forsaken the feminine, we can only speculate. The world is so readily identifiable with our own, that the viewer can further speculate as to the strength of the feminine voice in our own age. Ripley's world is ruled by commerce and common sense business speculation. The story opens with a group of men tearing open Ripley's space capsule with laser beams, and sending in probes to determine the presence of life forms. Her sleeping state is violated by a group of marauding salvagers who 'bring her down to earth.' "There goes our salvage money", they curse, on discovering that Ripley's life form still breathes.

During her recovery in hospital her stomach swells up and an alien embryo erupts from her, tearing her flesh asunder. The scene is familiar from *Alien*, with two significant variations. Firstly, this is Ripley's dream, or rather, her recurring nightmare of the grotesque alien mode of impregnation to which she has already born witness. Secondly, in *Alien* the monster erupted from the victims chest, but in Ripley's nightmare, her abdomen swells in mock pregnancy,

culminating with the monster's birth, which destroys the body it inhabits. The nightmare of giving birth to a monster gestating within one's body, and having one's body torn asunder in the process, is not necessarily peculiar to Ripley's past experience, but appreciable to any would-be mother.

Ripley, together with the combat unit dispatched to the alien planet, find a deserted settlement, until a single survivor appears hiding in the ruins. She is a young girl whom Ripley pursues down a narrow ventilator shaft, which opens out into a womb like chamber. The girl huddles foetal-like in the corner. Ripley coaxes her out.

Whereas *Alien* is structured around the appearance of the monster, and the elimination of victims, the dramatic structure of *Aliens* is built around plot points relating to Ripley and the girl, Newt. The first act culminates with Ripley finding Newt, the second act with Newt's disappearance into the lair of the giant bugs, and act three consists of Ripley rescuing Newt and defending her against the maternal horror, the giant alien mother.

Ripley removes Newt from the ventilation shaft, assisted by combat team member Hicks (who will later assume a surrogate father role) as other soldiers stand around the shaft opening, like a medical team attempting to assist in the birth process, but ultimately only witnesses to nature's inevitable process. In contrast to Ripley's 'birth' nightmare this scene has a clearly positive tone, implied both by the 'rescue' of Newt, and the bonding between her and Ripley, emphasised by Ripley assuming the 'mother' role. The girl is mute, traumatised by the alien incursion, and becomes communicative through Ripley's patient

When Newt disappears into the realm of the giant bugs, Ripley calls out: "I'm not going to leave you, Newt!" She abandons all common sense and reason displayed earlier, jeopardising her own safety and the safety of the last remaining crew members; 'papa' Hicks and 'uncle' Bishop. Ripley succumbs utterly to the protective mother role and, in spite of insurmountable odds found only in the pictures, rushes headlong into the alien enclave to rescue Newt. Newt is undergoing preparation for alien propagation.

In the final chords of act three, Ripley, with sixteen minutes before the colonised planet blows itself to pieces, wrests Newt from the ultimate horror (we have already seen an infant alien erupt from the chest of a young boy, who pleads for mercy in his final agonising seconds), only to confront Ripley's own ultimate horror - Mater Magna - in the monstrous destructive guise comparable to the 'id' creation of Morbius' sub-conscious mind. With Newt safely in her arms, Ripley faces her personal nightmare of motherhood - she sees the formidable alien mother, imprisoned by her egg-laying apparatus, surrounded by the off-spring she's creating; a child producing monster with the single purpose of procreation. In confronting the mother alien she confronts her own shadow - motherhood at its darkest and most vindictive. With Newt in her embrace, Ripley, the Loving Mother, faces the Terrible Mother.

Ripley surveys the scene, the alien eggs and the monster producing them, and raising a flame thrower, utters the word, "Bitch!" and dispatches the hatching eggs with a wall of flame. This makes mother very angry. In an orgy of vindictive rage, Ripley fires bombs into eggs, which explode and scream, and continues incinerating the remains, much to the vexed displeasure of mother, who writhes, seethes and screams at the outrage perpetrated before her. Her rage culminates with her wresting herself free from the gigantic egg sac which has kept her immobile. The alien mother

goes to the attack and Ripley makes a tactful retreat. With Newt in tow, she ascends the elevator shaft with scarce little time before the planet is due to explode, surrounded by flames and pursued by the alien mother monster. Ripley clammers from the depths of her own personal hell, the mighty satanic demoness hot on her tail. Ripley has unleashed the destructive element of the maternal drive, just as her own dormant maternal instinct was aroused in saving Newt.

Bishop reappears in the space vessel in time to save Ripley and Newt. The space colony explodes and with it, thinks Ripley, her Shadow is vanquished. Alas, having stirred the wrath of the Terrible Mother, Ripley must now engage in mortal combat. The monster had attached itself to the space vessel just as it took off. Displeased with Ripley for having extirpated her entire bevy of offspring, the alien mother first cleaves the repairable Bishop into two separate halves, pursues Newt with venomous intent, and is distracted by Ripley, who emerges encased in mechanical combat garb. After a prolonged battle, Ripley dispatches the monster into the endless night of outer space, from whence she came.

Ripley puts Newt to bed. As they sleep in their hibernation chambers their faces dissolve into each others, superimposed one over the other. The story which began with the image of Ripley's sleeping face dissolving into the planet Earth, now ends with a similar 'Mother Earth' icon, Ripley's maternal role fulfilled. "My mother used to say there were no monsters - no real ones - but there are," are Newt's final words.

4. Wounded Heroes and the Women who Possess Them

"Most of the plots were rather ordinary and most of the characters rather primitive types of people. Possibly it was the smell of fear which the stories managed to generate. Their characters lived in a world gone wrong... The law was something to be manipulated for power and profit. The streets were dark with something more than night." Raymond Chandler's description of the 'hard-boiled' style of writing of the 1930's (Hammett, Cain, Chandler himself, and others), was soon to become the noir films of the 1940's. Stories of embittered, cynical and wounded heroes and anti-heroes, confronting the treachery of manipulative, seductive and destructive women. The passage also describes the mood of Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982), the film version of Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, which, in the tradition of Hollywood screen adaptations, was early on expelled via the nearest window, to create a film stylistically and thematically reminiscent of the noir cinema burdgeoning some 40 years earlier.

The wounded hero is an 'ex-cop' named Deckard, introduced ordering sushi at a nighttime outdoor food stall in a rain drenched city street, musing solemnly: "Cold fish. That's what my ex-wife used to call me."

In stark contrast to the protagonist of the novel, Deckard has a failed marriage behind him, and, we soon discover, a failed job as well. Deckard has quit the 'force'; Blade Runners are assigned to 'retire' replicants, robots sufficiently advanced to pass for humans, but just too perfect and too dangerous to be let loose on the planet; replicants carry out the inhuman tasks on off-world colonies, and

are forbidden access to the disintegrating rain drenched 'real' world. It may be surmised that the replicants perfection and danger, lie in the fact that they have no feelings. Those that find their way to earth live in hiding - in the underworld.

Deckard is called in to eliminate four replicants who have killed an off-world space vessel crew and hidden themselves in the city. They have already killed one blade-runner. Deckard refuses. He's quit. A case of bothered conscience. But Deckard can't refuse. 'No choice.'

He is introduced to Rachel, a special case replicant with implanted memories, unaware that she is not human. Deckard falls in love with a machine. "Replicants aren't supposed to have feelings, neither are Blade Runners. What was happening to me?" he muses.

The novel describes Deckard, a married man in a world devoid of living creatures, obsessed with a owning a genuine sheep. Artificial constructions of beasts, both wild and domestic, predominate. In the film, a divorced and embittered Deckard falls for forbidden fruit - a replicant femme fatale, Rachel, who, like her film noir antecedants, is the alluring ice-maiden, the 'daughter' of a powerful father figure, and a woman with a secret past. So secret in fact, she's not aware of it herself; her memories are micro-chip fabrications - she has no past, she is a machine. The man who should destroy her, loves her, and finally they escape the 'underworld' together, Orpheus saves Perspheone. The only woman to which the hero can ally himself is not a woman at all, but a male constructed fantasy machine. A real woman may be beyond reach or understanding, but Rachel is perfect.

"She was special," reflects Deckard. "No termination date. We don't know how long we've got together. Who does?"

At the outset Deckard is a divorced and embittered loner - an outsider seemingly incapable of relating to people. His mode of communication when addressing others vacillates from silence to rage or overt cynicism. Artificial humans are a source of revenue; machines to be destroyed in exchange for capital. Like the machines search for 'meaning' in their four year life span, so does Deckard begin his own internal search. In pursuing replicants - 'perfect' beings but without 'soul' - he becomes caught up in their pursuit for extra life; their quest to thwart the built-in destruction. After four years, claims Tyrell, the replicant creator, the programmed responses become 'unstable.' Finally Deckard rejects humanity in favour of a machine programmed with emotional responses.



Rachel in Blade Runner, 'femme fatale' – not deadly, just 'dead.'

If Rachel is a woman without soul, for Deckard she represents the unattainable 'feminine mystique', which siren-like, lured the 'wounded' and weak male protagonists of film noir. Men are

manipulable victims of predatous and psychopathic (soulless) deadly women; Velma in Farewell My Lovely, Mumsie in Out of the Past ("I'm no good. I'll never be any good. Such a black soul, darling.") Phyllis Dietrichsen in Double Indemnity, Cora in The Postman Always Rings Twice, Helen in Cry Danger, Brigid O'Shaughnessy in The Maltese Falcon, Mrs Tucker in Force of Evil, Kitty Collins in The Killers, Nora in Kiss Me Deadly.

The cinema's femme fatale is either single, or fiercely independent, 'her own woman', unallied to any one male, and sires no children. She is a woman of secrets and bears a secret past. She is drawn to weak and pliable men, just as they are drawn to her. Purposely or not, her male victim seeks to be destroyed by the femme fatale, just as she seeks to destroy him. She is without feeling or remorse for the suffering of those around her. Murder is an expedient and natural recourse when it comes to a question of her own survival.



Phyllis Dietrichsen in Double Indemnity (1946), steers insurance salesman Walter Neff to 'the dark side.'

The replicant's pathology make them a threat. They are remorselessly lethal; psychopathic. As Rachel comes to terms with

her implanted memories, her lethal counterpart, Pris, uses any means to prolong the process of attaining any memories at all; under the manic leadership of Roy Batty, meeting 'their maker' and extending 'life' is their soul concern. She provides the 'bad girl' contrast to Rachel's 'good girl'; Rachel's concern is coming to terms with not being human in the first place - she relates to the past, Pris considers the future.

Because replicants are capable of any violence or brutality to ensure survival, any that find their way to earth, must be 'retired', eliminated. Deckard 'retires' them all, and is expected to turn the gun on Rachel, but runs away with her instead. Rachel, for all her memory implants and programmed emotional responses, is still a replicant - both artificial and psychopathic. Deckard, like so many film noir anti-heroes before him, is courting death, and content to do so in view of his failure to relate to human beings.

The film's ending, Deckard and Rachel speeding away in a hover-car from the black inferno into which we descended with the story's opening, and into blue skies and green mountains musing on an indeterminable life-span together, deviates from the original script where the couple descend in a lift from Deckard's apartment and toward an uncertain future. The present ending however, the Hollywood 'happy ending', is a formal closure which serves to complete the narrative cycle. The implications of the ending are rather more sinister; a programmed machine provides a better prospect for domestic harmony than a human being; a theme Bryan Forbes explored in *The Stepford Wives* (1974) where an entire suburb of commuter husbands have their wives replaced with computerized models.

The juxtaposition of Rachel and Pris, two feminine archetypes, is representative of the cinema's portrayal of the feminine; Ayesha

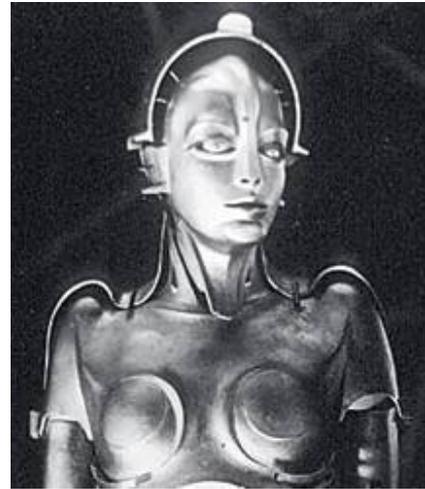
and Ustane in *She, Snow White and the Wicked Queen*, Ripley and the Alien Mother, *Barbarella* and the Black Queen, the betrothed and the prostitute in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, but most clearly portrayed in *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926), where the humanoid Maria (like Rachel; artificial) is created to undo the charitable works of the human Maria.



The Stepford Wives (1975) - perfect women

The surviving 90 minute prints of what was once a three hour film, make the plot incomprehensible at times, but the essence of the story (written by Lang's then wife, Thea von Harbou) concerns the Metropolis ruler, Fredersen, using a robot constructed by his scientist, Rotwang, to create unrest amongst the slave workers, allowing him to reinforce his position as the city's dictator. Fredersen's son, Freder, unaware of the slavery beneath the surface of Metropolis, which provides an idyllic life for a privileged few, learns the truth through Maria, a figure of redemption for the enslaved workers.

Rotwang's duplicate humanoid is created to discredit the human Maria. First she is to be centre stage of a night's entertainment for the power elite of Metropolis. Freder sees his father with 'Maria'. He collapses in a fever and the scene intercuts between Freder's bed-ridden state, the false Maria dancing half naked to Fredersen's guests, and Freder's fever-induced hallucinations; stone statues of the Seven Deadly Sins advance toward Freder, followed by the Grim Reaper, swinging his scythe from side to side. As his father's honoured guests are incited into a sexual frenzy.



'Maria' in Metropolis (1926) - temptress without a heart

Lang superimposes and intercuts close-up images of lustful eyes - a technique he'd used in films prior to, and after Metropolis, to convey unbridled lust or seething jealousy, or in the case of Fury (1936), rage. Freder's suppressed desire for Maria conjures up images of sin, death and castration - the swinging scythe descends upon him as he screams out Maria's name and collapses onto the bed, engulfed by raging fever. In Metropolis the 'whore-madonna' duality of the feminine, is portrayed within one and the same physical form. Freder, as 'wounded hero' (betrayed by his father, who has concealed from him the dark secret of Metropolis) is 'healed' by the human Maria - her evil humanoid form is destroyed - and Freder saves his father from the 'dark side'. The worker slaves

are freed, harmony comes to Metropolis and father and son are reunited.

The end result of George Lucas's Star Wars trilogy may also be the reunion of father and son, but the catalyst role of the 'feminine' may be less apparent. On one level Star Wars (1977) is about the conflict between the Empire (evil) and the Alliance (good), personified by the conflict between protagonist, Luke Skywalker, and antagonist, Darth Vader. Like Freder and Fredersen, they represent the polarities of the 'light' and 'dark' sides of the 'force'. On another level, Luke's quest is also Lucas's quest. Luke seeks the identity of the father he has never known, the Dark Father (Darth Vader), the shadow of his own personality. Luke wants power, but power is synonymous with the Empire and Darth Vader, the 'dark side' of the force. So his desire for power is suppressed.

Luke/Lucas embarks on a quest of self-discovery. By uncovering the identity of his father, he uncovers his 'shadow'; lust for power.

Star Wars begins with episode four - a project George Lucas intended as a trilogy of trilogies - and borrows a good deal from Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* (1958). In this samurai drama set in feudal Japan, Toshiro Mifune plays the part of a 'Jedi knight' to protect the spoiled princess who must be returned to the throne once usurpers of the 'evil empire' are overthrown. Two comic peasants fill the roles of R2D2 and CP30, the spoiled and capricious warrior princess corresponds to Princess Leia. The character, conspicuous through absence, is Luke Skywalker. One could assume the Star Wars author has found a narrative in which he would like to participate, and has accordingly placed himself in it.

In *The Empire Strikes Back* (Kershner, 1980) young Luke crosses swords with his father, and is finally defeated by his father's strength. Darth Vader reaches out his hand, as Luke stands on the brink of an opening to a black tunnel which plunges into the dark void of outer space. "Join me," he says.

This is Luke's moment of truth. Either he fulfills his desire for power through union with the 'masculine', his father, the dark side of the 'force', or, he plunges headlong into the 'feminine', the unknown, to be swallowed up, impotent, powerless.

Luke uses the 'force' to defy the Dark Father, ignoring the words of his uncle mentor, Obiwan Kenobi: "The 'force' is only for knowledge and defence, not as a weapon. Don't give in to hate or anger. They lead to the dark side." With Luke almost defeated, Darth Vader reveals his true identity.

Vader: Your future lies with me. Now you will embrace the dark side. We will rule the galaxy together.

Luke: You killed my father.

Vader: I am your father.

Luke recoils in horror. He is on the brink of the void. He is bruised and battered, his right arm has been severed by his father's laser sword. Vader stretches out his hand.

Vader: It is your destiny. Together we can rule the galaxy as father and son. It's the only way.

Luke: Never.

Luke steps into the abyss, plunging through the gaping black void. But before he is ejected into the endlessness of space, he is rescued by Leia. In forsaking the offer of power, the 'feminine' accepts him.

The ambiguity of Leia's role, and the feminine aspect she represents, is clarified in Return of the Jedi (Marquand, 1983) when it is revealed that Darth Vader, the Dark Father has sired both Luke and Leia.



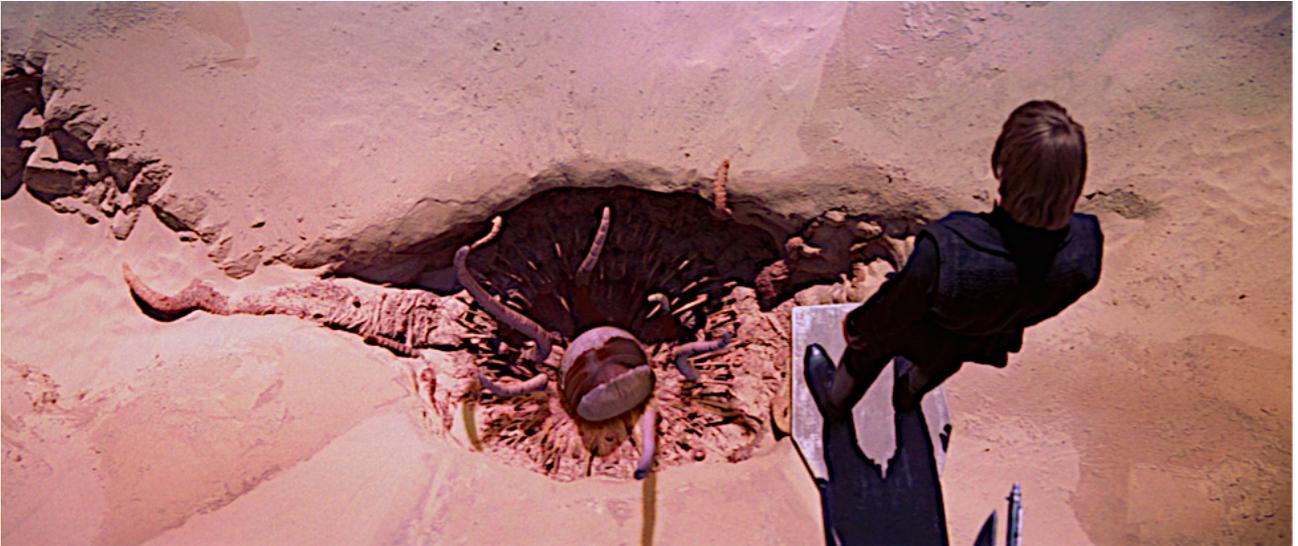
Leia and Luke in Star Wars (1977) - an unholy alliance sired by the 'dark father'.

Luke's fears and dangers are invariably teeth-rimmed holes; the sand serpent's pit, tunnels leading to monsters, conflict, or the dark oblivion of outer space. As a Jedi, having completed his initiation from boyhood to manhood, Luke undertakes to rescue Han Solo who is to be, "taken to the Dune Sea and cast into the Pit of Carkoon, the nesting place of the all powerful Sarlacc", where, "in his

belly (Solo) will find a new definition of pain and suffering, as (he) is slowly digested over a thousand years." The motif is described by the mythologist, Joseph Campbell, as 'the toothed vagina' - the vagina that castrates. (Campbell: Primitive Mythology p.73ff). Once again the horror of the 'feminine' threatens to engulf both Luke, and his sexual alter-ego, Han Solo, whom he saves in order that he be united with Leia.

The laser sword, on the other hand, is revered, respected and honoured. The male characters play with them constantly. Initially,

Luke and Han Solo 'cross swords' over Leia. Luke and Darth Vader 'cross swords' to determine who has greater mastery of the 'force'. Who has most power? Who has greater potency?



Luke's grisly fate - the 'vagina dentate.'

Should Luke have joined his father on the dark side? Would George Lucas then feel himself acknowledged within the paternal fold, so that 'Luke' could be destroyed and 'Lucas' come 'down to earth'?

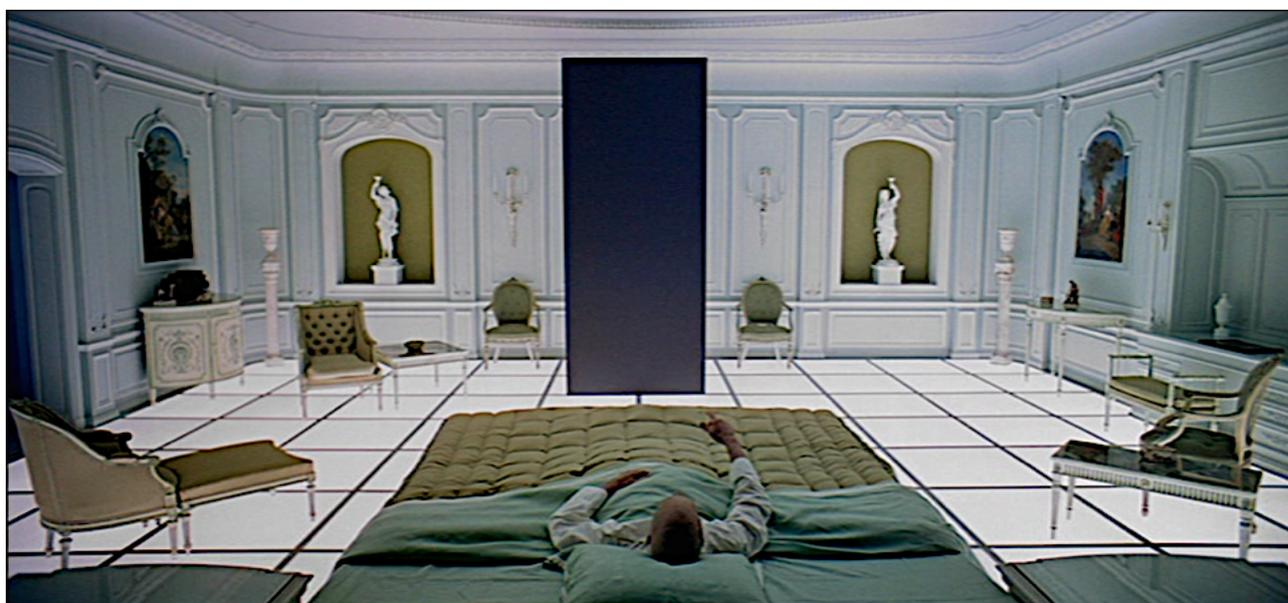
In the restaged conflict between father and son in Return of the Jedi, this time before the Emperor, the ultimate power of the dark side, Luke defeats his father and sees his father's true face, otherwise concealed beneath a black helmet. It is a face ravaged through abuse of the 'force', like the portrait of Dorian Gray revealed the inner state of its subject; ravaged through his quest for eternal youth/sexual prowess. Luke extends his hand in filial compassion. The father repents and dies. Does the Dark Father embrace the light side of the 'force'? Or does Luke, now the last of the Jedi's, lured by the power and knowledge that goes with it, embrace the dark side of the 'force'?

Luke begins his path to self-realisation in obscure exile. In the opening of *Star Wars* he bemoans his fate as an inconsequential farmhand on his uncle's remote farmstead, denied even the possibility of entering a military school to prepare himself to do battle against the tyranny of the Empire. His knowledge of 'self' is minimal. He is dominated by a father he's never known. His conscious aim, under the inspiration of 'uncle' Obiwan, becomes to be a Jedi - to fight against the Empire and defeat its tyranny. Unwittingly he elects to contest his father. He seeks power. His unconscious aim is to integrate the Father - the Dark Father - representing his shadow and power for destruction, not creating. "He (Luke) could become a great ally if he could be turned," says Vader to the Emperor. "Can it be done?" asks the Emperor.

In *The Empire Strikes Back*, as Luke completes his initiation, he dreams that he kills Darth Vader. He tears off Vader's mask only to find his own face staring back at him. The conventions of formal closure necessitate the Hollywood 'happy ending' whereby 'family' is reunited and 'good' overcomes 'evil'. But, as with *Blade Runner*, the implications of the ending suggest a more sinister fate for Luke Skywalker.

The feminine is not always apparent. In *Forbidden Planet*, the repressed feminine rises up in monstrous vengeance. In *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), director, Stanley Kubrick and writer, Arthur Clarke, have, between them, created a universe bereft of the feminine, where finally man can give birth to himself. The first part of the film, 'The Dawn of Mankind', concludes with primates equipped with tools defeating those without. In a match-cut spanning some several hundred thousand years, a thigh bone pitched into the heavens, becomes a space vessel en route to the moon. The film is a homage to man's technological advancements,

with emphasis on the word man. Women function as hostesses on the moon flight, and distant wives concerned with insurance premiums over video-phones, on the longer space journeys. The further the space odyssey stretches into the infinite, the greater the gap between the men who travel, and the women who stay at home. The odyssey could be interpreted as man's flight from the feminine, describing his inner journey toward self-sufficiency, where women are not required at all. Man's final triumph, in the concluding 'Star Gate' sequence, is when Bowman, the last remaining space traveller, grows old, withers, but instead of dying, sires his own foetus. He is both father and son.



2001: A Space Odyssey - the absence of the feminine

In the masculine logos/intellect dominated universe of 2001, one treacherous element of the feminine intercedes. In mythology, Jupiter gave birth to Athena, goddess of wisdom, through his head. In the original 2001 script, Athena was the name of the computer directing the mission to Jupiter. The computer became HAL, each letter preceding the initials IBM, but the feminine mode remained. The two astronauts, Bowman and Poole, respond to situations with machine like precision, neither questioning nor doubting their

roles, or the mission. HAL, however, embarks on its own 'human' quest for 'consciousness'. The machine begins to act 'emotionally' and not logically. It succeeds in killing Poole. Bowman considers his options. In the effeminate voice that has since become standard for space-ship computers, HAL speaks: "Look Dave, I can see you're really upset about this. I honestly think you should sit down calmly, take a stress pill, and think things over."

Bowman erases HALS memory banks, and as the programmes wind down, HAL becomes increasingly emotional, first protesting wildly, then pleading, and finally singing an old song from his initial programming. 'Daisy, Daisy/Give me your answer do/I'm half crazy just for the love of you... You'd look sweet, upon the seat, of a bicycle built for two...' is both representative of Kubrick's singular humour (film lovers everywhere wince to Gene Kelly and 'Singing in the Rain' after *A Clockwork Orange*), and a reference to HAL's dependence on companionship in sharp contrast to Bowman's insularity. Was Poole the victim of a jealous 'mistress'?

"What we are trying to create is a realistic myth," wrote Arthur Clarke, "And we may have to wait until the year 2001 itself to see how successful we have been." (*Geduld: A Filmguide to 2001: A Space Odyssey*). It is an archetypal masculine myth. Redemption may appear as the black monolith which unites the film's segments, like a shadow hovering just beyond the reach of mankind throughout the eons of technological and exclusively masculine progress. In Clarke's novel the monolith is an extra-terrestrial super-computer; it pervades the film as a kind of religious symbol. As it contrasts the otherwise logos driven cosmos, it may be considered an essentially feminine presence, a Pandora's Box, ready to be opened and release 'feeling' into Kubrick's loveless universe.



Journey to the Seventh Planet (1962) - space explorers meet their past loves. Only to discover....



... they are memories created by a Uranian space monster

In the year 2001 another a space odyssey was undertaken, not to Jupiter but to Uranus. Five astronauts make the Journey to the Seventh Planet (Sidney Pink, 1961; a US - Swedish production, filmed in Sweden) and on landing find the homes and countryside pertaining to their collective Scandinavian childhoods. Each man meets a girl from his past, and each man succumbs to his fears and desires. The women, the cottages and the landscapes, are fashioned from the memories of the spacemen by a Uranian life-form that dwells deep inside the planet's interior. They realise they

are victims of hallucinations, and by suppressing their feelings, break out of their memory induced landscapes to locate the 'brain' behind the hoax. The 'brain' rises up in monstrous form, yet the spacemen succeed in freezing it to death, and claim Uranus on behalf of the United Nations. To some observers the planet may be regarded a considerably more interesting place with the 'monster' than without it. Solaris, based on the novel by Stanislav Lem, ten years later, provided a different perspective on a similar theme.

In *Solaris* (Tarkovsky, 1971) a space station crew are mysteriously affected by a planet's ocean which seems to reproduce memories in the form of living people. Space psychologist, Kelvin, is sent to the space station to investigate. Since the death of his wife, Harey, ten years earlier, Kelvin has immersed himself in studies of the effects of space travel and long periods of isolation on the mental state of space station inhabitants.



Kelvin reunited with his dead wife - how real are memories?

On his first artificial night on board the station, he awakens to see his wife before him, seated in a chair, and wearing clothing more suited to a summer *dascha* than an artificial enclosure in space. Kelvin's suppressed memory becomes flesh and blood. He lures her into a space shuttle and fires her into the ocean from whence the memory came. The blast of the shuttle causes a fire, setting alight his clothes and burning his skin. Just as Beauty's indignant look ignites the suffering Beast in Cocteau's *La Belle et La Bete* (see Ch. 6), the memory of Kelvin's wife can still burn his flesh.

She returns the following night and Kelvin locks her behind steel doors. She breaks them down, tearing her body apart in the process, and collapses at his feet, a bleeding wreck, pleading for

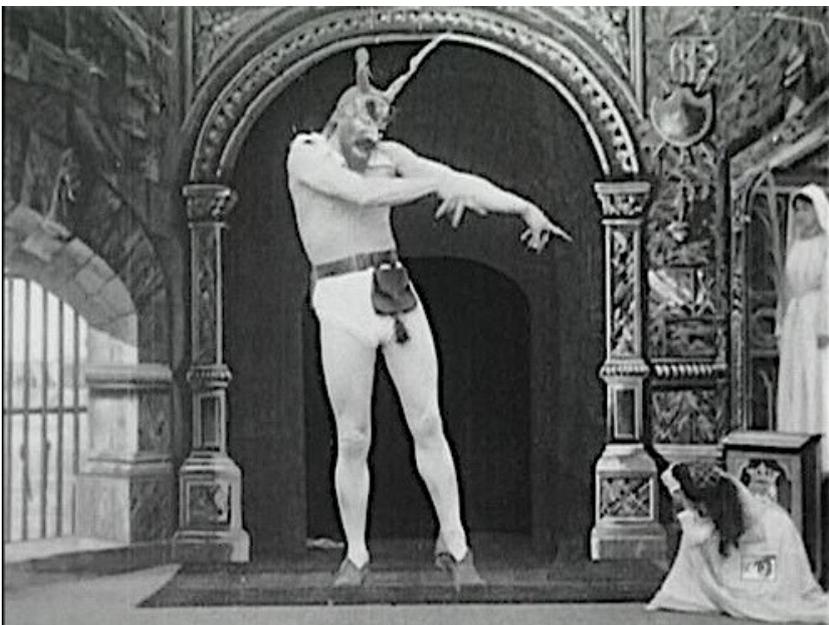
recognition. The more Kelvin attempts to suppress her memory, the stronger her presence becomes. Kelvin has no choice but to question his feelings, his past, his memories - all of which he has chosen to ignore. Having immersed himself in a technological, sterile and sexless element, the repressed 'feminine' rises up and stares him in the face. Finally, he is forced to question the nature of reality itself. Which is more tangible - the isolated steel structure orbiting a distant planet, or the memories of his past?

The miasmic ocean recreates Kelvin's childhood world - the summer *dascha*, the woods, his family. The world within in his memory, which he had so successfully closed himself to, finally consumes him completely.

His childhood home, a rural cottage, fields, a wood, a river, are all created by the giant brain of Solaris as a tiny island in an endless ocean. "No matter how inhuman an environment, the human spirit is eternal and unchanging," writes Tarkovsky, in his book *Sculpting in Time*, "Though any attempt to understand its mysteries is doomed to failure."

5. Hidden Empires and Immortal Women

On December 28th 1895, the freelance photographer, Georges Melies, was among guests invited to the first public showing of the Lumiere Cinematographe at the Grand Cafe, Paris. So inspired by the moving pictures was Melies that he constructed his own camera, and on April 4th 1896 presented his first film show at the Theatre Robert-Houdin.



George Melies, The Devils Castle, 1896 - cinema's first vampire movie.

In the same year Melies completed 78 spool length films, including *The Devil's Castle* (*Le Manoir de Diable*), three minutes long, about a young woman alone and frightened in a large abandoned castle, pursued by a man in a black cape and pointed teeth; the cinema's first vampire film.

In 1899 Melies completed *The Pillar of Fire* (*La Danse de Feu*), based on an episode from Rider Haggard's novel, *She*, where Ayesha enters the fire of eternal youth, and emerges an ageing hag, finally perishing in the flames which had sustained her for more than 2000 years.

The stories of Rider Haggard inspired 16 silent films; She has been filmed at least six times, including a version with Theda Bara in the title role, Merian Cooper's sound film of 1935 (two years after the completion of King Kong), and a version with a dubbed Ursula Andress as Ayesha, an unimpressive Hammer production with only Haggard's narrative content providing interest. (Robert Day, 1965) Hammer's Vengeance of She, two years later, reversed the scenario, with an immortal Holly awaiting the rebirth of Ayesha 60 years later. But he's chosen the wrong girl and withers to dust and bones in the film's waning minutes.



*Ayisha - She-who-must-be-obeyed; 1925, 1935, 1965
(Also 1915, with Theda Bara and 1896 - George Melies, The Pillar of Fire).*

The story of She concerns Leo, at the age of 25, under the guidance of Holly his guardian to undertake a journey to the lost kingdom of Kor, which according to legend, is ruled by an immortal queen. (Kor is Kuma in the Hammer production which ignored Holly's pledge to the infant Leo's dying father but remained faithful to Kor's location in the 'dark continent'. The Merian Cooper/RKO production opted for an arctic setting created with stylish expressionistic sets).

She is she-who-must-be-obeyed, who rules her empire by terror. "My empire is of the imagination," she declares. Written late in the 1800's, Haggard's novel became a study case for Jung and his followers as an example of anima projection. She remains an archetypal feminine figure; "Living in Kor, in the innermost heart, inaccessible to the world, hard to find and harder to attain, the goddess soul guards, as her most profound secret, the column of fire. (Cornelia Brunner: Anima as Fate p. 119 Spring 1986)



The cinematic culmination of She (1935 and 1965); the pillar of fire and Ayisha's loss of immortality

The film versions of She concentrate on Ayesha's entry into the flames of 'eternal youth' and her transformation from radiant beauty (portrayed by Theda Bara, Helena Gahagan, Ursula Andress, and others) to an ageing hag, crumbling into a heap of dust and bones before Leo's eyes; an ordeal that turns his golden hair grey.

In another Haggard novel, *King Solomon's Mines*, first filmed in 1937 with Cedric Hardwicke as Allan Quatermain, and again in 1988 with Richard Chamberlain, an underground kingdom of lost treasures is guarded by a sinister dwarf like woman, Gulao, "reputed to be thousands of years old." Like Ayesha she rules her African kingdom with terror. Gulao's sacred bone may point to any victim at any time to be sacrificed by her small tribe of savage warriors.

The cinema's fascination with the corruption of the flesh: the rapid decay or transformation as a moment of horror, has been included in countless vampire films, the many versions of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and films such as *Lost Horizon* (Frank Capra, 1936).



Lost Horizon (1937), a woman's vanity and the price of immortality.

Escaping by plane from war-torn China, British Foreign Minister, Bob Conway, his brother George, and some stranded Americans, crash in an unchartered region of Tibet. They are discovered by Lama Chang and some monks who lead them to the hidden kingdom of Shangri-la. Before the perilous mountain journey, Lama Chang explains, "It is not particularly far, but quite difficult," which is as much a description of a spiritual

journey as a physical one.

Shangri-la is the place of perfect harmony. According to its founder, High Lama Father Perrault, it is 'a way of life based on one simple rule - be kind.' The inhabitants live well into their hundreds, in healthy perfect bodies, due to, says Lama Chang, 'the absence of struggle in the way we live.'

Other members of the rescued party, all with dubious backgrounds - an arms dealer, a bar girl, a fraud, are transformed by the place and find their own inner peace, so that when an opportunity comes to leave, and return to civilisation, they decline. But for Bob Conway's brother George, Shangri-la is hell on earth, and he conspires continually for a way to leave. With the aid of a beautiful young woman - a long time resident, fed up with endless harmony and tranquillity, yearning for the excitement of civilisation, he leaves, forcing his older brother, Bob, to go with him. Bob is torn between conflicting loyalties, believing he has found his life's calling with the offer of the role of Shangri-la's High Lama by the dying Father Perrault.

The three of them find themselves lost in the Himalayan wilderness battling through a blizzard. The beautiful young woman, now beyond the protective and preserving climes of Shangri-la, succumbs to the processes of ageing and withers before George's eyes, and dies in his arms, a mummified corpse. George goes mad with grief and, at the height of the storm, plunges over a precipice to his death.

Bob Conway's story is related by four gentleman members of a distinguished London club: he is found wandering the wilderness alone with his delirious ravings of a secret kingdom hidden away in the mountains, with the promise of eternal life and spiritual harmony. He refuses to return to civilization, the club members hear, and spends years of intolerable hardship, a man possessed,

searching for the lost horizon of Shangri-la, a place no-one believes exists. The last heard of Bob Conway was that he had disappeared in an unchartered region of Tibet.

The hidden kingdom of the Himalaya has long been referred to in Buddhist literature and scriptures. According to Mipam, a 19th century Buddhist monk, in his Commentary to the Kalachakra, "the kingdom of Shambhala lies north of the River Sita divided by eight mountain ranges. The imperial rulers live at the Palace Kalapa of Rigdens on top of the circular mountain Kailasa, in the centre. In the middle of a park, Malaya, is a temple devoted to the Kalachakra built by Dawa Sangpo." In *Shambhala - the Sacred Path of the Warrior* (Shambhala 1984), Chogyam Trungpa writes that the myth is based on one of the ancient kingdoms of central Asia, such as the Zhang Zhung kingdom (p. 26), or that perhaps it is a place that is purely mythical. "Among Tibetan Buddhist teachers there has long been a tradition that regards the kingdom of Shambhala, not as an external place, but as the ground or root of wakefulness and sanity that exists as a potential within every human being."

The Kalachakra teaching refers to the cycle of life and death - and at the centre of the teaching is coming to terms with death, as the transformative process from life, to the intermediate state, Bardo, to rebirth, through daily meditation.

Bob Conway's search for the lost kingdom is a search for death - death without horror - a means of avoiding the conflict of daily life. His witness to the young woman withering to age and dust, was for him the retribution of physical desire - she wanted the worldly pleasures civilisation could provide and Shangri-la could not. The nightclub girl who survived the plane crash with Bob Conway, has found her home at Shangri-la. The two women represent diametric opposites; the spiritual woman of Shangri-la who yearns for the

worldly pleasures beyond the mountain walls of the hidden sanctuary; and the bar girl who finds a tranquillity she could never find in the bars of Shanghai and New York. As desire for worldly pleasure is punished with the accelerated corruption of the flesh, so is her spiritual redemption rewarded with long life and everlasting beauty. These are overtly Roman Catholic concepts of divine retribution and blessing accordingly, in contrast to Buddhist teachings of compassion, which are emphasised, both in James Hillman's novel and Capra's film interpretation.

Bob Conway's search for the lost kingdom represents his longing for oblivion; a painless death that may release him from the tedium and conflict of daily life.



Lost Horizon's fountain of youth - at what price immortality?

6. Savage! Primitive! Untamed!

Men's search for lost kingdoms, both on this world and worlds beyond, entail forsaking the civilised world for a primitive world. The appeal of the primitive world is the prospect of primitive women. The male fantasy projects the rejection of the masculine logos in favour of the feminine eros. The traditional view of the male-female relationship sees the male afraid of intimacy and loss of control, whereas the female encourages intimacy and commitment. The male gives love in order to have sex, and the female gives sex in exchange for love. The male fantasy projects into the primitive world, women who give themselves to pleasure without intimacy and without commitment. Nature and culture define the feminine - masculine duality alongside eros and logos.

It is not surprising to see, since films began, the anima projection of the 'feminine' in the forms of beasts of the jungle, or pertaining to the jungle.

Jungle Women

"A savage world whose only law was lust!" proclaims an advertisement for *One Million Years BC* (Chaffey, 1966), a cinematic theme which began with D W Griffith's *Man's Genesis* (1912), and made as *One Million BC* in 1940. *When the Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1970) promised an "age of unknown terrors, pagan worship and virgin sacrifice." In *Prehistoric Women* (Carreras, 1967; aka *Slave Girls*), a British adventurer stumbles into a lost world in the Amazon jungle where dark haired women have enslaved blonde women. The tribe leader demands that the wayward explorer pledge himself to her.

Woman: You refuse me?

Man: What can you expect? Your heartless cruelty is sickening.

Woman: You would have me otherwise?



The male anima would not have it otherwise; the 'savage woman' is inextricably allied to the fantasy cinema. In some cases the 'savage woman' is created inadvertently by the man, as in *She Devil* (Neumann, 1957) when a medical scientist seeking a cure to end all disease transforms a terminally ill young woman into a homicidal maniac. She is finally subdued and administered with an antidote. As they await her recovery, the doctor discusses ethics with his young assistant, Dan, who has fallen in love with Kyra Zelas, the She-Devil. Kyra had reciprocated, saying that she wanted "to bask in the reflected glory of a young bio-chemist whose brilliance approaches genius."

Doctor: We pitted our puny powers against the supernatural power that had marked Kyra Zelas for death and we won. Or did we win? Did we save the life of a human being? Or did we perhaps only create an inhuman being. An inhuman being that had no place in the human world, who exists only by destroying everybody human that it encounters in its struggle for survival. Whether she is to live a normal life again will not be decided by science Dan, not even by nature, but by a far greater and higher power.

(She dies).

It is best this way, Dan. You know that.

Dan: She was so beautiful.



Frequently, nature women possess magical powers, as in *Voodoo Woman* (1957), *Cult of the Cobra* (1955, illustration on contents page), *The Snake Woman* (1961), *Macumba Love* (1960). She may be too powerful, too ghastly for mortal men; *Megaera* for example, *The Gorgon* (Fisher, 1964) whose gaze is enough to turn a man to stone, or the *Ant-woman of Phase IV* (Saul Bass, 1973) created by ants to take over the world.

Serpents and spiders are frequent motifs to portray 'feminine' virulence; In *Reptile* (Gilling, 1966) the daughter of a Cornwall doctor is transformed into a deadly snake by a Malayan cult; Spider-women abound in films of all genres.

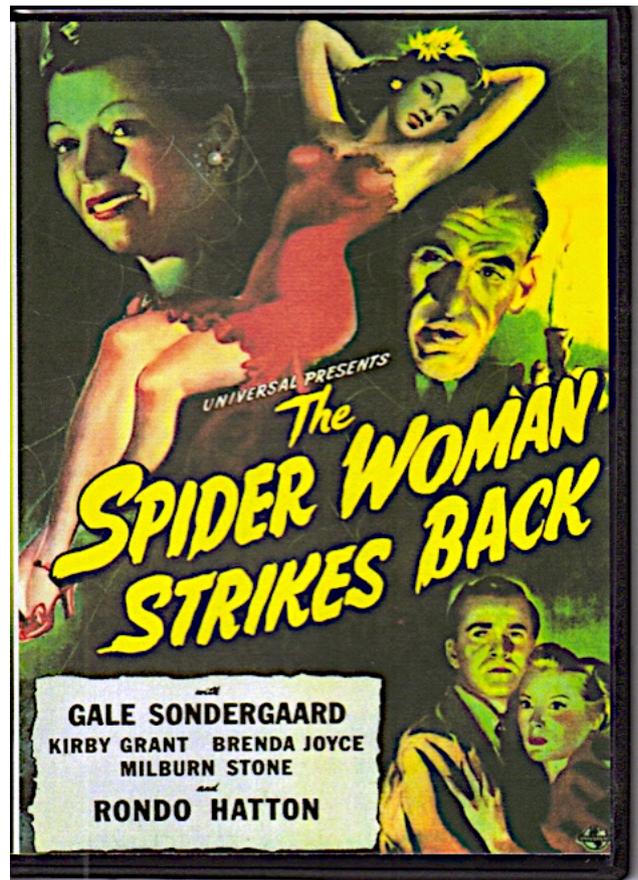


Sherlock Holmes considers a series of murders in the opening of *The Spider Woman* (Neill, 1944):

Holmes: Directing these pajama suicides is one of the most fiendishly clever minds in all Europe today. I suspect a woman.

Watson: You amaze me Holmes. Why a woman?

Holmes: Because the method, whatever it is, is peculiarly subtle and cruel. Feline, not canine.



The spider woman as femme fatale - from Sherlock Holmes to the political allegory of Hectory Babenco (Kiss of the Spider Woman), and the mad scientist plot of Mesa of Lost Women (1952); a plot to unleash the essence of the venomous tarantula into the local women of the Mexican mesa. (Below - Tandra Quinn's seductive dance of the tarantella)



Cat Women

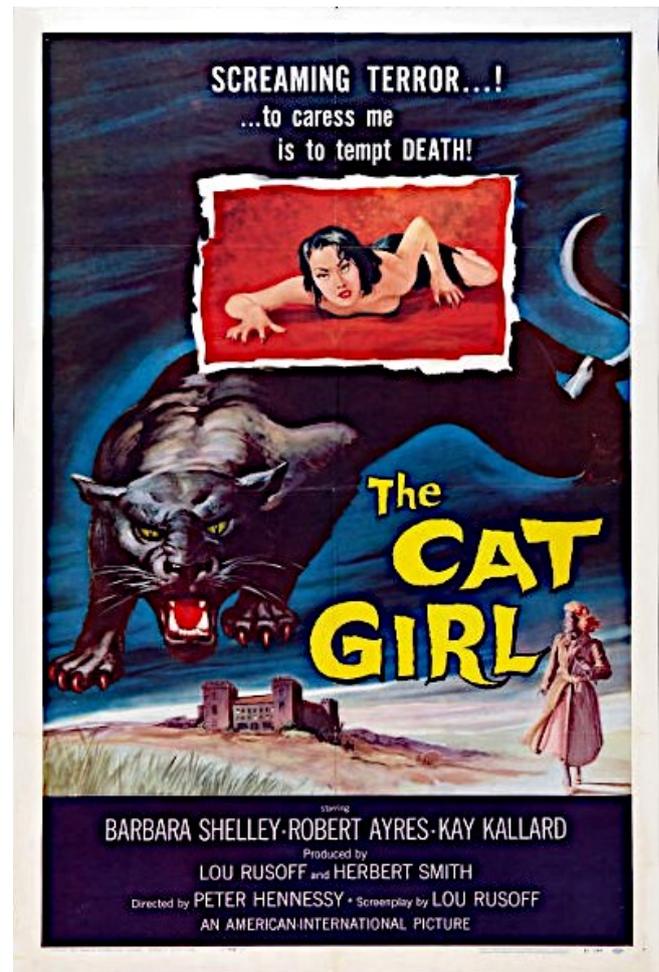
In *Cat People* (Tourneur, 1942) a young woman from the Balkans comes to America, believing she carries the curse of her ancient race of cat people, "...marked with the curse of those who slink and court and kill by night." Like the daughter of Dracula (see Ch. 8) she pits her ancient bane against modern science, and elicits the aid of a psychiatrist. But the ancient ways are too powerful, and the curse claims both herself and the doctor.



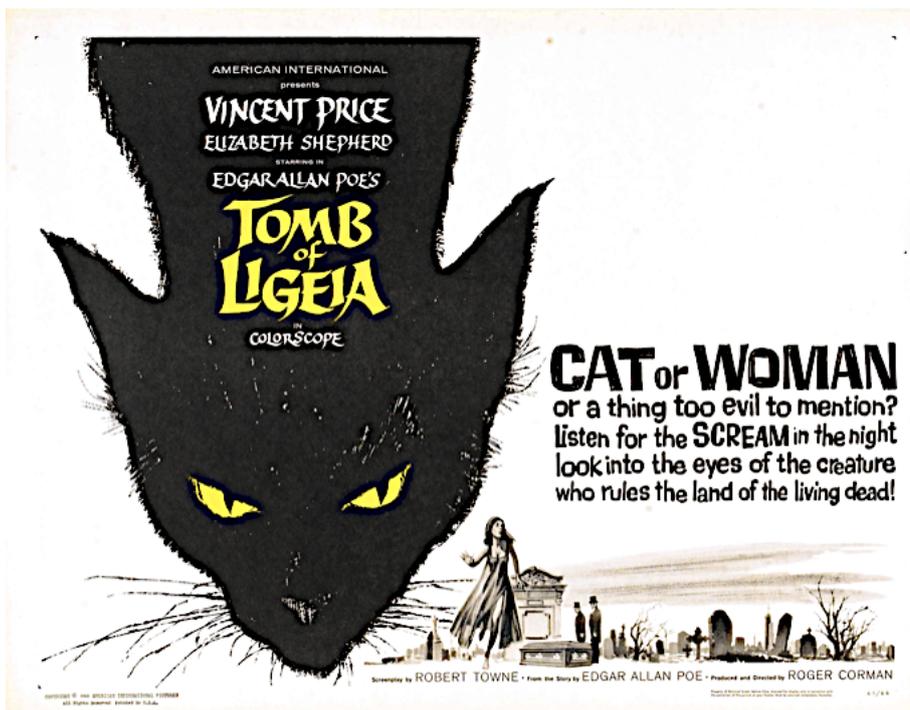
Paul Schrader's film, forty years later, which bears the same title, portrays a brother and sister as the last remaining descendants of the ancient race of Cat People. The transformation into a deadly panther occurs only after sex, necessitating the killing of a human in order to change back to human form.

The *Curse of the Cat People* (Wise, 1944) provides a brief glimpse of Simone Simon from the 1942 film, as a ghostly 'mother' who

appears in the fantasy of a little girl. A cat possesses a dead girl's soul in *The Cat Creeps* (Kenton, 1946), and in *Cat Girl* (Shaughnessy, 1957) a girl is afflicted with a family curse, providing her with a psychic link to a leopard, which hunts down men and kills them. In *The Cat Creature* (Harrington, 1973) a cat goddess possesses her victims in order to claim an ancient gold amulet, in *Latitude Zero* (Honda, 1969) a scientist of an undersea kingdom transplants the brain of a woman into a lion's body, and *Tomb of Ligeia* (Roger Corman, 1965; based on an Edgar Allan Poe story, adapted by Robert



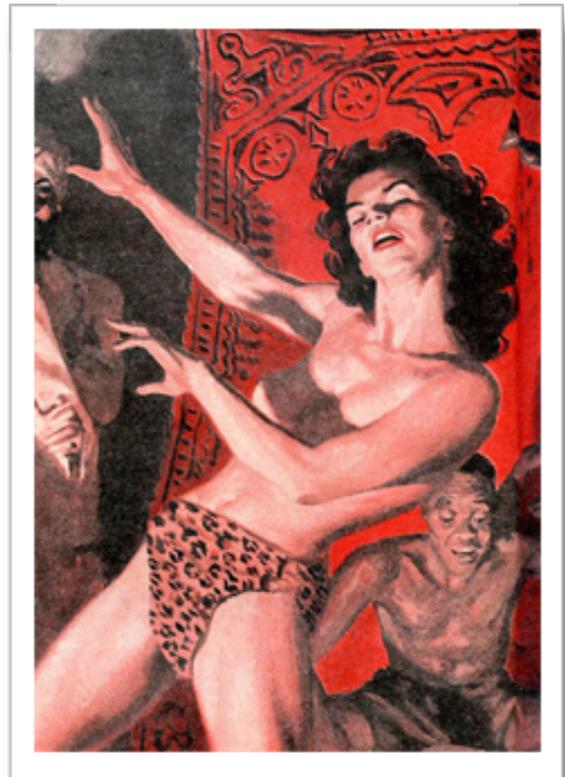
Towne) portrays a young bride, who, "even on her wedding night must share the man she loved with the 'Female Thing' that lived in the Tomb of the Cat." A Victorian recluse resurrects his dead wife into the form a cat, who becomes his Lady Rowena.



In *Cat Women of the Moon* (Hilton, 1953) telepathic cat women in black leotards, attempt to travel to the earth with a US space team. Efforts to persuade the astronauts telepathically fail, as the women quarrel amongst themselves. The earth men make a hasty departure.



The power of telepathy... only women and cats



Post war exotica and redress from a society of sexual repression; the leopard woman. Tarzan, and the celebrated illustration of 'Leopard Woman' by Robert Maguire.

7. Dreams of Young Girls

At the height of the depression between two world wars, Ann Denvers, a homeless waif, is plucked from the streets of New York and promised fame and fortune and film stardom. She is taken together with a film crew, led by a show seeking entrepreneur, to the remote Skull Island, the natives of which are held in terror by Kong the Ape-God.

King Kong (Cooper, Schoedsack - 1933) demands of the island's inhabitants, sacrificial victims at regular intervals, and the hapless Ann Denvers is seized once more, this time by natives, and chained to the sacrificial post, dressed in virgin white. Like the bride about to forfeit her maidenhood to the husband, she faces the terror of the unknown beast, out there in the dark, beyond the walls which

keep Kong from the reaches of the natives.



The gates are shut and she is alone, prepared as the bride of Kong, alone in a primeval world where the violent forces of nature rule over the pitiful efforts of human

kind; a world where Kong is master. Bearing his quarry, en route to his lair, he is attacked and destroys a giant serpent; creature of the earth, and then a fearsome pterodactyl; creature of the sky. In this hidden, unchartered and unknown world Kong reigns supreme,

just as the unleashed 'id' of Dr Morbius ruled by terror over the Forbidden Planet.



Beauty and the Beast - victims of the binding restraints of disparate cultures

However, when Kong is removed from the depths of the unconscious; Skull Island (chaos -the primeval and the laws of nature), and planted into the conscious; New York city (order - civilisation and the laws of man), and attempts the same battles, he is defeated. He can break the chains that ties him down to a mere spectacle for the entertainment of the well-dressed, refined society folk. They can glare at their manacled libido rendered helpless by the might of the civilised world, until this force, this god of the underworld, enraged by the indignity of captivity and the sacriligious disrespect of this parade of strangely garbed island natives, breaks free to reek havoc and terror. Kong reenacts the jungle battles, wrestling with the libidinous symbols of civilization; the earth-god serpent is a commuter train to be grappled and destroyed as the serpent was; the sky-god pterodactyl, winged machines to be plucked from the sky and smashed to the ground as the pterodactyl was. But these sky-gods fire so many rounds a second, and Kong the Ape-God may have clambered the highest pinnacle, the Empire State building representing the potency of commerce, civilisation and the most erect penis men could

envisage at the height of the depression era, but aeroplanes and machine guns are sufficient to bring him down to earth.

Both in the jungle of Skull Island and the jungle of New York, Kong's battles were waged on behalf of the woman betrothed to him. The monsters of the sky and earth set out to deprive him his quarry, so Kong destroys them; his battles in the jungle of New York are on behalf of his betrothed. Ann Denvers lies asleep in a high rise apartment block, overcome by Kong's dramatic escape. She awakens to find Kong at her window, and his arm reaching in to take her away. Kong has picked up other women mistaking them for Ann, and cast them remorselessly to the ground. Now the two are re-united, though only briefly. Ann watches as Kong is shot down from the top of the building.

"It wasn't the airplanes," says impresario Carl Denham to the newspaper men gathered around Kong's bleeding corpse. "It was Beauty killed the Beast." 'Beauty', having brought the 'Beast' into her conscious world could integrate it. She appeases the Shadow which perceives sexuality as an almighty monster, which when, finally defeated, allows her 'prince' to step out from the shadows and claim her.

Beauty, of Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et La Bete* (1946), based on the fairy tale by Madame Leprince de Beaumont written in the mid 1700's, is first repelled by the Beast, but when she learns to love him in spite of his outer appearance, the Beast transforms to the Prince.



Beauty is the youngest of three sisters, (In the original story the household consisted of three sisters and three brothers) her father's favourite daughter, whom she serves in dutiful passive obedience. Her father plucks a rose from the garden of the Beast, and if Beauty does not sacrifice herself to the Beast then her father must die. Beauty complies, as always, and enters the forbidden garden of the Beast, and when the portals open to the forbidden castle, she enters, prepared to offer herself to the monster therein. But the Beast soon becomes a servant to Beauty, and a slave to his own desire for her.

'You are the master here, says Beauty. 'No,' replies the Beast, 'You are the only master here.' And he kneels at her side. Later he says: 'You find me repugnant, truly ugly.' 'I can't lie Beast,' replies Beauty. 'But I understand you're doing your utmost to make me forget your ugliness.'

Beast: 'My heart is good, but I am a monster.'

Beauty: 'There are many men more monstrous, but it doesn't show.'

Each day the Beast asks that Beauty be his wife, and each day she refuses. The Beast, in his splendid robes and fine ornaments, becomes as savage as his lion-like appearance. He slays a wild deer and consumes it raw. Beauty looks on in horror. At night he comes to her chamber and Beauty dismisses him with a glare of contempt. He smoulders in silent rage and hides his face in shame.

Beast: 'Stop. Your look is burning me.'

With each rejection the Beast despairs and slowly withers. Beauty destroys the Beast. But as he dies in her arms she is overcome with compassion and confesses her love for him. He sheds his

monstrous guise and emerges the Prince, with the appearance of the village youth she has hitherto ignored. Together they ascend the heavens.

Beauty's is the initiation of the young girl, severing the ties that bind her to the father. In accepting the Beast she accepts her own sexuality. (See; C G Jung, ed; Man & His Symbols p.137-139)

Films of Tarzan, Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, etc etc; offer similar readings; the projection of the animus - 'the man inside the woman' into the brutal, the monstrous, the savage, finally 'conquered' by the woman's compassionate love. Many horror films too; In White Zombie (Victor Halperin, 1932) a newly married couple travel to a sugar plantation in Haiti. The plantation owner meets the young bride, Madeleine, and is consumed with desire for her. He enlists the aid of a sinister doctor (Bela Legosi) who transforms her to a creature without a will of her own, just as he has transformed black slaves into zombie workers who toil relentlessly at the sugar mill. She becomes a white zombie.



The young bride enslaved by masculine will - the animus

The white clad bride is imprisoned in the doctor's tower. Her groom storms the ivory enclave, but so powerful in the doctor's

hypnotic hold that he almost succeeds in forcing her to kill her loved one. Almost.

The gallant young knight rescues the white robed maiden, and vanquishes the monster of unharnessed sexuality; the dragons and monsters of fairy tales; in this case the Dracula like figure (Tod Browning's Dracula with Bela Legosi was released a year earlier) with mesmerising powers, who, in the culminating scenes, is despatched to the watery depths beneath his own castle.



Dracula as romantic hero

These self-proclaimed masters of the erotic arts who hold sway over young and impressionable girls appear in many guises; in *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (Capra - 1933), a newly wed missionary's daughter is separated from her husband during the chaos of civil war in China in the 1920's. She is knocked unconscious during a street riot and rescued/kidnapped by a Chinese warlord, General Yen.

The General rules his province as ruthlessly as Ayesha rules the Kingdom of Kor, and for a young Christian girl he represents the Satanic; she despises him for the small value he places on human life. General Yen is intrigued by her naive good will, Christian values, and her incomprehension of Chinese attitudes toward life and death. His fascination becomes desire and his desire leads him to his own downfall. He relents to her wishes to spare the life of a treacherous concubine whom the General discovers is plotting to overthrow him. She spares her life and this act of 'Christian charity' leads to the decimation of his army, and thousands of civilians within his province and his inevitable defeat. The bitter tea is a suicide potion.



Vampire, lover or bad dream? General Yen seduces the missionary's daughter

The ambiguous nature of General Yen intrigues the girl; he is a brutal forboding figure with a frequently exercised power of life and death over his subjects; he is a military strategist intent on

conquest and domination; traditionally masculine attributes which she abhors. But he is also refined, cultivated, of poetic disposition extolling the sublime qualities of nature and the intrinsic sadness of its ephemeral beauty. These qualities, together with his ritualised refinement in manner and dress, express, in the terms of western culture, feminine attributes. He is monstrous, yet refined, delicate and wise. How can she reconcile the two contrasting natures within one man?

In the manner of the Beast courting Beauty, General Yen requests that they dine together. Like Beauty, she declines, but on the third night, complies. In a dream General Yen appears to her as a Nosferatu figure that breaks the door down to her boudoir and attacks her; a monstrous intruder assailing her virtue, which she is powerless to resist. An elegant young man enters through a window to rescue her, his features concealed beneath a mask. He banishes the monster to the realm of shadows, and the couple embrace. The man removes his mask revealing the face of General Yen. She surrenders to him, they kiss, and she wakes, troubled.



"The terrifying lover!" proclaims a publicity slogan for Dracula (Fisher, 1957), and the dark robed vampire who pursues virtuous young maidens for a taste of their blood is a theme in the history of the cinema as immortal as the vampires themselves; from Melies' *Le Manoir du Diable* (The Devil's Castle - 1896) and F W Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) to Werner Herzog's remake in 1979. Most films are based on, or inspired by, literary works by two Dublin writers; Dracula by Bram Stoker, published in 1897, or *Blood and Roses*, and *Carmilla*, in a collection of short stories entitled *In A Glass Darkly* by Sheridan le Fanu published in 1872. As early as 1820 a



Nosferatu - Werner Herzog's remake (1979). *Desire without romance*

play entitled *The Vampire* played to London audiences, with a prologue that claims: "This piece is founded on the various traditions concerning The Vampires, which assert that they are spirits, deprived of all hope of futurity, by the crimes committed in their mortal state - but, that they are permitted to roam the earth in whatever forms they please, with supernatural powers of fascination - and, that they cannot be destroyed, so long as they

sustain their dreadful existence, by imbibing the blood of Female Victims, whom they are first compelled to marry." (From a publicity poster, 1820, reprinted in *The Hour of One - Six Gothic Melodramas*, including *The Vampire*, Published 1975, Gordon Fraser).

In F W Murnau's unofficial adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *Nosferatu* (1922), the Count is portrayed as a sinister ghoul like figure, with bald head, long fingers, razor teeth and deep sunken eyes; a memorably horrific character. Werner Herzog's interpretation (*Nosferatu*, 1979) portrayed by Klaus Kinski, retains the physical characteristics, but is portrayed more as a character driven by forces he is incapable of controlling. Between the two Count Orlocks, spanning nearly 60 years, a plethora of Draculas have darkened cinema screens, first in the Tod Browning film (*Dracula*, 1931) played by Bela Legosi as a figure of old European charm, seeking not just victims, but female companions to accompany him in his shadow realm, demanding no less than their mortal souls. He seeks no redemption, only compliance, and the challenges of the van Helsing's of the modern world, merely provide brief interludes of intellectual diversion. When the two characters confront one another, van Helsing lures the Count to reveal his true nature by placing a mirrored cigarette case before him. As there is no reflection the Count sweeps away the cigarette case in a single brief moment of 'loss of face'. "For someone who has lived but one life, van Helsing, you are uncommonly wise," declares Dracula, quickly regaining his composure. His quarry is a young girl who soon succumbs to his mesmeric eyes, but is saved at the last minute as rays of sunshine reduce Dracula to ashes, that he may return soon on his quest for eternal union.

Dracula's ambiguity is astutely portrayed in the parody *Love at First Bite* (Dragoti, 1979) where the Count (George Hamilton) is

evicted from his Transylvanian castle by the Rumanian communist party, and in exile, journeys to America to be re-united with an incarnation of a woman he'd loved many centuries before. She is a New York model and her urban twentieth century life style contrasts sharply with the elegant and refined old European ways of the Count. When his chosen love hesitates in choosing between mortality in the twentieth century or eternal life in the realm of shadows, the Count confesses that; "As for me, in a world without romance it's better to be dead." They fly away together on a night of the full moon, in the guise of two bats, beginning an eternal union hidden away in the darkest shadows of night; the limbo world of the unconscious where Beauty and Beast are no longer separated.



The Wolf Man; the tragi-romantic anti hero.

One of Dracula's more publicised attributes is his ability to take on the shape of a wolf. The lycanthrope features in mythology and folk lore and became a popular figure for a series of films which began with Werewolf of London (Walker, 1935) and proceeded to The Wolf Man (Waggner, 1940) with Lon Chaney as the son of an

English squire, who's bitten by a werewolf, and becomes one himself. His quest for redemption is futile and finally he is shot down as a beast of the forest. Maleva, the gypsy woman, foretold his doom: "Even the man who is pure in heart/And says his prayers by night/May become a wolf when the wolf bane blooms/And the moon is pure and bright."

The beast that takes over the civilised man's soul is familiar in the many film versions and adaptations inspired by R L Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, but is also familiar territory in the realm of folk lore and fairy tales. Angela Carter described her story *The Company of Wolves*, as a "re-telling of Little Red Riding Hood, but this time I wanted her to stay eaten."

The film, directed by Neil Jordan in 1982, begins with Grandma explaining to young Rosalie the dangers that lurk in the forest.

"If you ever see a naked man, you must run as if the very devil were after you."

According to Grandma a man must strip himself naked before he can change into a wolf.

*Rosalie: A naked man?
In this weather? He'd
have his thingamajigs
frozen off Granny.*



But Rosalie falls prey to the wolf in the

The Company of Wolves - Little Red Riding Hood retold

guise of a handsome young man. The woodcutter doesn't come to save her. The film's final sequence portrays the wolf pack's nocturnal flight through the forest toward Rosalie's bedroom. She sleeps amidst the paraphernalia of childhood; dolls, toys and teddy bears. The young girl's dream shows the wolves leaping through the window into her room; leaving her relics of childhood broken and destroyed in a wake of destruction. Rosalie's nightmarish initiation to maidenhood suggests she integrates the 'masculine', the beast within herself, rather than project it. She becomes the beast, she joins the company of wolves. Red Riding Hood portrayed the Victorian feminine ideal; weak, defenceless and in dire need of the strong woodcutter to come to her rescue when she is 'consumed' by the beast. In an older version of the tale, Idunna, who provided 'apples of immortality' to the nordic gods, is consumed by Loki in the guise of a wolf. Idunna, like Virgo (young maidens bearing the fruits of harvest), is devoured by the barren Winter following the autumn equinox, and reborn as Spring at the time of the spring equinox.



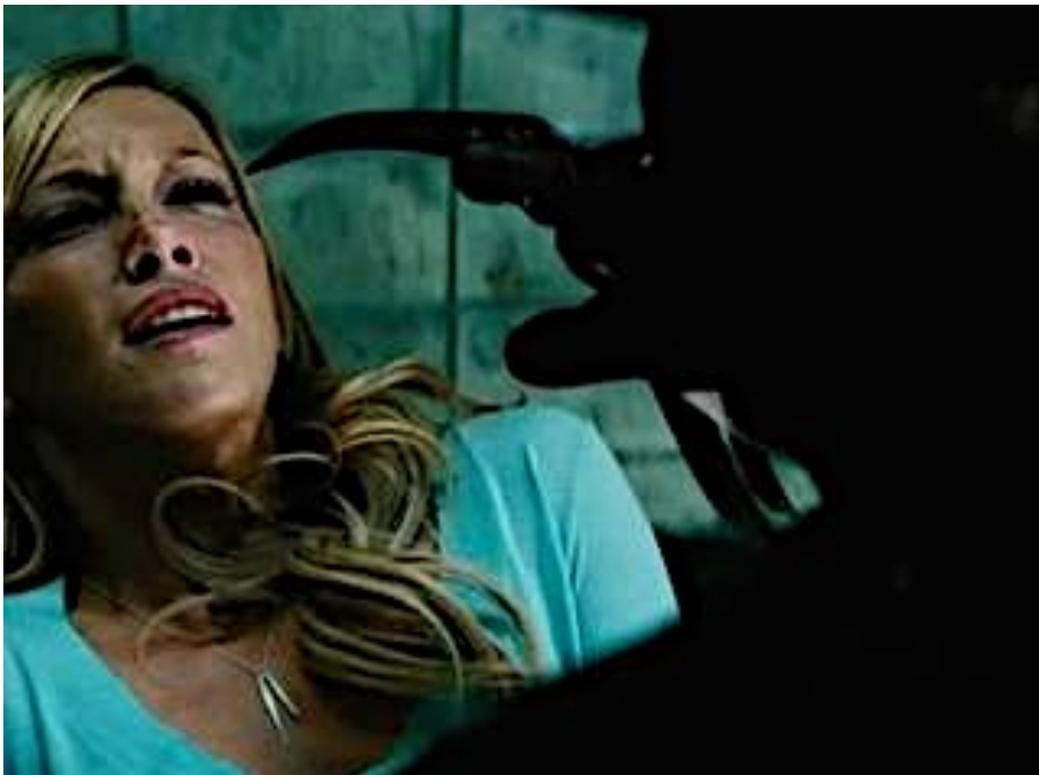
Lycanthropy in Italy - the husband as a night creature in Taviani brothers Kaos (1982)

Mal di Luna, one of the Pirandello tales included in *Kaos* (Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, 1982), concerns a young newly wed who must contend with her werewolf husband. The couple have moved to an isolated farm and on the eve of their first full moon together, the husband tells his wife: "Bolt the windows, lock the doors. No matter how much I howl and plead, don't let me inside." Rather than fall victim to her husband's menstrual transformation, the wife takes advantage of the situation by taking on a lover during those crucial periods.

In horror film sub-genres, 'splatter', 'slasher', 'gore', even the vampire film, young women are most frequently hapless victims to psychopathic young men. These films, viewed predominantly by male adolescents, are thinly based plots structured around scenes of orgiastic blood-letting where the female victims are dismembered, dissected, decapitated, drilled, slashed or chain-sawed - the male perpetrators wielding phallic electric drills, chain saws, meat cleavers, knives, achieve 'penetration' in order to see what the female consists of. Women "have their biology thrown back in their faces." (Kent and Morreau, eds: *Women's Images of Men*, Pandora Press, 1990; p. 180). 'Penetration', accomplished with wild slashing or thrusting, with the rushed anxiety of an adolescent male attempting to accomplish the sexual act, clearly establishes male 'pleasure' at the expense of the female victim. Death is 'post-coital repose'. Leatherface in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974), Michael Myers, the 'boogey man' escaped lunatic in *Halloween* (Carpenter, 1978), Jason in the numerous *Friday the 13th's* (Part One, 1980 - Part Seven, 1988), an indestructible humanoid in *The Terminator* (Cameron, 1980) and *Hardware* (1989), the Draculas, Blaculas and Count Yorgas, Freddy in a succession of nightmares on Elm Street; male assailants of young girls in claustrophobic and preferably darkened locations,

whom even in demise, promise resurrection in limitless sequels; 'the boogey man doesn't die'.

Nightmare on Elm Street (Craven, 1984) begins with a dream; Tina, a teenage school-girl runs through a water drenched corridor, a man's voice calling her name. She is attacked by a disfigured man who slashes her dress. She wakes and her nightdress is cut to ribbons. "Either you've got to cut your fingernails or stop having those kind of dreams," says her mother. At school she discovers that Nancy, her best friend, had the same dream. When Tina spends the night with her boyfriend, Freddy, the nightmare figure goes once more to the attack. In the middle of the dream the perspective switches from Tina's POV to that of Rod, her boyfriend. He watches her body thrown from one side of the room to the other, from the floor to the ceiling, and finally blood spurting from her abdomen, opened up by Freddy's invisible knives. Tina's mutilated body collapses onto the floor, and Rod is assumed the murderer.



A Nightmare on Elm Street - no solace in sleep...

After a sleepless night, Nancy nods off in a school class (the subject is Shakespeare's tragedies; "What is seen is not always real..." and dreams up Freddy once more. She realises Tina's real murderer is Freddy, and that the only way to save herself is to stay awake - Freddy can only attack in dreams. She warns her disbelieving boy friend, Glen, who is killed off in the second act climax, leaving Nancy alone to go to the attack. By waking in the middle of the dream, Nancy drags Freddy alive and kicking into the land of the conscious, and with the aid of a bucket of petrol and a lantern, burns him to death. Freddy, her mother explains, was the victim of a childhood prank twenty years earlier, when he had also been burnt to death, and was now avenging himself upon the perpetrator's descendants. Freddy, along with Jason, Michael Myers, Terminator, alien monsters, and the cinematic pantheon of nightmare figures, is just one more 'boogey man who doesn't die.'



Anna sketches her dreams - her dreams become nightmares, then premonitions of death (Paperhouse, 1988)

Paperhouse (Bernard Rose, 1988 - based on Marianne Dreams by Catherine Storr) is about a 12 year old girl, Anna, who during a period of illness, draws a series of sketches, including one of a boy in an isolated house. In her dreams the young boy she has manufactured, actually exists, and she becomes his guide and mentor, attempting to save him from his immobility. She realises that her dreams prepare her for the young boy's inevitable death, and just as Rosalie in The Company of Wolves integrates the 'wolf', Anna challenges and defeats her nightmare image of her father, as she leaves her childhood behind her.

Carl Jung describes a case study of a ten year old girl whose series of 12 dreams he found startling with their complex symbolism and archetypal imagery. "When I first read her dreams", he writes in Man and His Symbols (1964), "I had the uncanny feeling they suggested impending disaster. The reason I felt like that was the peculiar nature of the compensation that I deduced from the symbolism. It was the opposite of what one would expect to find in the consciousness of a girl that age." A year later she died of an infectious disease. "Such are the ideas brought home to the child", writes Jung. "They were a preparation of death expressed through short stories."



Anna's dream diary in Paperhouse

8. Women Who Consume Mortal Souls

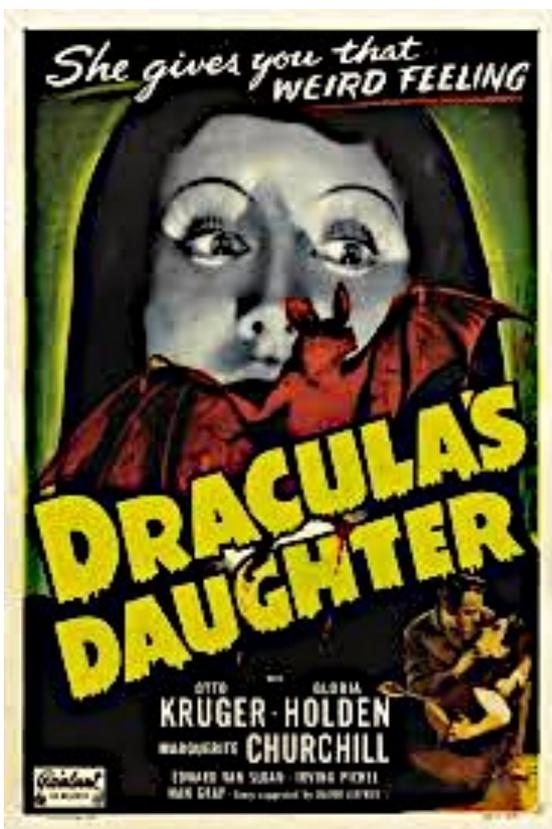
Dracula's Daughter (Hillyer, 1936) takes up the story where *Dracula* left off (Browning, 1931); van Helsing having plunged the wooden stake into the weary bosom of Bela Legosi's Count Dracula. His body is taken to a London police station, and a mysterious black robed woman demands to see the body. The policeman refuses, is hypnotised and recovers to find the body gone.

The enigmatic Countess Marya Zaleska, aided by her sinister man servant, transports her father's body to an isolated forest, and commits his flesh to the flames of a funeral pyre. Brandishing the dreaded cross she carries out a sacred ritual, that she, daughter of Count Dracula, will now be freed of the curse that has blighted generations, and will hunger for human blood no more. But soon her unspeakable desires return to consume her again.



Dracula's daughter - seductress

Since Melies' *The Devil's Castle* (1896), about a young girl terrorised by a vampire in an old castle, the vampire film has been a mainstay of fantasy cinema, which in its formative years gave rise to the 'screen vamp', the seductive 'dark woman' who has power over men. Theda Bara, the original 'vamp', appeared as Cleopatra, She (based on Rider Haggard stories), and a long line of powerful, alluring and destructive women. Like the vampire, the vamp feeds on blood; she drains men of their vital fluids, their strength and their sexual potency.



Young vampires — women with insatiable appetites

Unlike Dracula, Countess Zaleska is portrayed as a lost soul seeking redemption. By an accident of birth she is cursed with a hunger she cannot control; the ritual of reducing her father's flesh to ashes, will, she hopes, release her. "Now I'm free," she declares after the ceremony. "Free to live as a woman."

But the hunger returns and she picks up poor girls from the London streets on the pretext of being an artist seeking models. Desperate, she enlists the aid of a prominent psychiatrist, Dr Garth. If the rites of the old world have failed her, perhaps modern day science won't. When Dr Garth finally understands what he is dealing with, he is unable

to cope. At first lured by her beauty and dark secrets, he now condemns her from the stance of a blind rationalist. Refusing to be involved with matters he cannot understand he sets out to destroy her. She, equally disillusioned with his empiricist approach which refuses to acknowledge the possibility of knowledge beyond the five senses, realises there is nothing in the modern world that can save her from the powers of the ancient and primeval world



Marya Zaleska seeks professional help for an ailment for which there is no cure

to which she belongs. "There are more things in heaven and earth than can be found in your psychiatry," she says contemptuously, and flees to Transylvania, taking the good doctor's rather simple minded fiance, Janet. Once again the 'dark woman' is juxtaposed against the 'light'; the sanctity of the 'madonna' emphasised against the darkness of the 'whore'. Zaleska, bearing the cross of Christian righteousness, has attempted to redeem herself, but the hold of the satanic underworld, the occult, is too powerful.

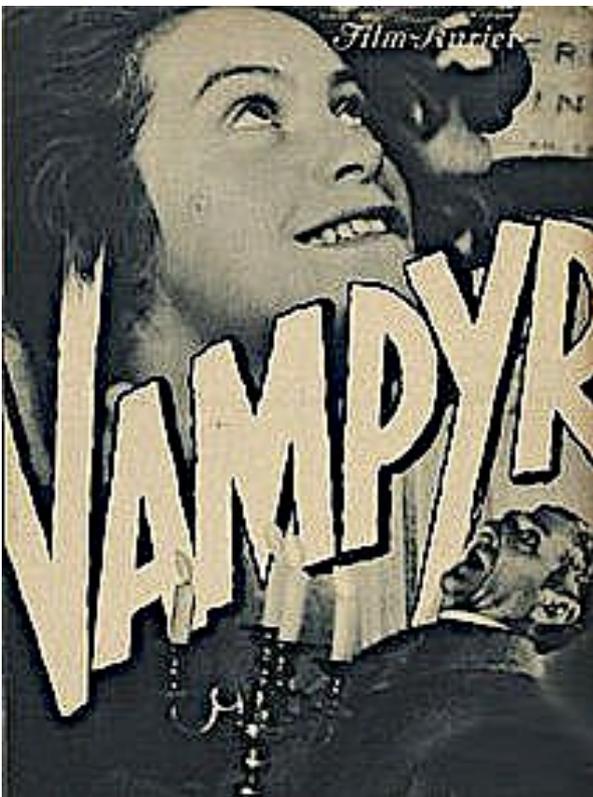
Dr Garth follows the Countess to her ancestral home in order to save his fiance. She pleads with him to remain with her amongst the undead.

Countess: Your life for hers. Only I can offer you that possibility.

Dr Garth: You're insane!

Countess: Insane? To offer you eternal life?

As the Countess attempts to prevent the doctor rescuing Janet from a fate worse than eternal vampirism, she is slain by an arrow through the heart, fired by her own faithful servant who is wracked with the jealousy of her attentions to Dr Garth. Finally jealousy has the most powerful, most primitive and most vengeful calling of all. For his troubles the servant is gunned down by local police, leaving the good Dr Garth and Janet, his fiance, to the dreary modern world they deserve.



Hedonism and Nordic Lutheranism in Dreyer's Vampyr (1931)

Carl Dreyer's film, *Vampyr* (1931), based on a story by Sheridan le Fanu, about a village plagued by vampirism, focuses on a beautiful young village girl who has fallen victim. As with the daughter of *Dracula*, her hunger for sexual satisfaction is deemed by the local villagers as a union with the devil, which Christian devotees combat with the cross. The village girl makes advances on the young nurse tending her, and attempts to seduce David Gray, a young English gentleman visiting the village.

With his help the vampire is revealed; a sinister dwarf like old woman, who is slain in her coffin by the traditional wooden stake through the heart. She withers to dust and bones and the young girl is saved; released from her 'unnatural desires', and the village freed of its blight.

Dreyer's next film, *Day of Wrath* (*Vredens dag*), from 1943, describes the persecution of 'witches' during the middle ages; his film *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (made in 1927 immediately prior to *Vampyr*) portrays the persecution and burning of an independent woman who defies the Great Father, the church. *Vampyr*, for all its low-budget limitations, contains several remarkable dream sequences; the most analysed sequence in which David Gray foresees his own death and burial depicted entirely with Dreyer's original use of the subjective camera.

Despite the Christian emphasis in these three films, Dreyer's concern is the Christian tyranny over the pagan, of death over life, dark over light. In *Vampyr* we enter a limbo world of shadows and the shadowless, where nothing is tangible. When David Gray arrives at the village tavern he gazes through his window to see the ferry at the river's edge, and the ferryman in a black cloak and scythe. The film begins with the text: "There exist certain predestined beings whose very lives seem bound by invisible threads to the supernatural world..." When the vampire is vanquished, the possessed girl, Leone, raises herself in her bed and smiles. "She has gone. My soul is free."

Whereas *Dracula* has heroic qualities; immortality, strength, wisdom and as the 1931 publicity posters proclaimed; 'the greatest lover of all time'; the female succubus is more complex. *Dracula* is reborn or resurrected time after time; *Marya Zaleska* perishes with a single arrow. *Carmilla of The Vampire Lovers* (Roy Ward Baker,

1970) is destroyed forever and female vampires are otherwise victims of Dracula and/or his servants.



Lesbian love confronts the patriarchal church in The Vampire Lovers, Hammer Studios first film in the Karnstein trilogy.

In Japanese cinema the supernatural is invariably portrayed as a feminine presence, a seductive ghost hungry for a man's soul. (As Japanese women are denied identity in a male society, it could be argued, the male anxiety is falling prey to to a stronger feminine will). In *A Tale of Rain and Pale Moonlight* (*Ugetsu Monogatari*, Kenji Mizoguchi 1953, based on the 17th century story by Ueda Akinari), a potter named Genjuro leaves his wife and child in the small country village to seek his fortune in the city. At the market place, with his wares on display, a noble woman, who gives her name as Lady Wakasa, praises his work and invites him to her home. The serene elegance of the mansion contrasts with the brutal reality of civil war beyond its walls, and the enchantment of the place and of Lady Wakasa grip Genjuro in a sinister spell. When he joins her in the garden, as she sings for him, feeds him, caresses

him, he surrenders to all the pleasures of the physical senses. She reveals that she is a ghostly demon, a vengeful phantom abandoned by her samurai husband, now seeking retribution against all men.

Genjuro: 'I don't care if you are an evil spirit. I have never imagined such pleasure existed.'

Genjuro has forsaken everything. His wife and child, his craft, now finally himself, captivated by the physical pleasures offered, paradoxically, by an evil spirit. A Buddhist priest comes to Genjuro's aid, and writes a sacred text on his back. When Genjuro is disrobed by the demoness, she retreats at once, and disappears into the world of shadows from whence she came. Genjuro awakens to find the beautiful mansion is a long abandoned ruin.



Genjuro succumbs to the power of a ghost demoness, Lady Wakasa

Remorsefully he returns to his wife, Miyagi, after his long absence, unaware that she died at the hand of samurai soldiers when he was away. But on his return she is there waiting for him, preparing dinner. Genjuro confesses his foolishness, that he was bewitched by an enchantress, and asks that he be forgiven. She forgives him at once.

Miyagi: 'You should know that a woman could die of yearning, and a man can never know her agony.'

Genjuro awakens the following morning before the cold ashes of the fire. Miyagi is nowhere to be seen. He learns from his neighbour that Miyagi is long dead, and realises that he was talking with her spirit. Genjuro devotes himself to the craft of the potter. As his hands shape the clay into bowls, her ghostly voice speaks to him.

Miyagi: 'Now at last you've become the man I wanted you to be.'

Genjuro is freed of the demon princess - an anima projection greedy for his soul; his surrender to a fantasy relationship which may have destroyed him.



Kuroneko - black cat, Japanese ghost demoness, reeking vengeance on Samurai warriors.

In *Kuroneko* (Kaneto Shindo, 1963) a mother and daughter slain by samurai become avenging cat creatures preying on male victims, until a local warlord sends out his best samurai to despatch the vengeful phantoms. The samurai is the husband and father of the dead women who find redemption by sparing his life. *Onibaba* (Shindo, 1965) which means 'demoness' portrays a mother and daughter during a time of civil war who prey on wandering samurai, and slay them for their weapons and goods in order to support themselves. Films such as *Woman of the Snow*, *Woman of the Dunes*, *Kwaidan*, and an episode of Kurosawa's *Dreams* (1990), portray demonic women who prey on manipulable young men. Kurosawa's film of *MacBeth*, *Throne of Blood* (1957) portrays a demoness to utter her prophecies, who then vanishes into the mist - an overtly supernatural episode in contrast to the traditional witch scenes, which, like the ghost of Banquo, are open to more subjective interpretation.



Demoness in Kwaidan (Ghost Stories), 1964.

Women who consume the souls of mortal men pervade the films of Ingmar Bergman. In *The Hour of the Wolf* (1968), Johan, an artist who travels to a remote island with his wife, seeking inspiration and solitude, encounters a beguiling and seductive young woman. The wolfing hour is the darkest hour before dawn, according to

Bergman, the time when most souls enter the world and when most depart. It's the hour Johan is unable to find refuge in sleep, when he's assailed by waking demons of insomnia. He is incommunicative with his wife and the young woman beguiles him. The couple are invited to the island's chateau where she lives, and here they meet her companions. The master of the house, Herr Vogel, after a toy theatre presentation of *The Magic Flute* with 'live' performers, dresses Johan in fine clothes, paints his face and lures him to the chateau cellar to meet his seductress. She is stretched out on a marble slab. Johan slowly removes the sheet that covers her lifeless body. His hands caress her breasts, her abdomen, her sex, when her eyes suddenly open, and her mouth peels back into a grotesque and mocking laugh. She raises herself, grasps Johan's face, and as though about kiss his painted lips, pecks at him like a predatory bird, and smears the paint across his cheeks. In the grasp of her embrace Johan realises that he is the central spectacle for the entire household. They stand in the shadows and glare, then laugh in mocking contempt. Johan is humiliated.



The artist Johan, tormented by a demonic vampiress in Hour of the Wolf (1968)

Johan's 'loss of face', quite literally as his make-up is smeared incongruously across his cheeks, and metaphorically, as he is humiliated and mocked before his macabre audience, is a scene to which Bergman returns in many films. Losing face has a parallel in the losing of one's identity. The predatous seductress has robbed Johan of his pride, his appearance and his identity. In *The Face* (1960) a magician (like Johan, portrayed by Max von Sydow), is forced to disprove claims of charlatanry and fails, in *Sawdust and Tinsel* (1948) Alma, the wife of the circus clown, bathes naked and frolics with a group of soldiers - her husband is forced to watch as onlookers laugh contemptuously; in *Wild Strawberries* (1956), aging Professor Borg dreams that a corpse falling from a coffin is his own, as its hand reaches out and tries to pull him in. Among the predatous women portrayed in Bergman's cinema, perhaps the most sinister is the Queen of the Night in his interpretation of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1972).

Like Johan in *The Hour of the Wolf*, Orphee, in Jean Cocteau's film of the same name (1948), is an artist who has lost his creative daimon. Cegeste, gifted young poet, dies prematurely and inspires Orphee from beyond the grave, who listens to his poetry via the car radio. Meanwhile, Eurydice, Orphee's neglected wife, bewildered by Orphee's secrecy, suspects him of infidelity and follows him into town by bicycle.

However, it's Death who is courting Orphee, and reaches him by taking Eurydice into the Underworld. Death is a beautiful woman in black, who enlists the unwilling aid of her servant, a suicide named Herbeteuse. Orphee, with Herbeteuse as guide, journeys to the Underworld, and is allowed to return with Eurydice on condition that he never look upon her face. Cocteau's modernised version of the Greek myth draws to its inevitable tragic conclusion.

The room above the garage where Orphee sits in the car transfixed to the radio transmitting the poetry of Cegeste, is occupied by Herbeteuse, the servant of Death, the black dressed woman, who falls in love with Orphee, and wants only his mortal soul.

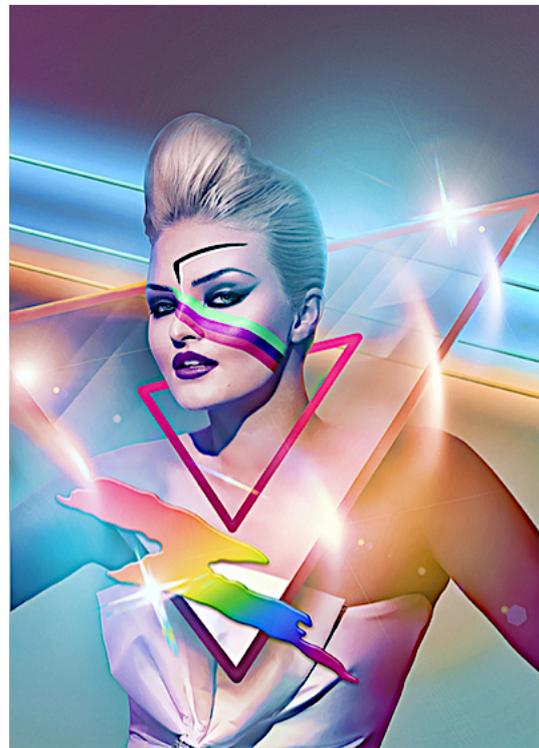


Woman as servant of Death; in Orpheus (1948) and Sunset Boulevard (1950)

Joe Gillis, the itinerant Hollywood screenwriter of *Sunset Boulevard* (Billy Wilder, 1950), also bereft of his creative daimon, similarly finds himself renting a room above the garage. Like Herbeteuse, his mistress is Death, a woman in black, a one time Hollywood screen idol, Norma Desmond. She must possess Joe at whatever price and manipulates the riddance of Betty Sheaffer, the young girl who loves him with the devotion of Eurydice.

'I did it because I need you,' Norma tells Joe, and when he rejects her, leads him to a watery grave, to take centre stage once more, before the lights and the cameras, as Death so often does.

In *Liquid Sky* (Slava Tsukerman, 1982) a UFO lands on top of a New York apartment block which contains formless aliens who feed on either heroine, or a chemical substance formed by the brain during orgasm. The unseen creatures find sustenance in abundance in New York's bohemian quarter, where drug addiction, punk fashion and easy sex, satiate their appetites. Carlisle, a fashion model, watches her lover disintegrate before her eyes, and convinces herself she has a new found power as a sexual harbinger of death. She proceeds on a succession of vengeful sexual encounters, eliminating men-folk (and her sexually aggressive girlfriend) who have won her disfavor. This culminates in her eliminating her alter-ego, an argumentative and conceited male model, played by the same actress. As an object of the male gaze, and bearer of sexuality, she identifies herself as the power behind sexual destruction, in this low-budget film made by a small group of exiled young Soviet film makers, immediately prior to mass-media concern with AIDS.



The new feminism and traditional male fears - Fellini's City of Women (1980) and Tsuckerman's Liquid Sky (1982).

In another comparatively recent Eastern European excursion into science fiction, *Sex Mission* (*Seksmisja*, Poland - 1984), two men awaken in the 21st century and find that they are the last surviving men. A matriarchal society has found a means of procreation without men, and these two unwelcome interlopers face the prospect of losing their masculinity under the surgical knife of vengeful 21st century 'femme castratrice'.

The portrayal of 'feminists' as knife wielding terrorists is reminiscent of Fellini's *City of Women* (*La Citta delle Donne*, 1980) in which a businessman (Marcello Mastroianni) within an elaborate dream frame-work envisages his persecution and downfall (he is shot down from his breast shaped hot-air balloon by a masked woman's machine gun fire). The paranoia is further reminiscent of certain films of the 1950's. Fifty foot tall women assail philandering husbands, men shrink to doll house size, and the repressed feminine becomes monstrous and tears young men to pieces.

Have we come full circle? Have the projected fears of women in the fantasy cinema developed in form and shape, but not in content? Science fiction literature was long considered a traditionally male domain, but since the 1970's women writers have increasingly used fantasy and science fiction genres as forums for contemporary anxieties. The commercial mainstream cinema may still, even into the final decade of the twentieth century, be an exclusive male domain. But as this barrier dissipates we may encounter a fantasy cinema that integrates the feminine, rather than project it into the monstrous dimensions of the repressed Shadow. Alternatively we can accept that the very essence of dramatic conflict is based on the unappeasable confrontation between the two polarities of who we are, and who we are not.

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