

THE QUEST GONE ASTRAY:
TRACING HORROR IN ALIEN INVASION
TELEVISION SERIES OF THE NEW MILLENIUM

TUBA AY
103603001

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ABSTRACT

The starting years of the new millennium, explicitly the year 2005, witnessed an attempt to bring the science fiction genre to the mainstream like the attempt in the 1950s, however, this time not through the medium of film but through television. Conversely, the outcome is not the same for the television series that have alien invasion narratives, if compared to the B-movies of the 1950s that had similar narratives. Mostly concentrated upon the texts of the series *Invasion* and *Threshold*, this thesis aims to explore the possible reasons beneath this unexpected fiasco and to scrutinize why the alien invasion sub-genre of contemporary science fiction fails to draw viewer attention today. Given the fact that as a sub-genre alien invasion includes the aspects of horror genre as well, this work seeks to decipher the ongoing transmutations within the sub-genre as a result of the polymorphous effects of postmodernity, that affect both the representation and the origin of 'horror' within these narratives, such as the alterations on the concept of The Other, and The Uncanny.

Keywords:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1) Alien Invasion | 5) Postmodernity |
| 2) The Other | 6) B-Movies |
| 3) The Uncanny | 7) Threshold |
| 4) Horror | 8) Invasion |

ÖZET

Yeni binyılın ilk yılları, net bir zaman vermek gerekirse 2005 yılı, 1950'lerdeki benzer bir şekilde, bilim kurgu türüne yeniden popülerlik kazandırma girişimine şahitlik etmiştir. Fakat bu seferki deneme, anlatım aracı olarak sinemayı değil televizyonu seçmiştir. Ne var ki, uzaylı istilasına sahip televizyon dizileri açısından sonuç, 1950'lerin benzer anlatılara sahip B filmlerine kıyasla, beklenenden farklı olmuştur. Ağırlıklı olarak *Invasion* ve *Threshold* dizilerine metinsel açıdan yoğunlaşan bu tezin amacı, söz konusu beklenmedik fiyaskoya yol açan sebepleri irdelemek ve alt tür olarak uzaylı istilasının günümüz bilim kurgusu çerçevesindeki temsilinin, izleyici ilgisini çekmekteki başarısızlığının altında yatan gerekçeleri derinlemesine incelemektir. Uzaylı istilasının korku türünün özelliklerini de kapsayan bir alt tür olduğu göz önüne alındığında bu çalışma, postmodernitenin polimorfik etkilerinin bu alt türde yol açtığı süregiden değişimin, bahsi geçen metinlerdeki 'korku'nun çıkış kaynağı ve dolayısıyla sunumu üzerindeki -Öteki ve Tekinsiz kavramlarındaki değişiklikler gibi- etkilerini sorgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1) Uzaylı İstilas | 5) Postmodernite |
| 2) Öteki | 6) B Filmleri |
| 3) Tekinsiz | 7) Threshold |
| 4) Korku | 8) Invasion |

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PREFACE

In year 2005, triggered by the success of ABC's *Lost*¹, there was an attempt to bring science fiction back to the mainstream by putting forward three alien invasion themed series on TV: CBS aired *Threshold*, NBC *Surface*, and finally ABC *Invasion*. Unfortunately, this urge was ended in fiasco due to the lack of expected viewer interest. *Threshold* was axed through the mid-season; despite the fact that *Invasion* and *Surface* managed to be picked up for one full season unlike *Threshold*, they never had the chance to get a second season. This unforeseen ignominy of contemporary alien invasion texts constitutes the point of origin of this thesis. By focusing mostly on the shows *Invasion* and *Threshold*, this study aims to probe the reasons why the alien invasion sub-genre of contemporary science fiction fails to draw viewer attention today, as well as to expose the major factors affected by postmodernity that led a noticeable corrosion within the sub-genre's quintessential form that cause such failure. Throughout the thesis, since alien-invasion sub-genre is an amalgamation of science fiction and horror genres, I will concentrate upon the shiftings in the foundation of 'horror' within these narratives and the ongoing transmutation affecting the sub-genre that challenge the essential, crucial, and indispensable aspects of horror as well as science fiction.

¹ *Lost*, American Broadcasting Company (ABC), 2004- .

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to clarify the primary shapeshiftings and mutations within horror narratives rooted in science fiction due to polymorphous effects of postmodernism and of postmodernity. Before exemplifying these mutations through recent SF TV series –since television has become the major domain for contemporary science fiction, it would be helpful to look briefly at the cinematic examples of the past² to highlight the major differences between modern fears and postmodern anxieties as the foundation for conceiving horror narratives.

During 1950s, the horror in science fiction mostly lies within the encounter with *the other*, which is characterized as xenophobic. Emerging public interest in new technologies and space travel due to the ascending popularity of science fiction literature and pulp magazines instigated the idea of creatures traveling from outer space to Earth. Thus, hostile aliens/extraterrestrials of various types visited Earth's terrified, paranoiac inhabitants of the early Cold War era in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise, 1951), *The Thing From Another World*

² Instead of giving examples from literary science fiction texts for the demonstration of the differing horror dynamics of modern era from the postmodern, I preferred the examples from cinema, because of its quality of being the medium of the masses. As my assumptions are based on the collective, cinema happens to be the closest medium to TV, with regard to having similar means of shaping collective consciousness as well as reflecting collective unconsciousness.

(Christian Nyby, 1951), *War of the Worlds* (Bryon Haskin, 1953), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel, 1956) and in *It! The Terror from Beyond Space* (Edward L. Cahn, 1958). I will argue that, the source of horror in those texts lies within cultural logic of modernity. Having its roots in the Enlightenment Project, modernity is fundamentally about *order* and the elimination of chaos through rationalization and rationality with the intention of achieving ‘progress’. In order to achieve stability and to maintain order, *disorder* should be defined, and in order to define disorder the Other is needed for representation along with the set of binary oppositions/dichotomies defining the Other so that it has to be eliminated/conquered for the preservation of the superiority of order. In other words, “only secure thing about modernity is its insecurity.”³ With the intention of preserving ‘the self’ and ‘the same’, modern societies are continuously in need of creating/constructing disorder, and are constantly on guard for the Other. In a sense, modernity embraces the oxymoronic; under the guise of favoring ‘humanism’ and ‘individuality’ it creates homogeneity and is totalitarian in practice. Thus, modern self is “stable and coherent”⁴; as it knows itself and the world around through ‘reason’, it is autonomous, rational, conscious and universal. About the condition of modernity Marshall Berman notes:

³ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 11.

⁴ Jane Flax, “Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory,” *Feminism/Postmodernism (Thinking Gender)*, Ed. Linda J. Nicholson (London: Routledge: 1990), p. 41.

There is a mode of vital experience –experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life’s possibilities and perils – that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience ‘modernity’. To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world –and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be a part of a universe in which, as Marx said, ‘all that is solid melts into the air’.⁵

In all aforementioned films of the fifties, no matter they are alien invasion or disaster movies; the horror comes from the fear of *unpreparedness* and its terrible consequences in the presence of the encounter with the Other. The Other in these films, both triggers the fear of losing authenticity and individuality as well as the fear of seeing the fall of Western civilization. Dual directional mechanism is at hand when reading these films: First one is, what I would like to call, *from the point of the Same through the Other* in which the Other is shown as sinister, destructive and threatening when ‘in control’, and the Same under the control of the Other –both bodily and by mind, is shown as lacking personal autonomy and identity, just mere puppets of destruction. The alien, in apocalyptic invasion films of the fifties, has become the

⁵ Marshall Bermann, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 15.

metaphor for widespread fear of Communism threatening the established norms of Western civilization and Enlightenment thinking. It should be noted that the socialist movement was a consequence of “the loss of faith in the ineluctability of progress” and of “the growing unease with the categorical fixity of Enlightenment thought”, and “increasingly challenged the unity of Enlightenment reason and inserted a class dimension into modernism.”⁶

The *pod people* under alien control in Don Siegel’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and the townspeople in whose brains the Martians placed crystals for mind control in William Cameron Menzies’ *Invaders from Mars* (1953) embody all elements associated with Communism in the way the Americans perceived at that time; they are presented as ‘devoid of morality’, cold, inhuman and emotionless, lacking individual thinking due to their being ‘single of mind’. On the other hand, their presentation can also be seen as a symbol of “a society where alienated people flee their individuality and seek refuge in mindless mass conformity.”⁷ The other direction is, thus, *through the Other towards the Same*. As the first direction stands for the concerns regarding the Other, the latter one stands for the Same. Concerning the social atmosphere of the fifties, Adam Roberts states:

American society was convulsed with a paranoid campaign against communism lead by Senator Joe McCarthy: people were publicly condemned for not embracing ‘American

⁶ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 29.

⁷ Albert Auster, *American Film & Society since 1945*, p. 51.

values' with enough zeal. McCarthy believed that agents from the old Soviet Union were infiltrating American society, and turning, as he saw it, 'good' American citizens into secret 'evil' communists.⁸

Therefore, the idea of '*they look exactly like Americans*' in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), can also be perceived as a political satire of Mc McCarthyism, and of the ideological milieu of conformism that it produced. The lack of emotion of the pod people corresponds to the "ethical blind eyes turned by Americans to the persecutions of their fellows by over-zealous McCarthyites"⁹. Obsessive efforts of establishing homogeneity in the society and paranoid categorization of what defines 'the Same' and what defines 'the Other in the Same' accumulated the mass fear of becoming what is feared most: *resembling* 'the Other'.

Another example of 'through the Other towards the Same' can be found in science fiction disaster movies of the 1950's and 1960's such as *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (Eugène Louré, 1953), *Them!* (Gordon Douglas, 1954), *The Day the World Ended* (Roger Corman, 1956), *The Deadly Mantis* (Nathan Juran, 1957), *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (Jack Arnold, 1957), *On the Beach* (Stanley Kramer, 1959), *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* (Irwin Allen, 1961), and *Crack in the World* (Andrew Martow, 1965). Cold War era's constant panic of nuclear war with the Soviet Union, along with less bespoken worries about radioactive fallout of America's own atomic tests brought out the

⁸ Adam Roberts, *Science Fiction*, p. 80.

⁹ *Ibid.*

production of numerous films dealing with “Imaginations of Disaster”¹⁰ about misuse of science and technology. As modernity’s “belief ‘in linear progress, absolute truths, and rational planning of ideal social orders’ under standardized conditions of knowledge and production”¹¹ brought out technocentrism, positivism and rationalism in practice, science, as a result, stands as a paradigm “for all true knowledge” that is socially useful. However, the idea of science’s being neutral and objective and the scientists’ being the ones who “produce scientific knowledge through their unbiased rational capacities, must be free to follow the laws of reason, and not be motivated by other concerns (such as money or power)”¹² was heavily challenged in the 1950’s and 1960’s science fiction films. Cinematic expressions of this uneasiness first started at the Machine Age, the period from the start of World War I to the beginnings of World War II, when “the machines and their products increasingly pervaded all aspects of modern life” and their presence efficiently reassigned the way “both the self and the world”¹³ was perceived. Concerning the science fiction-horror films of the Machine Age J.P. Telotte states:

¹⁰ The term applied by Susan Sontag to outline the existing thematics and subtexts of science fiction films from 1950 to 1965.

Susan Sontag, “The Imagination of Disaster,” *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (NY: Picador: 1966).

¹¹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 35.

¹² Mary Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: Continuum Press: 2007), [excerpt online].

<http://www.colorado.edu/English/courses/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html>. 5 April 2007.

¹³ Richard Guy Wilson, Dianne H. Pilgrim, and Dickran Tashjian, *The Machine Age in America: 1918– 1941* (New York: Abrams, 1986), p. 23.

In the midst of the Machine Age's emphasis on science and technology, and on how they might make life more efficient, provide us with new houses and even cities in which we would live and work, make both life and work more efficient, and fundamentally transform our lives, these science fiction-horror films stand as a kind of cultural subconscious, articulating in a variety of ways both the surface skepticism of Depression-era audiences and the deeper qualms that attended our entry into the "brave new world" of science and technology.¹⁴

Machine Age science fiction films can be seen as a pre-warning for the exploitations of science and technology in favor of ideological 'progresses' and they were less overtly interested in eschatological scenarios. After the Second World War, especially after the invention of atomic bomb and its release in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 to end the war, science fiction films inclined more and more towards *what-if* scenarios concerning science and technology ran amok. Plausibility of modernity's notion of 'progress for the well-being of humanity' shattered drastically after the two world wars and their devastating consequences upon the collective consciousness. Regarding the post-war era, Susan Sontag states: "[The] trauma suffered by everyone in the middle of 20th century when it became clear that, from now on to the end of human history, every person would spend his individual life under the threat not only individual death, which is certain, but of something almost insupportable psychologically –collective incineration and extinction

¹⁴ J. P. Telotte, *Science Fiction Film*, p. 90.

which come at any time, virtually without warning.”¹⁵ Science fiction genre nourished from this trauma could never be utopian: The rationalist belief in the effectiveness of technology and machinery to solve all the problems of humanity became subject to critique: envisionings of various apocalypses with numerous mutants, awakened monsters and world disasters invaded 1950’s and 1960’s films. ‘Savage’ Others –ants, dinosaurs, octopi, spiders, crabs – are drawn to destroy modern cities of ‘the Same’, “where they proceed to carry out nature’s revenge on a reckless, environmentally heedless human culture.”¹⁶

Another example for the aforesaid uneasiness is reflected through a ‘benevolent Other’, which is a very uncommon incident for its time. The alien in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) comes to Earth to warn its leaders to resolve their political conflicts peacefully without using any nuclear weapons that will put entire space in danger; otherwise the Earth will be exterminated. The alien portrayed as benevolent, “far from threatening humanity, serves to represent our essential values. The alien is held apart from the human, but only to provide a nostalgic message about what has been lost.”¹⁷ From the eyes of the alien, with the exception of the scientists, the Earthlings look dim-witted and hostile, just craving for power. Science is not used for any human advancement but a mere tool for the demonstration of ideological superiority. His

¹⁵ Susan Sontag, “The Imagination of Disaster,” *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (NY: Picador: 1966), p. 224.

¹⁶ J. P. Telotte, *Science Fiction Film*, p. 98.

¹⁷ Warren Smith, “‘I am a man, and nothing human is alien to me’: Alienation and Freakishness,” *Science Fiction and Organization*, Ed. Warren Smith (London: Routledge: 2001), p. 182.

message was clear: “Earthlings, behave yourselves”.¹⁸ On the other hand, by depicting the alien as humanoid, coming from a society which is culturally, economically, technologically and scientifically advanced, utopian dream of modernity is represented: a society progressing onwards and upwards, living in peace, prosperity and in order. On the other hand, by allegorically referring to modernity’s totalitarianism and its overindulgence with science on behalf of eliminating disorder, the film also foreshadows the possible dystopia that would come out of it: The peace of the universe is controlled by robots by means of imposition and submission, through which the Other, the subject of disorder, either has to conform by obeying the rules accordingly or be destroyed utterly.

What is attention-grabbing in the films of the fifties is that, no matter how deeply dystopic and obsessively apocalyptic they are, they all contain ‘happy endings’ in which the Other, whether it is an alien or a monster, is annihilated –that creates catharsis and homeostasis in viewers, or at least the threat of the Other is noticed by the authorities, ensuring the viewers that it is going to be resolved, imbuing them with hope. The basic structural premise of the horror narratives in these science fiction films are similar to what the Gothic texts try to achieve: to demonstrate the restoration or reconstruction of an order in a portrayed society via the chaos created by the Other. The narration develops through ‘order’ in which “the community is unaware of the impending danger”, to ‘chaos’ where “the monster’s arrival causes the breakdown of

¹⁸ Richard Hodgens, “A Brief, Tragical History of Science Fiction Film,” *Focus On The Science Fiction Film*, Ed. William Johnson (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall: 1972), p. 83.

social order and change” and concludes with ‘reconstruction’ that “resolves the issues, however swiftly, and restores order to the community, which may be different from the order at the beginning.”¹⁹ Although 1950’s and 1960’s science fiction’s main concern is modernity and the process of modernization, the way it deals with these qualms are conservative: through dichotomies of inside vs. outside, good vs. evil, right vs. wrong, human vs. alien/monster/machine and many more, it establishes boundaries and limits for the sake of preserving social order where the self/the Same and the Other interdependently bound together.

Privileging disorder rather than order, started with postmodernism, a movement began in late 1970’s that dominates the thinking of today. Postmodernists advocated the idea that the project of modernity collapsed as a cultural ethos. If modernity introduced industrial capitalism and scientific thinking, it also introduced the possibility of nuclear war after two devastating World Wars, the horrors caused by Nazism and Stalinism, racism and the Holocaust as its terrible outcome, and Third World hunger due to neo-colonialism. As a result, postmodernity rejects modernity’s “inevitable march of progress” and its “necessity to continue exploiting the environment around us irrespective of the long term effect.”²⁰ Through finding basis in Gödel’s theorem in mathematics, chaos theory and quantum mechanics in physics²¹, Lyotard, in his book *Postmodern Condition* (1984), substantiates no permanent

¹⁹ Colin Odell, *Horror Films*, p. 8.

²⁰ *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, Ed. Stuart Sim, p. 340.

²¹ See for further information: Jean-François Lyotard, “Postmodern Science as the Search for Instabilities,” *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1984), pp. 53- 60.

stable order is possible and desirable, at the same time as he points out that “science and knowledge [is] a search, not for consensus, but very precisely for ‘instabilities’, as a practice of *paralogism*, in which the point is not to reach agreement but to undermine from within the very framework in which the previous ‘normal science’ had been conducted.”²²

If the basis of modernity is a certain type of metanarrative organization, that is, discourses that seek to legitimize themselves through “making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of the Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth”²³, in all which knowledge “organized towards the fulfillment of universal human goals”²⁴; the basis for postmodernity is then, as Lyotard expressed, “the incredulity toward metanarratives”²⁵ in which the knowledge is valued in terms of “its efficiency and profitability in a market-driven global economy.”²⁶ This transformation of knowledge, the idea of inexistence of a stable order, and endorsement of flexibility, diversity, mobility, differentiation, deconstruction, decentralization and internationalization over against the very notions of Enlightenment and of modernity, radically changed how we perceive ourselves and the Other.

²² Fore word by Fredric Jameson, in Jean- François Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p. xix.

²³ Jean- François Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p. xxiii.

²⁴ Simon Malpas, *Jean-François Lyotard*, p.28.

²⁵ Jean- François Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, p. xxiv.

²⁶ Simon Malpas, *Jean-François Lyotard*, p.28.

Traditional Western belief in unity of selfhood –the self, outside the flux and at the still centre, superseded by the view of *de-centered self* which is ‘inside the flux’ and ‘outside itself’; “it is in the world, disseminated, scattered, consisting of intersecting selves that the world, language, contingencies, culture conjoin within clusters, motifs of identity.”²⁷ Edward E. Sampson and Kenneth Gergen viewed the self as an indeterminate ‘text’ that is “continually created and recreated through social discourse.”²⁸ In *The Saturated Self*, Gergen states:

The postmodern condition more generally is marked by a plurality of voices vying for the right to reality— to be accepted as legitimate expressions of the true and the good. . . . Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to a reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold.²⁹

The result is a condition what Gergen calls *multiphrenia*, the splitting of the individual psyche into many competing parts that results from social saturation. Under postmodern conditions, our identities defined and shaped by too many choices of self-expression. The media and the advances in technology, such as quick access to air travel, cellular phones, fax machines, electronic mails, and answering machines forged our social connectedness ahead, as well as causing ‘oversaturation’,

²⁷ Joseph Natoli, “David Lynch,” *Postmodernism: The Key Figures*, Ed. Hans Bertens and Joseph Natoli (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc.: 2002), p. 239.

²⁸ Dan P. McAdams, “The Case For Unity in the (Post)Modern Self: A Modest Proposal,” *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues*, Ed. Richard D. Ashmore (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press: 1997), p. 49.

²⁹ Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Modern Life*, p. 71.

inducing “pastiche personalities” and “cacophony of potential selves” to emerge.

For the postmodern self, Robert Jay Lifton offers a different term: *the protean self*.³⁰ It emerges because of a “confluence of disorienting factors such as world wars, campaigns of genocide, rapid technological and ideological change, the breakdown of moral authority, and the saturation of the mass media.”³¹ As people “engage in continuous exploration and personal experiment”, they discover “a capacity for bringing together disparate and seemingly incompatible elements of identity” in their “quest for authenticity and meaning.”³² It should be noted that the protean self requires strategic and calculated flexibility that may well be experienced as lack of authenticity. Lifton sees the development of a ‘fluid and many-sided personality’ positively, because “cultural crises may force the self to evolve in numerous directions, creating opportunities for personal expansion and growth.”³³ In this point, the protean self differs from the other socio-psychological analysis regarding the postmodern self, due to its ability to scheme a unique and coherent path through “fragmentary and chaotic currents of change.”³⁴

³⁰ The term is derived from the Greek sea god Proteus, who displayed many forms and had the ability to shapeshift. Thus the adjective protean means ‘mutable’, ‘versatile’, ‘capable of assuming many forms’ with connotations of adaptability and flexibility.

³¹ Dan P. McAdams, “The Case For Unity in the (Post)Modern Self: A Modest Proposal,” *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues*, Ed. Richard D. Ashmore (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press: 1997), p. 48.

³² Robert Jay Lifton, *The Protean Self – Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation*, pp. 1-12.

³³ Susan Harter, “The Personal Self in Social Context –Barriers to Authenticity,” *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues*, Ed. Richard D. Ashmore (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press: 1997), p. 87.

³⁴ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 44.

For this reason, Lifton eulogizes the protean self's adaptive and life-transforming power rather than lamenting its superficial multiplicity.

The anxiety emerging due to the experience of identity-formation process differs in de-centered postmodern self, if compared to self-centered modern self. Modernity challenges the individual with a complex variety of choices, however “offers little help as to which options should be selected”³⁵. Therefore anxiety becomes a fundamental experience for the modern self: Owing to the possibility of numerous choices but also to the subsistence of pre-defined dichotomies, one can never be sure that s/he has made the ‘right’ choice, that s/he has chosen one ‘true’ identity, or even constructed any identity at all. Douglas Kellner notes that

[I]n Modernity, self-consciousness comes into its own; it becomes possible to continually engage in reflection on available social roles and possibilities and gains a distance from tradition. One can choose and make – and then remake – one's identity as one's life-possibilities change and expand or contract. Modernity also increases other directedness, however, for as the number of possible identities increases, one must gain recognition to assume a socially validated, recognized identity. In modernity, there is still a structure of interaction with socially defined and available roles, norms, customs, and expectations, among which one must choose and reproduce to gain identity in a complex process of mutual recognition.³⁶

³⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, p. 80.

³⁶ Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern*, p. 231.

Postmodern identity is an annexe of the freely-picked abovementioned modern identities, which accepts and affirms an unstable and rapidly mutating condition. Kellner points out that this condition of multiplicity of choices poses a problem for the modern self, as they produce anxiety and identity crisis. However, for the postmodern self, “anxiety allegedly disappears for immersion in euphoric fragments of experience and frequent change of image and identity.”³⁷ As a consequence, it can be said that while the modern ‘I’ suffers from the burdens of ‘to be’, the postmodern ‘me’ enjoys the ecstasies of ‘not to be’.

Apart from the alterations regarding the self, postmodernity caused radical change in the meaning of otherness and how we perceive the Other. Unlike the logic of modernity in which the unity of society is sustained through the ‘exclusion of otherness’, postmodernity, via celebrating difference, diversity and heterogeneity, prefers ‘engagement with otherness’. Jean Baudrillard, in *The Transparency of Evil*, notes:

Crude otherness, hard otherness –the otherness of race, of madness, of poverty– are done with. Otherness, like everything else, has fallen under the law of the market, the law of supply and demand. It has become a rare item....Consequently, the other is all of a sudden no longer there to be exterminated, hated, rejected or seduced, but instead to be understood, liberated, coddled, recognized. In addition to the Rights of Man, we now also need the Rights of the Other. In a way we already have these, in the shape of a universal Right to be Different.³⁸

³⁷ Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern*, p. 247.

³⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *Transparency of Evil*, pp. 124-125.

By bending modernity's established binary oppositions concerning gender, ethnicity and morality, postmodernity embraces the Other and merges the Other in the Same, rather than excluding it from the 'I' and 'We'. As a result, the Other is macerated; the Other's amalgamation with the Same, alas, leaves 'no Other of the Other'. As Baudrillard states, there is no longer drama of otherness, "otherness has become sociodramatic, semiodramatic, melodramatic."³⁹

³⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Transparency of Evil*, p. 125.

CHAPTER 1

TRANSMUTATIONS IN THE ORIGIN AND REPRESENTATION OF HORROR

1.1 The Disappearance / Non-appearance / Obscurity of the Other

Utopian celebration of difference by postmodernism has deeply altered genre conventions of science fiction. If “the key symbolic function of the SF novum⁴⁰ is precisely the representation of the encounter with difference, Otherness, alterity”⁴¹ and as a genre, science fiction deals with “the narrative of other/s” as well as “the narrative of the same, as other”⁴² then, how can science fiction articulate itself today, in a postmodern world in which the Other is in black market, the Same is no longer homogeneous but disoriented as well as the individual self? Once the secure limits protected by traditional signifiers and Cartesian inspired binary oppositions have been blurred, science fiction starts to

⁴⁰ Darko Suvin coined the term *novum*, for the ‘new thing’ or ‘new things’ (plural *nova*) that distinguish the science fiction tale from a conventional literature. The term *novum* refers to *point of difference*, that is, some difference between the world of fiction and what Suvin calls the “empirical environment”, the world we live in. This ‘point of difference’ might be a material object like a time machine or a spaceship; or it might be something conceptual like a new form of gender.

⁴¹ Adam Roberts, *Science Fiction*, p.25.

⁴² Damian Broderick, *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*, p. 51.

query ‘What is the Other? Where is the Other?’ through creating mere *simulations of the Other*.

In contemporary alien invasion TV series such as *Threshold*⁴³ and *Invasion*⁴⁴, we no longer see 1990s archetypal aliens portrayed as humanoid UFO Greys⁴⁵ portrayed as the Vree race in *Babylon 5*⁴⁶, the Asgard race in *Stargate SG-1*⁴⁷ and as in *Dark Skies*⁴⁸ and *The X Files*⁴⁹. What we see is rather the ‘agents’ of aliens that are sent to Earth for exponential invasion; the ‘real’ alien race responsible for the invasion is absent and off-screen unlike the Greys. In *Threshold*, only in the first episode, titled “Trees Made of Glass”⁵⁰, the encounter with the UFO is depicted, without even showing the alien. This UFO’s shape is far more different than any UFO sightings: it is a higher dimensional geometrical object that keeps on ‘morphing’ and as it morphs, it disseminates an audio signal that deadly affects human beings. The UFO is *visually* ‘beyond comprehension’ for humans; because it is a four-dimensional object and we are living in a three-dimensional world, we are only capable of seeing part of it and can never fully know its ‘real’ form. Moreover, it can not be detected through human-made surveillance

⁴³ *Threshold*, CBS Television, 2005-2005.

⁴⁴ *Invasion*, American Broadcasting Company (ABC), 2005-2006.

⁴⁵ The greys are the most common extraterrestrial life forms of sci-fi imagery. They are also known as Roswell aliens, Zetas and Reticulians. They are bald, large-eyed, large-foreheaded, grey (sometimes blue-grey/green-grey) skinned beings. Although they are described as benevolent in the literature, they are also prone to be the ones responsible for abductions, impregnations and alien probes.

⁴⁶ *Babylon 5*, Baton Broadcasting Incorporated (BBS), 1994-1996; CFMT Television, 1997-1998.

⁴⁷ *Stargate SG-1*, Showtime Networks, 1997-2002; The Sci-Fi Channel, 2002 -.

⁴⁸ *Dark Skies*, National Broadcasting Company (NBC), 1996-1997.

⁴⁹ *The X Files*, Fox Network, 1993-2002.

⁵⁰ “The Trees Made of Glass, Part 1”, CBS, 16 September 2005.

satellites; it comes and goes unnoticed because its technology is based on four or even five-dimensional physics. It should be highlighted that by portraying the UFO encounter as visually impenetrable and inscrutable, *Threshold* breaks popular culture's common visual *identification* of Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) as 'flying saucer' or 'flying disk' that emanated as the consequence of "visionary rumors"⁵¹ stemmed from and dominated since the widely publicized Roswell UFO Incident in 1947. Although *Threshold* shows the UFO encounter only once till the end of the series, its depiction of UFO as both scientifically and visually unidentifiable, reflects the tension of today's improbability of marking the UFO as 'you-foe' as done before; today's foes are no longer visible but obscure, as the evil is no longer opaque but transparent.

On the contrary, the invasive subject is not that visually ambiguous and mysterious in *Invasion*. The orange glowing aliens dwelling in the lakes of Florida are mere squid-like *catalysts* awaiting warm human bodies to occupy and transmogrify. However, their coming to Earth by using a natural event like hurricane as a masquerade makes *Invasion* similar to *Threshold* by portraying the extraterrestrials difficult to observe and identify. Nonetheless, just like *Threshold*, *Invasion* gives meager visual and narrative prominence to dramatizing human encounter with the alien, by restricting alien contact scenes to the minimum. Today's focal point is not the alien as the Ultimate Other –with regard to its being "ontologically Other only by virtue of its being *biologically*

⁵¹ Carl. G. Jung, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*, p. 8.

Other”⁵² –but the Others in the community of the Same. However, as binary oppositions like self/other, same/different has become unclear and ambiguous in postmodern societies, dual directional mechanism –*from the point of the Same through the Other and through the Other towards the Same*, as I exemplified before through the films of 1950s, cannot be applicable to contemporary science fiction texts. Rather, the relationship between the self/Same and the Other/Different has become multi-dimensional, spiral, multi-layered interaction. It is of no surprise that contemporary alien invasion texts incline towards *body horror* – alternatively called *biological horror*, that introduces a state that disrespects “borders, positions, rules” and “that disturbs identity, system, order”⁵³, which is more concordant with postmodern social experience. In body horror, which combines “the spectacle of the horror film with the questions of engagement with the alien posed by science fiction,”⁵⁴ the body “is transformed from a (relatively) integrated entity, to an ongoing subject of metamorphosis” which may be provoked “virally, through genetic mutation, or indeed, through extraterrestrial influence”⁵⁵ ascertaining what is ‘alien’ is not the alien itself, but the distortion of the human body.

⁵² Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., “Dis-Imagined Communities: Science Fiction and the Future of Nations,” *Edging into the Future: Science Fiction and Contemporary Cultural Transformation*, Ed. Veronica Hollinger, Joan Gordon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2002), p. 228.

⁵³ Barbara Creed, “Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginar Abjection”, *Screen –Body Horror Special Issue* (Vol. 27, No. 1, Jan/Feb: 1986), p.45.

⁵⁴ Warren Smith, “‘I am a man, and nothing human is alien to me’: Alienation and Freakishness,” *Science Fiction and Organization*, Ed. Warren Smith (London: Routledge: 2001), p. 184.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Since the late 1970s, the horror aspect of body horror is achieved through different means in correlation with differing cultural anxieties ascribed to the body: it can arise due to general estrangement from the body to a point at which the body becomes ‘the other’ as portrayed in *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979) and *The Thing* (John Carpenter, 1982); it can originate from loss of biological control due to viruses and autoimmune disorders as in *Shivers* (David Cronenberg, 1975) and *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle, 2002); or emanate from morphology, the change of biological form through exploitation of genetics as in *The Fly* (David Cronenberg, 1986). Regarding the contemporary body horror narratives in science fiction, Marc Jancovich, states that “the threat is not simply external [alien as the Ultimate Other] but erupts from within the human body, and so challenges the distinction between self and other, inside and outside.”⁵⁶ Accordingly, as biotechnology and genetics dominates more and more our contemporary lives, body horror in alien invasion narratives manifests itself not as outwardly bodily degenerations and drastic physical deformations but as inwardly cellular mutations undetectable from outside, causing the Other and Otherness become even more obscure and ambiguous.

By both being derivations of *Invasion of Body Snatchers* (1956, 1978), *Threshold* and *Invasion* deals with the theme of stealth invasion through genetic assimilation. In *Threshold*, aliens invade through telecommunications without even bothering to show themselves. The

⁵⁶ Mark Jancovich. *Horror, the Film Reader*, p. 6.

broadcasted alien audio signal reassembles the DNA by structurally altering it from double-helix to triple helix through frighteningly rapid cellular change. The signal is so powerful and efficient that even if it is heard from a second-generation copy, it can still hack into the DNA and finds a way to manipulate it. Apart from rewriting the genetic code, the signal also alters the cognitive thinking of humans. It triggers off an unusual brain wave activity in mid to lower frontal lobes of the infectees, causing them to generate far more theta waves than the average cognitive model. As a result they experience frightening hallucinations and start having odd dreams about a glass/crystal landscape and a dark presence – actual physical appearance of the aliens. These dreams have *virtual reality* effect, as if teleporting the dreamer to the habitat of the aliens. These visions are nothing but ‘implanted memories’ that avail the infectees’ process of adaptation to their new alien selves/bodies and ready them to the new alien world order.



Figure 1 Forest of Glass in *Threshold*

Moreover, the signal can affect and corrupt the machines; even our own inventions are turned against us. It can copy and spread itself through television, radio and internet; it can also re-program any electronic device such as answering machines, PDAs, cell phones, ATMs. It operates both like self-propagating bio-virus and computer virus, spreading itself around at uncontrollable speed.



Figure 2 Fractal triskelion pattern used in *Threshold*

If compared to the conventions of body horror, what *Threshold* poses is something bigger: the horror derived not only from the metamorphosis of human body but also from the distortions of *Earth as a complete body*. The genetic re-formation is not restricted to humans; it is a complete bio-forming as well as terraforming –xenaforming is a more accurate term– of Earth including both the flora and the fauna. The aliens are not merely planning to colonize humans but also preparing the Earth as environmentally habitable planet for themselves by transforming the

plants into crystal-like structure –as in the dreams of the infected. The *fractal triskelion pattern* (Figure 2), which is used throughout the series as a graphic representation of a mathematical equation that describes a DNA molecule in a triple-helix form, is a mere alien communication symbol referring Earth’s complete transmutation. It is more like a visual *mark* that labels the infected: the infected rats and cockroaches circling in the shape of the fractal pattern, the infected mobile phones’ screens are covered by it; even the signal-affected-area of the city glows at night by forming this shape via city lights.



Figure 3 Fractal pattern performed by the infected fish just before the first contact



Figure 4 Infected cockroaches performing the fractal pattern in circles after the first contact on the naval ship Big Horn



Figure 5 Fractal pattern on the screen of the infected phones.



Figure 6 Fractal pattern via city lights on the infected areas of the city.

Rather sticking to the original, *Invasion* focuses on the mutations of human body rather than that of the Earth as a complete body. By taking the advantage of chaos emerged from the aftermath of a natural disaster like hurricane, squid-like, glowing, water-based extraterrestrials furtively take over the bodies of town inhabitants. These creatures act like catalysts, pseudo-wombs for the cloning process: they first merge with the original body penetrating their twelve tentacles to the neck, abdomen and the temple, and then, after annihilating the original, they replace it with the cloned copy. *Invasion* calls these alien-affected bodies as ‘hybrids’ for the intention of emphasizing their “deliberately constructed” nature and constant “in-between”⁵⁷ state, unlike *Threshold* that calls them as ‘infectees’ highlighting rather the *viral* effect of the alien signal upon human body. The word ‘infectee’ resonates more like a

⁵⁷ Patricia Linton, “Aliens, (M)Others, Cyborgs: The Emerging Ideology of Hybridity,” *Alien Identities: Exploring Differences in Film & Fiction*, Ed. Imelda Whelehan (London: Pluto Press: 1999), p. 172.

pathological labeling of a tainted, contaminated body, with connotations of ‘disease’ and ‘epidemic’ in mind.

As in *Threshold*, bodily transformation is not visible and noticeable from *ab extra*; it happens on a molecular/cellular level: the DNA, the genes, the basic physical units of ‘heredity’, are altered by the aliens. In addition to the alteration of the whole DNA structure, they also modify the blood type and the number of red blood cells, causing massive escalation in hemoglobin rate similar to that of the sea mammals, as in whales and dolphins. Due to their increased oxygen transportation efficiency, hybrids manage to survive under water unlike humans. They have become amphibians: their habitats altered immediately unlike the infectees in *Threshold* where the habitat alteration is barely ‘foreshadowed’ through crystal forest dreams, since it necessitates the completion of Earth’s terra-formation.



Figure 7 Cloning process in *Invasion*.

Invasion raises the gauge of ambiguity regarding the Other, one level above: In *Threshold*, no matter infectees look exactly like humans, they are somewhat *identifiable*; after the exposure, they gain enormous strength, have inclination towards violence, start consuming merely high protein rich foods and most importantly they attain the power of rapid cell regeneration through which their wounds get healed almost immediately. However, in *Invasion*, unlike their strange affinity with water, hybrids look and act exactly like humans within the society. They are not entirely emotionless, single-minded, inhuman beings like the pod people portrayed in *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956). Although the copy and the original have (outwardly) identical bodies, the *difference* between the original and the copy manifests itself not directly in societal relationships but in familial ones. It can only be identified by the ones who are the most intimate, like the family members, yet very vaguely. The daughter of Dr. Mariel Underlay notices her mother “smell different” after the hurricane and has become somewhat detached from her children, neglecting some of her motherly responsibilities.

‘The Other’ is the *sine qua non* of science fiction as it is of Gothic and the horror genre, since it provides the principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties. Regarding the importance of Other in science fiction novels and films, Christina Cornea states:

Ideas about human subjectivity and identity have most often been established in a comparison between self (human) and Other (nonhuman) characters. So, in terms of genre’s codes and conventions, it is possible to see how the alien or robot of science

fiction may provide an example of Otherness, against which a representation of “proper” subjectivity is worked through. Images of Otherness in science fiction can be understood as a metaphor for forms of Otherness within society, or between societies, which have traditionally been built upon gendered divides or upon distinctions based on racial differences. A recognition of how science fiction operates on this metaphor...tells us about various definitions of the human subject and about the fears and anxieties surrounding a given society’s Others.⁵⁸

The human/alien hybrids in *Invasion* can be seen as an allegory of the postmodern subject’s quest for identity in a society where, once being the metaphors of Otherness, the abovementioned gendered and racial distinctions are melded and blurred. After the body-snatching incident – the replacement of the *original* by the *copy*, the hybrids all undergo a *state of confusion*, trying to reconcile what has happened to them. They have lost connection with their former ‘selves’, that of the original and become fragmented, unable to separate cognitively the difference from the sameness. For example, Mariel is completely unaware of the fact that she is a copy, a hybrid; because she does not remember anything about the night the body-snatching occurred. As she has the original’s memories –since the copy is generated from the same DNA – but not the original’s self, she is not conscious about her changed state of being, about her *difference*. However for the ones, who have some bodily defects, the state of confusion lasts shortly but its impact is severe. As the hybridization occurs through cloning, the body’s identical copy is

⁵⁸ Christine Comea, “Figurations of the Cyborg in Contemporary Science Fiction Novels and Film,” *A Companion to Science Fiction* Ed. David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.: 2005), p. 275.

generated. People who have some bodily defects –like Deputy Lewis Sirk who has an amputated arm –or bodily deformations –like Christina which occurred after childbirth –find out that their clone bodies lacking them after the body snatching incident. Since *the difference is written on the body* –not *in the body* like the ones without visible defects – the way they cope with their newly-formed bodies are remarkably dissimilar. As being a pious man, Deputy Lewis Sirk interprets his newly-grown left arm as a miracle bestowed by God and he is so eager to share this miracle with the townsfolk. For fear that this kind of publicity might threaten the existence of hybrids –the difference *on* the body is far more observable than the difference *in* the body and thus it may create panic and confusion among the humans, he is outtalked by Sheriff Tom Underlay and Father Scanlon that this miracle is nothing but a personal message that should not be spread. After Tom Underlay somewhat forces him to reamputate his arm, Lewis Sirk comes to an understanding of the fact that Tom Underlay is not a man of deep faith as he seems to be, but a sole manipulator. He loses his way and feels like he has betrayed God by following the orders of the Sheriff and wasted God’s gift in return. Like Lewis Sirk, Christina is overjoyed by finding out her bodily difference, yet interprets it not as a miracle but an opportunity to start life anew. According to her, her life before the body-snatching incident was a complete disaster. She got married at a very young age, was neglected by her husband and impregnated against her will. Instead of living the joys of adolescence, she found herself surrounded by the responsibilities of

adulthood. After she discovers that her body is restored to its virginal state, with the intention of recovering her 'adolescence', she erases the traces of her so-called 'adult' life by abandoning her baby and murdering her mother-in-law (if her husband hadn't died at the night of the hurricane, she would probably have killed him too in the process).

After the state of confusion, the series focuses upon the hybrids' *adaptation process*, their 'integration' into the society, after their *anagnorisis*⁵⁹, to be precise, the recognition of their bodily otherness. While portraying this process, *Invasion* intensifies postmodern boundary-confusion by deconstructing the social cohesion of 'the Same' and 'the Different' through situating *Them in We* and *We in Them*. Such ambiguity and fluidity of boundaries gives expression to "postmodern experience of social fragmentation and to the constantly threatening confrontation between the embattled 'selves' and the risky and unreliable world that they inhabit."⁶⁰ The hybrids' integration into the society results differently pertinent to the vicissitudes of 'self formation'. Some of the hybrids roughly handle their new form of being, and could not manage to adjust either to their newly formed bodies or to the society they once belong. By "denying the possession of and by a self and preferring [absolute] engagement with Otherness"⁶¹ they 'consciously

⁵⁹ *Anagnorisis* means discovery/recognition in Ancient Greek which is used by Aristotle in *Poetics*, to describe tragic hero's sudden awareness of the real situation, of the truth about his or her identity or actions which he had been previously ignorant of. Anagnorisis is accompanied by *peripeteia*, reversal of circumstances due to the causes of anagnorisis, including external changes as well as changes of character.

⁶⁰ Andrew Tudor, "Unruly Bodies, Unquiet Minds," *Bodies and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1995, p. 40.

⁶¹ Thomas Docherty, "The Ethics of Alterity," *Postmodern Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Ed. Niall Lucy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 143.

reject integration’, which is a symptom of hysteria, “the typical postmodern psychic malady.”⁶² By saying that, I draw focus not on the Freudian sexual etiology of hysteria, but on the traumatic, as elucidated by Elizabeth Bronfen in her book *The Knotted Subject*⁶³. Hysteria, “the malady of representation”⁶⁴ becomes a language associated with trauma; yet, trauma in a postmodern sense is “not the disruption of an otherwise stable psyche, but rather an unbounded experience of constant disaffection providing the backdrop for postmodern subjectivity”⁶⁵. In *Invasion* hybrids’ trauma, which reveals itself as excessive multiphrenia in self formation and absolute rejection of integration and socialization, emanates primarily from their over-fascination with their bodily difference, specifically, from the seductiveness of ‘power of being the Other’. This kind of “reciprocal seduction subverts all relations between the subject and the moral world”⁶⁶ causing unwillingness in developing any interpersonal and interactional skills that are in conformity with the values of the society.

The character Christina sets an extreme example for the aforementioned state of ‘absolute engagement with Otherness’. In the episode “The Nest”⁶⁷ she reveals her identity transformation after the body-snatching incident with these words: “I used to be the perfect

⁶² Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern*, p. 233.

⁶³ Elizabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its Discontents*, p. xiii.

⁶⁴ Id. at 40.

⁶⁵ Belinda Clayton. “Rethinking Postmodern Maladies,” *Current Sociology*, Vol. 50, No. 6, 2002, p 846.

⁶⁶ Louis Aragon and André Breton quoted in Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), p. 50.

⁶⁷ “The Nest”, ABC, 15 February 2006.

daughter. I was the perfect wife and the perfect mother. Until I wasn't.” and adds: “Someone’s been telling me what to do all my life. No more...No more...” Throughout the series, she rejects integration and socialization to such an extent that her actions manifest the symptoms of psychopathy. She demonstrates the signs of social impairment, extreme egocentricity and incapacity for love by killing whoever stands on her way, by using Derek solely for her personal gain and by siding with no one but herself –rejecting to belong both to the actual human society and to the hybrid society either formed by Eli Szura or Tom Underlay.

Some of the hybrids form *protean* selves, represented mostly through the character, Mariel Underlay. As I mentioned before, protean self is “preeminently adaptable” and the source of such identity is “the current condition of the rapid flux, confusion and restlessness.”⁶⁸ For Mariel Underlay, the uncertainty and anxiety emerged from the exponential feelings of ambivalence, confusion, emptiness and despair due to sudden and traumatic anticipation of ‘difference’, have become not the obstacles but means to self-knowledge. In the episode “Us or Them”⁶⁹ when Tom Underlay explains his wife the truth beneath her feeling different, she exclaims “Whatever is happening to me, I am going to fight it!” Concurrently, Dave, Mariel’s ex husband Russell’s brother-in-law, expresses that Mariel “seemed pretty good, nicer than she used to be” and he supports Mariel’s newly formed protean self –allegorically the postmodern ‘Right to be Different’ –by uttering the words “Just

⁶⁸ John F. Schumaker, *Age of Insanity: Modernity and Mental Health*, p. 18.

⁶⁹ “Us or Them”, ABC, 11 January 2006.

because something is different does not necessarily make it bad. It could still be good”⁷⁰.

However, unlike *Invasion*, in *Threshold* the infectees completely reject their former ‘selves’ and memories, completely detach themselves from the society and its norms. In the episode “Alienville”⁷¹ it is portrayed that they even form their own society in a small Virginia town called Allenville where they live ‘peacefully’ with their own ‘alien’ customs. *Threshold*’s alien-human hybrids resemble more to the pod people of the original film, *The Invasion of The Body Snatchers* (1956). They are non-negotiable and fixated on spreading the alien signal on any costs, like the pod people who work together to spread the seeds of the gigantic alien pods to replace the entire human race. Although the infectees are regarded as hybrids in *Threshold*, their alien side far more overweighs their human side; their humanness solely resides in their physical appearance, whereas, in *Invasion*, there is diversity among the hybrids. Unlike the infectees of *Threshold*, the hybrids are not completely single in mind: since each copy share the original’s memories, each one have completed his/her adaptation process differently and (re)build new identities/personalities accordingly. That is why Tom Underlay’s attempts to control the hybrids’ actions in order to form a homogeneous hybrid society prove to be in vain, throughout the series. Contrasting the infectees of *Threshold*,⁷² the hybrids of *Invasion*

⁷⁰ “Origin of Species”, ABC, 30 November 2005.

⁷¹ “Alienville”, Episode 13, August 2006 DVD.

⁷² In *Threshold*, the only infectee shown on the side of humans is Doctor Julian Sloan. Due to a genetic defect he has, he has not become a complete infectee after eating mutated

have the opportunity to ‘make a personal choice’ within the course of the invasion by blurring the dichotomies of good and evil as well as the Same and the Other even further.

1.2 The Impossibility of Annihilating the Other

As in the history of colonization, in novels and films dealing with alien contact, Joan Gordon states,

The first impulse of human confrontation with the alien, the Other, is to annihilate it. This annihilation may occur through familiarization: by assimilating or by ‘passing’, by absorbing or being absorbed by the dominant culture. That is the peaceful method. Or the annihilation may occur through erasure: by expulsion or killing. Peaceful or violent, through familiarization or erasure, these are impulses toward genocide, “any systematic attempt to exterminate a people or its culture and way of life.” So the aliens, however frightening, do not themselves evoke the monstrous...; the terrifying impulse toward genocide does.⁷³

The methods used for eliminating alien invasion differ in *Threshold* and *Invasion*. From the methods of genocide mentioned above, *Threshold* adopts inescapably the latter, annihilation through *erasure*. I deliberately use ‘inescapable’ because the series centers upon a secret government project called Threshold which was designed by Molly Anne Caffrey, a

tomatoes, but become a vigilante hunting down the infectees whenever he detects an aggravated theta wave around. However, if compared to *Invasion*’s Muriel and Louis Sirk who prefer to side with the humans rather than the aliens, Doctor Sloan appears to be nothing but a two-dimensional character.

⁷³ Joan Gordon, “Utopia, Genocide, and the Other,” *Edging into the Future: Science Fiction and Contemporary Cultural Transformation*, Ed. Veronica Hollinger, Joan Gordon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2002), p. 205.

contingency analyst, as a rapid response measure to a First Contact Scenario with the extraterrestrial. It is a complete organized plan involving a detailed what-to-do and who-to-do: Stage one of the plan calls for an immediate quarantine of the alien landing site or the crash site. After the object is secured by a Special Operations Force –a highly trained specialized military unit– the next stage begins. Stage two calls for the insertion of a Red Team –consists of a microbiologist, aeronautical engineer, and an expert in linguistics and applied mathematics– whose priorities are threefold: first, confirming the presence of extraterrestrial life intelligent or otherwise, then attempting to communicate with it, and finally determining its intent whether it poses any possible threat. It is, then, of no surprise that if ever the aliens pose a threat, the governmental response would be annihilation through erasure rather than any peaceful method. The opening monologue narrated by the head of the team Molly Caffrey, expresses the paranoid tone of the series:

My name is Molly Caffrey, and I work for the Federal Government. I deal in worst case scenarios, the unthinkable. On September 16th, 2005, the unthinkable happened. An extraterrestrial object appeared off the bow of a naval freighter. The entire crew was exposed to a high frequency signal. Some died instantly. Others began to change. They are now stronger, more resilient. They dream of alien landscapes. And they are driven by the impulse to infect others. Several of the crewmen are now loose in the United States. They will strike anytime, anyplace, anyone. Their goal: to turn us into them. But I have a plan to stop them. That plan is called "Threshold".

This conservative attitude towards the Other draws *Threshold* near to the film *Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996) and also caused the series to be referred as anti-*X Files*: instead of uncovering the conspiracy, the main characters –Molly Caffrey and the rest of the Red Team– seek to cover-up the truth about first-contact, and later the evidences of ongoing alien invasion in order to preserve confidentiality of Threshold project.

In the earlier episodes, the names and identities of the Others, the missing members of the crew who are affected by the alien signal, are known by the Threshold team. According to their well-organized plan eliminating them would not be so hard. However through the mid season, it becomes clear that Caffrey's so-called perfect plan regarding Earth's *de-alienation* cannot compete with extraterrestrials' clandestine plans of actualizing an *alien-nation* on Earth. Aliens are always one step ahead of Caffrey's plan with their methods. In order to infect more and more people, they use inconceivable methods: one of the missing infected crewmen donates his sperms to a fertility clinic with the intention of infecting the inseminated women, another one tried to build a signal emitter in the most crowded place of the subway with the intention of infecting thousands of people including the federal employees, the others contaminate water and distribute Frankenstein-food –mutant vegetables containing alien DNA in which the infected blood is used as a fertilizer– to the market for mass infection. Moreover, through making a church

reverend a “dreamer”⁷⁴, the aliens even used the congregational aspect of religion for *converting* numerous people. The series, from the beginning to the end, emphasizes the idea of *nowhere is safe* to such extent that schools, churches, hospitals, military and governmental institutions, even our homes have become places liable to danger.

The series implies in the episodes of “The Burning”⁷⁵ and “Outbreak”⁷⁶ that it is not the first time the aliens visit the Earth, they had been sending probes at intervals of 160 years, however, estrangement of people from one another due to lack of travel and technology disallowed any widespread infection. Aliens’ power at the present time comes merely from their exploitation of humans’ vulnerabilities due to postmodern condition. Accordingly, concerning post-industrial society, Daniel Bell states:

The revolutions in transport and communications have brought men into closer contact with each other and bound them in new ways; the division of labor has made them more interdependent; tremors in one part of society affect all others. Despite this greater interdependence, however, individuals have grown more estranged from one another.⁷⁷

Today’s paradoxical connectedness/estrangement situation makes the invasion easier, especially through internet, for the reason that

⁷⁴ The Reverend Lavory, is not a complete infectee whose DNA structure is absolutely altered. He is just a “dreamer”, a term used for humans who have partially exposed to the signal or to the crystalline structures –formed first on the signal-affected particles of the wrecked naval ship Big Horn then on the mutated plants. Only theta waves are altered in “dreamers” causing them to hallucinate and see weird dreams and visions.

⁷⁵ “The Burning”, CBS, 30 September 2005.

⁷⁶ “Outbreak (a.k.a. Escalation)”, Episode 11, August 2006 DVD.

⁷⁷ Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, p. 26.

cyberspace is today's cardinal means of communication because of its being "the fusion of current media technologies such as phone lines, cable networks, satellite links, and high-definition TV screens" and is the least controllable among the other mass communication means due to its being "a loose confederation of thousands of smaller, often locally run, computer networks."⁷⁸ Therefore by not necessitating any face-to-face interaction, cyberspace, whose virtual frontiers bear no national limits, has become an ideal place for spreading the alien signal. There are various attempts for its dissemination: the signal is spammed through e-mail over the internet; later, it was turned into an mp3 file and uploaded on a web site to be downloaded, as a result, a DJ mixes it with dance beats and caused lots of people get infected in a rave party. Besides, ATMs' infection due to the chipped credit cards led to the infection of bank's network system as well as affecting home PCs, shops, financial networks connected to it.

Evil is ahead of us theme dominates *Threshold* till the end of the series. Since predicting the infectees' next move is nearly impossible, solutions offered by Caffrey's team, under the name of governmental response, can never go beyond *save-the-day* logic. Various cover stories fabricated by the Threshold team in order to conceal the fast paced alien invasion are, indeed, the cover-ups for Threshold's incompetence to terminate the invasion. Even the three Red Team members' –Molly Caffrey, Sean Cavenaugh and Lucas Pegg's –limited exposure to the

⁷⁸ Udo Greinacher, "Fear and Dreaming in the American City from Open Space to Cyberspace," *Architecture of Fear* Ed. Nan Ellin (NY: Princeton Architectural Press: 1997), p. 289.

alien signal via partial viewing of Big Horn video recording and their consequently becoming “dreamers” did not aid the Threshold plan to track down the infectees, estimate their next moves and prevent the spreading of the signal. The alien signal, first broadcasted in a navy ship in North Atlantic Ocean, has spread itself almost all over to the United States within a short period of time. The Others, the infectees, camouflage themselves so effectively in the society that the invasion of Earth, the apocalypse, has become inescapable. The series gives the viewer no rest, no catharsis is experienced throughout the series, because the order prior to the first encounter is never restored, annihilation of the Other is by no means successfully achieved. If the horror in science fiction emanates from the genocidal attempts towards the Other in favor of preserving order and the unity of society, lack of succession in such genocidal attempts evokes horror as well, through acquiescence of orderly disorder. *Threshold* would demonstrate alien invasion inside out within three year arc, if the series’ production had not been cancelled. Each season the series would change its name relevant to Molly Caffrey’s counter plans corresponding to the changing phases of the invasion, from *Threshold* to *Foothold* as a response to a massive alien invasion and finally to *Stranglehold*, as a counteraction to a well-established alien presence on Earth. However, the series abrupt cancellation, forced the screenwriters to conclude the series with a satisfactory closure wherein the first alien-human progeny tells Molly via a dream sequence that her Threshold plan will eventually succeed in

stopping the alien invasion within nine years. Unfortunately, such implication of restoration of order and authority in the future reverberates more like a strained hope, and that kind of hope seems dreamlike just like the sequence itself, since the series, in its entirety, revolves around orderly disorder rather than disorderly order. It could be suggested that the series plot development and story arcs are affected by the rules of chaos and catastrophe theories –in the sense that unpredictable and sudden shifts and changes affecting the equilibrium of the system, which make a great deal of contribution to achieve the series’ orderly disorder atmosphere. Subsequently, imbuing viewers with hope in the end entirely deconstructs the series’ current course of events, attenuating the credibility of such hope within viewers.

Given that *Invasion*’s attitude towards the Other is more complicated if compared to *Threshold*, the series means of annihilation of the Other is, therefore, more intricate. *Invasion* portrays the ordinary people’s response to alien invasion and their struggle to uncover the military involved conspiracy behind it, contrasting *Threshold* which is a governmental conspiracy itself –definitely not by participating in the actualization of the invasion as in *Invasion*, but by uncovering the facts of invasion from the public. Because *Threshold* portrays a governmental response, it focuses on the annihilation of the Other(s) to restore the previously established order, yet the number of Others are multiplying so uncontrollably that the Threshold plan renders itself useless under such circumstances. On the contrary, *Invasion*’s focus from the start is the

annihilation of the Same rather than the Other: Since there is no such governmental plan intending to eliminate the threat, the townsfolk are left alone from the beginning, trapped in a quarantined town after the hurricane, falling prey to the body-snatching aliens. In *Threshold*, the *victimization of the Same* emanates from the *ineffectiveness* of the Symbolic Order and poses itself as an *outcome*, whereas, in *Invasion* Symbolic Order's complete *lack* from the beginning till the end, causes such kind of victimization to be perennial and perpetual.

Unlike *Threshold*, both aforementioned methods of annihilation, namely assimilation and erasure, are used in *Invasion*. However, unlike the conventional alien invasion texts, these methods of annihilation are enforced by the Other(s), not by the Same. On the other hand, contrasting *Threshold*, *Invasion* portrays the power struggle of two hybrid leaders, Tom Underlay and Eli Szura, who have different plans in mind regarding the course of the invasion and the future of the hybrids. The town's sheriff, Tom Underlay, evokes the initial phase of the invasion. For fear of being dissected by the Same, Tom Underlay encourages the hybrids to adapt to the social and cultural norms of the dominant society of the Same. This 'voluntary assimilation' done in secrecy, consolidates the existence of the hybrids on the one hand, and on the other, it initiates the foundation of a hybrid community. In order to homogenize the hybrids and aid their integration of the society of the Same, Tom Underlay establishes a hurricane survivor's group under church support. Since each hybrid's adaptation process differs from one another, some of the hybrids

resist integration and adaptation, risking the secrecy Tom Underlay desperately tries to maintain. Those ‘misfits’ are exiled by the Sheriff to a camp located on an island outside the town, which is governed by another hybrid, a former CIA operative named Eli Szura. As the hybrids multiply in number each day, they become more and more uncontrollable and correspondingly the camp teems with misfits, deviants etc. sent by the sheriff. While Tom Underlay struggles to control both humans and the hybrids in town due to the outgrowing ‘us versus them’ conflict, Eli Szura develops a guerilla army out of the misfits and prepares them for a full-scale invasion.

Tom Underlay’s plans for the future of the hybrids remain unclear throughout the series; because he shifts from sinister to victim and back to sinister so easily that it is difficult to deduce whether he intends a complete assimilation of the Same or just a society in which hybrids and the humans can coexist harmoniously. However Eli Szura’s vision of the future for the hybrids is not that blurry: he seeks complete erasure of the human race for the benefit of hybrid domination. The series portrays the actualization of his plans in the last episode “The Last Wave Goodbye”⁷⁹. When the second hurricane hits the town of Homestand, Eli Szura puts his full-scale invasion in motion. The armed hybrid militia gathers all the townsfolk who are not yet ‘changed’ in a hangar, and initiate mass body-snatching by pushing the captors in the water as the thousand luminescent lights fall into it. As expressed by the Sheriff Tom Underlay,

⁷⁹ “The Last Wave Goodbye”, ABC, 17 May 2006.

it is nothing but “genocide under the cover of a hurricane.” Although helicopters of US Air Force appear above the sky and Szura is killed in the end –ironically, by Tom Underlay, the order is not completely restored like the end of *Threshold*. With thousands of body snatching squid-like catalyst roaming in the water and hundreds of pregnant hybrid women giving birth to alien progeny, this recovery sounds rather a false hope; because the actual source of the invasion still remains untouched.

Both *Invasion*'s and *Threshold*'s inability to restore order in the end by annihilating the Other/s and eliminate the threat of alien invasion unlike the alien invasion texts of the fifties can be seen as a consequence of postmodern risk society. Related to the emergence of risk society, sociologist Anthony Giddens states that “the development of modern social institutions and their worldwide spread have created vastly greater opportunities for human beings to enjoy a secure and rewarding existence than any type of pre-modern system. But modernity also has a somber side, which has become very apparent in the present century.”⁸⁰ This somber side comes from the way the definitions of security and danger, trust and risk were changed by modernity. First of all, the nature of risk has changed; it has become more and more global each day. Comparing postmodern risks with that of the modern, Ulrich Beck, who first coined up the term ‘risk society’, states that “being at risk is the way of being and ruling in modernity; being at global risk is the human condition at

⁸⁰ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 7.

the beginning of 21st century.”⁸¹ Cyber wars, SARS, mad cow disease, terrorism, climate changes, global warming etc. proves that “new risks are continuously revealed and linked to changes in technology, biology, social tensions and politics”⁸² contrasting the traditional view of risk which was seen as a natural event –prevalence of infectious diseases, climatic unreliability, natural disasters etc.– outside of human control or influence. Giddens, in his book *Consequences of Modernity*, outlines the risk profile of modernity as follows:

1. *Globalisation of risk* in the sense of *intensity*: for example, nuclear war can threaten the survival of humanity.
2. *Globalisation of risk* in the sense of *expanding number of contingent events* which affect everyone or at least large numbers of people on the planet: for example, changes in the global division of labour.
3. Risk stemming from the *created environment*, or *socialised nature*: the infusion of human knowledge into the material environment.
4. The development of *institutionalised risk environments* affecting the life-chances of millions: for example, investment markets.
5. *Awareness of risk as risk*: the “knowledge gaps” in risks cannot be converted into “certainties” by religious or magical knowledge.
6. The *well-distributed awareness of risk*: many of the dangers we face collectively are known to wide publics.
7. *Awareness of the limitations of expertise*: no expert system can be wholly expert in terms of the consequences of the adoption of expert principles. ⁸³

⁸¹ Ulrich Beck, *Living in the World of Risk Society*, p. 2.
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/sociology/pdf/Beck-LivingintheWorldRiskSociety-Feb2006.pdf>. 17 May, 2007.

⁸² Jan Hovden, *Theory Formations related to the ‘Risk Society’*, p. 1.
<http://risikoforsk.no/Publikasjoner/Risk%20Society-Karlstad-X.pdf>. 18 May, 2007.

⁸³ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, pp. 124-125.

In the light of abovementioned articles, *Threshold* portrays the optimum manifestation of risk society in high modernity –as Giddens prefers to call in lieu of post-modernity. Although *Threshold* consists of a team of experts and even the whole plan is developed by a contingency analyst, it proves out that it is still insufficient over against the risk. For instance, they exploded the naval ship Big Horn after the first encounter in order to eliminate the threat in the midst of the Pacific ocean, however, as the radiation is spread by wind and toxic materials are spread by rivers and ocean currents, the bio-formed particles of Big Horn has spread all across the coasts of the United States by doubling the amount of risk. Likewise, as the epidemic diseases are spread by airplane travelers and IT viruses by global networks, the broadcasted alien signal in airplanes and its downloadable versions spammed through internet multiplies the number of infectees day by day, globalizing the risk to a greater extent. On the other hand, although the series focuses solely on the United States, the viewer is consciously aware of the fact that these risks have the capacity of affecting the whole world, heeding any borders, or any ethnical differences.

Commonly, “the main focus of risk perception and opinion is the possibility of future threats and disasters associated with risks.”⁸⁴ However, contemporary risks are increasingly “complex, unpredictable

⁸⁴ Jan Hovden, *Theory Formations related to the 'Risk Society'*, p. 1.
<http://risikoforsk.no/Publikasjoner/Risk%20Society-Karlstad-X.pdf>. 18 May, 2007.

and uncontrollable within clear spatial and temporal boundaries”⁸⁵ and have become an integral part of everyday experience that today’s notion of risk awareness has changed accordingly. Jan Hovden states that it is not “about our own experiences or about current statistical risk picture of deaths and injuries, but about an *uncertain future*. Fear and anxiety of these threats which we are uncertain or ignorant about, are a great challenge for risk management even though the probabilities for such events may be microscopic.”⁸⁶ Correspondingly, in *Threshold*, the more the Threshold team covers up aliens’ invasion attempts and postpones to inform the public under the pretext of ‘panic is contagious’ –obviating the public’s awareness of risk as risk, the more the threat has become unpredictable and incomprehensible to be handled. Through the end of the series, risk is everywhere: in grocery stores, insemination clinics, metro stations, night clubs, in what people eat and what people drink etc., and the Threshold team realizes that it cannot be averted with absolute certainty though it is calculable on the basis of knowledge.

If *Threshold* illustrates risk management efforts in a postmodern risk society from the point of contingency experts, or more generally, from the point of expert systems, *Invasion* portrays the other side of the coin, from the point of postmodern subjects constituting ‘the public’ who show incredulity toward “scientific accounts of risk and the ability of the

⁸⁵ Peter Brand, “The Environment and Postmodern Spatial Consciousness: A Sociology of Urban Environmental Agendas”, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, (Vol. 42:5, 1999) p. 637.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

techno-scientific establishment to deal with them”⁸⁷ and who find new ways of coping with uncertainty and, in Beck’s terms, “self-annihilating future” postmodernity offers. Regarding the reasons beneath the condition of contemporary societies who are dealing with the self-reflexive loop of constant generation of new risks and uncertainties while attempting to avoid, diminish or control one, Slavoj Žižek states:

The new opaqueness and impenetrability (the radical uncertainty as to the ultimate consequences of our actions) is not due to the fact that we are puppets in the hands of some transcendent global Power (Fate, Historical Necessity, the Market); on the contrary, it is due to the fact that ‘nobody is in charge’, that there is *no such power*, no ‘Other of the Other’ pulling the strings –opaqueness is grounded in the very fact today’s society is thoroughly ‘reflexive’, that there is no Nature or Tradition providing a firm foundation on which one can rely.⁸⁸

Interrogation and undermining of tradition due to social reflexivity conduces the disintegration of *the big Other*, in other words, “the communal network of social institutions, customs and laws”⁸⁹ along with affecting the *trust* in the big Other, since all social relations have become negotiable and no longer exists a firm set of norms and beliefs to be used to create trust, as provided by tradition before. According to Žižek, the demise of the big Other exposes another paradox of postmodernity: Though big Other’s demise affords freedom, its lack is

⁸⁷ Peter Brand, “The Environment and Postmodern Spatial Consciousness: A Sociology of Urban Environmental Agendas”, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, (Vol. 42:5, 1999) p. 637.

⁸⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, p. 336.

⁸⁹ Tony Myers, *Slavoj Žižek*, p. 49.

actually experienced as “an unbearable burden”⁹⁰ which “manifests itself in a desire for discipline”⁹¹ conducting the emergence of “numerous little others or partial big Others”⁹² as well as *the Other of the Other*, that is, the big Other that exists in the Real, in order to compensate that demise. Regarding the construction of the Other of the Other by postmodern subjects, Žizek affirms:

The belief in the big Other which exists in the Real is the most succinct definition of paranoia, so that, two features which characterize today's ideological stance cynical distance and full reliance on paranoid fantasy are strictly co-dependent: today's typical subject, while displaying cynical distrust of any public ideology, indulges without restraint in paranoid fantasies about conspiracies, threats, and excessive forms of enjoyment of the Other. Distrust of the big Other (the order of symbolic fictions), the subject's refusal to "take it seriously," relies on the belief that there is an "Other of the Other," a secret, invisible, all-powerful agent who effectively "pulls the strings" behind the visible, public Power. This other, obscene, invisible power structure acts the part of the "Other of the Other" in the Lacanian sense, the part of the meta-guarantee of the consistency of the big Other (the symbolic order that regulates social life).⁹³

The postmodern subjects' paradox of absolute cynicism towards official institutions yet the belief in the existence of conspiracies and an unseen Other in control at the same time, reflects itself in numerous works of literature, cinema and the TV as if none of them would be complete “without reference to some secret organization, usually a military-

⁹⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters*, p. 25.

⁹¹ Tony Myers, *Slovoj Žižek*, p. 55.

⁹² Id. at 56.

⁹³ Slavoj Žižek, 'The Big Other Doesn't Exist' (*Journal of European Psychoanalysis*, Spring-Fall: 1997). <http://www.lacan.com/zizekother.htm>. 30 May 2007.

industry complex, which covertly controls governments, newspapers, markets and other significant institutions.”⁹⁴ Correspondingly, *Invasion* as well is a product of this paranoid construction; its protagonists reveal one by one that trust and security relationship between modern institutions –from the smallest one to the biggest –and the subjects has eroded to its very end. What differs *Invasion* from the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) which is paranoid in its storytelling as well, is the intensity of this mistrust and the existence of never ending conspiracies. The mistrust to town’s authority figures in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* –the police as the figure of physical authority and the psychiatrist as the intellectual –leaves its place to trust when the protagonist Miles Bennett manages to reach FBI officers out of town. However in *Invasion*, there is nothing but conspiracies about the alien invasion, and mistrust is everywhere, both in the town and out of it. It is revealed that the two powerful hybrids, town sheriff Tom Underlay and Eli Szura, both have CIA connections, the media, which is seen as a last hope to inform the public about the ongoing invasion, is corrupted by alien influence and more importantly, the military is involved in the alien invasion to such an extent that through the end, the series portrays soldiers with their guns in their hand forcefully pushing people in the water for massive body-snatching. The inhabitants of the small town are left alone both in the course of elimination of the alien invasion and in the restoration of the havoc in the aftermath of the hurricane by the

⁹⁴ Tony Myers, *Slovoj Žižek*, p. 56.

modern institutions which should be responsible for their security instead.

Vulnerability and unease are essential part of the postmodern subjectivity. If paranoid constructions, emerging from *ontological insecurity* and *epistemological chaos* the postmodern condition brings, are nothing but “an attempt to heal ourselves, to pull ourselves out of the real ‘illness,’ ‘the end of the world,’ the breakdown of the symbolic universe, by means of this substitute formation”⁹⁵ then, it is of no surprise that science fiction becomes the ultimate genre where this collective paranoia and mistrust finds expression, especially on a mass medium like television since the nineties. Following the legacy of *The X-Files*, and blending it with popular themes of science fiction of the fifties, *Invasion* and *Threshold* aims “to normalize what is psychologically unbearable”⁹⁶ by evoking yearning for the Symbolic in the face of a chaotic situation like alien invasion. Conscious that achieving ever-the-Same by annihilating the Other is impossible in the age of reflexivity and restoring order is infeasible in today’s risk society, *Invasion* and *Threshold*’s desire for discipline merely remains as a nostalgic one. Although persistent repetition of the importance of the nuclear family unit, meritocratic individualism (in *Invasion*), and patriotism (in *Threshold*) from the surtext sounds rather banal, these attempts reflect nothing but collective nostalgia for the past as well as for

⁹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, p. 19.

⁹⁶ Susan Sontag, “The Imagination of Disaster,” *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (NY: Picador: 1966), p. 112.

the future due to the demise of the big Other and radical uncertainties postmodernity brings.

1.3 Hybridization as Means of D/Evolution

Contemporary science fiction TV series demonstrate narrative and visual ascendancy of the hybrid, whether in alien/human form or human/machine form as in cyborgs. Since the line of demarcation between the human/machine, the human/nonhuman, the human self/Other has eroded, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ascribe any essentialist notion of humanity due to the advances in genetic engineering, biotechnology, nanotechnology and cybernetics. As a consequence, science fiction texts incline more and more towards depiction of various forms of the ‘hybrid’ as metaphors of post-human, “possible future beings whose basic capacities so radically exceed those of present humans as to be no longer unambiguously human by our current standards”⁹⁷, and of trans-human, “the intermediary form between the human and the post-human.”⁹⁸

If we look closer to the genre conventions of science fiction, in some science fiction novels and films, we witness “a human regressing down the evolutionary ladder towards the beast”; in some others we witness “a human transforming into ‘something that never existed before’, going up the evolutionary ladder displaying new strengths, new

⁹⁷ Nick Bostrom, *The Transhumanist FAQ: A General Introduction*, (Ver. 2.1: 2003), p. 5. <http://www.transhumanism.org/resources/FAQv21.pdf>. 15 May 2007.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

energies and even a new politics.”⁹⁹ However, contemporary science fiction series that I mention have a tendency to reflect both progressive and regressive aspect of evolution¹⁰⁰ by continuously comparing and contrasting human characters with that of the trans or post-humans.

Mutation, the ultimate mode of biological change, which leads to evolution, is an enduring theme in science fiction. Regarding the evolutionary scenarios in science fiction texts, Joan Slonczewski and Michael Levy state:

The idea that some key mutation might cause sudden evolutionary change, that entire new species might come into existence practically overnight, has always been popular...The ‘sudden change’ stories, however, generally miss the point that even ‘punctuated equilibrium’ requires natural selection, including the deaths of numerous ‘less fit’ individuals, and takes many successive steps to generate true species divergence. Furthermore, they and other alien-ecosystem stories generally fail to depict the divergence of many related forms of life, instead of one or two.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Karin Littau, “Adaptation, Teleportation and Mutation from Langelaan’s to Cronenberg’s *The Fly*,” *Alien Identities: Exploring Differences in Film & Fiction*, Ed. Imelda Whelehan (London: Pluto Press: 1999), p. 151.

¹⁰⁰ Although science fiction mentions progress and advancement in parallel with evolution, and regression with devolution, terminologically it is completely against the rules of evolutionary theory. There is no directionality in evolution; all changes progressive or regressive is regarded in terms of evolution, since in either way the change is pursued for the sake of the living organism’s ‘own good’.

¹⁰¹ Joan Slonczewski, Michael Levy “Science Fiction and the Life Sciences,” *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Ed. Edward James, Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press: 2003), p. 178.

Invasion and *Threshold* take into account aforesaid criticism on ‘sudden change’ stories¹⁰². The hybrids are not over-nightly created species, but somehow appeared in the course of *natural selection* and *adaptation*. Best example comes from *Threshold*: The first contact with the alien signal does not result in complete mutation of all the crew of naval ship Big Horn. Some of them immediately get bodily deformed and die; some of them become ultra-violent, killing each other; and some committed suicide. Only a group of people manage to handle and, thus, survive from the signal’s genetic alteration due to their ability to adapt the newly formed circumstances, to be precise, due to the *survival of the fittest*. *Invasion* implies natural selection, however, in a more complex and ambiguous way, since the *speciation* after the processes of mutation –in course of genetic hybridization, do not concern the humans but the copies/clones of the humans. It is stated in the episode “Origin of Species” that changes in humans due to hybridization is not a unique thing ever happened in Everglade, Florida, but various post-hurricane incidents from Venezuela, Cuba, and Brazil all indicate that there are numerous extraterrestrial attempts of human hybridization since 2002. However, according to the records, the hybrids in other parts of the world all died by committing suicide after killing people close to them, only the hybrids in Everglade manage to *survive*. What is noteworthy in *Invasion* is that the process of natural selection and speciation accompanied not

¹⁰² It should be noted that the course of viral infection’s dissemination outweighs the course of the evolutionary process in *Threshold*’s narration. However, *Invasion* is all about the stages of evolution. The episode names such as “Unnatural Selection”, “Origin of Species”, “Us or Them”, “The Fittest” and “Re-evolution” indicate the blatancy of the series’ evolutionary storyline.

solely by *biological adaptation* as in *Threshold* but by the *social adaptation* by means of “going to church, supporting each other, developing a community” as described in “Origin of Species” by Healey, former CIA agent who is secretly investigating the invasion. Such adaptation process exceptionally occurred in Everglade merely related to the constant supports of sheriff Tom Underlay who is hinted to be ‘the fittest’ of the preceding hybrids whose body-snatching incident dates back to 1996. Healy expresses in the episode “Redemption”¹⁰³ the importance of Tom Underlay relating the survival of the hybrids in Everglade which differs from the rest of the world: since he is dealing with his transformation for nine years, his presence is acting as some kind of stabilizer for other ‘survivors’, keeping them balanced and aiding their adaptation process. Henceforth, the speciation, emergence of the new species, instigates.

Invasion and *Threshold* both treat the newly formed half-human/half-alien species to be superior to *Homo sapiens* within the context of progressive evolution. In *Invasion*, the new body of an alien/human hybrid is perceived as an “upgrade”, furthermore, the hybridization is approached as a process of “from being a caterpillar to a butterfly.” In the episode “Re-Evolution”¹⁰⁴ it is clearly anticipated by Russell Varon and Dave Groves that alien/human hybrid species is “our next evolutionary upgrade”, the homo superior, like “we are to Neanderthals”

¹⁰³ “Redemption”, ABC, 25 January 2006.

¹⁰⁴ “Re-Evolution”, ABC, 19 April 2006.

after secretly hearing out the a woman’s infomercial speech at the communal gathering in Szura’s camp as follows:

Survival is an elemental world, yet it means different things to different people. To some, it may imply mere existence, to others superiority. To some peace...Others, war. But to *us*, it just means the future.¹⁰⁵

The hybrids are not merely invasive species but also our evolutionary replacement threatening our complete existence on Earth. Similarly, the infectees in *Threshold* declare their superiority as new species which is explicitly reflected in two separate significant dialogues. First one is between Molly Caffrey and an infected military school student, Brian in the episode “Blood of the Children”¹⁰⁶ :

Molly: You are not yourself.

Brian: No. I am not myself...I am better. We are going to make everyone better.

The other dialogue is between Manning and Molly in “Outbreak”, where he overtly explains the hybridization is for humanity’s ‘own good’:

Manning: Every life is precious to us; that is why we came... What is happening is a gift. It is the next step in *your* evolution...You need us, without our help all human life will be extinguished.

Molly: How?

Manning: When mankind was still living in caves two neutron stars collided. Six years from now the cosmic radiation from that event will strike Earth.

Molly: The only way we survive is if you alter our physiology.

¹⁰⁵ What is noteworthy in this quotation is that to whom the woman refers in her speech as ‘*the others*’ proves out to be nothing but a *disguised* ‘*we*’ in brackets. Gradually, the series uncovers that the word ‘survival’ never solely meant ‘the future’ for the hybrids, but meant superiority and war like the verbally referred *others* throughout their course of invasion.

¹⁰⁶ “Blood of the Children”, CBS, 23 September 2005.

Molly remains skeptical about Manning's revelation although he gives exact coordinates of the mentioned stars to be checked which will confirm his explanation. However, one thing is certain either way: the humankind will be extinct. If Manning is right, succession of Molly Caffrey's plan, *Threshold* will bring total extinction to *Homo sapiens* since our physiology can not handle the radiation that will occur due to gamma ray burst. If Molly is persuaded by the explanation of Manning and let the aliens create *Homo superior* on Earth, it will also bring extinction to *Homo sapiens*: as we witness the human-alien hybrids' alien side far more overweighs their human side –their humanness demonstrate itself only as an outward appearance, and as I italicized in the quotations, they even refer humanity in a conversation as 'you' not 'we' unlike the hybrids in *Invasion* –technically the DNA alteration does not create *Homo superior* but only create new form of alien species impersonating merely the human form.

By constantly emphasizing the threat of extinction of the entire human species, and portraying desperate humans trying to prevent the dominance of the pathological Other, *Invasion* and *Threshold* intensifies *body horror* –or *biological horror*, with *survival horror*. As originally being a video game genre emerged in the early 1990s¹⁰⁷, survival horror focuses on the vulnerability of the game protagonist(s) whose main goal

¹⁰⁷ Survival horror is mostly associated with *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* game mechanics. The term 'survival horror' was first used by *Resident Evil* (1996) on the game's front cover for defining the game's genre; also it is displayed on the game's loading scene as a phrase: "Enter the world of survival horror..." Although the genre was popularized by *Resident Evil*, the first survival horror game *Sweet Home* dates back to 1989.

is 'survival' only. Contending with limited supplies in ammunition and health, the protagonist has to survive against violent, aggressive, blood-thirsty undead or otherwise supernatural creatures –not always in the sense of Gothic monsters, *Resident Evil* game series' fiends are virus infected mutant zombies due to the experiments of an evil corporation. Since there are a variety of endings, the protagonist's survival skill determines the ending of the game, which makes survival horror distinct from the other game genres. In survival horror games, the 'nowhere is safe' condition allows the player no respite and the player always feel under-prepared and underpowered over against the strength or number of the enemies s/he has to face. Correspondingly *Threshold* and *Invasion*, employ the same techniques of survival horror to heighten the tension and terror within the viewers similar to what the survival horror games aim to do to their players. Being in constant state of danger and facing continuous obliteration attempts of the pathological Other(s), what is left for the entire humankind is their primordial 'survival instinct', since man-made civilization and technology become obsolete in preventing the extinction of the entire species.

It is also attention-grabbing that both *Invasion* and *Threshold* portray religious figures as hybrids themselves, and in favor of evolutionary upgrading of humans which is quite the opposite of theological debate on creation-evolution controversy brought forward by the monotheistic religions since Charles Darwin introduced the theory of evolution by natural selection in 1859. In *Invasion*, the hybrid Father

Jeffrey Scanlon, the town's priest, first sided with sheriff Tom Underlay and used his congregational influence to rehabilitate the newly formed hybrids, the hurricane 'survivors' and to spiritually aid their integration into the society. According to him, what has happened to the hybrids is 'a miracle', a second chance offered by God. In the episode "Re-Evolution", there is a dialogue between Dave and Father Scanlon that clearly reveals his opinion about evolution:

Dave: Russell believes that what has happened to you and all these people may be some kind of radical evolution. I'm sure you have some quibble with that but...

Father: I never even considered it.

Dave: Well, I'm not surprised.

Father: Oh, no, no...I am not one of these people who believe that god and evolution are mutually exclusive. Like everything else in the universe I believe that evolution was part of God's plan.

Similarly in the episode "Revelations"¹⁰⁸ *Threshold* portrays 'dreamer' Reverend Lavory misinterpreting the dreams – the implanted memories of a glass/crystal landscape and a dark presence –he had, as a Godly message since the same imagery is narrated for the description of heaven in The Book of Revelation 4:6: "I saw the throne in Heaven. And before the throne, there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal. And in the midst of the glass was a beast full of eyes before and behind." He believes that the evolutionary extinction of Homo sapiens is not "the end of the world," he prefers to think of it as a change, "a *cleansing*, like the Great Flood or Sodom and Gomorrah" where "the *impure* will be swept away, and those

¹⁰⁸ "Revelations", CBS, 4 November 2005.

that remain will go on to the next step.” Since he compares the bio-formed Earth to Heaven, he expresses this next step for Homo Superior to be “one step closer to becoming the divine creatures that He intended us to be.” He even thinks that fractal triskelion pattern symbolize Holy Trinity and believes that he has been “anointed by the Lord to help usher in a new chapter in human history.” He spread those beliefs in congregational gatherings; with the support of people it has turned into a religious movement, properly speaking, into a sect whose symbol is fractal triskelion pattern itself.

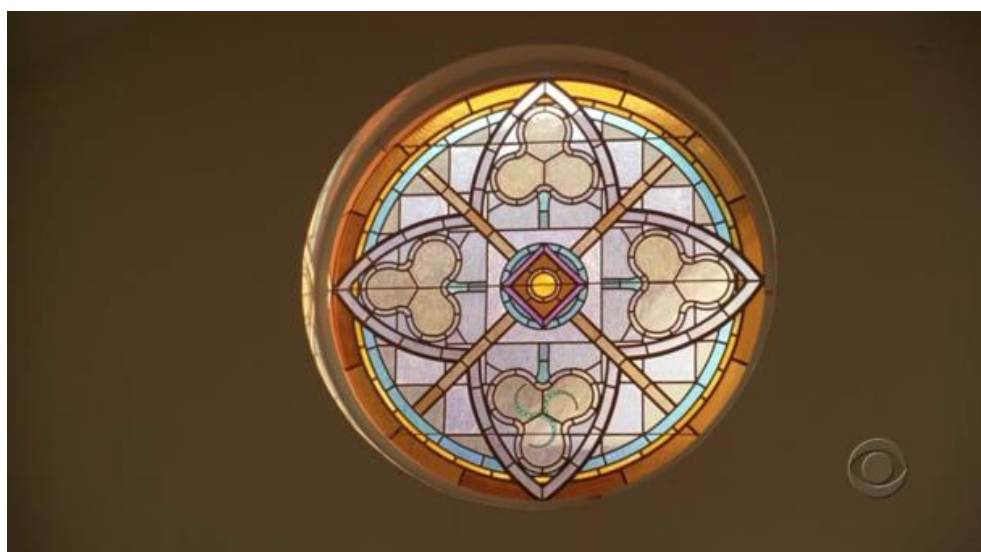


Figure 8 Fractal pattern on the stain glass of the church in *Threshold*

Recurring images of ‘hybrid’ priests within these series who are in favor of or believing in evolution contrasting anti-evolutionary thinking within monotheistic religions, might be a reference to contemporary postmodern belief systems and breakdown of old ways of belief. In the postmodern world, “the postmodern individual is

continually reminded that different peoples have entirely different concepts of what the world is like [and thus] views religious truth as a special kind of truth and not an eternal and perfect representation of cosmic reality”¹⁰⁹ states Walter Truett Anderson in his book *Reality Isn't What It Used To Be*, and adds:

We all become consumers of reality, and greater numbers of us also become creators and merchandisers of reality. As the faith in old absolute wanes, the season opens on the construction of new realities for those who do not care to be seen in the standard models. In earlier times, the invention of cultural forms was shrouded in mystery; now it becomes, for better or worse, democratized. Individuals feel free to create new identities for themselves, and entrepreneurs of reality dabble gaily in the creation of new history, new science, new religion, new politics.¹¹⁰

The old *ways* of belief are collapsing in postmodern era, however, not necessarily the old *systems* of belief result in a similar collapse: postmodern religions or beliefs still have “solid structures and ready answers”¹¹¹ “created to suit every yen and every agenda.”¹¹² Correspondingly, by hybridizing Catholicism with theories of evolution, ‘the genetic hybrid’ priests in *Threshold* and *Invasion* symbolize the entrepreneurs of ‘renewed’ old systems of belief, appropriate for postmodern individuals as being the subjects of their congregation, namely, ‘the seekers’ or ‘the mental hybrids’, who are ready to believe

¹⁰⁹ Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*, p. 8.

¹¹⁰ Id. at 9.

¹¹¹ Id. at 8.

¹¹² Id. at 24.

new realities, in order to compensate the void of the loss of old ways of belief and to psychologically endure the transition to remain sane and more or less socially conventional. Since *Invasion* and *Threshold* can be regarded as conservative series whose storylines revolve mostly around rejuvenating long-lost modern values in the postmodern world, the hybrid priests' hybridizing the monolithic structure of Christianity is reflected as a threat along with the ongoing alien invasion. However, these priests are not presented as evil but metaphorically 'misguided' in the postmodern era where "the collapse of old ways of belief and the coming into being of a new worldview threaten all existing constructions of reality and all power structures attached to them"¹¹³ Not knowing that he is being affected by the mutant vegetables in the church garden, Reverend Lavory of *Threshold* misinterprets the implanted dreams as a divine message and this was about to give rise to the formation of a new cult if the Threshold team had not intervened. Though unintentionally, he participated in alien invasion by mentally and spiritually preparing the going-to-be-infected to the next phase for humans, the Homo Superior; in other words, *mentally converting* them prior to any *genetic conversion* made by the alien signal. The subjects of his congregation, on the other hand, by pretending to have the same visions he had and by faking to share a 'pseudo-common' experience, reflect their readiness for either kind of conversion just to find a meaning –whether it is fabricated or not –in the cacophony the postmodern world offers. Similarly, *Invasion's*

¹¹³ Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be*, p. 26.

body-snatched Father Jeffrey Scanlon is misguided and manipulated by sheriff Tom Underlay whom he thought he is a man of faith, however as revealed in “Us or Them” by sheriff’s daughter that he does not believe in God, yet, would prefer that people treat him as God. He is intentionally hybridized by the sheriff for his congregational influence like Reverend Lavory of *Threshold*: following the instructions of Tom Underlay, he participates in the activation of the invasion by helping the upcoming species’ survival via socially adapting them through survivors’ meeting at his church, The Church of Eternal Life, under the slogan of “We are not alone”. His giving encouraging speeches to the hybrid congregation on how ‘special’ they are, causes the emergence of ‘us versus them’ conflict among the hybrids as well as the humans, even to such extent that a hybrid group after the survivors’ gathering attempts to lynch a non-hybrid while the Father watches the event without interrupting. When Father Scanlon understands that his power is abused by Tom Underlay, he shoots him and later he is sent to misfits’ camp of Eli Szura by the sheriff himself, with the pretext of not handling well the transformation the hybridity brings. After this incident, the series persistently portrays Father Scanlon as a ‘Fallen Priest’ to such extent that in the episode “Re-evolution”, he overtly expresses to Dave and Russell the reason beneath his shooting Tom Underlay as follows:

Father: He misled me. I really believed that God saved my life the night of the hurricane. But now I know differently and Tom knew all along...

Dave: So what do you think saved you?

Father: Evil.

As humanity's 'forced evolution' is initiated via alien influence in both *Threshold* and *Invasion*, these series share the idea of alien *pre-determination* within the course of evolution. In both series aliens strive for 'biological perfection' –one has to have 'perfect DNA' devoid of genetic defects and has to have perfect bodily health lacking any diseases –to initialize the hybridization process, although the rest –processes of natural selection and adaptation –is left up to humans. In *Threshold*, Arthur Ramsay, the mathematician and the linguist of the Red Team, did not become infected after sleeping with an infectee, portrayed in the episode "Vigilante"¹¹⁴, because of the abnormality in his brain which caused him to be a dwarf. Correspondingly, in the same episode, Doctor Julian Sloan did not become a complete infectee after he ate mutated tomatoes, due to an inherited genetic defect he had. In *Invasion*, the alien catalysts did not take Healey in Cuba because he was sick –though his illness is never stated, and later on Kira, the daughter of Tom Underlay, because she had a bad heart valve. Genetic discrimination within alien predetermination for the sake of the acceleration of the survival of the fittest reminds the Nazi's obsession with racial hygiene and eugenics targeting weak, sick, insane, dissident, degenerate humans for elimination from the chain of heredity for the sake of preserving the pure Aryan 'master race'. The alien's elimination of the sick and the genetically defected from the start resembles the Nazi's acts within the Nazi Germany Eugenics Program such as The Law for the Prevention of

¹¹⁴ "Vigilante", Episode 12, August 2006 DVD.

Hereditarily Diseased Offspring (*Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses*) stipulating compulsory sterilization of the hereditarily diseased who were suffering from illnesses such as schizophrenia, manic-depression, epilepsy, hereditary deafness or blindness, and the program called Action T4 (*Aktion T4*) necessitating euthanasia –not in the sense of “Anglo-American concept of euthanasia which emphasizes the individual’s ‘right to die’ or ‘right to his or her own death’ as the ultimate human claim but the state’s right to kill”¹¹⁵ –on adults and children who were institutionalized and/or suffering from birth defects. Similar to the Nazis’ thinking, the genetically defected are nothing but *lives unworthy of life* for the aliens, neither deserving nor qualified for ‘evolutionary upgrading’, mere disturbances for the upcoming species’ genetic hygiene.

The notions of evolution and devolution are entangled in both *Threshold* and *Invasion*, however, in an ambiguous way. On the one hand, the alien hybrids are presented as future upgrading of *Homo sapiens*; on the other hand, they are referred as bridge species, whose females are nothing but mere ovulatory agents solely responsible for reproduction and the delivery of true alien progeny. Another dilemmatic presentation is whether these hybrids are upgrading or downgrading of *Homo sapiens*. Alien hybrids are superior in the sense of physiology and genetics: they have the ability of rapid cell recovery, their strength is increased, and additionally in *Invasion* they can breathe underwater. It is implied that such alteration is necessary

¹¹⁵ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, p. 46.

for the survival of humanity in the future: in *Threshold*, it will save the humanity from radiation caused by the upcoming gamma ray burst; in *Invasion*, though it is indicated indirectly unlike *Threshold*, future humans can survive from the ecological disasters like the catastrophic rise in sea levels due to melting of the ice sheets caused by the global warming, since they become more like an amphibian in nature. However, that kind of evolution is presented, on some level, as devolution: rise of the superhuman brings the fall of humaneness. They have become collective, savage, violent and single in mind devoid of individuality and authenticity, regressing humanity back to the prehistoric times.

CHAPTER 2

DISINTEGRATION OF *THE UNCANNY*

AND THE END OF DEEP-HORROR

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality.

(Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, pp. 81-82)

Apart from the transfigurations in the origin and representation of horror that I examined in the previous chapter, there is a remarkable change in the horror techniques that science fiction texts use to evoke horror in the postmodern era. The most striking and core-shattering mutation that hints the demise of horror within contemporary science fiction occurred in the production of the Uncanny effect.

Before technically analyzing the alterations within the Uncanny, it would be better to scrutinize what the term ‘horror’ stands for. First of all, *horror* should be distinguished from *terror*, since what is commonly called

horror is merely terror¹¹⁶. Ann Radcliffe, the writer of renowned Gothic text *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, states that “terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakes the faculties to a higher degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them.”¹¹⁷ According to Radcliffe, terror is characterized by “uncertainty and obscurity”¹¹⁸ which makes it mysterious, leaving almost all to imagination. However, horror is specific and defined unlike terror. Correspondingly, Devendra P. Varma expresses that “the difference between terror and horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse.”¹¹⁹ If terror is the *raw* manifestation of fear, then horror is the *digested* one; the first, expresses itself with the feeling of dread *before* the horrific experience and pertinent to the Imaginary, whereas the latter, reveals itself with the feeling of revulsion *after* the horrifying incident, more like coming face to face with the Real. Hence, horror is a shattering experience: its basic law is that “existence is completely nihilistic and entropic” where “humanity and the humane exist only as prey”¹²⁰. The feelings of unease, discomfort and shock are derisory to express the existential effect of horror, since the effect is not temporary

¹¹⁶ Nowadays, horror is confused with terror conceptually; besides, the word horror may also stand as an abbreviation for the horror genre. In order to prevent further confusion, I may resort using the phrase “deep-horror” instead of “horror” if ever I feel the need.

¹¹⁷ Ann Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry,’ *New Monthly Magazine*, No.16: 1826, p. 149.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Devendra P. Varma, *The Gothic Flame: Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England, its Origins, Efflorescence, Disintegration and Residuary Influences*, p. 130.

¹²⁰ Roger G. Schlobin, ‘Children of a Darker God: A Taxonomy of Deep Horror Fiction and Film and Their Mass Popularity,’ *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 1.1: 1988. <http://wpl.lib.in.us/roger/HORROR.HTML> (accessed: 5 June 2007).

but permanent: It is crushing, paralyzing as well as epiphanic, in the sense that it brings realization and revelation which is so repugnant. For the reason that it is a *participatory* experience, “horror’s demand for its audiences’ emotional involvement is great, and when it strikes, it does so deeply. Thus, it will return again and again in daydreams and nightmares. It shakes and disrupts.”¹²¹

2.1 The Postmodern Uncanny: ‘The Uncanny’ as ‘The Familiar’

The state of the Uncanny which is a specific form of anxiety, is first identified by Ernst Jentsch in his essay *On the Psychology of the Uncanny (Über die Psychologie des Unheimlichen)* in 1906 and the phenomenon is defined as “doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might be, in fact, animate.”¹²² Inspired from the ideas of Jentsch, Sigmund Freud elaborates and develops the concept of the Uncanny in a 1919 essay, *The Uncanny (Das Unheimliche)* by focusing on E.T.A. Hoffmann’s story *The Sandman (Der Sandmann)* like Jentsch did. Referring to the experience of the Uncanny Freud states:

¹²¹ Roger G. Schlobin, ‘Children of a Darker God: A Taxonomy of Deep Horror Fiction and Film and Their Mass Popularity,’ *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 1.1: 1988. <http://wpl.lib.in.us/roger/HORROR.HTML> (accessed: 5 June 2007).

¹²² Ernst Jentsch, quoted in Sigmund Freud, ‘The Uncanny’ (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, Ed. James Strachey, (London: The Hogarth Press: 1955), p. 225.

The German word ‘unheimlich’ is obviously the opposite of ‘heimlich’ [‘homely’], ‘heimisch’ [‘native’]—the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is ‘uncanny’ is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar. Naturally not everything that is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation is not capable of inversion. We can only say that what is novel can easily become frightening and uncanny; some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny.¹²³

In order to clarify the ambiguous umbrella term ‘the Uncanny’, Freud consults German dictionaries for the linguistic and semantic usage of the word ‘uncanny (unheimlich)’ and discovers that there is a semantic ambivalence between unheimlich and heimlich which is commonly known to be antonyms:

heimlich (1): known, familiar, homely/home-like, intimate, comfortable, domestic.

heimlich (2): secret, unknown, hidden, concealed, withheld from sight.

unheimlich (1): unknown, unfamiliar, un-homely, strange, uncomfortable, eerie.

unheimlich (2): no-longer-secret, known, unhidden, revealed, uncovered, the hidden exposed.

Heimlich, the domain of the *Private*, collides with *Unheimlich*, the domain of the *Un-Private*; two different meanings of each word are incompatible with each other, that is to say, the meaning of heimlich has a meaning that overlaps with its opposite, unheimlich. According to Freud, the extension

¹²³ Sigmund Freud, ‘The Uncanny’ (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, Ed. James Strachey, (London: The Hogarth Press: 1955), pp. 220-221.

of the linguistic usage of heimlich to its opposite unheimlich connotes that “uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression.”¹²⁴ This sense of ‘strange familiarity’, in other words, *the return of the repressed*, makes the Uncanny frightening, not simply ‘the fear of the unknown’.

The Uncanny arouses terror and horror simultaneously because “it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general”¹²⁵. It evokes terror by penetrating the Imaginary, through making things *uncertain*. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle expresses that the uncanny is connected with “the sense that things are not as they have come to appear through habit and familiarity, that they may challenge all rationality and logic.”¹²⁶ Concurrently, the Uncanny induces horror as well, by instigating the Real, through *discovery* and *revelation* after the resurfacing of the hidden, repressed fears and anxieties by the Uncanny. Rosemary Jackson states that the Uncanny “functions to dis-cover, reveal, expose areas normally kept out of sight. It uncovers what is hidden and, by doing so, effects a disturbing transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar.”¹²⁷

That sense of ‘strangeness’ emerging after the transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar, “elides resolution and [...] shifts between the traditionally fixed boundaries of what is considered to be *real* and what is

¹²⁴ Sigmund Freud, ‘The Uncanny’ (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, Ed. James Strachey, (London: The Hogarth Press: 1955), p. 240.

¹²⁵ Id. at 218.

¹²⁶ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, p. 37.

¹²⁷ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, p. 65.

thought to be *imaginary*.¹²⁸ The Uncanny evokes emotional-cognitive conflicts, that is, the conflicts occurring between “fairly universal and primitive emotions, desires, or libidinous feelings, and a more advanced and rational order of beliefs, recognition of laws, or convictions about reality.”¹²⁹ As a result, the distinction between rational and irrational, fact and fiction blurs, what *is* and what *seems* becomes obscure. That kind of state draws the experience of the Uncanny near to *paramnesia*, more specifically akin to *déjà vu*, the illusion of having previously experienced something actually being encountered for the first time¹³⁰. However, due to the accumulative effects of postmodernity and of postmodernism, the Uncanny has become more of an experience similar to *jamais vu*, to be precise, the illusion that the familiar is being encountered for the first time¹³¹. The ‘strangely familiar’ sense of the Uncanny has turned into ‘familiarily strange’ due to the transposition of the meanings of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*: what is once considered to be unfamiliar, unknown and eerie (*unheimlich*) has semantically transformed into something familiar, known and homely (*heimlich*), and correspondingly, what is once considered to be familiar and homely (*heimlich*) has become strange and unfamiliar (*unheimlich*).

¹²⁸ Jane Fletcher, ‘Uncanny Resemblances,’ *N.Paradoxa*, Issue No.7: 1998.
<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/n.paradoxa/fletch.htm>. (accessed: 5 June 2007).

¹²⁹ Cynthia Freeland, ‘Explaining the Uncanny in *The Double Life of Véronique*,’ *Horror Film and Psychoanalysis: Freud’s Worst Nightmare*, Ed. Steven Schneider, (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2004), pp. 91-92.

¹³⁰ Definition of *déjà vu* is retrieved from *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*, www.dictionary.com.

¹³¹ Definition of *jamais vu* is retrieved from *Merriam-Webster’s Medical Dictionary* through www.dictionary.com.

Best example for the transformation of the Uncanny in science fiction reveals itself in the representation of ‘the alien’ –as the uncanny Monster, specifically, the extraterrestrial species named as ‘Grays’ for the reason that their appearance in literature and film has pervaded the popular culture from the late 19th century onwards. Conventionally, the encounter with the alien evokes the uncanny effect as follows: It is *unheimlich* in the sense that it comes from the outer space, from a place which is *unknown* to humans, that it is biologically and physiologically *different* with its gray skin –sometimes blue-gray/green-gray, bald bulbous head, large black almond-shaped lidless eyes, and with its limited facial features. Whereas, on the other hand, it is strangely *heimlich*, since it has anthropomorphic characteristics. Neurologist Dr. Steven Novella states:

The aliens, however, do not just appear as humans, they appear like humans with those traits we psychologically associate with intelligence exaggerated. If, for example, we compare humans to apes we can observe that humans have larger relative craniums, smaller faces with more gracile features, and less hair. If we take a human and then increase the cranium size, make the face smaller and all features more gracile, and take away the hair, you end up with a typical gray alien.¹³²

Aliens are mere byproducts of human imagination that projects human race to a future hyper-evolved state, devoid of all the bestial and Id-driven motives¹³³. They have no digestive system, genitals –they reproduce by cloning –or muscles; they don’t communicate with speech –their having a

¹³² Steven Novella, ‘UFOs: The Psychocultural Hypothesis,’ *The New England Skeptical Society*, 2001. <http://www.theness.com/articles.asp?id=46> (accessed: 5 June 2007).

¹³³ Conversely, Gothic monsters like vampires or zombies projects humanity to a pre-evolved or devolved state, solely driven by the Id to evoke the sense of the ‘strangely familiar’.

slit mouth and lacking a nose nasally makes speaking activity impossible – but instead they use telepathy, a higher level of communication requiring exclusively the brain.

However, the centenarian affinity with the aliens and their spacecrafts, that is to say, the UFOs inevitably initiated the transformation of the *unheimlich* into the *heimlich* in the collective psyche. Thomas E. Bullard points out that UFOs and aliens “have invaded modern consciousness in overwhelming force, and endless stream of books, magazine articles, tabloid covers, movies, TV shows, cartoons, advertisements, greeting cards, toys, t-shirts, even alien-head salt and pepper shakers, attest to the popularity of this phenomenon.”¹³⁴ Such popularity and overuse, and their descending into mere *icons* of popular culture, gradually decreased the uncanny effect they evoke; ironically they have become ‘homely’ and ‘familiar’¹³⁵. Therefore, contemporarily the uncanny effect is created not through evoking the ‘strangely familiar’ but the ‘familiarily strange’, through injecting eeriness and eccentricity to what is considered to be familiar and well-known. The three alien

¹³⁴ Thomas Eddie Bullard, ‘UFOs: Lost in the Myths,’ *UFOs and Abductions: Challenging the Borders of Knowledge*, Ed. David M. Jacobs, (University Press of Kansas: 2000), p. 141.

¹³⁵ It should be noted that countless alien and UFO related sites and blogs on the internet and the public’s mass appeal to them, render the uncanniness of the phenomenon itself and cultivate the formation of the collective familiarity that I mention. Among the series I analyse, the best example for the aforesaid mass popularity of the alien encounter and UFO phenomenon reveals itself in *Invasion* through the character of Dave Groves. He is obsessed with extraterrestrials and fascinated by the paranoid conspiracy theories; moreover, he has a blog through which he informs the world about the strange happenings in Homestead. After he experiences contact with one of the squid-like cloning catalysts in the water and managed to survive from the abduction, his fascination with the aliens heightens instead of experiencing any post-trauma. In the episode “The Origin of Species”, Healey, an ex-CIA agent who kidnaps him to get more information about the happenings in Homestead after reading his blog, criticizes him for his overindulgence and fascination with the alien phenomenon through these words: “Your dreams has come true Dave. You have been abducted.” It is also interesting that ABC simulates Dave’s blog on the official website of the series which parodies the incident even further, in a very postmodern way.

invasion/infiltration plotted TV series of the new millennium, *Threshold*, *Invasion* and *Surface*¹³⁶, avoid demonstrating the clichéd alien imagery to such an extent that they show no aliens at all¹³⁷. Rather, they intend to bring out *the strangeness, the unfamiliarity* within the well-known alien phenomenon. *Invasion* and *Surface* show no UFOs; instead, they depict the aliens' coming to Earth through the presentation of falling bright lights in the sky, similar to the natural phenomenon of a meteor entering the Earth's atmosphere – *Invasion* also adds up the aid of hurricane to uncover the alien infiltration. The *well-known* natural incidents bear *strangeness* in them; they have become the major means for the aliens to land on Earth unnoticed. Unlike *Invasion* and *Surface*, *Threshold* portrays a UFO as an alien probe; however its portrayal defies common knowledge that has its basis upon alleged UFO sightings, for the reason that the UFO is presented as a four or five dimensional object that is incomprehensible by the human mind. The clichéd 'flying saucer' imagery that the popular culture is familiar with leaves its place to an object which is literally left 'unidentified' and never-to-be-known by humanity.

¹³⁶ *Surface* (NBC, 2005-2006) can be considered more of a pseudo-alien invasion text if compared the other two series I mentioned. It is more of an example of a 'science (more specifically, genetics) gone haywire' monster-disaster show. However, in its earlier episodes, before revealing that all the chaos is manmade, it focuses on the possibility of an alien influence on the apparition of the gigantic sea monsters as the agents of alien invasion that threaten the existence of humanity on Earth. Though the sea monsters are genetically engineered, there is a hinted alien influence – an alien plant that helped the recreation of the sea monsters, hence this influence is extraneous to the invasion of the Earth by the extraterrestrials, just justifying aliens' spasmodic visits to our planet. My intention to put *Surface* along with *Threshold* and *Invasion*, solely resides in how it demonstrates the 'so-called alien encounter'.

¹³⁷ These series focus more on alien-human hybrids than the aliens themselves. Alien encounter is shown either once or their involvement is vaguely implied.



Figure 9 Apparition of the four-or-five-dimensional alien probe in the middle of the Pacific Ocean in *Threshold*.



Figure 10 Strange and beautiful lights on the night of the hurricane in *Invasion*

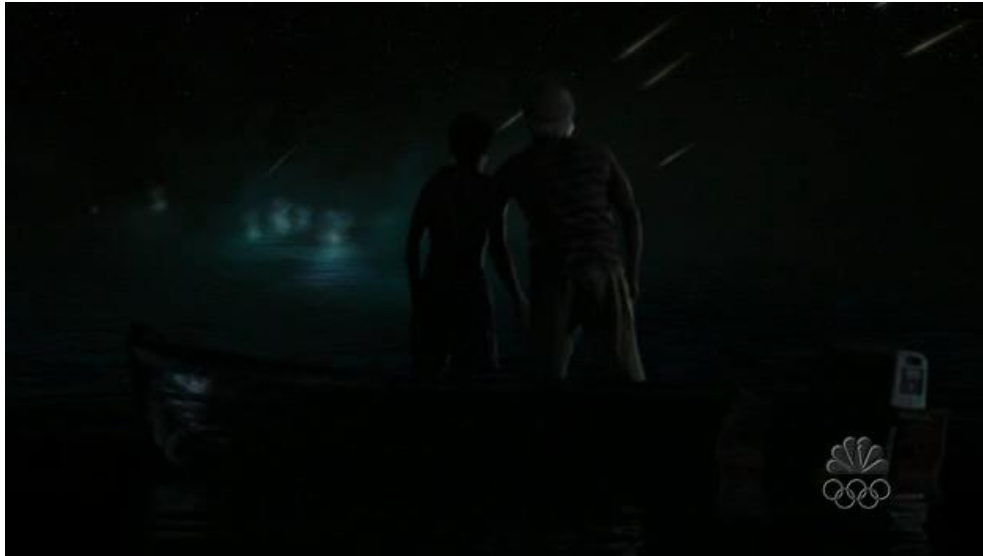


Figure 11 Mysterious meteorite shower landing on the surface of the Caribbean Sea in *Surface*

Distortions in the uncanniness of the Monster also affect the core notion of ‘the return of the repressed’ that actually initiates the feeling of ‘strange familiarity’. Conventionally, like Gothic monsters, science fiction monsters are nothing but “displaced and distorted versions not only of tendencies repressed across a culture, but also of the ‘bad’ subject (the Other) with whom those tendencies have already been identified, and who has already been labeled monstrous.”¹³⁸ The *revelation/uncovering/exposure* of the repressed by the Uncanny, via the figure of *the Monster* as the metaphor for the Other that held responsible for the apparition of the *apocalypse*, is what makes the experience of the Uncanny by the viewer/reader so powerful and fearful. In order to stabilize the intensity of fear and anxiety emerged after facing ‘the familiar in the strange’, the

¹³⁸ Kelly Hurley, ‘British Gothic Fiction, 1885-1930’ *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Ed. Jarrold E. Hogle (Cambridge University Press: 2002), p. 198.

monster is eliminated or exterminated in the end, and the apocalypse is postponed. It is done in such a way as to effect *catharsis* for the viewer or reader, “who sees his or her unacceptable desires enacted vicariously and then safely ‘repressed’ again, or it may encourage sympathy for the monster and thus serve to critique the cultural norms which the monster violates.”¹³⁹

However, contemporarily, this balance of fascination-revulsion with/from the monster has deteriorated and catharsis has become an unreachable state for the viewer/reader. Major reason behind it can be the dissolution of the connection between the Monster and the apocalypse, and the Uncanny. The etymological meanings of the words *monster* and *apocalypse* coincides with the meaning of *unheimlich* as ‘to reveal’. ‘Monster’ and ‘monstrosity’ derive from the Latin verb *monstrare*, meaning ‘to show’, ‘to expose’ and ‘monstrous’ in that sense means something capable of being shown or *demonstrated*. Similarly, ‘apocalypse’ derives from the Greek verb *apo-kalyptein* meaning ‘to uncover’ and from the word *apokaypsis* meaning an ‘uncovering’. Therefore, considering their etymological roots in mind, it appears that the monster and the idea of apocalypse aid the revelation the *unheimlich* brings, and initiate via their exposing ability, ‘the resurfacing of the repressed’ which is a core aspect of experiencing *unheimlichkeit* (uncanniness). The changing nature of *unheimlich* and the reason beneath the demise of horror in the postmodern era, in fact, reside mostly within

¹³⁹ Kelly Hurley, ‘British Gothic Fiction, 1885-1930’ *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Ed. Jarrold E. Hogle (Cambridge University Press: 2002), p. 198.

the metamorphosis the Monster and notion of the apocalypse have undertaken, which I thoroughly expressed in the previous chapter under the issue of obscurity/loss of the Other and Otherness due to constant reflexivity postmodernity offers and the apocalypse-ready postmodern risk society. If the monster is no longer the quintessence of pure evil and vice, and the apocalypse “has become banal,” nothing but “a set of statistical risk parameters to everyone’s existence,”¹⁴⁰ how can they ‘uncover’ or ‘expose’ the repressed and therefore initiate the uncanny effect within the viewer? How can the feelings of fascination-revulsion be aroused on condition that the Monster is nothing but vague embodiment of good and evil at the same time or the story arcs are filled with sudden u-turns of an evil character to good or vice versa as in the case of *Invasion*’s sheriff Tom Underlay or *Threshold*’s alien hybrid Manning? How can the viewer experience catharsis correspondingly, if the Monster cannot be eliminated and the apocalypse cannot be averted in the end? Is it even possible that the idea of apocalypse still arouses the primal fear of humanity, that is, the fear of death, in an era when everybody is familiar with various minor-to-major risks and accustomed to the idea of possible apocalypses that will actually cause the end of the world?

The crisis here is that the Uncanny has become problematical in itself under such conditions. Today, what the experience of the Uncanny brings is not the ‘revelation’ of *the return of the repressed* via the ‘strangely familiar’ as it should be, but the ‘concealment’ of *the constancy*

¹⁴⁰ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, p. 183.

of the ever-present via the ‘familiarily strange’. The Uncanny resides in the present, not in the past or correspondingly not in the future: What we fear is already there, already we know of; it is not, to any further extent, the resurfacing of the things that we have already suppressed in the unconscious. The unhomely ‘outer space’ as the *spatial uncanny* has become the homely ‘waters’ due to the present alarm of global warming and the rise in sea levels as demonstrated in alien invasion series. Moreover, we begin to fear ourselves more than we fear the Other. It is of no surprise that the science fiction TV series of the new millennium like the replicas of the fifties’ B-movies like *Surface*, *Invasion* and *Threshold* show interest in ‘familiarily strange’ humans than the ‘strangely familiar’ aliens, or like the re-imagined *Battlestar Galactica*¹⁴¹ deals more with humanity than the man-made Cylons in the same respect.

In the course of the postmodern Uncanny, there is no postponement of the apocalypse and the elimination of the monster to preserve order so as to re-repress what has already been exposed as repressed: the chaos remains, the apocalypse actualizes and the monster is at all times stays on the loose. There is no need for re-repression because the postmodern Uncanny stems from concealment rather than exposure unlike the modern Uncanny. It covers up what we think we know of, that which we fancy we are familiar with, with endless conspiracies –mostly military-industrial complex based ones. Whenever some of the conspiracies are slightly revealed, many more of them accrue to the storyline. The modern Uncanny

¹⁴¹ *Battlestar Galactica*, The Sci-Fi Channel, 2004- .

shatters the viewer existentially –on the level of Being, by leading him/her to face the Real through the exposure of the repressed, then settles him/her back into the Symbolic, conversely, postmodern Uncanny intends to *shock* the viewer by reminding through conspiracies that the Symbolic Order or the Law that he/she knows of does not exist and places him/her in constant incongruity. Correspondingly, their outcome on the viewer is immensely different: first one evokes deep-horror followed by catharsis, whereas, the latter evokes slight terror and subsequently leaves the viewer with millions of question marks in mind since there is no clear resolution, nothing but ambiguities or probabilities.

CONCLUSION

The decline in viewer enjoyment on contemporary alien invasion TV shows that instigated the abrupt cancellations of *Invasion* and *Threshold* is by no means coincidental. As being a fusion of science fiction and horror genres, alien invasion subgenre of science fiction proclaims itself to be ceasing in our day and this fiasco is a distinct sign of its demise¹⁴². As I discussed earlier, postmodern condition has altered and thus reshaped the subgenre in such a way that the core, indispensable elements that constitute the evocation of horror is either macerated or ceased to function.

Conventionally, horror in alien invasion subgenre has its foundation in two major fears: the fear of the Other (it may be the alien or the aliens among a society) and the fear of the Apocalypse (the fear of the dissolution of an established order or a civilization). However, the postmodern celebration of difference, multiplicity and heterogeneousness which renders down the dichotomies of the Same and the Other as well as the good and the evil, have caused the metaphors of the subgenre to be

¹⁴² The recent film-remake of *Invasion of The Body Snatchers* called *Invasion* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2007) is also a disappointment, proving my point even further that the reason beneath the lack of expected viewer interest in alien invasion scenarios is not 'medium' related but 'genre' based.

stripped out of their meaning. On the other hand, the emergence of postmodern risk society, or to put in other words, the common anticipation of risk as a part of the ordinary life makes the idea of the apocalypse sound rather banal. Moreover, these series' portraying the actualization of the apocalypse bears another problem. Traditional alien invasion texts end with the aversion of the apocalypse and the restoration of the order (the order in the end may be different from the previous order but at least the chaos is prevented). Even though those texts play with the idea of irreversible catastrophe that will affect the entire human race, they ironically postpone its realization. That is to say, though those texts prophesy *the end*, they support the idea of the apocalypse to *go on* by averting the end from happening. By doing so, the idea of the apocalypse mutates over time, acquires novel connotations mirroring shifting social anxieties and preoccupations, and then reflects itself onto another text. On the contrary, contemporary alien invasion texts' actualizing the prophesied end puts the idea of the apocalypse solely in *coma*. As a result, the viewer whose catharsis is being taken off his/her hands, gets accustomed to 'the end' scenarios to such an extent that s/he completely accepts the way it is demonstrated and thus gets number and number on each view, to the social anxieties the idea of apocalypse put forward.

The transformation from the society of prohibition to the society of enjoyment is another reason why the viewer response to 'horror' in contemporary alien invasion texts is so different than the 1950's. As I discussed in chapter two, deep-horror emanates from the fluctuation

between fear and desire, as well as conformity and defiance, mostly through the experience of the Uncanny. Resurfacing of the repressed desires by the Uncanny –in other words, the evocation of the Id, instigates Real enjoyment. However, in the society of prohibition, enjoyment in the Real is a radical experience, because it poses a threat to the social order by transgressing the symbolic boundaries and limits. As a consequence, that kind of experience should be sacrificed for fear of punishment, so it has to be re-repressed in order to be relocated in the symbolic. In an era dominated by McCarthyism, fear of Communism and nuclear war, 1950's movies followed the same lead. The Alien as being the ultimate Other represented the repressed desires and fears, and its 'punishment' by annihilation in the end provides the restoration of the once-threatened-order.

Today, however, prohibition leaves its place to enjoyment. Postmodern subject is commanded to enjoy rather than to suppress his/her desires for fear of punishment, unlike the modern subject. However this transformation has deep impact on the intensity of horror produced by the alien invasion texts. Since there is no explicit prohibition posed by the symbolic order, the condition of 'the return of the repressed' loses all its meaning, rendering enjoyment in the Real inaccessible. As a consequence, the Real enjoyment leaves its place to the imaginary enjoyment as deep-horror leaves its place to terror in these aforementioned narratives. Since terror evokes the Ego not the Id, enjoyment in the Imaginary respects the boundaries of the symbolic order rather than transgressing them.

Unfortunately, there is a huge difference between ‘to enjoy’ (enjoyment in the Real provided by deep-horror) and ‘imagine to enjoy’ (enjoyment in the Imaginary provided by terror): the enjoyment is direct in the first, whereas, in the latter it is indirect, prone to produce the illusion/simulation of enjoyment rather than the enjoyment itself.

In this respect, by recycling the alien invasion texts of the 1950s in new contexts, the contemporary alien invasion texts that I mentioned is nothing but a nostalgic yearning for the return of deep-horror and the Real enjoyment it provides. However such quest of attaining the unattainable is doomed to go astray. The Real enjoyment via deep-horror necessitates the existence of strict borders and limitations because the source of the actual enjoyment originates from transgressing the borders of the symbolic order. Furthermore, deep-horror on its own necessitates prohibition and punishment provided by the symbolic order. Because deep horror’s emanation is bound to the existence of the flux between fear and desire, as well as defiance and conformity, prohibition and punishment are sole means to procure such flux: Prohibition intensifies the *desire* to transgress the limits and provokes the subject in *defiance* of the symbolic order, on the other hand, punishment levels such desire and substitutes desire with *fear* which puts the subject in *conformity* with the symbolic order. However, the symbolic Law today is more tolerant and its borders are more flexible that, under such circumstances, to obtain the abovementioned necessities vital for deep-horror has become impossible,

which makes the survival of the alien invasion subgenre even more difficult.

APPENDIX

The Primary TV Series

THRESHOLD

September 16, 2005 – November 22, 2005 (USA) CBS

Production Company: Paramount Network Television

Creator: Bragi F. Schut

Executive Producers: Brannon Braga

David S. Goyer

David Heyman

Cast: Carla Gugino Dr. Molly Anne Caffrey

Brian Van Holt Sean Cavanaugh

Brent Spiner Dr. Nigel Fenway

Rob Benedict Lucas Pegg

Peter Dinklage Arthur Ramsey

Tagline: They're Here. More are Coming. Don't Worry. We have a Plan.

Plot Summary:

A team of experts, led by a female government contingency analyst, are assembled when the U.S. Navy discovers an extraterrestrial craft has landed in the Atlantic Ocean.

INVASION

September 21, 2005 – May 17, 2006 (USA) ABC

Production Company: Warner Bros. Television

Creator: Shaun Cassidy

Executive Producer: Shaun Cassidy

Cast: William Fichtner Sheriff Tom Underlay

Eddie Cibrian Russell Varon

Kari Matchett Dr. Mariel Underlay

Lisa Sheridan Larkin Groves

Tyler Labine Dave Groves

Tagline: Did you see the lights?

Plot Summary:

When a small town at the edge of the Florida Everglades is threatened by a raging hurricane, U.S. Park Ranger Russell Varon must go to great lengths to protect the small community and his family safe. During the storm his young daughter claims to have seen mysterious lights, seemingly unaffected by the gale-force winds, floating near the water. Varon dismisses the sighting, but begins to wonder if there really was some truth to the story after his missing ex-wife turns up naked and her memory of the storm is completely gone. While the community begins to clean up after the storm and piece their lives back together, Varon begins to investigate the strange happenings as he tries to make sense of what is happening.

The Secondary TV Series

SURFACE

September 19, 2005 – February 6, 2006 (USA) NBC

Production Company: NBC Universal Television

Creators: Jonas Pate

Josh Pate

Associate Producer: Michael Lewis

Cast: Lake Bell Dr. Laura Daughtery

Jay R. Ferguson Rich Connelly

Carter Jenkins Miles Bennett

Rade Serbedzija Dr. Aleksander Circo

Ian Anthony Dale Davis Lee

Tagline: Water. The perfect hiding place.

Plot Summary:

The series centers on the appearance of mysterious sea creatures in the deep ocean and tracks the lives of four characters: Laura Daughtery, the young oceanographer who discovers the secret; Dr. Aleksander Circo, the government scientist who tries to keep things under wraps; Richard Connelly, the Louisiana insurance salesman who loses his brother in a suspicious diving accident; and Miles Bennett, the young boy who brings one of the creatures ashore.

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