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### **Film and history : 'Planet of the Apes' as history**

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**FILM AND HISTORY:**  
***PLANET OF THE APES AS HISTORY***

by

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A thesis presented to Bangor University in fulfilment  
of the thesis requirement for the degree of  
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## SUMMARY

This thesis contends that *all* types of film hold historical value and should be appreciated as relevant and valuable sources for contemporary historians. It is argued that feature films, and in particular fictional feature films, are overlooked as sources of information for scholars analysing contemporary history. *Planet of the Apes* (dir. Franklin J. Schaffner, 1968) is used as a case study to indicate the breadth of information available within the complex audio-visual text.

This study contributes to the study of the under-researched film *Planet of the Apes* that holds an important place within the history of the American science fiction genre. The film is worthy of study because it can be understood as a countercultural document. It reflects upon, engages with and at times critiques the complexities of the political and social culture of the United States in the 1960s. Close analysis of the film provides insight into the attitudes of the filmmakers and their intended audience revealing a intricate commentary on a broad array of concerns and movements including the civil right movement, the women's liberation movement, the Vietnam War and the fear of the advancement and proliferation of nuclear technology.

Fictional feature films, such as *Planet of the Apes*, can and should be used to provide a better understanding of a particular historical period supplementing the archival materials traditionally consulted by historians. Film is interpreted in this thesis as a primary source deserving of respect and incorporation into the study of contemporary history.

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This thesis is dedicated to my family: Mummy, Daddy, Bambi, and all of the cats of Tabbycat Cottage. I carry your heart with me (I carry it in my heart).

## INTRODUCTION:

### FILM AND HISTORY: *PLANET OF THE APES* AS HISTORY

*I think it's good... It'll certainly be different. If the social comment comes off as well as the wild adventure, we may get some attention.*

– Charlton Heston<sup>1</sup>

*Everything I knew about politics I had learned from Planet of the Apes.*

– Mark Kermode<sup>2</sup>

Feature films are one of the most ‘maligned and underused’ resources available to contemporary (post-1900) historians.<sup>3</sup> They act as an inscription of their time period, part of a historically-bound discourse, not necessarily constrained by issues surrounding discussions of accuracy and truthfulness. Since the inception of the moving image filmmakers have been capturing history on screen by filming events as they happen, but also by telling stories purely intended to entertain in reacting to time-specific cultural trends and fashions.

This thesis proceeds from the perspective of the historian. It recognises that *all* types of film hold historical value and therefore should be used in the study of American cultural history. They are the most visible and widely distributed form of U.S. popular culture. Hollywood films are global; they are viewed by millions of people, translated into hundreds of different languages, and incorporated into daily life through a range of media outlets. Such films hold important and relevant information as cultural reactions rather than historical reflections.

Hayden V. White proposes that a distinction should be made between historiography and what he terms ‘historiophoty,’ which is the representation of history through ‘visual images and filmic discourse.’<sup>4</sup> He suggests that film should be

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<sup>1</sup> ‘August 10, 1967,’ Charlton Heston, *The Actor's Life: Journals 1956-76* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976), 277.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Kermode, *It's Only a Movie* (London: Random House, 2010), 50.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Dawson, *Hollywood for Historians*, Historical Insights: Focus on Teaching (Coventry: History at the Higher Education Academy, 2009), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Hayden White, ‘Historiography and Historiophoty,’ *The American Historical Review* 93:5 (December, 1988), 1193.

seen as a separate part of the historical discipline. It cannot and should not simply be compared to written history as the study of film as history requires skills and approaches often specific to film studies.

This thesis looks at the position and potential for film to be used as a historical document and will be focused upon a case study of *Planet of the Apes* (dir. Franklin J. Schaffner, 1968). *Planet of the Apes* deserves to be celebrated and understood as an important document of the counterculture worthy of academic attention. The film was made during a period of great social change and comments upon multiple issues at play in U.S. society in the 1960s. Yet, despite the popularity of the *Planet of the Apes* series, as displayed by cinema attendance figures, sequels, merchandise, literature, and the resurgence of the franchise in 2001 and 2011, the original film, its subsequent sequels and prequels have failed to reach the levels of exposure, popularity, longevity, and academic respect afforded to other science fiction films of the period, most notably *2001: A Space Odyssey* (dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1968), having been overshadowed by ‘the wake of the acclaim’ for Kubrick’s masterpiece.<sup>5</sup>

Although *Planet of the Apes* was reviewed in newspapers and magazines between February and April 1968 – as the film was given a staggered national release – there are very few academic monographs and edited collections on the five original *Apes* films. There are currently only six books in print and only one of these, Eric Greene’s *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race, Politics and Popular Culture* (Middleton, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), is an academic text. The other five are more clearly targeted towards the fan market and tend to deal with trivia and details of production rather than rigorously analysing the series. They are as follows: David Hofstede, *Planet of the Apes: An Unofficial Companion* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2001); Brian Pendreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes: Or How Hollywood Turned Darwin Upside Down* (London: Boxtree, 2001); Joe Russo, and Larry Landsman, *Planet of the Apes Revisited: The Behind-the-Scenes Story of the Classic Science Fiction Saga*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2001); Christopher Sausville, *Planet of the Apes Collectables: Unauthorized Guide with Trivia and Values* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Schiffler Publishing, 1998); and Paul. A. Woods, *The Planet of the Apes Chronicles* (London: Plexus Publishing Limited, 2001).

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<sup>5</sup> Frederick S. Clark, ‘Sense of Wonder’ *Cinéfantastique* 2:2 (Summer, 1972), 3.

Race is the primary focus of the majority of the texts surveyed for their analysis of the *Planet of the Apes* franchise. In particular Eric Greene's *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, Adilifu Nama's *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction* and Susan B. McHugh's article 'Horses in Blackface' are identified as key race allegory readings of the 1968 *Planet of the Apes*. Greene analyses the original series including the five original films and television series' (1968-1976) and discusses them as allegorical texts responding to a range of contemporaneous concerns. However, it is important to note that he repeatedly returns to the issue of race, situating it as the fundamental issue of the entire franchise. Nama includes a chapter that specifically focuses upon the tribunal sequence and how *Planet of the Apes* highlights the response to institutionalised racism throughout U.S. history.<sup>6</sup> McHugh analyses the restricted nature of the allegory that does not extend its racial allegory to include the other animals.<sup>7</sup> These texts are reviewed in the chapter entitled 'Liberal Good Intentions & Racist Undertones: *Planet of the Apes* and Race.' This critical review introduces the most popular readings of the film and lays the foundation of the chapter that further develops and adds to these existing responses.

Despite such coverage of the films' allegorical content, and in other titles such as Pendreigh's *The Legend of Planet of the Apes*, and Russo and Landsman's *Planet of the Apes Revisited*, some of the other concerns dealt with in the films are often underdeveloped or overlooked completely. When scrutinising the entire series of films race is almost certainly the most prominent issue, but this reading relies upon viewing them all 'as one great work,'<sup>8</sup> complete with a continuous, overarching narrative, recurring characters and motifs. However, this reading overlooks the fact that these films were conceived as individual works that were produced in different historical contexts and on the whole by different crews, casts, and notably different directors. The films should also be considered as separate texts as they were not originally conceived as a series. Released in 1968, *Planet of the Apes* became the first film of the series but it was initially a discrete entity, and it was only once this foundational feature proved popular that sequels were even considered.

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<sup>6</sup> Adilifu Nama, *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Susan McHugh, 'Horses in Blackface: Visualising Race as Species Difference in *Planet of the Apes*,' *South Atlantic Review* 56:2 (Spring, 2000), 40-72.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race, Politics and Popular Culture* (Middleton, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 1.

## THE *PLANET OF THE APES* FRANCHISE – THE ORIGINAL SERIES (1968-1972)

*Planet of the Apes* is the central case study here because it is the foundation of the franchise; it is the film that inspired and informed the immediate sequels and the later reimaginings. The *Apes* franchise presently includes seven films made across five decades (1968-2011), two television series, an animated series, graphic novels, novelisations, and a plethora of merchandise that have been created in conjunction with the filmed productions.<sup>9</sup> The first four sequels and the 1968 *Planet of the Apes* form a pentalogy that will be referred to as the original series: *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (dir. Ted Post, 1970), *Escape from Planet of the Apes* (dir. Don Taylor, 1971), *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (dir. J. Lee Thompson, 1972), and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* (dir. J. Lee Thompson, 1973). The sequels were all created in the seventies in response to the popularity of the initial film and the prominence of the science fiction genre throughout the decade.<sup>10</sup> The *Planet of the Apes* franchise was an ‘early experiment in entertainment franchise’ that ‘paved the way for the postmodern economics of storytelling, where sequels aren’t just expected, but contractually obligated.’<sup>11</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* is a franchise. By using the term franchise it is possible not only to understand the films as a group but also makes reference to the development and increasing need for films to be ‘a hub of commercial opportunity and brand exchange.’<sup>12</sup> Films are not distinct artefacts but part of a complex web of commodities that can be bought and consumed by a culture. The *Planet of the Apes* franchise can be seen as a forerunner to the later science fiction franchise *Star Wars* (1977).<sup>13</sup> *Star Wars* was conceived and written as a series and has become one of the most profitable in Hollywood history not simply because of the popularity of the initial film and later sequels but partially because of the associated products which encouraged lasting popularity and greater cultural immersion. A large amount of *Planet of the Apes*

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<sup>9</sup> A sequel to *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (Wyatt, 2011) is currently in production with Twentieth Century Fox under the working title: *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* due for release in May 2014.

<sup>10</sup> See ‘Appendix II’ for a discussion of the science fiction genre context.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Von Busack, ‘Signifying Monkeys: Politics and Story-telling in the *Planet of the Apes* Series,’ in Gregg Rickman (ed.), *The Science Fiction Films Reader* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2004), 165.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Grainge, *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 53.

<sup>13</sup> The *Star Wars* film series to date: *Star Wars* (1977), *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* (1983), *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (1999), *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002) and *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005).



merchandise was created, from lunchboxes to latex ape masks, which is now highly collectable and valuable not only in terms of monetary value but also for its fans in creating a connection to the films.<sup>14</sup>

Each instalment of the original *Planet of the Apes* film series, although linked by their storyworld and ideological concerns, should be understood as separate films. Identical creative teams did not produce the films; they are multiple authored texts presenting slightly different attitudes to and interpretations of prominent issues surrounding scripting and filming. Twentieth Century Fox produced the entire *Planet of the Apes* series, including the three most recent additions, with the original series also being produced by APJAC Productions (founded by Arthur P. Jacobs in 1964). The perceptible differences between the films can be in part attributed to the nature of film because, as Jack Stillinger notes, ‘as a rule, the authorship of films is so complicated and diffuse as to be, for all practical purposes, unassignable.’<sup>15</sup> Identifying a clear author of a filmic text is practically impossible; because of film’s inherent collaborative nature as a series, this is further complicated by the sheer volume of people engaged in the projects stretching out over more than a decade.<sup>16</sup>

The series can be split into different groups according to which issues were most prominent at the time. *Planet of the Apes* and *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* have a number of common strains including race, religion, Vietnam, and condemnation of nuclear warfare. *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* of all the films has the most unconcealed use of and commentary upon religion and religious practice. *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* can also be viewed together as these two films have the most overt commentary upon race relations in the United States. Despite their obvious civil rights message these films can be seen as having a clear religious content as well; *Conquest* may be ‘the centrepiece of the *Apes* saga’s racial allegory’ but it is also structured around several biblical narratives, for example the story of Moses.<sup>17</sup> *Battle* also has a strong religious tone as it can be seen as a retelling of the story of Cain and Abel and specifically the

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<sup>14</sup> For a detailed review of the collectibles created for the original *Apes* series see Sausville, *Planet of the Apes Collectables*.

<sup>15</sup> Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of the Solitary Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 174.

<sup>16</sup> For further discussion of multiple authorship see Steven Price, *Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and Steven Maras, *Screenwriting – History, Theory and Practice* (London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 8.

first murder. *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971) cannot be grouped as easily as it contains neither the variety offered by the first two films nor the blatant civil rights commentary of the latter. It does engage with these issues but they are not as pronounced because the film appears to have a more light-hearted edge; however, it does set the foundation for *Conquest* as it sees the birth of a messianic figure who heralds the rise of the apes from subaltern species to master race.

*Planet of the Apes'* post-apocalyptic storyline and future (although not futuristic) setting was intended by the filmmakers to 'make certain comment about today's society in spite of the fact that time in which we were telling the story was in the twenty-third century.'<sup>18</sup> The film's narrative allows for a discussion of a number of pertinent issues. *Planet of the Apes'* position within the science fiction genre is important because of its lasting impact as a cultural reference point.<sup>19</sup> As the first major film franchise and as one of the first films of the New Hollywood science fiction wave it is important to establish the context in which the film was created within Hollywood history and also in terms of critical response. The following section examines the production of *Planet of the Apes* and provides insight into how the studio marketed the film to its intended audience. This is then compared to the range of critical responses to the film, considering whether the reviews indicate a wider response from outside the reviewers (and publishers) own personal aesthetic tastes.

### **PRODUCING *PLANET OF THE APES***

*Planet of the Apes* was a long-running project for producer Arthur P. Jacobs that took five years to get from the purchasing of the rights to the source novel, *La Planète des Singes*, in 1963 to the cinema screen in 1968.<sup>20</sup> Jacobs recognised the novel's potential for development into an American narrative after the book was given to him by friend and literary agent Alain G. Bernheim.<sup>21</sup> *La Planète des Singes* was adapted for the screen by Rod Serling (c.1964-66) and Michael Wilson (c.1966-67). Serling devised most of the major plot points and penned the famous Statue of Liberty ending

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<sup>18</sup> Franklin J. Schaffner quoted in Dale Winogura, 'Dialogues on Apes, Apes and More Apes,' *Cinéfantastique* 2:2 (Summer, 1972), 21.

<sup>19</sup> A plot outline can be found in Appendix I.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Boulle, (trans. Xander Fielding) *La Planète des Singes*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> Jacobs kept a full record of all correspondence between himself and Bernheim including letters, memos, and telegrams. These can be found in the General Correspondence Folders (59/3-5) in the Arthur P. Jacobs Collection, Collection 23, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University.

and Wilson was brought in to improve and develop the dialogue, most of which was ultimately filmed.<sup>22</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* was produced by Jacobs' own film production company APJAC Productions with associate producer Mort Abrahams and financed and distributed by Twentieth Century Fox. During the production of *Planet of the Apes* Richard Zanuck was the Head of Production at the studio who 'represented a new generation' of studio moguls.<sup>23</sup> Although Charlton Heston is the name most readily associated with the project, the role of Taylor – or Thomas as he appears in earlier scripts drafts – was first offered to Marlon Brando and Paul Newman.<sup>24</sup> Telegrams sent in the early stages of development (1963) between Jacobs and Bernheim indicate that the stars were approached and interested in the main role receiving copies of the translated novel and sketches.<sup>25</sup> In a message from November 1963 Jacobs reported that Newman was 'greatly interested' in the project, but went on to say that he was sure they would have a deal 'with or without Newman.'<sup>26</sup> Despite this initial confidence that the film would be made 'with or without' a star, securing a recognisable star was essential to the film eventually being produced.

Following the casting negotiations with Newman and Brando, Jacobs and Abrahams looked to casting other major stars including John Wayne and Charlton Heston. As producer Mort Abrahams explains they discussed Wayne but came to the conclusion that 'it would throw the balance of the picture too much. It would be a star

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<sup>22</sup> The final revelation of *Planet of the Apes* as written by Serling is reminiscent of an episode that he wrote for *The Twilight Zone*. 'I Shot an Arrow into the Air' (Ep. 15, Season 1, CBS, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1960) that told the story of four astronauts who crash-land on an asteroid with limited supplies and water. One of the astronauts kills his companions in order to survive only to discover that the space ship had in fact crash-landed back on Earth.

<sup>23</sup> Penreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> The series of telegrams and letters between Bernheim and Jacobs indicate how invested Jacob's was in getting the project into production. Letters also show that he kept an eye on the availability of the novel when it was released in the United States in November 1963. In one letter from that November Jacobs claimed that it was 'shocking' that the majority of New York booksellers had not even heard of the novel and that neither reviews nor adverts had appeared in publications such as *Publisher's Weekly*, *Time*, or *Newsweek*. He suggested that Bernheim should 'send a cable in Pierre Boullé's name demanding promotion.' See Arthur P. Jacobs, Letter to Alain Bernheim, 20 November 1963. Arthur P. Jacobs Collection, Collection 23, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University. General Correspondence, 59/3. See also General Correspondence Folders (59/3-5) for full telegram collection.

<sup>25</sup> A telegraph from 29<sup>th</sup> October 1963 notes that Brando was reading the book had received preliminary sketches whilst on location in Tahiti. Arthur P. Jacobs (APJAC), Telegram to Alain G Bernheim (29<sup>th</sup> October 1963). Arthur P. Jacobs Collection, Collection 23, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University. General Correspondence, 59/3.

<sup>26</sup> Arthur P. Jacobs (APJAC), Telegram to Alain G Bernheim (20<sup>th</sup> November 1963). Arthur P. Jacobs Collection, Collection 23, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University. General Correspondence, 59/3.

vehicle.’<sup>27</sup> Wayne was closely associated with the ‘myth of the Western hero’ and the wild lawlessness of the American frontier;<sup>28</sup> the main character of *Planet of the Apes* needed to be representative of U.S. civilisation and its arrogance so that the fall from man to beast would be entirely devastating. As Abrahams goes on to explain ‘Heston was American civilization. He fit the frame and he didn’t take away.’<sup>29</sup> As Mark Jancovich observes, his presence gives the film ‘an aura of quality’ and links it back to the classical epic Hollywood productions via which Heston gained notoriety.<sup>30</sup> He might not have the star power of Wayne but he was the figure that reviewers of *Planet of the Apes* structured their observations around.

Franklin J. Schaffner joined the fledgling project as the proposed director in 1965. *Planet of the Apes* had already been attached to two other directors: J. Lee Thompson, who eventually directed the final two *Apes* films, and Blake Edwards, director of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1961) and *The Pink Panther* (1963). Both left the project due to commitments to other films, with Edwards leaving in January 1965 following a series of rejections for financing from the major studios (Warner Bros., MGM, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox). As Heston explained, the project ‘drifted around the studios for a couple of years’ but failed to gain any traction as it was considered too risky,<sup>31</sup> it was ‘the first of the space fantasies and the studios basically all thought it was kind of a bizarre idea... and they were *terribly* skeptical.’<sup>32</sup>

Schaffner, who had worked with Heston on *The War Lord* (1965), became attached to *Planet of the Apes* during the latter stages of securing funding. After many years of Jacobs repeatedly pitching the film to the major Hollywood studios, Richard Zanuck (Twentieth Century Fox) agreed to finance a test reel. Fox commissioned the development of the required make-up and a short scene that was shot on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1966.<sup>33</sup> The test reel was directed by Schaffner, with a short script from Michael

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<sup>27</sup> Mort Abrahams quoted in Penreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> Marcia Landy, ‘The Hollywood Western, the Movement-Image, and Making History,’ in J. E. Smyth (ed.), *Hollywood and the American Historical Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 39.

<sup>29</sup> Mort Abrahams quoted in Penreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes*, 56.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Jancovich, ‘Charlton Heston is an Axiom’: Spectacle and Performance in the Development of the Blockbuster,’ in Andy Willis (ed.), *Film Stars: Hollywood and Beyond* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 57.

<sup>31</sup> Charlton Heston, ‘Foreword,’ in Joe Russo, and Larry Landsman, *Planet of the Apes Revisited: The Behind-the-Scenes Story of the Classic Science Fiction Saga* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2001), xi.

<sup>32</sup> Charlton Heston interview with Russo and Landsman quoted in *Ibid*, 25. Emphasis in original.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Test Sequence, Feb. 21 1966.’ ‘Arthur P. Jacobs Collection,’ Collection 23, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University. 59/15 & 59/16. Also available from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Shadefackenthal Library, Franklin and Marshall College.

Wilson that starred Heston as Thomas, Edward G. Robinson as Zaius, Linda Harrison as Zira, and James Brolin as Cornelius. Twentieth Century Fox eventually greenlit the project in September 1966 with a budget of just under five million dollars.<sup>34</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* was released in 1968 at the end of the Production Code era with the ratings system formally beginning on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1968. Prior to the change from Production Code to ratings the major studios tried to anticipate ‘the reactions of the regulators’ and made sure their films would pass first time.<sup>35</sup> In an anecdote from Leff and Simmon’s *Dame in the Kimono* Arthur P. Jacobs was said to have commented on the visibility of Charlton Heston’s rear in a 1967 in-house screening of *Planet of the Apes* saying, ‘I can see their butts... we’ve got to give the impression of nudity without showing Chuck’s ass.’<sup>36</sup> Jacobs was aware that nudity would be an issue for the Production Code Administration (PCA) as it was something that had been specifically raised in correspondence between the PCA and the studio in April 1967.<sup>37</sup> When the film was finally sent for analysis by the PCA in January 1968 it was given the seal of approval with no need for re-editing.<sup>38</sup>

#### **MARKETING *PLANET OF THE APES*: POSTERS & THE TRAILER**

*Planet of the Apes* had a striking U.S. print advertising campaign with a series of posters, and trailers that were screened in cinemas and in television spots. The posters can be seen to act as a record of the intentions of the studios in terms of their target audience. Film posters are created ‘for (and from) the film’ itself and can be ‘a deciding factor in its commercial success.’<sup>39</sup> Alongside trailers, television

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<sup>34</sup> For a detailed description of the development of *Planet of the Apes* and the story of its production see Joe Russo, and Larry Landsman, *Planet of the Apes Revisited*, 1-91. This text includes interviews with the key figures (where possible) and makes use of the extensive personal archives of Arthur P. Jacobs, some of which is held in the ‘Arthur P. Jacobs Collection,’ Collection 23, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University. The book is not fully referenced in an academic style; details of archival and personal collections are not provided.

<sup>35</sup> Leonard J. Leff, Jerold L. Simmons, *Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 275.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 275.

<sup>37</sup> The letter responded to the submission of the final revised screenplay and informed the studio that the ‘material meets the requirements of the Production Code’ but noted that ‘breasts should be properly covered’ in response to stage directions that described humans females as bare-breasted. It also suggested that the American Humane Society would need to be consulted regarding all scenes with live animals. See Geoffrey M. Shurlock, Letter to Frank Ferguson, 28 April, 1967. Motion Picture Association of America – Production Code Administration Records (MPAA/PCA), Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

<sup>38</sup> *Planet of the Apes* PCA approval document, 17 January, 1968. MPAA/PCA Records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

<sup>39</sup> John Ellis, *Visual Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), 30.

appearances (both interviews and trailers), and newspaper/magazine advertising, posters are one of the most crucial methods of marketing for a new film, especially for films made prior to the proliferation of Internet marketing.<sup>40</sup> The poster is a ‘narrative image,’<sup>41</sup> a principally visual paratext that gives the audience information on different aspects of film content in a single frame.

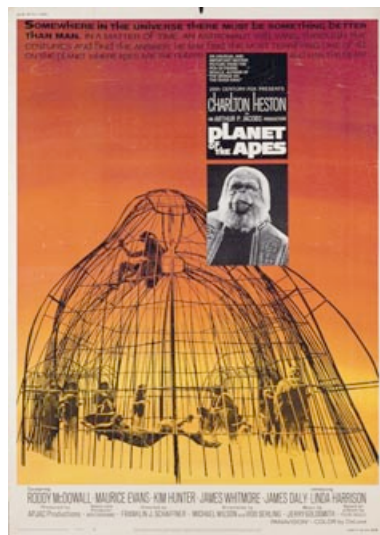


Fig. 1.: U.S. one-sheet poster (1968)<sup>42</sup>



Fig. 2.: U.S. one-sheet poster (1965)<sup>43</sup>

Several posters were produced for *Planet of the Apes*' U.S. marketing. The main one-sheet poster (fig.1) has a bright orange gradient background, the central image is a graphic of a cage of humans with Charlton Heston barely visible in the lower right-hand corner, and in the centre right there is an inset image of a clothed orangutan (Dr. Zaius).<sup>44</sup> The title and name of the main star of the film (Heston) are prominently displayed and the accompanying text reads:

<sup>40</sup> See Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 57-63.

<sup>41</sup> Ellis, *Visual Fictions*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Planet of the Apes* [poster], printed U.S.A., LPIU Local No. 6-L Cleveland Litho, 68/50 (1968). Margaret Herrick Library (AMPAS), Photograph Archive (396-1), Poster Collection, POST-25546.

<sup>43</sup> *The War Lord* [poster], printed U.S.A., 65/300 (1965). Margaret Herrick Library (AMPAS), Photograph Archive (396-1), Poster Collection, POST-0495.

<sup>44</sup> The gradient-orange one-sheet poster is the most widely available poster and cannot be viewed at all of the archives consulted (Loyola Marymount University, Margaret Herrick Library (AMPAS), and Franklin & Marshall College). It was also the cover image used from the press book that was issued prior to the film's release that included publicity images and advertising layouts. The other U.S. posters created for the film's 1968 release were only available from the Franklin J. Schaffner Collection at Franklin and Marshall College and from a private collector. See *Planet of the Apes* Press Book (orange & black), and *Planet of the Apes* Press Book (yellow & red). Arthur P. Jacobs Collection, Collection 23, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University. Publicity Campaign Folder, 61/4.

**Somewhere in the universe there must be something better than man.** In a matter of time, an astronaut will wing through the centuries and find the answer. He may find the most terrifying one of all on the planet where the apes are the rulers and man the beast.<sup>45</sup>

The photograph of the Zaius (Maurice Evans) and the black outline drawing of the human captives on the poster sets up a tension between the humans and the apes. The different types of images (photograph/line drawing) and the positioning of these within the frame, with the ape at the top and Heston and other indistinguishable humans down below, indicates the film's main narrative as a struggle between man and beast.

The poster draws upon the *Planet of the Apes*' 'star intertexts' in its advertising, suggesting that Twentieth Century Fox on one hand hoped to draw upon Heston's existing audience but on the other were not intending to create a star vehicle.<sup>46</sup> In contrast to other posters advertising Heston films, for example the one-sheet for *The War Lord* (dir. Schaffner, 1965) where Heston appears centrally and powerfully posed (fig. 2), this main poster for *Planet of the Apes* marginalises Heston. It plays upon audience expectations for Heston to be shown as a strong force poised for battle or in a romantic clinch. Instead Heston is shown imprisoned and subjugated. This narrative image indicates that this Hollywood hero is to be defeated by animals, and that this unusual film, against Heston's usual type, will offer audiences more than a talking-animal adventure. It does not focus upon the science fiction element but rather suggests the 'Swiftian satire' that Franklin J. Schaffner had apparently intended.<sup>47</sup> The publicity campaign material (pressbooks/classroom guides) that accompanied the posters promoted a reading of the film as 'an allegory for our times with the flavour of Jonathan Swift and a dash of Jules Jules Verne'.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Emphasis in original (first sentence in bold text).

<sup>46</sup> Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> Schaffner quoted in Dale Winogura, 'Dialogues on Apes, Apes and More Apes' *Cinéfantastique* 2:2 (Summer, 1972), 21.

<sup>48</sup> Anon, 'Publicity,' *Planet of the Apes* Pressbook (1968), 4. Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Archives and Special Collections, Shadok-Fackenthal Library, Franklin and Marshall College, 24/5. See also Leader, William, *Planet of the Apes: A Guide and Commentary for Teachers and Students: Pursuing the Study of Man* (APJAC/20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 1967), 25/5.

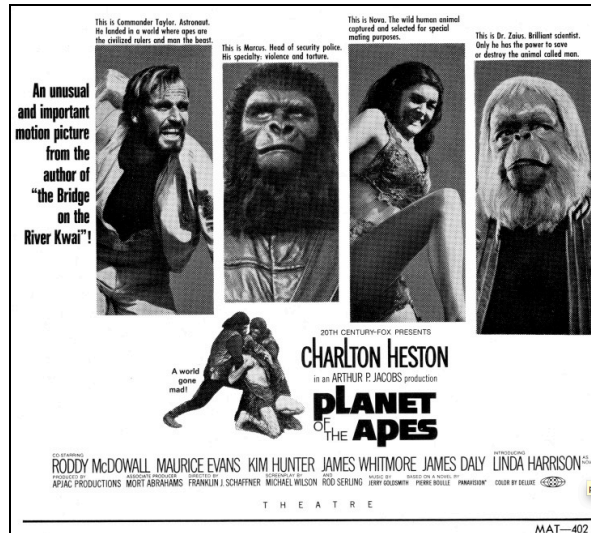


Fig. 3.: U.S. one-sheet poster (1968)<sup>49</sup>

A descriptive panelled poster was also released in the U.S. for *Planet of the Apes* (fig. 3), and a series of door posters were created (fig. 4 – following page). These posters draw upon the same set of promotional images with extended descriptions more overtly emphasising the struggle between human and ape and violent nature of some of the apes. These posters were also used in newspaper advertising. The door posters include an image of the chimpanzee Dr. Zira that describes her as a ‘seeker of truth’ who ‘will be tortured’ if she reveals the truth about humans. Despite the greater focus upon Heston, these images still highlight the dangerous situation the human characters are placed in with an image of Taylor’s torture at the hands of the apes. They continue to challenge the more traditional notions of Heston as a man with innate heroic qualities whilst also promoting the film on the basis of his central casting.

<sup>49</sup> *Planet of the Apes* Pressbook (1968), 1. Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Archives and Special Collections, Shadok-Fackenthal Library, Franklin and Marshall College, OSDRI.





Fig. 4.: Series of four U.S. door poster (1968)<sup>50</sup>

The international posters indicate a marginally different marketing strategy that focuses far more clearly on the *Planet of the Apes*' main star. However, thematically they tend to share much with their U.S. counterparts as Heston, although more prominently displayed, is shown to be in jeopardy. The more hostile nature of the Western European posters advertises the film through a display of aggression against Heston, bound, gagged and whipped rather than marginalised and caged. For example, the Italian (fig. 5), Spanish (fig. 6), and French (fig. 7) posters feature similar images of a bare-chested Heston being restrained and silenced by two black gorillas. Greater emphasis is placed upon Heston, his body, and the physically aggressive nature of the apes.

In all of these images Heston is shown to be struggling against his captors rather than resigned to his position as prisoner as he is shown in the main U.S. poster. This image of resistance and peril was not found in all of the international posters, as the Polish one-sheet shows (fig. 8). This stylised poster, designed by Eryk Lipiński, can be attributed to the Polish poster art tradition that took 'a visual, conceptual approach' to the design of imported film posters.<sup>51</sup> Instead of providing narrative information these posters focused 'rather on the artist's interpretation of the climate and mood of the film.'<sup>52</sup> Yet, despite its differences the poster still creates an aggressive image with the stark stare of a black gorilla with the image of the Statue of

<sup>50</sup> *Planet of the Apes* [poster series], printed U.S.A. Part of a private collection. Available at: <<http://pota.goatley.com/misc/posters/>> [Last accessed: 27/05/2012].

<sup>51</sup> Danuta A. Boczar, 'The Polish Poster,' *The Art Journal* 44:1 (Spring, 1984), 20.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

Liberty canted and drifting in black space. It is the only poster released at the time to feature the image of the statue that was purposefully kept a secret from audiences.



Fig. 5.: Italian one-sheet poster (1968)



Fig. 6.: Spanish one-sheet poster (1968)



Fig. 7.: French one-sheet poster (1968)



Fig. 8.: Polish one-sheet poster (1968)<sup>53</sup>

The full-length trailer for *Planet of the Apes* opens with part of the monologue from the opening of the film where Taylor claims he ‘can’t help thinking that somewhere in the universe that there has to be something better than man.’<sup>54</sup> The

<sup>53</sup> All four poster images taken from Margaret Herrick Library (AMPAS), Photograph Archive (396-1), Poster Collection. Individual details as follows: *Planet of the Apes* [poster], printed Italy, Rotolito (1968), 2007-715-35; *Planet of the Apes* [poster], printed Spain, T. G. Llauger, S. A., Barcelona (1968), POST-13138; *Planet of the Apes* [poster], printed France, Ets Saint-Martin, 38 Rue Pascal Paris 13 Kel. 05 95 (1968), POST-13139; *Planet of the Apes* [poster], printed Poland, WD A 2 W WA ZAM 511 P 51 6 000 (1968). Ibid, POST-23118.

<sup>54</sup> This trailer is available on the 2006 14-disk *Planet of the Apes – The Ultimate Collectors Edition*. It can also be accessed on videotape at Franklin and Marshall College (*Planet of the Apes* Trailer [videotape], 82/1) and at UCLA (*Planet of the Apes* Trailer [film reel], reel no.125).

trailer is a montage of sequences from the film and some cut material, and two voiceovers that purposely sit outside of the filmic diegesis. The first voiceover (actor unknown), that begins after Taylor/Heston's opening line, explains the setting of the film exclaiming that the film-world 'will challenge every idea you've ever had of civilisation'. The voiceover is accompanied by images of the spaceship crashing, gun-wielding gorillas, and a caged Nova. This is then replaced by the voice of Charlton Heston speaking out of character, the voiceover becomes diegetic as the trailer cuts to Heston speaking directly to camera on set (in Zaius' chambers). He gives the trailer a serious tone by explaining the film's philosophical underpinning. Heston reiterates the notion of the upturning of civilisation saying that following the crash on the planet:

It did not end here, it ended in an episode so unpredictable, so shocking it made the horror that preceded it seem calm and gentle as a summer's night. A great many people worked long and hard to answer the question of what a civilisation would be like where the evolutionary process had been reversed and apes were the superior species. Hundreds of technicians and the largest number of make-up artists assembled assisted the producers, the writers, the director, and the cast.



Fig. 9.: Screenshots from the 1968 cinema trailer for *Planet of the Apes*

There is a repetition of the line 'it's a madhouse!' in a jarring split-screen (fig. 9) where the dialogue overlaps and clashes with itself. This is followed by a split-screen with Zaius asserting that 'man has no understanding,' contrasting the clothed ape with Taylor and Nova lying together on straw. In both instances the audio and image indicate that Heston is the star of the film, especially as other well-known actors such as Kim Hunter (Zira) and Maurice Evans (Zaius) are obscured by prosthetics. Heston is positioned, however, as secondary to technical achievements and the desire for the film to be taken seriously.

The trailer, like the posters, is tense and aggressive with Taylor/Heston being attacked and tormented by his captors. The trailer matches the other advertising that

positions *Planet of the Apes* not as a space opera but as a Swiftian satire. The film was marketed towards a wide viewership, with evidence of intentions towards Heston's existing audience but also those interested in the unique technical and even philosophical aspects of the film. *Planet of the Apes* was a film that the distributors and filmmakers hoped would be taken seriously, as the Twentieth Century Fox financed 1966 test reel attests, and not being sneered at by critics and the audience was a major concern that can be seen to be documented in film's advertising strategy.

### **REVIEWING *PLANET OF THE APES***

Reviews can be ignored or missed by the audiences and can not act an absolute inscription of the views of the original audience. Even so, 'upon release... reviews hold the power to set the parameters for viewing, what to watch for, and how to make sense of it.'<sup>55</sup> They can offer the audience a particular approach to the material with the critic acting as a mediator between the viewer and the text. They are expressing their subjective view (within the strictures of their specific publication) that can change the perception of a film from the way that it is advertised to the way in which it is remembered within popular culture.

The print advertising for *Planet of the Apes* included quotes from the reviewers (fig. 10.1 & 10.2) that highlighted the studio's recognition that they play an 'intermediary role between production and reception'.<sup>56</sup> Quotations from selected reviews from major nationally available publications such as *LIFE* magazine, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times* appeared as part of the adverts highlighting particular reviewers, such as Richard Schickel's review from *LIFE*.

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<sup>55</sup> Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 167.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 168.



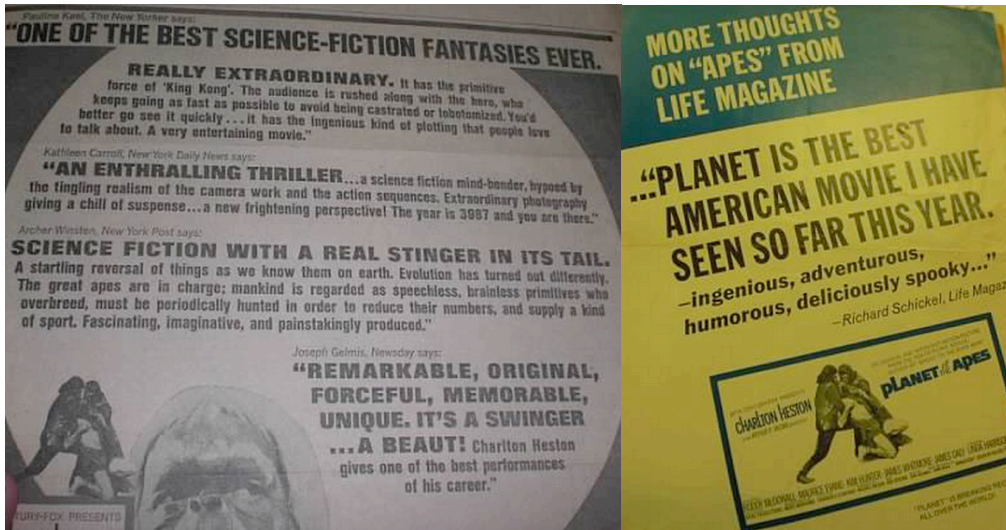


Fig. 10.1.: New York Times advert cutting for *Planet of the Apes* dated 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1968, no page number available.  
 Fig. 10.2.: Magazine advert cutting for *Planet of the Apes* (source unknown)<sup>57</sup>

Schickel’s review of *Planet of the Apes* is worthy of note because of the way he approaches the film. Early in the review he claims that the film is ‘the best American movie I have seen so far this year’ but then goes on to explain that the film could and should be viewed as if by a child.<sup>58</sup> He speaks of his own four-year-old daughter’s affection for the film and the influence it has had upon her ‘inner life.’<sup>59</sup> He says that he should have been brave enough to proclaim his own enjoyment of the film suggesting that ‘any sensible child’ would recognise the quality of the film immediately and that film critics often fail to respond to films with the immediacy of a child at a film’s ‘proper level.’<sup>60</sup> American cinema, he notes, have ‘almost no art tradition’ and should not be judged as art, but rather as the entertainment they are intended to be. Schickel notes that *Planet of the Apes* is full of possibility and successfully develops the ‘sociology of a world run by apes.’<sup>61</sup> It is a mixed review as on that on one hand it suggests that to truly appreciate it you must do so as a child, but on the other praises it as ‘an authentic, totally engaging experience’ and a ‘radical reversal of kind.’<sup>62</sup>

Pauline Kael, film reviewer for the *New Yorker*, takes a similarly mixed approach to the film comparing it to the ‘primitive force[...] of old *King King*’ but also

<sup>57</sup> Newspaper cuttings taken from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Archives and Special Collections, Shadok-Fackenthal Library, Franklin and Marshall College, Reviews folder, 25/7.  
<sup>58</sup> Richard Schickel, ‘Second Thoughts on Ape-Men: *Planet of the Apes*,’ *LIFE* 64:19 (10 May, 1968), 20.  
<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.  
<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.  
<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.  
<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

referring to the film as a ‘joke’ that is played upon the audience and its star. She analyses the film in terms of the use and literal abuse of Charlton Heston and his body – a theme that is repeated and propagated in the studio marketing. Kael draws attention to the use of Heston’s star body as ‘archetype of what makes Americans win’;<sup>63</sup> a site of magnificent strength that is then used as a whipping boy for the failings of Western civilisation. The review although clearly expressing Kael’s own feelings about the film’s somewhat absurd and farcical elements also recognises the film’s allegorical content and the manipulation of the star in the pursuit of this extra-textual meaning. Kael’s review, or rather a brief passage with several ellipsis, was quoted in the publicity material for use in advertising following the New York premiere.<sup>64</sup>

Pauline Kael’s reviews were influential and offered a developed and often controversial opinion on the cinema she experienced. She shaped the way that film was reviewed throughout the seventies and eighties. As Jed Perl notes, she was a key figure in a ‘golden age of film criticism’ in the United States whose style and approach to the films was unique.<sup>65</sup> She had a clear ‘intensely felt’ voice that would make her a ‘national figure’ during her eighteen years at *New Yorker*.<sup>66</sup> However, it is important to note that her audience extended beyond the readership of the magazine as she also published fourteen books between 1965 and 1996 that included extended essays and collections of her reviews, and articles with a number of other publications including *Harper’s* and *The New Republic*.<sup>67</sup> Kael’s reviews provide insight into films from an influential zeitgeist perspective that not only has an effect on her audiences but also upon her film critic contemporaries.

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<sup>63</sup> Pauline Kael, ‘The Current Cinema: Apes Must be Remembered, Charlie,’ *The New Yorker* (17 February, 1968), 108.

<sup>64</sup> The passage selected was given as: ‘one of the best science fiction fantasies ever... Really extraordinary... It has the primitive force of *King Kong*... You’d better go see it quickly... it has the ingenious kind of plotting that people love to talk about. A very entertaining movie.’ See *Planet of the Apes* Pressbook, 4. See also Print Campaign, n.d. Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Archives and Special Collections, Shadek-Fackenthal Library, Franklin and Marshall College, 25/11.

<sup>65</sup> Jed Perl, ‘A Quarter Century with Kael,’ *The Yale Review* 81:2 (1993), 105.

<sup>66</sup> Will Brantley, ‘Introduction,’ in Will Brantley (ed.), *Conversations with Pauline Kael* (Jackson: University Press Mississippi, 1996), ix, xi.

<sup>67</sup> *I Lost It at the Movies* (Boston: Little Brown, 1965); *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (Boston: Little Brown, 1968); *Going Steady* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969); *Deeper into Movies* (1973); *Reeling* (Boston: Little Brown, 1976); *When the Lights Go Down* (New York: Holt, 1980); *5001 Nights at the Movies* (New York: Holt, 1982, revised in 1984/1991); *Taking It All In* (New York: Holt, 1984); *State of the Art* (New York: Dutton, 1987); *Hooked* (New York: Dutton, 1989); *Movie Love* (New York: Dutton, 1991); *For Keeps* (New York: Dutton, 1994); *Raising Kane, and Other Essays* (New York: Dutton, 1996). See also ‘Trash, Art, and the Movies,’ *Harper’s* (February, 1969), 65-83; ‘Tourist in the City of Youth,’ *The New Republic* (11 February, 1967), 30-35.

One of the most negative reviews came from the *New York Times* from an early career Renata Adler. She sums up her initial view on *Planet of Apes* by writing: 'It is no good at all, but fun, at moments, to watch.'<sup>68</sup> In a later article she went as far as to say that the film was 'a camp extravaganza' that was 'so dull and false that it was clear that... *Planet of the Apes* is going to be inferior to any single episode of *Star Trek*.'<sup>69</sup> She cites the 'unconvincing' sets and special effects as evidence and implies disparagement with the casting of Heston.<sup>70</sup> But interestingly she does directly refer to counterculture in her first review stating that the film is 'an anti-war film and a science-fiction liberal tract,' furthermore she refers to the native humans as 'Neanderthal flower children who have lost the power of speech.'<sup>71</sup> Although she suggests that these flower children as an image of freedom are sullied by the character of Nova who is defined by her body and solely communicates, according to Adler, through the 'wobble [of] her hips.'<sup>72</sup>

*The New York Times* published a letter sent to the paper by Isaac J. Black, a fan of *Planet of the Apes*, who forcefully criticised Adler's review of the film. He wrote that he was 'flabbergasted by Renata Adler's startling review' and that it was 'inconceivable' that anyone could criticise the film so heavily.<sup>73</sup> Black stated that:

The truth of the matter is that this science fiction flick is certainly equal to its publicity blurbs. Miss Adler's criticism is an exercise in negative approach and conveys no more than a mirage of insight or sophistication... The hunting scene alone was worth the price of admission.<sup>74</sup>

It is unknown as to whether this was a representative letter or an isolated example of the point of view of the audience that Adler wrote for. Black's letter highlights that the reviewer generally makes comment in accordance with their own aesthetic tastes,

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<sup>68</sup> Renata Adler, 'Monkey Business,' *The New York Times* (9 February, 1968), 55.

<sup>69</sup> Renata Adler, 'The Apes, the Fox, and Charlie Bubbles,' *The New York Times* (25 February, 1968), Arts & Leisure, Section 2, 1D.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 55. Harrison, who played Nova, later responded to this comment claiming that it was her 'natural walk' as part of an article in the *LA Times* that discussed Harrison's restricted role as the mute beauty. See Don Alpert, "'Silent' Linda Has Her Say," *Los Angeles Times* (24 March, 1968), n.p. Newspaper cutting taken from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Reviews folder, 25/7.

<sup>73</sup> Isaac J. Black, 'Beautiful *Planet*,' *The New York Times* (14 April, 1968), D11.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, D11.

but it is noteworthy that Adler's review refers to the wider social and political context that the film responds to.

Reviewers from other major newspapers were not so harsh as Adler. Richard L. Coe writing for *The Washington Post* pronounced *Planet of the Apes* to be an 'impressively conceived' film with amusing and well-placed 'satirical comments' and a 'whammy' of a closing shot.<sup>75</sup> Kevin Thomas from the *Los Angeles Times* calls the film a 'rarity' with 'authentic' make-up and effects that is as 'provocative as it is entertaining... a true screen odyssey.'<sup>76</sup> Thomas is particularly impressed with the script, especially when it remains 'bleak' rather than making 'tossed in' comic asides, and Schaffner's directorial style that 'has intelligence, taste and authority.'<sup>77</sup> The reviewer (Anon.) from *The Hollywood Reporter* gave a mostly positive review heralding the 'superb' acting, the 'sharp' dialogue, and a score that should be considered 'among the finest of its genre' and emphasising that '*Planet of the Apes* is a Swiftian social satire, allegory, straight-faced science fiction and spoof, the latter, it seems in error.'<sup>78</sup> However, the review also notes that the ending is 'cumbersome' and that it is an 'overwhelming symbolization' that ultimately leads to 'a number of the tangential commentaries [being] sacrificed [sic.]' in the pursuit of a broad anti-war theme.<sup>79</sup> This review of the closing sequence differs from many of the reviews that reported the closing shot as 'totally persuasive',<sup>80</sup> 'a jolting surprise well worth preserving',<sup>81</sup> and 'undeniably ingenious.'<sup>82</sup>

Franklin J. Schaffner's archived collection of reviews includes a select number of articles from across the country including San Francisco, Chicago, and Atlanta. For example the *San Francisco Examiner* reviews the film as 'better than expected',

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<sup>75</sup> Richard L. Coe, 'The Simians Take a Planet,' *The Washington Post* (12 April, 1968), B6.

<sup>76</sup> Kevin Thomas, '*Planet of the Apes*: Out of This World Movies,' *Los Angeles Times* (24 March 1968), D18.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, D18.

<sup>78</sup> Anon, '*Planet of the Apes* Race Pic; Should be Gargantuan Boxoffice Hit for 20<sup>th</sup>,' *The Hollywood Reporter* (5 February, 1968), 3.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>80</sup> David Wilson, *Planet of the Apes* [review], *Sight & Sound* (Summer, 1968), n.p. Cutting taken from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Reviews folder, 25/7.

<sup>81</sup> Emerson Beauchamp, '*King Kong* Was Never Like This,' *The Evening Star* (Washington D.C., n.d.), 6. Cutting taken from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Reviews folder, 25/7.

<sup>82</sup> Martin Knelman, 'Apes is amusing... but perhaps not quite so much fun as a barrel of people,' *Toronto Daily Star* (11 April, 1968), 34. Cutting taken from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Reviews folder, 25/7.



‘fascinatingly depicted’, and refers to it as having ‘a Swiftian punchline of a story.’<sup>83</sup> Sam Lesner for the *Chicago Daily News* calls the film ‘intriguing’ but chastises the filmmakers for not going ‘far enough’ with the ‘vitriolic comment on the habits of mankind.’<sup>84</sup> Terry Kay writing from Atlanta gives a mixed review saying that the actors ‘do excellent work in translating a strange tale into something sensible, or, at least, sensational.’<sup>85</sup> Kay notes that on the New York release the film ‘established records... [and that] even those who are enthusiastic about the film are surprised.’<sup>86</sup> Schaffner collected these more regional reviews alongside the responses from the major critics indicating the director’s interest in the critical response and potentially the audience’s perception of his work.

The critical press responses to *Planet of the Apes* offer some insight into the ways that audiences may have interpreted and at least initially perceived *Planet of the Apes*. The reviews from the major national and local publications indicate uneasiness with the film and its ability to present a realistic future dystopia. The make-up, although recognised with an honorary Academy Award for make-up artist John Chambers, is not received as entirely convincing although reviews often make reference to challenge that Hunter and McDowall had to undertake to work with the prosthetics. There is mostly positive response to Heston’s performance and the decision to forsake ‘his customary past’ and work in the science fiction genre.<sup>87</sup> The publicity and reception of the *Planet of the Apes* indicates that the film was aimed at the Middle America that had enjoyed Heston’s films during the 1950s and 1960s and those who would enjoy the philosophical nature of the film. Although it was not specifically marketed towards the U.S. counterculture it did allegorise many of the key issues that were prominent within the culture at the time. It acts as a record of the zeitgeist, and the ‘liberal tract’ that *Planet of the Apes* was made in is important to recognise and analyse.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Stanely Eichelbaum, ‘*Planet of the Apes* [review],’ *San Francisco Examiner*, n.d., n.p. Newspaper cutting taken from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Reviews folder, 25/7. Schaffner’s personal copy of this review is annotated with the phrase ‘fascinatingly depicted’ underlined in pen.

<sup>84</sup> Sam Lesner, ‘Apes Take Over in Intriguing Film,’ *Chicago Daily News* (15 April, 1968), n.p. Newspaper cutting taken from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Reviews folder, 25/7.

<sup>85</sup> Terry Kay, ‘*Planet of the Apes* [review],’ *The Atlanta Journal* (-- April, 1968), n.p. Newspaper cutting taken from Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Reviews folder, 25/7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, n.p.

<sup>87</sup> Coe, ‘The Simians Take a Planet,’ B6.

<sup>88</sup> Adler, ‘Monkey Business,’ 55.

## THESIS OUTLINE

*Planet of the Apes* was chosen as the main case study because of its position as a relatively under-researched film in comparison to other similarly influential films of the sixties, and because it is an entirely fictional film. If the world presented within a film has little bearing upon reality it cannot become bound up in discussions of historical accuracy. This is particularly important for this study as it is intended to show that feature films hold value as cultural documents even in comparison to more traditional filmic adaptations of historical events, persons, and periods.

The thesis is broken down into two sections with the introduction, discussion of film as history, and methodology providing the basis for the study and the following five chapters providing a historically informed reading of *Planet of the Apes* that acts as case study to discuss and develop the method and theory discussed in the first part of the thesis.

The first chapter ‘History, Lies, and Videotape: The Use, Abuse, and Interpretation of History on Film’ looks at the intersection between popular historiographical art (such as the historical drama), contemporary narrative cinema, and historical research. It analyses the position of the feature film in the study of contemporary history, encouraging scholars to approach the feature film in an academic manner. It is because fictional films are generally made for entertainment purposes that they are so significant; they are a valuable source for revealing historical *truths* and registering popular thought and changing attitudes. This chapter surveys the history of the joint study of the history and film studies, and the way in which fictional film is often marginalised in contemporary history. This chapter along with the following methodology chapter sets up the issues, which will be discussed in the five-chapter case study.

The second chapter provides a discussion of the methodology utilised in this study. It reviews the requirements and approaches necessary for the historian to systematically use the film – whether archival, feature, or documentary – as a primary source material pertinent to the study of contemporary history. The chapter proposes a suitable methodology and analyses the issues with writing about and analysing film from the perspective of the historian as academic outside of the film studies discipline. It recognises that films are complex texts that contain much information not only in the text itself but also throughout its various paratexts. It details the

specific archives, primary documents, secondary historical texts, and secondary materials used in this thesis and also offers details on where to locate sources appropriate to this type of study of American culture and history.

Each of the following case study chapters retain a similar structure allowing for a clear link between the historical events and movements that are being analysed. These readings will look at responses on both a surface and subtextual level; they will analyse the text, the imagery, and the wider context of the film. It is intended that the case study of *Planet of the Apes* will act as an example of the type of information and interpretation that can be gleaned from a single filmic text when it is studied within its historical context. These case studies indicate the level of information contained within a cultural text and the way it was used as a conduit by U.S. artists to respond to their experiences of their country, culture, and political situation.

The first chapter of the case study, chapter three, considers the limited narrative range available to the black actors in *Planet of the Apes* and in the early stages of post-classical Hollywood. 'Liberal Good Intentions & Racist Undertones: *Planet Of The Apes* and Race' analyses the allegorisation of U.S. race relations in *Planet of the Apes* and reviews the existing academic research conducted on the subject. Much of the discussion centres on Dodge (Jeff Burton) as the sole black figure caught in the tension between liberal good intentions and racist undertones. Specific references to U.S. race relations become increasingly obvious as the franchise continues into the 1970s, whereas the 1968 *Planet of the Apes* engages with the culturally prominent race issue but offers a more general comment on intolerance and oppression. The broader allegorical base to the franchise provided by *Planet of the Apes* opens the film to a number of readings related to these more universal themes.

The fourth chapter, 'Framing the Subject: Identity Politics in *Planet of the Apes*,' investigates the relationship between the film's gender representations and their actual position in 1960s American society. This chapter follows on from the previous investigation of screening race relations and Hollywood cinema's attempts at positive and progressive depiction, and the reality of its ingrained prejudices. The three main female characters (analysing costume, language and societal positioning) are examined and compared to their ape and human (male) counterparts. The females' gender is a barrier to full participation in the male-dominated world. The female

characters offer two opposite stereotypes, the beauty or the brain, neither reflective of reality. Even masculinity is questioned; the sixties was a time of upheaval when traditions ensuring male supremacy were challenged. *Planet of the Apes* simultaneously celebrates and rejects traditional gender roles.

Chapter five, entitled ‘Aping Religion or Religious Apes: *Planet of the Apes* and Religion’ explores the post-war religious revival in the United States and how this is manifested and critiqued in *Planet of the Apes*. This chapter begins with a discussion of the religious context of the 1960s, beginning with the religious boom in the post-war period and ending with the diversification of the U.S. religious milieu in sixties with the search for religious alternatives by a vocal minority. A religious discourse appears throughout *Planet of the Apes* with references to U.S. religious structures with sections in the chapter on the commentary on the division between religion and the state, the prevalent position of Judeo-Christian forms and structures in characters and narrative, the relationship between religion, science, and education.

The sixth chapter, ‘*Planet of the Apes* and the Vietnam War: Reworking American Myths,’ interprets the film’s content in terms of its reaction to U.S. involvement in international conflicts during the 1960s. *Planet of the Apes* provides a negative reading of the Vietnam War as it imagines a disastrous future; in a post-Cuban Missile Crisis (1963) context nuclear war was not just something for science fiction because it had almost become fact. The Vietnam War is the most prominent of the ‘hot war[s]’ of the Cold War and throughout its history it has overshadowed the wider ideological conflict for the U.S. public.<sup>89</sup> In *Planet of the Apes* the commentary about the war can be specifically linked into the Vietnam War alongside wider concerns about the arms race and the Cold War as a whole. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the Statue of Liberty finale and the resultant nuclear warning.

Chapter seven, ‘From Technophilia to Technophobia (to Retrogression): Technology in *Planet of the Apes*,’ follows on smoothly from the previous chapter and its concluding section that opened the discussion of the technological advancement and the anxieties it initiated. *Planet of the Apes*’ response to technology and weaponry changes throughout the course of the film’s narrative, shifting between excitement, disaster, and fear. It explores the role of the spaceship and the subversion

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<sup>89</sup> Norman Friedman, *The Fifty-Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (Annapolis, M.D.: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 364.

of its positive image, moving from allowing its crew to explore and hopefully discover a better future, to one that malfunctions and sends its crew to a future where technology has destroyed the world as they knew it. The film investigates the way in which a technologically regressive natural future-world is used to approach and work through issues surrounding the restriction of scientific progress, animal testing and animal rights, and the proliferation of weapons technology.

This thesis intends to look at a broader array of historical events and movements that had an impact upon the film including and extending beyond the existing analysis of the film as racial allegory. The social commentary in *Planet of the Apes* is much wider than previous texts have suggested. *Planet of the Apes* is ‘a rich, mediated myth with hermeneutic depth’ which will benefit from analysis of the full array of available readings to help further understand the lasting impact the film (and the resultant franchise) has had upon U.S. popular culture.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Richard Besel and Reneé Smith Besel, ‘Polysemous Myth: Incongruity in *Planet of the Apes*,’ in John Perlich and David Whitt (eds.), *Millennial Mythmaking: Essays on the Power of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, Films and Games* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company Inc., 2010), 57.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### HISTORY, LIES, AND VIDEOTAPE:

#### THE USE, ABUSE, AND INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY ON FILM

*In one sense every motion picture is historical – a visual record of the reflected surface of whatever portion of the world existed in front of the camera at a given moment in time. In a similar sense every book written, every work of art, every artifact is also historical – the product of a time, a place, an unrecapturable moment.*

- Robert A. Rosenstone<sup>1</sup>

*History is no more than a useful device to speak of the present time.*

- Peter Sorlin<sup>2</sup>

#### FILM AS HISTORY

As Vivian C. Sobchack has observed, ‘American film does not merely have a history – it also is history. Movies are a continuous inscription and interpretation of American experience through time and in the world.’<sup>3</sup> Film and history are not mutually exclusive; they are intertwined with key historical events directly impacting the development of Hollywood whether affecting production, content or reception.<sup>4</sup> All types of films can and should be used as historical documents, whether as part of a group of films or as an ‘exceptional’ filmic example which has a clear message all of its own.<sup>5</sup> Films are rich with ideas and reference not only specific historic events but also offer an insight into the period of production responding to their cultural context.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, ‘Introduction: Film Reviews,’ *The American Historical Review* 97:4 (Oct, 1992), 1138.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1980), 208.

<sup>3</sup> Vivian C. Sobchack, ‘Beyond Visual Aids: American Film as American Culture,’ *American Quarterly* 32:3 (1980), 293.

<sup>4</sup> Hollywood has been directly affected by changes in U.S. and world history. For example, in terms of production Hollywood developed an assembly-line mentality heavily influenced by the success of the system in the U.S. car industry (Ford Motors), which was utilised initially in the Classical Hollywood period (c.1927-1960). Hollywood movie content was directly affected by the introduction of the Motion Picture Production Code (c.1930-1968) that provided strict guidelines on appropriate subject matter. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) initiated further constraints upon content for fear of allegations of Communist sympathies being levied against all sectors of the industry and the resultant Hollywood Blacklist that prevented hundreds of people from working openly within the Hollywood system.

<sup>5</sup> K. R. M. Short, ‘Introduction: Feature Films as History,’ in K. R. M. Short (ed.), *Feature Films as History* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 35.

Film is an important and influential element of U.S. popular culture and history. It is one of the most visible ways in which the United States communicates with the world in a seemingly constant flow of images and ideas produced by the nation's filmmakers. As noted by Arthur Schlesinger:

Film is the only art in which the United States has made a real difference. Strike the American contribution from drama, painting, music, sculpture, dance, even possibly from poetry and the novel, and the world's achievement is only marginally diminished. But film without the American contribution is unimaginable. The fact that film has been the most potent vehicle of the American imagination suggests all the more strongly that movies have something to tell us not just about the surfaces but about the mysteries of American life.<sup>6</sup>

Hollywood and its independent counterparts have provided an inscription of the American experience through sounds, images and stories. The majority of films created by the United States are fictional feature films;<sup>7</sup> feature films do not purport to be based upon a particular historical person or period but by the nature of their collaborative creation formed through the culture they interact with and within.

The study of *film history* – tracking and interpreting the historical development of filmmaking and national motion picture industries – falls ‘well within the boundaries of traditional historical practice.’<sup>8</sup> Knowledge of film history is considered to be an important part of the study of film as it allows students to understand where the films they watch and analyse fit into a wider filmic context. It is often concerned with the study of traditional sources such as studio documentation (e.g. correspondence, memos, scripts, memoirs, set photographs) alongside the films produced. The scholarship examines the key social, technological and economic changes in a particular film industry or nation. There are also

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, ‘Foreword,’ in John E. O'Connor and Martin A. Jackson (eds), *American History/American Film: Interpreting the Hollywood Image* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1979), x.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to distinguish here between feature films and fictional feature films as one of the purposes of the thesis is to analyse how entirely fictional films can be employed in the study of contemporary history. ‘Feature film’ can easily be used to mean any entertainment film whether documentary (e.g. *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, dir. Alex Gibney, 2005), history film (*Black Hawk Down*, dir. Ridley Scott, 2001), or fictional film (*Avatar*, James Cameron, 2010). Therefore, the term fictional feature film will be used in order to avoid confusion between the different possible interpretations of the term.

<sup>8</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 3.

individual histories/biographies of significant actors and directors and the impact their work has had upon the industry.<sup>9</sup>

The use of *filmed history* – footage from newsreels, television news footage, propaganda film and documentary – is the most traditional use of moving image sources by historians. Video recordings are used as primary sources of information; they purport to act as a record of history and can be analysed in terms of accuracy in line with other primary source material. This type of material attempts to ‘open a direct window into the past’<sup>10</sup>; however, it cannot ‘escape being in some sense a manipulation.’<sup>11</sup> There are voice-overs, camera angles, editing decisions and the selection of images and narratives by contributors making footage an ‘interpreted experience of the actual.’<sup>12</sup>

Since the 1970s the study of *history on film* – films that dramatise the lives of historical periods and personalities – has become an increasingly popular area of historical study. Historians have been concerned with assessing the accuracy of these portrayals, focusing their attention upon the value of using film as a method of teaching, explaining and interpreting history. This particular method of historical analysis of film has raised debate over whether film is a valid form of history or if its position as a form of mass entertainment invalidates it.

Ian Jarvie argues that a film is too linear to work as historical scholarship; history is not just a case of narrating a story of the past. He claims that history’s value lies in debate, the debate over ‘exactly what did happen, why it happened, and what would be an adequate account of its significance.’<sup>13</sup> Film only offers a single point of view and despite its vivid depiction inaccuracies are impossible ‘to correct.’<sup>14</sup> As Robert A. Rosenstone notes, films do not have footnotes or the ability to defend their arguments in the way that traditional authors of history do. However, he adds that films are ‘enormously rich’ and can offer a ‘higher

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<sup>9</sup> For example several studies have been done on the work on Orson Welles as both actor and director see Peter Conrad, *Orson Welles: The Stories of his Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), Terry Comito (ed.), *Touch of Evil: Orson Welles, Director* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1985), André Bazin, *Orson Welles : A Critical View* (London: Elm Tree, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, ‘History in Images/History in Words: Reflecting on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film’, *The American Historical Review* 93:5 (December, 1988), 1180.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Sklar, ‘Documentary: Artifice in the Service of Truth,’ *Reviews in American History* 3:3 (September, 1975), 301.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 303.

<sup>13</sup> Ian C. Jarvie, ‘Seeing through Movies,’ *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 8 (1978), 378.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 378.



degree of detail and specificity.’<sup>15</sup> Rosenstone is a vocal advocate of the use of film as historical record and has written extensively on the subject.<sup>16</sup>

However, although there have been several books, articles and edited volumes written about the ‘history film’ and the ways in which fictional feature film can be used to tell history, comparatively little has been written about the way in which fictional feature films can be used as a historical primary source.<sup>17</sup> By approaching film as more than a dramatisation of historical knowledge it is possible to circumnavigate the issue of accuracy and whether a film presents a clear and truthful presentation of history; it instead looks at the value of film as an expression of the zeitgeist.

A further category is therefore suggested which proposes that all films should be thought of as primary sources, as representations of their own time and not simply of the one they show on screen. So rather than simply history on film it is important to discuss *film as history* – the study of film as an important historical record/source material, concentrating on the way in which film draws upon and reflects the culture that created it. This involves, as Tony Barta notes, thinking about ‘looking at the screen as screen rather than window’ and interpreting the material viewed as a mediated version of its history and contemporary culture.<sup>18</sup> This is an approach that can be applied to all types of film as it takes into account the methods and history of the source’s production as well as analysing the final content.

Scholarship concerning film and history really began to emerge in the 1970s and has continued to develop with changes in approach and availability. Initially, scholarship focused

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<sup>15</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, ‘History in Images/History in Words,’ 1176, 1177.

<sup>16</sup> Rosenstone’s two monographs: *Visions of the Past* and *History On Film/Film on History*. Rosenstone’s two edited collections: *Revisioning History Filmmakers and the Construction of the Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), and with Allan Munslow (ed.), *Experiments in Rethinking History* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> See Ron Briley, ‘Reel History: U.S. History, 1932-1972, as Viewed through the Lens of Hollywood,’ *The History Teacher*, 23:3 (May, 1990), 215-236; Deborah Cartmell, I. Q. Hunter and Imelda Whelehan, (eds.), *Retrovisions: Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 2001); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen: Historical Vision* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Marc Ferro, *Cinema et Histoire* (Paris: Editions Denoel, 1988) Translated by Naomi Greene, *Cinema and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988); David Herlihy, ‘Am I a Camera? Other Reflection on Films and History,’ *The American Historical Review*, 93:5, 1186-1192; John E. O’Connor, ‘History in Images/Images in History: Reflections on the Importance of Film and Television Study for an Understanding of the Past,’ *The American Historical Review*, 93:5 (December, 1988), 1200-1209; John E. O’Connor and Martin A. Jackson, *American History/American Film: Interpreting the Hollywood Image* (The Ungar Publishing Company, 1979); Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2006); Robert A. Rosenstone, ‘History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film,’ *The American Historical Review*, 93:5 (December, 1988), 1173-1185; Vivian Sobchack, *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Robert Brent Toplin, *History by Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Robert Brent Toplin, ‘The Filmmaker as Historian,’ *The American Historical Review*, 93:5 (December, 1988), 1210-1227.

<sup>18</sup> Tony Barta, ‘Screening the Past: History Since Cinema,’ in Tony Barta (ed.), *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger, 1998), 2.

on how film can be used in the classroom and how film has been ‘abused or neglected’ by academics and seen as ‘an entertaining footnote to the main business of traditional scholarship.’<sup>19</sup> Scholars such as Vivian Sobchack, Robert Brent Toplin, Marc Ferro, Robert Rosenstone, Natalie Zemon Davis, John E. O’Connor and Martin A. Jackson have written texts which assess the quality of the history represented on film by exploring the accuracy of a range of films deemed to be of historical value. Highlighting issues concerned with using film to tell history, these scholars helped to show the academic value of film outside of the media/film studies turn. Pointing out the ‘differences between film and professional prose’, they also recognised that film can be taken ‘seriously as a source of valuable and even innovative historical vision’.<sup>20</sup>

All films present a world, whether in the past, present or future, which has been ‘filtered through the prism of a filmmaker’.<sup>21</sup> Films are the creations of the filmmaker’s vision responding to the assumed desires of their prospective audience. Robert A. Rosenstone and Robert Brent Toplin have both written about the potential of film to recount history and more importantly the key differences between traditional print history and audio-visual history as presented through the medium of film. Asking historians and critics alike to

see the history film as part of a separate realm of representation and discourse, one not meant to provide literal truths about the past... but metaphoric truths which work, to a large degree, as a kind of commentary on, and challenge to, traditional historical discourse.<sup>22</sup>

In looking at the relationship between film and history, Andrew Bergman argues that the historian or critic should be doing more than simply assessing the extent to which a film is a faithful representation of a particular historical period because, in doing so, the historian/critic is in danger of overlooking the value the film holds as a ‘cultural artefact’.<sup>23</sup>

The meaning of the film is not located entirely within the surface narrative but in the subtext (and context) which can be uncovered by the scholar and used as a record of the period in which the film was released. Any film can be seen to reveal more about the period in which it was produced than the one which it attempts or purports to (re)create, whether it

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<sup>19</sup> Vivian C. Sobchack, ‘Beyond Visual Aids: American Film as American Culture,’ *American Quarterly*, 32:3 (1980), 283.

<sup>20</sup> Davis, *Slaves on Screen*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Paul B. Weinstein, ‘Movies as the Gateway to History: The History and Film Project,’ *The History Teacher* 35:1 (November, 2001), 41.

<sup>22</sup> Rosenstone, *History on Film*, 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Bergman, *We’re in the Money: Depression America and Its Films* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), xii.

presents the assassination of a president or the discovery of an alien planet. This chapter will explore the growth of the study of film and history, in particular the history of the study of film as an interpreter and recorder of history rather than the history of cinema itself. This thesis is an analysis of film, and specifically entirely fictional film as history from within the American historical paradigm. Despite improvements and developments in contemporary historians' attitude towards film, scholarship still tends to discuss films that are based upon historical events and personae. In the following section a review will be provided of the academic disciplines of Film Studies and History and the way in which these subjects have been studied and combined in interdisciplinary study.

### **STUDYING FILM STUDIES AND HISTORY**

Film Studies and History have existed as separate and parallel disciplines for many decades until several of the major American studies journals (e.g. *The American Historical Review* and *The Journal of American History*) and the interdisciplinary journal *Film & History* began to look at the film from a historical perspective, discussing its potential to be seen as more than a source of entertainment and information. These journals still regularly discuss the accuracy of films based in a particular historical period or about specific historical figures, looking at how the filmmakers have (mis)represented these on screen.

#### **1970-1990**

The combined study of film and history began to become more popular from 1970 with the launch of the journal *Film & History*. Subtitled as 'the leading peer reviewed journal in the study of exchanges between film and history', the journal aims to enhance scholarship in history, film and the visual image as forms of historical evidence. The journal also explores 'how film – rather than painting or literature or physics – uniquely reflects or shapes our knowledge of the world.'<sup>24</sup> Each issue is comprised of a series of articles dealing with questions of methodology, issues of value and validity, readings of historic films and films which deal with specific historical events and icons, discussion of national cinemas, the role of film within the classroom, central themes and movements, with some book reviews, film reviews and interviews.

*Film & History* marked a change, in the sense that it brought two disciplines together in a way, which reflected current thinking on both subjects and how an interdisciplinary

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<sup>24</sup> Anon, 'About Film & History: Film & History's Methodology.' No date. Available at: <<http://www.uwosh.edu/filmandhistory/about/index.php>> [Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010].

approach could enhance the discourse and understanding of both. The scope of the journal is broad and emphasises the links between the disciplines of film studies and history and how a study of the moving image can benefit from appraisal from both approaches to provide a more complete reading and understanding of a particular film, genre or issue. However, the journal's attitude to film is still seems grounded in the notion that film's value lies in its role as a record of history (documentary, propaganda, newsreel footage), and the way in which historians can assess the way a mainstream film can be used to present a truthful portrayal of history.

Robert Sklar's *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (1975), Garth Jowett's *Film: The Democratic Art* (1976), and John E. O'Connor and Martin A. Jackson's *American History/American Film: Interpreting the Hollywood Image* (1979) were released within a few years of each other, potentially showing 'a sudden [change] in taste' in terms of the approach some contemporary historians were taking to the potential of film in the study of social history.<sup>25</sup> These three titles approached many of the issues which are still relevant today, with O'Connor and Jackson's title giving the most broad look at the issues, not only looking at the film in the context of the Hollywood machine but also at the different types of films which could be considered 'as valid and respectable.'<sup>26</sup> The articles selected for *American History/American Film* consisted of a range of case-studies covering films from several decades of Hollywood. Of particular interest for this study, is Stuart Samuels' chapter which analyses *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (dir. Don Siegel, 1956) as it is the only chapter to explore a film not based upon a specific historical event. Before launching into a close textual analysis of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and its representation of the fifties America Samuels introduces his chapter with a discussion of Hollywood films as containing 'the values, fears, myths, assumptions, point of view of the culture in which they are produced.'<sup>27</sup>

More than fifteen years passed after *Film & History*'s inaugural edition before the two most prominent American history journals started to formally include film as a standard part of their academic remit. *Film & History* instigated a change in the way in which film was viewed in terms of its historical value as evidence. This was manifested by the inclusion of reviews and articles dealing with the methodological issues pertaining to the use of film in

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<sup>25</sup> Frank Manchel, 'Reviewed work(s): *Film: The Democratic Art* by Garth Jowett & *Movie-made America: A Social History of American Movies* by Robert Sklar,' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 12:3 (July, 1978), 117.

<sup>26</sup> 'Introduction' in O'Connor, *American History/American Film*, xvi.

<sup>27</sup> 'The Age of Conspiracy and Conformity: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956),' in O'Connor, *American History/American Film*, 204.

the classroom and in historical research in *The American Historical Review* and *The Journal of American History*.

The December 1986 (73:3) edition of the *Journal of American History* (*JAH*) was the first history journal to publish 'Movie Reviews', a biannual feature that still appears in the June and December issues.<sup>28</sup> In these biannual editions of the journal an introduction accompanied the first series of reviews. Robert Brent Toplin discussed how '[m]ovies and television interpret American history for the public', and noted the role of the *JAH* in exposing professional historians to 'those diverse efforts to bring history to large national audiences.'<sup>29</sup> The first series of reviews was made up of only documentaries. The purpose of the section as set out by Toplin was explicitly to 'aid' historians 'in selecting movies for use in the classroom.'<sup>30</sup> He also set out a series of statements by which films should be judged asking questions such as:

Does the movie make an original contribution to our understanding of history?... Does it offer us a view of the past that is different from what is typically achieved through the medium of print?... How does the movie relate to historical writing?... How sophisticated is the historical analysis?... Do the producers raise the kinds of questions historians raise when addressing the subject?... How does the film communicate?'<sup>31</sup>

Introducing the film section in the journal in 1989 (76:3), Toplin viewed 1988-89 as a peak in early scholarship in film as history. He noted that a 'substantial number of historical productions' had been released during these years,<sup>32</sup> including the output of television networks such as PBS, Entertainment, and the Turner Broadcasting System and notably the Hollywood productions *Mississippi Burning* (dir. Alan Parker, 1988) and *Eight Men Out* (dir. John Sayles, 1988).<sup>33</sup> But he also reported that it was a 'good year for historians interested in

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<sup>28</sup> Correct as of date of thesis submission, September 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, 'Introduction: Movie Reviews,' *The Journal of American History*, 73:3 (December, 1986), 819.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 819.

<sup>31</sup> Selection of examples taken from all of Toplin's four points: Toplin, 'Introduction: Movie Reviews' (Dec, 1986), 821.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, 'Introduction: Movie Reviews,' *The Journal of American History* 76:3 (December, 1989), 1003.

<sup>33</sup> *Mississippi Burning* is a crime drama that follows the FBI investigation into the disappearance of three civil rights activists in Mississippi. The film was loosely based upon the Mississippi Civil Rights Workers Murders that took place on 21<sup>st</sup> June 1964. James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner were all members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) who were lynched by members of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) after they were sent to Mississippi to investigate the burning of a church that supported the Civil Rights Movement. *Eight Men Out* (1988) is a U.S. sports film based upon the book *Eight Men Out* by Eliot Asinof published in 1963 that recounted the 1919 Black Sox Scandal. The scandal took place during the 1919 baseball World Series

studying the visual media', as there were increasing numbers of professional conventions which discussed media topics showing that historians were 'according films greater legitimacy'.<sup>34</sup> This 'legitimacy' was further confirmed by the growing respect given to film in journals like *Film & History* and the activities of *The American Historical Review* which had included a forum on history and film in December 1988 and had begun to include film reviews in 1989, and the continuing development of the International Association for Audio-visual Media in Historical Research and Education (IAMHIST).<sup>35</sup> But all of this development still focused upon the historical film, the documentary, and the place of film in education; these studies rarely made forays into the study of other purposes and filmic genre.

It was not until December 1988 that the other leading journal of American History, *The American Historical Review* (*AHR*) began to consider the place of film in historical research. The December issue included the following articles:

- Robert A. Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film' (1173-1185)
- David Herily, 'Am I Camera? Other Reflections on Films and History' (1186-1192)
- Hayden White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty' (1193-1199)
- John E. O'Connor, 'History in Images/Images in History: Reflections on the Importance of Film and Television Study for an Understanding of the Past' (1200-1209)
- Robert Brent Toplin, 'The Filmmaker as Historian' (1210-1227)

These articles have become central to the study of history and film as they set out many of the key ideas concerning the way in which film has become part of history as a record and a way in which historical *truths*, and also falsities are transmitted to the public. David Herily pointed out that films 'exploit historical moments' and that historians need to test the limits of the films being produced,<sup>36</sup> but that the *AHR* could provide the setting for the discussions and points of interest for scholars of history. The following year in October 1989, the journal included film reviews introduced by the leading scholar in this area. Robert Rosenstone

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where eight members of the Chicago White Sox were banned from baseball for throwing games in conjunction with at least two syndicates and a number of gamblers.

<sup>34</sup> Toplin, 'Introduction: Movie Reviews,' *Journal of American History* 76:3 (December, 1989), 1003.

<sup>35</sup> The International Association for Audio-visual Media in Historical Research and Education (IAMHIST) was founded in the summer of 1977 and organises a biennial conference which brings together researchers of media history looking at historically informed documentaries, television series and other media texts. It gives special attention to the role of film and television in the Second World War and the Cold War. It also publishes a quarterly journal – *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*.

<sup>36</sup> David Herily, 'Am I a Camera? Other Reflections on Films and History,' *The American Historical Review* 93:5 (1992), 1192.

introduced the section as an important addition to the journal which was not only engaged in showcasing the work of historians but also educating and opening up discussions surrounding new developments in the discipline and emerging currents of thought. He appealed to his fellow historians in saying:

I suggest we look at films on their own terms, as documents written in a visual language, as arguments about the past that proceed by different rules than does written history. To do so is to rethink the familiar attacks on the historical film.<sup>37</sup>

Here, Rosenstone highlights the difficult relationship historians have with the cinematic medium, which requires a new set of skills and terms to explain and use film to its full potential. Rosenstone recognises that in order for film to be truly useful and insightful it must be approached as the complex audio-visual artefact that it is.

During the seventies and eighties there were significant changes to the history of the study of film as history; journals began to take films that were given general cinematic release more seriously. Several film genres were scrutinised by historians, which had not previously been considered valuable sources of study. Yet this change was not to see the feature film understood and received as a source for study in its own right; it was still compartmentalised with the focus remaining on historical drama films, archival footage and notions surrounding accuracy.

### **1991 – The *JFK* Moment**

Despite the flourish of activity in the late seventies and eighties there was not a steady flow of articles to accompany the film reviews that began to establish a place for film in the output of the leading U.S. historians and the key journals in the field. In 1992, however, there was a quantitative shift in the amount of articles discussing the importance of film following the release of Oliver Stone's *JFK* in 1991. *JFK* was 'a cultural moment that [produced] historical reflection';<sup>38</sup> this '*JFK* moment' ignited a flourish of work on not only the film and its content, but also on how the film might be seen to be a commentary upon the contemporary political situation. *JFK* had an 'extraordinary effect on the public consciousness', and led to calls for files from the House Select Committee on Assassinations to be opened and available

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<sup>37</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, 'Introduction: Film Reviews,' *The American Historical Review* 94:4 (October, 1989), 1032.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Pratsch, 'Introduction: Film Reviews', *The American Historical Review* 100:14 (October, 1995), 1193.

to the public for consultation.<sup>39</sup> The film also presented an alternative explanation of Kennedy's assassination that 'was convincing enough to stimulate the U.S. Congress to attempt to reopen the investigation of the assassination.'<sup>40</sup>

*JFK* was released in the United States in December 1991 and follows the story of Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner), the New Orleans District Attorney who questioned the Warren Commission's findings on Kennedy's assassination.<sup>41</sup> In 1969, following two years of investigations, he filed charges against Clay Shaw (Tommy Lee Jones), a business man, with conspiracy to murder Kennedy. Clay was acquitted of all charges. Garrison was the only man to bring a trial to the U.S. courts in relation to the death of the President. Garrison's book, *On the Trail of the Assassins* was one of the main sources that Oliver Stone and screenwriter Zachary Sklar referred to when writing the script.<sup>42</sup> The film starred Kevin Costner, fresh from his Oscar-winning *Dances with Wolves* (dir. Kevin Costner, 1990) in which he had played a 'decent, simple, honest American, the war hero...' a characterisation that would inevitably influence the reception of Garrison.<sup>43</sup>

Between 1990 and 1991 Costner played three hero roles: John Dunbar in *Dances with Wolves*, Robin Hood in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, and Jim Garrison in *JFK*. In all three films Costner plays 'the defender and protector of his beloved',<sup>44</sup> whether in America's Civil War in defence of his beliefs and country, as England's mythic hero (albeit with an American accent), or as the defender of the *truth* and the purity of the image of Kennedy. Stone forms particularly heroic images of both Kennedy and Garrison, representations that are 'likely to have a more lasting and far-reaching impact on the public mind than any number of historical tomes which present an alternative view.'<sup>45</sup>

*JFK* became part of a series of works to approach the subject of John F. Kennedy's

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<sup>39</sup> Marcus Raskin, 'JFK and the Culture of Violence,' *The American Historical Review* 97:2 (April, 1992), 487.

<sup>40</sup> M. Keith Booker, *From Box-Office to Ballot Box: The American Political Film* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 35.

<sup>41</sup> The Report of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy (commonly known as the Warren Commission) was the name of the report produced by an investigative body set up by President Lyndon B. Johnson on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1963 in the wake of Kennedy's death on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1963. The commission was chaired by Chief Justice Earl Warren who presented a final report to Johnson on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1964 that concluded that Kennedy had been shot by a lone-gunman called Lee Harvey Oswald, and that Oswald had been shot by Jack Ruby.

<sup>42</sup> Jim Garrison, *On the Trail of the Assassins: My Investigation and Prosecution of the Murder of President Kennedy* (New York: Sheridan Square Press, 1988).

<sup>43</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, 'JFK: Historical Fact/Historical Film,' *The American Historical Review*, 97:2 (April, 1992), 509.

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Hirschmann, *Heroes, Monsters & Messiahs: Movies and Television Shows as the Mythology of American Culture* (Kansas: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2000), 293.

<sup>45</sup> Geoff Stoakes, 'JFK, Vietnam and the Public Mind,' in Philip Davies (ed.), *Representing and Imagining America* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), 207.



life and assassination released at the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s, coinciding with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the run-up to the 1992 U.S. presidential election. Several of the most popular books which looked at the alternatives to the Warren Commission's findings also directly inspired Oliver Stone and the crew involved in researching and writing the script for *JFK*. These books reached a height in popularity following the success of the film, indicating a clear interest in not only the film itself but in its controversial subject matter.<sup>46</sup> The public had a growing appetite for conspiracy narratives and the re-evaluation of the life and death of Kennedy.

'Given the governmental abuse during the 1970s and the revelations of the Iran-Contra in the Reagan era, Stone easily embraced the conspiracy literature of the Kennedy assassination.'<sup>47</sup> Although Stone is seen as a liberal intent on presenting Kennedy as a 'dove rather than a cold warrior... insisting that escalation in Vietnam was a product of the assassination,'<sup>48</sup> *JFK* resonated with both sides of the debate. It engaged with 'issues, ideas, data and arguments of the discourse' and was the first commercial movie to generate further investigation into its subject matter by a sizeable proportion of the public, the press, and the professionals.<sup>49</sup> The film was more than a source of entertainment for masses but actively engaged in the study of history, forcing people to rethink the accepted explanation and in so doing became 'the most talked-about and controversial film of the decade.'<sup>50</sup>

## Reviewing *JFK*

*JFK* became a subject of debate in both the *JAH* and the *AHR*. The *JAH* published 'Forum: Oliver Stone's *JFK*', introduced by the editor (Toplin) with a series of three reviews of the film by Toplin, Thomas C. Reeves and William W. Phillips. The latter journal devoted a

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<sup>46</sup> The findings of the commission have been considered very controversial and have inspired several pieces of conspiracy literature. See Jim Garrison, *On the Trail of the Assassins: My Investigation and Prosecution of the Murder of President Kennedy* (New York: Sheridan Square Press, 1988); Mark Lane, *Plausible Denial: Was the CIA Involved in the Assassination of JFK?* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991); Jim Marr's, *Crossfire: The Plot that Killed Kennedy* (New York: Carroll & Graff Publisher, Inc., 1989); and Mark North, *Act of Treason: The Role of J. Edgar Hoover in the Assassination of President Kennedy* (New York: Carroll & Graff Publisher, Inc., 1991). *JFK* was based upon Garrison's personal account with heavy reliance upon Marr's work – both books were re-released to coincide with the premiere of the film with banners on the front of the books linking them directly to the film. For example, the editions of *Crossfire* published after 1991 (2001 - 9<sup>th</sup> edn.) are marked with: 'A basis for Oliver Stone's Movie *JFK*'.

<sup>47</sup> N. Giglio, 'Oliver Stone's *JFK* in Historical Perspective', *Perspectives* (April, 1992). Available at: <<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/1992/9204/9204FIL.cfm>> [Last accessed: 18/072010].

<sup>48</sup> Art Simon, *Dangerous Knowledge: The JFK Assassination in Art and Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 23-24

<sup>49</sup> Robert A. Rosenstone, 'JFK: Historical Fact/Historical Film,' *The American Historical Review*, 97:2 (April, 1992), 510.

<sup>50</sup> Ian Scott, *American Politics in Hollywood Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 127.

whole Discussion Forum (which was a regular feature) to the film, including the three articles: ‘*JFK* and the Culture of Violence’ (Marcus Raskin), ‘*JFK*: The Movie’ (Michael Rogin) and ‘*JFK*: Historical Fact/Historical Film’ (Robert A. Rosenstone).

The *JAH JFK* reviews were issued within the regular ‘Movie Reviews’ section of the journal with only a short introduction from Toplin who highlighted the way in which *JFK* had ‘[stimulated] a lively dialogue involving millions of people in the United States and abroad.’<sup>51</sup> But the reviews do not follow a theme or particular discussion point (beyond the film as a whole) approaching the text from a range of perspectives.

Reeves’ review assessed the film in terms of politics, in particular labelling the film ‘leftist propaganda’ because of its melding of actual film footage with Stone’s own fabricated images (manipulated in order to be almost indistinguishable from the original material used).<sup>52</sup> He makes it clear that the film should not be seen as history because of the political motivations of the director and the inaccuracy of the content. Reeves’ focus is upon what the film tells the audience about the Kennedy assassination and resultant court case, and although it refers to Stone’s political allegiance it does not look explicitly at why Stone may have chosen to approach the myth in 1990/1.

Phillips’ review of *JFK* is acerbic, calling it a ‘disaster’ and suggesting that viewers ‘should take a filmic purgative.’<sup>53</sup> His opinions on the film indicate a disapproval of the way in which the assassination has been used as a money-making ploy that overlooks the importance of the event and potential for it to be opened to *serious* historical debate. The third and final review in this series is by the movie review editor Toplin who takes a much broader approach to the subject not only focusing upon *JFK* but also the changing nature of historical understanding of film and its place within contemporary society. He notes that *JFK* has sparked a ‘useful dialogue’, raising questions about the assassination itself but also wider concerns about Cold War policy making. It also importantly ‘inject[ed] fresh energy into an old debate about the relationship between Hollywood and history’ which is why *JFK* and the discourse which surrounds it is seen as a turning point in this study.<sup>54</sup>

The *AHR* reviews of *JFK* appear independently from the journal’s regular film reviews section, in a separate discussion forum in the opening section of the printed journal. The three articles ‘*JFK* and the Culture of Violence’ (Marcus Raskin), ‘*JFK*: The Movie’

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<sup>51</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, ‘Introduction: Movie Reviews’, *The Journal of American History* 78:3 (December, 1991), 1262.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas C. Reeves, ‘Review: *JFK*’, *The Journal of American History* 78:3 (December, 1991), 1263.

<sup>53</sup> William W. Phillips, ‘Review: *JFK*’, *The Journal of American History* 78:3 (December, 1991), 1264, 1266.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, ‘Review: *JFK*’, *The Journal of American History*, 78:3 (December, 1991), 1168.

(Michael Rogin) and ‘*JFK: Historical Fact/Historical Film*’ (Robert A. Rosenstone) all consider the key issues raised by the film in terms of the methodology of using film as history and also approaches to the study of the assassination of Kennedy.

Raskin approaches the film as a turning point in cultural attitudes, which have been provoked by the symbolic end of the Cold War (fall of the Berlin Wall) and the impact the film has had beyond its audience. He claims that film has had ‘extraordinary effect on the public consciousness’ and has ‘generated concrete political actions that never would have occurred had the film not been made.’<sup>55</sup> Raskin recognises that the film is more than historical fantasy; regardless of its inaccuracies the film can be seen to engage with its period of production. As Raskin explains:

*JFK* is meant to use the assassination to force an audience to decide whether it wants to ground the American political process in the post-Cold War era with the same structures and habits of mind that governed it during the Cold War.<sup>56</sup>

Michael Rogin’s ‘*JFK: The Movie*’ proposes that *JFK* is a composition of both fact and fiction. It draws upon an historical event but manipulates it in order to create a ‘mysterious, fragmentary’ conspiracy narrative film.<sup>57</sup> Rogin asserts that the film’s value lies not in its retelling of the assassination but in its broader themes and political impact. In particular, the way in which *JFK* makes the audience ‘experience how politically produced paranoid anxieties, somatized on the visually produced mass body, turn into paranoid analysis.’<sup>58</sup> Stone’s paranoid style does not lead to a conclusion; instead *JFK*’s ‘visual bludgeoning’ leads to confusion.<sup>59</sup> Rather than assessing quality or analysing accuracy Rogin chooses to look at the film as representation of political paranoia in a period of political change; *JFK* is a cultural document of the 1990s rather than a history of the 1960s.

In the final of the three articles published by the *AHR*, ‘*JFK: Historical Fact/Historical Film*’, Robert A. Rosenstone analyses how director Oliver Stone controversially approaches one of the most infamous historical events of recent history and does so with an underlying commentary upon the major branches of government. Rosenstone discusses claims of the misuse of history and whether films should be judged in the same way as other historical

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<sup>55</sup> Marcus Raskin, ‘*JFK* and the Culture of Violence,’ *The American Historical Review*, 97:2 (April, 1992), 487.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 490.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Rogin, ‘*JFK: The Movie*,’ *The American Historical Review*, 97:2 (April, 1992), 502.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 505.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 504.

texts. He uses the opportunity to discuss not only *JFK* but also the historians' ill-informed approach to moving image sources. Rosenstone highlights that the history film can never be considered a true reflection of the past but, as with all historical scholarship, it is essentially an interpretation of the information and facts presented. In order for a film to be considered historical it must 'engage the issues, ideas, data, and arguments of that discourse',<sup>60</sup> something which Rosenstone considers Stone to have managed to certain extent in *JFK*. It is not possible or beneficial to judge *JFK* in terms of accuracy or against other methods of historical interpretation. As Rosenstone remarks, 'a film is not a book.'<sup>61</sup>

Notably the articles published in the *AHR* recognised *JFK* as a historical document, although not necessarily one concerning the assassination of Kennedy and 1960s political history. Although the surface subject matter is accepted as being a discussion and representation of alternatives to the Warren Report it is acknowledged if only briefly, and most obliquely by Rogin and Rosenstone, that *JFK* can be seen as a measure of contemporary attitudes to the U.S. government in the wake of the end of the Cold War. *JFK* can be understood as a document that signals and foreshadows the United States' return to a Democrat presidency following three terms of Republicanism – Ronald Reagan (1981-1985/1985-1989) and George H. W. Bush (1989-1993).

*JFK* was released in the run up to the 1992 Democratic primaries and eventual presidential election, which saw William 'Bill' Clinton nominated as the Democratic candidate and elected as the 42<sup>nd</sup> president over incumbent president George H. W. Bush. It was because of the political climate into which *JFK* was released that 'Stone succeeded in having his product of popular culture taken seriously as a vehicle of truth.'<sup>62</sup> Stone reintroduced the mythic Kennedy to a new voting generation, as part of a series of media reports that attempted to 'concretize the JFK-Clinton connection with the help of historical materials.'<sup>63</sup> Stone's film ensured that TV clips of the Kennedy assassination were repeatedly shown via the U.S. news media as Kennedy increasingly became a commodity, something that the Clinton campaign could capitalise upon by invoking his memory and rhetoric.

This flourish of work concerning the influence and importance of history films that was ostensibly generated by the furore surrounding *JFK* in 1992 has not necessarily made a lasting impact upon the study of film *as* history. Despite this shift in the early nineties the

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<sup>60</sup> Rosenstone, 'JFK,' 510.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 506.

<sup>62</sup> Luc Herman, 'Bestowing Knighthood: The Visual Aspects of Bill Clinton's Camelot Legacy,' in Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (eds.), *Hollywood's White House: The American Presidency in Film and History* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003), 311.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 315.

tendency to analyse history films and documentaries rather than feature films continues. Since 1970 and the inception of *Film & History*, a journal committed to the analysis film as history (albeit with historical drama bias), there have been an increasing number of universities offering degrees which combine the study of film and history and modules that offer a more interdisciplinary approach but these still tend towards the study of historical film.

### **Millennial Approaches: In Universities**

Although increasing numbers of universities offer joint film studies and history BA programmes these are not combined but rather taught as distinct disciplines. For example, in the U.K. around twenty universities offer degrees where film and history can be studied together; this includes the 'history with film' option, where film is a minor to the major study of history.<sup>64</sup> Yet, the two subjects rarely intersect; undergraduate students often complete modules in the two departments separately with little attempt made to combine the subjects into a single unit. The two subjects are seen to compliment each other but few departments have developed interdisciplinary modules that unify the areas of study. Those that have must rely upon a solid knowledge base in both disciplines. In order to truly investigate the potential for film to act as and become part of history, students must not only have a good grounding in film studies and a knowledge of the period under survey, but also the ability to apply one to the other therefore providing a truly interdisciplinary approach.

My own experiences as a student are also relevant here as this entire study was inspired by the difficulties I encountered as I attempted to approach film from a historian's perspective. I came to this topic, the study of film *as* history, as an undergraduate student studying at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland, U.K.), where I took advantage of the open nature of the first year during which students were encouraged to expose themselves not only to their elected degree subject (in my case History) but also to modules run by other departments. I filled in my timetable with a range of subjects from a number of different schools following personal as well as academic interests.

During the second year of my degree programme I changed from single honours history to joint honours in Film Studies and History following a semester studying film in an introductory module offered by the School of Language and Literature. I found that I regularly linked the two programmes together, making reference to films in my history

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<sup>64</sup> This information was taken from the UCAS website 'Course Search' function looking for 'history and film'. Available at: <[www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk)> [accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> July 2011].

assignments, and not simply using them as illustrative visual material, but as sources in their own right. However, my tutors did not always receive this positively, as I was often told I should look at the accuracy of the history in my chosen examples.

I was committed not only to studying film and history as separate subjects but also to the possibility of interdisciplinary study. I was particularly interested in looking at U.S. cultural history and struggled to see how a study of contemporary history could not look at that nation's filmic and other artistic/cultural output. It was not until my fourth and final year at university that I was offered a module which brought together the two subjects, and which allowed me to use the skills I had acquired in film analysis to read and better understand a film as a product of its context.

The module 'America on Film, c.1960 to the Present' directly led to my decision to complete an interdisciplinary project for my final year dissertation. Entitled, 'Damn them all to Hell!: *Planet of the Apes* as History', my dissertation looked at the changing interpretation of the *Planet of the Apes* narrative in both the 1968 and 2001 films, specifically focusing on the differences between the two periods of production and how differences in the interpretations and adaptations of the source material were linked directly to key historical moments and changes in public perceptions and opinions. That dissertation in turn led to this PhD thesis. Frustrated by how little had been written about *Planet of the Apes* and its position within film history and as a part of history, I embarked upon a study of the 1968 film as an important historical document assessing its worth as a source for historians. This is coupled with an investigation into how and why feature films can, and should be used by historians as more than visual examples for teaching and discussions about historical accuracy and authenticity.

Conferences alongside peer-reviewed journals and publications are two of the main ways in which academics validate their work. Since 2000 the journal *Film & History* has run a biennial and themed conference. Thus far the broad themes have been: 'The American Presidency' (2000), 'The Western' (2002), 'War' (2004), 'The Documentary' (2006), 'Film and Science' (2008), 'Representations of Love' (2010), and most recently 'Film and Myth' (2012). Submitted and peer-review articles presented at these conference also form special editions of the journal. These conferences have included a range of papers that approach the study of film and history in variety of different ways ranging across a number of genre and film forms through analysing television and other moving image sources, film history, the historical film and the way in which films can be seen to reflect upon their historical context. These types of conferences, although infrequent in the field of history, are valuable as they

allow for the opportunity for experts in both fields to come together in a single academic environment and discuss film and history as complementary disciplines.

### **CONCLUSION: USING FILM TO INTERPRET/UNDERSTAND HISTORY**

Despite changes over the past forty years concerning the way in which film is studied and the way that some contemporary historians, and the two major American history journals – *JAH* and *AHR* – engage with film as a document worthy of study, there is still a propensity to discuss film as a illustration of the period or person(s) it purports to represent. Robert A. Rosenstone's latest publication *History on Film/Film on History* (2006); Richard Francaviglia and Jerry Rodnitzky edited collection *Lights, Camera, History: Portraying the Past in Film* (2007) featuring contributions from Rosenstone, Rollins, and Toplin; and Jessica E. Smyth's *Hollywood and the American Historical Film* (2012) with articles by prominent scholars including Rosenstone, Marcia Landy, Robert Sklar, and Ian Scott are the most recent examples of scholarship, produced by historians, that engage with the interdisciplinary study of film and history. However, these focus upon the validity of studying film as history and give a defence of historical film arguing that 'it provide[s] an emotional hook that pulls audience interest toward a study of the subject.'<sup>65</sup> This approach to the moving image source, although valid and important to an understanding of the position of film as a form of history, is more closely aligned to the historical discipline rather than an interdisciplinary approach looking at the film within its context and thinking about how an individual film, or a cycle of films can be seen as an expression of the zeitgeist.

The intention of this thesis, therefore, is to show that a film (either historical in content or entirely fictional) can be reflective of its cultural context and that in particular *Planet of the Apes* can be seen as a cultural document of the 1960s counterculture representing ideas on and interpretations of the political and cultural events of the period. Through study of all of the elements of the film including the mise en scène, cinematography, sound/music, actors, filmmakers (including directors, writers, editors, producers...), imagery, rhetoric and narrative it is possible to uncover a film's implicit and explicit meaning. It is also possible to interpret the film in terms of how it responds to particular issues, as a product 'of its time'. For example, gender politics in the 1960s: during the sixties the second wave feminist movement began to gain momentum, the role and hierarchical position of women

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<sup>65</sup> Robert Brent Toplin, 'In Defense of the Filmmaker,' in Richard Francaviglia and Jerry Rodnitzky (eds.) *Lights, Camera, History: Portraying the Past in Film* (College Station, T.X.: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 126.

began to shift. How is this shown in films in the period? Do they reflect liberal or conservative attitudes? What roles do women take? Is an equal society imagined, or does the film conform to tradition? All of these types of questions and investigations can be used to reveal much about the film as an insight into the wider cultural context of an historical period, a period that may not necessarily be represented in the film.

Films can be seen to reveal more about the period and culture that produced them than the one which they attempt to (re)create. On the whole this applies to the full range of film genres because regardless of the film's purpose or narrative content (both fictional and historical) it is 'an inseparable part' of the culture that produced it and not simply a 'reflection' of it.<sup>66</sup> Viewed by millions every day films have become a source of information about history, cultural norms and trends, fashion, political views, and a record of the 'feelings and attitudes of the periods in which they are made.'<sup>67</sup> The meaning of the film is not located entirely within the surface narrative but in the subtext which can be uncovered and used as a record of the period in which the film was produced and released.

When writing about film *as* history, analysis must draw upon not only historical knowledge of the period surrounding a film's production and release but also make use of the appropriate analytical terms and methods employed within film studies. This thesis brings together film studies and history through the use of skills acquired via the study of both disciplines to enhance and inform a close textual reading of the 1968 film *Planet of the Apes*. It is hoped that this work will encourage a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of film as history negating the need to engage in discussions purely concerning accuracy and validity. Studies of contemporary history must be aware of the impact and interpretation of events by the nation's filmic output looking at films as individual documents but also as part a wider collection of documents, which can be used to and seen to form a history.

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<sup>66</sup> Lawrence W. Levine, 'The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and its Audiences,' *American Historical Review* 97:5 (December, 1992), 1376.

<sup>67</sup> Peter C. Rollins, 'Film and American Studies: Questions, Activities, Guides,' *American Quarterly*, 26:3 (August, 1974), 249.



## CHAPTER TWO:

### METHODOLOGY:

#### ANALYSING FEATURE FILMS IN CONTEXT

*The shimmering text of the movies is harder to be precise about in words:*

*The translation from a medium of light and movement to one of written speech is itself an art*

- Tony Barta<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

Since *Planet of the Apes*' release in 1968 the film's imagery and narrative have been interpreted from a number of different perspectives indicating the complexity of the text. There is much opportunity for, as Maltby suggests, 'discovering textual contradiction and ambiguity' in Hollywood cinema and *Planet of the Apes* due to its appropriation of allegory opens itself up to multifarious readings.<sup>2</sup> *Planet of the Apes* is a 'cultural phenomenon' with iconic imagery that exists outside of the film's narrative as reference points within popular cultural memory.<sup>3</sup> The film has become an artefact of popular culture.<sup>4</sup> This apparent trivialisation thwarts attempts to see the film as a valuable text for analysis. The negativity levied towards popular culture texts, especially those that have

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Barta, 'Introduction,' in Tony Barta (ed.), *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger Publishers, 1998), x.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Maltby, "'A Brief Romantic Interlude": Dick and Jane go to 3½ Seconds of the Classical Hollywood Cinema,' in David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (eds.), *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 435.

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Marie Erb, *Tracking King Kong: A Hollywood Icon in World Culture* (Detroit, M.I.: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 2. Erb's study of King Kong tracks the use and development of the figure of King Kong as a cultural phenomenon in American cinema and popular culture since its inception through to the Peter Jackson's 2005 release *King Kong*.

<sup>4</sup> References to *Planet of the Apes* (1968) have appeared in several major U.S. television programs, most famously and frequently in the animated satire *The Simpsons* (1989-present). An episode called 'A Fish Called Selma' (series 7, episode 19, first broadcast 24 March 1996) featured a stage-musical version of the film called 'Stop the Planet of the Apes, I Want to Get Off!'. This starred educational-video star/actor Troy McClure (Phil Hartman) as Taylor singing songs such as 'Dr. Zaius' (sung to the tune of 'Rock Me Amadeus' by Falco) and 'You'll Never Make a Monkey Out of Me!' Other examples of television series that reference the film include: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *The Critic* (1994-1995), *Family Guy* (1999-2003 & 2005-present), *Futurama* (1999-2003 & 2008-present), and *Seinfeld* (1989-1998).

become common parody subjects, overlooks the position these fictional representations of culture hold in our understanding and mediation of contemporary cultural history.<sup>5</sup>

Critiquing cinematic texts from the standpoint of the historian lies somewhere in the ‘difficult ambience between the analytical and the absorbed’.<sup>6</sup> The ideas that are consciously expressed and actively included in the film sit alongside and in tension with those that expose ingrained and even acceptable prejudices for the time of production. As popular culture texts, films are not simply representing history but also providing an understanding of the constructed nature of history. They highlight the friction generated between those attempting to represent history, and as shown in this thesis, those responding to their historical context unconcerned with notion of accuracy and academic opinion. The filmmakers of *Planet of the Apes* were not intending to create a historical artefact but rather a cultural product that would be commercially successful and perhaps remembered beyond its theatrical release. For the contemporary historian, as noted by as Tony Barta, the cinematic medium is ‘harder to be precise about in words’ than the traditional primary source because its ‘meaning shifts’ and cannot always be easily and entirely objectively pinpointed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Following the turbulence of the sixties popular culture has increasingly become a subject of academic inquiry that has influenced a number of other disciplines. As an academic discipline Popular Culture Studies analyses the value of all popular texts as a representation of the people who consume them and studies the continuing breakdown of the conceptual boundaries between high and low culture. Ray B. Browne defines popular culture ‘as all aspects of the society we inhabit... It is the world around us: the mass media, the small groups, the individual controls and directors of our life, the entertainments, diversions, heroes, icons, rituals, psychology, religion, irreligion – the total life picture.’ (Browne, 2005: 11). Contemporary studies of popular culture often criticise the cynicism of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas) suggesting that pop culture can and does respond to the needs of the people and that consumers can choose to resist indoctrination by the culture industry. See Ray B. Browne (ed.), *Popular Culture Studies Across The Curriculum: Essays For Educators* (Jefferson, N.C.: 2005). See also Theodor W. Adorno (trans. Anson G. Rabinbach), ‘Culture Industry Reconsidered,’ *New German Critique* 6 (1975), 12-19; Theodor W. Adorno (ed. J. M. Bernstein), *Culture Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr), *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 2002); Ray B. Browne, ‘Popular Culture as the New Humanities,’ *The Journal of Popular Culture* 17:4 (Spring, 1984), 1-8; Jürgen Habermas (trans. Thomas McCarthy), *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston, M.A.: Boston Beacon Press, 1987); Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston, M.A.: Boston Beacon Press, 1966); Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1989); John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003); John Storey, *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Barta, ‘Introduction,’ x.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, x.

This chapter provides a suitable methodology for the historian using film as history. It recognises that films are complex texts that contain much information not only in the text itself but also throughout its various paratexts. This chapter presents a method for analysing not only the film but also the film as an element of a wider historical context. It details the use of archives, primary documents, secondary historical texts, and means of identifying a filmic context. This thesis alternates using archival materials (scripts, photographs, correspondence, speeches), paratextual material (posters, reviews, merchandise), and secondary materials (existing analyses and historical reference texts) with textual analysis of key scenes in *Planet of the Apes* – the principal primary source. This chapter proposes using film studies methods to enhance a historical methodology where the fictional feature film is posited and used as a primary source. This suggests that a process of methodological ‘cross-fertilization’ with other arts and humanities subjects is ‘central to the process of renewal’ within contemporary history.<sup>8</sup>

As Howell and Prevenie noted in their book about historically *Reliable Sources*: ‘All cultures, all peoples, tell stories about themselves, and it is these stories that help provide the meanings that make a culture.’<sup>9</sup> Feature films are stories that people tell about themselves, stories that form part of a culture and offer a source that the historian can analyse in their interpretation of contemporary historical events and periods. For the historian to entirely overlook fictional features films or to consider them ‘mindless, empty, unsatisfying or hollow’ is to pass over an immensely important means of recording the interpretations of the experiences of filmmakers and their audiences.<sup>10</sup> In using film as history this thesis hopes to continue to close ‘the chasm’ between historians and films that ‘can be traced in part to historians’ resistance to the theoretical apparatus of film studies.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Colin Lucas, ‘Introduction,’ in Jacques le Goff, and Pierre Nora (eds.), *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Martha C. Howell and Walter Prevenie, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Nichols, *Engaging Cinema: An Introduction to Film Studies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 443.

<sup>11</sup> John E. O’Connor, ‘Image as Artifact: An Introduction,’ in John E. O’Connor (ed.), *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television* (Malabar, F.L.: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co Inc., 1990), 8.

In order for the historian to fully incorporate a film text into their research they must develop a methodology that allows full analysis of the breadth of information contained within the cinematic text. John O'Connor presents a framework for historians working with film sources in his edited collection *Image as Artifact*. He remarks that the historian's usual approach to their source material must be expanded to 'consider the nature of visual communication.'<sup>12</sup> O'Connor recognises the variety of ways that the cinematic text can be utilised and in particular considers how they could be used in research and as a teaching tool in the classroom. This methodology is 'based upon the traditional tools of historical scholarship' and outlines the different ways moving images might be appropriated.<sup>13</sup>

O'Connor details a two-stage process; the first stage concerns how information about and from the text should be gathered and the second stage identifies 'four frameworks for historical inquiry.' These frameworks are titled as 'the moving image as representation of history;' 'the moving image as evidence for social and cultural history;' 'actuality footage as evidence for historical fact;' and 'the history of the moving image as industry and art form.'<sup>14</sup> This section will expand upon O'Connor's method of gathering information and will consider the integrality of understanding historical context in revealing the historical interpretation contained within the moving image document.<sup>15</sup>

### **GATHERING INFORMATION: FILM CONTENT**

The first stage O'Connor proposes is concerned with 'gathering information on the content, production, and reception' noting that the source must be read as more than a series of stills and dialogue when assessing the conveyance of meaning.<sup>16</sup> As a historical document film offers the historian a number of challenges and requires them to understand the material's distinctive method of communication and approach the source with a developed knowledge of audio-visual analysis.

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<sup>12</sup> John E. O'Connor, 'Historical Analysis, Stage One: Gathering Information on the Content, Production, and Reception of a Moving Image Document,' in O'Connor (ed.), *Image as Artifact*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> John E. O'Connor, 'Image as Artifact: An Introduction,' in O'Connor (ed.), *Image as Artifact*, 4, 4-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 6-8.

<sup>15</sup> See previous chapter for a discussion of the categorisation of film sources and how fictional feature films (film as history) can be understood alongside more traditional film sources: filmed history (newsreel/documentary) and history on film (films about historical periods and personalities).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

As James Monaco shrewdly expressed in the preface to the second edition of *How to Read a Film*:

Is it necessary, really, to learn How to Read a Film? Obviously, anyone of minimal intelligence over the age of two can – more or less – grasp the basic content of a film, record, radio, or television program without any special training. Yet precisely because the media so very closely mimic reality, we apprehend them much more easily than we comprehend them.<sup>17</sup>

What Monaco importantly highlights here is difference between apprehension and comprehension, and the diligence required to fully understand the complexities of the film text. For a historian or someone outside of the film studies turn it is important to explain why the film is such an important artefact for comprehending contemporary culture and how it can be used by academics cross-disciplinarily.

The most frequently referenced introductory texts to film analysis are James Monaco's *How to Read a Film* and David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's *Film Art: An Introduction*.<sup>18</sup> These film studies guides offer the scholar an introduction to the formal qualities of film – analysing things such as shot composition, editing, mise-en-scène, dialogue, sound/music, star personas, genre, narrative, and technology.<sup>19</sup> Books such as these would aid the historian in their reading of the film text by giving them access to the full range of terms and methods for critically analysing film content. This should allow them to produce a subjective and defensible analysis that is not overly reliant upon an objective interpretation.

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<sup>17</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, and Beyond*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 17.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid; David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010). Other useful texts include: Pam Cook, *The Cinema Book* (London: BFI, 2007); Jill Nelmes, *Introduction to Film Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996); Nichols, *Engaging Cinema*; Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

<sup>19</sup> A glossary of terms can be found at the back of *Film Art* (all nine editions) and the first and second editions of *How to Read a Film* that might be useful for those new to the field. Film dictionaries can be helpful for navigating secondary material as well as ensuring correct term usage. Monaco extended his own glossary into a dictionary of over 2,400 entries in 1999 that also includes terms for other new media and superseded his previously published *Glossary of Film*. James Monaco, *The Dictionary of New Media: The New Digital World: Video, Audio, Print* (New York: Harbor Electronic Pub., 1999). See also Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

A familiarity with film should not be confused with ‘critical understanding’ and knowledge of film and wider-viewing is insufficient for a historian who wishes to fully utilise film as a primary source.<sup>20</sup> ‘An education in the quasi-language of film’ is essential as it ‘opens up greater potential meaning’ for the observer.’<sup>21</sup> In order to gain a fully understanding of the complexities of the film text the historian must learn a new set of skills and a technical vocabulary. This will allow them to comprehend and explain what a film is communicating, how it’s meaning is constructed, and what alternative readings might exist within the text.

Repeat viewing is essential to understanding the film source. When an important scene is identified an in-depth textual analysis should be conducted focusing each upon a different aspect on each viewing. For example, one viewing might concentrate upon how editing contributes to meaning. The scholar would then consider the scenes in terms of how the editing used, what particular techniques are used, and why that particular method was used and deduce what the intention of this directorial decision. In some cases the continuity editing will be used and attention will not be drawn to the editing allowing emphasis of something else. Editing can also be used to determine the pace of the sequence or the way that the audience relates it to other elements of the narrative. Cross-cutting for example edits together two scenes occurring simultaneously in different locales providing a literal and often symbolic link between the two scenes.<sup>22</sup>

A systematic and rigorous formal analysis of key sequences will ‘reduce the dependence on plot and dialogue’ that scholars who are unfamiliar with audio-visual analysis retreat to and ‘on which they are sometimes over-reliant.’<sup>23</sup> Film is a moving

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<sup>20</sup> John E. O’Connor, ‘An Introduction to Visual Language for Historians and History Teachers,’ in O’Connor (ed.), *Image as Artifact*, 302.

<sup>21</sup> Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 170.

<sup>22</sup> For example: Famously Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather* (1972) uses this technique to develop the film’s main themes and create links between the mafia, the Roman Catholic Church, and themes of guilt, power, and loyalty. During the baptism scene at the end of the film the contradictory nature of Michael Corleone’s (Al Pacino) life is exposed. In one scene we are shown the baptism where he becomes a godfather and in the other a series of violent murders that Michael has ordered to confirm his position as the mafia’s new ‘godfather’. In this paradoxical sequence Michael is shown fulfilling his duty to the church, renouncing Satan and promising to protect his new godson, and also his devotion to his position of power and desire to protect himself. This sequence is further enhanced by other formal elements such as the organ music that plays throughout the sequence further entwining the sequences and their meaning.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Richards, ‘Film and Television: The Moving Image,’ in Sarah Barber and Corinna M. Peniston-Bird (eds.), *History Beyond the Text: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge, 2009), 77.

audio-visual text that is experienced as a whole and should be analysed as such. If a reading relies upon screenshots and content analysis of dialogue, for example, the intricacies of a scene could be overlooked. It is not what is shown that is always most important but rather how it is conveyed. Breaking down each key scene and re-watching with a different focus makes it possible for the scholar to extrapolate the meaning fully and see how this was created via a complex configuration of all of the different formal aspects.

In-depth analysis of the moving image document in isolation can lead scholars to overlook the vitally important context in which the film was conceived, made, and received. In order for a film's historical value to be unearthed it must be understood in close relation to its own history and the historical period it belongs to. 'Factors of production often dictate both content and reception' and all three of these elements are bound into a film's historical context.<sup>24</sup> The production of *Planet of the Apes* was heavily influenced by its sixties context, for example particular storylines were rejected as they were considered too controversial for the wider audience.<sup>25</sup> These changes and omissions to scripts and the final edit can be tracked via changes made to scripts, studio and personal correspondence, and through interviews with the director. In order to fully appreciate a film's content it must be viewed from an informed position where the critic understands the historical context of, and also the details of each film's production and reception.

#### **GATHERING INFORMATION: CONTEXTUALISATION**

Films 'do not operate in a vacuum but respond directly to what is going on around them.'<sup>26</sup> Knowledge of the historical context is absolutely vital to understanding the relevance of the references, images, and rhetoric that the film draws upon. Film is 'fundamentally intertextual' and its meaning is formed through a network of information

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<sup>24</sup> O'Connor, 'Historical Analysis, Stage One: Gathering Information,' 11.

<sup>25</sup> Nova was originally to be shown as pregnant at the end of the film, this was removed in the later stages as it was considered offensive by Fox executives. See Dale Winogura, 'Dialogues on Apes, Apes and More Apes,' *Cinéfantastique* 2:2 (Summer, 1972), 26. This is also discussed in further detail in the chapter 'Framing the Subject: Identity Politics in *Planet of the Apes*.'

<sup>26</sup> Richards, 'Film and Television,' 78.

that exists between the film and its audience.<sup>27</sup> A study of a film should begin with a thorough examination of the historical period so that these culturally and historically bound references can be at first recognised and then analysed and explained.

Consultation of a range of different national newspapers can allow the scholar to get an idea of the types of stories that were dominating the headlines and available to the viewers of the film at the time. Newspapers are crucial sources of information that offer time-specific interpretations of major events and trends. They are not, however, sources of objective data about what was happening when the film was in production and at release, but instead give insight into what types of reports were considered most important at the time of publication and conceivably ‘reinforced present cultural frames.’<sup>28</sup> In looking at a film as a document of American culture major nationally available newspapers should be accessed as they give an overview of the stories that were reported at a national level. The nation’s most popular daily publications – *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post* – should be considered. This is particularly important if the aim is to identify major trends and gain an overview of what issues were on the national agenda.<sup>29</sup>

Newspapers must also be supplemented with a survey of relevant primary and secondary sources. Speeches, census reports, newscasts, magazines, memoirs, photographs, and other relevant sources should be consulted. This allows access to the types of phrases and images that were being frequently invoked. For example, in the later chapter on *Planet of the Apes* and the Vietnam War the speeches of John F. Kennedy are used to show how politicians were reworking the ideological idea of American frontier and how this was then imagined in science fiction.<sup>30</sup> This is then supplemented with secondary interpretations that

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Sklar, ‘Moving Image Media in Culture and Society: Paradigms for Historical Interpretation,’ in O’Connor (ed.), *Image as Artifact*, 133.

<sup>28</sup> David T. Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How “Objectivity” Came to Define American Journalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 133.

<sup>29</sup> See Stephen Vella, ‘Newspapers,’ in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from 19th and 20th Century History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 192-208; Anthony Smith, ‘The Long Road to Objectivity and Back Again: The Kinds of Truth We Get in Journalism’, in George Boyce, James Curran, and Pauline Wingate (eds.), *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Constable, 1978); Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> In particular two speeches are referenced: ‘Address of Senator John F. Kennedy Accepting the Democratic Party Nomination for the Presidency of the United States, 15 July, 1960,’ ‘Special Message to



give an overview of the period and also highlight key events and issues. Secondary sources – writings by other historians – are ‘interpretative’ and with the ‘exception of a few classic texts’ most historical volumes are replaced with updated histories and so a balance of new and older respected texts also need to be incorporated.<sup>31</sup> Primary sources are ‘intractable, opaque, and fragmentary’ and need to be supplemented with ‘good’ secondary material relating to the period under discussion.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the historical methodology and the film studies methodology can be seen working together as both are required to allow the film source to become fully realised and utilised within the writing of contemporary history.

The original audience must be considered when assessing how a film might act as a record of the culture that produced it. As O’Connor comments ‘people make meaning from images (or signs) by relating them to a series of codes, among them cultural codes, shared artistic codes, and cinematic codes.’<sup>33</sup> Codes that they have created through their own individual experiences and each viewer has a ‘unique personal history as a member of a specific culture at a specific period.’<sup>34</sup> Audiences present scholars with a challenge as they cannot be generalised and even consultation of documents such as newspaper articles, reviews, and box and office receipts cannot fully explain or define their reaction.

The film review is most frequently accessed genre of film writing. Reviews are published regularly in newspapers, magazines, journals, and in collections for public consumption as a means of assessing the merits of a film. They tend to be short articles often written by a staff writer at a particular publication and offer their readers a review of elements such as entertainment value and aesthetic quality. There are an abundance of film reviews available online from a variety of different sources, although they must be treated cautiously as ‘allowances must be made for [their] attitude and readership’.<sup>35</sup> When analysing a film as history the most beneficial reviews will likely to be those released in the months and weeks running up to the release of the film. In the case of *Planet of the Apes* the reviews came in two waves with some being written and published

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the Congress on Urgent National Needs, 25 May, 1961.’ Available at:

<<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/JFK-Speeches>> [Last accessed: 21/08/2011].

<sup>31</sup> Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton, *Doing History* (London: Routledge, 2011), 67.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 156-157.

<sup>33</sup> O’Connor, ‘Historical Analysis, Stage One: Gathering Information,’ 12.

<sup>34</sup> Jay Ruby, ‘Exposing Yourself: Reflexivity, Anthropology, and Film,’ *Semiotica* 30:1/2 (1980), 157.

<sup>35</sup> Richards, ‘Film and Television,’ 79.

in early February 1968 following the New York premier and the rest in late March and early April when the film was put on general US release.<sup>36</sup> These were released in print media in newspapers, magazines like *The New Yorker*, and journals including *Film Quarterly*.

It is important to look at a wide range of reviews in order to make an assessment of how the film was originally reported to the public. It is also worth noting that ‘audiences [do] not always heed the advice of the critics’ as films that have been critically approved do not always find audiences and those that have invited derision regularly top annual box-office charts.<sup>37</sup> *Planet of the Apes* received mixed reviews but it was one of the top ten grossing films of 1968. Andrew Sarris labeled it Schaffner’s ‘silliest project’ noting that it was ‘a commercial irony’ that *Planet of the Apes* would probably go on to be one of the director’s best known films,<sup>38</sup> whereas Kevin Thomas of the *Los Angeles Times* referred to it as a ‘triumph of artistry and imagination’ labeling it a ‘true screen odyssey.’<sup>39</sup>

Alongside film reviews, which can provide very varied responses to films, audience surveys can be carried out. These may help to bridge the gap between the critical response and the individual reaction to a film. The questionnaire is ‘basic tool’ for this research method and it allows for the collection of empirical data on the film for instance viewing habits, personal opinion, and how these change according to factors such as geography, age, class, or gender.<sup>40</sup> It can provide the scholar with some direct insight into the opinions of the audience although it is extremely unlikely that a researcher will be able to assemble information on the entire audience. The sample must be representative with a balance of responses from across a societal cross-section. However, as a means of analysing a film retrospectively as history this method is problematic. Although members of the original audience could be approached decades after a film’s release their opinions would not be representative of their immediate response to the film. It is not possible to positively discern in advance whether a film will

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<sup>36</sup> *Planet of the Apes* opened in New York on 8<sup>th</sup> February and released nationally on 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1968.

<sup>37</sup> Richards, ‘Film and Television,’ 79.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968* (Boston: De Capo Press, 1996), 184. First published 1968.

<sup>39</sup> Kevin Thomas, ‘*Planet of the Apes*’ Out of this World,’ *Los Angeles Times* (March, 1968), D18.

<sup>40</sup> Anders Hansen, Simon Cottle, Ralph Negrine, and Chris Newbold, *Mass Communication Research Methods* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), 225.

have cultural and cinematic longevity and therefore films of interest are not identified until long after their release. This form of data collection would be more beneficial to a study of contemporary cinematic releases.

Fan magazines have been ‘a major part of film culture’ in the United States and a survey of their content and the letters sent in by members of the magazine’s readership could offer further avenues of research.<sup>41</sup> These documents should be interpreted as ‘supporting discourses’ that sit alongside film reviews and critical writing representing the fans and their reaction to the films.<sup>42</sup> Film magazines are termed ‘documents of fandom’ by British scholar Sarah Street and her analysis of the British fan magazine culture identifies them as a means of analysing a responsive part of the original audience.<sup>43</sup> She notes that it is extremely challenging to reconstruct and understand the ‘codes of contemporary discourse’ that surrounded a film’s original historical moment and that looking to these types of publications that were sometimes amateur may offer ‘a glimpse at fan culture’ and the roots of a film’s popular longevity.<sup>44</sup>

Many fan magazines such as science fiction and fantasy fan publications *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (1958-1983) and *Castle of Frankenstein* (1962-1975) that circulated in a specific community are not widely available to scholars and tend to be held in personal collections. Even when available it is worth noting that these magazines will have chosen to publish only a small selection of notable responses, if any, about the film being analysed. This potentially direct flow of responses from audience members is mediated by the publication. Articles published will not necessarily engage with material critically instead offering fragments of information on production and trivia through informal interviews with members of the cast and crew. Henry Jenkins’ and John Tulloch’s analysis of science fiction audiences suggests that this fan material should be redefined ‘not as useless or decontextualized knowledge but rather as unauthorized knowledge’ that can be used to make further sense of the complex ‘narrative universe’ that audience’s create and engage

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<sup>41</sup> Richards, ‘Film and Television,’ 81.

<sup>42</sup> David Desser and Garth S. Jowett, ‘Introduction,’ in David Desser and Garth S. Jowett (eds.), *Hollywood Goes Shopping* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xvi.

<sup>43</sup> Sarah Street, *British Cinema in Documents* (London: Routledge, 2000), 77.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 82.

with.<sup>45</sup> This is a form of documentation that requires development and further study that has yet to be completed in a systematic fashion.

All films generate vast amounts of documentary material. Thankfully, for the scholar, both personal and corporate papers have been kept at the studios and entrusted to university and museum archives. This material is important for the historian in order to form an understanding of the film in its context. These archives hold material from the studios that can be used to track the development of the film from its pitch and development through scripting, shooting, post-production and release. Depending on the collection this might include personal correspondence, budgets, contracts, script drafts, costume development, concept art, set photographs, posters, presspacks, and storyboards. There is a wealth of information that can be overwhelming, but can offer insight into particular decisions that influenced the final film. It is also a means of verifying analysis of the film's content; does consultation of archived primary documents support the scholar's analysis of the film's content?

Many of major Hollywood studios have kept extensive records from their production history. This documentation can be found in archives often at universities in Los Angeles as well as in the studios' own archives, although these are sometimes unavailable to scholars. As Douglas Gomery notes 'luckily for the historian, Hollywood studios have long been held under suspicion' meaning that they have been required to keep extensive records.<sup>46</sup> These official reports have then been greatly enhanced with the release of personal papers that supplement the official ones with private correspondence, memos, journals, and annotated documents. The largest catalogued holdings are held at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles), University of Southern California (USC), Margaret Herrick (the library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science) and Loyola Marymount University.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Henry Jenkins and John Tulloch, 'Beyond the *Star Trek* Phenomenon: Reconceptualizing the Science Fiction Audience,' in Henry Jenkins and John Tulloch (eds.), *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Dr. Who and Star Trek* (London: Routledge, 1995), 17-18.

<sup>46</sup> Douglas Gomery, 'Considering Research in Film and Television Archives?' *Perspectives Online* 39:1 (2001). Available at: <<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2001/0101/index.cfm>> [Last accessed: 13/08/2012].

<sup>47</sup> Other notable archives/libraries with Hollywood holdings include: The Library of Congress, The Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research (WCFTR), The Frances Howard Goldwyn Hollywood Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The Performing Arts Special Collections (PASC) at UCLA holds collections for Twentieth Century Fox, Paramount, and RKO. hold papers for Warner Bros. Universal, and Republic Pictures. Margaret Herrick holds the Hollywood Production Code files and more than a thousand collections that include personal and corporate documents from people involved in all areas of production including directors and studio executives. Loyola Marymount University holds a number of personal collections and production collections for selected productions. All of the listed archives also have collections of scripts, stills and other movie ephemera that may not belong to a particular collection but rather to the general catalogue.

Archival material offers access to an abundance of materials that give the scholar access to the inner-workings of the studio and an opportunity to understand the decisions that were made concerning casting, directing, removal and addition of scenes, and studio and industry politics. But as this range of documentation attests the film does not exist independent from its context, the film is framed within its filmic context. It is an important element of the historical context that must also be understood. This can be achieved through consultation of archival materials and through existing studies on the subject. The scholar must identify the studio and research its history, understand the genre the film fits into, catalogue the types of films being released in the period of study, and investigate the director, crew, and cast and understand their existing work. These are all integral to being able to analyse the film, its audience, and how it formed part of a collection of cinematic texts released by the studio and the industry at the time the chosen film text was released.

Once a film source is ‘fully documented’ the gathered information can offer a huge amount of material for the historian to draw upon.<sup>48</sup> The film is a primary source, but it is one that is part of a network of materials that allows the historian to identify and track the actions of its producers’ intentions, developments, and adaptations to their material over the history of production. Films cannot provide direct access to the historical period regardless of the film genre, but instead presents ‘contemporary views of

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<sup>48</sup> Richards, ‘Film and Television,’ 86.

that world.<sup>49</sup> An interpretation that may simultaneously ‘idealize and satirize’ its social and cultural setting;<sup>50</sup> through consultation of the proposed range of materials the historian may be able to analyse the gap between reality and the one offered in the film. *Planet of the Apes* is presented in this thesis as a case study, the following section details how the above method was utilised in this study including film access, archive access, and selection of secondary materials.

### **GATHERING INFORMATION ON *PLANET OF THE APES***

It is now easier to access the film *Planet of the Apes* than it would have been in the twenty years following its release. The scholar does not have to rely on television screenings, reruns, or archives to access current, canonical, or ‘perpetual sellers’.<sup>51</sup> Of all of material relating to this study the film was the most readily available. Following the 1980s ‘home-video revolution,’<sup>52</sup> films are widely accessible on DVD, Bluray, and in recent years via on-demand Internet streaming media. As O’Connor notes ‘unlike other historical evidence which exists independently as words on a page or as an artifact you can hold in your hand, moving images require technology,’<sup>53</sup> but this technology is now widely available and not just to those who have access to a projector and original film reels.<sup>54</sup> In the wake of the 2001 remake and the film’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008 there was renewed interest in the original 1968 *Planet of the Apes* and several special edition collections were released, the most comprehensive being the 2006 14-disk *Planet of the Apes – The Ultimate Collectors Edition* that was used in this study.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2001), 187.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

<sup>51</sup> Gomery, ‘Considering Research in Film.’

<sup>52</sup> Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 121.

<sup>53</sup> O’Connor, ‘Image as Artifact: An Introduction,’ 4.

<sup>54</sup> If a study is being conducted with niche or currently unavailable titles the Library of Congress ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)), UCLA ([www.cinema.ucla.edu](http://www.cinema.ucla.edu)), and the British Film Institute ([www.bfi.org.uk/archive-collections/](http://www.bfi.org.uk/archive-collections/)) all hold comprehensive film collections and the facilities required for watching films on different and original formats. Catalogues can be accessed through their websites.

<sup>55</sup> This limited edition collection includes: the original 1968 film, the four film sequels, the live-action television series, the animated television series, Tim Burton’s 2001 *Planet of the Apes*, and *Behind the Planet of the Apes* a 126-minute AMC documentary on the about the production of the original *Apes* films presented by Roddy McDowall. The collection is presented in an ape-head bust (Caesar).

Despite the ease of film access the archives are more challenging for the British academic to incorporate into their research as they require a visit to the United States. In the case of this project material was found in two locations (Los Angeles and Lancaster, P.A.) across three different archives. The Los Angeles libraries visited were Margaret Herrick Library (Charlton Heston Papers, the Production Code Files) and LMU's William H. Hannon Library (Arthur P. Jacobs Collection). *Planet of the Apes'* director Franklin J. Schaffner's personal papers are held at his alma mater Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster. Neither UCLA or USC had holdings relevant to this study other than scripts that were available elsewhere, and posters that with consultation with their archivists were found to be the same as those available at the Margaret Herrick Library.

The most comprehensive collection is at Loyola Marymount University in the 'Arthur P. Jacobs Collection' series 2 only, as series 1 is currently unavailable to researchers.<sup>56</sup> This collection includes 'files from his publicity firm (15 linear feet); files from his motion pictures (65 linear feet); artwork; sound recordings; books and other memorabilia.'<sup>57</sup> Within the collection there are a variety of materials from the production of the *Planet of the Apes* and some studio material for the sequels *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*. The Margaret Herrick Library contains the 'Charlton Heston Papers 1941-1992', the 'Motion Picture Association of America – Production Code Administration Records (MPAA/PCA),' and an extensive poster collection that includes a series of original posters for the 1968 film from around the world. The Heston collection includes little material on the film, but did include a copy of the script and some speech transcripts that were relevant, and a large scrapbook of clippings and photographs.<sup>58</sup> There is also a folder held for *Planet of the Apes* in the

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<sup>56</sup> There are further documents from the collection that are still under the care of Jacobs' widow Natalie Trundy (1972-) who allowed Joe Russo and Larry Landsman complete access to the unarchived personal collection. Access was not granted for this project. Russo and Landman's *Planet of the Apes Revisited* offers an extremely detailed look at the development and production of the film with two chapters of the book devoted to 'The Road to *Planet of the Apes*' and the production of film. See Joe Russo, and Larry Landsman, *Planet of the Apes Revisited: The Behind-the-Scenes Story of the Classic Science Fiction Saga*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2001), 1-92.

<sup>57</sup> Archive description of Collection 23: Arthur P. Jacobs Collection. Available at: <[http://library.lmu.edu/Collections/specialcollections/Manuscripts/Jacobs\\_Collection.htm?](http://library.lmu.edu/Collections/specialcollections/Manuscripts/Jacobs_Collection.htm?)> [last accessed: 14/08/12].

<sup>58</sup> Scrapbook (1962-1970), Charlton Heston Papers 1941-1992, Collection 173, Margaret Herrick Library (AMPAS), 6-OS.

MPAA/PCA files with a letter issued prior to the commencement of filming in April 1967 and also the official the final PCA approval document from January 1968.<sup>59</sup>

The 'Franklin J. Schaffner Collection' held at Franklin and Marshall College's Archives and Special Collections is not widely publicised and has not been used in any of the previous critical studies of *Planet of the Apes*. However, it was utilised by Erwin Kim in the researching of his 1985 book *Franklin J. Schaffner*.<sup>60</sup> Kim dedicates a chapter to *Planet of the Apes* but this is more concerned with detailing the production and Schaffner's involvement rather than analysing the film itself. The 'Franklin J. Schaffner Collection' includes 'screenplays, scripts, films, film trailers, photographs, set designs, publicity packets, and other television and motion picture memorabilia' ranging from script drafts to an original ape mask.<sup>61</sup> In particular the scripts from this collection were useful as they included the director's annotated shooting script and copies of the drafts scripts also held at UCLA, Margaret Herrick, and Loyola Marymount University.

Franklin and Marshall College was the first archive to be used as it had not been employed in a critical study of *Planet of the Apes* before. All of the archives consulted were accessed through the help of librarians by phone and email and via a U.S.-based research assistant who was able to access material on my behalf. Contact was made with librarians who assisted in deciding upon what material should be viewed and what was most relevant to the study being conducted. Photocopies and photographs of material were made of documents were possible creating a collection of materials that could be viewed repeatedly. This was further aided by the digitisation of some key documents such as the shooting scripts and posters images by archive staff. The archive at Loyola Marymont was particularly expansive and although it was extremely well-documented

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<sup>59</sup> The letter sent from Geoffrey Shurlock at the PCA to Frank Ferguson at Twentieth Century Fox raises concerns about the nudity in the film and the treatment of animals. it was advised that the film would likely be suitable for release as long as precautions were taken over the costuming of the female humans. The film was released in the final months of the Production Code in February/April 1968 and classification formally began in November of that year. See Geoffrey M. Shurlock, Letter to Frank Ferguson, 28 April, 1967, and *Planet of the Apes* PCA approval document, 17 January, 1968. Motion Picture Association of America – Production Code Administration Records (MPAA/PCA), Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. For details of the Production Code and its influence over Hollywood (c.1930-1968) see Leonard J. Leff, Jerold L. Simmons, *Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

<sup>60</sup> Erwin Kim, *Franklin J. Schaffner* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1985).

<sup>61</sup> Archive description of Franklin J. Schaffner Collection MS1. Available at: <<http://library.fandm.edu/archives/mscoll/schaffner.pdf>> [last accessed: 14/08/2012].



there were some items that had been kept that were not related to the production of *Planet of the Apes* but had interestingly formed part of Jacobs' wider personal collection.<sup>62</sup>

This archival material was used alongside existing studies of *Planet of the Apes* production to create an understanding of the film's history. Russo and Landsman's *Planet of the Apes Revisited* makes use of a number of sources generally unavailable to researchers and offers the most complete story of the film and its production. It includes interviews with many of the film's, and indeed the franchise's, key figures. It references a huge amount of the material held in the archives (although this is rarely referenced fully) and creates a narrative for the film. Primarily intended as a book for the fandom it is a useful resource for scholars as it provides a review of such a varied amount of primary material. Eric Greene's *Planet of the Apes as American Myth* is also useful as it too uses the material available at Margaret Herrick and UCLA. Although archival material, mainly photographs, is often used by Greene for illustration rather than a source for independent analysis.<sup>63</sup>

The filmic context was established through consultation of secondary material that analysed the 1960s film industry. *Planet of the Apes* is viewed as a science fiction film and initial research of the film focussed upon the film's position within turns of this genre. *Planet of the Apes* is recognised as forming part of a cynical cycle of science fiction cinema in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>64</sup> Key Hollywood science fiction cinema scholars including Annette Kuhn, Vivian Sobchack, and J. P. Telotte provide a framework for understanding the development of the genre and also *Planet of the Apes*' position within that genre. This was then further developed through research into Twentieth Century Fox, the director (Franklin Schaffner), the actors (Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter, and Linda Harrison), the crew (Bill Creber, John Chambers, Jerry Goldsmith), and the producers (Arthur P. Jacobs, Richard Zanuck).

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<sup>62</sup> For example, in the LMU Arthur P. Jacobs Collection... LAT article

<sup>63</sup> Greene does not make reference to the PCA documents or their content, and did not use the Franklin J. Schaffner collection at Franklin and Marshall College.

<sup>64</sup> See Appendix II: American Science Fiction. See also Joan F. Dean, 'Between *2001* and *Star Wars*,' *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 7:1 (1978), 32-41; Vivian Sobchack, 'Postfuturism,' in Redmond, *Liquid Metal*, 220-227; Constance Penley, 'Time Travel, Primal Scene, and the Critical Dystopia,' in Constance Penley, Elisabeth Lyon, Lynn Spigel and Janet Bergstrom (eds.), *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 63-82; Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction: Between Fantasy and Reality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 75-100.

An initial understanding of *Planet of the Apes*' historical context was created through exposure to the newspapers of the day in particular *The New York Times* as it is the most widely distributed U.S. daily newspaper after *The Wall Street Journal*.<sup>65</sup> This material was then further contextualised with a review of the history of the United States in the 1960s as interpreted by historians. In particular William H. Chafe's influential monograph *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* was used to provide a foundational understanding of U.S. history of the twentieth century. This was enhanced with consultation of works by Paul Boyer, Arthur Marwick, Arthur Schlesinger, Harvard Sitkoff, Richard Slotkin and other monographs, edited collections, and journal articles that allowed for a greater understanding of the period. The key issues for analysis were selected early in the process through consultation of primary and secondary sources from the 1960s and the film itself.

## CONCLUSION

The following chapters utilise this methodology to uncover the issues and critiques at play within *Planet of the Apes*. It is a methodology that incorporates elements from a range of different arts and humanities disciplines. This thesis is an interdisciplinary project and it is important to recognise the most important aspects of each field, in this case film studies and history, and to incorporate them in a way that satisfies both allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the text. As David Bordwell notes, 'a particular film offers a text or discourse' it can be analysed and understood as part of a historical period and its narrative, as part of a group of films it can also be used to identify changes across a specific timeframe.<sup>66</sup> But each film must be understood fully before it can be viewed as part of continuing cinematic and cultural discourse. This thesis acts as an example of how much information is contained within the single filmic artefact, and also allows for discussion of the under-researched film *Planet of the Apes* that still continues to draw an audience more than forty years after its initial release.

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<sup>65</sup> *The Wall Street Journal* with its focus on economic and business news, although widely circulated, is not the most useful for gaining a sense of what the average American was reading to during the 1960s outside of legal and business quarters. The United States' other consistently popular daily newspaper, *USA Today*, did not begin publication until 1983.

<sup>66</sup> David Bordwell, 'Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory,' in Bordwell, *Post-Theory*, 18.

The civil rights movement was the ‘most significant insurgent challenge to arise’ during the 1960s social movements and was integral to stimulating other social movements.<sup>67</sup> It was an unavoidable issue in looking at a film of the 1960s but also one that has been written about extensively in existing analyses of *Planet of the Apes*. The inclusion of a separate chapter in this thesis on race and *Planet of the Apes* was debated as it has already been the focus of academic scholarship. However, race and the civil rights movement is a central part of the elusive decade of the 1960s and it is the subject of the first chapter of the case study because of its role as a foundation to many of the other social movements that are discussed in later chapters.

The following chapter provides a review of the relevant scholarship concerning *Planet of the Apes* and race, and an analysis of the film as a response to the civil rights movement. It looks at the role of the film’s only black cast member, the central trial scene as a reference to *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857), and the issues surrounding the wider Hollywood and science fiction genre context where black characters were being provided with greater visibility. It critiques and in some instances expands upon the already present understanding of *Planet of the Apes* as a record of contemporary attitudes to the changing understanding of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States in the 1960s.

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<sup>67</sup> Doug McAdam, ‘The Decline of the Civil Rights Movement,’ in Jo Freeman, Victoria Johnson (eds.), *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties* (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1999), 325.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### LIBERAL GOOD INTENTIONS & RACIST UNDERTONES:

#### *PLANET OF THE APES AND RACE*

*Black skin was a code for limited narrative range*

- James Snead<sup>1</sup>

*The accused is indeed a man. Therefore, he has no rights under ape law.*

- Dr. Honorius, Deputy Minister of Justice

#### INTRODUCTION

*Planet of the Apes* allegorises race-relations in the United States in the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> This is the most popular reading of the original 1968 film, and indeed all of the parts of the original film series 'where the struggles and reversals between futuristic apes and humans form a sustained allegory not only for slavery but also for the burdens of racial exploitation, the civil rights movement, and the black rebellion that followed it.'<sup>3</sup> As already noted in the introduction, the *Apes* series can be understood as being ideologically split according to the prominence of certain issues with the sequels taking a more blatant stance on the civil rights movement.

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<sup>1</sup> James Snead, *White Screen/Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side* (London: Routledge, 1994), 19.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to clarify that the use of the terms *race*, *white*, and *black* are based on the understanding that race is, as noted by Stuart Hall, 'essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category'. Also, for the purposes of this chapter, it is recognised that the term *race* covers a vast range of ethnic backgrounds; this study will focus upon African-Americans in highlighting the centrality of race to U.S. society in the period under discussion. This work will not address the intricacies of modern racial categories in the United States but will focus on the black/white binary prevalent in the science fiction genre. See Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities,' in Kobena Mercer (ed.) *Black Film/British Cinema* (ICA Documents No.7, London: A BFI Production Special, 1988), 28. For further discussion of contemporary raciology and definitions of race see Michael Banton, *Racial and Ethnic Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 32-59; Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: Wiley & Sons Inc., 1967), 9-11; Richard Dyer, 'White,' *Screen* 29: 4 (1988), 44-64; Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 11-53.

<sup>3</sup> Ed Guerrero, *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 43.

The racial commentary that appears in *Planet of the Apes* ‘is fully expressed as black racial revenge in the film’s sequels’ where the apes (as symbols of black power) replace, overthrow and eventually oppress their former, and notably white, owners.<sup>4</sup> The most overt commentary of race relations, specifically the U.S. civil rights movement, can be found in the two final instalments of the original series in *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*, released in 1972 and 1973 respectively. Both were helmed by British director J. Lee Thompson who foregrounded ‘political themes which had been down-played’ in the previous films in the series,<sup>5</sup> especially following *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* – the most light-hearted film in the franchise. As Adilifu Nama goes on to explain:

*Conquest* is loaded with racially charged imagery that invokes African American oppression: an enslaved ape population in shackles, apes whipped, apes made to serve a predominately white population, and humans-only segregation. As a result the mise-en-scène of an assortment of gorillas storming the citadels of white authority and privilege as an unstoppable violent mob that burns everything along the way all too easily referenced the image of militant blacks protesting and burning various neighbourhoods during the race riots of the late 1960s... *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* and, to a lesser extent, *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*... are clear examples of SF films that pander to white political paranoia and possibly black political fantasy. Both films evoked some of the most strident fears associated with black militancy by imagining politically conscious and organized apes initiating the type of racial revolt that the rhetoric of black militancy advocated.<sup>6</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* engages with the race issue that was undeniably prominent within the United States during the film’s development, production, and post-production (c.1963-1967). However, this discussion of the race issue is achieved in a slightly more concealed, or even general, fashion than the later sequels. The apes in the first film are structured in a rigid caste system that clearly marks the ape society as segregated with orangutans as the ‘natural’ leaders, the chimps as the intelligentsia, and the black gorillas

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<sup>4</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 130.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Chibnall, *J. Lee Thompson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 319.

<sup>6</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 150-51

as working classes.<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting here that in Boulle's novel the black gorillas are defined as 'the most powerful class';<sup>8</sup> this reversal in the Serling/Wilson adaptation indicates an inherent racism in the film and that when interpreting the novel the screenwriters actively chose to arrange the society so it reflected their own, maintaining the societal status quo. This change could also be interpreted as an attempt to 'show the absurdity of organising a society according to the colour of skin.'<sup>9</sup> This species/racial distinction is blurred in the later additions to the franchise, as '[the] racial differentiation between orangutans, chimpanzees, and gorillas is de-emphasized as all the apes become stand-ins for African-Americans.'<sup>10</sup> The series moves from being a broader discussion of race, intolerance and oppression, as found in *Planet of the Apes*, to one that makes more specific references to the civil rights movement, positioning the sequels as direct commentary and the 'most breathtaking essay on racial conflict in film history.'<sup>11</sup>

This chapter will examine the presentation of race in *Planet of the Apes*, the 'originary film' in the *Apes* franchise that established its position on the race through particular iconic images, characters, and rhetoric.<sup>12</sup> This chapter will discuss the existing interpretation of the film as racial allegory; frame *Planet of the Apes* within its black science fiction filmic context; analyse the role and representation of the only non-white human (Dodge); and examine the references made to the American race discourse in the hunt and trial sequences. This chapter acts as a gateway to the rest of the case study that looks in detail at the other issues in the *Planet of the Apes* that are often overlooked due to the prominence of the race in the franchise as a whole.

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<sup>7</sup> A discussion of the caste system can be found in the chapter 'Aping Religion or Religious Apes: *Planet of the Apes* and Religion'. This chapter discusses this segregation, which has more to do with the class separation between apes along specific racial/species lines rather than a distinction between human and ape. Humans do not even gain a class marking as they are not only perceived as animals by the apes but shown onscreen in their introduction as a herd of animals completely outside of society. They are killed for sport by the gorillas and experimented on by the chimpanzees but they are not even depicted as a slave class, as the apes are shown to be in later instalments of the franchise.

<sup>8</sup> Boulle, *La Planète des singes*, 99.

<sup>9</sup> Amy Catherine Chambers, "'Damn them all to hell!': *Planet of the Apes* as History,' MA Dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 2006, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 73.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Atkinson, *Ghosts in the Machine: Speculating on the Dark Heart of Pop Cinema* (New York: Proscenium Inc., 1999), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Amanda Ann Klein, *American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, & Defining Subcultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 4.

Existing academic texts have already extensively covered the discussion of race in *Planet of the Apes*. Most notably Eric Greene's *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race, Politics and Popular Culture* that surveys all of the films in the original series assessing their overall and individual allegorical content. It views them as being part of a single and ongoing discourse that uses and develops the content of the first film throughout the later sequels. Adilifu Nama's *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* scrutinises Hollywood science fiction cinema's misrepresentation and lack of representation of race. The book includes a chapter with an extended discussion of *Planet of the Apes* entitled 'White Narratives, Black Allegories'.<sup>13</sup> Nama uses *Planet of the Apes* and the franchise as a whole as an example of the way in which racial discourses have appeared in ostensibly white narratives. Although peer-reviewed academic examinations of race as the central ideological concern of *Planet of the Apes* already exist it is important to recognise, reiterate, and reinforce these readings. It is essential to consider the position the race issue has taken in the appreciation and existing analysis of the film before analysing of the other seldom discussed issues.

#### **GREENE, NAMA, MCHUGH: VISUALISING RACIAL MYTHS IN *PLANET OF THE APES***

Eric Greene's 1996 monograph *Planet of the Apes as American Myth* provides textual analysis of the five original *Apes* films with an addendum that reflects upon the extension of the franchise into television and comic adaptations. At the time of writing Greene was in no doubt that the *Apes* saga had not come to end:

Given that the language of the *Apes* saga has not been exhausted and given that there is both an increased recognition of racial problems and a need for cultural response to them, it should come as no surprise if *Apes* continues to be a fertile mythological space in which stories and questions about racial conflict are explored. This time, however, we cannot settle for the same negative answer.<sup>14</sup>

The series has been re-launched twice since Greene wrote this statement, once with the 2001 adaptation directed by Tim Burton, and recently with *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*

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<sup>13</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 128-132.

<sup>14</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 190.

directed by Rupert Wyatt in 2011 and the announced sequel *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* due for release in 2014. Indeed, the series' 'mythological space' continues to expand and acquire new audiences.<sup>15</sup>

Greene states on the first page of *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race, Politics and Popular Culture* that the *Planet of the Apes* series 'should be viewed not as separate entities but as one great work.'<sup>16</sup> Greene spreads his analysis across the entire franchise, including the five original films, the animation, and the television series and other adaptations of the originary film. He introduces so many ideas and possible interpretations that he cannot fully develop them without straying from his central contention that the franchise is built upon an allegory of race relations.

Race is Greene's central concern. His book, and in particular the chapter on *Planet of the Apes*, does analyse other sixties/seventies social issues and anxieties (such as the feminist second-wave) but his discussion tends to be brief and often concludes with discussions of race. Greene recognises the changes in the *Apes* series as the civil rights movement itself developed throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. He uses the five original films as a means of tracking and analysing changes in race representation and the movement's allegorisation in mainstream Hollywood cinema. However, he provides few details of the historical events and intricacies referenced throughout the material, choosing instead to focus on the material and assuming knowledge on the part of the reader.

Greene's study is referenced in several critical texts as an important, or even 'seminal',<sup>17</sup> reading of the *Planet of the Apes* series and 'interracial relations' in the United States.<sup>18</sup> It opens up the debate of the representation of race in science fiction with *Planet of the Apes* series acting as a primary case study. The book is structured into chapters that deal with all of the elements the franchise in chronological order: an entire chapter is given over to *Planet of the Apes*; in the second chapter *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* and *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* are grouped together and analysed as

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<sup>15</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 190.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> M. Keith Booker, *Alternate Americas: Science Fiction Film and American Culture* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger, 2006), 98.



complementary texts; the third chapter analyses *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* and goes into greater detail on the building race allegory in the series; the fourth chapter valuably critiques the oft-maligned *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*; and the concluding chapter draws the study together by examining the extension of the franchise into animated and live-action television series, comics and novelisations, and promotional merchandise/collectables. Greene attempts to show how the *Apes* films have become ‘a frame of reference regarding racial conflict’ through a utilisation of all of the facets of the franchise.<sup>19</sup>

Greene most extensively analyses the scripted dialogue, focusing on the words spoken and the images presented. This analysis is supplemented with reference to archival materials such as scripts, memos, set photographs, promotional posters, and images of audiences and the stars at awards ceremonies and in promotional images (both in and out of costume). He uses screenshots and the archival photographs of cast, crew and producers to illustrate his points, although he does not always directly refer to the published images in the text, suggesting that they were selected and included later in the publication process. Greene often fails to fully analyse the cinematographic elements of the franchise despite the inclusion of this visual evidence. He does not analyse all of films’ formal components and his style and approach to the content of the franchise and his wider filmography suggests training in literature, where written words tend to be the primary vessel for meaning, rather than film studies.

The script is indeed a vital element of appreciating *Planet of the Apes*; the dialogue is intricate and suffused with references to the historical period and often guides the narrative, but it is supplemented, enhanced and at times eclipsed by the full array of techniques available to the filmmaker. *Planet of the Apes*, as with all Hollywood cinema, is ‘strongly pictorial’ but it is importantly a moving image with editing, cinematography, mise-en-scène, and a soundtrack (both diegetic and non-diegetic).<sup>20</sup> The director and his crew generated meaning through a combination of ‘consciously chosen’ stylistic elements.<sup>21</sup> Franklin J. Schaffner was an experienced film and television director;<sup>22</sup> he

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<sup>19</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 176.

<sup>20</sup> Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Kim, *Franklin J. Schaffner*, 424.

developed a unique style that relied upon composition, favouring long takes over stylised camera movement and editing. Consultation of Schaffner's personal annotated shooting script gives some insight into the level attention given to camera movements, angles, lens and lighting.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the literary approach to analysing the *Planet of the Apes* franchise, Greene made a significant contribution to the study of science fiction and way in which films can be used as gateways to understanding the way contemporaneous social commentators (filmmakers) respond to their historical period. He did not, however, establish the reason for the study beyond the franchise's under-researched state, or position it within an American studies or historiographical turn, which this newer study hopes to achieve.

Adilifu Nama's *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction* shows that the existing critique of Hollywood science fiction cinema has overlooked the representation of race. He builds upon the existing studies completed on race and science fiction literature that noted that whether a film is 'consciously or unconsciously' racist 'leaving such racism unexamined allows for the perpetuation of it.'<sup>24</sup> Nama suggests that issues of race are notable because of their absence, suggesting that the dearth of black faces 'signals a normalization of white supremacy in the future world.'<sup>25</sup> U.S. science fiction

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<sup>22</sup> *Planet of the Apes* was Schaffner's fifth film and showed experience in the medium with experimental camerawork and full use and appreciation of the widescreen technology. Schaffner had been 'recognised as the top director at CBS', working as a house director from 1948 (6). He directed news, public affairs programmes, UN telecasts, and political conventions (1948 and 1952). Schaffner utilised his news experience for *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* (NBC, 14 February 1962). His fluid and unique cinematographic style gave eager audiences an intimate view of Kennedy's White House renovation. Following the success of the White House Tour (he won a 1962 Directorial Achievement Award from the Directors Guild of America), Schaffner was asked to direct and supervise all television appearances of JFK. See Kim, *Franklin J. Schaffner*.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Wilson, *Planet of the Apes* (Leather-bound Shooting Script with Schaffner's Annotations), 5 May 1967. Franklin J. Schaffner Collection (MS1), Archives and Special Collections, Shadok-Fackenthal Library, Franklin and Marshall College, 24a/7,

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Anne Leonard 'Introduction,' in Elizabeth Anne Leonard (ed.), *Into Darkness Peering: Race and Color in the Fantastic* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 1997), 4. Although Nama's book is the only monograph to specifically deal with the representation of race in science fiction cinema, thus far, the subject of race and science fiction literature has been the subject of several texts. Recent key texts include: Sharon DeGraw, *The Subject of Race in American Science Fiction* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009); De Witt Douglas Kilgore, *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Isiah Lavender III, *Race in American Science Fiction* (Bloomington, I.L.: Indiana University Press, 2011); John Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (Middleton, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 125.

cinema tends towards all-white futures rather than creating images of diversity beyond the constraints of contemporary society.

Nama examines the systems of racial meaning and the stereotypes present within his selected case studies and his broader survey of American science fiction cinema. He attempts to provide the reader with a better understanding of the methods of cultural production that might have influenced this negligible or negative portrayal. He therefore also offers a perspective on U.S. culture and its ideologies as expressed through, and across, the history of the science fiction genre. As Michael Omi observed: ‘the presence of a *system* of racial meanings and stereotypes, of racial ideology seems to be an enduring aspect of American popular culture.’<sup>26</sup> Science fiction cinema as a major element of that popular culture records the creative industries’ attempts at progressive portrayals and also their reoccurring representation of white hegemonic futures and alternative realities.

Nama takes a post-structuralist approach to the American science fiction genre, suggesting that Hollywood’s contribution to this genre is open to a variety of different interpretations beyond those intended by the filmmakers, especially concerning race. Nama states that there are ‘unstated regimes of racial discourse’ awaiting discovery, circulating under the surface of science fiction cinema.<sup>27</sup> He views his film examples through the prism of U.S. race relations. In a similar fashion to Greene, Nama takes different audience perspectives into account, recognising that the *Planet of the Apes* series has been used to ‘serve varied political agendas.’<sup>28</sup> Both Greene and Nama show that the texts have been aligned to both liberal and in some instance to the neo-Nazi agenda, reinterpreted as black revenge fantasies and also as a warning against increased racial tolerance.<sup>29</sup>

Nama’s analysis of *Planet of the Apes* focuses upon the issue of the institutionalisation of racism in the United States. The trial sequence is read as response to the way that the legislative branches have been used to sanction racism and how *Planet of the Apes* as a post-1964 Civil Right Act text engages with the issues concerning the

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Omi, ‘In Living Color: Race and American Culture,’ in Ian H. Angus, *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 121. Emphasis in original.

<sup>27</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 179.

<sup>29</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 124.

law and discrimination.<sup>30</sup> The film recodes ‘whites as subhuman’ and shows the orangutan leaders rejecting the evidence of Taylor’s intelligence and as Nama concludes ‘whiteness [occupies] a symbolic status in this SF film that blacks have historically been forced to fill in American society.’<sup>31</sup> The trial puts the white audience in the place of the oppressed, showing the frustrations and innate dangers of being denied basic human (or in this case ape) rights. It supplants racial prejudice with species discrimination, discussing race but also opening up the allegory to readings concerning intolerance along the grounds of religion, race, class, and gender.

Susan B. McHugh’s article ‘Horses in Blackface: Visualising Race as Species Difference in *Planet of the Apes*,’ published in the peer-reviewed *South Atlantic Review* in 2000, takes a different approach to the film. McHugh’s article scrutinising the way in which *Planet of the Apes*’ racial allegory is focused upon human/ape relations and fails to take other animals into account.<sup>32</sup> Horses are the only other animals shown in the film and the apes use them as working animals; the apes simply replace the humans in the natural order. *Planet of the Apes* has not turned the natural order upside down as some texts might suggest,<sup>33</sup> instead the pinnacle of the order has just been removed and replaced, and the previous systems of oppression have been maintained. This continuation of the status quo indicates that the film is specifically structured in order to allow for the assumption that the apes are a direct commentary upon the human race and their racial, gender and religious prejudices.

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<sup>30</sup> The 1964 Civil Rights Act, signed into law on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1964, outlawed ‘discrimination or segregation on the grounds of race, color, religion, or national origin’ in any ‘place of public accommodation’. The Civil Rights Bill that had been proposed by President John F. Kennedy was finally passed in the wake of his assassination as President Lyndon B. Johnson ‘yoked the overwhelming emotional intensity of the moment to a plea for action on the country’s urgent social problem’ (Chafe, 2003: 225). In combination the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 ended the wide disenfranchisement of African-Americans by ensuring equal voting rights, and terminated federally sanctioned discrimination against African-Americans. See William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 225-230; Robert Cook, *Sweet Land of Liberty?: The African-American Struggle for Civil Rights in the Twentieth-Century* (London: Longman, 1998); Robert D. Loevy, *To End All Segregation: The Politics of the Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* (Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America, 1990).

<sup>31</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> Susan McHugh, ‘Horses in Blackface: Visualising Race as Species Difference in *Planet of the Apes*,’ *South Atlantic Review* 56:2 (Spring, 2000), 40-72.

<sup>33</sup> For example Brian Pendreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes: Or How Hollywood Turned Darwin Upside Down* (London: Boxtree, 2001).

McHugh specialises in literary and interdisciplinary animal studies, looking at the connections between humans and nonhuman animals and their representation in literature and film. Her article is not specifically about *Planet of the Apes* as a U.S. civil rights text but more broadly about the relationship between race and species and the way that the film approaches racial markings as species marking.<sup>34</sup> McHugh defines humans as animals, part of nature rather than something outside of it. She argues that race is a construct of society and cannot survive if that society no longer exists. She questions the process by which Taylor's ideas of self were constructed and how the film is able to fully discuss issues of race and species by removing those structures. Taylor, as the only surviving human-human, is repositioned as 'an animal among animals.'<sup>35</sup> He cannot exert control because the system that gave him power has been destroyed. McHugh concludes that only by recognising that ideas about race/species are constructed can people ever stop the segregation that definitions of race and species generate.

Although there are several texts that include chapters on *Planet of the Apes* they tend to provide overviews of the film and the main issues covered with some original insights,<sup>36</sup> but they do not offer specific readings of sequences or focus on a particular issue as the three sources noted above (Greene, Nama, McHugh). Film reviews of *Planet of the Apes* from newspapers, magazines, and academic journals (reviewed in the introductory chapter) do provide further insight into the film and its racial allegory as perceived by the critics, but again these tend to be, and are often intended to be, shorter appraisals of the film rather than developed discussions.

## **RACE, SPACE, AND SCIENCE FICTION**

For a genre that is defined by its futuristic otherworldly framework and its potential to imagine alternate societies and power relations, the cultural politics of the science fiction genre have been consistently Earthbound. Narratives often perpetuate the prejudices of

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<sup>34</sup> McHugh, 'Horses in Blackface,' (2000), 51.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>36</sup> See Booker, *Alternate Americas*, 91-108 and Richard Von Busack, 'Signifying Monkeys: Politics and Story-telling in the *Planet of the Apes* Series,' in Gregg Rickman (ed.), *The Science Fiction Films Reader* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2004), 165-177.

their cultural context and even those that do challenge the zeitgeist often fail to fully realise their attempts at progress. As feminist science fiction writer and critic Joanna Russ famously suggested, science fiction narratives present a type of ‘intergalactic suburbia,’<sup>37</sup> where Western society is presented with only a few futuristic addenda, tending towards showing ‘an idealised and simplified’ past that retains traditional power relations.<sup>38</sup> Russ’s comments criticise not only gender representation but also race and class by recognising the preservation of traditional structures in futuristic fantasies and the unmistakably distinct division between good and bad, male and female, black and white.

In Sean Redmond’s 2006 article ‘The Science Fiction of Whiteness’ science fiction is defined as white: it is a white-dominated genre in terms of characters/actors, narratives, and the mise-en-scène. Redmond states that the genre presents ‘a version of whiteness that appears to be timeless, endlessly replayed and relayed, so that whiteness itself appears to be timeless and endless.’<sup>39</sup> Racial myths influenced and limited black representation because scientific achievement was defined as belonging within the remit of the white scientist, and ‘good’ science in particular was ‘given a white identity.’<sup>40</sup> Black representation in science fiction cinema is distorted by the prevalence of the white male and forced into ‘the binary configuration of black and white.’<sup>41</sup>

The majority of Hollywood science fiction is divided into the binary racial tropes where white is rendered good, safe, innocent, knowledgeable and knowable, and black is often marked as bad, dangerous, stupid, and unpredictable. Science fiction has a ‘politicized production design’ that utilises binaries as ‘a way of imagining through physical space the contemporary conflicts surrounding issues of race, class, and gender.’<sup>42</sup> It is a visual method, which David Desser traces back to Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), that utilises binaries such as high/low, inside/outside, technology/nature, light/dark ‘to translate into thematic issues’ highlighting an array of sociopolitical

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<sup>37</sup> Joanna Russ, ‘The Image of Women in Science Fiction,’ *Vertex* 1:6 (Feb, 1974), 54.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>39</sup> Sean Redmond, ‘The Science Fiction of Whiteness,’ *Scope* 6 (2006). Available at: <<http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=6&id=184>> [Last accessed: 12/07/2012].

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>41</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 139.

<sup>42</sup> David Desser, ‘Race, Space, and Class: The Politics of Cityscapes in Science Fiction Films’ in, Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Alien Zone II* (London: Verso, 1999), 84.

conflicts.<sup>43</sup> Despite the potential for the genre to act as a forum for discussion this use of binary highlights Hollywood's coded images as racist as they offer limited race representation or refuse to provide it altogether. As Daniel Bernardi concludes in his monograph on *Star Trek* and race:

Hollywood consistently constructs whiteness as the norm in comparison to which all 'Others' necessarily fail. In what amounts to a paradox of assimilation, white film and television tries to be expansive and incorporate Others... but ends up ultimately pushing those very Others aside because of a presumed innate difference... [when Hollywood] isn't telling the story of assimilation, it falls back on constructing people of color as deviant threats therefore in need of punishment or civilising, or as fetishized objects, and thus no less objects and obstacles.<sup>44</sup>

African-Americans are part of science fiction's 'ghostly presence,'<sup>45</sup> appearing in minor roles, under the disguise of alien make-up, or as 'narrative subtext or implicit allegorical subject.'<sup>46</sup> They are not entirely absent from sixties and seventies science fiction but rather subsumed or subordinated, notable because of their unavailability to viewers living in a society where 'civil rights became part of the daily agenda of life for all Americans'.<sup>47</sup> For much of the history of Hollywood science fiction film black characters have been absent, as James Snead notes 'omission and exclusion are perhaps the most widespread tactics of racial stereotyping but are also the most difficult to prove because of their manifestation is precisely absence itself.'<sup>48</sup>

Omission forms part of James Snead's rhetorical model for analysing black representation in American cinema. In *White Screen/Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side* Snead identifies the 'most frequent devices whereby blacks have been consigned to minor significance on screen' as mystification, marking, and omission.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel Leonard Bernardi, *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>45</sup> Vivian Sobchack, 'The Virginity of Astronauts: Sex and the Science Fiction Film,' in Annette Kuhn, *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema* (London: Verso, 1990), 103.

<sup>46</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 167.

<sup>48</sup> Snead, *White Screen/Black Images*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 4.

Snead notes that blacks appear in very restrictive roles as either sidekicks or servants, utilised to make white men appear ‘more authoritatively manly’ and pleasure is derived from this familiar structure that displaces ‘the necessity of verifying its moral or actual validity.’<sup>50</sup> Black skin is ideologically charged and its presence is used as a conduit to a number of stereotypes, ideas and images; differences in skin colour are not simply seen as being natural. Of the devices identified omission is clearly the most difficult to clarify and it receives the least amount of space in Snead’s exposition of this method of analysis. He defines omission as ‘exclusion by reversal, distortion, or some other form of censorship,’ and explains that this repetitious absence creates the idea in the spectator that ‘blacks belong in positions of obscurity and dependence.’<sup>51</sup> Their lack of representation or stranding in the edges of the narrative space disengages the Other from the primary Hollywood narratives.

During the fifties ‘the lines between black space and white space increasingly blurred’ and landmark cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) began to legally desegregate society.<sup>52</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education* not only ended federally sanctioned racial segregation overturning *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the case that declared ‘separate but equal’ constitutional, but also ‘provided the legal foundations of the civil rights movement of the sixties.’<sup>53</sup> By the late 1950s the previously segregated white space of the city was being infiltrated by racialised minorities, often black, a change that ‘forced white Americans to confront the darker face of the city in postwar America.’<sup>54</sup>

The urban science fiction film grew in popularity in this period, visualising fears about the future of the cityscape from threats both internal and external. Films such as *Them!* and *War of the Worlds* ‘confirmed popular suspicions about American urban life’ and allegorised the perceived anxieties concerning the non-whites communities that grew

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Eric Avila, ‘Dark City: White Flight and the Urban Science Fiction Film in Postwar America,’ in Daniel Bernardi (ed.), *Classical Hollywood/Classical Whiteness* (Minneapolis, M.N.: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 56.

<sup>53</sup> Michael L. Birzer and Richard B. Ellis, ‘Debunking the Myth That All Is Well in the Home of ‘Brown v. Topeka Board of Education’: A Study of Perceived Discrimination,’ *Journal of Black Studies* 36: 6 (July, 2006), 794. See also Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle For Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> Avila, ‘Dark City,’ 56.



rapidly in urban areas.<sup>55</sup> This film cycle might be seen to come to a climax in *The World, The Flesh and the Devil* (dir. Ranald MacDougall, 1959) where all of humanity is wiped out and, for the first half of the film at least, humanity's last man is African-American.

*The World, The Flesh and the Devil* was the first U.S. mainstream science fiction film made prior to 1970 to feature a black leading man and openly support the 'anti-segregation agenda.'<sup>56</sup> It was released only five years after the seminal Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* and its post-apocalyptic narrative imagines a future with only three survivors – a black man, a white woman, and a white man – who find themselves in an interracial love triangle set against a desolate near-future Manhattan. For the first half of the film the main character Ralph (Harry Belafonte), is alone, often framed in canted extreme long-shots and amongst montages of deserted buildings and streets, reinforcing the notion that he 'is not just the last man alive; he is a living black man in a dead white world.'<sup>57</sup> His race is significant, and for Belafonte who used 'cinema as a weapon of propaganda,' the film although not specifically about race does clearly deal with 'racial issues'.<sup>58</sup>

*The World, The Flesh and the Devil*, released in the early stages of the U.S. civil rights movement, articulated, however incompletely, the changing state of political and cultural landscape with respect of the position of the African-Americans in U.S. society. The black lead, the white woman, and the possibility of inter-racial cooperation, if not romance, is on the surface somewhat progressive. Belafonte is represented as more than an unthreatening black male taking part in a white narrative; he is not merely an ambassador for black America but a representative of all humanity. However, *The World, The Flesh and the Devil* is marred with inconsistencies betraying an underlying prejudice shown through the retention of 'the racial and sexual ideologies of dominant culture.'<sup>59</sup> A 'wall of simple-minded clichés' obstructs the film's racial potential by focusing the latter

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>56</sup> Stéphanie Larrieux, 'The World, the Flesh, and the Devil: The Politics of Race, Gender, and Power in Post-Apocalyptic Hollywood Cinema,' *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 27 (2010), 133.

<sup>57</sup> Larrieux, 'The World, the Flesh, and the Devil,' 133.

<sup>58</sup> Steven J. Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right: How Movie Stars Shaped American Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 204.

<sup>59</sup> Susan Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race, 1903–1967* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 238.

part of the film on the love triangle and the resulting tension between the black and white male survivors.<sup>60</sup>

*The World, The Flesh and the Devil* exemplifies the cultural anxiety concerning black-integration permeating a post-apocalyptic subgenre that was constrained not only ‘by the racial logic operating outside of the film but also is understandable only in relation to that logic.’<sup>61</sup> The potential for imagining a future uncontaminated by racism and sexism was quelled by existent and apparently acceptable intolerances. Films such as *Omega Man* and *Planet of the Apes* imagined desolate futures indicating that racial equality was a step towards the breakdown of the evident safety of current world order (if only for whites). The infected and perverted whiteness of ‘The Family’ in *Omega Man* and the racialised gorillas of *Planet of the Apes* represent futures where the white man (Charlton Heston) is left to defend himself and the human race against the dangerous Other. These post-apocalyptic narratives have the potential to imagine a future that is not bound by bigoted stratification, yet the rearticulation of racism serves to show the ingrained nature of these prejudices within the science fiction genre and Hollywood narrative cinema.

Despite the seemingly progressive move to include a black crewmember in *Planet of the Apes*, the fairly swift departure of Dodge (Jeff Burton) from the screen and the narrative undermines the filmmaker’s liberal good intentions. This attempt at reversing science fiction’s tendency towards retaining traditional and existing social and power relations can be compared to the hopeful vision of the future and the racially diverse crew of the starship *Enterprise* in *Star Trek* (1966 - 1969).<sup>62</sup> *Star Trek* ran for three seasons between September 1966 and June 1969 and is ‘the best-known single work in the history of science fiction media.’<sup>63</sup> The *Enterprise* crew included communications officer Lieutenant Nyota Uhura, played by black actress Nichelle Nichols, the highest-ranking

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<sup>60</sup> Albert Johnson, ‘Beige, Brown, or Black,’ *Film Quarterly* 13:1 (1959), 43.

<sup>61</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Further analysis of the original series of *Star Trek* appears in the chapter entitled ‘*Planet of the Apes* and the Vietnam War: Reworking American Myths’ where *Star Trek* is discussed in relation to its use of frontier mythology which was also appropriated by *Planet of the Apes*.

<sup>63</sup> M. Keith Booker, ‘The Politics of *Star Trek*,’ in J. P. Telotte, *The Essential Science Fiction Television Reader* (Lexington, T.X.: University Press of Kentucky), 195.

female officer to serve on ship for the three years of the series, and helmsman Lieutenant Hikaru Sulu who was played by Japanese-American actor George Takei.

The seemingly egalitarian crew of the *Enterprise* 'was uncommon in network television of the 1960s'.<sup>64</sup> It was a reflection of the changes occurring in the United States. New conceptions of racial identity and its meaning were developing and *Star Trek* was one of the first programmes to openly display these changes, foreshadowing the impact advances in civil rights would eventually have upon the visual media. For example, the series is popularly cited as having aired American television's first interracial kiss.<sup>65</sup> At the climax of the episode 'Plato's Stepchildren' Kirk and Uhura are forced to kiss.<sup>66</sup> As noted by Nichelle Nichols 'It was quite clear from the story that Kirk and Uhura are kissing against their will,' and that even this artificial embrace worried network executives who feared that it would offend viewers and in particular 'the Southern affiliates.'<sup>67</sup> It did not. The kiss provided the show with one of its largest batches of fan mail, 'all of it positive',<sup>68</sup> with the majority of questions addressed to Nichols and Shatner about what it had been like to kiss each other. As Paul Gilroy comments 'the image of these non-lovers focused the widely shared sense of race consciousness as earthbound and anachronistic' and suggested that those who recognised this were more advanced humans capable of allowing for humanity's progression.<sup>69</sup>

*Star Trek* did not offer an image or understanding of black culture. It failed to offer fully developed roles for racial and ethnic minorities with many being cast as aliens

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<sup>64</sup> Daniel L. Bernardi, 'Star Trek in the 1960s: Liberal Humanism and the Production of Race,' *Science Fiction Studies* 72:24 pt.2 (July, 1997), 209-225. Available at:

<<http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/72/bernardi72.htm>> [Last accessed: 12/11/2009].

<sup>65</sup> It was the first scripted kiss to be shown on a U.S. network between a black woman and a white man – both of which were fictional characters. The first interracial kiss aired on U.S. television was between Nancy Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr. who greeted each other with a kiss during the 1967 NBC musical-variety show *Movin' With Nancy* (dir. Jack Haley Jr., NBC, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1967). Captain Kirk also kissed an Asian-American actress (France Nuyen) in the previously recorded but later broadcasted episode 'Elaan of Troyius' (Ep. 13, Season 3, NBC, 20<sup>th</sup> December 1968) which is sometimes listed as being the third episode in the series.

<sup>66</sup> 'Plato's Stepchildren,' *Star Trek* (Ep. 10, Season 3, NBC, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1969). In this episode the crew are stranded on an alien planet run by the sadistic 'Platonians' a race of ageless and telekinetic humanoids that claim to have structured their society around the teachings of Plato. The crew of the *Enterprise* is forced to entertain the rulers of the alien society by singing, fighting, and kissing. Spock (Leonard Nimoy) and Nurse Christine Chapel (Majel Barrett-Roddenberry), and Uhura and Kirk are forced to kiss each other.

<sup>67</sup> Nichols quoted in Kelefah Sanneh, 'Black in the Box: In Defense of African American Television,' *Transition* 10:4 (2001), 46.

<sup>68</sup> Nichelle Nichols, *Beyond Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories* (London: Boxtree, 1996), 196.

<sup>69</sup> Gilroy, *Against Race*, 344.

with their physical racial/ethnic attributes being exploited to further separate these characters from Kirk's 'white knight'.<sup>70</sup> The *Enterprise*'s only non-white characters, Uhura and Sulu, were shown in 'subordinate roles' under the rule of a white captain.<sup>71</sup> But the series approached controversial subjects and spearheaded an 'integrated tradition' that many later 'black television' series failed to achieve.<sup>72</sup> It may not have dealt specifically with black culture but it did tackle issues of race that were part of the ongoing equality debate in United States during the 1960s. The episodes of *Star Trek* unsubtly worked as racial parables that promoted 'unity through diversity' under the guise of a space-adventure series.<sup>73</sup>

*Star Trek* engaged with racial politics and heralded a change in the boundaries of contemporary media and popular culture. It showed that the civil rights protests and legal amendments were having an impact upon 'the self image of Americans' and the way they represented their world on both the big and the small screen.<sup>74</sup> As with many other science fiction narratives of the late 1960s the issue of minority representation was prominent as there was a tension between the desire to be progressive and the commercial fear of losing the wider audience. Gene Roddenberry, *Star Trek*'s creator, had intended to create vision of 'a future in which discrimination on the grounds of race or gender was a thing of the past,'<sup>75</sup> he may not have achieved this absolutely but made great genre-defining strides towards such a future in terms of representation.

During the sixties the science fiction genre's output decreased following its massive popularity and output during the fifties. Films like *Planet of the Apes* helped to revive the genre and brought in a new wave of films that dealt with issues surrounding inequality, paranoia and corruption. As the civil rights movement continued to intensify, 'black characters [began] to creep into the previously all-white worlds of the future.'<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Bernardi, *Star Trek and History*, 64.

<sup>71</sup> Michael C. Pounds, *Race in Space: The Representative of Ethnicity in Star Trek and Star Trek the Next Generation* (Lanham, M.D.: Scarecrow Press Inc., 1999), 172.

<sup>72</sup> Sanneh, 'Black in the Box,' 55. Sanneh gives the example of the sitcom *The Cosby Show* (1984-1992) as part of 'segregationist tradition' of black television. It presented black culture but did not engage with black politics, there were very few white characters and they definitely did not kiss.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>74</sup> Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, 'Cold War Pop Culture and the Image of U.S. Foreign Policy: The Perspective of the Original *Star Trek* Series,' *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7:4 (Fall, 2005), 74.

<sup>75</sup> Roddenberry quoted in Adam Robert, *Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 102.

<sup>76</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 21.

*Planet of the Apes* offered some visibility to minorities and women by putting them alongside the white astronauts, at least allowing them to constitute half of the crew in the pre-credit sequence. *Planet of the Apes*' allegorical content deals with the issue of race and inequality in more detail; despite their physical absence from the majority of the film African Americans and the civil rights movement are at the forefront of the allegorical drive of *Planet of the Apes*.

## DODGE

Dodge is the only black character in *Planet of the Apes* and Jeff Burton was the only black actor cast in the film.<sup>77</sup> Burton had an extensive career as a supporting actor on popular television series such as *Batman* (1968) and *Bewitched* (1968-1970) and in several film projects, most famously playing Dodge in *Planet of the Apes* and Dr. Brannan in *Coffy* (1973).<sup>78</sup> Jeff Burton and his female co-star Dianne Stanley (who plays Stewart, the female crewmate) form what critic Judith Shatnoff terms a 'minority contingent' in *Planet of the Apes*.<sup>79</sup> Dodge is the black crewmember, Stewart is the female one, and the only two to survive beyond the hunt are the white men. Dodge and Stewart constitute half of the original crew on the mission yet neither character survives: Stewart dies due to a ship malfunction in her sleep and Dodge is killed during the hunt sequence. Taylor later discovers Dodge's dead body displayed in the apes' natural history museum.

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<sup>77</sup> Available materials (films titles, cast lists, archival material) show that Jeff Burton is the only named African-American cast member. There may have been other non-white actors in minimal roles under the ape masks in crowd scenes; although this is unlikely but it is not possible to prove this conclusively.

<sup>78</sup> *Coffy* is a violent blaxploitation film that follows the exploits of a nurse who goes on a vigilante crusade against inner-city drug dealers when her much younger sister becomes an addict. *Coffy* starred the 'queen of blaxploitation' Pam Grier and it was the precursor to the most famous Grier film *Foxy Brown* (1974) that formed part of a cycle in black American cinema in the 1970s that transcoded the 'black political struggles and aspirations of the times.' Guerrero, *Framing Blackness*, 98. See also Ed Guerrero, 'Black Violence as Cinema: From Cheap Thrills to Historical Agonies,' in John David Slocum, (ed.) *Violence and American Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2001), 214.

<sup>79</sup> Judith Shatnoff, 'A Gorilla to Remember,' *Film Quarterly* 22:1 (Autumn, 1968), 57.



Figure 1.1: Close up of Dodge's taxidermied face

Figure 1.2: Taylor's discovery of Dodge in a natural history museum display

Dodge is shown as the *only* black person on the planet of the apes, and his death and subsequent exhibition for ape posterity further confirms his position as both exotic anomaly and dangerous deviation from the normative white human. In the museum exhibit Dodge is set apart from the other humans suggesting that his skin colour is alien to the apes, confirmed by the fact that all of the native humans shown in the film are white, brown-eyed, and brunette.<sup>80</sup> Taylor's blonde blue-eyed appearance is recognised as unusual and highlighted by Zira's pet name for him: Bright Eyes. Taylor's uniqueness *saves* him whereas Dodge's distinctiveness makes him a target for the hunters. This suggests that the unusual dark-skinned human is a valuable kill to be preserved, not as a specimen for experimentation as Taylor is but as an exhibit. Dodge's glazed eyes and powdery skin-tone gives him an uncanny appearance; he seems barely human. Make-up artist John Chambers created Dodge's unnerving inhuman appearance (fig. 1.1) by using full-eye contact lenses, translucent body make up, and a custom mouthpiece for his cheeks and lips adding 'to the stuffed illusion.'<sup>81</sup>

### **A Hottentot Eros?:**

Dodge is a failed attempt at a progressive portrayal of a racial minority in the U.S. civil rights era. He is presented simply as a body devoid of humanity and identity and becomes an oddity, a commodity, and an attraction within an ethnological exhibit (fig. 1.2). In a

<sup>80</sup> At the end of the film it is revealed that Earth, as it was seen and remembered by the protagonist, had been destroyed. His exclamation – 'you blew it up!' – suggests that a nuclear holocaust has occurred, destroying civilisation, leaving behind only brunette, white humans. This lack of variation within the human-animal herd could also indicate racial cleansing where any differentiation from the white majority (perhaps including blondes and redheads) has been eradicated at some point between the astronauts leaving Earth in (1972) and arriving on the future-Earth (2673).

<sup>81</sup> Make up artist John Chambers quoted in: Anon, 'Mad, Mad, Mad Monkey World,' *Famous Monsters of Filmland* 52 (October, 1968), 51.

sense Dodge becomes a Hottentot Venus;<sup>82</sup> he is a contemporaneous ‘encounter with the limits of black humanity,’<sup>83</sup> a freak body to be ‘managed, silenced, and mediated’ and defined by its ‘deviation’ from what is considered normal.<sup>84</sup> Sarah Baartman’s ‘earth-bound infra-humanity’ is supplanted by the future-Earth Dodge who is positioned as an extinct animal,<sup>85</sup> defined as human in a world where concepts of ‘human’ and ‘humanity’ are no longer relevant and most definitely considered undesirable.

In *Planet of the Apes* Dodge is only present, in the museum and indeed in the film as a whole, to be looked at. He is given meaning by the film’s ‘isolated white figure’ Taylor, who is able to exert his power with a ‘glance of his steel-blue eyes.’<sup>86</sup> Dodge is represented as a disempowered black body, displayed in death for entertainment and visual objectification and viewed as a specimen rather than a sentient human being. From his opening shots Dodge is seen as little more than an inadequately characterised token black character who was included in later drafts of the script so that the crew would appear to be more representative of the U.S. population. Dodge does not fulfil a major role in the narrative, he is only referred to by his nickname and is only given meaning

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<sup>82</sup> Sarah Baartman was the Hottentot Venus; a black Khoisan woman born in South Africa in 1789, brought to England in 1810, and caged and exhibited in London and Paris until she died from small pox in 1815. No record of the Hottentot Venus’s real name exists and she is referred to by a variety of different names, here the form Sarah Baartman will be used, as it is the most common combination. She was a member of the San Tribe but was given the moniker ‘Hottentot’ which was ‘the exotic label that stood for everything the Englishman considered himself not to be’ (Thomson, 1997: 71). Her captors crudely reduced her to sexual parts and depicted Baartman as ‘animal-like, exotic, different and deviant’ (Willis, 2010: 4). Baartman’s buttocks, breasts, and genitalia were of particular interest to the paying audience and the nineteenth century scientific community. After she died Baartman was dissected, analysed, preserved, and turned into a biological specimen that continued to be exhibited up until the 1970s. A full cast of Baartman’s body and skeleton was shown at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris up until the 1970s and her remains were held in storage until she was repatriated to South Africa in April 2002. For further discussion of the history and legacy of Baartman and her position as cultural reference point see Janell Hobson, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Rachel Holmes, *African Queen: The Real Life of the Hottentot Venus* (New York: Random House, 2007); Sadiya Qureshi, ‘Displaying Sara Baartman: The Hottentot Venus,’ *History of Science* 42 (2004), 233–257; Zoë S. Strother, ‘Display of the Body Hottentot,’ in Bernth Lindfors (ed.), *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business* (Bloomington, I.L.: Indiana University Press, 1999); Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press: 1997); Deborah Willis (ed.), *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her Hottentot* (Philadelphia, P.A.: Temple University Press, 2010).

<sup>83</sup> Gilroy, *Against Race*, 36-37.

<sup>84</sup> Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 71.

<sup>85</sup> Gilroy, *Against Race*, 37.

<sup>86</sup> Stuart Hall, ‘The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media,’ in George Bridges and Rosalind Brunt (eds.), *Silver Linings: Some Strategies for the Eighties* (London: Laurence and Wishart Ltd., 1981), 40.

when placed in relation to the white protagonist.<sup>87</sup> He is frequently shown in point-of-view shots aligned to Taylor, often indicating Taylor's control over him and their situation, or in medium shots with Taylor as shown in the museum. In these later museum shots (fig. 1.2) Taylor has lost control, he is running from the apes, but his survival retains the power relation undeniably positioning him above of his dead crewmate.

Once stuffed in the museum Dodge is a fantasy creature devoid of culture, language, consciousness and memory he is a figure that could never actually threaten the viewer, whether within or outside of the filmic diegesis. Sarah Baartman was paraded and viewed as 'a wild beast',<sup>88</sup> an exhibit presented as a 'curiousness of the alien... [that] disturbingly blurred the human/animal boundary.'<sup>89</sup> Dodge, as a modern reinscription, is presented as both beast and alien he is an animal in an ethnographic display literally separated off as different. He is positioned in opposition to the planet's white human majority, and the non-white audience are forced to experience him and *themselves* as 'Other' creating a 'regime of power' that, even in this future world, posits the white male as a normative figure and the pinnacle of humanity and the black as the alternative.<sup>90</sup>

Meaning is derived not simply from the object itself (Dodge) but from the location in which it is placed (the museum). As an object, Dodge gains meaning from the way his body is framed within the museum, as shown in figure 1 alongside the white Taylor; as a representative black figure he is a 'palimpsest of meaning' allowing for a range of interpretations depending on context.<sup>91</sup> In the opening sequence Dodge is seen

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<sup>87</sup> Dodge has since been given a full name and title. The 'ANSA Public Service Announcement' bonus feature on the 2008 blu-ray release of *Planet of the Apes* provided the following biography: 'Lieutenant Thomas Dodge serves as head science officer. At the relatively young age of 35, Lieutenant Dodge exhibits the vision of a man with twice his years. He admits yearning to find intelligent life at the crew's ultimate destination. A dream he has often discussed as professor of organic chemistry at Annapolis.' This retrospective addition to the *Planet of the Apes* myth recognises the issue with having a black character restricted to a single name and undeveloped back-story in the original feature. By giving him at least some basic credentials, the 2008 release of *Planet of the Apes* highlights and confirms the issues surrounding Dodge's initial inclusion and insubstantial characterisation.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Chambers (ed.), *The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities in Connection with the Calendar, Including Anecdote, Biography, & History, Curiosities Of Literature and Oddities of Human Life and Character*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1863–64) 2: 621.

<sup>89</sup> Qureshi, 'Displaying Sara Baartman,' 238.

<sup>90</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Cultural identity and Diaspora,' in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 225.

<sup>91</sup> Henrietta Lidchi, 'The Poetic and the Politics of Exhibiting Other Cultures,' in Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Thousand Oaks, C.A.: Sage Publications, 1997), 167



enclosed in a glass case viewed almost as a specimen by Taylor and, interestingly, cinematographically equally to his white counterpart, Landon (fig. 2).<sup>92</sup> However, later in the film, when Taylor looks upon Dodge embalmed in the museum he is a specimen once again but this time he is clearly defined by his racial difference and displayed for viewing pleasure. He is only recognised as ‘Dodge’, rather than just as another human-animal, when looked upon by Taylor (and by extension the audience). His meaning is always mediated and he is positioned as the Other by the apes and also by Taylor.



Figure 2 – Landon and Dodge’s introductory shots given from Taylor’s POV within the space ship set

Despite the racist aspects of Dodge’s portrayal Eric Greene interprets him and other African-American characters featured in the *Apes* series as an ostensibly ‘sympathetic’ and ‘positive image of non-white’ Americans.<sup>93</sup> Dodge’s ‘calm professionalism’ counters ‘the vanity of Landon and the misanthropy of Taylor’ and the character is often shown in medium-shots independently from the two other male astronauts ‘to set him apart from their childish bickering.’<sup>94</sup> Greene goes on to talk about the *Apes* series’ ‘progressive impulses’ and accepts that the filmmakers do not always achieve their liberal goals for example, the positioning of the white man as the symbol of civilised humanity is highlighted as being particularly problematic.<sup>95</sup> Dodge’s gentle persona may, however, be interpreted as a continuation of the restricted portrayal of racial minorities and the potentially ‘unconscious racism’ exhibited in *Planet of the Apes*.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Notably Stewart is shot from a different perspective (from inside her casket) positioning her as a deviation from the male astronauts. For further discussion of this sequence and relationship between the male and female see the following chapter ‘Framing the Subject: Identity Politics in *Planet of the Apes*.’

<sup>93</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 149.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

<sup>96</sup> Hall, ‘The Whites of Their Eyes,’ 37.

Following the death of the crew's only female member the black man, who up until the crash and revelation of the dead Stewart also remains silent, symbolically becomes her replacement. Karen Ross defines whiteness as the traditional norm in cinema and suggests that the 'Others', in this case Dodge and Stewart (who is different because of her gender), are defined by their differences to this normative figure. Dodge becomes the alternative to the 'profoundly unproblematic' white characters.<sup>97</sup> Dodge acts as the caring balance between Taylor and Landon; he is the peacemaker displaying a devotion to the mission and his crewmates safety.

Dodge exhibits traditionally female traits that his white colleagues, Taylor and Landon, eschew in order to selfishly ensure their own survival. In the trek scene immediately following the crash onto the planet the white men consider their reasons for joining the crew, they discuss a desire and cynicism, in Taylor's case, towards being remembered as American heroes. Dodge is not given the opportunity to express his own rationale, as he is not included in the conversation and is seen testing the earth and checking for signs of life. Taylor suggests that his desire to learn and nurture is to be mocked, claiming that he would go to ridiculous lengths in his pursuit of knowledge.<sup>98</sup>

Dodge is 'almost sexless and sterile' in his weaker and more subservient role.<sup>99</sup> He is essentially, as Sidney Poitier was considered to have been, 'limited by the perceptions of what audiences would accept of a African American star.'<sup>100</sup> The mere inclusion of Dodge in the crew aligns *Planet of the Apes* to a liberal agenda but it is quite superficial. The use of this 'relatively new movie type' that critic Renata Adler defined as

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<sup>97</sup> Karen Ross, *Black and White Media: Black Image in Popular Film and Television* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>98</sup> Taylor jokes that Dodge would 'walk naked into a live volcano' in order to learn something new.

<sup>99</sup> Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 175. This reference is taken from a section where Bogle discusses the African-American actor Sydney Poitier whose 'ascension to stardom... was no accident.' He was an 'integrationist hero' who was intelligent, well-spoken, mannerly, conservatively dressed and who played tame characters who did not threaten the system. For a white audience he was entirely acceptable, 'the perfect dream for white liberals anxious to have a colored man in for lunch or dinner,' as shown in Stanley Kramer's 1967 *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* in which Poitier played the black fiancé to the daughter of Matt and Christina Dayton, played by Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn. In 1967 Sidney Poitier become the first black performer to be ranked among Quigley's top ten box office attractions he was number 7 in 1967 and due to the success of several long-running films that year (*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, *In the Heat of the Night*, and *To Sir, With Love*) he was 'designated the biggest movie star in the US in 1968.' Peter Krämer, *The New Hollywood From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 56.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Monaco, *The Sixties: 1960-1969* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 151.

‘a Negro based on some recent, good Sidney Poitier roles – intelligent [and] scholarly’ is not underpinned with any real power or meaning.<sup>101</sup> Dodge bares no threat to the dominance of either of the white men (or the audience) following the crash and his death soon after neutralises him altogether.

*Planet of the Apes* puts an African-American outer space fifteen years prior to NASA and gives him a level of equality that was uncommon in the United States in sixties.<sup>102</sup> But this progressive attempt is thwarted as he never fully realised as a character and ‘in accordance with what film financiers call the brother rule Dodge is the first to be killed’.<sup>103</sup> Dodge’s characterisation is significant because it was produced in an era and within a medium that has a history of being ‘rife with thoughtless, negative, ethnic stereotypes.’<sup>104</sup> Dodge is a ‘transitional figure who benefits immediately from inclusion in the system but who loses in the long run as his difference becomes obliterated’ because his diversity is too much for a late-sixties popular Hollywood narrative.<sup>105</sup> By dying early in the film Dodge’s initial positivity is revoked perhaps indicating what Nama refers to as ‘a cultural longing to return to an America prior to the civil rights movement by imagining a future world devoid of black people’,<sup>106</sup> but the fact that he is there at all and importantly presented as positive non-violent character should not be entirely overlooked.

#### **TAYLOR: WHITE BODY/BLACK REPRESENTATIVE**

Taylor’s power in the opening sequence is ‘symbolically anchored through a white visual aesthetic’.<sup>107</sup> The starkly white ship (interior and exterior), the high-key white lighting, the white jumpsuits/spacesuits, and importantly the white-skinned scientist (Charlton Heston/Taylor) encode white as the dominant power. But this apparent position of supremacy given to Taylor via the *mise-en-scène* and his racial marker in the pre-credit

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<sup>101</sup> Renata Adler, ‘Monkey Business,’ *The New York Times* (9 February, 1968), 55.

<sup>102</sup> Guion S. Bluford Jr. was the first African-American in space with the launch of *Challenger* on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1983 he was ‘a reluctant hero on the issue of racial barriers’ preferring to talk about his achievements as a scientist instead of his race. William J. Broad, ‘First U.S. Black in Space,’ *New York Times* (31 August, 1983), 6.

<sup>103</sup> Von Busack, ‘Signifying Monkeys,’ 171.

<sup>104</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 150.

<sup>105</sup> McHugh, ‘Horses in Blackface,’ 61.

<sup>106</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 22.

<sup>107</sup> Redmond, ‘The Science Fiction of Whiteness.’

sequence is irreparably damaged once the ship crashes. Although *Planet the Apes* does retain some semblance of racial hierarchy, in defining an unequal Dodge/Taylor power relationship, Taylor's situation is quite the reverse of the experience of the majority of white heroes in post-war science fiction. Instead of the white space(ship) being a place of safety it becomes a dangerous one that must be escaped. However, the alternative reality that the surviving astronauts discover symbolically strips the white man of his power.

Isolated on the planet of the apes with his colleagues dead or incapacitated, Taylor is left as the last human, a (post-historic) omega man. Even though he is surrounded by apes and humans, he is alone in his intelligence and experience. Instead of retaining the dominant evolutionary position humans have fallen down the scale and the great apes have become the highest primates.<sup>108</sup> Taylor does not fall to the bottom of the social ranking, as the apes do in later sequels, but becomes part of a species that are quite literally outside the edges of ape society, roaming around fields and forests scavenging for food and shelter.



**Figure 3.1:** Taylor hosed down by the gorilla guard  
**Figure 3.2:** Image of three teenage protesters in Birmingham in Alabama, 1963

At the beginning of *Planet of the Apes* Taylor 'symbolizes narcissistic American white masculinity' but once he becomes animal amongst animals he, as a representative of the U.S. white majority, receives his 'racial comeuppance'.<sup>109</sup> Taylor is subjected to a number of punishments, often loaded with racial significance, insinuating that once on the planet Taylor/Heston is a symbol not only for white America but also a conduit for exploring race relations. By positioning the white man as racial Other an emblematic

<sup>108</sup> Notably *Planet of the Apes* only includes apes from the highest level of the primate infraorder (higher primates – human, orangutan, chimpanzee, gorilla) but does not indicate the presence or increased intelligence of lesser apes (gibbons), monkeys (old and new world monkeys – with tails), or prosimians (such as lemurs, bushbabies, tarsiers).

<sup>109</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 129.

commutation test takes place and *Planet of the Apes* is able to allegorically confront U.S. race relations. For example, the use of the high-pressure hose to silence and subjugate Taylor (fig. 3.1) makes an explicit visual reference to the ‘brutal treatment of protestors’ in Birmingham (Alabama), famously captured in the photographs of Charles Moore (fig. 3.2).<sup>110</sup> Fire hoses and police dogs were used against young activists in enormous nonviolent for desegregation. The use of the symbolically charged hose in *Planet of the Apes* acts as ‘visual shorthand for the civil rights movement’ aligning Taylor’s plight with those involved in the movement.<sup>111</sup>

The use of the high-pressure hose to silence Taylor is the most striking of the visual references made in *Planet of the Apes*, but it is only one of the ‘thinly layered references to American racism’ that emerge throughout the film.<sup>112</sup> In addition to the waterboarding, Taylor is hunted, captured, whipped, gagged, threatened with castration and execution, and stripped (both literally and of his legal rights). All of these brutal methods of punishment and control ‘are practices that form the historical landscape of black bodies in white America’ and Taylor’s experiences continue to be equated with the plight and history of minority communities in the United States.<sup>113</sup> The multiplicity of these racially charged images creates some confusion as the black/white binary is blurred; the white Taylor and the black gorillas (in particular) can be seen to be representatives of both sides of the binary colour divide, sometimes simultaneously.

The gorillas as the violent, leather-clad *black* apes are seen as the lowest class in the apes’ segregated society and if viewed independently can be read as African-Americans this reading relies on a dualistic colour reading where black colour must equate to black race and lighter skin/fur must be white. When viewed in the context of

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<sup>110</sup> David Steigerwald, ‘The Liberal-Radical Debates of the 1960s,’ in David Steigerwald and Michael W. Flamm *Debating the 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives* (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc., 2008), 16. See also Glenn T. Eskew, *But For Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997) and Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham Alabama: The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

<sup>111</sup> Martin A. Berger, ‘Fixing Images: Civil Rights Photography and the Struggle Over Representation,’ *RIHA Journal* 10 (21 Oct, 2010). Available at: <<http://www.riha-journal.org/articles/2010/berger-fixing-images>> [Last accessed: 23/09/2011].

<sup>112</sup> Von Busack, ‘Signifying Monkeys,’ 171.

<sup>113</sup> George Yancy, ‘The Black Body: Under the Weight of White America’s Microtomes,’ in Cynthia E. Henderson (ed.), *America and the Black Body: Identity Politics in Print and Visual Culture* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Press, 2009), 269.

the narrative the gorillas are shown and heard spouting the attitudes of racist white America aligning them more clearly with white stereotypes than black ones. Taylor's racial configuration shifts he moves from being a white hero to being the oppressed minority, and finally ends with the shoot-out at the archaeological dig where he almost contradictorily defends the remnants of human civilisation (read: white America) against what Greene highlights as 'the darkest of the apes, the gorillas.'<sup>114</sup>

The following section will look at two points at which Taylor is subjected to some form of torture and placed in the role of the racial minority. The hunt scene takes its referents from several eras of U.S. race relations drawing upon post-Reconstruction racial abuse and colonial slavery practices. The trial that follows the discovery of Taylor's threatening intellect is the *Planet of the Apes*' central set-piece that brings together many of the issues under discussion in the film, and as Charlton Heston explains: 'it is in this scene that the simian world is revealed as a mirror to the human world.'<sup>115</sup> Here Taylor is subjected to a tribunal that is held to establish his origin and is essentially intended as a means of sanctioning his execution. References to *Dred Scott v. Sanford* and a discussion of the institutionalisation of racism is woven into this sequence alongside a thinly-veiled attack on the crumbling wall of separation between the church and the state in United States in the post-war period.<sup>116</sup> Although often eclipsed in popular memory by a desecrated statue, these racially charged sequences – the hunt and the trial – are integral to *Planet of the Apes* palimpsestuous response to its socio-political context.

### **The Hunt**

The apes are first introduced via a hunt scene where they trap, capture, and in some instances kill humans. They are introduced via a dialectical binary, a clear division where 'human/animal is visually reinforced by the opposition of light/dark.'<sup>117</sup> All of the humans, including the astronauts, are treated as animals and the apes are revealed as violent hunters. This sequence lays the foundation for the racial allegory that will follow

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<sup>114</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 41.

<sup>115</sup> Heston quoted in Russo, *Planet of the Apes Revisited*, 71.

<sup>116</sup> A full discussion of this critique of U.S. post-war religious boom and its influence on state can be found in the chapter 'Aping Religion or Religious Apes: *Planet of the Apes* and Religion.'

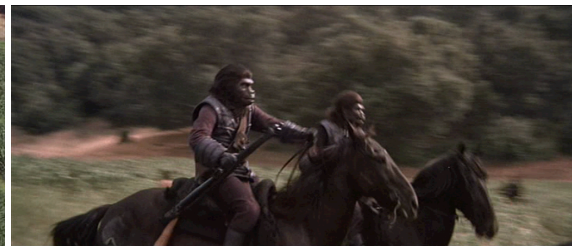
<sup>117</sup> Desser, 'Race, Space, and Class,' 85.

where apes will be framed within the narrative as white racists and white humans as the oppressed racial minority.

The hunt sequence identifies the gorillas ‘with popular nineteenth-century U.S. images of runaway slave hunters, who similarly employed the technologies of guns and domesticated horses to exert dominance over people termed ‘animal’ in relation to themselves.’<sup>118</sup> McHugh’s reading looks at the method and means by which the gorillas respond to their human targets. Humans are not worthy of a place within the apes’ restrictive class system that maintains power relations according to species they sit outside of it mute and powerless. As the apes do not recognise humans as anything more than animals, like the horses they ride, their treatment of the humans although cruel is not unexpected (see fig. 4).<sup>119</sup> Whereas the slave catchers were searching for slaves who, as commodities, hold value within society, the gorillas are just tracking animals that destroy crops and hold limited worth as biological specimens.



**Figure 4.1:** Humans scatter in fear at the sound of hunting horns



**Figure 4.2:** Apes are revealed to the audience on horseback brandishing rifles



**Figure 4.3:** Apes strike the great white hunter pose with their big game/human kill



**Figure 4.4:** Medium shot of apes being photographed enjoying their sport

One particularly striking image that is used in the hunt sequence can be seen to reference both the colonial period and post-Reconstruction America. The gorilla hunters

<sup>118</sup> McHugh, ‘Horses in Blackface,’ 61.

<sup>119</sup> The ape treatment of humans is considered animal cruelty by chimpanzee scientist Zira who (along with her reluctant fiancé Cornelius) acts as an intermediary between the orangutan leaders and the oppressed Taylor. A discussion of the film’s references to the animal rights movement and medical research can be found in the chapter ‘From Technophilia To Technophobia (To Retrogression): Technology In *Planet of the Apes*.’



are shown taking photographs with piles of dead and injured humans, making sport of human suffering. They take photos in the style of the ‘great white hunter,’ big-game hunters whose domination of the African animals paralleled colonial domination over black Africans (see fig. 4.2 & 4.3). The hunted animals and colonised humans occupied ‘the same rhetorical space in the colonial milieu in which big game hunting came of age.’<sup>120</sup> The image of the jovial apes in front of the dead humans also references ‘the post-Reconstruction US phenomenon of white people (sometimes unmasked Klansmen) being photographed with the mutilated corpses of black lynching-victims.’<sup>121</sup> The image of the black body hanging from a tree or lying in a mutilated heap ‘was more explicit and immediate than any other expression of racial violence and oppression’ and lynching photographs were often created as keepsakes functioning ‘as an integral part of the racial and sexual ideologies in the lynching act itself.’<sup>122</sup>

The mutilation of the black body as a means of symbolically reaffirming white power has a long history; lynching and castration offered ‘in their ritualized deployment [functioned] as both a refusal and a negation of the possibility of extending the privileges of patriarchy to the black man.’<sup>123</sup> It was symbolic and literal way of curtailing black power, and it is alluded to in *Planet of the Apes* when it is revealed that Zaius has ordered for Taylor to be gelded, the terminology (geld) and imagery evoked once again aligns Taylor with black slave narratives.<sup>124</sup> In this instance, Taylor’s castration is intended to

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<sup>120</sup> Laura Wright, *Wilderness Into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 83.

<sup>121</sup> McHugh, ‘Horses in Blackface,’ 58.

<sup>122</sup> Amy Louise Wood, ‘Lynching Photography and the ‘Black Beast Rapist’ in Southern White Masculine Imagination,’ in Peter Lehman (ed.), *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2001), 194-195.

<sup>123</sup> Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002) 90.

<sup>124</sup> Castration was a relatively common form of punishment for African-origin slaves (alongside other forms of mutilation such as cutting off ears and branding). Gelding was a standard corporal punishment for black men caught running away or *accused* of raping white women (although this became punishable by death in the Antebellum period). Gelding was part of the ritual of lynching and the ‘fascination with and fetishization of the black penis made it the most highly prized lynching souvenir.’ This presented the black victim as ‘subordinated, feminized, and abject’ and no longer a threat to white masculinity or female virginity. See Dora Apel *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004) 136, 133-164; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise And Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 617-618; Sue Peabody, ‘Slavery, Freedom, and the Law in the Atlantic World, 1420-1807,’ in David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman (eds.), *The Cambridge World History of Slavery: Volume 3, AD 1420-AD 1804* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).



reaffirm ape order as the barbaric emasculation of rebellious slaves and lynch victims apparently restored patriarchal order. Castration would also stop Taylor from procreating with Nova and creating a new 'mixed' human race that could threaten ape rule. Although the initial reference to gelding Taylor occurs before he has spoken (the revelation of Zaius' plan is his impetus to run away), he has already been flagged as a threat, as Zira recognises him as an above normal intelligent human and Dr. Zaius, who knows the truth about humanity, is already aware that Taylor can talk before it is revealed publicly.<sup>125</sup>

These references recall slavery, colonialism, and lynching. By using these ideologically and racially charged images and rhetoric the filmmakers introduce the apes as replacements for white America bound up in a history of racism and oppression of the Other. They represent the misguided and damaging attitudes that created and perpetuated a Western history of racial injustice and signposts *Planet of the Apes* as 'a document [of] racial guilt.'<sup>126</sup>

### **The Trial: Recoding Racial Injustice**

The trial sequence in *Planet of the Apes* serves a number of functions and forms a sizable part of the film's running time. It is the film's central set piece and acts as the transition between the main action sequences; the trial is preceded by the crash and hunt scene and proceeded by the escape from the ape settlement into the Forbidden Zone where Taylor discovers the Statue of Liberty. As a single scene it can be read from a variety of perspectives; in the next chapter, 'Aping Religion or Religious Apes: *Planet of the Apes* and Religion,' the tribunal sequence will be analysed as a discussion of the teaching of evolution and the encroachment of religious dogma on nation that is supposed to have 'a high wall of separation between church and state.'<sup>127</sup> This chapter analyses the trial as a reference to *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857) and will investigate how this allusion can be

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<sup>125</sup> This refers to a scene where Taylor is shown in a huge human cage with the other human captives and in an attempt to make contact with Zira, Zaius and Cornelius, he writes in ground 'I CAN WRITE'. A playful Nova scrubs out the 'write' and Taylor pushes her aside. This act provokes another primitive male into attempting to bite Taylor; two gorilla guards break up the fight hurting Taylor in the process and are ordered to take him back inside. The words 'I CAN' are still visible in the dirt and Zaius uses his foot to wipe out the residual inscription intentionally preventing the chimpanzees from finding out about Taylor's abilities.

<sup>126</sup> Andrew O'Heir, 'Gorilla Warfare,' *Sight and Sound* 11:9 (Summer, 2001), 13.

<sup>127</sup> Mark A. Graber, Maeva Marcus, Melvin Urofsky, Mark Tushnet, and Howard Gillman, *Dred Scott and the Problem of Constitutional Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11.

interpreted as a ‘taut critique of institutional racism’ that places a ‘white male in the crosshairs of institutional discrimination.’<sup>128</sup>

### ***Dred Scott v. Sanford and the Apes Trial***

*Dred Scott v. Sanford*, also known as the Dred Scott Decision, was a Supreme Court ruling that declared that all people of African heritage – including slaves, those that were declared free, and all of their descendants – were not citizens of the United States. It is a verdict that is often considered ‘the worst ever rendered by the Supreme Court,’<sup>129</sup> ‘a ghastly error,’<sup>130</sup> and ‘judicial review at its worst.’<sup>131</sup> Dred Scott was born into slavery in Virginia c.1795-1800 and first sued for his freedom in 1847. Following a decade of appeals and reversals, the case against his ‘owner’ was eventually brought to the Supreme Court. The original case concerned the freedom of one slave, his wife (Harriet Scott), and his family but became about whether Scott, and by extension any African-American, was a citizen of the United States and if slavery could be sheltered by the Constitution.

Civil rights were stipulated by the Constitution and as there was no specific provision for slaves, or those with slave ancestry, within the document they were constitutionally denied basic rights. Prominent historian Don E. Fehrenbacher, whose work focused upon 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. history and who specialised in the Dred Scott ruling, noted that:

The response to the decision proved to be much more important than its direct legal effect. As law, the decision legitimized and encouraged the expansion of slavery that never took place; it denied the freedom to a slave who was then quickly manumitted. But as a public event, the decision aggravated an already bitter sectional conflict and to some degree determined the shape of the final crisis.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 127.

<sup>129</sup> Walter Ehrlich, ‘*Scott v. Sanford*,’ in Kermit L. Hall (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 761.

<sup>130</sup> Alexander Bickel, *The Supreme Court and the Idea of Progress* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 41.

<sup>131</sup> Malcolm M. Feeley and Samuel Krislov, *Constitutional Law*, 2nd ed. (Glenview. I.L.: Scott Foresman & Co., 1990), 34.

<sup>132</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

*Dred Scott v. Sanford* was well received by slave owners in the Southern states, but ‘provoked an angry outcry from Republicans’ as the decision decreed that slavery was constitutional.<sup>133</sup> The now infamous decision is ‘not merely a shameful part of America’s long forgotten past’ but rather a symbolic event and decision that can be understood a cultural reference point that is evoked in discussions of the continuing struggle for racial equality in the United States.<sup>134</sup> ‘Echoes’ of the decision and its repercussions are present in U.S. culture whenever it is assumed ‘that one race is more centrally ‘American’ than others and more clearly and obviously a part of the American people and the American political community.’<sup>135</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* draws upon the racist rhetoric and implications of *Dred Scott v. Sanford* and reverses it; the white man is recoded as a victim of institutionalised racism in a reality where speciesism is equivalent to racism. Taylor is denied the right to a voice in the courtroom and allegorically addresses ‘the crisis of political legitimacy hovering over America’s institutions and their inability to deliver racial justice.’<sup>136</sup> The curtailing of Taylor’s freedom begins when he is captured during the hunt: he is denied a voice literally with a bullet to the neck, then his written word is erased by a government representative, and he is denied the right to speak in a government hearing. He is eventually released, but his freedom is short-lived as he discovers his true fate: he is trapped on a future Earth with no means of escape and only mute humans or apes who are shown to be ruled by misguided religious zealots.

Zira attempts to establish the purpose of the trial and in doing so forces the orangutans to consider human rights. By referring to Taylor as ‘the accused’ the orangutans imply that the human is, as Zira notes, ‘guilty of something’ despite his apparent exclusion from ape law. They want to be able to validate his ‘disposal’ by using their founding documents, the Sacred Scrolls,<sup>137</sup> as proof of his invalidity, yet cannot

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<sup>133</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, ‘The Dred Scott Decision,’ in Don E. Fehrenbacher (ed.), *Abraham Lincoln: A Documentary Portrait Through his Speeches and Writings* (New York: New American Library, 1964), 88.

<sup>134</sup> Cecil J. Hunt, ‘No Right to Respect: *Dred Scott* and the Southern Honor Culture,’ *New England Law Review* 42:79 (2007), 80.

<sup>135</sup> Jack M. Balkin, and Sanford Levinson, ‘Thirteen Ways of Looking at Dred Scott,’ *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 82:49 (2007), 54.

<sup>136</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 129.

<sup>137</sup> Discussion of the trial as a comment on post-war religion can be found in the chapter: ‘Aping Religion or Religious Apes: *Planet of the Apes* and Religion.’

appreciate him as a being with rights. The following passage of dialogue highlights the apes' quandary and the absurd nature of the trial:

**ZIRA.** At the very least, this man has the right to know whether there's a charge against him.

**HONORIUS.** Objection! The accused is indeed a man. Therefore, he has no rights under ape law.

**PRESIDENT.** Well, Dr. Zira? This is a man, is he not?

**ZIRA.** He is unlike any man you have ever seen - as we hope to prove.

**PRESIDENT.** Answer the question. Is he a man?

**CORNELIUS.** Sir? The question is the point at issue: is he a man, or a deviate, or a freak of nature?

**HONORIUS.** Objection!

**PRESIDENT.** Sustained. In all fairness, Dr. Zira, you must admit the accused is a non-ape, and therefore has no rights under ape law.

**ZIRA.** Then why is he called the accused? Your Honors must think him guilty of something.

**ZAIUS.** This man is not being tried. He is being disposed of.

The apes come to an impasse as Zira wishes to have Taylor viewed as an 'exceptional creature' who should be saved from 'mutilation' and the orangutan government wish to have him confirmed as an abomination and sentenced to death. Taylor is a threat to ape, and specifically orangutan, hegemony because if they were to grant him the opportunity to speak in the courtroom they would be giving him de facto rights. In doing so he would contradict their founding documents, which make no allowances for humans and defines them as mute 'beasts', and simultaneously undermine orangutan power that is defined and confirmed by those same documents.

The Sacred Scrolls are religious and legal documents and they are the apes' founding documents of not only their religion but also their government system. Allegorically they make comment upon the unsteady wall of separation between the state and religion in the United States by combining the state law and religious doctrine into a single document and showing the result of such a method of governing. Set out in chapters and verses like a religious texts, the document is used as a guide to matters of a religious, legal, and also, scientific nature. There is little room for interpretation of the ape laws because it is intrinsically entwined with faith. The Scrolls make reference to the U.S. founding documents the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution through

specific phrases such as ‘all apes are created equal’ and via the Scroll’s position and role in legal proceedings.

Ape prejudice against humans is not simply restricted to personal beliefs but is rather more threateningly operating ‘at the institutional level’ and it means that Taylor is denied ‘justice.’<sup>138</sup> He has no means of defending himself and has no control over his future. He is a victim of the system that put so much faith, quite literally, into a document written hundreds of years in the past. The rulings and attitude of the ape court mirrors that of the U.S. Supreme Court in landmark cases such as *Dred Scott*, showing that a literal interpretation of the founding documents can ‘permit or even require very great evils,’<sup>139</sup> especially when ‘the theoretical opinions of individuals are allowed to control its meaning’.<sup>140</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Planet of the Apes* is simultaneously progressive and regressive in its representation of race relations, acting as a record of the complex nature of Hollywood’s attempt to respond to changing attitudes and ideas in the United States in the sixties. It proudly displays its liberal intentions but often fails to maintain them under the pressure of the studios and their wider conservative audience. *Planet of the Apes* perpetuates the racism that was entrenched not only in Hollywood cinema but also in U.S. society.

Increased visibility suggested positive gains for black Americans in mainstream cinema, but the restricted roles and frequent stereotypes readily contradicted these apparent advances. ‘Social, political and economic pressures inside and outside of the commercial film industry played a pivotal role’ in improving opportunities for black Americans.<sup>141</sup> Civil rights organisations, primarily the NAACP,<sup>142</sup> interpreted the comical

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<sup>138</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 129.

<sup>139</sup> Balkin, ‘Thirteen Ways of Looking at Dred Scott,’ 78.

<sup>140</sup> Paul Finkelman, ‘The Dred Scott Case and the Politics of Law,’ *Hamline Law Review* 20:1 (1996), 1.

<sup>141</sup> William R. Grant, *Post-Soul Black Cinema: Discontinuities, Innovations, and Breakpoints, 1970-1995* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 30.

<sup>142</sup> The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the USA’s oldest and largest civil rights organisation. It was founded on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1909, the one-hundredth anniversary of Lincoln’s birth, as a grassroots organisation that ‘immediately entered the public life of [the United States] by defending Negroes against injustice and by seeking to outlaw lynching’ and remains as a ‘national agent for civil rights change today.’ Gilbert Jonas, *Freedom’s sword: the NAACP and the struggle against racism in America, 1909-1969* (London: Routledge, 2007), 2. See also Manfred Berg, *The Ticket to Freedom: The*

and stereotyped images of blacks as ‘a form of propaganda that perpetuated a false image of African Americans and prevented blacks from achieving social equality.’<sup>143</sup> They wanted to see evidence that Hollywood was responding to societal changes and that this global film industry was willing to produce more ‘accurate depictions of Black people.’<sup>144</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* was put on general release days before the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, whose death was a turning point in the movement as it confirmed the change from a non-violent, liberal white and upper-class black protest movement to one that was black-led, increasingly working class, and willing to support a more aggressive agenda. *Planet of the Apes* affiliates itself with the earlier part of the movement, taking a more subtle approach to the changing state of civil rights, offering increased visibility and an allegorical content which, in order to retain a broader audience, had the iconic Charlton Heston recoded as a ‘signifier for black victimisation.’<sup>145</sup>

*The New Yorker* film critic Pauline Kael noted in her original 1968 review of *Planet of the Apes* that ‘[the] picture is an enormous, many-layered black joke on the hero and the audience, and part of the joke is the use of Charlton Heston as the hero.’<sup>146</sup> Although Kael reviews the film as being somewhat farcical, she does highlight the way that the film played a game with the audience and perhaps the studio executives who had been so careful to eradicate controversial elements. It provided an opportunity to recognise Heston as a symbol of racial discrimination, as the centre of race allegory that was ‘obvious to all but the filmmakers, at least at first.’<sup>147</sup> But it could be, and has been, reinterpreted from starkly different perspectives as an allegory of black victimisation, a

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*NAACP and the Struggle for Black Political Integration* (Gainesville, F.L.: University Press of Florida, 2005); Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New Press, 2009).

<sup>143</sup> Justin T. Lorts, ‘Hollywood, the NAACP, and the Cultural Politics of the Early Civil Rights Movement,’ in Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer (eds.), *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2011), 39. Critics inside and out of the NAACP were quick to dismiss the Hollywood campaigns as they were seen as a distraction from the organisations primary struggle for equality.

<sup>144</sup> Grant, *Post-Soul Black Cinema*, 31.

<sup>145</sup> Nama, *Black Space*, 127.

<sup>146</sup> Pauline Kael, ‘The Current Cinema: Apes Must be Remembered, Charlie,’ *The New Yorker* (17 February, 1968), 108.

<sup>147</sup> Von Busack, ‘Signifying Monkeys,’ 171.

white warning against increased racial tolerance, or just as a ‘campy farce’ and space adventure starring Charlton Heston.<sup>148</sup>

This chapter has discussed the way that *Planet of the Apes* attempts to be progressive with its (late) casting of a black actor, Jeff Burton, in a initially prominent role. This positive portrayal is worth noting because Dodge as a representative of black America is presented as a positive force, albeit a marginalised feminised one, who breaks the violent, sexualised, black stereotype. The white man dominates cinematic America and the black man is often portrayed as his inferior in the role of the sidekick to make the white lead appear even more powerful.<sup>149</sup> In an attempt to resolve what Manthia Diawara terms this ‘American dilemma’ black characters appear in ‘token’ roles or as a ‘symbolic representation of Blacks where they are absent.’<sup>150</sup> *Planet of the Apes* provides both of these methods of black representation in its attempt to resolve the dilemma of a national cinema that failed to offer visibility to a group of citizens that constituted an identifiable percentage of the U.S. population at the end of the sixties.<sup>151</sup>

*Planet of the Apes*’ representation of minorities is interesting because there is a clear attempt to actively engage in the debate over race and racism in the United States in the period of production. In the wake of the 1964 Civil Right Act this film text actively invites discussion of the role of the law in the United States’ history of racial discrimination and makes ‘political statements about government action and responsibility.’<sup>152</sup> It is an example of Hollywood’s attempt to recraft the African American image, although it may have failed with the decision to kill off the black male and have him presented within the diegesis as a non-threatening objectified black body.

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<sup>148</sup> Stephen Farber, ‘Review: *Planet of the Apes*,’ *Film Quarterly* 21:4 (1968), 60.

<sup>149</sup> See Snead, *White Screen/Black Images*, 5.

<sup>150</sup> Manthia Diawara, ‘Black American Cinema,’ in Manthia Diawara (ed.), *Black American Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 12.

<sup>151</sup> In the 1960 United States Census the recorded black population was 18,871,831 (10.5%); in the 1970 Census the black population increased to 22,580,289 (11.1%). See U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, ‘Race of the Population of the United States, by States: 1960,’ *U.S. 1960 Census of Population Supplementary Reports* (September, 1961), PC(S1)-10; U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, ‘Race of the Population of the United States, by States: 1970,’ *U.S. 1970 Census of Population Supplementary Reports* (February, 1972), PC(S1)-11. Available from United States Census Bureau, <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)> [last accessed: 22/07/2012].

<sup>152</sup> Despina Kakoudaki, ‘Spectacles of History: Race Relations, Melodrama, and the Science Fiction/Disaster Film,’ *Camera Obscura* 17:2 (2002), 120.

‘Despite the apparent racial/gender integration of the hero team’ offered in *Planet of the Apes* and other post-apocalyptic narratives since the sixties, very few narratives have been produced in Hollywood where the African American body fully ‘participates in the myths of nationhood and of ‘America’.’<sup>153</sup> *Planet of the Apes*’ minor minority characters, Dodge and Stewart, make up half of the original crew and are sent into space decades before their real-life counterparts but fail to offer audiences a new image of either African-Americans or women. They show the nature of change in the late sixties as filmmakers began to respond to societal and cultural shifts but also had to retain their audiences who would not all respond positively to the liberal fantasy where white America had to share its power. *Planet of the Apes* represents a step forward into the future, a white future, but one that was allegorically underpinned with the struggles of African-Americans.

The following chapter looks further into *Planet of the Apes*’ discussion of identity politics and examines the role of women in the film and how they are crudely represented in a binary as either beautiful, silent, and ultimately replaceable (Stewart and Nova) or as intelligent, ugly, and fundamentally alien (Zira). It develops the discussion of Charlton Heston’s role within the film as a representative of American masculinity and how his position of power is undermined. It will frame this discussion within a survey of the representation of women in science fiction, and the central actions of the second-wave feminist movement that began at the end of the sixties. The chapter offers an analysis of *Planet of the Apes*’ attempts to critique sexism and the film’s ultimate perpetuation of the ‘patriarchal myth’ that it attempts to debunk.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 112, 127.

<sup>154</sup> Marleen S. Barr, *Feminist Fabulation: Space/Postmodern Fiction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), xii.



## CHAPTER FOUR:

### FRAMING THE SUBJECT:

#### IDENTITY POLITICS IN *PLANET OF THE APES*

*Their absence from a central position in science fiction narrative creates an indelible and deeply significant space. Women cannot be avoided in the science fiction film, no matter how many spaceships leave them behind.*

- Vivian Sobchack<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

*Planet of the Apes* has been read as an allegory of sixties U.S. culture, approaching issues such as the civil rights movement and the threat of nuclear war, but discussions of the gender roles presented and how these might be seen as representative of this period are notably infrequent. It is not clear as to whether the filmmakers are attempting to challenge dominant ideas about women's rights, femininity, and masculinity or conform to the more conservative ideas of the majority; it appears to do both and often simultaneously. This chapter will look at the representation of women in science fiction, the key feminist actions of the sixties, and how *Planet of the Apes* can be seen to both critique and conform to the 'patriarchal myth'.<sup>2</sup>

#### LIBERATING THE SIXTIES: THE SEEDS OF THE SECOND WAVE

'As the sixties began no feminist movement of consequence existed',<sup>3</sup> other issues present within the countercultural movements of the sixties subjugated the women's liberation movement. The same sexist notions found in the wider U.S. societal context underpinned the countercultural protest movement as a whole with 'assumptions about

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<sup>1</sup> Sobchack, 'The Virginity of Astronauts', 109.

<sup>2</sup> Marleen S. Barr, *Feminist Fabulation: Space/Postmodern Fiction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), xii. See also Jane Caputi, *Goddesses and Monsters: Women, Myth, and Popular Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 23-116.

<sup>3</sup> Alice Echols, "'Women Power' and Women's Liberation: Exploring the Relationship Between the Antiwar Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement," in Small, *Give Peace a Chance*, 172.

male and female spheres of responsibility' being so 'deeply ingrained that to question them amounted to heresy.'<sup>4</sup> These movements were contradictory as they were fighting for freedom and equality on the one hand whilst maintaining a traditional gender-biased structure on the other.

The women's movement took inspiration from the civil rights movement whilst simultaneously reacting against it and its inherent prejudices. Within the new Left Movement Students for Democratic Society (SDS)<sup>5</sup> there were 'assumptions of male superiority'.<sup>6</sup> Women, regardless of race, were used as 'helpmates or worse' and despite the fact that they made up over a third of the movement they occupied only six percent of the executive committee seats.<sup>7</sup> One of their most popular anti-war slogans: 'Girls Say Yes to Guys Who Say No!', was considered to be particularly offensive as it openly confirmed the position of women within the movement as objects to be possessed and literally used by the male protesters.

'The turbulence of the 1960s stirred up deep contradictions in women's lives.'<sup>8</sup> The decade was important to the regeneration of the feminist movement peaking during the 1970s. The foundations of second wave feminism lay in the knowledge garnered from the experiences of, and development of skills within, other prominent protest movements in which women were heavily involved. The sixties opened up possibilities for the movement to take shape and build momentum, taking cues from the civil rights movement in particular. This period highlighted the fact that women of all races were not

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<sup>4</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 319.

<sup>5</sup> The SDS called for extensive changes to the economic and social structures of the United States from the 1960s onwards. It was part of the first generation of the New Leftist organisations and initially formed as a youth wing of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), an old left social democratic and anti-communist organisation. A guiding document for the movement was formed at a convention held in June 1962 at Port Huron, Michigan. This document known as the *Port Huron Statement* laid out the activists' central beliefs which had compelled these students to move 'from silence to activism', making an explicit connection between ending the Cold War and advancing domestic reform. Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal* (Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 11. See also Dominick Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), Chapter 7; 'Port Huron Statement,' in William H. Chafe, and Harvard Sitkoff, (eds.) *A History of Our Time: Readings on Post-War America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 291-296; Harvey Peckar, Paul Buhle (ed.), Gary Dumm (illustrator), *Students for Democratic Society: A Graphic History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Echols, "'Women Power'", 173.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 173.

<sup>8</sup> Sara M. Evans, 'Sources of the Second Wave: The Rebirth of Feminism,' in Alexander Bloom (ed.), *Long Time Gone: Sixties America Then and Now* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 190.

truly benefitting from the political advances in the civil rights movement and even if changes were made women would still be considered second-class citizens because of their gender.

Historically women in the United States have had few legal rights, suffering from restrictions to their personal freedom, jobs and expectations. The Second World War created the necessary conditions for change for some women, with middle class women in particular gaining access to occupations and higher education opportunities that had been previously reserved for white males. After the war ended many of the advances that had been made for women during the war years were rescinded, and despite their work towards equality for others, women continued to be subjected to ‘astonishingly overt’ discrimination and segregation.<sup>9</sup>

In one of the seminal texts of the second wave, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963),<sup>10</sup> Betty Friedan attacked the traditional notions of what it was to be female and highlighted what a woman could achieve by advancing beyond her roles as mother and housewife. *The Feminine Mystique*’s focus was upon the women of the American middle classes who, although considered to be ‘the envy of women all over the world’, were restricted by their ‘superficial freedoms’ which allowed comfort in the home but a negligible impact and influence within the public domain.<sup>11</sup> By solely living their lives in the role of homemakers, women were seen to be subordinating their own identities to their families. Friedan, through her activism, promoted the idea that women in the United States not only needed to re-evaluate their position within society, but also their understanding of themselves on a personal level; each woman needed to develop a sense of self and an individual identity separate from her family and its attached traditions.

Friedan is seen as one of the ‘chief architects’ of the women’s liberation movement,<sup>12</sup> she helped to set up the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws, now known as NARAL Pro-Choice America. *The Feminine Mystique* made a modest plea for women to gain a more

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<sup>9</sup> David Steigerwald, *The Sixties and the End of Modern America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press Inc., 1995), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminist Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963).

<sup>11</sup> Steigerwald, *The Sixties*, 252.

<sup>12</sup> Margalit Fox, ‘Betty Friedan, Who Ignited Cause in ‘Feminine Mystique,’ Dies at 85,’ *New York Times* (February 6, 2006), A20.

equal position within society without absolutely divorcing them from their family unit. She did not push for revolution nor a total upturning of the familial system, something which was questioned by her more radical ideological descendants of the late sixties who asked: 'if alienation was rooted in the family and tied to the constraints on women, then why not redefine the family or simply do away with it altogether?'<sup>13</sup>

The Miss America Pageant protest on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1968 was the first major public action of the revitalised late-sixties edition of the feminist movement. It was a public display of disgust at the 'most apple-pie of American institutions' the Miss America pageant.<sup>14</sup> The pageant was chosen because, as protest organiser Robin Morgan explained, 'where else could one find a such a perfect combination of American values – racism, materialism, capitalism – all packaged in one "ideal" symbol, a woman.'<sup>15</sup> The feminist protesters in attendance crowned a sheep Miss America, only spoke to female reporters, and burnt numerous beauty products such as high heels, girdles, hair curlers, and make up in what they called the 'freedom trash can'.<sup>16</sup> During the winner's acceptance speech in the live broadcast, protesters unfurled an enormous women's liberation banner whilst shouting out 'freedom for women' and 'no more Miss America'. Although the TV cameras did not show the banner the commotion could be heard on the broadcast and the morning papers gave full details of what had been shown and said. This was a very public and memorable beginning to the second wave of the women's movement.

The feminist movement was 'quintessentially a sixties movement' as it gathered momentum throughout the decade, and women liberationists 'felt that they started to mobilize around their own, rather than other people's, oppression.'<sup>17</sup> It was built up over decades and reacted against, but also drew great swathes of experience from the male-dominated movements. As Alice Echols explains:

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<sup>13</sup> Steigerwald, *The Sixties and the End of Modern America*, 253.

<sup>14</sup> Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The '60s and its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 75.

<sup>15</sup> Robin Morgan, 'Women Disrupt the Miss America Pageant,' in Robin Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Random House, 1977), 64.

<sup>16</sup> See Isserman, *America Divided*.

<sup>17</sup> Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 77.

The larger male-dominated protest Movement, despite its considerable sexism, provided much of the intellectual foundation and cultural orientation for the women's liberation movement, many of whose ideas and approaches – especially its concern with revitalizing democratic process and reformulating 'politics' to include the personal – were refined and recast versions of those already present in the New Left and the black freedom movement.<sup>18</sup>

The end of the sixties was a point of conflict between the desire for domestic change and liberation with a wish to retain the status quo: the traditional gendered hierarchy that had been promoted and preserved throughout U.S. history.

This contradiction between the desire for social reform and also the preservation of gender-based discrimination can be located and analysed in the cultural output of the United States. The images and ideas presented in films and television programmes were often superficially opposing sexism whilst simultaneously conforming to the gender bias permeating the country and its media outlets. This can be seen both in terms of the production process and the final product. Science fiction film is of particular interest here because of its interpretable allegorical content, where meaning is located in both surface images but also the more implicit commentaries that respond to cultural trends and discourses. *Planet of the Apes* is given as a prime example, and in this instance in particular, the female characters are both provided with opportunity for equality whilst also being represented as subjugated stereotypes.

### **SCIENCE FICTION: PATRIARCHAL GENRE**

Science fiction is often perceived as a 'predominately male' genre,<sup>19</sup> representing women in 'condensed forms'.<sup>20</sup> *Planet of the Apes* fits into the history of the genre by only presenting three named female figures of which only one, an ape, is (literally) given a voice. *Planet of the Apes* reflects upon the prevalent issues within U.S. popular and political culture, but it also forms part of one of the most popular Hollywood genres that

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>19</sup> Melzer, *Alien Constructions*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Sobchack, 'The Virginity of Astronauts', 104.

acts as ‘a powerful cultural barometer of our times.’<sup>21</sup> The American science fiction genre and the discourse it forms is integral to an understanding of the presentation of gender and bodies on the sixties’ screen, and in this instance the images formed and promoted through *Planet of the Apes*. These clearly link into an understanding of the film as a documentation of attitudes and perceptions within U.S. popular cultural understanding, perceptions that *Planet of the Apes* both perpetuates and problematises.

‘Men have so often identified Woman as Other, out there, the opposite of cool male intellect and civilization, a part of the warm, squishy, undifferentiated natural world from which men are born but quickly escape...’<sup>22</sup> Lisa Tuttle’s explanation of the role and perception of women within science fiction exposes one of the central issues surrounding female representation within it. The female is identified with nature, emotion, sexuality, and vulnerability; she is seen as the antithesis of the intellectual, scientific man who dominates the genre. Women have been consistently present but generally consigned to ‘subsidiary and stereotyped roles’<sup>23</sup>: as romantic interests for the male protagonists, or as characters in need of rescue and protection. ‘Other’ characters are defined and understood through their relationship to the white male heterosexual characters that dominate science fiction narratives.<sup>24</sup>

Science fiction ‘is an ideal genre for exploring the ideology of gender [and] for questioning our culture’s constrained thinking regarding gender.’<sup>25</sup> Due to its presentation of alternative realities on Earth, in alien zones and in multiple imagined

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<sup>21</sup> Geoff King, and Tanya Krzywinska, *Science Fiction Cinema: From Outerspace to Cyberspace* (London: Wallflower Press: 2000), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Lisa Tuttle, ‘Pets and Monsters: Metamorphoses in Recent Science Fiction,’ in Lucie Armitt (ed.), *Where no Man has Gone Before: Women and Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1991), 97.

<sup>23</sup> Barry Keith Grant, ‘*Strange Days*: Gender and Ideology in New Genre Films,’ in Murray Pomerance (ed.), *Ladies and Gentlemen, Girls and Boys: Gender in Film at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 188.

<sup>24</sup> This notion that women have been created and defined as ‘other’ has been argued by feminists, most notably Simone de Beauvoir, calling for women to define themselves outside of the female/male binary. This concern over female ‘otherness’ ignored the differences amongst women themselves – discussion surrounding the experience not only in the representation of women but also the experience of the black and Native American woman. See Simone de Beauvoir (trans. H. M. Parshley), *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1953); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Routledge, 1990); bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> Barry Keith Grant, *Shadows of Doubt: Negotiations of Masculinity in American Genre Film* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 121.

futures, science fiction has the potential to create progressive images and envisage cultures where traditional roles and hierarchies can be reversed and even removed altogether. Yet, more often than not science fiction film narratives propagate ‘cultural myths about the naturalization of masculinity,’<sup>26</sup> suggesting that men dominate not only Earth but also any number of hypothetical parallel universes because male-domination is natural, normal and expected. At best narratives propose ‘safe alternatives’ but in many cases female characters come to ‘embody negative archetypal figures’ with little room for progressive interpretation.<sup>27</sup> These speculative narratives endorse the agenda of the tradition that creates them rather than imagining characters that defy the white patriarchal images of the West. Their promise appears to be limited by the notion that ‘human possibility [has] rigorously predetermined conditions’ that ensure that particular ideas and images are projected to the viewing public rather than liberal alternatives.<sup>28</sup>

Women are marked by their physical differences and are rarely permitted to be more than a visual distraction in the science fiction genre; they have become a ‘ghostly presence’ there in body but not in spirit.<sup>29</sup> But there have been some notable exceptions prior to the introduction of Sarah Connor and Lt. Ellen Ripley in the late seventies;<sup>30</sup> women have taken on positions of genuine power even in male dominated narratives. Zira from *Planet of the Apes*, for example, offers a presentation of an educated female with agency but her species codes her as alien instantly complicating this liberal image.<sup>31</sup> A further example from this period is Lisa (Rosalind Cash) from *Omega Man* (1971) the ‘most obscure of the trinity of [science fiction] films starring Charlton Heston.’<sup>32</sup> *Omega Man* envisages a post germ-warfare world where the few survivors defend themselves against plague-victim mutants. A former army medic, Dr. Robert Neville (Heston), administers a life-saving experimental vaccine to himself during a biological war

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<sup>26</sup> Erica Sheen, ‘Women at Work in Hollywood,’ in: Armit (ed.), *Where no Man has Gone Before*, 160.

<sup>27</sup> Susan A. George, ‘Science Fiction Film: Nineteenth Twentieth Century,’ in: Robin Anne Reid (ed.), *Women in Science Fiction and Fantasy: Overviews* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 2009), 112.

<sup>28</sup> Sheen, ‘Women at Work in Hollywood’, 160.

<sup>29</sup> Sobchack, ‘The Virginity of Astronauts’, 103.

<sup>30</sup> Sarah Connor in *The Terminator* (1984), *Terminator II* (dir. James Cameron, 1991), and Ellen Ripley in *Alien* (dir. Ridley Scott, 1979), *Aliens* (dir. James Cameron, 1986), *Alien 3* (dir. David Fincher, 1992), *Alien: Resurrection* (dir. Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> An issue that will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

<sup>32</sup> The trinity being: *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *Omega Man* (1971), and *Soylent Green* (1973). See Nama, *Black Space*, 47.

between Russia and China, which he believes, makes him the last man on Earth; the omega man. Neville spends his days roaming a vacant Los Angeles, and the nights fighting off hordes of albino mutants. Neville eventually comes across a small group of survivors led by a young black woman called Lisa.

‘Stereotypically sexy and sassy’ Lisa rescues Neville from a mutant attack by forcing him onto her motorcycle, at gunpoint.<sup>33</sup> Although she is initially introduced as a feisty gun-wielding black female, she subsequently becomes aligned with conventional female traits. Lisa is the love interest for the hero and has taken on the role of mother to the remaining healthy children in the human commune that she helps to run, until she herself becomes infected with the mutant plague. Over the course of the film she moves from a position of power on her own terms as a strong black female character to a role where she comes to embody many traditional female traits: romantic interest, mother, and vulnerable female in need of rescue. Lisa and her ‘children’ are rescued from death and mutation by Neville’s ultimate messianic sacrifice, as he discovers that his blood acts as an antidote and vaccine to the plague. Neville/Heston becomes the saviour of humanity.

As a whole the science fiction genre is ‘concerned... with the question of *difference*, typically posed as that of the difference between human and nonhuman.’<sup>34</sup> However, in a predominately male-led genre it could be said that human females are ‘alien’ and that, essentially, ‘to be human is to be male’.<sup>35</sup> The American science fiction genre often keeps men and women within specific roles where men are linked with science, technology, innovation and exploration and women are restricted to a position of triviality, with their sexuality and ability to bear children coded as dangerous. Women have a biological power over their male counterparts, something which is both ‘envied and emulated,’<sup>36</sup> in the science fiction genre. There have been several attempts to imitate the power of giving birth, imagining a world where women are superfluous.

In *Planet of the Apes* the ship acts as a female replacement, a metal womb protecting the astronauts and keeping them alive; thus, the male characters give

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<sup>33</sup> Janani Subramanian, ‘Alienating identification Black Identity in *The Brother from Another Planet* and *I Am Legend*,’ *Science Fiction Film and Television* 3:1 (Spring, 2010), 47.

<sup>34</sup> Constance Penley, ‘Introduction,’ in Penley, *Close Encounters*, vii.

<sup>35</sup> Marleen Barr, *Alien to Femininity: Speculative Fiction and Feminist Theory* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood, 1987), 31.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 105.



themselves the ability to cultivate and maintain life without the need for a woman. The film is not about reproduction and repopulation, but sustaining life on Earth and on the ship by finding new sources of power through the exploration and colonisation of space. This changes once the ship fails and the male survivors must fend for themselves and forge their way on an alien planet without the female-replacement mothership or the token female astronaut. From the opening sequence women are presented in a complicated manner with their roles oscillating between progressiveness and a regression to a state primitivism (which is presented as an ideal), or in the case of Zira a step down in the evolutionary ladder to ape.

### **‘HOLD YOUR TONGUE MADAM!’: THE FEMALE FORM IN *PLANET OF THE APES***

Throughout *Planet of the Apes* ‘the images of women are split between the presumed mutually exclusive poles of beauty and brains.’<sup>37</sup> There are only three female characters in the film, acting as representatives for more than half of the world’s population, crudely crystallised into broad binary stereotypes. Stewart (Dianne Stanley) is the first woman on screen, she is first seen silently sleeping and then later as a shrivelled corpse but she is never shown awake. Nova (Linda Harrison) a mute human beauty is introduced in the second phrase of the film. After Taylor and his surviving crewmates are captured by the apes, she acts as a companion for Taylor (it is unclear if they have had sex) and has no direct narrative agency. The final female is an intelligent psychologist (studying human/animal psychology) called Dr. Zira (Kim Hunter) but her species problematises a positive reading as a progressive female role-model. All of the other characters are male.

#### **Stewart**

*Planet of the Apes* put a woman into outer space fifteen years before NASA,<sup>38</sup> only to ‘kill her off within the first fifteen minutes of the film.’<sup>39</sup> Stewart thus violates previously male space in mind and body, and ‘having not spoken a word, dies almost immediately, thus neutralizing her as a source of competition for the male astronauts.’<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 38.

<sup>38</sup> Dr. Sally Ride was the first woman to be sent into space by NASA, on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1983.

<sup>39</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 37-38.

Stewart, played by relative unknown Dianne Stanley,<sup>41</sup> becomes one of two female humans in the film who never speak a word; Nova is positioned as the primitive mute beauty, a replacement for the first flawed female who dies before she can become a threat. The film posits the silent human female as the preferred choice of both the male lead and the filmmakers; the only female to speak is an ape, Dr Zira. Without the presence of any strong human females the male characters dominate their species with no competition.



Fig. 1.1.: Landon shot from Taylor's POV.



Fig. 1.2.: Dodge shot from Taylor's POV.



Fig. 1.3.: Taylor looking at Stewart.



Fig. 1.4.: Stewart from within her pod, alive.

In *Planet of the Apes*' opening sequence Taylor inspects his crew of unconscious astronauts safe within their metal wombs. Taylor appears as a paternal figure ensuring that his crew are safe before he puts himself into the same sleeping state. This short but telling sequence is filmed from Taylor's point of view. He looks at the two male crewmates as equals despite their racial differences, one being white, and the other black (fig. 1.1 & 1.2). But when he comes to look at Stewart, the style of cinematography changes marking her as different. She is the only crewmember shot from within the capsule from behind the glass, an objective shot differentiating her from the others. She is

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<sup>41</sup> Very little is known about the actress who played Stewart, *Planet of the Apes* was her first film role. She was also an extra in Elvis Presley's 1968 film *Speedway* where she played a waitress. Stanley was chosen to play the silent Stewart but was not credited in the titles, suggesting that she was cast for purely aesthetic reasons and that it was not important to have a well-known actress play the part, as she was to be little more than a body.

detached from the other crewmembers both visually in terms of her obvious biological differences and in the way in which she is viewed (fig. 1.4).

Stewart is an image of beauty: blonde, slim, and conventionally pretty, but, ironically, she is not explicitly the object of the gaze. Taking Laura Mulvey's theory on female objectification on screen, Stewart is quite literally '...isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualised.'<sup>42</sup> To be seen and not heard, she is simply an image that is lingered upon for a moment before the narrative continues. Her visual and other separation enhances her position as a visual pleasure rather than an important element within the film's narrative. Here, it is the male characters who are the focus of the cinematic gaze, Taylor (and the camera) watch each of the male astronauts in the opening section but when it comes to Stewart, both Taylor and the female crew are shot/framed differently. Taylor's point-of-view shot is replaced and he becomes the object of the shot, as if the sleeping Stewart is watching him (see fig 2.).

Throughout the film Taylor is the focus of the female gaze, as shown in many of the shots of Nova who, despite being the focus of the camera's gaze, is shown to be watching Taylor. The homoerotic appropriation of the gaze is matched in a later sequence just preceding the arrival of the apes on screen; the male astronauts bathe together stripping and clearly watching one another with no embarrassment or awkwardness. The loss of the female seems to have allowed for this moment of freedom to occur before it is revealed that the astronauts are not alone on the planet.

Following a computer malfunction on the spaceship, occurring off-screen during the title sequence, the crew become lost in time and space but only the male astronauts survive. Stewart dies and is shown as a desiccated and skeletal corpse, which does not appear to stir much emotion in the other characters. Interestingly, once Stewart is dead she is shot differently; the shot of her dead in the glass casket does not mirror the one of her alive (see fig. 2).<sup>43</sup> She is now objectively shot from outside the glass as the other

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<sup>42</sup> Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' in Laura Mulvey (ed.), *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), 21.

<sup>43</sup> The two images in figure 2 are two different actresses as the part of Stewart was actually shared between two women as the make-up artist John Chambers decided that, even though the aged prosthetic mask of Stanley's face was what was needed, the mannequin originally used ruined the effect as he explain: 'it just didn't look dead'. So, an 83 year-old woman was brought in to be the corpse in order to get the correct look. She was not credited. See John Chambers quoted in Anon, 'Mad, Mad, Mad Monkey World,' *Famous Monsters of Filmland* 52 (October, 1968), 42-51.

astronauts had been; however, she is still not shot purely from Taylor's pure point-of-view. The over-the-shoulder shot which is clearly behind Taylor suggests a continuing detachment from her. According to Eric Greene, 'the segregation and elimination of [Stewart's] presence seems a strategy to communicate that gender is not an issue on the planet of the apes... however the film's curious treatment of Stewart has precisely the opposite effect: it raises the issue of gender.'<sup>44</sup>



**Figure 2** – Stewart before and after the credit sequence  
2.1.: Stewart from within her pod, alive. 2.2.: Stewart in an over-the-shoulder shot from Taylor's POV.

Alive and dead Stewart is a character for discussion. Her mere presence highlights the issue of gender and in turn the changing and challenging position of women in 1960s U.S. society. The film was released a few years before the peak of the women's movement, which was to have a prominent position in the political arena of the 1970s. The decision to have this particular female character and then to have her positioned outside of her traditional role in an ostensibly male-dominated situation is worthy of investigation.

The originating novel, *La Planète des Singes*, did not include any female astronauts and therefore the inclusion of such a character was a conscious decision by the filmmakers. There were only three stranded crewmembers (two astronauts and a journalist) featured in the novel with Nova as the only female human. From the 1964 *Planet of the Apes* script proposals onwards, Rod Serling's adaptation included a fourth crewmember, a man called Blake. This fourth astronaut, who was always supposed to die at the beginning of the film, changes in name from 'Blake' to 'Stewart' in scripts from February 1965 and is clearly referred to as a man by the other characters.<sup>45</sup> It was not

<sup>44</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 37.

<sup>45</sup> The change from Blake to Stewart in 1965 perhaps reflects the change of director that year from Blake Edwards to Franklin J. Schaffner.

until Michael Wilson's final shooting script in May 1967 that the gender of the astronaut changed. Initially, it could be assumed that the composition of the ship's crew was altered in order to be representative of the U.S. population, therefore explaining the incorporation of both the female and black astronauts. If this is the case it could be presumed that Stewart is just another astronaut, a scientist rather than some sort of domesticated ideal. Stewart can be seen one hand as a response to the burgeoning second wave feminist movement as she is positioned as an equal within a traditionally male space, whilst on other her inclusion was a change made to the plot that allows the other astronauts to use Stewart for procreation when a suitable Earth alternative is found.

Following the crash and subsequent arrival on the planet more information is revealed about the Stewart, including her rather masculine name. Her first name, however, is never revealed;<sup>46</sup> she remains as half a character a symbol rather than a complete person. In one particular (one-sided) conversation with Nova Taylor explains that Stewart was essentially cargo, put on the ship purely as a sexual partner. She was put aboard to satisfy, as Taylor puts it, the 'hot and eager' men and to eventually fulfil her potential as a 'new eve'. She was to be the literal mother to a new human colony with her biological ability being her only power over her male counterparts. Stewart is placed in a traditionally male job, with a male name, but as details of her character are revealed she increasingly becomes another woman in the science fiction genre to be shown in an 'assumed subsidiary and stereotyped [role].'<sup>47</sup> Vacillating between 'motherhood and monstrosity'<sup>48</sup> Stewart never fulfils her childbearing function and is quickly forgotten as a mummified corpse (an image drawn from the horror genre) leaving behind the two most extreme female types as representatives: the beauty (Nova) and the beast (Zira).

## **Nova**

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<sup>46</sup> Stewart has since been given a full name and title. The 'ANSA Public Service Announcement' bonus feature on the 2008 blu-ray release of *Planet of the Apes* provided the following biography: 'Lieutenant Maryann Stewart, 33, is both a career astronaut and a respected biological researcher. A veteran of ANSA's Apollo and Juno space programs, she brings experience, curiosity, and old-fashioned guts to the team.' This retrospective addition to the *Planet of the Apes* myth in 2008 recognises the sexism surrounding Stewart's position as a female character intended for breeding. By giving her a full name and some basic credentials the 2008 release of *Planet of the Apes* highlights and confirms the issues surrounding Stewart's initial inclusion and presentation.

<sup>47</sup> Grant, 'Gender and Ideology in New Genre Films,' 188.

<sup>48</sup> Kath Woodward & Sophie Woodward, *Why Feminism Matters* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 73.

Described in the shooting script as being ‘hauntingly lovely and hauntingly stupid’ Nova is the only named female human on *Planet of the Apes*.<sup>49</sup> Linda Harrison played the character, a former pageant girl chosen for her looks who, according to Pauline Kael, did not ‘seem to have had any acting training.’<sup>50</sup> Harrison’s acting skills were, however, of little consequence as her purpose was to be ‘the most fantastic beauty’,<sup>51</sup> a ‘beauteous brownette’ who was described in the production documents and pressbook in terms of her beauty queen looks rather than her personality.<sup>52</sup> Nova is given to Taylor by the apes and he names her, like a pet animal. She is not an equal to Taylor and is clearly presented as a primitive woman with primal urges rather than reasoned thought. In the act of naming Taylor creates a (gender) hierarchy with him on top and her as a subservient woman beneath him; she has no control over this and in taking his name she responds to it like the animal she is seen to be.<sup>53</sup>

Barry Keith Grant notes, in a survey of gender representation in science fiction, that women are often ‘positioned as objects of exchange’,<sup>54</sup> things rather than sentient beings with agency. Grant’s observation can be applied to both of the female humans in *Planet of the Apes* who are positioned within the narrative as things to be used, given and exchanged according to their perceived value at the time. Nova and Stewart are seen to be exchangeable, and their level of intelligence seems of little interest or consequence, as it is their bodies and their biological abilities that define them, notably mimicking the casting of the two actresses who portray them; chosen for their physical attributes rather than their skills as actresses. The two females share many of the same characteristics

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<sup>49</sup> Nova’s script description: ‘Her hair is long and black, her skin nut brown, her face hauntingly lovely and hauntingly stupid.’ Michael Wilson, *Planet of the Apes* (shooting script), May 5, 1967. Arthur P. Jacobs Collection, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University. Collection 023, box 61.

<sup>50</sup> Pauline Kael, ‘Apes Must be Remembered, Charlie,’ in Pauline Kael, *Going Steady* (London: Temple Smith, 1970), 37.

<sup>51</sup> When casting the part of Nova there was a hope that Ursula Andess would take the role fresh from her iconic turn as Honeychile Ryder in *Dr. No*. But it was eventually decided that they ‘would unleash an international search (as there is no language barrier) for the most fantastic beauty to be discovered for films.’ Pendreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes*, 32.

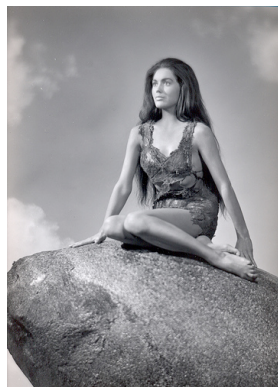
<sup>52</sup> ‘Preliminary Production Information Guide on The Arthur P. Jacobs Production of *Planet of the Apes*, n.d. (c.1967), 11. Arthur P. Jacobs Collection, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University. Collection 023, box 59, folder 7.

<sup>53</sup> This is discussed in further detail in the next chapter: ‘Aping Religion or Religious Apes: Planet of the Apes and Religion’. The act of naming is read as a display of adamic power by Taylor, who is framed as a new Adam and he asserts his power by being the one to name the animalistic human woman (Nova) who uncomfortably sits on the line between animal and human/pet and companion.

<sup>54</sup> Grant, ‘Gender and Ideology in New Genre Films’, 192.

within the narrative, they are both: silent, beautiful, and intended for breeding. When Nova is given to Taylor by the apes she is intended as a mate and Stewart, as already mentioned, is intended as a ‘new eve’.

Both Dianne Stanley (Stewart) and Linda Harrison (Nova) are little more than images in the film just as they appear in their promotional photographs (fig. 3). Bodies to be looked at and consumed by the assumed male science fiction audience.<sup>55</sup> Their silence, and in Stewart’s case sudden death, is explained away in the narrative but open for discussion when looking at science fiction within its sixties U.S. context.



3.1 Linda Harrison as Nova



3.2 Dianne Stanley as Stewart

Figure 3 – Promotional stills from *Planet of the Apes*

Nova’s silence could be seen as a rejection of the powerful female by the filmmakers. *Planet of the Apes* was released amidst a period of U.S. political history when women were raising their voices against years of oppression, and the dominance of the traditional family structure and ingrained gender hierarchies famously elucidated in Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique*. As noted in the introduction to the chapter Friedan’s seminal text revealed the fallacy of the prevailing valuation of U.S. middle class women, which was that they were only acknowledged as valued citizens in their expected role as wives and mothers. And Nova is not expected to be anything more; she is restricted by her apparent lack of intellect and her relationship to/with Taylor and cannot think to argue or reject this formation.

Nova can be seen to ‘represent certain fantasy types and images of limited female possibility.’<sup>56</sup> She is subservient to her master and literally unable to question her position

<sup>55</sup> See Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure,’ 19.

<sup>56</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 38.

allowing Taylor to dominate, she is even described in the script notes as having a ‘mute appeal that cannot be denied.’<sup>57</sup> Reaffirming the position of the dominant male, perhaps not only for Taylor but also for the white American man whose privileged position was seemingly being attacked by the plethora of protest movements. Taylor forms a relationship with the primitive Nova, the type of relationship that had perhaps eluded him back on (his) Earth. He recalls that: ‘there were women, lots of women. Lots of lovemaking, but no love. That was the world we’d made. So I left, there was no one to hold me there.’ Suggesting that he had no partner to stay with and that perhaps the sexual liberation of the sixties, and ‘white counterculture’ free love movement had led to the creation of activist women that did not offer Taylor what he wanted or needed.<sup>58</sup> With Nova he has a relationship where he has total control over an infantilised, sexualised humanoid incapable of answering back or forming an opinion. Perhaps, Taylor has found the mythic perfect woman.<sup>59</sup>

A clear example of the ‘sexual saturation of the female body,’<sup>60</sup> Nova appears throughout the film scantily clad in an animal skin bikini with long tousled dark hair, fake eyelashes and strikingly free from unsightly body hair. She can be compared to the highly sexualised Loana (Raquel Welch) in *One Million Years B.C.* released only two years prior to *Planet of the Apes* in 1966 (fig. 4.1). The provocative nature of the costumes for both Nova and Loana appeared to have been designed purely to appeal to the spectator; a fantasy rather than a reality, presented in sixties filmic turn that favoured ‘an exotic or pre-historic landscape, a land before time (and before the existence of clothing in most cases)... in keeping with the many of the perceptions of women of the time period.’<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Michael Wilson, *Planet of the Apes*, Final Shooting Script, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1967, 85.

<sup>58</sup> Echols, *Shaky Ground*, 33.

<sup>59</sup> The myth of the ‘perfect woman’ is seen in Ovid’s *Pygmalion* where a sculptor falls in love with a woman he carves from ivory that is then made flesh by the goddess Venus and her son Cupid – ‘what is important in this myth is the idea that the perfect woman for a man is a woman conceived by him, and that when left to define herself, woman is corrupt, immoral and, therefore, undesirable.’ Kathryn Fraser, ‘“Now I am Ready to Tell How Bodies are Changed into Different Bodies...”: Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*,’ in Dana Alice Heller (ed.), *Makeover Television: Realities Remodelled* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 185. See also Paula James, *The Legacy of Ovid’s Pygmalion Myth on Screen: In Pursuit of the Perfect Woman* (London: Continuum, 2011); and Victor Ieronim Stoichitã, *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> Linda Williams, ‘Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess,’ in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism*, (6<sup>th</sup> edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 730.

<sup>61</sup> Dominique Mainon, and James Ursini, *The Modern Amazons: Warrior Women On-Screen* (Plompton Plains, N.J.: Limelight, 2006), 20.



Raising questions about whether this pre-historic landscape is intended to be understood as post-apocalyptic; a return to a period where gender hierarchies (advances in gender equality) and modern technologies have been removed.

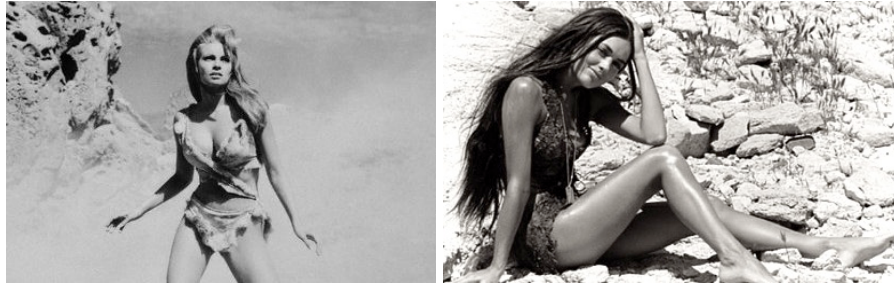


Figure 4 – Promotional stills from *One Million Years B.C.* (1966) and *Planet of the Apes* (1968)

4.1 Raquel Welch as Loana

4.2 Linda Harrison as Nova

Loana has a seemingly contradictory position within the narrative of *One Million Years B.C.* and sixties/cult popular culture as a ‘sex symbol’ and also as a ‘physically aggressive’ character that plays a ‘sacrificial role in rescuing the male protagonist.’<sup>62</sup> She has narrative agency something that the equally sexualised Nova fails to achieve. These pre-historic women (and post-historic in Nova’s case), especially those conceived in the sixties and seventies,<sup>63</sup> are not intended as accurate representations of their historical antecedents. They provide an image of womanhood ‘combining archaic and modern elements’,<sup>64</sup> with women appearing in progressive roles but often through traditionally sexualised images; representatives and defenders of humanity wrapped up in a fur bikini.

Nova in body and image fits into this icon of the pre-historic sex symbol; a literal beauty queen bound in a bikini and first seen running in terror from the narrative’s source of peril, with the gorilla hunters taking the position of the dinosaurs. A sixties siren in a fashionable bikini, reminiscent of Ursula Andress’ *Dr. No* (1962) Bond girl, with back-combed hair and make-up Nova has little to her characterisation. She neither fights nor propels the narrative. She runs from the apes into the arms of the male protagonist, acting

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 21, 22.

<sup>63</sup> See also *Sheena: Queen of the Jungle* (1 series, 26 episode, 1955-1957), *Teenage Cave Man* (1958), *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1970), *Creatures the World Forgot* (1971) and the later parody of such films *Caveman* (1981).

<sup>64</sup> Mainon and Ursini, *The Modern Amazon*, 1.

as the companion and focus of the gaze. She may represent the future of humanity but does so in a fashion that highlights the sexist, problematic presentation of womanhood in *Planet of the Apes* and the science fiction/fantasy genre in sixties and seventies.

In the original source novel Boulle's Nova was naked. As a primitive human she was originally unable to clothe herself. On the planet of the apes humanity has returned to the most basic level of existence lacking in emotional responses such as embarrassment. In *Planet of the Apes* Nova is clothed, albeit in a figure-enhancing bikini, perhaps suggesting that she has developed a desire to be covered. Modesty is a human trait as we are the only animals to wear clothes; in being clothed does Nova become less of an animal? And, does her relationship with Taylor become less disturbing?

Michael Wilson's original ending to *Planet of the Apes* included a pregnant Nova and the assassination of Taylor.<sup>65</sup> As indicated in the novel Nova became the mother to a new race of intelligent humans and Wilson's original screenplay had a conclusion in keeping with the novel. All references to her condition were removed from the final cut of the film.<sup>66</sup> In an interview with Dale Winogura, for the *Cinéfantastique Planet of the Apes* special issue, Wilson revealed that a Fox executive who felt it was offensive had demanded the deletion of this key scene.<sup>67</sup> Wilson explained that the objection was due to Nova being 'humanoid and not actually human,' if Nova was seen to be pregnant then 'it would mean that Taylor had committed sodomy.'<sup>68</sup> This was unacceptable to the film

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<sup>65</sup> In the original sequence an ape sniper killed Taylor and a pregnant Nova escaped into the Forbidden Zone allowing for the possibility of the continuation of the twentieth-century human race following the death of Taylor.

<sup>66</sup> Nova's pregnancy storyline suggests that intelligence is passed down from the father (Taylor) with the mother (Nova) simply acting as an empty vessel to carry *his* child. If the child had been born following the death of Taylor how would it have developed into an intelligent human without being spoken to or taught? The film raises the nature-nurture controversy of the sixties and early seventies here by suggesting that a child born of a sentient father and a primitive woman would be endowed its father's abilities even it was solely raised within a primitive community. Taylor, the white male, is seen as the carrier of intelligence. *Planet of the Apes* suggests that human nature and human ability is inherited (nature) not taught (nurture). For details on the nature-nurture debate relating to the acquisition of language see Noam Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics: A Chapter in the History of Rationalist Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Geoffrey Sampson, *Educating Eve: The Language Instinct Debate* (London: Cassell, 1997). For a details primatologists' debate on the subject see Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989). See also Susan McKinnon & Sydel Silverman (eds.), *Complexities: Beyond Nature & Nurture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>67</sup> Michael Wilson, Interview conducted by Dale Winogura, January 5, 1972, in Dale Winogura, 'Dialogues on Apes, Apes and More Apes,' *Cinéfantastique* 2:2 (Summer, 1972), 26.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 26. In the use of the term 'sodomy' Wilson refers specifically to bestiality – sex with non-human animals – suggesting that Taylor having sex with Nova would be tantamount to bestiality.

producers who were unwilling to entertain the idea of sex between the iconic Charlton Heston and a barely human beauty.

Had a pregnancy been present within the narrative Nova's offspring would have represented an element of hope: a fresh start for the human race. The lack of children (not only in the removal of the pregnancy storyline but also the dearth of young humans seen onscreen) aligns *Planet of the Apes* with other science fiction films of the late sixties. These films were, as Vivian Sobchack notes, 'filled with dystopian fear'.<sup>69</sup> She goes on to say that: '[r]ather than figuring children (and through them conceiving a future), the films mark the socially necessary or externally imposed absence of children.'<sup>70</sup> The removal of the pregnancy may be attributed not only to the issues of decency raised by the Fox executives but also to the dystopian nature of *Planet of the Apes* and its desolate closing image. The optimism inspired by the pregnancy would have 'muddied the waters and detracted from the impact of the Statue of Liberty and the sense of hopelessness its appearance conveyed.'<sup>71</sup>



5.0: Nova – in each of these shots from throughout the film Nova is watching Taylor.

Nova is defined by her relationship to Taylor not simply within the narrative but also through the way she is filmed and directed. She is often shown in a close up watching him (fig 5). Her gaze, along with camera's, is occupied with Taylor. From their first meeting Nova is mesmerised by Taylor. She is unable to communicate with him, and

<sup>69</sup> Vivian Sobchack, 'Child/Alien/Father', 14.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>71</sup> Mort Abrahams quoted in: Pendreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes*, 99.

despite his best efforts he is unable to teach her to do so, suggesting that she is in fact barely human. The term human relating only to the species and not the attached associations surrounding terms like humane, which align humanity with a presumed level of intelligence and compassion that animals apparently lack. But on the *Planet of the Apes* it is the ‘animals’ who are the most intelligent, and in particular the chimpanzee Zira. She is the scientist who recognises the importance of the discovery of Taylor and is willing to risk her personal freedom, and even her life, in order to expose the myths that form the foundation to ape government, religion, and law.

### **Zira**

As a female character in a film made in the late sixties Zira offers a liberal presentation of the future woman. The ape civilization appears to accept females as respected equals and they are shown to be capable of challenging the status quo. Zira does so by gaining a voice in a court of law and being a leading researcher in her field; her power and position are things that would have eluded the majority of even middle class women in sixties U.S. society. *Planet of the Apes* is, in part, an allegory of contemporary America, showcasing its inadequacies and prejudices. Yet this seemingly primitive ape-run planet achieves a level of equality, which is denied to women of the developed Western nations, holding up as an example to be emulated as well as criticism of U.S. society.

Dr. Zira is the last of the three named female characters. She is a chimpanzee scientist who studies humans and is the first, and one of the only, apes willing to accept the possibility of a sentient human. She is an equal to her fiancé Cornelius (Roddy McDowall), intellectually superior to the gorillas who work in her lab, and perhaps even to the orangutan officials who are unable to accept an alternative to their ‘true science’.<sup>72</sup> In Wilson’s original script Zira and Cornelius were equally assertive, but a later rewrite altered the character of Cornelius making him more cautious and reserved and in need of the confirmation and pushing of the more assertive Zira.

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<sup>72</sup> In an argument with Taylor and Zira, Zaius makes the following statement: ‘There is no contradiction between faith and science. True science.’

Zira is limited by her species-restricted class but within this grouping she has elevated herself to a position of respect unhindered by her gender. Zira is the childless female; she is never discussed in terms of her ability to bear children inline with Nova and Stewart, instead she is defined by her intelligence.<sup>73</sup> Zira seems to be a representation of second-wave feminist aspirations: an opportunity to destroy the mystique that had surrounded their lives which implied that a woman should be content as a wife and mother and never wish for ‘something more than washing dishes.’<sup>74</sup> As noted in *The Feminine Mystique*, centuries had passed where ‘half of the population was denied the right to become fully human.’<sup>75</sup> But as noted by Sherrie A. Inness in her discussion of tough women to which Zira can be compared, ‘her masculinity might be impressive for a “girl”, but she is no match for the “boys”.’<sup>76</sup>

In *Planet of the Apes* the majority of the female characters fail to become ‘fully human’; they are restricted to their specified roles. Stewart’s death stops her from fulfilling her potential and in turn stops her becoming a threat to the dominant human male. Nova is constrained by her apparent intellectual incapacity but this may be due to a lack of education (nurture) purposely keeping her and the other humans on the planet, in a state of primitivism.<sup>77</sup> A state that benefits the orangutans (the ruling class), who wish to maintain their position of power by maintaining the society’s strict caste system. If it were proven that the humans, whether male or female, were capable of reason and innovation the entire system would be called into question. The only female character,

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<sup>73</sup> Zira’s voluntary childlessness is notable as she is the only female not to be discussed in terms of her child-bearing abilities. But it can be questioned as to whether this position is seen as positive or not as the other female chimpanzees are shown with children suggesting that Zira is abnormal on the planet of the apes. In *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* a married Zira and Cornelius bear a child and in a reversal of the original script ending of the first film Zira, Cornelius and their newborn child are shot in fear of their offspring developing into an intelligent ape race that would ultimately lead to the end of human civilization. In the film’s coda it is revealed that the murdered ape infant is not theirs but a different baby chimp. Zira and Cornelius’ baby is hidden and survives. So, when Zira does eventually bear a child in the third installment of the series it is also considered unnatural and Zira is neutralized as a threat.

<sup>74</sup> Friedan, *The Feminist Mystique*, 55.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

<sup>76</sup> Sherrie A. Inness, ‘Boxing Gloves and Bustiers’ in Sherrie A. Inness (ed.), *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 12.

<sup>77</sup> In *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1974) Nova finally speaks showing that the humans native to the planet of the apes are capable of doing so and that their silence could be attributed to a lack education rather than a biological incapability. But when Nova utters her first word: ‘Taylor!’ she is shot. Serving as a confirmation of the sexist attitudes presented in the first film. When Nova breaks her silence she is killed neutralising her as a threat to male dominance and as a hope for humanity and the world that Taylor ultimately obliterates by detonating the ‘Doomsday Bomb’.

ironically, who comes close to reaching her potential and becoming more human is an ape.

Yet, the fact that Zira is an ape raises questions. She may be a representation of the liberal hopes for the future but these hopes are applied to an ape rather than to a female human character. Charlton Heston was essential to much of the commentary in *Planet of the Apes* as he was posited as the archetypal Western male. If the film had been made with a female lead the central meaning would have been eclipsed as so much of meaning surrounds Heston's star persona. Heston was the representation of 'the values that the filmmakers [wanted] to deconstruct and challenge.'<sup>78</sup> By keeping the strong female character to the sidelines and as an ape the film made the point about the position of women without altering the comments which were made by using the iconic Charlton Heston.

Zira is, however, open to a different interpretation suggesting a less positive reaction to the feminist movement. In *Planet of the Apes* a woman can either be 'physically attractive (Nova) or smart (Zira) but she may not be both (Stewart),' Zira may be female but she is also 'ugly' by human standards (if compared to the beautiful human women) and only allowed to be intelligent because of her appearance. Suggesting that, only unattractive women can have rewarding careers and that this is only because they have failed to attain a husband fulfilling their purpose as a wife and mother. This suggests that a successful woman is one who has married well and reared accomplished children; the traditional women's role was 'dressed up by the new mystique to become equal to splitting atoms [and] penetrating outer space.'<sup>79</sup> In the film Zira has a fiancé but he is shown to be a weaker character, not as successful in his career, slow to grasp ideas and more inclined to accept the declarations of the corrupt governing class. Cornelius is a passive character hardly the manifestation of the classic notions of masculinity. Zira has failed to attract a strong male who will care for her and is therefore a failure.

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<sup>78</sup> Pendreigh, *Legend of the Planet of the Apes*, 117.

<sup>79</sup> Friedan, *The Feminist Mystique*, 211.

**“I CAN’T HELP THINKING SOMEWHERE IN THE UNIVERSE THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING BETTER THAN *MEN!*”: REPRESENTING PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY**

*Planet of the Apes* is confirmed as a male-dominated film from its opening sequence where Taylor’s monologue sets the tone for the rest of the film. We are presented with his point of view, his voice, his body: this is Taylor’s story. He provides our link to contemporary America, a frame of reference that establishes Taylor’s position within the narrative as the dominant force. Even after Taylor is stripped, beaten and humiliated by his inhuman captors he is still in control of the narrative, he makes things happen. *Planet of the Apes*, although technically presenting at least one positive female role model (Zira), ‘reinforce[s] exactly what SF has in its power to challenge: cultural myths about the naturalization of masculinity.’<sup>80</sup> The film perpetuates the patriarchal myth through its presentation of a male dominated story, with infantilised vulnerable human females, and an ingrained male hierarchy not only in the futuristic spaceship setting but also within ape society. *Planet of the Apes* fails to suspend itself from its own history, and instead conforms to the prejudices of its context, only further confirming its position as primary source of the 1960s and its many contradictions.

Despite this presentation of male hierarchies, *Planet of the Apes* does posit an alternative to the traditional male fantasy where space exploration becomes a metaphor for ‘masculine potency’.<sup>81</sup> Taylor, the narrative’s patriarchal figure, is stripped of his power and privileges and at the end of the film, although seemingly safe from the apes has been unable to ‘save’ his planet or his species. His power is localised and personal, and the film’s resolution does not show the protagonists dominance over technology and his ‘alien’ (ape) enemies. The only thing he can control is his woman, his gun and his horse, a primitive masculinity.<sup>82</sup>

The male characters dominate the narrative of *Planet of the Apes*. Zira, the token female ape, does have influence but this is subject to the appearance of the human man (Taylor) who questions everything she had known about her world. The other female characters have little impact on the narrative and at best they act as a distraction and a

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<sup>80</sup> Sheen, ‘Women at Work in Hollywood,’ 160.

<sup>81</sup> Grant, *Shadows of Doubt*, 122.

<sup>82</sup> For a discussion of animals within *Planet of the Apes* see McHugh, ‘Horses in Blackface,’ 40-72.

‘site of visual pleasure.’<sup>83</sup> Comparatively, the male characters are far more influential. The narrative revolves around Taylor and his experience of an alien planet and his interactions with the main ape character Dr Zaius (Maurice Evans) who acts as the conservative opposition to the liberalism of Zira, Cornelius and their teenage nephew Lucius (Lou Wagner). Zaius is an orangutan, a member of the ruling elite who acts as the Minister of Science and as the Chief Defender of the Faith, a contradiction that seems obvious to both Taylor and the audience. Despite his stubbornness and prominence throughout the original *Apes* series, appearing in two of the films (*Planet* and *Beneath*) and as a recurring character in the television series, Dr. Zaius is still secondary to the human characters.

### **Heston/Taylor**

Taylor is one of the many characters that Heston played throughout his long and varied career. Heston became a mouthpiece for the disenchanting youth of the late sixties and into the seventies starring in such films as *The Omega Man* and *Soylent Green*. These were key films in a cycle in the science fiction genre that fell between *2001: A Space Odyssey* in 1968 and *Star Wars* in 1977.<sup>84</sup> This dystopian group of films presented contemporary U.S. culture as ‘essentially repressive and self destructive.’<sup>85</sup> It is interesting therefore that an actor who became so prominently aligned with conservative right-wing politics (through open support of the Republican Party and the American

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<sup>83</sup> Teresa DeLauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984), 37.

<sup>84</sup> See ‘Appendix I’, and Dean, ‘Between *2001* and *Star Wars*.’ According to Dean the other films in the cycle are as follows: *The Andromeda Strain* (1971), *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* (1973), *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970), *A Boy and His Dog* (1975), *Chosen Survivors* (1974), *Clones* (1973), *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* (1972), *The Death Machine* (1976), *Death Race 2000* (1975), *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* (1971), *Frogs* (1972), *Futureworld* (1976), *Gas-s-s-s or It Became Necessary to Destroy The World in Order to Save It* (1970), *The Hellstrom Chronicle* (1971), *The Little Prince* (1971), *Logan's Run* (1976), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), *The Omega Man* (1971), *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), *Rollerball* (1975), *Silent Running* (1972), *Slaughter House-Five* (1972), *Sleeper* (1973), *Soylent Green* (1973), *The Stepford Wives* (1975), *THX-1138* (1971), *Westworld* (1973), *Zardoz* (1973) and *Z. P. G.* (1972).

<sup>85</sup> Mark Jancovich, “‘Charlton Heston is an Axiom’: Spectacle and Performance in the Development of the Blockbuster,” in Andy Willis, *Film Stars: Hollywood and Beyond* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 55.



National Rifle Association) would be so involved in films that represented and vocalised the concerns of the U.S. counterculture including commentaries upon firearms.<sup>86</sup>

For the original late-sixties audience Charlton Heston was a household name, an actor associated with big biblical budget blockbusters. Those viewing his films in the aftermath of his work with the American National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Republican Party may interpret Heston as a gun-toting conservative and the liberal *Planet of the Apes* might be seen to contradict to the conservative ideals for which he became famous. The sequences where Taylor is seen holding a gun take on a whole new (postmodern) meaning which would not have been present for those viewing what was a pre-NRA Heston. A millennial audience might be more familiar with the ‘villainized Charlton Heston’ who appeared in the central interview of Michael Moore’s 2002 *Bowling for Columbine*.<sup>87</sup> Moore’s film tried to show that the 1999 Columbine High School Massacre had been the result of the U.S. gun culture.<sup>88</sup> In a personal attack upon Heston, Moore insisted that the NRA president was in part responsible for the massacre, as he had directly contributed to irresponsible gun culture in the United States.

Throughout the course of the sixties Heston became involved in politics, but he was not the conservative stalwart he is remembered as, he actively involved himself in the decade’s defining movements. He openly aligned himself with the Democratic administrations of the sixties and become involved in civil rights demonstrations. Following years of claiming that actors could not make a valuable contribution to political debate, Heston become increasingly vocal. Following his role as Moses in *The Ten Commandments* (1956), Heston said that it was his duty to ‘stand up and be counted.’<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See chapter seven: ‘From Technophilia to Technophobia (to Retrogression): Science and Technology in *Planet of the Apes*.’

<sup>87</sup> Peter C. Rollins, ‘Film and History: Our Media Environment as a New Frontier,’ in Francaviglia, *Lights, Camera, History*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> In 1970 historian Richard Hofstadter characterised the United States as a ‘gun culture’ noting that the United States ‘is the only modern industrial urban nation that persists in maintaining a gun culture.’ (25) He argued that this culture had developed from the frontier myth. Hofstadter made a link between high levels gun ownership and increasing levels of violence. He openly advocated stricter gun control. See Richard Hofstadter, ‘America as a Gun Culture,’ in Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace (eds.), *American Violence: A Documentary History* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 25-34.

<sup>89</sup> Charlton Heston quoted in Emilie Raymond, *From My Cold, Dead Hands: Charlton Heston and American Politics* (Lexington, K.T.: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 47.

The 1960s signalled the beginning of celebrity political activism, which has become a prominent element of U.S. politics over the past fifty years, with many national-level campaigns celebrating and recognising the potency of their celebrity endorsements. Heston facilitated the rise of celebrity politics and ‘emerged as one of Hollywood’s most prominent activists.’<sup>90</sup> Heston worked with the Democrats ‘at the height of his career’ but never registered as a party member.<sup>91</sup> He was supportive of the Democrat policies concerning religious and racial tolerance but was neither a Democrat nor a liberal; he followed the Democrats due to personal political convergences, but leaned towards conservatism, shunning the more radical elements within the protest movement and the Democratic Party. In a speech called ‘Other Faces, Other Faiths’, which Heston composed during the filming of *The Ten Commandments*, he talked of the ‘dread disease’ of bigotry and explained that people should not be judged according to their race or their religious inclination.<sup>92</sup> He was publicly outraged following the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy in 1968, which was during the period during in which *Planet of the Apes* was on release across the United States.<sup>93</sup>

Heston was favoured by director Cecil B. DeMille who cast him in a number of roles which emphasised Heston’s physical and mental strength, making him ‘a cultural icon of manliness.’<sup>94</sup> Heston played central roles within some of DeMille’s best known films including: *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952) and *The Ten Commandments*. The films made with DeMille only constituted a small part of Heston’s body of work, which also included a number of other biblical and historical features. The most famous of these being: *Julius Caesar* (1950), *Ben-Hur* (1959) and *El Cid* (1961). These films added to the actor’s ‘iconographic value’ and the notion that Heston represented and upheld American values and morality regardless of a film’s setting.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>92</sup> Charlton Heston, ‘Other Faces, Other Faiths,’ n.d. (ca 1955-56), ‘Writings’ (file), Charlton Heston Special Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences.

<sup>93</sup> King was assassinated on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1968, one day before *Planet of the Apes* was put on general release across the United States, and Kennedy was assassinated on 15<sup>th</sup> June

<sup>94</sup> Anton Karl Kozlovic, ‘Cecil B. DeMille: Hollywood Macho Man and the Theme of Masculinity within His Biblical (and Other) Cinema,’ *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 2:2 (June, 2008), 123.

<sup>95</sup> McHugh, ‘Horses in Blackface,’ 43.

As an actor and as a celebrity he became a representation of Western normativity. He was white, blonde, blue eyed, tall, and ruggedly handsome, and his booming voice demanded respect. By putting Taylor into danger the makers of *Planet of the Apes* were throwing the United States, indeed all of the Western world into danger, showing that if it could happen to Charlton Heston it could happen to anyone. *Planet of the Apes* called into question 'the heroic and American values' which Heston embodied and by stripping and beating such a prominent figure the filmmakers were able to drive home their messages with resounding force and clarity.<sup>96</sup>

From the very beginning of Heston's career, 'there was no getting around his body.'<sup>97</sup> Heston's physical appearance became a major part of the characters he created, regularly appearing topless and on rare occasions entirely naked. Many of the films Heston made, took pleasure and meaning from showing off his 'lean hipped, powerful body.'<sup>98</sup> According to Steven Cohan, Heston's role in the *Ten Commandments* sealed the actor's position as an epic presence and the way in which his body would be used in future projects; when playing Moses, Heston's massive physical presence emphasised the character's 'moral stature... [and legitimised] his authority.'<sup>99</sup>

Heston carried with him a particular set of values, values which would be challenged and besmirched in his role as Taylor. The characters Heston portrayed, defended and represented the values and ideas of the West, in *Planet of the Apes* this was also the case but these values were shown to be corrupt. Taylor is not a traditional hero, he is ultimately shown to fail as he is unable to save himself or his companions and is ultimately shown in the final sequence breaking down in defeat. He is overwhelmed by the knowledge that he back on Earth, but that *his* world no longer exists. The symbol of hope, the Statue of Liberty truncated in the sand representing not only the destruction of the United States as a place but also its ideology that had been corrupted into wars at home and abroad and had essentially led to the apocalypse. Heston/Taylor as a representative for the West is put on trial and the body that had initially been used to

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<sup>96</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 562.

<sup>97</sup> Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 155.

<sup>98</sup> Kael, 'Apes Must be Remembered,' 37.

<sup>99</sup> Cohan, *Masked Men*, 159.

symbolise the strength and virility of the West became weak and fallible. Representing American power in all of its guises: ‘the physical attraction and admiration one feels towards the beauty of strength as well as the moral revulsion one feels towards the ugliness of violence.’<sup>100</sup>

Taylor reflects the anxieties of the filmmakers who were responding to a society in the midst of international and national conflicts, he became one of many sixties male protagonists who had ‘given up hope in himself and in his society.’<sup>101</sup> As Heston remarked in an interview about *Planet of the Apes*: ‘I’ve played many angry cynical men, but never a man whose cynicism and distaste for mankind was sufficient to make him literally leave the earth.’<sup>102</sup> Taylor sees no future for the human race, and escapes to find something better only have his darkest predictions realised.

Throughout *Planet of the Apes*, Taylor, like many other male characters in this period, was ‘marked... by the tenuousness of his control over his life.’<sup>103</sup> Taylor is at first the prototypical western male, white, masculine, commanding, physically strong and attractive, but once he crash lands all of these things which had formed his identity become irrelevant; the society which had recognised and celebrated these qualities no longer exists. Taylor just becomes one of many voiceless humans; his gender and race offer him no power. During the hunt sequence and the subsequent section where Taylor is unable to speak, he becomes an equal to all of the other humans, judged according to his species and the pre-existing prejudices surrounding them.

In a similar way to the women and black members of American society, Taylor is judged according to fixed biological differences. The social and economic changes happening in the United States in the late sixties and through out the ensuing decades called into question notions of masculinity. At one time it was believed that men were ‘at the pinnacle of the natural hierarchy’ but this has since been exposed for what it is: ‘subjectivity that is organised within structures of control and authority.’<sup>104</sup> For the men

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<sup>100</sup> Kael, ‘Apes Must be Remembered,’ 37.

<sup>101</sup> Joan Mellen, *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film* (London: Elm Tree Book, 1978), 248.

<sup>102</sup> Charlton Heston, Interview conducted by Dale Winogura, 11 February, 1972, in Winogura, ‘Dialogues on Apes,’ 29.

<sup>103</sup> Mellen, *Big Bad Wolves*, 249.

<sup>104</sup> Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford, ‘The Forward March of Men Halted,’ in Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford (eds.), *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988), 11.

who lived through the height of this period of change, and specifically the changes which came with the feminist movement, there was a fear that ‘masculinity [would] be shorn of its hierarchical power and [would] become simply one identity among others.’<sup>105</sup>

### **(Un)Dressing Taylor**

The costumes worn by Charlton Heston in *Planet of the Apes* visually emphasise the changes Taylor undertakes, moving from white knight to vagabond. When Taylor first appears on screen he is dressed in a white jumpsuit emblazoned with the U.S. flag, his name and a patch embroidered with the word ANSA (fig. 6.1). ANSA (American National Space Administration) is a clear reference to NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) further confirming the astronaut as a symbol of the United States. Taylor is clean-shaven with neat pomaded hair and a cigar;<sup>106</sup> this image of control shows Taylor at the pinnacle of human achievement, a highly skilled professional leading an exploratory mission into space for the benefit of human race brimming with potential and ideals.

Taylor’s monologue somewhat contradicts the image of the perfect American hero and posits him as one of the many anti-heroes who graced screens throughout the sixties. Taylor’s identity is founded within this image: the name, the nation, and the traditional notions of what it is to be a strong male. As Taylor’s costume is destroyed and eventually removed altogether the character is also stripped of his former identity. The costume slowly changes, from the crisp white uniform of the astronaut to the threadbare loincloth of the humans on the planet of the apes. After the crash Taylor is shown with longer hair on his face and his head marking the first stage in this series of costume changes, aligning Taylor (and therefore Heston) with the youth movements that eschewed the styles of their parents; from oiled and controlled to natural and free (fig. 6.2).

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>106</sup> The use of the cigar in this context is interesting, as it seems out of place in the futuristic setting of the spaceship. It may be seen as a representation of male potency, with smoking as a gendered performative act that has been seen through out film history most notably in the film noir where the hero (often played by Humphrey Bogart) is rarely seen without his characteristic cloud of smoke. Heston is seen in this sterile opening sequence with his oiled hair and iconic cigar as the epitome of controlled manliness.



**6.1:** Taylor in the opening sequence. **6.2:** Taylor after the computer malfunction.  
**6.3:** Taylor and crew naked and washing in the waterfall. **6.4:** The crew dressed in the remnants of their uniforms and packs.

Taylor's name and nation mean nothing to the apes. He is simply seen as a human, one of many and his gender also pales into insignificance. The concepts and items that had once given him prominence no longer exist and this is once again shown in the costume he wears. The astronauts escape from the sinking ship still dressed in their suits, which deteriorate over the trek scene becoming ripped and dirty. When they reach a waterfall after having walked through the arid desert they go for a swim stripping and washing themselves (fig. 6.3). It is a symbolic baptism, cleansing them of their sins, allowing them to be symbolically reborn into a new order. Other humans steal their clothing and they are left naked and devoid of the identities which had once surrounded them. They follow the trail of their ripped clothing and manage to find enough to cover themselves. Landon and Taylor partially dress themselves in torn, muddied trousers and Dodge uses part of what was perhaps a tent (fig. 6.4.). The kinetic hunt sequence which follows this tranquil waterfall scene forces the to mix and run with the herd of humans as the gorillas hunt them down. Their costumes, trousers and a plastic tent differentiate Taylor and his crew; the other male humans are dressed in rags, which barely cover anything. Dodge is shot, Landon is captured and they are both separated from the wounded Taylor.

The scene which follows the hunt shows an unconscious captured Taylor who is covered in rags, brown and dirty, with dishevelled hair and unruly facial hair. Nothing differentiates him from the other humans. His trousers have been removed, possibly

under the orders of the orangutans, as those tailored items would have raised questions. The material goods, the job, the education and the social standing which had been so important in the twentieth century society were rendered defunct.

The rags, which Taylor wears, also change over the course of film. The first set of rags offer more coverage. His chest is partially covered and this costume stays intact right up until the trial. Before the trial proceeds, Taylor is stripped of his rags which, according to the President of the Assembly (James Whitmore), ‘give off a stench that’s offensive to the dignity of this tribunal.’ Taylor stands naked and vulnerable in front of a panel of apes who do not recognise him as anything other than an animal. He has no rights, no identity, and is only referred to as “Bright Eyes.” When naked in the courtroom (fig. 6.3), Taylor appears to be ashamed and scared but once he starts to redress himself (fig. 6.4.) he begins to defend himself as if the clothing helps to give him confidence. By covering his genitals and creating himself clothing from the rags he is left with, he is able to regain some control over the situation.



7.1: Taylor stripped of his own clothes with Nova. 7.2: Taylor in his rags, with his chest and thighs covered.

7.3: Taylor stood naked during the trial. 7.4: Taylor redressing and regaining confidence.

### Shooting Taylor

Taylor is gagged and bound following his attempts to defend himself, eroticising and spectacularising the male body which, is ‘coded as unnatural’ in contrast to Nova whose

exposed body is unquestioned.<sup>107</sup> Her exposure is seen to be natural and desired. Throughout the film Heston is shot in a medium close up, ensuring that his entire chest fills the screen. His ape captors and helpers are often shot with a close-up, as their chests hold no iconographic value. In the scene immediately after the trial scene, which is a conversation between Zaius and Taylor in Zaius's office, Taylor is dressed in a rag with his arms tied behind his back pushing his chest out. The camera lingers over his strong oiled figure, which despite the nature of the scene and Taylor's helplessness, is shown to be beautiful and muscular (fig. 8.1). Taylor does not reclaim the rags which had offered more coverage, choosing to remain half naked; his costume continues to shrink and reveal more flesh, until it barely covers anything, with, at times, almost the entire of his body exposed when shot from the side.

The costume which Taylor wears in the final sequences of the film is far more revealing than the one worn in the trial and the scene with Zaius, it cuts up to the top of his thighs and is much shorter at the back showing the curve of his rear (fig. 8.2). Many shots throughout the closing sequences of the film show Taylor bare-chested with a growing sense of pride in his individuality and the power and in turn the danger this holds. Taylor takes control of his appearance by changing his hair, he makes it neater and shaves off his beard (which Cornelius tells him makes him look less intelligent ) (fig. 8.3.). He is unashamed and unafraid of showing off his difference, he sheds the things which had controlled him, and embraces his new life taking Nova and the bare essentials to make a new life in the Forbidden Zone. But before he is able to do so his hope is crushed by the revelation that this world is in fact Earth. Taylor falls to his knees at the base of the Statue of Liberty, which 'though truncated, towers over the suddenly insignificant Heston/Taylor.'<sup>108</sup> In the shots where Taylor damns his 'race' for its destructiveness, he thrashes around in the sea, tanned and muscular but entirely dwarfed by the magnitude of his discovery (fig. 8.4).

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<sup>107</sup> Ina Rae Hark, 'Animals or Romans: Looking at Masculinity in *Spartacus*,' in Steve Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinity in Hollywood Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), 152.

<sup>108</sup> Sandy Rankin, 'Disalienation and the Irrepressible Revolutionary Wish: Apes, Heston, Ludics, Home,' *Journal of Popular Culture* 40:6 (2007), 1027.





8.1: Taylor facing Dr. Zaius. 8.2: Taylor's new rags, with Nova.

8.3: Taylor shaving, watched by a confused Nova. 8.4: Taylor cursing his race before the Statue of Liberty

### Humanzee, Human Do: The Male Apes

Heston/Taylor is central to the plot of *Planet of the Apes*. Although he is not the only male character on the planet of the apes, he acts as the benchmark against which the majority of the characters are judged. The main male characters besides Taylor are the apes Cornelius and Zaius.<sup>109</sup> The filmmakers use apes to make bold statements about the state of U.S. society without directly attacking those they wished to condemn. Rod Serling, the *Planet of the Apes* original screenwriter, claimed that his experience on *The Twilight Zone* had taught him that: 'it was possible to have Martians say things that Democrats and Republicans can't say.'<sup>110</sup> An ape could say things that would have been too controversial for a human character; the direct link to humanity and thus the United States is broken sheltering the commentary from direct criticism.

It could be said of the apes' gender is of little importance as they are already the 'other' to the human norm. They are not understood as being male or female, neither masculine nor feminine, but as apes, whose species difference defines them. Allegorically the apes are humans, the film and indeed the entire franchise is, as Eric Greene puts it: a

<sup>109</sup> Although Dodge and Landon are present in the film they do not remain intact into the main body of the film narrative (left dead or incapacitated) and thus cannot be fully compared to Taylor alongside the male apes who do occupy an important role within the progression of the narrative.

<sup>110</sup> Serling quoted in Alex Abramovich, *Cinderella Story: Notes on Contemporary Culture* (Christchurch, NZ: Cybereditions Corporation, 2002), 30.

‘consciously fictive primatology, a deliberate use of a particular construction of apes to advance particular constructions of humans.’<sup>111</sup>

Cornelius, like Nova, is defined by his relationship to his more successful and influential partner. He is Zira’s fiancé and appears to be a weaker character of the two, in need of guidance from his stronger mate, who has excelled in her work. He acts as a balance to the fiery Zira. Unusually for a science fiction film the female character is dominant and has more influence over the narrative and her male counterpart albeit she is an ape. Cornelius may be shown to be the weaker in this coupling, but Zira as a representative of her class and her sex is able to achieve a level of professional prominence denied to women in the 1960s.

Cornelius tends towards the conservative views and beliefs bestowed by the orangutan leaders and he is able to recall details about the Sacred Scrolls, reciting huge chunks showing the way in which the ape religion influences his reason and ideas. Alternatively Zira needs little persuasion to accept Taylor for what he is and in so doing puts herself and her partner in danger of retribution from ape society. Cornelius’ relationship with Zira is the inverse of to Taylor and Nova’s partnership where the traditional ‘active/male and passive female’ relationship is adhered to.<sup>112</sup> As we have seen during the trial sequence he does argue with the panel but it is Zira who leads Taylor’s defence. He questions his own beliefs but it is not until *Escape from the Planet of the Apes* that Cornelius develops beyond this position and becomes one of the primary characters who is ultimately sacrifices himself (along with Zira) in order to save his son Milo.<sup>113</sup>

Dr. Zaius is the most prominent of the ape characters. A governmental leader and a religious defender, his character influences and forms the foundation of several of the film’s central allegorical issues. Zaius stubbornly enforces the status quo and it is revealed that, perhaps, his intentions for doing so are not entirely unfounded. He recognises the humans as a threat and although he helps to stagnate the development of an entire species (humanity), and threatens their continued existence, he does so in order

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<sup>111</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 5.

<sup>112</sup> Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure,’ 19.

<sup>113</sup> Milo grows up to become Caesar (also played by Roddy McDowall) the ape who leads the revolution *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes* against humanity and who is shown as a ape legend in *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*.

to protect the apes from humanity's perceived destructiveness. The power hierarchy on the planet of the apes is shown to have stagnated with clear divides according to species (gorilla, chimpanzee, orangutan). Zaius and the rest of the orangutan are at the pinnacle of this system, manipulating the rest of the apes with religion and tradition.

Notably, neither the orangutans nor gorillas are shown to be female. Their female companions are offscreen, hidden to us, presumably confined to a domestic sphere that we barely see. Only the chimpanzees are shown to be female. But other than Zira these females are shown in traditionally gendered roles. They are pictured with children. In the sequence when Taylor escapes into the ape settlement a young chimp is the first to spot the errant human whilst sat with his mother, and a second mother/child pairing is seen scared and running from Taylor as he is rounded up by the gorilla guards. They neither speak nor engage. Initially it appears that advances have been made concerning women with the presence and position of Zira. But due to the conspicuous absence of other female apes throughout the rest of the film (and indeed the series) Zira appears to be a token gesture, not only in the film-world, but also for the filmmakers.

The orangutans who are seen to part of the ruling elite have names which reflect their importance, besides Zaius the other orangutans are called Honourius and Maximus, meaning man of honour and the greatest respectively. Zaius could be a reference to Zeus, who was the king of the gods in Greek mythology, suggesting his position as keeper of the faith and also the power he commands. The ape system is male dominated and any threat to it would threaten the elevated position of these male orangutans, in a similar way the feminist and other protest movements were seen as a threat to the American way of life.

### **CONCLUSION: MAN, WOMAN, APE**

The American science fiction genre 'is progressive in its representation of gender insofar as it shows female characters working alongside men in space',<sup>114</sup> but it has repeatedly failed to present females as heroes or even as equals to their male (or even alien) counterparts. The female characters in *Planet of the Apes* conform to particular stereotypes and those who survive land in two discrete and distinct spheres: intelligence

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<sup>114</sup> Grant, *Shadows of Doubt*, 128.

and beauty. Nova represents ‘certain fantasy types and images’ as the infantilised, mute, sexually alluring female, who depends upon the more aggressive male to rescue her from the hands of the apes.<sup>115</sup> Zira is the only strong female character and she dominates fiancé; however, it is unclear as to whether the character can be read as a positive attempt to challenge dominant sexist attitudes, or an indictment of intelligent women exposing them as failures in terms of traditional notions of femininity.

*Planet of the Apes* has a ‘minority contingent,’<sup>116</sup> there is a black character, Dodge, and a female character, Stewart, who constitute half of the crew of astronauts alongside the blonde Taylor and the brunette Landon. Yet neither of these characters survives: Stewart dies before the journey is even completed and Dodge is killed during the hunt sequence at the beginning of the film, and is later seen in a taxidermy display in a museum.<sup>117</sup> Dodge and Stewart are only referred to by their surnames/nicknames whereas both of the white males are given full names, John Landon and George Taylor. Landon, however, does not remain intact, during the trial sequence he is seen to have been lobotomised and without the faculties and identity he had once possessed. It is only Taylor who survives in a complete form, different in mind from the man who was first seen on the spacecraft but in body he remains in control.

Throughout *Planet of the Apes* the issue of gender arises, and the position it has in the formation of an individual’s identity. For the female human characters their gender is seen as a barrier, they are unable to participate in the male-dominated human world and must be secondary to the strong masculine hero. Through the symbolic killing of the female astronaut the film shows a seemingly negative position towards women in traditionally male spaces. The other female characters lie within two female stereotypes that are deemed oppositional: the beauty and the brain, stereotypes that do not appropriately define and represent contemporary women. Women are indirectly shown that a successful career is a sign that they have failed to attract a man who is capable of looking after them, removing their need or desire to work and have a profession. Nova is presented as the perfect image of beauty, highly sexualised and subservient. At no point

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<sup>115</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 38.

<sup>116</sup> Judith Shatnoff, ‘A Gorilla to Remember,’ *Film Quarterly* 22:1 (Autumn, 1968), 57.

<sup>117</sup> For further discussion of Dodge and his position as a objectified human specimen in the ape natural history museum see previous chapter on race entitled: ‘Liberal Good Intention or Crass Exploitation?: *Planet of the Apes* and Representing Race.’

does the film show her as unfulfilled or as a failure, her lack of intelligence is not a problem, she is there to fulfil her role as the beautiful companion, which she does with ample aplomb.

Charlton Heston is integral to *Planet of the Apes*. His value as an image of manliness and as a successful Hollywood star allows the filmmakers to make comment U.S. society. His body is used and abused throughout the film. Heston's body is used in many of his films as a site of perfection and power but *Planet of the Apes* subverts this. The film shows that the values and ideas previously represented in and by Heston should be questioned; all that he has stood for is under review.

The 'myth of masculinity' is exposed *Planet of the Apes*.<sup>118</sup> It is shown that man is not automatically the pinnacle of creation, and that his position of power is not unquestionable. The opening sequence of the film that separates the female astronaut and posits Taylor as the all-powerful master of the universe as indicated through his command of technology, his ship, his crew and himself. But once he reaches the planet of the apes he is shorn of this position and it is shown that as a white straight male he is one of many, a human equal to others within his species. Heston's masculinity and his body which had, after years in Hollywood, become a symbol of power and purity became a site on which the filmmakers 'wrote the emotional, physical, and social traumas of contemporary masculinity'.<sup>119</sup> The breakdown of his masculinised power is linked to the fall and destruction of U.S. might, as symbolised by the Statue of Liberty, a nation whose power is not inherent but built upon the marginalisation and colonisation of other cultures and technologies.

*Planet of the Apes* simultaneously celebrates and rejects traditional gender roles, and evidenced by the way in which the filmmakers approach the body of its main actor. The male body becomes, unusually, eroticised and objectified whilst simultaneously remaining powerful and purposeful. The human female body remains, however, within its own repetitive position as a site of sexual allure and visual pleasure. The female ape, Zira, is allowed a position of power where neither her body nor her wealth makes her appealing but instead her intellectual capacity. But a reading of Zira as a positive role-

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<sup>118</sup> Sally Robinson, "'Emotional Constipation' and the Power of Damned Masculinity," in Peter Lehman (ed.), *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2001), 139.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

model is problematic as she is not human, aligning intelligence with a modicum of failure and unattractiveness. There is a state of confusion over the issue of gender and the body within the film, but there is evidence that the filmmakers were making an attempt to present a liberal view of the future. *Planet of the Apes* was made in period when women were on the brink of change and the filmmakers make some clear attempts to question and discuss the seemingly ingrained gendered hierarchy exhibited within the United States. *Planet of the Apes* fluctuates between being a film for the future whilst simultaneously attempting to appeal to a majority who were not engaged in political protest and a vocal rejection of the establishment.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### APING RELIGION OR RELIGIOUS APES?: *PLANET OF THE APES* AND RELIGION

*Beware the beast man, for he is the devil's pawn. Alone among God's primates, he kills for sport, or lust or greed. Yea, he will murder his brother to possess his brother's land.*

*Let him not breed in great numbers, for he will make a desert of his home and yours.*

*Shun him. Drive him back into his jungle lair, for he is the harbinger of death.*

- The Sacred Scroll (scroll 23, verse 9).

#### INTRODUCTION

A religious discourse appears throughout the films of the *Planet of the Apes* franchise in a variety of different forms: mimicry of Judeo-Christian forms and structures, the division between religion and the state, and the relationship between religion, science, and education. This chapter will explore the postwar religious revival in the United States and how this is manifested and critiqued in *Planet of the Apes*.

#### The Post-War Religious Boom 1940-1960

In the twenty years immediately following the Second World War the United States experienced a 'boom in religion.'<sup>1</sup> Polls indicated that more people were not only aligning themselves with a particular faith but also actively participating in that faith. Religious groups experienced an increase of more than 20 million members in the 1940s, and a significant growth of approximately 28 million in the 1950s, and the overall percentage of US citizens claiming religious affiliation rose from 49 percent to 65 percent between 1940 and 1960.<sup>2</sup> The post-war growth in religious participation was not simply categorised by increased membership in the Protestant Christian denominations, or what

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Boyer, 'The Chameleon with Nine Lives: American Religion in the Twentieth Century,' in Harvard Sitkoff (ed.), *Perspectives on Modern America: Making Sense of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 263.

<sup>2</sup> See Bureau of Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1970* (Washington D.C., 1970), 42.

Paul Boyer refers to as the ‘the charmed circle’,<sup>3</sup> but across the spectrum of faiths present in the United States, including Roman Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Baha’ism, Sikhism, and Native American religious practices.

Increasing religiosity after the Second World War had a number of causes. To a certain extent, the post-war boom was attributable to the growth of new suburban communities. It drew the increasing suburban demographic into the churches because of the sense of community it provided, helping to break ‘the anonymity of suburban living’.<sup>4</sup> This surge has also been more popularly attributed to a public ‘patriotic reflex’ to reject the perceived communist threat.<sup>5</sup> ‘The American Cold War unfolded as a particular sort of Christian enterprise, sustained by the conviction that the American cause was morally right and the communists evil.’<sup>6</sup> Firmly rooted in the incompatible ideological conflict between the USSR and the USA, religion formed a core platform on which the war was fought as the USSR was consistently presented and understood as a state of ‘atheism and materialist ideology.’<sup>7</sup> Anti-communist rhetoric ‘placed religion in league with patriotism’<sup>8</sup> and emphasised the ungodly nature of not only the Soviet state but also its general population, suggesting that openly expressed faith in God *was* an act of patriotism. This religious dominance and the position of ‘God’ in the rhetoric of the US Cold War was highlighted when Congress added ‘under God’ to the pledge of allegiance and put ‘in God we trust’ on the currency in 1954. Despite the legal separation between the state and religion as set out in the nation’s founding documents, there was a prominent religious dimension to the Cold War; as leaders and the public alike ‘stressed their religiosity’ and aligned faith with morality, and in turn atheism and the communist states with amorality.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This specifically refers to the Protestant Christian traditions; notably Roman Catholicism is often excluded in a discussion of American Christianity. See Paul Boyer, ‘Two Centuries of Christianity in America: An Overview,’ *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 70:3 (September, 2001), 556.

<sup>4</sup> Sydney E Ahlstrom, ‘The Traumatic Years: American Religion and Culture in the ‘60s and ‘70s,’ *Theology Today* 36:4 (January, 1980), 508.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 242.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Rotter, ‘Christians, Muslims, and Hindus: Religion and U.S.-South Asian Relations, 1947-1954,’ *Diplomatic History* 24:4 (2002), 606-7.

<sup>7</sup> Boyer, ‘The Chameleon with Nine Lives,’ 264.

<sup>8</sup> Ross Gregory, *Cold War America: 1946 to 1990* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2003), 222.

<sup>9</sup> Dianne Kirby, ‘Religion and the Cold War,’ in Diane Kirby (ed.), *Religion and the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1.



## American Civil Religion

Writing in 1967 (and revised in 1988), Robert N. Bellah commented on the position of religion in the United States, drawing specific attention to the inaugural and Cold War speeches of Kennedy and Johnson, and war-time speeches of both Lincoln, and Jefferson. Bellah claimed that American allusions to ‘God’ were not essentially linked to any one of the key faiths but made reference to ‘the concept of God, a word which means so many different things to so many different people’; this led to his conclusion that it is possible to identify an ‘institutionalized civil religion in America’.<sup>10</sup> In speeches, Bellah notes that references to God and other biblical archetypes<sup>11</sup> provided at points little more than a framework for ‘more concrete remarks’ pertaining to political policy or military strategy.<sup>12</sup> But this religious base to political expositions indicates the level to which the United States had become intertwined with religion, whether specifically Christian or not. And an understanding of US history and international engagements must be understood within the context of religion.<sup>13</sup>

The formal separation of church and state did not mean that the political system was devoid of ‘a religious dimension’. Rather that a majority of Americans shared several religious elements often concerning the core belief in a deity (or deities).<sup>14</sup> This concept of a civil religion is clearly linked to a Judeo-Christian ethic but it is neither Christian nor Jewish in reality, it is ‘a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or, one could almost say, as revealed through the experiences of the American people.’<sup>15</sup> U.S. culture responded to the plurality of religious traditions, and through its use of general religious principles incorporated the religious majority into the pursuit of specific political or social goals. Religion provided a ‘common language’,

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<sup>10</sup> Robert N. Bellah, ‘Civil Religion in America,’ *Daedalus* 117:3 (Summer, 1988), 99, 97.

<sup>11</sup> Bellah lists the following phrases as being of particular importance saying: ‘Behind the civil religion at every point lie biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death, and Rebirth.’ (Bellah, ‘Civil Religion,’ 115).

<sup>12</sup> Bellah, ‘Civil Religion,’ 99.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the importance of religion to an understanding contemporary cultures and its position as one of the ‘filaments that make up webs of significance’ see Andrew Rotter, ‘Christians, Muslims, and Hindus: Religion and U.S.-South Asian Relations, 1947-1954,’ *Diplomatic History* 24:4 (2002), 594.

<sup>14</sup> Bellah, ‘Civil Religion’, 100.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 115.

which could be accessed by the majority of the population, and was only potentially inaccessible to ‘committed unbelievers’.<sup>16</sup>

Religion performed an important function especially concerning the U.S. response to and justification for the Cold War and its various theatres of battle. In the Cold War context this infusion of religious rhetoric and imagery provided a rationalisation for U.S. intervention in South East Asia not only in a direct religious response through the deployment of Christian missionaries following the Second World War, but also through the clerical, financial, and eventually military/physical support which was intended to roll-back the supposedly godless communists. The invocation of God was not aligned to any single religious tradition but instead drew upon many, forming a civil religion that navigated the United States’ ‘dual sacred-secular culture’.<sup>17</sup>

### **JFK: Catholic President**

Throughout much of US political history religion has been a deciding and influential factor. Elected positions have been won and lost through religious views and affiliations as ‘religious beliefs or loyalties... seem to have some independent effect on voting behaviour.’<sup>18</sup> The voting public is often described as being separated into groups divided culturally according to race, religion and class. Yet religious views cross many classes, so middle and working class Catholics may be grouped together as it is presumed that their religious affiliations will influence them the most.<sup>19</sup>

In studies carried out in 1960, 1964 and 1968 by Edward Laumann and David Segal it was shown that, religion was a potent source of political cleavage in the 1960s, demonstrating that the highest number of participants who voted according to their religious views did so between 1960 and 1964.<sup>20</sup> This peak coincided with John F. Kennedy’s nomination and election as the Democratic candidate in the 1960 presidential

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<sup>16</sup> Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 264.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Lambert, *Religion in America: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 159.

<sup>18</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Basis of Politics* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1963), 308.

<sup>19</sup> See Paul A. Djupe, ‘Religious Brand Loyalty and Political Loyalties,’ *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 39: 1 (2000), 78-89; and Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>20</sup> Edward O. Laumann and David R. Segal, ‘Statistics and Ethnoreligious Membership as Determinants of Social Participation and Political Attitudes,’ *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (July 1971), 36-61.

campaign. Kennedy had to work hard to overcome 'hostility to the idea of a Catholic president.'<sup>21</sup> For example, in the run up to Kennedy's nomination for the Democrat ticket, *LIFE* magazine published several articles looking at the impact of religion upon U.S. politics in general and Senator Kennedy in particular.<sup>22</sup> Questions were raised about whether a Catholic should be President, and how various sectors of the American of public would feel about the young, Catholic Kennedy being elected president.

'The religious issue', as it was euphemistically referred to, was something that Kennedy attempted to quell throughout his campaign for the presidency. In one speech made in April 1960 in an address at the American Society of Newspaper Editors Convention in Washington D.C. Kennedy defended his position by saying that:

There is no religious *issue* in the sense that any of the major candidates differ on the role of religion in our political life. Every presidential contender, I am certain, is dedicated to the separation of church and state, to the preservation of religious liberty, to an end to religious bigotry, and to the total independence of the officeholder from any form of ecclesiastical dictation. Nor is there any religious *issue* in the sense that any candidate is exploiting his religious affiliation... I am not 'trying to be the first Catholic President', as

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<sup>21</sup> Paul S. Boyer, Clifford E. Clark Jr., Joseph F. Kett, Neal Salisbury, Harvard Sitkoff, and Nancy Woloch, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People 1890s–Present* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn., Lexington, M.A.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1996), 963.

<sup>22</sup> Looking specifically at the reference to JFK's religious life in *LIFE* in the run up to the Democratic Convention in July 1960, leading articles included: Rev. James A. Pike, 'Should a Catholic be President', *LIFE* (21 Dec., 1959), 78-85 – which discusses the issues surrounding having a Catholic in the White House; William K. Goolrick, 'Jack Kennedy Takes Two Tough Tests', *LIFE* (27 Apr., 1959), 47-48 – this article looks at two events attended by the 'Catholic Senator' and the questions raised by Protestants, summarising that 'Kennedy had made a favorable impression on some, but others went away still implacably opposed to a Catholic president. (47)'; Daniel Yankelovich, 'U.S. Voters' Image of Ideal President', *LIFE* (21 Mar. 1960), 124-138 – this study, commissioned by *LIFE*, analyses public opinion on all of the nominees for both Democrat and Republican parties. The section which looks at Kennedy focuses upon his Catholicism and statistics show that 73% of Protestants questioned would have concerns about a Catholic president and believed that Kennedy would be unable to divorce himself from his religious views (128 & 132); Anon, 'Strategic Warpath in Wisconsin', and Robert Ajieman, 'Jack's Campaign Aids: Hard-working Family, Enthusiastic Catholics', *LIFE* (28 Mar., 1960) 21-27, and 28-30 – this series of reports follows the Democrat nominees campaign trail through 'heavily Catholic Wisconsin' (28); Robert Coughlan, 'The Religious Issue: An Un-American Heritage', *LIFE* (4 Jul., 1960), 79-86 – this article was partly a response to 'Should a Catholic Be President' article and takes a historical look at the role of religion in U.S. politics. It notes that if Kennedy wins the nomination his Catholicism will be 'a factor in the election' (80) because it is something that will be 'thought about, discussed, and weighed as one feature of his character. Other things being equal it could even be the decisive issues – but other things seldom are equal' (86).

some have written. I happen to believe that I can serve my nation as President – and I also happen to have been born a Catholic.<sup>23</sup>

But despite his protestations to the contrary JFK's religious affiliation was an issue, and it raised questions about the separation between the state and church and how a Catholic President might threaten this.

### **The Onset of the Sixties: Religious Crisis?**

Despite the rising levels of religious membership across many traditions present within the U.S. religious discourse (see Table 1), a rise which continued throughout the sixties and well into the seventies and eighties, there is a perception that the country experienced a 'religious crisis' during the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> This is in part founded on the discrepancies between the figures of those nominally aligning themselves with a faith and their physical attendance at worship services. As Ross Gregory explains:

Although affiliation with religious organizations remained generally high..., other signals suggested a weakening of faith had set in. Statistics on attendance at worship services, which never kept pace with membership, pointed to a sharper decline beginning in the mid-1960s.<sup>25</sup>

The decline in participation within the dominant religions (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish) and the perceived crisis was related to several factors. It was attributed to the 'increase in the range of beliefs' and the West's changing perception of 'the religious identity of their own society' moving from a Judeo-Christian society to a something far more secular.

This was further enhanced by the 'serious weakening of the process by which the great

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<sup>23</sup> John F. Kennedy, 'The Responsibility of the Press: Address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington, D.C. April 21, 1960,' quoted in David Henry, 'Senator John F. Kennedy Encounters the Religious Question: "I am Not the Catholic Candidate for President",' in: Halford Ross Ryan (ed.), *Oratorical Encounters: Selected Studies and Sources of Twentieth Century Accusations and Apologies* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 1988), 156.

<sup>24</sup> McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*. Note: McLeod makes use of Arthur Marwick's concept of the 'long sixties' lasting from 1958-1974. If an analysis of the sixties is confined to a reading of a ten year period this does not allow for a discussion of the causes and consequences of the major events of this period (Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Transformation in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c.1958-1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7.).

<sup>25</sup> Gregory, *Cold War America*, 222.

majority of children were socialized into membership' of a religious tradition. In the 1960s parents were less likely to adorn their homes with religious iconography meaning the next generation were not growing up literally surrounded by the images of their religious background.<sup>26</sup> These reasons, as identified by McLeod, show that the changes to engagement with religion importantly occurred at a personal, national, and to some degree on an international level.

Decline can also be interpreted as a response to the cultural, political, and historical context of the 1960s which was damaged by the counter-cultural protest movements which highlighted the many social issues which needed to be resolved, the growing interest in alternative spirituality, 'and above all the Vietnam War' all of which combined to produce 'a very different kind of religious atmosphere' to the one experienced in the immediate post-war period.<sup>27</sup>

The legitimacy and authority of many of the prominent U.S. institutions, political, economic, educational, religious and even familial were questioned during the sixties. Religion itself was not rejected, but instead 'the establishment' of which it was a part. Those openly critical of the establishment were young middle and upper-middle class adults, who formed groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society and what became known as the New Left, and became part of a new intergenerational conflict. However, their minority views differed from those of 'many of their peers [who] remained committed to old-time moral and religious values.'<sup>28</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* can be seen as reflective of the counter-cultural movement that developed in the United States. The film explicitly questions religion, and the position of religious dogma in governmental and legal arenas whilst simultaneously forming part of the Judeo-Christian infused culture to which it belongs. The images formed, and the cultural and religious intertextual references made, indicate not simply a questioning of religious structures but also act as a testament to the position of religion, and specific traditions and denominations within American popular culture and its entertainment output.

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<sup>26</sup> McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 258.

<sup>28</sup> Joanne Beckman, 'Religion in Post-World War II America.' *TeacherServe* (October, 2000). Available at: <<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/twenty/tkeyinfo/trelww2.htm>> [Last accessed 20/11/07].

## **MIMICRY: APES APING RELIGION**

The apes, and in particular the orangutans, in *Planet of the Apes* mimic and at points mock religion. In this future America (as the film is set in the geographical place that was once the USA) religion has taken the place of secular government and the wall of separation between church and state has been eroded. The two have become interchangeable and *Planet of the Apes* highlights the dangers of allowing any religious doctrine or a politically motivated church to become involved in government and the impact it can have on the development of a society. The unquestioned religion (there is only one faith/denomination) presented in *Planet of the Apes* allows the orangutan class to retain its stranglehold over the ape society, and is seen by them as an integral part of the continuance of the species.

### **The Tenets of Ape Religion**

*Planet of the Apes* creates a detailed and structured storyworld including a faith that draws directly upon the tenets of the United States and the Judeo-Christian structures that form the American Civil Religion. Ape religion shares the main tenets of the major monotheistic religions, it is structured around the belief in the existence of a higher power and follows a creed which dictates what followers should believe and how they should conduct their lives (the Articles of Faith issued by a prophet, the Lawgiver).<sup>29</sup> The Sacred Scrolls contain all the law, prophesies, and tenets of the faith and this document, as Zaius explains, was ‘written long ago set down by the wisest ape of all, our Lawgiver’ more than twelve hundred years before Taylor and his crew crash on the planet. They are the founding documents of not only the ape religion but also the government system. Set out in chapters and verses like the religious texts of the largest world religions, the chimpanzees and orangutans make reference to the scripture in several settings and use it as a guide to matters of a religious, legal, and also, scientific nature.

Within the first instalment of the *Planet of the Apes* franchise the religion itself is not fully explained in terms of the exact rules and obligations but it is clearly pervasive

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<sup>29</sup> The rule: ‘Ape shall never kill ape’ was not officially given until the final film of the original franchise – *Battle for the Planet of the Apes* (1973).

within the narrative and the film's storyworld. The first two 'Articles of Faith' are expressed as follows:<sup>30</sup>

- First Article of Faith: 'The Almighty created the ape in his own image;... He gave him a soul and a mind; [and] he set him apart from the beasts of the jungle, and made him the lord of the planet'
- Second Article of Faith: 'All apes are created equal'

These tenets appear alongside other direct quotations from the scripture and clear ideological statements. The two articulated 'Articles of Faith' mimic two prominent founding documents. The first article is reference to a key phrase within the book of Genesis, which is an important text within the Judeo-Christian faiths specifically emulating the phrase: 'So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'<sup>31</sup> The 'Second Article of Faith' refers to the United States' Declaration of Independence, which states that 'all men are created equal'.<sup>32</sup> The founding documents of the ape culture combine and mimic the founding documents of the United States and the Judeo-Christian traditions, highlighting not only the centrality of the United States to the film's allegorical content but also that the nation's fundamental documents (the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights) have biblical foundations. They are predicated upon concepts that have their roots in the bible, showing that the United States' government has never been fully separated from the church and that the two are intrinsically linked.

It is clearly stated in the ape faith documents through uses of the word 'god' and 'lord' that there is a firm belief in a god, and that *his* prophet the Lawgiver set out the faith and wrote the Sacred Scrolls. The Lawgiver seems to hold the position of a prophet

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<sup>30</sup> These are taken from opening speech and first line of questioning given by state prosecutor Honorius during the trial sequence. The first is a paraphrasing of the First Article of Faith, and the second is phrased within a question designed to show that Taylor is unable to think as he cannot explain the ape culture to the court.

<sup>31</sup> Genesis 1:27, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (New York: Hapter, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness', 'The Declaration of Independence,' available at: <[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html)> [Last accessed: 12/04/2011].

in a similar fashion to Moses and Mohammed in the Jewish and Muslim traditions respectively; he is the messenger for the ape god rather than actually being a god himself.<sup>33</sup> Other important tenets of faith are as follows:

- Apes are the superior species and the ‘beast man’ must not be allowed to breed ‘in great numbers’<sup>34</sup>
- The Almighty is represented on Earth by the Lawgiver, a prophet, who wrote out the Articles of Faith
- The Forbidden Zone is deadly

The ape government is theocratic. It is structured in a way that means the tenets of the faith are enmeshed with the laws of the land: religious leaders are the governmental leaders and there is little or no distinction between the two. A direct comparison is made with the United States where government and religion *are* constitutionally separated; there is no state religion. The First Amendment to the Constitution (Bill of Rights) clearly protects individual religious freedom and ensures that the state cannot impede upon religious practices.<sup>35</sup> But this does not encumber the flow of religious idioms into the speeches and documents issued by those in power.

In *Planet*, because we know that Taylor is a sentient, speaking human, it is clear to the audience that religion and the truth are divorced from one another, the proof that their religion is a façade to maintain the status quo against exterior threats. Taylor is

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<sup>33</sup> The quotations from the Sacred Scrolls also include a reference to Proteus but it is never explained as to whether this is the name of their god or if Proteus is a prophet or a messenger in a similar manner to the Lawgiver. In Greek mythology Proteus is one of several minor sea gods who is, in some tales, described as the son of Poseidon (the preeminent sea god). Proteus could shape-shift (into animal, plant, or one of the elements), tell the future, and as a sea god he could guide and protect ships, and sailors prayed to him for safe passage.

<sup>34</sup> Quotations taken from a longer section from the ‘twenty-third Scroll, ninth Verse’ that Cornelius recites from memory at Zaius’ command at the end of the film when doubts are cast upon the ape faith once evidence of ancient sentient human race is found. The full quote is as follows: ‘Beware the beast man, for he is the devil’s pawn. Alone among God’s primates, he kills for sport, or lust or greed. Yes, he will murder his brother to possess his brother’s land. Let him not breed in great numbers, for he will make a desert of his home and yours. Shun him. Drive him back into his jungle lair, for he is the harbinger of death.’

<sup>35</sup> ‘Amendment I: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.’ ‘The U.S. Constitution, Amendment I.’ Available at: <[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html)> [Last accessed: 11/04/2011].



hidden from the public by the government and when he escapes after finding out he is to be castrated, he runs through the ape city and at one-point runs into a room in which a funeral is being held (see figure 1). He is separated from the mourning congregants by a thin wall. In this shot the religious ritual that forms the foundation of the ape society is visually contrasted with Taylor, the human who could disprove this faith. It represents the apes' blind devotion. They cannot see the truth as they are too distracted by religion and its falsities – the wall literally obscures Taylor from their sight, splitting the screen in half with Taylor on one side and the followers of the ape religion on the other. However, it is an ape child who destabilises the wall when he sees Taylor. Since he is not yet fully immersed in the ape religion, the film suggests that it is the youth who have the clearest sight and hence the possibility to change the established ideas.



Fig.1 – Taylor's escape

Most religions have their own creation myth, which explains the beginnings of the universe as a deliberate act of creation by a supernatural being or beings. According to Genesis, for example, God created everything, and man was positioned as the most important and powerful creature in all creation. The apes are no exception and constructed their own creation narrative where god created the species in his own image. Thus the apes, like many 'fundamentalist' Christians, do not accept the possibility that they evolved from a different species, and that creation may not have happened as it is literally described in the holy texts. The film presents the refusal to accept evolution as a naïve worldview that allows religious dogma to overshadow and obscure scientific evidence. It is visually reinforced in the trial sequence when the three judges at the

hearing The President of the Assembly (James Whitmore),<sup>36</sup> Dr. Maximus (Woodrow Parfey) and Dr. Zaius form the image of the ‘Three Wise Monkeys’ of Japanese folklore who ‘see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil.’ The eyes of one ape are covered in order to hide from Taylor, himself visual proof that their Sacred Scrolls are false; the ears of the second are covered to block out the scientific facts spoken by ape scientist Cornelius; and finally the covered mouth suggests that there is no coherent argument to disprove what Cornelius, Zira and Taylor are presenting.

### **Aping Religious Robes**

Ape society’s power hierarchy is structured according to species. These differences are clearly perceptible as orangutans, chimpanzees, gorillas, and humans are clearly identifiable from one another. Separation is denoted through the use of robes and specified styles of dress. The orangutans wear long orange robes over brown tunics, the chimpanzees wear earthy green and brown tunics, the gorillas wear black leathers with elbow length gloves, and the humans wear rags with males wearing loincloths and the women in bikinis.<sup>37</sup> Taylor’s costume is slightly different from the other humans as he covers more of himself with a second rag covering his chest, and is often pictured with a choke collar further identifying him as animal within this species segregated society.



**Fig. 2** – The segregation of species, delineated by costume

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<sup>36</sup> The character is not given a name he is only referred to as the President of the Assembly.

<sup>37</sup> Linda Harrison revealed that her costume had been the subject of much debate and that ‘Naturally, these people would have run around with no clothes on but we couldn’t do that. So we used bark... Bark seemed more natural.’ See Don Alpert, ‘‘Silent’ Linda Has Her Say,’ *Los Angeles Times* (24 March, 1968), n.p.

The orange fur, skin, and costumes of the orangutan lawmakers can be seen to hold symbolic value. The robes worn by the orangutan leaders can be interpreted as representing the vestments worn by both legal and religious figures therefore visually conjoining religion and state. From a religious perspective the orange, or saffron, robes link into visual cultures of the Hindu and Buddhist faiths. The saffron colour has been long regarded ‘an auspicious color of Hinduism’ and comes to represent the presence of religious and specifically ‘Hindu practices’, particularly where it is used ‘as one of the colors of the national flag of the secular Indian state, where it is popularly believed to represent the Hindus in India’.<sup>38</sup> In this religious context the saffron is seen to ‘represent bravery, renunciation, and knowledge’<sup>39</sup> and in *Planet of the Apes* the orangutans are situated at the pinnacle of their religion and therefore an unquestioned position of power. Yet, the orangutans struggle to maintain their previously unchallenged position as knowledge bearers and protectors of the faith when they are questioned by the intelligentsia (Zira and Cornelius) and the presence of a sentient human being (Taylor).

In an article by Kevin Thomas published in the *LA Times* in June 1967, the world created in *Planet of the Apes* is described as a ‘nightmare Shangri-La’, a reference to Buddhist Tibet that was repeatedly presented as an orientalist paradise in Hollywood.<sup>40</sup> Here Thomas highlights that the utopian vision of other cultures and religious activity often seen in Hollywood films is rejected and replaced in *Planet of the Apes* with a ‘nightmare’ that critiques the place and relative power of religion in contemporary culture. Thomas also points out that ‘the orangutans are the Brahmins of the apes’

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<sup>38</sup> Rachel Dwyer, ‘The Saffron Screen?: Hindi movies and Hindu Nationalism.’ in Birgit Meyer, and Annelies Moors (eds.), *Religion, Media, and The Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 274.

<sup>39</sup> Raminder Kaur, *Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism: Public Uses of Religion in Western India* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 144.

<sup>40</sup> Kevin Thomas, ‘A Gargantuan Effort for *Planet of the Apes*,’ *Los Angeles Times* (25 June, 1968), C11. Here Thomas refers to the mythical kingdom of Shangri-La that was first described in James Hilton’s 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* and more popularly in Frank Capra’s 1937 film adaptation. Shangri-La as an ‘orientalist myth of Tibet’ and Buddhist traditions was used by Hollywood to promote a utopian vision of the region but also a ‘condescending and derisive critique’ of Tibet’s monastic tradition. See Peter Bishop, ‘Caught in the Cross-Fire: Tibet, Media, and Promotional Culture,’ *Media, Culture & Society* 22:5 (September, 2000), 645-664.

indicating an awareness of the religious references to both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and the critique of religious structures presented in the film.<sup>41</sup>

As a symbol within the Buddhist faith, the saffron orange is most famously associated with the monks of the Theravada tradition. The monks wear saffron robes that represent the simplicity of their lives and their vow of poverty. The robes are the only garments of clothing worn and as a visual expression indicate an individual's complete commitment to their faith and their close link to god. The decision by the orangutans (and therefore the filmmakers) to wear these robes all of the time are similarly intended to show the orangutans' commitment to the faith in all aspect of their lives.

The orangutans' robes are also adorned with breastplates remarkably similar to those worn by the high priests who served in the Jewish Temple. The biblical breastplate is a garment adorned with twelve precious stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel. It is a religious garment but could also be seen as a literal breastplate, a piece of armour, showing the link between war and religion and the fact that many wars have been caused and fuelled by religious fervour. The apes' breastplate is also inscribed with symbols possibly referring to ancient civilisations such as the Aztecs and Incas, ancient civilisations that were wiped out by the *conquistadors*, those European invaders whose mere existence contradicted the belief systems of the Incas and Aztecs. The *conquistadors* had access to new technologies and transport that allowed them to explore the world and prove/show to other civilisations that the world extends far beyond their own borders and shorelines.

There are only a few orangutans shown within the film, as the majority of the ape civilians (the extras) are represented as chimpanzees. There are the four orangutans present during the trial: the President of the Academy, Dr. Maximus – Commissioner for Animal Affairs, Dr. Zaius – Minister of Science and Chief Defender of the Faith, and Dr. Honorius (James Daly) – Deputy Minister of Justice. There is also an orangutan who performs the only religious ceremony featured in the film: the funeral (see figure 3). The celebrant conducts the service from behind a large wooden sarcophagus, a further level of detail to this short sequence indicating the importance of the religious content as shown

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, C11. Alongside a reference to Buddhist culture with Shangri-La, Thomas makes direct reference to the Hindu Brahmin. The Brahmin are the highest order of traditional Indian caste system who officiate religious rites, and study and teach the Vedas (sacred Hindu texts).

in the intricate mise en scène. The detailed sets and costumes highlight that *Planet of the Apes* can be read as a religious commentary. With a sizable chunk of time and budget spent on these sequences which do not specifically advance the narrative but do form an important part of the film's sacred visual make-up.



**Figure 3** – Minister in worship space with coffin, and statue of the Lawgiver holding the Sacred Scrolls

Notably the ape minister wears ceremonial garb, he is pictured with a penitential purple chasuble over the top of his robes. The chasuble is a Roman Catholic overvestment worn by the celebrant during mass. The liturgical purple used is also of interest, as it is a colour used in vestments and church adornments during the Christian seasons of penance (Advent and Lent), and can be seen to represent the sins of humanity. This particular clerical costume, with its combination of orange and purple, can be seen to bring together notions of both Eastern and Western religious traditions in a single figure. It suggests not simply a discussion of a single religion or religious denomination but the entire concept of faith and its role within U.S. political discourse and the development of the state in an increasingly global framework.

The orangutans wear their robes all the time signifying the devotion they have to their faith. They wear these robes irrespective of what they are doing, whether it be linked to their religious life or their work life as government employees, collapsing the distinctions between the two. This simple visual link to Eastern and indigenous religions aligns the orangutans with a culture, which is both familiar domestic and foreign, and exotic to its audience. It is used as a visual signifier of dangers of and the ease at which religion can come to influence politics, with religion being present in more than text and

conversation in this fictional society. The ape faith is pervasive, infiltrating every layer of the society to the point where they are practically impossible to differentiate.

### **Religion vs. the State**

Taylor is put on the trial because he contradicts the ape religion. Dr. Honorius heralds him as an abomination claiming that he is part of the experiments of Dr. Zira and a ‘corrupt scientist’ named Galen (Wright King) who are actively attempting to ‘undermine the very cornerstone of [the ape] Faith’. *Planet* highlights the problems of not having a clear divide between the state and religion, and how an erosion of this can lead to a stagnation of scientific development and knowledge.

The orangutans that preside over Taylor’s trial all wear orange robes, a sign of their power, devotion, and religiosity. Thus, their religious connotations suggest an inquisition. Indeed, Dr. Zaius is introduced as the ‘Minister for Science and the Chief Defender of the Faith’, uncannily recalling the full name for the Inquisition itself, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The reference here is to the Spanish Inquisition that took place in Spain beginning officially beginning in 1478 with a Papal Bull and following a lengthy period of decline officially abolished in 1834. Initially it was an attempt by Spain’s sovereigns, Ferdinand V and Isabella to create a single faith, a Catholic orthodoxy to unite the country along religious and ethnic lines. This political beginning intended to create a single united nation rather than a one split between people following the Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths. The inquisition and its trial procedure targeted newly converted Catholics who were mostly Jewish (*conversos*) and Muslim (*moriscos*) and whose conversion was suspected to be insincere. In the first sixty years of the inquisition in excess of three thousand people were executed for their religious beliefs and apparent heresy.<sup>42</sup> Making reference to the Inquisition here, *Planet of the Apes* calls upon an historical movement where religious fervour and the state became united, both sanctifying ereligious cleansing.

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<sup>42</sup> For further discussion of the Inquisition see Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Revision* (New Haven, C. T.: Yale University Press, 1999), Joseph Pérez, *The Spanish Inquisition: A History* (New Haven, C. T.: Yale University Press, 2006), Helen Rawlings, *The Spanish Inquisition* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

Zaius represents the difficulty of maintaining a religious point of view when confronted with scientific fact, which appears to contradict certain beliefs such as the creation myth, and in the fictional ape religion the position of apes as the first and only sentient beings on Earth. Zaius claims that there is no contradiction between religion and what he terms 'true science' suggesting the orangutans perhaps know the truth about their origins but deny it in order to maintain the status quo.

### **Sacred Scrolls**

The ape religion is the underlying structure of the ape society it forms the base of the state laws which affect both the working (gorilla) and middle classes (chimpanzee). The ape religion is seemingly used by the orangutan ruling class to justify social arrangements; a means of controlling the masses and retaining the orangutan position of power. Therefore, if it were shown that the Sacred Scrolls and the ape religion were false it would fracture the entire societal structure. The orangutans' reasoning and knowledge would also be questioned and they would lose their seat of power. In the trial sequence Taylor is cross-examined by the Dr. Honorius who uses religious questions to prove that Taylor is simply a 'performing animal' and that his inability to answer the questions about the Articles of Faith and religious dogma stem from an inability to think and reason. The questioning is as follows:

**HONORIOUS:** Tell the court, Bright Eyes, what is the second Article of Faith?

**TAYLOR:** I admit, I know nothing of your culture.

**HONORIOUS:** Of course he doesn't know our culture, because he cannot think. (*to Taylor*) Tell us why all apes are created equal.

**TAYLOR:** Some apes, it seems, are more equal than others.

**HONORIOUS:** Ridiculous. That answer is a contradiction in terms. Tell us, Bright Eyes, why do men have no souls? What is the proof that a divine spark exists in the simian brain.

A clear inter-textual reference is made here to George Orwell's 1945 novella *Animal Farm*.<sup>43</sup> In particular Taylor's line: 'Some apes, it seems, are more equal than

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<sup>43</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (London: Penguin, 1989) – the novella is about the oppressed animal occupants of an English farm under the control of ruthless human overseers. The animals rebel against their owners and form a communal society. However, a megalomaniac pig called Napoleon seizes power and

others' parallels the phrase: 'All animals are created equal, but some are more equal than others'.<sup>44</sup> In both cases this is a distortion of a phrase which forms part of each fictional society's founding documents, the Articles of Faith in *Planet of the Apes* (Second Article of Faith: All apes are created equal), and the Commandments of Animalism in *Animal Farm* (Seventh Commandment: All animals are created equal), which in itself invokes the US Declaration of Independence which states that 'all men are created equal'. These societies, both imagined and actual, are seemingly conceived with a hope of genuine equality. In *Animal Farm* the animals stage a revolution to create a communal society which is manipulated by the pigs to form a dictatorial state; in *Planet of the Apes* the apes evolve and take control of the planet after the fall of humanity and establish an orangutan oligarchy; and in the United States the founders' notion of equality was restricted to *men* of white European descent. The notion of everyone being equal becomes 'a meaningless absurdity' once each of these societies moves beyond their formational ideals and into the realities of maintaining them in the face of power, greed, egotism, and racism/speciesism.<sup>45</sup>

The pigs in *Animal Farm* ape their human predecessors and similarly the orangutans are shown to be equally oppressive replacements for their human ancestors. The orangutans manipulate the founding documents to secure their position as the ruling class and conveniently do not extend the rights laid down in the religious lore to all of the citizens. *Planet of the Apes* like *Animal Farm* makes use of a 'fictional space' in which contemporary issues can be 'explored in relative isolation from the historical, political and economic contexts in which it actually occurred.'<sup>46</sup> *Animal Farm* has continued to be a popular text throughout its history, it has been adapted into one animated film, one made-for-television film, a stage musical, and its famous rhetoric

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runs the farm like a communist police state. The pigs become increasingly like the humans they replaced by walking on two legs ('four legs good, two legs better', 89), wearing clothes, and entertaining the humans at dinners.

<sup>44</sup> Orwell, *Animal Farm*, 90.

<sup>45</sup> V. C. Letemendia, 'Revolution on Animal Farm: Orwell's Neglected Commentary,' *Journal of Modern Literature* 18:1 (Winter, 1992), 129.

<sup>46</sup> Ben Clarke, *Orwell in Context: Communities, Myths, Values* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 150.



been regularly used in texts discussing issues of equality and representation.<sup>47</sup> By using this frame of reference the filmmakers draw *Planet of the Apes* into a wider discussion of the rights of man which has been an developing element of a Western literary, visual, and political discourse. Orwell's book although referring to the political events of the thirties and forties (and before through references to Napoleon Bonaparte), was 'prophetic of the Cold War' and was as relevant then as it was when it was originally released,<sup>48</sup> for example it was promoted by several government agencies during the Cold War as anti-Soviet propaganda not only in U.S. but also in other states considered vulnerable to communist Russia.<sup>49</sup>

### **Sacred Scrolls/Legal Scrolls**

The Sacred Scrolls pronounce that humans cannot think for themselves and during the trial (and indeed every time the Scrolls are recited) the Scrolls instead of being challenged are accepted as law rather than faith. Religion is often formed through a series of 'laws' that must be followed by its participants, for example, both Judaism and Christianity are in part structured around the Ten Commandments: a core set of rules believed to have been dictated by God to His people. But these rules, although in part mirrored in state laws in the West (e.g. murder is against church and state law), do not directly form part of the laws governing the country. Breaking ecclesiastical law is not always tantamount to breaking state law. But in *Planet of the Apes* there is no distinction; the religious laws set out in the Scrolls *are* the state laws. The orangutans do not think to question the Scrolls and with the precedent that has been set, Honorius' questions to Taylor seem quite reasonable.

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<sup>47</sup> Film: *Animal Farm* (dir. Joy Batchelor & John Halas, Halas and Batchelor Cartoon Films, 1956); TV film: *Animal Farm* (dir. John Stephenson, TNT, 3 Oct 1999); Musical: Peter Hall (adaptation), Adrian Mitchell (lyrics), & Richard Peaslee (music), *The Play of George Orwell's Animal Farm* (London: Heinemann, 1993).

<sup>48</sup> Claudia Durst Johnson and Vernon Elso Johnson, *The Social Impact of the Novel: A Reference Guide* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 120.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 120. Johnson and Johnson explain that: 'In the Cold War, the official reception of the book turned even more positive, as *Animal Farm* was chosen to serve as propaganda. The U.S. Information Agency sponsored translation of the book in thirty languages; the Voice of America broadcast it to Eastern Europe; and the Central Intelligence Agency sponsored it in South America' – confirming the book's continuing importance and impact upon the USA between the end of the Second World War throughout the Cold War. See also Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granata Publications, 1999), Chapter 7.

All the information the apes claim to have concerning humans derives from the Sacred Scrolls, which are set out like other religious manuscripts in chapters and verses. All of the apes appear to know them by rote and they are often cited as a form of proof. For example, in the archaeological dig in the Forbidden Zone at the end of the film Cornelius proposes that a ‘talking’ human doll, found beneath layers of ape artefacts, acts as proof that a civilised human society preceded ape rule:

**CORNELIUS.** A doll alone proves nothing. True. But the doll was found beside the jawbone of a man and no trace of simian fossils has turned up in this deposit.

**ZAIUS.** Your conclusion is premature. Have you forgotten your Scripture? The Thirteenth Scroll? (*quoting from memory*) 'And Proteus brought the upright beast into the garden, and chained him to a tree, and the children made sport of him.'

**CORNELIUS.** No sir, I haven't forgotten.

**ZAIUS.** Well? For a time the ancients kept humans as household pets. Until the Lawgiver proved that man could not be tamed. Keep digging Cornelius. You'll find evidence of the master of this house: an ape.

Zaius attempts to use the Scrolls as ‘proof’ that man has always been a lower being. Apes had toy humans just as a human child might have a toy ape (which, ironically considering the film's marketing, they did at the time). However, it is when it is discovered that the doll cries ‘mama’ that the scrolls are really questioned: why or how would an ape make a doll that could talk? Conveniently, Zaius does not have to explain this illogicality as his guards create a diversion. By clinging to his scripture Zaius attempts to deny science, to deny the truth from those he and his class rule over.

### **The Church, the Faith, and the Law: The Monkey Trial**

As previously discussed, the trial sequence is one of the key set pieces in *Planet of the Apes*. It can be read in a number of different ways depending upon which ideological issue is focused upon. If read as a document that discusses the issue of institutionalised racism in the United States in the 1960s the trial sequence can indeed be interpreted as a reference to the symbolically and culturally significant case of *Dred Scott v Sandford*. But within a discussion of the film’s attitude towards religion the trial can be interpreted

differently; the sequence references *Scopes v. The State* (1925) – a famous U.S. trial in which a teacher was put on trial for teaching evolution. Scopes was put on trial for contradicting the teachings of the bible just as Taylor is symbolically put on trial for contradicting the apes’ religious dogma.

*Scopes v. The State* was famously nicknamed the ‘Scopes Monkey Trial’ and was triggered by the actions of a young high school teacher from Dayton Tennessee called John T. Scopes who was put on trial for teaching evolution in a state where it became illegal to teach any theory that refuted the literal scriptural explanation of the creation. The court case, which drew reporters from around the country, was billed as ‘the trial of the century’ before it had even begun.<sup>50</sup> The Monkey Trial has since become part of what critic Joseph Wood Krutch terms ‘the folklore of liberalism’;<sup>51</sup> a common reference point in the continuing debate on science, religion, and the state in the United States.

On 21st March 1925 the *Butler Act* was passed in Tennessee, a law that prohibited teachers in public schools from s their students with alternative scientific explanations for the origin of man. It declared:

That it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the Universities, Normals and all other public schools of the State... to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.<sup>52</sup>

The *Butler Act*’s namesake, Tennessee State Representative John Washington Butler, was also the head of the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA).<sup>53</sup> The WCFA

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<sup>50</sup> More than a hundred reporters covered the event and WGN Radio broadcast the trial live making the Scopes trial the first to be broadcast directly to the nation. *The New York Times* reported that between 150,000 to 200,000 words were sent out for publication each day by reporters from across America and Europe – Anon, ‘2,000,000 Words Wired to the Press,’ *The New York Times* (22 Jul, 1925), 2. See also Michael Lienesch, *In the Beginning: Fundamentalism, The Scopes Trial, and the Making of the Antievolutionist Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 145-147; Donald F. Brod, ‘The Scopes Trial: A Look at Press Coverage after Forty Years,’ *Journalism Quarterly* 42 (Spring, 1965), 219-227.

<sup>51</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch, ‘The Monkey Trial,’ *Commentary* 43:5 (May, 1967), 83.

<sup>52</sup> Chapter 27, House Bill No.185 (The Butler Act). Public Acts of the State of Tennessee passed by the 64th General Assembly (March 13, 1925). Available at:

<<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/tennstat.htm>> [Last accessed: 06/01/08]

<sup>53</sup> The World’s Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) was the first interdenominational organisation of fundamentalists in the world formed in 1919 by Baptist minister William Bell Riley. It was founded by a group of premillennialists who sought to combat the growth of modernism and the acceptance of the theory of evolution through Bible conferences and Bible schools. The organisation lost some of its momentum

lobbied for anti-evolution laws to be passed in a number of states, however, it was first successful in Tennessee. In response to the *Butler Act* the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) advertised for a teacher to purposely break this law forcing the state into trial and therefore a debate about, not only the specifics of this particular law and the constitutionality of anti-evolutionary statutes, but also engage in a wider discussion of the United States' 'social and intellectual values' concerning the separation of church and state.<sup>54</sup> As the trial's focal defence lawyer Clarence Darrow put it, the main purpose of the trial was: 'preventing bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the education of the United States.'<sup>55</sup>

The trial itself took place 10-21 July 1925 following Scopes' law-breaking lesson in May 1925.<sup>56</sup> The trial was essentially a 'a publicity stunt' to give the ACLU the platform it sought to get the Christian fundamentalists to defend their position on religious restrictions to education in front of the national and international media.<sup>57</sup> The case was essentially fought out between prosecutor William Jennings Bryan, a three-time Democratic candidate and the 'mouthpiece' for the antievolutionist movement,<sup>58</sup> and the 'nation's premier legal defender', staunch agnostic Clarence Darrow.<sup>59</sup> Scopes and the law he had broken were of little significance once the trial started because it was mainly a fight between the two lead counsel and the opposing views they represented. Although

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following the Scopes Trial in 1925 eventually seeing the demise its anti-evolutionist crusade during the 1940s. For a discussion of the Christian Right and its origins see: Clyde Wilcox, 'The Christian Right in Twentieth Century America: Continuity and Change,' *Review of Politics* 50:4 (Fall, 1988), 659-681, and William Vance Trollinger, *God's Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

<sup>54</sup> Douglas O. Linder, 'State v. John Scopes ('The Monkey' Trial),' 2008. Available at: <<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/evolut.htm>> [Last accessed: 06/04/2011].

<sup>55</sup> Clarence Darrow quoted in: Adam Laats, *Fundamentalism and Education in the Scopes Era: God, Darwin, and the Roots of America's Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1.

<sup>56</sup> Supposedly Scopes' lessons were not actually about evolution, but he had technically broken the law by teaching from the standard Tennessee high school biology textbook that included a section on evolution. Scopes was not religious but he opposed the Butler Act as he believed in the importance of the theory of evolution to scientific understanding and progress. He later said: 'The Butler Act was an effort on the part of a religious group, the fundamentalists, to impose by law their religious beliefs on the rest of society'. See Michael Burgen, *The Scopes Trial: Faith, Science, and American Education* (New York: Benchmark Books, 2010), 16.

<sup>57</sup> Edward John Larson, *Summer of the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Cambridge, M.A.: Basic Books, 2006), 93.

<sup>58</sup> Jeffrey Moran, *The Scopes Trial: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 14.

<sup>59</sup> Larson, *Summer of the Gods*, 69.

the trial was technically won by the State with Scopes being charged and fined there were no further charges or cases tried concerning this law; a victory for the evolutionists.

Although the antievolutionist movement seemed to come to an end at the close of the 1920s following a series of public loses, in reality it declined rather than disappearing altogether. The movement continued at a local level built up through a base of fundamentalist churches, schools, and seminaries. As Michael Lienesch explains:

Antievolutionism would continue through periods of retrenchment and resurgence, emerging periodically into public view with the advent of the creation science of the 1960s, the alliance of the New Christian Right (NCR) and the advocacy of 'intelligent design' in our own time. Combining change and continuity, the movement has proven remarkably resilient. Yet even as it has changed ... the antievolutionist movement has remained a product of its past, existing even today in the shadow of the Scopes trial.<sup>60</sup>

Up until the 1960s a large proportion of U.S. public schools did not teach evolutionary theory.<sup>61</sup> Similarly 'Bibles, prayer, and other expressly Protestant expressions of belief remained embedded' in the day-to-day lives of school children.<sup>62</sup> These ingrained expressions of faith came under increasing legal pressure during the sixties, texts published by federally funded institutes were distributed nationwide thereby reintroducing evolution into the curricula in a large number of school districts. In June 1962 the Supreme Court outlawed compulsory state-sponsored school prayer (*Engel v. Vitale*) and in 1963 it ruled that it was unconstitutional to institute mandatory Bible reading in public schools (*Abington School District v. Schempp*).<sup>63</sup> Yet, despite this ruling many schools continued with the practice, and it was only enforced if there was local protest. The *Butler Act* itself was not officially repealed until September 1967, and in 1968 the Supreme Court prevented any state from instituting antievolutionist statutes banning evolutionary teaching in order to promote religion.<sup>64</sup> These changes to the

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<sup>60</sup> Lienesch, *In the Beginning*, 198-199.

<sup>61</sup> See Gerald Skoog, 'The Coverage of Human Evolution in High School Biology Text-books in the 20th Century and in Current State Science Standards,' *Science and Education* 14:3 (2005), 395-422.

<sup>62</sup> Laats, *Fundamentalism*, 196.

<sup>63</sup> *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962), *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

<sup>64</sup> *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 (1968).

education system could be clearly seen as a concerted ‘effort to prevent the interference of the state in religion and vice versa.’<sup>65</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* was released in a period of educational reform where, as detailed above, the state started to reinforce the wall between church and the administration using the US Constitution as a form of legal support. The film itself makes clear references to the Scopes Trial and the plethora of cases which were heard by the Supreme Court during this 1960s. Many of the laws which were revoked were not residue from the United States' Puritanical past but the successes of the antievolution movement of the 1920s.

The language and tone of the trial sequence in *Planet of the Apes* takes many of its cues from the drama and posturing of the Scopes trial and the antievolution movement. The ape trial uses Taylor to not only attack the ape scientists but also to attempt to prove that he is a lie or at worse an anomaly, and ‘prove’ their own explanation of creation. During the closing sequence, in the Forbidden Zone at the archaeological dig site, Zaius declares that there is ‘there is no contradiction between faith and science. True science.’ His words mirroring the idioms of the antievolution movement and in particular a statement made by John W. Butler claiming that evolution ‘was only a guess’ and that there was ‘no controversy between *true* science and the bible’.<sup>66</sup>

The tribunal is an investigation of Taylor as a walking talking contradiction of the law, he is questioned by Dr. Honorius, whose use of religious dogma as a basis of his responses represents the apes as bigots who are blinded by their faith. Honorius’ opening statement makes reference to the Articles of Faith referring to them as ‘sacred truths’ and claims that the study of humans and evolution is ‘insidious’ and ‘perverted’. This antievolutionist standpoint is further confirmed in the direct examination of Taylor where he asked to recite the ape lore and explain the finer details ape religious culture. This particular form of proving innocence is also reminiscent of the Salem witch trials of 1692 where ‘witches’ were required to faultlessly recite the Lord’s Prayer and explain other

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<sup>65</sup> George E. Webb, *The Evolution Controversy in America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 150.

<sup>66</sup> John W. Butler quoted in: Ray Ginger, *Six Days or Forever?: Tennessee vs. John Thomas Scopes* (Boston: Beacon, 1959), 82-83.

systems of Christianity impeccably. It was believed that witches were unable to repeat these because of their link to the devil.<sup>67</sup> Taylor's failure to explain the ape religious culture seems to act as testimony that humans are unable to think, and the possibility that he may have crash landed on the planet is denied because advances in aeronautical technology have not been permitted to develop, as they too appear to contradict the ancient lore. When it is first revealed, by Zira, that Taylor is able to communicate (first through writing and later speech) the chimpanzee scientists realise that if Taylor is, as a fearful Cornelius postulates, a 'missing link, it means the Sacred Scrolls aren't worth their parchment.' They realise the implications of their discovery and the fact that they will be charged under ape law with treason.

Taylor is literally put on trial in *Planet of the Apes* for proving that evolution occurred and that a biological link exists between apes and humans. His mere existence threatens the ape 'faith in simian superiority'<sup>68</sup> and in so doing contradicts ape lore/law. Taylor and his discoverers, Zira and Cornelius, are accused of treason because of their blasphemous challenges to the religious state law. The apes, like the US lawmakers, attempt to shelter their constituents from ideas that challenge religious teachings and *Planet of the Apes* through the invocation of the Scopes' Monkey Trial and the antievolutionist movement criticises those in positions of power who allowed themselves to be guided by their fundamentalist beliefs and use the law to enforce religious conformity. Despite this seemingly negative commentary the franchise can be seen as being intertwined with a religious discourse that has existed throughout US history. Narratives that have been structured using stories and characters from a variety of religious texts; these are utilised in *Planet of the Apes* to question particular beliefs and the religious institution as a whole.

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<sup>67</sup> See Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 146.

<sup>68</sup> When Taylor regains the use of his voice and is locked up with only Nova for company he explains to her his fears about his future on the planet saying: 'Yeah...me Tarzan, you Jane. That's all right ... I had a puppy once that never barked. He just licked my hand. He's dead now. They're all dead. Everything... I think maybe they'll kill me, too. Are they afraid of me? I can't hurt them... but I threaten them somehow. Threaten their faith in simian superiority. Yeah ... you're right. They'll have to kill me.'

## **Judeo-Christian Figures and Religious Imagery**

### **Adam and Eve:**

Beyond *Planet*, the series is peppered with religious imagery. The story of Adam and Eve runs through several of the films but most notably in *Planet of the Apes*. Adam and Eve were the first humans created by God according to the Bible and the Qur'an . The trope of being the first of a new race appears in *Planet of the Apes* in two places. Stewart's role is to become the new 'Eve'; however, when she is prematurely killed she is replaced by Nova (whose name means 'new' and is almost a homonym for the Hebrew name for Eve, Chava) as a companion ('help-meet') for Taylor, the only known sentient human on the planet (like Adam in the Garden of Eden). However, the idea of a new Adam and Eve is not an optimistic one in *Planet of the Apes*.

Taylor and Nova take on the roles of Adam and Eve. He is akin to a new creation on the planet of the apes, and if he was to reproduce (with the help of Nova) he could literally be the Adam of a new human race. There are humans on the planet but they are shown as animals, if Taylor was to reproduce it is assumed that he would sire a child of similar intellect to himself, something which the apes fear as they want to have him gelded. Taylor could be the Adam of a race of human-humans rather than animal-humans. However, Taylor and the film as a whole question this idea: why would he want to recreate a species that destroyed itself? 'Man, that marvel of the universe, that glorious paradox' as Taylor ironically refers to humanity, was self destructive. The film asks if the failings of humanity are ingrained and part of what is termed 'human nature'. Taylor wonders if it would be any better if he was start a new 'intelligent' human colony or if they are doomed to recreate the tragedies of the past.

Stewart the female astronaut, who dies in the spaceship before the crew reach the planet, was to be, according to Taylor, the 'new Eve.' She is only ever referred to by her surname and seems to be thought of more as cargo than an equal. Stewart has a purpose, to become mother for a colony if required, with the 'hot and eager help' of the male astronauts. Her intelligence and her abilities are not mentioned, rather simply her ability to procreate. The ship and its contents, therefore, also serve as an analogy for Noah's Ark, the idea of saving enough people to start a new human race; however, this idea is



destroyed once the ‘most precious cargo’ is lost.<sup>69</sup> Stewart is replaced by Nova, who is literally given to Taylor by the apes, as God created Eve for Adam.

Taylor shows interest in Nova from the first time he sees her in the hunt but it is only through the God-like power of the apes that he is able to be with her. Taylor may have chosen Nova but he is only able to have her with the blessing of the apes. When Nova is given to Taylor as a mate she is even holding a piece of fruit with a bite taken out of it. This could be read as reference to Eve who ate the forbidden fruit from the Garden of Eden, the bite out of the apple is a symbol of transgression. In Christian tradition it is believed that Eve performed the Original Sin, the first act against God’s word. God forbade the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, yet she ate from it and also gave some to Adam. The fruit Nova holds is a mango – a much more exotic fruit than that of Eve’s traditional apple – suggesting that she is a new Eve.<sup>70</sup> Taylor does not know that she is a descendant of the same race as Taylor. She may be human biologically but she lacks the same cerebral abilities that we assume Stewart had. The new world is dangerous, Taylor cannot trust what he knew of the world, because until the final revelation Taylor assumes he is on an alien planet. The new future is to be feared as it is not the Garden of Eden which was given to Adam. The world is not pre-Fall but rather post-deluge as it turns out so far past the fall of man that a new order has taken its place. When the new Adam and Eve discover the fallen Statue of Liberty ‘they discover the fall from grace before they even reach the garden.’<sup>71</sup>

One smaller and yet interesting point made in the film is the rebuilding of Taylor’s power. Like a reborn Adam he is literally stripped of everything he had

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<sup>69</sup> Stewart is referred to as ‘cargo’ by Taylor in his one-sided conversation with Nova when he explains to her (and by extension the audience) about Stewart’s role and the world he had come from, saying: ‘Did I tell you about Stewart? Now there was a lovely girl. The most precious cargo we’d brought along. She was to be the new Eve. With our hot and eager help, of course. Probably just as well she didn’t make it this far...’

<sup>70</sup> Genesis makes no mention of an apple, just fruit from the tree of knowledge. The image of the apple appears in later biblical books. But the fruit has also be interpreted and translated as being a pomegranate, a quince, or even a banana. But as Francis McKee notes: ‘The first translators of the Old Testament into Latin, however, thought the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil had to be the apple as it was the most common fruit of the ancient world.’ The apple forms part of ‘a complex network of sexual and religious allusions’ in Latin translation of Genesis. So while the apple image is a later change through translations and parallel texts the apple still remains the symbol of Eve, and the symbol of her transgression. For a study of the apple and its symbolic meaning see Francis McKee, ‘East of Eden: A Brief History of Fruit and Vegetable Consumption,’ *British Food Journal* 97:7 (1995), 5-9.

<sup>71</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 54.

(clothing, space ship, weapons) and everything he knew.<sup>72</sup> The only power he has is over his female companion. In the Genesis telling of the story of Adam and Eve, Adam gains power over all the animals of creation by naming them. God created everything but is it Adam, the male, who is at the pinnacle of creation.<sup>73</sup> In a similar fashion Taylor demonstrates ‘adamic power’ by naming Nova,<sup>74</sup> suggesting she is an animal. Alternatively, as she is the *new* new Eve he is demonstrating his Godlike (or parental) power by naming her. It is an expression of limited control in the new world where he is placed at the top of the human race. In the new New World of the planet of the apes gender inequality is shown to be ingrained, or perhaps it can be seen as an inequality that is ingrained in Taylor; a prejudice that is a vestige of the world he left behind. The other humans have their names selected by the apes, which means that the apes hold this position of power, like Adam. Taylor is accordingly named ‘Bright Eyes’ suggesting that he is some sort of domesticated animal.<sup>75</sup> It is only once he is able to speak (following recovery from a throat injury) that he names himself, his companion, and he is able to regain this apparently significant fragment of power.

Taylor, and equally Heston, is referred to as ‘the American Adam’ in Pauline Kael’s review of *Planet of the Apes*.<sup>76</sup> She sees him as a character (both in the film and in popular culture) who can be used ‘to work off some American guilt feelings or self-hatred’,<sup>77</sup> which could be seen to have developed in post-war United States coinciding with a perceived fall from moral superiority. Taylor/Heston’s body becomes a metonym for the US body politic on which issues are displayed and punished,<sup>78</sup> and through the literal and verbal beatings Taylor receives he becomes a scapegoat for the perceived

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<sup>72</sup> Taylor, until the finale, is assumed to be on an alien world where the customs, knowledge,] and experiences that he had built throughout his life have become practically useless as the planet of the apes is so different to his previous understanding of reality.

<sup>73</sup> The second human created by God was named woman because she ‘was taken out of man’ and Adam names his wife Eve; ‘because she was the mother of all living’ (Genesis 2:23 & 3:20, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (New York: Harper, 1983)).

<sup>74</sup> McHugh, ‘Horses in Blackface,’ 45.

<sup>75</sup> The name ‘Bright Eyes’ is not a reference to Richard Adams’ novel *Watership Down* (London: Rex Collings, 1972), the animation *Watership Down* (dir. Martin Rosen, 1978) or the film’s theme-song ‘Bright Eyes’ written by Mike Batt and sung by Art Garfunkel.

<sup>76</sup> Kael, ‘Apes Must be Remembered, Charlie,’ 108.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

<sup>78</sup> Discussion of the American body can be found in the previous chapter ‘Framing the Subject: Identity Politics in *Planet of the Apes*.’

shame of a nation. Taylor is a metonym for US society, as he embodies the image of formative notions of American masculinity: a blonde, white, healthy male, a vision of rugged individualism, best known for playing Moses in *The Ten Commandments* in 1956. He is the ‘archetype of what makes America win’;<sup>79</sup> someone who represents a peculiar dichotomy where Kael believes the audience will be caught between feeling admiration for Taylor, and by extension the United States’ strength, whilst feeling repulsion towards its history of violence.

### **Taylor-Moses**

Taylor comes from a society that has destroyed itself. He is put on a new world, becoming a new Adam, and acts as a link between two eras of human history; a change from an old (testament) world to a new one. Therefore, alongside the reading of Taylor as Adam there is a possible reading of a Taylor-Moses. Taylor is a redemptive figure who is sent out into the universe by the U.S. government to find new civilisations and perhaps a way of resolving the problems on Earth. Once he is on the planet of the apes he becomes a Moses-figure for the savage humans who need a leader (spiritual and otherwise) to lead the out of slavery into the Promised-Land and a new way of living for a sustainable future. Taylor explores space briefly experiencing freedom from the restrictions and imperfections of his homeland and engages with other elements of the universe (creation), only to be literally put on trial for humanity’s mistakes. His trial that also reflects upon the Sanhedrin trial of Jesus,<sup>80</sup> and Taylor and Nova’s eventual release into the Forbidden Zone (heaven/hell) gives the remnants of human civilisation a clean slate, a chance for redemption.

Throughout the development of the American science fiction genre ‘the Christ myth and the Jesus story’ has been a recurring narrative and character structure.<sup>81</sup> From ‘spiritual impulses’ and ‘biblical allusions’ to representations of an ‘allegorical Jesus’ science fiction has made use of redemptive narrative espoused in the New Testament.

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<sup>79</sup> Kael, ‘Apes Must be Remembered, Charlie,’ 108.

<sup>80</sup> Sanhedrin trial of Jesus – this refers to the account of the trial of Jesus as presented in the canonical gospels (Matthew 26:57–68, Mark 14:53–65, Luke 22:63–71, and John 18:12–24) where Jesus is brought before the Jewish council before his trial before Pontius Pilate where he was sentenced to death.

<sup>81</sup> Stephenson Humphries-Brook, *Cinematic Saviour: Hollywood’s Making of the American Christ* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger, 2006), 111.

*Planet of the Apes* has more than mere biblical allusions; it makes references directly to several figures from across several traditions, linking the plight of the main character (Taylor) to existing sacred narratives. Despite the anti-establishment message of *Planet of the Apes* the film forms part of filmic discourse that uses and structures itself around religious imagery. Whether intended as critique or not the incorporation of such images works to show how religion and specifically the Judeo-Christian traditions have become ingrained in U.S. society.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

*Planet of the Apes* cannot be divorced from its context and, as this thesis continues to argue, a film is a representation of the period that created it. However, in terms of a religious reading of *Planet of the Apes* the film responds not only to the immediate period, but also to a much longer religious discourse that has developed across U.S. history. Remnants of previous periods and religious movements all form part of an understanding of the United States in the twentieth century, and to deny the longevity of the issues raised in *Planet of the Apes* is to misrepresent not only the film but also the cultural and political changes which occurred during the sixties: the context of the conception, creation, and release of *Planet of the Apes*. Role-reversal and biblical archetypes are used to obliquely expose the contradictions allied with a society that allows faith to become confused with constitutional law.

*Planet of the Apes* directly references the history and culture of the United States and its narrative is not simply a reinterpretation of a biblical story or a parody of court cases played out throughout US history. The film uses elements of these narratives to provide structure to its discussion and also to generate symbolic meaning allowing communication with the audience on both a denotative and connotative level. *Planet of the Apes* critiques the formal structures and experiences of America during the Cold War, a period when practically every area of society came under suspicion fuelled by a growing 'culture of paranoia'.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Culture: From the Kennedy Assassination to the X-Files* (London: Routledge, 2000), 58.

The United States' ongoing discussion of the separation between the state and dominant religious institutions and traditions gained new momentum during the sixties. US lawmakers and politicians were shown to use the Constitution to curtail the influence that proponents of Christian fundamentalism had gained over the country. The national education reforms that took place throughout the sixties via Supreme Court rulings (such as the outlawing of enforced daily prayer and Bible reading) further confirmed attempts to reinstate the 'wall of separation' that was intended to ensure that religious intuitions and the lore they upheld did not impact upon the political decision making process.

*Planet of the Apes* proposes an alternative reality where human advances in science and technology have permitted intergalactic planetary exploration but also presents a future Earth where society has stagnated because of the dictations of a religious institution. The erasing of the line dividing science, the state, and religion in *Planet of the Apes* is shown to be twofold. On one hand the orangutans' control over scientific experimentation has prevented the creation of apocalyptic weaponry, but on the other its restriction of scientific research has guaranteed the continuance of a retrogressive society. The film discusses both the possibilities of science, from both a positive and negative perspective, and the impact religion can have upon the development of a society as it is so entwined with its scientific advancement.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### *PLANET OF THE APES* AND THE VIETNAM WAR: REWORKING AMERICAN MYTHS

*Does man, that marvel of the universe, that glorious paradox who has sent me to the stars,  
still make war against his brother?*

- Taylor

#### INTRODUCTION:

*Planet of the Apes* is an allegory of the Vietnam War. The imagery and rhetoric employed by the filmmakers allows in part the film to be interpreted as a commentary upon the U.S. experience of Vietnam from a counter-cultural perspective. *Planet of the Apes* takes the war to its most destructive imagined conclusion: nuclear annihilation. The shocking finale confirms that the future of the United States is under threat, not only from external aggressors but also, from its own technology and involvement in foreign wars.

The Vietnam War caused a schism in U.S. political and social discourse, which did not always follow clear partisan lines. ‘Americans turned against each other in bitter conflict over what some called genocide, and what others called a patriotic defence of freedom.’<sup>1</sup> It was not, as popular memory suggests, an entirely unpopular war; statistics throughout the war period indicated that that less than half of Americans were opposed to the war at any one time. In February 1968, the month of New York premier of *Planet of the Apes*, only 46% of polled Americans opposed involvement in Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> It divided the country, yet the popular media tended towards a more negative portrayal of the war despite continued assurances from the White House that the war was neither a failure nor unwinnable. As President Nixon noted in his memoirs, the U.S. media’s presentation of the war gave ‘the impression that we were fighting in military and moral quicksand, rather than towards an important and worthwhile objective’ which led to ‘a serious demoralization of the home front.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 241.

<sup>2</sup> February 1968 poll: 46% opposed, 42% support, 12% undecided, in John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973), 54-55.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 350.

## THE VIETNAM WAR AND SIXTIES CINEMA

‘American film was bound up in the American experience of Vietnam’.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the late sixties and early seventies Hollywood output was greatly affected by the Vietnam War and the public perceptions of it. However, this apparent fixation was not displayed through open references to the war but in implicit commentaries. Hollywood was reluctant to finance films that made direct references to the war, a precarious subject matter for a profit-driven industry. If filmmakers openly critiqued the war then they risked a sizable percentage of their potential audience and therefore reducing their possible income in a period when cinema ‘battled a near decade-low average weekly attendance of nineteen million’.<sup>5</sup> Even after U.S. withdrawal from the region in 1975 ‘the supercharged subject of the Vietnam War was handled warily’ and perhaps even considered ‘box-office poison’.<sup>6</sup>

John Wayne’s jingoistic *Green Berets* (1968) was one of the only films set specifically in Vietnam to be released at the height of the conflict.<sup>7</sup> *Green Berets* was ‘really a western in disguise’ attempting to show the Vietnam War as a conventional affair imbued with the spirit of the American frontier;<sup>8</sup> the Vietcong were posited as the Indians and the U.S. army played at being John Wayne-styled cowboys.<sup>9</sup> The film was made with full U.S. military co-operation and told the story of Colonel Mike Kirby (Wayne) who led a group of tough Green Berets in a mission to capture a strategically significant Vietcong general. *Green Berets* was ‘conceived from the start as a work of propaganda’ that was intended to convince the audience, both domestic and foreign, that a U.S. military presence was absolutely necessary in Vietnam.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John Hellman, ‘The Vietnam Film and American Memory,’ in Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (eds.), *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 179.

<sup>5</sup> Leslie H. Abramson, ‘1968: Movies and the Failure of Nostalgia,’ in Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *American Cinema of the 1960s: Themes and Variations* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 194. Between 1946 and 1971 weekly cinema attendance dropped from more than 90 million to 15.8 million. The steepest decline occurred between 1956 and 1971 when weekly attendance dropped 62%. Also see Cobbett Steinberg, *Reel Facts: The Movie Book of Records* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 45-46.

<sup>6</sup> Harold Schechter and Jonna G. Semeiks, ‘Leatherstocking in ‘Nam: *Rambo*, *Platoon*, and the American Frontier Myth,’ *Journal of Popular Culture* 24:4 (1991), 17.

<sup>7</sup> One other lesser-known Vietnam film was released called *The Losers* (dir. Jack Starrett, 1970). Also set in the Asia it was about a group of bikers called the ‘Devil’s Advocates’ sent out into the Cambodian jungle to rescue an U.S. diplomat. See Eben J. Muse, *The Land of Nam: The Vietnam War in American Film* (Lanham, M.D.: Scarecrow Press Inc., 1995).

<sup>8</sup> See later discussion within this chapter of the Turner’s Frontier Thesis in the section entitled: ‘Vietnam and *Planet of the Apes*: Reworking the Frontier Myth.’

<sup>9</sup> Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Granta Publications, 1999), 25.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Slotkin, *The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 520.

‘The Vietnam War was not a John Wayne War; the *Green Berets* war was.’<sup>11</sup> Structured like a World War Two or western genre film, *Green Berets* had clearly defined battles and achievable quantifiable goals, a luxury that was not afforded to the military in Vietnam. Although *Green Berets* was successful at the U.S. box office bringing in almost \$11 million domestically and a further \$9 million overseas,<sup>12</sup> it was almost universally panned by critics at the time of release and has yet to receive plaudits in retrospect. *New York Times* critic Renata Adler, called the film ‘vile and insane’ and ‘a caricature of patriotism’ commenting upon *Green Berets*’ over-simplification of the war and its reliance upon the symbols, themes and narrative devices of other types of war genre films (western and Second World War films).<sup>13</sup>

The box office success of *Green Berets* can be most clearly attributed to Wayne’s ‘position as an icon, an embodiment of authority, masculinity, love of country, and other allegedly endangered American virtues.’<sup>14</sup> But the success of *Green Berets* can also be ascribed to the fact that this was mainstream Hollywood’s first (and only) attempt at directly representing military combat in Vietnam. Yet despite this popularity *Green Berets* ‘made barely a ripple in the veil of Hollywood’s avoidance of Vietnam as a subject’ and there were no popular attempts to represent the war directly until the 1970s.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the critical failure of *Green Berets*, the war was not ignored by Hollywood. Writing in 1973, Julian Smith noted that even though Hollywood did not approach the war directly it did produce ‘bigger and better films about intolerance.’<sup>16</sup> As evidenced by films like Sam Peckinpah’s *Straw Dogs* (1971) where David, a timid research mathematician played by Dustin Hoffman, relocates to his English wife’s Cornish hometown in search of peace from the United States’ increasingly aggressive protest movements, only to be driven to extremely violent actions by a gang of locals. David’s actions are justified as he protects himself against savage attackers; *Straw Dogs* acts as a fantasy of potency where the American male is able to defend his homestead. As noted by Hoffman the film was inspired by a seemingly contradictory reaction to the Vietnam War, saying: ‘I was against the war in

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<sup>11</sup> Muse, *The Land of Nam*, 45.

<sup>12</sup> Tony Shaw, *Hollywood’s Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 223.

<sup>13</sup> Renata Adler, ‘Screen: *Green Berets* as Viewed by John Wayne: War Movie Arrives at the Warner Theatre,’ *New York Times*, (20 June, 1968), 48.

<sup>14</sup> James T. Campbell, “‘Print the Legend’: John Wayne and Postwar American Culture,” *Reviews in American History* 28:3 (2000), 465.

<sup>15</sup> Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 531.

<sup>16</sup> Julian Smith, ‘Look Away, Look Away, Look Away, Movie Land,’ *Journal of Popular Film* 2:1 (Winter, 1973), 44



Vietnam, and yet violence also attracted me, and I thought that maybe I could put some of that into the character.’<sup>17</sup>

Hollywood managed to make only tangential references to the war and used other settings to play out issues concerning Vietnam. The war comedy *M\*A\*S\*H* (dir. Robert Altman, 1970) that was later adapted into a television series (1972-1983) may have been set in the midst of the Korean War, but its ‘long-haired, pot-smoking rebels’ seemed out of place in Korea; they were ‘instantly recognizable to an audience bred on Vietnam.’<sup>18</sup> The anti-military sentiments represented in *M\*A\*S\*H* and other (not Vietnam) war films such as *Patton* (dir. Franklin J. Schaffner, 1970), and *Catch-22* (dir. Mike Nichols, 1970) showed that, as Elaine M. Bapis writes:

By 1970 a popular image of the disillusioned, disorientated, young draftees entering a war they never understood replaced the earlier Green Berets figure. Now clichéd, those images framed the new cinematic discourse about Vietnam, war, and manhood.<sup>19</sup>

Filmmakers were aware of the war’s contentious position but they were also unlikely to overlook an issue that so obviously ‘enthralled the American public.’<sup>20</sup> Increasingly disturbing images of atrocity were reported directly to the public via the television and newspaper media, images that have formed part of the ‘mediated memory of the Vietnam War’ that continues to influence modern interpretations and recollections.<sup>21</sup> ‘All the films of the period... were to some degree oblique metaphors for the war’;<sup>22</sup> allusions to contemporary events and opinions were subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) included. Those references may not be instantly obvious to a contemporary audience, but were far more apparent to a generation constantly confronted with the idioms and images associated with the war.

This chapter will look at the way in which *Planet of the Apes* can be seen, in part, as a Vietnam War allegory. The film uses rhetorical and pictorial references to make comment on America’s position in the Vietnam War. It takes a negative stance on U.S. involvement and

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<sup>17</sup> Dustin Hoffman quoted in Mark Kermode, ‘A Wild Bunch in Cornwall,’ *The Observer* (3 August, 2003). Available at: < <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2003/aug/03/features.review>> [Last accessed: 10/08/11].

<sup>18</sup> Smith, ‘Look Away,’ 37.

<sup>19</sup> Elaine M. Bapis, *Camera and Action: American Film as Agent of Social Change, 1965-1975* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2008), 116.

<sup>20</sup> Muse, *The Land of Nam*, 46.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Hoskins, *Televising War: From Vietnam to Iraq* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 19.

<sup>22</sup> Albert Auster and Leonard Quart, ‘Hollywood and Vietnam: *The Triumph of the Will*,’ *Cineaste* 9:3 (1979), 4.

can be seen as one of the many films to allegorically deal with the themes and issues relating to the Vietnam War. *Planet of the Apes* was released across the United States at the height of the U.S. Army's involvement in Vietnam, so understanding the historical background for the period of release is vital to appreciating how the film can be understood as a response to the war.

### **THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE VIETNAM QUAGMIRE**

U.S. involvement in Vietnam began in the 1940s during the Second World War, continued at a small advisory level to French colonial forces in the 1950s, peaked during the 1960s and early 1970s as increasing numbers of U.S. combat troops were deployed, and came to an end in 1975 with the fall of Saigon. It is the longest and most controversial war in U.S. history and the 'Vietnam experience' continues to 'haunt' the generations that follow it as well as those that 'planned and fought it.'<sup>23</sup> The Vietnam War happened simultaneously to other major events within the United States, including burgeoning protest movements demanding social change. During the sixties and seventies the United States fought a war on two fronts; as the military coordinated actions in Vietnam, the successive administrations were faced with great social upheaval, including a fervent anti-war movement. The war at home was intertwined with the war abroad; there was, as Mary Kathryn Barbier remarks:

[A] feedback loop between Vietnam and the 1960s, for while the upheaval of the 1960s is cited as the cause for the US defeat in Vietnam, at the same time the Vietnam War is blamed for, at the very least, contributing to the disruption of American society during that decade.<sup>24</sup>

The Vietnam War, as a specifically U.S.-led conflict, can be seen to have begun in 1965 when the first combat troops were sent in on the orders of President Lyndon B. Johnson.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Christian Appy and Alexander Bloom, 'Vietnam War Mythology and the Rise of Public Cynicism,' in Bloom (ed.), *Long Time Gone*, 72.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Kathryn Barbier, 'Vietnam in History and Memory,' in Andrew Weist, Mary Kathryn Barbia, and Glenn Robins (eds.), *America and the Vietnam War: Re-Examining the Culture and History of a Generation* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 5.

<sup>25</sup> The first combat troops were not sent until 1965 but Johnson was the fourth president to be involved in war in Vietnam and South East Asia. The United States entered into the region and the war incrementally between 1950 and 1965. President Harry S. Truman's administration instigated involvement in the First Indochina War supporting the French with modest military and financial aid. President Dwight D. Eisenhower supported the separation of Vietnam helping to build a nation of South Vietnam by dispatching military advisors and the CIA to coordinate psychological warfare against the North. President John F. Kennedy remained committed to the Cold War policies of his predecessors and covertly deployed 400 Green Berets to train the South Vietnamese Army and increased the number of advisors. See Andrew J. Rotter, *The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).

Johnson inherited the war from Kennedy and considered losing Vietnam to communism untenable, saying: 'I am not going to lose in Vietnam. I am not going to be the President who saw South East Asia go the way of China.'<sup>26</sup>

There had, however, been fighting in Vietnam for decades before the United States became militarily committed. The war had its roots in the First Indochina War (1946-1954), which was a Vietnamese struggle led by the Vietminh against French Imperialism.<sup>27</sup> In 1954 the French pulled out of Vietnam following a decisive defeat at Dien Bien Phu,<sup>28</sup> and following the Geneva Conference that negotiated ceasefire between the French Legion and the Vietnamese, the country was split along the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel. Control of the communist North was given to Ho Chi Minh; the non-communist South, to the Emperor Bao Dai. This divide was initially intended to be a temporary measure until elections could take place to establish a unified government. The separation remained, and fighting continued between the two sides of the divide. South Vietnam was supported by the United States and North Vietnam received support from its communist allies, most notably the Soviet Union.

By 1965, the United States had transformed a limited advisory commitment to support the South Vietnamese in their fight against the communist North into a major war that would see thousands of young American men drafted into a decade-long conflict. Their construction of Vietnam 'as a Cold War battlefield' drew the U.S. military and civilian leadership into the belief that failure in Vietnam would lead to the loss of Asia in their continued fight against the spread of communism.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Tet Offensive:**

*Planet of the Apes* was released at the peak of the Vietnam War. Its premiere in February 1968 coincided with the Tet Offensive, which took place between 31<sup>st</sup> January and 24<sup>th</sup> February 1968. The Tet Offensive has been interpreted as a turning point in the war; the perceived failure of the military shattered 'the grand illusion' that had surrounded the

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<sup>26</sup> Johnson quoted in: Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and his Times* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, New York: Mariner Books, 2002), 726.

<sup>27</sup> The Vietminh (abbreviation of Việt Nam Độc Lập Đồng Minh Hội – League for the Independence of Vietnam) was formed to gain independence for all of Vietnam from the French Empire.

<sup>28</sup> The Battle of Dien Bien Phu (13<sup>th</sup> March-7<sup>th</sup> May 1954) was a decisive engagement often seen to mark the end of the First Indochina War (1946-1954) and the French military presence in SE Asia. The battle saw the comprehensive defeat of a French garrison that impacted upon the Geneva Conference, which was already underway, the battle ensured the removal of the French legion from the region.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Atwood Laurence, *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 285.

Vietnam War.<sup>30</sup> ‘The Tet offensive was the war in microcosm – superior American firepower against superior North Vietnamese political will.’<sup>31</sup> Although technically a U.S. military success if assessing in terms of body counts, this North Vietnamese led attack greatly increased public opposition to the war.<sup>32</sup>

During the first three months of the fourth year of U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam, the North Vietnamese forces mounted a widespread military offensive against U.S. bases and South Vietnamese districts that had previously been thought safe from attack. The leaders of the offensive had chosen the Buddhist Lunar New Year (Tet) as the time for the attack as traditionally both sides observed a cease-fire. Thousands were killed throughout the 25 days of the offensive, and although the body count of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army was far higher, the impact of the offensive on the U.S. perception of the war was unprecedented. The early reports in the media suggested ‘a smashing Communist victory’; this image of failure lingered in the minds of the public and was overall left ‘uncorrected [by] the media.’<sup>33</sup>

In an article published in the *New York Review of Books*, Andrew Kopkind commented that ‘the realities of war were not so much changed... what has changed is the way the war is perceived.’<sup>34</sup> The Tet Offensive itself did not signal a massive change in the war on the ground, but it did cause irreparable damage to the Johnson administration and growing anti-war movement. ‘Tet was the first sustained period during which it could be said that the war appeared on television as a really brutal affair.’<sup>35</sup> Footage showing military and civilian casualties rose considerably across all of the U.S. networks throughout the first three months of 1968, with the volume of images rising from 2.4 to 6.8 times a week.<sup>36</sup>

By the end of February 1968, some of the most revered figures of U.S. broadcast journalism spoke out against the war and the possibility of a victory for the allies. Walter Cronkite, one of the most famous anchor men of the period, made a memorable statement in the final stages of the offensive following a visit he had made to the region. Cronkite openly gave his opinions on the state of the war saying:

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<sup>30</sup> Isserman, *America Divided*, 231.

<sup>31</sup> Clarence R. Wyatt, *Paper Soldiers: The American Press and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 182.

<sup>32</sup> Isserman, *America Divided*, 231.

<sup>33</sup> Spencer C. Tucker, *Vietnam* (London: University College London Press, 1999), 140.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Kopkind, ‘The Thaw,’ *New York Review of Books* (25 April, 1968), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 171.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 171.

For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate... And with each escalation, the world comes closer to the brink of cosmic disaster. To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet satisfactory conclusion... But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honourable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.<sup>37</sup>

This declaration by Cronkite, who was viewed as an ‘oracle of truth’, substantiated the growing realisation that the war was not going to end in victory.<sup>38</sup> The newsmen did not cause the shift in opinion but rather announced it, providing ‘a confirmation of characteristics and trends that had been around a long time.’<sup>39</sup>

Pentagon officials who were ‘obsessed with body counts’ insisted that the massive enemy body count indicated that the United States was winning the war.<sup>40</sup> By the end of 1968 the U.S. death toll stood at 30, 610, and in that year alone 14, 589 had died, making it by far the bloodiest year of the conflict.<sup>41</sup> Although the extraordinary numbers of Vietnamese deaths that had occurred up to this point had been regularly reported, the news of sudden increases in U.S. fatalities changed the war.

### **Operation Rolling Thunder:**

1968 also saw the conclusion of the extensive Washington-controlled bombing campaign called Rolling Thunder. This sustained aerial assault conducted against North Vietnam ran from March 1965 until November 1968. The campaign was intended to weaken North Vietnamese forces through continued bombing of bases, industrial centres and military transportation routes. Rolling Thunder was also implemented in order to raise the flagging morale in South Vietnam amongst U.S. and native troops. The industrial centres which were bombed were not highly valued assets within the North Vietnamese economy: industrial progress was underdeveloped throughout the country due to a lack of capital, unskilled workers and management, all legacies of the French occupation. In turn, the North

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<sup>37</sup> Walter Cronkite, ‘We are Mired in a Stalemate,’ Broadcast Transcript, *CBS News* (27 February, 1968), UC Berkeley Media Resources Centre: Available at: <<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/pacificviet/cronkitevietnam.html>> [Last accessed: 22/09/2009].

<sup>38</sup> Chafe, *Unfinished Journey*, 337.

<sup>39</sup> Wyatt, *Paper Soldiers*, 182.

<sup>40</sup> Chafe, *Unfinished Journey*, 282.

<sup>41</sup> Statistic taken from James H. Willbanks, *The Tet Offensive: A Concise History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 77.

Vietnamese government preferred to 'allocate resources according to ideological rather than economic criteria,'<sup>42</sup> which only further stunted the growth of the economy.

The U.S. military used conventional coercion tactics against a pastoral third world nation. Its plan to destroy industry and infrastructure was not easily achieved and the campaign barely made an impact upon the economy or the Northern war effort. If anything the Rolling Thunder bolstered the income available to North Vietnam: prior to its commencement the North received \$95 million in economic aid and practically no military aid; however, from 1965-1968 this increased to \$600 million in economic aid and in excess of \$1 billion in military aid.<sup>43</sup> Three months after the end to Rolling Thunder and the end of the Johnson administration (and the commencement of Nixon's presidency) the United States and North Vietnam entered peace talks.

### **Nuclear War & MAD**

Anxieties about the Vietnam War were linked into wider concerns about the Cold War and the possibility of nuclear annihilation. The nuclear brinkmanship of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which had happened only six years prior to the release of *Planet of the Apes* in 1962, was still an issue in the sixties and seventies. The arms race between the Soviet Union and the United States continued throughout the Cold War with a constant fear that the one-upmanship that occurred throughout the period would lead to nuclear war and in turn mutual destruction.

There was discussion as to the feasibility of using an A-bomb as a method of ending the Vietnam War. Barry Goldwater, the Republican senator for Arizona and Republican candidate in the 1964 presidential election, was famed for his position on nuclear weapons. As part of his election campaign Goldwater proposed using the nuclear weapons rather than simply retaining them as a deterrent. Johnson's Democratic presidential campaign for the 1964 election subverted the Goldwater slogan 'in your heart you know he's right', using the slogans 'in your guts, you know he's nuts', and 'in your heart, you know he might'. The Democrats focused a great deal of attention on Goldwater's susceptibility to an active nuclear weapon strategy and his belief that nuclear weapons could be used effectively in the limited Vietnam War.

Mutually assured destruction (MAD) is a military deterrence strategy in which full-scale use of nuclear armaments is avoided as neither power wishes to be annihilated. The

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Anthony Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 189.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

threat and fear of obliteration is assumed to prevent either side from resorting to nuclear weapons in a conflict. While the United States' use of atomic bombs did bring an end to the war in the Pacific at great expense, hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians and soldiers were injured or killed. Strategically during the Cold War MAD was seen as a way to prevent an unlimited conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both powers continued to build and develop their nuclear technology, yet importantly 'the point of stockpiling nuclear weapons was not the anticipation of ever *using* them, but of *preventing* their use by the other side.'<sup>44</sup> As historian Gerald De Groot notes 'once the atomic powers decided that the best protection against a Bomb was another Bomb, any talks of arms reduction was rendered irrevocably futile.'<sup>45</sup>

'The Bomb was a potential menace; Vietnam was actuality.'<sup>46</sup> The proliferation of nuclear weapons increased greatly throughout the sixties and seventies yet, surprisingly, 'the public focus on atomic warfare and its dangers declined.'<sup>47</sup> Attention shifted from a fear of nuclear weaponry to other more immediate issues. The war and the domestic turmoil that ensued as a result pushed the nuclear war issue into the background. An issue that had once been so vehemently discussed and feared was now a small part of the 'complex cultural and political reality' of the United States in the sixties.<sup>48</sup>

Nuclear annihilation became an almost abstract concept; the theory of deterrence and the knowledge that these weapons existed but were not actually intended for use meant that the issue did not continue to be seen as a major concern. However, the dystopian post-apocalyptic cinema released in the late sixties and early seventies would seem to suggest that the issue was still influential. If only as a narrative tool, nuclear war and its aftermath appeared regularly in the science fiction genre. The fear of nuclear war, although not constantly in the public news media, still appeared in the films of the time. Science fiction films structured narratives around a potential post-apocalyptic future, investigating the world after the explosion of nuclear warheads.

As already mentioned, many of the science fiction films released between 1968 and 1977 presented a post-apocalyptic reality irrevocably changed by nuclear war. A clear example of this is *Planet of the Apes* with its shock ending, where it is revealed that the

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Boyer, 'From Activism to Apathy: America and the Nuclear Issue, 1963-1980,' *Bulletin* 40:7 (September-August, 1984), 19.

<sup>45</sup> Gerald J. De Groot, *The Bomb: A Life* (London: Random House, 2004), ix.

<sup>46</sup> Boyer, 'From Activism to Apathy,' 20.

<sup>47</sup> A. Constandina Titus, 'Back to Ground Zero: Old Footage Through New Lenses,' *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 11:2 (Spring, 1983), 3.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Boyer, 'From Activism to Apathy,' 20.

planet of the apes is actually Earth, an Earth which has been greatly changed by nuclear and chemical warfare (as indicated by smaller details alongside the Statue of Liberty). For example during the trek sequence after the astronauts escape their sinking ship the sky is shown as alien, flickering between a recognisable cloudy sky to a black and blue negative image indicating an instability on the planet.

The following analysis will look at how *Planet of the Apes* can be seen as a discussion of the Vietnam War. It will examine the Vietnam War as a colonial endeavour of the French empire and how this subsequently became a U.S. military operation. In doing so, I present Boule's *La Planète des Singes* as a possible commentary upon French colonialism, specifically considering how this translated into a popular U.S. cultural narrative. A discussion of the Frontier Myth follows, looking at how Vietnam as a U.S. conflict is reflected in *Planet of the Apes* through its utilisation of some of the iconography and ideals of the Frontier, which informed not only popular cultural output, but also the political arena of the 1960s. Comparisons are made to *Star Trek* (1966 - 1969), the most prominent science fiction narrative to utilise the Frontier Myth in its original television series, and how this contemporary to the *Apes*' franchise dealt with the complexities of the Cold War. This leads on to an analysis of the way in which science fiction can be seen to borrow from other genres, and specifically how *Planet of the Apes* can be seen as incorporating elements from the Western and how this fits into the wider discussion of the Frontier thesis and its impact upon U.S. culture. The final section of this chapter then discusses the warning against nuclear war as presented through *Planet of the Apes*' famous finale. This section appears within the chapter as it will be argued that the inclusion of this scene could be interpreted as a commentary on Vietnam; the nuclear war which destroyed the planet was dispatched as a way of ending U.S. entrenchment in Vietnam. The United States had used nuclear weaponry in the Pacific War against Japan and there had been discussion of the possibility of using it to end this much longer U.S. engagement. *Planet of the Apes* imagines a future where this was allowed to happen.

#### **THE AMERICANISATION OF *LA PLANÈTE DES SINGES*: THE FIRST INDOCHINA WAR**<sup>49</sup>

Pierre Boule's 1963 novel *La Planète des Singes*, the original source material for the *Planet of the Apes* franchise, can be read as an allegory of French involvement in Indochina. The

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<sup>49</sup> The war between the French and the Vietnamese is also referred to as: The Franco-Vietnamese War, the French Indochina War, the Franco-Vietminh War, the Indochina War, the First Vietnam War, the Dirty War (la sale guerra – a term used by French communists and leftist intellectuals during the conflict e.g. Sartre) and the Anti-French Resistance War (in Contemporary Vietnam).



book may have been of particular interest to Hollywood producer Arthur P. Jacobs because of the fantastical story and also because the central concerns of the novel would translate well to an American milieu. The film adaptation changes substantial elements of the original source novel in order to ‘Americanise’ the content and make the story relevant and more accessible to a predominately U.S. audience. The changes to the narrative and visual elements described in the book allow the film adaptation to explore ideas and issues which the original story arc would not have permitted.

The novel’s French colonial context is relevant to an examination of *Planet of the Apes* as a response to the Vietnam War. *Planet of the Apes* became one of the ‘best-known works in all of American popular culture,<sup>50</sup> but it was adapted from a French novel that can be seen to have responded to the Boule’s experience of colonialism in South East Asia. This Americanisation of *La Planète des Singes* is interesting because of the similar position that the United States was considered to hold in the region following U.S. strategic military involvement in Vietnam in the years following the release of the book and the development of the film’s script.

By entering into the First Indochina War on the side of the French the United States betrayed its roots as a nation that had fought its own anti-colonial war gaining independence from the British in the American War of Independence (1775-1783). The U.S. government considered war in Vietnam to ‘fit into a global political strategy to defend the “free world” against communism.’<sup>51</sup> However, U.S. support of French attempts to re-establish colonial control in Indochina, and specifically in Vietnam, ‘could not but also be in practice, a continuation of European imperialism on the part of the United States.’<sup>52</sup>

The symbolic content of *La Planète des Singes* can be attributed in part to the personal encounters of the author. Pierre Boule served as a resistance fighter and secret agent in Burma during the Second World War and these experiences ‘supplied the background and atmosphere’ for the novels he wrote throughout his career.<sup>53</sup> He was captured as a prisoner of war whilst working on the Mekong River and subjected to forced labour. Boule’s work, which also includes *William Conrad* (1950) and *Le Pont de la Rivière Kwai* (1952), was heavily influenced by his experiences of colonialism and as a resistance combatant. ‘Many of the writers who survived the war felt the need to write work which allowed a cathartic re-

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<sup>50</sup> M. Keith Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas, *The Science Fiction Handbook* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 57.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 178.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 178.

<sup>53</sup> Lucille Frackman Becker, *Pierre Boule* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 66.

enactment of their sense of the end of the civilized world under Hitler.<sup>54</sup> But when asked whether his books, and in particular *Le Pont de la Rivière Kwai*, were intended as anti-military commentaries Boule responded that it was neither ‘militaristic nor anti-militaristic’ and that he intended his work to be ‘an illustration of a general “absurdity” which could as well have been located in other times, other places and with other personages.’<sup>55</sup>

*La Planète des Singes* is located in another time, on another world with not only other people but also other animals. It is about the destruction of human society, not through war or nuclear annihilation (as suggested in the film adaptation) but through humanity’s idleness and ignorance. The novel might therefore be read as a comment on the world’s complacency at the actions of Nazi Germany in the years preceding the commencement of World War Two.

In *La Planète des Singes*, the main character is a French journalist called Ulysse Merou who accompanies a team of astronauts on an expedition into the year 2500 during which he crash lands on an alien, yet Earth-like, planet ruled by apes. Humans exist on the planet but they are mute animals, who steal and destroy the clothing and technology of the stranded scientists. Merou is captured and treated as one of the animal-humans and experimented upon until he is able to prove his intelligence. He falls in love with and impregnates one of the planet’s primitive humans, whom he names Nova. Merou is released from captivity but is forced to flee the planet with Nova. It is revealed that humans had once ruled the alien planet, and that they had built an advanced technological society and enslaved apes to perform manual tasks. Eventually humans became entirely dependent upon their ape slaves until they became so idle and mentally incapable that the apes were able to overthrow them. Humans further degenerated into a primitive state. Upon learning of the history of the ape planet, which is uncovered by the presence of Merou (the missing link), the apes see the intelligent humans (Merou and the child he has with Nova) as a threat and decide to exterminate them to put a stop to the propagation of the intelligent strand of humanity. Nova and Merou escape with their child to return to Earth only to discover that it too has been taken over by apes.

Critic Laurence M. Porter describes *La Planète des Singes* as an allegory of the French experience in Vietnam and Africa, as he explains:

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<sup>54</sup> Laurence M. Porter, ‘Text of Anxiety, Text of Desire: Boule’s *La Planète des Singes* as Popular Culture’, *The French Review* 68:4 (March, 1995), 710.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Boule quoted in Georges Joyaux. ‘*The Bridge over the River Kwai*: From the Novel to the Movie,’ *Literature/Film Quarterly* 2 (1974), 179.

*La Planète des singes* [...] ventilated an anxiety more current, and one peculiar to France. It was published in 1963. France has just lost nearly all her overseas empire between 1945 and 1962. The story of a 'superior' race (the humans: read, the French Caucasians) losing its resolve and vitality, and being taken over by an 'inferior' one (the apes: read, the North African Arabs, the black Africans, the Vietnamese in SE Asia), must have resonated powerfully in the political unconscious of a French person of 1963.<sup>56</sup>

France had once been a great colonial power. The French colonial empire lasted for over four centuries and included territories that expanded across five continents. The empire reached its peak in the years between the First and Second World Wars and affected in the region of one hundred million colonised people living in an area that exceeded seven million square miles. The empire was seen to come to an end following a process of decolonisation that concluded with the peace treaty for the Algerian War of Independence in 1962. As well as the fight for control in North Africa, France was involved in lengthy colonial war in Vietnam. The French involvement in Vietnam came to an end in 1954, only a few months before the beginning of the Algerian War (1954-1962).

The anti-colonial war in Vietnam 'has been displaced from the history of decolonization and resituated primarily as an arena for the ideological struggle between capitalism and communism.'<sup>57</sup> It moved from being a French war to being a war associated most strongly with the United States. At the time of entering war in Indochina both the U.S. and French military expected victory over a country that was thought to be inferior.

*Planet of the Apes* bypasses many of the novel's wider concerns about colonialism and the destruction of the human race and specifically focuses upon more pressing issues within the United States during the sixties. It reflects 'the anguish of "America's" Vietnam War at its height'.<sup>58</sup> The film also distils the wider concerns about apocalypse into a commentary on the fear experienced by a nation entrenched in a foreign war. Although the book was originally written in French it does not base any of the narrative within a specifically French context, and therefore it was both ripe for and open to adaptation to film for a broader audience.

Many of the central plot points from the novel are cut or modified for the 1968 film interpretation. The most prominent change is to the conclusion to the story. The end of the original story involved the revelation that Earth was doomed to become another ape

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<sup>56</sup> Porter, 'Text of Anxiety,' 710.

<sup>57</sup> Anshuman Mondal, 'South and East Asia,' in John McLeod (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 143.

<sup>58</sup> Porter, 'Text of Anxiety,' 713, n.8.

dominated nightmare, the protagonist returns to Earth after escaping the planet of the apes only to discover that it too has become a planet run by apes.<sup>59</sup> Merou names the planet he lands on Soror meaning sister in Latin highlighting the similarities the planet has to Earth, but it is clear that the planets are separate. Soror acts as a mirror to Earth. The film posits the narrative not only firmly on Earth but also specifically on the shores of the East Coast of the United States by using the iconic Statue of Liberty, thus ensuring that the audience clearly identifies the apes (and at points the humans) as ‘inverse [copies] of human civilisation’ and specifically U.S. civilisation.<sup>60</sup>

*La Planète des Singes* deals with the notion that humans are at the centre of the universe. The humans in the novel represent imperial France. Humanity is not abruptly usurped by the apes but gradually replaced as humans become increasingly dependent upon their ape slaves. Despite their superpower status as a major imperial power France and the French Legion were unable to defeat the apparently inferior Vietnamese. The United States and France shared a ‘deprecating interwar perception of colonial Vietnam’ and it had ‘an unwavering belief’ in its own political, military and financial supremacy.<sup>61</sup> An underestimation of nationalist Vietnamese tactics and commitment ultimately led to the defeat of these two major powers.

Throughout the Vietnam War, the U.S. army and administration not only saw itself as being superior to the Vietnamese but also to the old-world imperialists they replaced. In *Planet of the Apes*, the United States is represented as seeing itself as, not only the world’s greatest super-power, but also the most powerful in the universe as Taylor and his crew travel out into the cosmos to discover and colonise. As the mission’s purpose is left unexplained the audience can draw its own conclusions as to the purpose of the operation. Taylor and his crew have been sent out into space to explore but the mission can be interpreted as a conquest to find new worlds to use and exploit as the United States continues to become the most dominant neo-colonial power.

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<sup>59</sup> Tim Burton’s 2001 remake of *Planet of the Apes* retained the ending imagined by Boulle with astronaut Leo Davidson (Mark Wahlberg) escaping the planet of the apes to discover that Earth has also fallen to ape rule.

<sup>60</sup> Blai Guarné (2008), ‘On Monkeys and Japanese: Mimicry and Anastrophe in Orientalist Representation’. In: Carles Prado-Fonts (ed.), ‘Orientalism’ [online dossier], *Digithum* 10 (2008), 26-36. Available at: <<http://www.uoc.edu/digithum/10/dt/eng/guarne.pdf>> [Last accessed: 07/10/09].

<sup>61</sup> Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 6.

## **VIETNAM & *PLANET OF THE APES*: REWORKING THE FRONTIER MYTH**

The Frontier Thesis,<sup>62</sup> first formulated by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893, argues that the United States' frontier past best explains its distinctive history, suggesting that it is the history and impact of the American Frontier rather than the homeland (Europe) that has formed the basis of the United States' identity.<sup>63</sup> Richard Slotkin's seminal monograph *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century* shows how the myth has infiltrated many areas of U.S. culture and analyses the effect this has had upon those who experience and enter a discourse with the texts that utilise frontier rhetoric. Of particular interest is the chapter entitled: 'Conquering New Frontiers: John Kennedy, John Wayne and the Myth of Heroic Leadership, 1960-1968.'<sup>64</sup> Here Slotkin analyses the way in which Kennedy utilised the myth of the Frontier in his election campaign and presidency. Filmmakers and television producers were influenced by the prominence of frontier rhetoric in the period; it is perceptible in their output and allusions to traditional Western imagery throughout a range of genres. *Planet of the Apes* can be seen to form part of a collection of works that utilised this imagery, in this instance drawing upon elements of the western, to combat the Vietnam War allegorically.

### **How the West (was) Lost: The Use of American Frontier Mythology**

The political rhetoric used by John F. Kennedy drew upon images and ideas from U.S. history. He spoke of a New Frontier and in doing so 'invested Vietnam with an expectation that made its frustrations apocalyptic.'<sup>65</sup> The American Frontier is one of the most significant myths in U.S. culture. Its evocation brings to mind the images and ideas upon the nation is built. As Richard Slotkin explains:

The Myth of the Frontier is one of the oldest myths, expressed in a body of literature, folklore, ritual historiography and polemics produced over a period of three centuries. Its symbols and concerns shaped the most prevalent genres of both nineteenth-century literary fiction and twentieth century movies. The myth celebrates the conquest and subjugation of a natural wilderness by entrepreneurial

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<sup>62</sup> Also referred to as The Turner Thesis and the Frontier Myth.

<sup>63</sup> See Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History,' in Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (eds.), *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice* (London: Longman, 1995), 58-78.

<sup>64</sup> 'Conquering New Frontiers: John Kennedy, John Wayne and the Myth of Heroic Leadership, 1960-1968,' in Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (Atheneum: New York, 1992), 489-548.

<sup>65</sup> Hellman, 'The Vietnam Film and American Memory,' 178.

individualists, who took heroic risks and so achieved windfall profits and explosive growth at prodigious speeds.<sup>66</sup>

The mythic quality of the Frontier, which was conjured up by the Kennedy administration's chosen epithet of the New Frontier, meant that the eventual failure in Vietnam could be seen to have been particularly traumatic. Vietnam had been infused with the principles of the Frontier, it was the United States' destiny to protect and preserve these third world nations, as it had once been their destiny to push the Frontier across the barren American plains. As John Hellman writes, Vietnam promised:

[The] qualities of America's remembered frontier triumphs: remoteness from dangerous confrontation with a major European power, a savage enemy who could be righteously hunted down, a wilderness landscape in which the American could renew his virtues where the European had proved only his vices, and the Asian people America historically saw as the appointed beneficiaries of its destiny. On a mythic Asian plain, the Special Forces could solve the tensions of bureaucratization, affluence, and racism; the frustrations of containment and nuclear stalemate; the desire to demonstrate all alignment with post-colonial people; and the anxious need to prove the 'toughness' of the contemporary American character.<sup>67</sup>

Kennedy's acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination for the 1960 presidential election used the term 'New Frontier' as a slogan which 'expressed in symbolic shorthand a new approach to the use of American power'.<sup>68</sup> By summoning this mythic imagery, Kennedy projected a particular image which suggested he should be seen in the position of the hero,<sup>69</sup> leading the United States into a new world: advancing civil liberties at home, and promoting democracy and a Western ideology internationally. In this nomination acceptance speech he said:

We stand at the edge of a New Frontier - the frontier of unfulfilled hopes and dreams, a frontier of unknown opportunities and beliefs in peril. Beyond that frontier are uncharted areas of science and

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Slotkin, 'Gunfighters and Green Berets: *The Magnificent Seven* and the Myth of Counter-Insurgency,' *Radical History Review* 44 (1989), 68.

<sup>67</sup> John Hellman, *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 51.

<sup>68</sup> Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 489.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 490.

space, unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered problems of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus.<sup>70</sup>

Vietnam was part of the frontier he spoke of. Kennedy's administration called for further action against the growing Communist sphere of influence and encouraged Americans to see Vietnam as part of this New Frontier in need of protection. It was to be considerably more invasive and far-reaching than the Frontier of the Old West, it now included areas far beyond the borders of United States and also beyond the bounds of what was at that time possible, specifically referring to the desire to be the first nation to land on the moon. Yet, Kennedy was not alone in his use of the language and iconography of the Frontier, it became:

[So] central to the cultural and political life of America in the 1960s that both sides in the growing national schism increasingly drew on it as they tried to renounce and redefine it as 'culture' and 'politics' grew increasingly indistinguishable.<sup>71</sup>

The term Manifest Destiny, when it originally appeared in the nineteenth century, was used to explicate the belief that the American settlers were destined to expand across America into the Western territories.<sup>72</sup> Kennedy suggested a new destiny for the United States in the twentieth-century; as one of the most powerful nations in the world it had the right and the responsibility to provide international aid ensuring the safety and perpetuation of their notion of democracy.

Slotkin suggests that the underestimation of Vietnamese native politics and military strength can be seen as a 'logical consequence of the settlers-vs.-Indians myth that informed the administration.'<sup>73</sup> The United States entered into a war with insufficient understanding of South Asian/Vietnamese culture and dramatically misjudged their opponents in a war that 'ruptured' the American myth and altered the way the United States and its international ventures would be interpreted for decades to come by those both on the home front and abroad.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> John F. Kennedy, 'Address of Senator John F. Kennedy Accepting the Democratic Party Nomination for the Presidency of the United States, 15 July, 1960.' Available at: <<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/JFK-Speeches>> [Last accessed: 19/08/2011].

<sup>71</sup> Rick Worland, 'From the New Frontier to the Final Frontier: *Star Trek* From Kennedy to Gorbachev,' *Film & History* 24:1/2 (February/May, 1994), 21.

<sup>72</sup> See Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

<sup>73</sup> Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 494.

<sup>74</sup> Hellman, 'The Vietnam Film and American Memory', 187.

*Planet of the Apes* draws upon this experience in Vietnam, making comment on the approach of the U.S. civilian and military forces in Vietnam. It posits a future United States with an overly confident government sending underprepared astronauts into an unknown environment, who expect to successfully impose themselves on the existing culture. Following their crash on the unknown planet, Taylor, Landon and Dodge are forced to leave the crash site to find food and shelter and during the trek across the canyon there is discussion of the elusive nature of their mission. The men talk about their personal reasons for joining the crew but fail to provide a concrete motive for the mission as a whole. The 'directionless wandering' of the U.S. astronauts reflects the lack of clarity which surrounded the Vietnam War and echoes the feelings of the troops in Vietnam and the vocal anti-war sector.<sup>75</sup> Draftees were fighting a war thousands of miles away in an unknown landscape, with unconventional battle lines, marking success with body counts instead of captured territory, and confusion over the enemy, as one marine exclaimed 'anybody can be the enemy, so everybody is.'<sup>76</sup>

The underdeveloped human herd could be seen as a metaphor of Vietnam society, or rather an interpretation the United States' racist attitude toward the Vietnamese.<sup>77</sup> As Taylor puts it 'if this is all they have, we'll be running the place in six months'; this egotism is quickly shattered when the apparently underdeveloped apes shoot Dodge and capture Taylor and Landon. Just as the United States misjudged the seemingly retrogressive Vietnam, the American astronauts on the planet of the apes underestimate their situation losing their lives, (hearts) and minds along the way.<sup>78</sup>

When Taylor declares that 'if this is all they have...' in the hunt sequence the sentiment of his words strongly alludes to the types of comments made by politicians throughout the Vietnam War. Johnson famously referred to Vietnam as a 'raggedy-ass little fourth-rate country',<sup>79</sup> and Nixon also used the phrase 'fourth-rate' when referring to the

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<sup>75</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 48.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Heidtman, Plymouth, Mich., Pfc., Fifth Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, 1966-67, quoted in Donald Jackson, 'Confessions of 'The Winter Soldiers': The Images Stick in Their Minds: A Vietnamese Farmer Shot for Target Practice, A Child Stoned in a Fit of Anger, Villages Destroyed for No Reason,' *LIFE* (9 July, 1971), 26.

<sup>77</sup> The Vietnamese were subject of a 'longstanding Euro-American racism towards nonwhite peoples at home and abroad.' The U.S. dismissed Vietnam's 'capability to build an independent post-colonial state.' See Mark Philip Bradley, 'Making Sense of the French War: The Postcolonial Moment and the First Vietnam War, 1945-1954,' in Mark Atwood Lawrence and Fredrik Logevall (eds.), *The First Vietnam War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 21.

<sup>78</sup> Amy Catherine Chambers, "'Damn them all to hell": *Planet of the Apes* as History,' MA Dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 2006, 22.

<sup>79</sup> President Lyndon B. Johnson quoted in Christian G. Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 146.



warring nation saying: 'I refuse to believe that a little fourth-rate country like North Vietnam does not have a breaking point.'<sup>80</sup> These recurrent remarks about the weak and inferior nature of Vietnam (and SE Asia as a whole) suggested that the administration, and in turn the military, assumed that the people they were fighting were deficient not only in their military abilities; but also that underlying racism informing U.S. engagement in the region assumed poverty to be an inherent characteristic of the people of third world nations. Western involvement in these countries in both the colonial and post-colonial eras was justified by the notion that these nations needed help because they lacked the capability to build and sustain their own nation.

### **The Wild West: Vietnam and the Forbidden Zone**

*Planet of the Apes* takes visual cues from the Western film and the 'touchstone of national identity' the American Frontier.<sup>81</sup> The Forbidden Zone in *Planet of the Apes* is an uncolonised area of the ape world, beyond the borders of the existing ape settlement and described throughout the film as uninhabitable. In the sequence when Zira takes Taylor home with her after she finds that he can write and communicate, Cornelius explains to Taylor that: 'No creature can survive the Forbidden Zone. I know. I've seen it.' But he later reveals once they escape into the Forbidden Zone that the area is 'an ancient taboo set forth in the Sacred Scrolls' and that it was pronounced deadly by the Lawgiver. Its position as forbidden is closely linked into the ape's religious myths that govern their society.

The Forbidden Zone can be read not only as a reference to the Frontier, as represented in U.S. mythology, but also to the 'unknown' landscape of Vietnam. The Forbidden Zone is mentioned several times before it is actually shown on screen.<sup>82</sup> It is talked about as an abstraction by apes, a far off unknown land. As with the Forbidden Zone, Vietnam became somewhat of an abstraction; it became 'an almost wholly unreal country.'<sup>83</sup> The names of strategic areas and the outline of the country on a map became familiar but 'there was little nation-wide familiarity with the country's cities, towns and provinces and the war produced

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<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Loren Baritz, *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 196.

<sup>81</sup> John E. O'Connor and Peter C. Rollins, 'The West, Westerns, and American Character,' in Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (eds.) *Hollywood's West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, & History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 2.

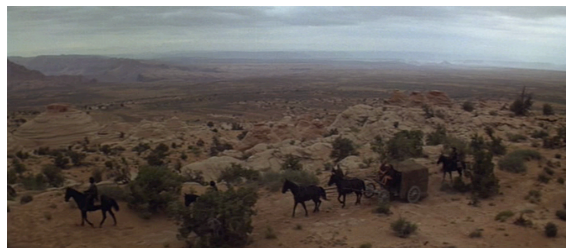
<sup>82</sup> The human astronauts do crash into the Forbidden Zone at the beginning of the film, but it is not articulated as a specific geographic location until the chimpanzees talk about it with Taylor. Before it is given a name it is seen as a dangerous barren landscape that the astronauts must escape in order to survive. Dodge analyses the soil and declares that 'Nothing will grow here' meaning that the astronauts must look for signs of life beyond this area or they are going to starve.

<sup>83</sup> John Pym, 'A Bullet in the Head: Vietnam Remembered,' *Sight and Sound* 48:2 (Spring, 1979), 83.

few set battles which could be fixed in the public mind.<sup>84</sup> Vietnam and the war therein remained for the majority a mystery as the information and analysis released by newsmen and politicians shaped opinions. Similarly, the Forbidden Zone is shown on the maps as just an outline with only a boundary marked to show the distinction between the green, safe Western sphere and the brown, barren, dangerous Eastern zone. The map ensures that the Forbidden Zone's true origins remain a mystery for the apes, Taylor and the audience (fig. 1.1). The Forbidden Zone is foreign and forbidden, the details of its terrain and history obscured from the ape public in order to disguise the fact that the area proves that apes were preceded by a cultured human race. This human race had access to technologies far surpassing their own as evidenced by the Statue of Liberty that is more than symbol of U.S. 'national consciousness;' the 'Lady of the Harbor was first an idea. Then an engineering achievement.'<sup>85</sup>



1.1.: Map of the ape land and Forbidden Zone



1.2.: Travelling with horses and wagon



1.3.: Travelling across the Forbidden Zone



1.4.: Taylor and Nova represented as settlers

Zira and Cornelius help Taylor to escape certain death at the hands of the leaders of the ape society and travel through the bleak Forbidden Zone landscape in a covered wagon with horses. Extreme long shots are used here (fig. 1.2, 1.3, 1.4), a standard device for the Western genre, to establish that the fugitives are insignificant in comparison to their environment and 'reinforces the landscape's theatricality.'<sup>86</sup> The landscape becomes as significant as the characters travelling across it. The frontiersmen (and women) depicted in Westerns struggled to tame the West and the use of the genre's iconography and cinematography evokes the difficulties of Americans overcoming the 'wilderness

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>85</sup> Michael W. Robbins, 'Using Your Head: Give Me Liberty,' *New York Magazine* (19 Aug, 1985), 59.

<sup>86</sup> Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.

topography',<sup>87</sup> a difficulty notoriously experienced by the U.S. forces in Vietnam that fought against a native enemy that utilised its familiarity with the natural landscape.

The escape from the settlement of the apes begins with shots of the wagon travelling across densely foliated agricultural land. The frame is filled with images of crops and trees in full bloom showing the success of the ape colony (fig 2.1). The bright rich colours of the external wide-angle shots are contrasted with the dark, dingy tightly framed shots of inside the wagon where the humans must hide (fig. 2.2). As the journey continues it becomes clear that the characters are reaching the edges of ape civilisation. The previously lush fields are rougher, dryer and look trampled. Nova's reaction reveals that a human colony is near by. The sequence then cuts to a crane shot overlooking the scarecrows (possibly crucified apes which were last seen in the post-credit sequence) in the edges of the Forbidden Zone. Then a series of long shots show the wagon travelling across the Zone, no dialogue accompanies this sequence, it mirrors the shots used in the opening trek sequence when the astronauts first crashed onto the planet.



2.1.: Leaving the ape settlement – crops and forests



2.2.: Taylor and Nova escaping from the apes in a wagon

The key difference between the trek sequence and the escape sequence is the dramatic change in status and power for the protagonist. The once white clad astronaut Taylor (as representative of white America) has become a pariah forced into the Forbidden Zone with little hope of survival. The space ship and related technologies have been replaced with a wagon, and Taylor is to be abandoned in the Forbidden Zone unprepared for what he is going to discover. This thematic element of *Planet of the Apes* relates to the experience of the United States in Vietnam, commenting upon the apparently underprepared soldiers sent out into an unconventional foreign war. The trek sequence also emulates imagery of the Western with wild figures (Native Humans/Native Americans) overlooking the travellers in their journey across the barren plains (fig 3). As previously noted, Slotkin made a link between the attitude of the U.S. government towards to the Vietnamese and the cultural myth of

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<sup>87</sup> O'Connor, 'The West, Westerns, and American Character,' 18.

cowboys/settlers and Indians/Native Americans.<sup>88</sup> In this opening sequence the native humans play the part of the Indians, their shadowy presence indicating danger and an unpredictable future for the astronauts who have unwittingly crash-landed on their planet.



3.0: Native Humans looking down upon and Space Cowboys as they trek to 'safety'

The Vietnam War was an unconventional guerrilla war. The Vietnamese that fought against the U.S. and their allies utilised their knowledge of the landscape to succeed. They used the jungles for cover, set traps for the U.S. troops and avoided engagement in battles in exposed areas. In response to this predicament the U.S. military used a number of controversial chemicals as part of its military strategy. Most famously Agent Orange, an herbicide and defoliant, was used as part of the U.S. military's herbicidal warfare programme (1961-1971). Operation Ranch Hand was designed and implemented to disrupt agricultural food production and destroy the dense foliage that provided enemy cover. The use of chemical warfare in combination with the constant bombing strategy of Rolling Thunder decimated huge regions of the Vietnamese landscape rendering parts of the country barren. Vietnam became the United States' Forbidden Zone.

In a particularly acerbic exchange between Dr. Zaius and Taylor, a little of the history of the Forbidden Zone is explained as understood by the ape society. Zaius explains: 'the Forbidden Zone was once a paradise. Your breed made a desert of it ages ago'. This unforgiving indictment of the human race suggests that the destruction of the landscape may have been deliberate. *Planet of the Apes* questions the continued use of destructive chemicals upon peasant populations and the natural landscapes. The uninhabitable Forbidden Zone is a prediction of what continued chemical and nuclear warfare would do to not only U.S. enemies but also the entire human race. The Forbidden Zone becomes a future United States

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<sup>88</sup> See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 494.

or symbolically Vietnam, defoliated and desolate; a future where no one won the land, the hearts, or minds of Vietnam.<sup>89</sup>

### **Space: The Final Frontier**

‘The enduring popularity of *Star Trek* is illuminated through the varied sources of American historical and cultural mythology it evokes and negotiates’.<sup>90</sup> In the context of this work, the original series that ran for three seasons between September 1966 and June 1969 is a significant point for comparison. *Star Trek*, like *Planet of the Apes*, commented upon the events of the sixties in a covert fashion as to avoid the shrewd eyes of the censors and network executives. Both franchises formed part of the ‘post-war science fiction genre’ that saw the development of major science fictions works as a response to war.<sup>91</sup> These two franchises continued in various forms beyond their original incarnations and discuss the war alongside a number of other key issues that were prominent in the sixties. John Meredith Lucas a producer on *Star Trek* explains the advantages of the genre:

It was great to work... in the science fiction genre [it] gave us free reign to touch on any number of stories. We could do our anti-Vietnam stories our civil rights stories, you know. Set the story in outer space, in the future and all of a sudden you can get away with just about anything, because you're protected by the argument that ‘Hey, we're not about the problems of today, we're dealing with a mythical time and place in the future.’ We were lying of course...<sup>92</sup>

The genre allows its writers to approach taboo subjects and make observations and criticisms that would not be acceptable in genres that tend to be more open about their intentions.

During the sixties the United States was continuing to grow in influence across the world and was involved in a dangerous arms race with the Soviet Union as well as a space race to become the first nation to reach the moon. In May 1961, Kennedy gave a speech to a special joint session of Congress to ask for an increase of spending on the national space programme. After the success of Sputnik in 1957, the Soviets continued to make advances which left the United States in a perpetual state of catch-up and embarrassment, further

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<sup>89</sup> In *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, the Forbidden Zone is revealed to be inhabited by a telepathic mutant race that worships a nuclear warhead. The mutants who appear to have human faces (which turn out to be masks) are shown to be gruesome skinless creatures that are the result of a nuclear apocalypse.

<sup>90</sup> Worland, ‘From the New Frontier to the Final Frontier,’ 19.

<sup>91</sup> Rick Worland, ‘Captain Kirk: Cold Warrior,’ *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 16:3 (Fall, 1988), 109.

<sup>92</sup> John Meredith Lucas quoted in William Shatner with Chris Kreski, *Star Trek Memories* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 326.

exacerbated when the Soviets put the first man into space in April 1961.<sup>93</sup> By pushing to land a man on the Moon by the end of the decade, the Kennedy administration hoped to close the gap, making a promise to the American people and yet at the same time a threat to dominance of Soviet Union in this particular race, saying:

I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space.<sup>94</sup>

Kennedy's famous plea/promise cast a shadow over the rest of the decade as United States moved towards accomplishing the aim of a lunar landing. *Planet of the Apes* was released just over a year before the goal was achieved and Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong walked on the surface of the moon (21<sup>st</sup> July 1969). The idea that the United States would inevitably go into space was not too much of a imaginative stretch for the producers and viewers of *Planet of the Apes*, and therefore the film is not so much a prediction of the future in terms of space travel but of what the United States will do with this new power once their goal is achieved.

In *Planet of the Apes*' pre-credit sequence Taylor is seen travelling out into the universe seemingly alone and somewhat disgusted with his own nation and the entire human race. The vast openness and possibilities he faces in space lead him to muse on the failings of his kind. How can a species (specifically the United States) that is able to create and discover such amazing things still be consumed by war? As Taylor asks: 'does man, that marvel of the universe, that glorious paradox who has sent me to the stars, still make war against his brother?' This comment is a reference to Vietnam and the Cold War, intended for an audience that had either experienced the war first-hand or had lived through the era. *Planet of the Apes* also proposed the possibility of the United States becoming a state permanently at war with the failure of MAD and the resultant nuclear holocaust becoming a reality.

The twentieth-century is often referred to as the 'American century',<sup>95</sup> as the United States assumed a centrality on the world stage that might be considered imperial. The nation's pervasive culture seeped into many countries and cultures, ever increasing the United States' ideological sphere of influence. U.S. imperialism can be seen to be as

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<sup>93</sup> Cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space on April 12, 1961.

<sup>94</sup> John F. Kennedy, 'Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs, 25 May, 1961.' Available at: <<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/JFK-Speeches>> [Last accessed: 21/08/2011].

<sup>95</sup> Donald Wallace White, *The American Century: The Rise and Fall of the United States as a World Power* (New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1996).

‘economic imperialism, political imperialism and cultural imperialism’.<sup>96</sup> The Vietnam War began as an colonial war between the French and one of its last colonies and it was taken over by United States during the 1950s as part its foreign policy to halt the spread of the Soviet sphere of influence (empire) and increase its own.

*Planet of the Apes* takes the notion of U.S. imperialism to what might be its unsettling conclusion. In the film, having achieved dominance on Earth, the United States sends a convoy of only U.S. astronauts to extend its influence far beyond its borders into outer space. The Wild West has been tamed, the ideological New Frontier is ever extending and space is ‘the final frontier’;<sup>97</sup> a boundless, uncharted expanse that is the United States’ new manifest destiny. Taylor, the commander of the astronauts, seems somewhat of an unusual choice of leader as he is not shy in expressing his disillusionment with the world he has left behind. The patches on his uniform indicate his allegiance to the United States, but as all of the astronauts are labelled thus, perhaps the U.S. has taken over the entire world. It has become the only world power, eclipsing every other nation. Taylor, the only surviving representative of the Earth does not wish to act as its defendant and last hope for survival but is forced to do so when he is literally put on trial and forced to defend not only himself but the entire species.

### ***Star Trek***<sup>98</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* can be compared to the original series of *Star Trek* that also comments upon the Vietnam War through a series of episodes released at the height of the war, to be discussed in this section. The series also clearly identifies itself with the United States through its evocation of frontier mythology from the opening monologue onwards.

‘*Star Trek* is the product of dreams and nightmares of the 60s. It came to those who needed the triumph of confidence in American past, while fearing a present that foreboded the disappearance of the American way.’<sup>99</sup> *Star Trek* focused upon the adventures of Captain James T. Kirk (William Shatner) and the crew of the starship *Enterprise*. The *Enterprise* is part of an armada of ships that form Starfleet, which is an exploratory and military

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<sup>96</sup> Rob Kroes, ‘American Empire and Imperialism: A View From the Receiving End,’ *Diplomatic History* 23:3 (Summer, 1999), 465.

<sup>97</sup> From the first line of the opening monologue of the credits for *Star Trek* (3 series, 79 episodes, Paramount Television, Sept 8 1966-3 June 1969).

<sup>98</sup> The first series was just called *Star Trek* but has acquired the retronym *Star Trek: The Original Series* in order to easily differentiate it from the later series. Throughout this work when *Star Trek* is alluded to it will be in reference to the original series.

<sup>99</sup> William Blake Tyrell, ‘*Star Trek* as Myth and Television as Mythmaker,’ *Journal of Popular Culture* 10:4 (Spring, 1977), 712-13.



peacekeeping service. The series is famed for the opening performed by Captain Kirk (William Shatner):

Space... the Final Frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds; to seek out new life and new civilizations; to boldly go where no man has gone before.

This speech opened each episode, making a clear reference to the Frontier, a notion that was being regularly called upon by politicians. However, in contrast to *Planet of the Apes*, *Star Trek* presents ‘an idealized version of the United States’.<sup>100</sup> The series chooses to show a future where the United States has overcome its faults and become the peacekeepers of the universe, playing upon audience fear of the present whilst recalling an almost mythical period in the American past.

‘Earth’s Utopian 23rd century future... is presented as a sequel to the Vietnam epoch.’<sup>101</sup> *Star Trek* posited a future where Earth was no longer ravaged by war, and where humans live together peacefully. *Planet of the Apes*’ depiction of the future of the world and in turn the United States remained bleak throughout its various instalments. The future is actually a vision of the past, the dominant society is no longer human and although the apes do not appear to be at war, they are assumed to be in their position of power because of the reckless actions of a war-torn twentieth century. *Star Trek* and *Planet of the Apes* shared similar concerns; there are several episodes of television series, which were broadcast, in the same years as the development and release of *Planet of the Apes* that clearly deal with the Vietnam War.

Two particular episodes contained obvious statements about the futile and detestable nature of the Vietnam War, ‘A Private Little War’ and ‘The Omega Glory’ aired in February and March 1968 respectively, and made little attempt to disguise what was actually being discussed.<sup>102</sup> ‘A Private Little War’ is set on the primitive and once peaceful planet of Neural on which the planet’s inhabitants (the Hill People) have split into two tribes. One of the tribes has been armed with flintlocks, weaponry far beyond their current stage of technological development. It is discovered that the Klingons have armed one side with weaponry and promises of power and glory. Captain Kirk must make the decision as to whether Starfleet and in turn the Federation will arm the other side in order to balance the power. Starfleet is

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<sup>100</sup> Sarantakes, ‘Cold War Pop Culture,’ 78.

<sup>101</sup> H. Bruce Franklin, ‘*Star Trek* in the Vietnam Era,’ *Film and History* 24:1/2 (Feb/May, 1994), 36.

<sup>102</sup> ‘A Private Little War,’ *Star Trek* (Ep. 19, Season 2, NBC, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1968) and ‘The Omega Glory,’ *Star Trek* (Ep. 23, Season 2, NBC, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1968).



usually interpreted as representative of the United States and the Klingons, an aggressive enemy warrior race, are seen as representatives of the USSR.<sup>103</sup> In ‘A Private Little War’, Starfleet (USA/capitalism) and the Klingons (USSR/Communism) each take a side in a war that has as much to do with their own ongoing political situation as the tribes they are supporting.

Kirk’s reluctance to militarise the unarmed Hill People stems from the experiences of the Earth’s human race. The Hill People can be interpreted as representatives of Vietnamese whose limited civil war was expanded into an international conflict when their war became part of the larger ideological conflict between the USA and the USSR. By becoming involved in the war Kirk and his crew risk ‘condemning [the] whole planet to a war that may never end.’<sup>104</sup>

Similarly ‘The Omega Glory’ focuses upon war and its impact society. This episode focused upon what had become an endless war between two primitive species of humanoids: the Comms and the Yangs. At the beginning of the episode the crew of the *Enterprise* are seen to have more in common with the Comms who have formed a colony and display signs of rationality, than the Yangs who are ‘constructed as savages’ and presented like the wild Native Americans in Hollywood Westerns.<sup>105</sup> The Comms are played by Asian actors all speaking with a homogenised Asian accent that clearly distinguishes them from the white-skinned Yangs. The crew of the *Enterprise* discover exactly how much the activities on Omega IV parallel those on Earth. The Yangs are actually Yankees and the Comms were once called the Communists and they fought a war, which was very similar to the Cold War. Years of fighting have blurred the distinction and the original names.

Omega IV, the world of the Yangs and the Comms, is a literal parallel of Earth, which warns against continued warfare. It is discovered that the Yangs have been fighting for generations to regain their land from the invading Comms. The Yangs are no longer seen as primitives but ‘noble warriors’ fighting honourably to protect themselves.<sup>106</sup> The language and visual cues in the episode further align the Yangs with the United States, their sacred texts include references to ‘freedom’ and the phrase ‘We the People’,<sup>107</sup> they carry a tattered

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<sup>103</sup> See Sarantakes, ‘Cold War Pop Culture,’ 78. For a broader discussion of the ‘problematic aspects of Klingon ethnicity’ see Peter A. Chvany, “‘Do We Look Like Ferengi Capitalists to You?’: *Star Trek*’s Klingons as Emergent Virtual American Ethnics,’ in Henry Jenkins, Tara McPherson, and Jane Shattuc (eds.), *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasure of Popular Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 105-121.

<sup>104</sup> Dr. McCoy (DeForest Kelley), ‘A Private Little War,’ *Star Trek* (Ep. 19, Season 2, NBC, 2 Feb 1968).

<sup>105</sup> Bernardi, *Star Trek and History*, 57.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

<sup>107</sup> ‘We the People’ is the opening phrase of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America. The Preamble is as follows: ‘We the people of the United States, in order to form a perfect Union, establish

United States flag and use the opening chords of the national anthem in a ceremony. By the end of the episode the Yongs have gained a position of power over the Comms and symbolically Kirk and his crew have helped to end the Cold War.<sup>108</sup>

The storylines found in the original *Star Trek* are of particular interest as they were being produced at the peak of the Vietnam War and also in the midst of developments in the American science fiction genre. The obvious references to the war and the commentary on contemporary culture provided, whilst not as damning as *Planet of the Apes*, indicates that the war was alarming difficult to comprehend because the end was not clearly in sight. It was possible that the United States and the Soviet Union in collaboration with their allies could create a future with no future. MAD as a doctrine of military strategy was ‘successful in assuring postwar stability’ by using ‘U.S. strategic nuclear forces to deter possible Soviet attacks;’<sup>109</sup> it calmed fears concerning the bomb and possible nuclear annihilation. The response found within U.S. cultural output reflected the changing position of the bomb and nuclear fear, as Boyer writes:

The loss of immediacy was self-reinforcing. As nuclear weapons literally went underground after 1963, the torrent of novels, movies and television programs which had both fed and reflected the culture’s nuclear fears slowed to a trickle. This in turn, facilitated the numbing process.<sup>110</sup>

### **‘YOU MANIACS! YOU BLEW IT UP!’: THE NUCLEAR WAR WARNING**

As President Truman noted in his State of the Union address following the first hydrogen-bomb test in 1953:

From now on man moves into a new era of destructive power... The war of the future would be one in which man could extinguish millions of lives at one blow, demolish the great cities of the world, wipe out the cultural achievements and destroy the very structure of civilisation that has slowly and painfully built up through hundreds of generations. Such a war is not a possible policy for rational men. We know this, but we dare not assume that others would not

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justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.’

<sup>108</sup> Rick Worland makes an argument that James T. Kirk (JTK) is a future reincarnation of John F. Kennedy (JFK). Kirk guides a ship, which is an allegory for the USA and fights the enemies of the oppressed throughout the universe. See Worland, ‘From the New Frontier to the Final Frontier,’ 20.

<sup>109</sup> Christopher Bertram, ‘Strategic Defense and the Western Alliance,’ *Daedalus* 114:3 (Summer, 1985), 279.

<sup>110</sup> Boyer, ‘From Activism to Apathy,’ 18.

yield to the temptation science is now placing in their hands.<sup>111</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* imagines this future. The Earth has not been decimated, as it is by the end of *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, but rather irrevocably altered for any surviving humans. Culture and civilisation have been wiped out, the Earth is left behind and following this cataclysm humans do not emerge as the dominant species. In destroying their society they have forfeited their right to the Earth. Truman spoke about ‘rational men’ and the hope that nuclear technology would not be utilised again, yet ten years after his speech the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation. The world’s two major superpowers came close to instigating nuclear holocaust but instead ‘avoided war – nuclear war – and the tension subsided.’<sup>112</sup> The films and television produced during the 1950s, the initial period of nuclear proliferation and development, responded with paranoiac images and narratives but this fear subsided as other cultural and military issues eclipsed the nuclear issue during the 1960s. But it did not disappear altogether, the concerns surrounding nuclear technology remained and narratives such as *Planet of the Apes* vocalised and visualised them.

The Vietnam War pushed the nuclear issue into the background; Vietnam was an immediate crisis and had a direct influence on the lives of the American people as well as their governing bodies. The nuclear issue was no longer a central concern for the media and those commenting upon cultural anxieties through a variety of artistic and popular media outlets. Yet, *Planet of the Apes*’ prevailing image endows the film with a ‘strong critique of nuclear technology’.<sup>113</sup> Taylor escapes with Nova, leaving behind the sounds of Zaius and his guards blowing up the archaeological dig, to ride along the rugged coastal line of the Forbidden Zone. The non-diegetic soundtrack is silent and only the sound of crashing waves can be heard. This sequence presents hope, a possibility that Taylor and his mate may be able to start a new human race out in the Forbidden Zone, one built upon Taylor’s progressive principles and in contrast to the apes corrupt and bigoted existence. Seconds later the film changes, suddenly shifting from hope into bleak ‘hopelessness’ as Taylor stumbles upon the vestiges of the Statue of Liberty (fig.4).<sup>114</sup>

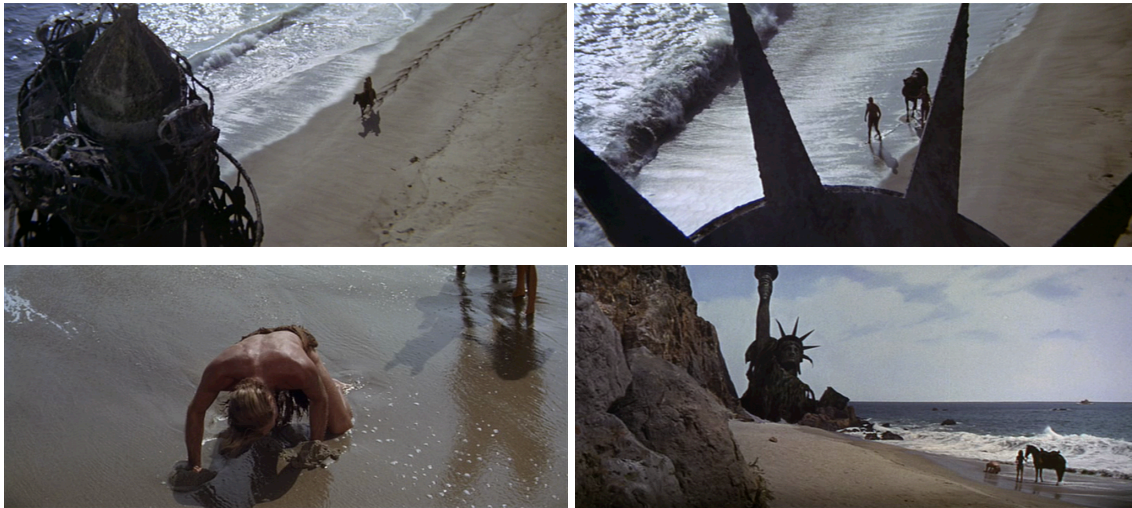
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<sup>111</sup> Harry S. Truman, ‘Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, 7 January 1953.’ Available at: <<http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers>> [Last accessed: 22/08/2011].

<sup>112</sup> Roger Hilsman, *The Cuban Missile Crisis: The Struggle over Policy* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 131.

<sup>113</sup> Christopher W. Podeschi, ‘The Nature of Future Myths: Environmental Discourse in Science Fiction Film, 1950-1999,’ *Sociological Spectrum* 22:3 (July-Sept 2002), 274.

<sup>114</sup> Pendreigh, *The Legend of the Planet of the Apes*, 99.



4.0: The gradual exposure of the State of Liberty in fragments, through Taylor's reaction and finally confirmed with a wide-angle shot

Taylor discovers that the apes are in fact descendents of *the* human race. He realises that he was right about the human race and that they never stopped fighting one another, eventually making use of nuclear technology and obliterating their world. *Planet of the Apes* concludes with a dystopian view of humanity. Humans have destroyed themselves and the only remnants of their civilization are a rusty symbol of freedom and ‘a cave full of decomposing artefacts which, as Taylor points out, all speak of humanity’s weakness and fragility.’<sup>115</sup> The famed Statue of Liberty ending of *Planet of the Apes* crystallises the commentary upon U.S. society (fig. 5). The statue works as shorthand for United States but also all of Western civilisation. By symbolically destroying the Statue of Liberty, the film highlights the fragility of human achievement, juxtaposing ‘a bright shining myth with a corroded reality’.<sup>116</sup>

The ending of *Planet of the Apes* places the film within the post-apocalyptic genre that uses apocalypse as a narrative device.<sup>117</sup> By symbolically destroying the world and replacing it, filmmakers are able to make very specific comments about their own society. For the writers who use apocalypse, the world is so suffused with technological, economic

<sup>115</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 47.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

<sup>117</sup> The genre of post-apocalyptic cinema structures the narrative around survivors of a catastrophic event who are trying to rebuild their lives (which is distinct from apocalyptic cinema where the threat is present but has not yet destroyed anything). *Planet of the Apes* is unusual as it is not until the end of the film that the storyworld is shown to be post-apocalyptic. The film becomes post-apocalyptic rather than being established as such from the opening of the film. The second film of the *Apes* franchise *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* (1970) also plays with the definition of post-apocalyptic cinema as it is ‘the purest example of a picture that is simultaneously apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic since the story is set in a world created by nuclear upheaval, which is then completely destroyed in another cataclysm.’ See: Charles P. Mitchell, *A Guide to Apocalyptic Cinema* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 2001), 17-18.

and political chaos that it should end ‘because in some crucial sense it *has* ended.’<sup>118</sup> This blend of disgust and cynicism begins to explain the ‘fascinated pleasure many people in the late twentieth-century America feel in *seeing* significant parts of their world destroyed – over and over.’<sup>119</sup> It has a cathartic purpose but does not necessarily indicate a literal desire to destroy the world rather an opportunity to expose the problems of society and work out some of these issues on screen.

*Planet of the Apes* opens with a monologue of self-loathing, Taylor critiques humanity and suggests that he has been sent out into the universe to find ‘something better;’ he does not. In discovering the ape race and being forced to defend himself and his species Taylor learns that he must make his own future away from civilisation (whether ape or human). As he gains his individual freedom and the opportunity to make his own life beyond the frontier of the ape settlement he discovers that he cannot escape his past and that was right all along. Humanity destroyed itself, continuing to make war.

The closing sequence indeed alters the way in which the rest of the film may be interpreted. However, it is not only the damaged Statue of Liberty that suggests a nuclear disaster; smaller details such as the way in which sky is shown in the trek sequence further confirms this reading. In keeping with its sixties context the *Planet of the Apes*’ cinematography forms part of a ‘contemporary photographic aesthetic’ that was defined by experimentation with techniques formerly considered as errors in traditional filmmaking such as lens flare, colour desaturation and overexposure.<sup>120</sup> The trek sequence includes a noticeable amount of lens flare shot with canted low-angles (fig. 5.1), this lack of concern for ‘technical correctness or propriety’ allows for increasingly ‘artistic and expressive effects.’<sup>121</sup> The lens flare fits into the sixties cinematic context but also adds to the otherworldly nature of the landscape. The planet’s atmosphere appears to have been altered, its unnatural colours giving off what Dodge explains as a ‘strange luminosity’ with ‘thunder and lightning and no rain’ (fig 5.4). The sky flashes from a natural looking blue to an electric blue and black (a negative photo effect) sky (see fig. 5.3. & 5.4) .

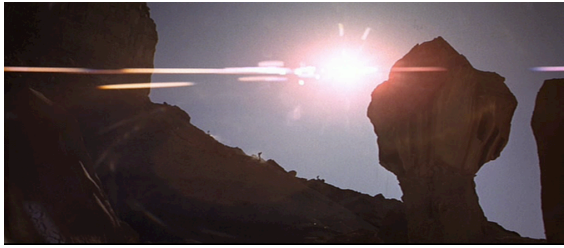
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<sup>118</sup> James Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-apocalypse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 7.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>120</sup> Vincent LoBrutto, *Principal Photography: Interviews with Feature Film Cinematographers* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>121</sup> Barry Langford, *Post-Classical Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 146.



5.1.: Astronauts trekking in alien landscape



5.2.: Lens flare sunset in the Forbidden Zone.



5.3.: In-between the flashes of storm



5.4.: Flash of storm with negative image sky

In the 1968 shooting script the weather is as explained a follows:

Across the top of the hills there suddenly runs a line of fire. Jagged bolts of lightning flash across the sky, but bring no rain, and thunder claps sound like heavy artillery.<sup>122</sup>

This scene presents the planet as alien. The skies have changed possibly due to some kind of chemical or nuclear technology, the explanation in the script and the filmed sequence suggest an unknown danger which sounds like artillery fire. The astronauts are in a foreign/alien landscape under the attack of an unknown enemy, falling boulders and an altered atmosphere highlighting the danger and dislocation of these men.

By finishing the film on an anti-nuclear note the film recalls the slogans and ideas of the growing nuclear disarmament campaign of the late sixties, which claimed that ‘nuclear war is an accident waiting to happen’.<sup>123</sup> *Planet of the Apes* suggests that the United States’ position in international affairs and their propensity to become involved in ideological conflicts may only come to an end with the ‘insistent conclusion of nuclear technology – the annihilation of human society’.<sup>124</sup> Suggesting that the ‘primal fear of extinction’<sup>125</sup> should stem the development of the weaponry that could potentially bring the end of, as Truman

<sup>122</sup> Michael Wilson, *Planet of the Apes*, Final Shooting Script, 5<sup>th</sup> May 1967, 13.

<sup>123</sup> Slogans quoted in Peggy Rosenthal, ‘The Nuclear Mushroom Cloud as Cultural Image,’ *American Literary History* 3:1 (Spring, 1991), 72.

<sup>124</sup> Jane Caputi, ‘Films of the Nuclear Age,’ *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 16:3 (Fall, 1988), 106

<sup>125</sup> Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 360.

forecast, humanity's cultural achievements and civilisation.<sup>126</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Planet of the Apes* is both a record of cultural history and film history especially when considered as a response to the Vietnam War and wider ideological Cold War. The film was released in the peak years of the Vietnam War and fits into a cinematic turn that did not directly refer to the Vietnam War but rather chose to use themes and storylines that allowed for an allegorical discussion of the war and its influence upon U.S. culture. The impact of the Vietnam War cannot only be seen through the photographs, footage and news reports from the various media outlets of the sixties both home and abroad but also in the United States' filmic and televisual output that registered the 'feelings and attitudes' of its creators and their intended audience.<sup>127</sup>

This chapter has discussed the way that Hollywood cinema was 'bound up' in the discourse surrounding the Vietnam War.<sup>128</sup> *Planet of the Apes* draws upon frontier rhetoric and imagery placing the film's science fiction narrative in a both futuristic and old American world. The opening and closing stages of the film see the astronauts battling against a literal American landscape (Lake Powell) with visual cues taken not from the traditions of the science fiction genre but rather the Western. This weaves the narrative of *Planet of the Apes* into a discussion of the United States and its role in global politics by drawing upon and reworking American myths that are concerned with 'conquest and subjugation'.<sup>129</sup> Vietnam was considered 'box-office poison' but avoiding the issue completely would have been impossible as it was not just a war being fought in an abstract foreign nation but one at home that was inextricably linked into the protest and social movements of the period.<sup>130</sup>

The future presented *Planet of the Apes* can be interpreted as a post-apocalyptic post-war world. On this second-chance Earth the humans who destroyed it are no longer in charge. They have become an animal race that needs to be controlled as vermin rather than a species that will go on to populate the whole planet. The fears of a generation have been realised and rather than an alien life form taking over human minds and bodies as imagined in the 1950s, the world in *Planet of the Apes* is the product of internal fears of self-destruction. By going a step too far the U.S. military and administrations could force the world, and in the case of

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<sup>126</sup> Truman, 'State of the Union,' 7 January 1953.

<sup>127</sup> Rollins, 'Film and American Studies,' 249.

<sup>128</sup> Hellman, 'The Vietnam Film and American Memory,' 179.

<sup>129</sup> Slotkin, 'Gunfighters and Green Berets,' 68.

<sup>130</sup> Schechter 'Leatherstocking in 'Nam,' 17.

*Planet of the Apes* the American continent, back into a pre-industrial wilderness. The apes' technologically regressive society draws from a romantic image of the American West and Vietnam as 'an uncivilised wilderness that can only benefit from the civilizing tendencies of the warrior nations.'<sup>131</sup> The arrival of Taylor, his crew and their declaration that they could 'be running the place' with little effort displays an error that was founded within the U.S. policy towards Vietnam. The complexities of the culturally distinct Vietnamese nation were not fully analysed and there were assumptions that this 'raggedy ass' country would be unable to overcome the mighty forces of the United States and that they would willingly accept and even welcome the modernisation – the Americanisation - of the country both politically and culturally.<sup>132</sup>

The following chapter looks more broadly at the theme of technology building from the reading of *Planet of the Apes* final image of the Statue of Liberty as an anti-nuclear message. The threat and fear of the atomic bomb remained as part of the public consciousness even it was secondary to discussions about the Vietnam War and social protests. The image of desecrated statue can be read as an extension of the references made to the Vietnam War. This is achieved through an evocation of a mythic American past that appears within an anticipated future showcasing the consequences of the United States' destructive prowess. The Western imagery in *Planet of the Apes* is used to show the 'logical outcome of a perverted legacy' where Vietnam becomes the United States' longest and last war as it continues to the point of humanity's annihilation.<sup>133</sup> The foundational myths of the nation are shown to be fallible and that the United States does not have a manifest destiny. It is not destined to Americanise indigenous cultures or colonise the final frontiers of space with impunity.

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<sup>131</sup> Muse, *The Land of Nam*, 223.

<sup>132</sup> Slotkin, 'Gunfighters and Green Berets,' 75.

<sup>133</sup> O'Connor, 'The West, Westerns, and American Character,' 12.



## CHAPTER SEVEN:

### FROM TECHNOPHILIA TO TECHNOPHOBIA (TO RETROGRESSION): TECHNOLOGY IN *PLANET OF THE APES*

*Only a fool would give a gun to an animal*

- Dr. Zaius

*Guns don't kill people; people kill people and monkeys do too (if they have a gun)*

- Eddie Izzard<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION:

Although *Planet of the Apes* is principally set in a technologically regressive society the film offers a number of opportunities to discuss technology and science. The reversal of the evolutionary scale, which positions apes as the dominant species, is assumed to be the consequence of a nuclear apocalypse caused by the humanity's misappropriation of technological advancement specifically nuclear weaponry. The unearthing of the secrets of the planet of the apes at the end of the film following the scenes in the archaeological dig and of the State of Liberty show that Taylor and his now dead crew had not escaped Earth but instead crash-landed into its disastrous future.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Planet of the Apes* the apes' scientific research and progress is controlled and restricted by the government and the religious scripture that structures and informs their culture. The apes in *Planet of the Apes* deviate from the ape society that Pierre Boulle envisioned in his 1963 novel *La Planète des Singes*. Boulle's apes lived in a technologically advanced metropolis that far surpassed the major cities of the sixties (e.g. Paris, New York, London). By positioning the apes in a world that would be considered

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<sup>1</sup> Eddie Izzard, *The Circle* (dir. Anastacia Pappas, Vision Video, 2002). This is part of a joke that references Charlton Heston and his work with NRA, and makes an intertextual reference to *Planet of the Apes*.

<sup>2</sup> Although the lobotomised Landon is technically shown to be alive during the trial sequence, and there is no indication that he has been euthanised by the apes, he is still dead to Taylor. As Taylor exclaims after seeing that his crewmate has been experimented on: 'You did that to him, damn you! Cut out his memory, took his identity, and that's what you want to do to me!'

technologically retrograde the filmmakers created a substantial distance between the audience and the film's subjects making the ending all the more shocking and the commentary throughout the film less controversial.

In the opening shots of *Planet of the Apes* technology appears to be a positive force as it allows the astronauts to travel and explore, but following a series of technological failures it becomes quite the opposite. A computer malfunction is the catalyst for the beginning of the crew's journey on the ape planet and thereafter the film comments upon humanity's naïve dependency upon technology and the danger of unrestricted use. It also satirises government control of scientific research; the findings of both Dr. Zira and Cornelius are suppressed by Dr. Zaius as he knows that their research will uncover the truth about the ape world: it was once run by humans.

A predominantly negative vision of technology pervades *Planet of the Apes* positioning the film within a cycle in American science fiction film, which ran between 1968 and 1977. As previously mentions the dates of this period are specific as they refer to the release dates of certain films, opening with *2001* and *Planet of the Apes* and ending with the release of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters*. Films produced in this period approached technology with caution investigating situations where technology became a threat to, rather than an aid to, the continuance and success of the human race. These films were infused with a pervasive paranoia, which was displayed through narratives that dealt with the consequences of humanity's 'mishandling of both natural and scientific resources.'<sup>3</sup>

The following chapter discusses the role of technology in *Planet of the Apes* and how this can be seen to refer to the period in which it was created. This begins with a discussion of the ship and its responsibility for transporting and shipwrecking its crew on a barren alien planet and the way the film inverts the image of positive human technology that is often associated with science fiction cinema'. The following section builds upon the idea of useless technology and the way that nature is shown to overwhelm Taylor and his crew as they attempt to escape their crashed spaceship, the desert and, for Taylor only, his eventual escape from the apes and their attempts to geld and lobotomise him. The ape city is discussed as a comparison to the natural and technological settings shown

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<sup>3</sup> Dean, 'Between *2001* and *Star Wars*,' 38.

in the opening sequence and trek. The ape settlement is both modern and ancient showing that technology can lead to both development and regression. Following the removal of technology from the astronauts by the native humans they become indistinguishable from them and treated as such. The final section discusses how technology changes in the hands (or paws) of another species and how this allegorical reversal of power is used within the film. The use of humans as test-subjects is discussed alongside the references made to the growing animal rights movement of the late sixties. This culminates in a section analysing the significance of the weaponry used in *Planet of the Apes* and how this interacts with the gun control discourse that developed throughout the 1960s following a wave assassinations and urban rioting.

#### **ICARUS: THE PRE-CREDIT DREAM**

The space ship, fondly referred to as *Icarus* by fans of *Planet of the Apes* series,<sup>4</sup> appears in the original film and two of the sequels (*Beneath the Planet of the Apes* and *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*). The popular moniker for the ship is a reference to the character of Greek mythology whose arrogance led him to ignore the warnings of his father and fall to his death when he flew too close to the sun. Like Icarus, the ship in *Planet of the Apes* despite its ability to travel at light speed through time and space, ultimately crashes back to Earth.

The ship acts as a ‘harbinger not of progress but of terror’ warning against the misuse and blind trust put in technology.<sup>5</sup> It is the vessel used for the first interstellar mission of the fictional American National Space Administration (ANSA), its programmed destination was somewhere in the Orion constellation but following a computer malfunction it returns back to Earth, an Earth so far into the future that it is unrecognisable to the ship’s crew. The ship is one of the most memorable props from the film, it was designed to ‘emulate what NASA was doing back then’ by using the types of

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<sup>4</sup> Larry Evans is credited with choosing the name for the spaceship that is left unnamed in the franchise (the 2011 *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* is the first film in the canon to use the name validating this fan addition to the *Planet of the Apes* mythology). See Jim Key, ‘The Flight of the Icarus: A Special Tribute to the Spaceship from the *Planet of the Apes* Movies Series,’ *Sci-Fi & Fantasy Models* 38 (1999), 14.

<sup>5</sup> H. Bruce Franklin, ‘Where We’re Going: Visions of the Future in Science-Fiction Films, 1970-82,’ *Science Fiction Studies* 10:1 (1983), 73.

design associated with the agency in the sixties,<sup>6</sup> specifically the McDonnell Aircraft Corporation development proposals for the NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) Gemini capsule.

*Planet of the Apes* was released in the wake of NASA's Project Gemini human spaceflight programme, which ran between 1961 and 1966 and was intended to develop techniques for advanced space travel. Project Gemini was initiated following the successes of and the knowledge gained from the first series of manned space flights called Project Mercury. On 25<sup>th</sup> May 1961, President John F. Kennedy, announced that the United States 'should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.'<sup>7</sup> Project Gemini became the 'bridge between the pioneering achievement of Project Mercury and the yet-to-be realized lunar mission of Project Apollo',<sup>8</sup> which saw the landing of the first man on the moon in July 1969.

*Planet of the Apes* begins on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1972, only four years into the future from the release of the film in 1968. During the opening sequence close-ups of the ship's clock gives the date on Earth and the projected date on the ship, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2673. As discussed in the previous chapter the space race eclipsed the arms race in the 1960s and it was deemed vital that the United States get a man on the moon before the Soviets. Throughout the development, production, and distribution of *Planet of the Apes* there was much excitement surrounding these hugely important changes in U.S. space exploration and discussion of issues concerning technology, the politics of space and whether the United States would make space their new frontier to be explored and colonised.

The notion of the United States as a new imperial power (although not necessarily neo-colonial) is furthered explored in the sequence after the crash where Landon plants a miniature U.S. flag in the soil of the first land the astronauts set foot on (fig. 1). The inclusion of the flag in the packs of the astronauts implies that the crew were sent out into the universe not only as observers but also as invaders. The mission directive is never

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<sup>6</sup> Jim Key, 'An Interview with Bill Creber [Art Designer for *Planet of the Apes*],' *Sci-Fi & Fantasy Models* 38 (1999), 20.

<sup>7</sup> Kennedy, 'Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs.'

<sup>8</sup> James M. Grimwood and Barton C. Hacker, 'Introduction,' in James M. Grimwood and Barton C. Hacker (eds.), *Project Gemini: Technology and Operations* (2006). Available at: <<http://history.nasa.gov/SP-4002/intro.htm>> [Last accessed: 02/01/2009]

fully explained. In one conversation that occurs during the trek from the crash site to civilisation Taylor and Landon talk about why they got involved in the mission. Taylor mocks Landon by suggesting he took the job in order to maintain his ‘all-American standing’ and for glory and immortality. Landon explains Dodge’s reasons for joining by saying: ‘He’d walk naked into a live volcano if he thought he would learn something no other man knew.’ However, this conversation does not fully explain the purpose of the mission and once the astronauts strip themselves of their costumes and symbolically baptise themselves the mission is not mentioned again.<sup>9</sup>



1.0: Landon claims the unknown land for the United States with a miniature foldaway flag

The unexplained mission that catapults the astronauts onto the planet of the apes could be speculated upon according to the content of the film; for example how the astronauts react to certain situations, in particular the planting of the U.S. flag. The inclusion of the flag, in what is supposed to be a survival pack, suggests that the mission was intended as an exploratory mission and the symbolic action of planting the flag; a traditional act of sovereignty, further confirms this. It could be seen to suggest that the United States is trying to expand its sphere of influence, beyond not only the Americas but also the Earth. In the near-future depicted in the film space has become the new frontier, technology has advanced at such a rate that by 1972 it is possible to launch astronauts into space for a long-term mission. This also involves the development of the chambers that preserve the astronauts and other futuristic technology.

Alongside the expansionist reading of the mission it could also be seen as an escape from Earth. As most clearly indicated by some of Taylor’s darker moments, he refers to himself as a ‘seeker’ but goes onto say that his dreams are empty and that he has the ‘idea that somewhere in the universe there has to be a creature superior to man.’

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<sup>9</sup> For further discussion of the baptism see the chapter four: ‘Framing the Subject: Identity Politics in Planet of the Apes.’

Dialogue like this indicates that Taylor’s involvement in the mission allows him to escape Earth/United States and that he did not join in order to increase its borders. Suggesting that in the few short years from the release of the film to the year that the film is set (1968 through 1972) the world has degenerated. The protests and the attempts to bring peace and stability have failed and the world is now so beyond redemption that crews need to be sent out into space to find an alternative planet, a second-chance Earth.



2.1: Ship introduction



2.2: Close-ups of technology



2.3: Ship after the crash – emphasised with canted angle



2.4: Distorted by water – predicting a dangerous future

*Planet of the Apes* begins as a technophilic dream with a vision of technology at its best. The ship allows for the exploration of the universe by U.S. scientists to discover new territory and possibilities to improve the world and its future. Although the misanthropic George Taylor provides a cynical commentary on this depiction of future, the mise en scene in the pre-credit sequence acts to infuse his words with at least a small element of hope. The white, pure, reassuringly symmetrical ship with its comforting flashing lights, control panels, dials, and peaceful sleeping crew suggests that the technology acts a protective cocoon for the scientists (fig 2.1). The images of the ship and its technology dominate the screen with at least the first few minutes of dialogue being accompanied by shots of machinery rather than the talking protagonist (fig 2.2). Taylor further confirms the importance and power of the computer as he declares that his life and those of his crewmates are ‘in the hands of the computer’. Once visually introduced

Taylor still has to share the screen with the ship, as if it were another character in the opening sequence.

Taylor is dwarfed by the ship's interiors and the blurs of light hurtling past the windows behind him. He often appears to the right of the shot, with focus being drawn to the computer screens and flashing lights on the control panels surrounding him. Taylor seems to be mid conversation when he first appears on screen, but there is no one else in the shot with him. Taylor chooses to talk to a machine instead of another person. It is assumed that he is talking to either a radio or recording device that will be heard by someone on Earth in the future. In Boule's *La Planète des Singes* the main narrative, as described in the previous chapter, is framed by story about a couple (Jinn and Phyllis) who read a message in a bottle they find floating in space while they are on pleasure cruise on a spaceship; the message was written by Ulysse. At the end of the novel Phyllis and Jinn are revealed to be apes. Much like Ulysse's message in a bottle in Boule's novel, Taylor feels the need make a record of his experiences despite the fact that they may never be heard by anyone. It is interesting to note that whereas Ulysse chose to commit his experiences to paper, Taylor relies upon the technology that surrounds him to keep his record. Taylor's musings are lost within the sinking ship and the realisation that the future he was speaking to no longer exists.

The written message in *La Planète des Singes* acts as a record of Ulysse's experiences and outlasts the technologically advanced voice recording which Taylor commits his thoughts to, making comment that ancient (traditional) technology is more reliable and durable than modern technology. Throughout the film it is made clear that Taylor struggles with human contact, he is at his calmest and most humble in conversation with an inanimate recording device. In his first scenes of contact with other humans, Taylor is unfazed by the death of his female crewmate, rude and purposely confrontational with the other crewmembers during their trek to civilisation and angry rather than mournful of the destruction of human civilisation.

It is only in the pre-credit sequence that technology actually fulfils its purpose. From the title sequence onwards the mood of the film changes as technology shifts from a positive force to a negative one. Taylor's prologue is immediately followed by the deliberately unsettling and abstract title sequence. The titles act as a transition between

the calm of the opening prelude and the crash into the Forbidden Zone. The red, white and blue colour scheme of the opening sequence continues with the titles that are accompanied by coloured flashes in the hues of the U.S. flag. These abstract images are scored with avant-garde discordant music, that ‘warns of the randomness and tension inherent in the vastness of space.’<sup>10</sup> Jerry Goldsmith’s approach to the orchestra was experimental, the horn players reversed their mouthpieces, the string players bowed with the wooden side of their bows (*col legno tratto*), and in audio postproduction the score was technologically enhanced with echoplex to create the echo effect on the string and percussion. Goldsmith took traditional instruments and purposely created as odd and unrecognisable sounds as possible generating a sound of the future firmly rooted in the past. Philippe Mather notes that the score’s unusual instrumentation ‘piercing sound adds a reflexive element to the soundtrack, since they temporarily violate the standard rule of inaudibility for narrative film music.’<sup>11</sup> The traditional, albeit manipulated, orchestral instruments were played alongside primitive instruments, wooden percussion and steel mixing bowls.<sup>12</sup> All of which combine to create a ‘metallic, synthesized sound aesthetic of the postapocalyptic’ that sets the tone for the rest of the film.<sup>13</sup>



3.0: Close-ups of technology in the post-crash sequence

Following the dislocating title sequence the astronauts are suddenly thrown into a dangerous situation as the technology into which they had put so much trust threatens to kill them. In the aftermath of the crash there are a number of close-ups and extreme

<sup>10</sup> Cynthia J. Miller, ‘Seeing Beyond His Own Time: The Sounds of Jerry Goldsmith,’ in Matthew J. Bartkowiak (ed.), *Sounds of the Future: Essays on Music in Science Fiction Film* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2010), 213.

<sup>11</sup> Philippe Mather, ‘Figures of Estrangement in Science Fiction Film,’ *Science Fiction Studies* 29:2 (2002), 194.

<sup>12</sup> See Miller, ‘Seeing Beyond His Own Time,’ 212-213 and Kristopher Spencer, *Film and Television Scores, 1950-1979: A Critical Survey by Genre* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2008), 187-190.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Barnham, ‘Scoring Incredible Futures: Science-fiction Screen Music, and ‘Post-modernism’ as Romantic Epiphany,’ *The Musical Quarterly* 91:3/4 (Winter, 2008), 251.



close-ups of the technology that mirrors the pre-credit sequence, which also used this style of cinematography to highlight the power of technology (fig. 3). However, in the latter scenario it has transitioned from preserving life to destroying it. The film comments upon the ‘double-edged’ nature of technology with its power to both save and destroy.<sup>14</sup> In a speech made in December 1967 entitled ‘Nuclear Power: Key to a Golden Age of Mankind’ incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson noted that nuclear technology must be used ‘wisely’, saying:

What began as the most terrible instrument of war that man had ever seen can become the key to a golden age of mankind. But this will not happen unless we make it happen... We can either remake life on earth – or we can destroy it... We reaffirm our determination to dedicate the miraculous power of the atom not to death but to life.<sup>15</sup>

In this speech Johnson raises the point that nuclear technology although dangerous and most overtly associated with destruction, has been used for ‘peaceful purposes’ in particular the development and deployment of atomic energy.<sup>16</sup> His speech shows the continuing centrality of the nuclear technology to the national consciousness and wider concerns about mankind’s scientific discoveries and how they are used and controlled. This fear is present throughout the science fiction of the period that indicates not simply a fear of nuclear technology but rather the potential of any technology to alter the perceived nature order that positions humanity as the dominant species. This is expressed in *Planet of the Apes* through the fear that humanity in its current form could be wiped out and that the biological order could be corrupted returning Earth to a prehistoric version of itself eradicating all ‘cultural achievements’ and ‘the very structure of civilisation’.<sup>17</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* uses technology as a representative of both hope and fear; the crew trust that their computers and life-support technology will protect them and this is

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<sup>14</sup> Cyndy Hendershot, *Paranoia, the Bomb, and 1950s American Science Fiction Films* (Bowling Green, O.H.: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 82.

<sup>15</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, ‘Nuclear Power: Key to a Golden Age of Mankind,’ *Department of State Bulletin* 57: 1487 (25 Dec., 1967), 863.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 862-863. Johnson’s talks about nuclear reactors and the millions of kilowatts of electric power generated by these and used in homes across the nation. He also mentions the way it is used by the military to protect the nation with nuclear submarines that act as the United States’ ‘first line of defense against tyranny.’

<sup>17</sup> Truman, ‘State of the Union,’ 7 January 1953.

visually reinforced by the cinematography, which lavishes time and space on the ship and its abundant gadgetry. The astronauts are punished for putting their trust in man-made technology. The apes' knowledge of human technology is hidden and literally buried in order that it will not be proliferated; they distrust it because they know of and understand its devastating nature. They do not want to repeat humanity's mistakes.

The disturbing non-diegetic soundtrack of the title sequence fades out to be replaced with a disconcerting screeching noise, which is combined with fast seemingly uncontrolled camerawork that propels the audience into the next stage of the *Planet of the Apes*. Franklin J. Schaffner explains this cinematographic effect as follows:

To get the aerial shots for the crash-down the cameraman was on top of a World War I biplane. We also had a B-25 with a camera in its nose. But when I ran their footage for the crash-down it simply didn't seem to work. So I said hell with it, let's shoot the picture and then we'll come back to this thing. When we finished shooting and I sat down to cut the picture there was one can of film I had never seen and by cutting wide-footage into zoomed-lens stuff and mixing things up and reversing footage, literally reversing footage, and even running some footage backwards, we put together a sequence which seems to work pretty well for the crash. But it was not planned at all.<sup>18</sup>

The kinetic out-of-control sun-glare infused camera work where the frame turns, shakes and rolls towards the surface of the alien planet is filmed from the perspective of the ship rather than its sleeping crew. This sequence gives the ship and its failed machinery agency showing that technology is beyond the control of its creators. The comparatively quiet pre-credit sequence comes to a crashing conclusion shattering its sanitised dreamlike quality and replacing it with a primeval landscape.

### **TECHNOLOGY VERSUS NATURE**

The ship hurtles towards the surface of an unknown planet that is simultaneously familiar and yet alien. A feeling of recognising the landscape yet assuming that it must be alien

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<sup>18</sup> Franklin J. Schaffner interviewed by Stanley Lloyd Kaufman Jr. in Stanley Lloyd Kaufman Jr., 'The Early Franklin J. Schaffner: His Thoughts on his Films are Those of a Maturing Craftsman,' *Films in Review* (Aug-Sept, 1969), 413.

gives the audience a unique insight into the feelings and experiences of the stranded astronauts. As Schaffner explained:

You hoped people wouldn't guess the fact that the ape society was on Earth, but also had to deliver hints from time to time in order to make the ending legitimate. Wide-open, desert-like scenery seemed to indicate a planet somewhere, and was suitable for the idea the end of a planet that had been devastated... [the] long shots impressed the locale on the audience, not the personalities of the astronauts.<sup>19</sup>

It is only once the ship hits the water that the film cuts back to the crew, the human element. A menacing red light flashes within the ship, obviously a warning to the crew, but also as an indicator of the ship's control over their fate. In the diegetic soundtrack there is a beeping sound that had also appeared in the pre-credit sequence. Initially the beep is a reassuring noise like a heart monitor regulating and monitoring the sleeping crew but in the post-crash sequence it is altered and becomes a countdown to catastrophe.

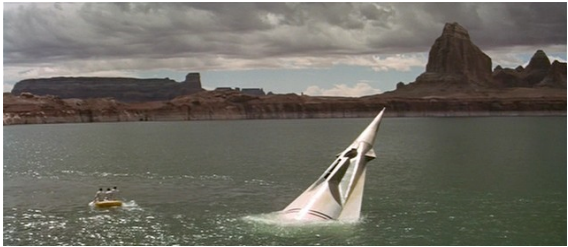
The crew are awakened from their technologically-induced sleep to a scene of disaster. Taylor calls out for Stewart the only member of the crew missing. There is a momentary silence and then a loud metallic screech accompanies the close up of a shrivelled Stewart, who looks like she has been dead for hundreds of years encased in her space-age sarcophagus. There has hardly been enough time to take in the death of Stewart before the ship begins to creak and groan, and water gushes into the ship threatening the lives of the surviving crew once again. The crew frantically move around the ship continuing to risk their lives to check a number of machines and readings, they still put their trust into the ship rather than themselves or each other. This sequence is shot using long shots so that the ship seems to fill and control the screen while the comparatively small crew (in size on screen and in number) try to tame and control it.

At the point when the water breaches the wall of the ship it becomes obvious that the astronauts will have to abandon ship and that despite the power technology wields it cannot be used against the force of nature. Technology can and will be overcome by nature. An extreme close up of the Earth/ship time dial shows that the astronauts are

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 412.

stranded in 3978 (25<sup>th</sup> November 3978). But this date could be subject to discussion as this image relies upon putting trust in the accuracy of machinery that has just stranded the protagonist on an alien land. A computer malfunction is blamed for the crash yet the film through its use of close up suggests a continued trust in technology. Once the decision to abandon ship has been made (Landon: ‘no use, the power’s gone’ Taylor: ‘Forget it, abandon ship’) the film cuts to shot of the exterior of the ship, the ship continues to dominate the frame, it remains in the centre of the shot. The conversations of the overcome crew continue clearly even though they are far from the camera/audience, and attention is drawn to the sinking ship (fig. 4.1) and the alien landscape in the background.



4.1: Ship contrasted with natural/alien landscape



4.2: Astronauts overwhelmed by desert landscape

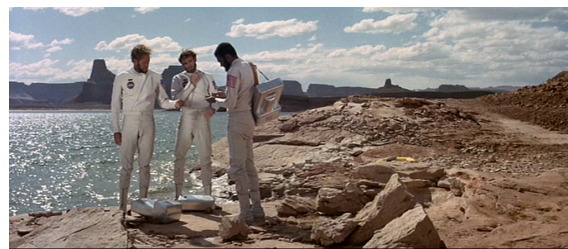
The trek sequence was shot at Lake Powell, a man-made reservoir on the Colorado River spanning the border between Utah and Arizona. A landscape created by both nature and technology as the reservoir was a human creation, formed by flooding the Glen Canyon with the controversial Glen Canyon Dam. This section of the film is quite slow and uneventful and gives the audience the time to accept that the crew are stranded in an alien landscape. Again putting their trust in the last remnants of the ship’s technology, the soil is found to be unsuitable for sustaining plant life so the crew must leave the relative safety of the water to go in search of food. They have been forced to return to a very basic state of survival, their technology entirely pointless if they can not find food and water.

Dodge, Landon and Taylor each have a survival pack which contains: a sensor, a Geiger counter, a pistol, twenty rounds of ammunition, a basic medical kit, a camera, a TX-9, food and water. The TX-9 is not explained in the film, it is assumed to be some sort future technology but its purpose or intended use remains a mystery and it just becomes another item of pointless technology. As Taylor informs his crew: ‘there is only

‘enough [food and water] for three days’ so they must find plant life beyond the borders of the inhospitable desert in order to survive. The content of the survival pack suggests arrogance on the part of ANSA; the astronauts have not been equipped with essentials such as a compass, matches, and a tent. Perhaps ANSA did not plan for failure. A mistake ANSA repeats in *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* when Brent (James Franciscus) is also put into the same position, stranded without adequate supplies on an alien planet. The kits essentially become the last pieces of technology available to the crew, but many of the items prove to be relatively ineffectual in their new environment.



5.1: Taylor's ineffectual survival pack



5.2: Off-centre crew sharing the frame with desert

The landscape completely replaces the ship and its abundant technology as the dominant image on screen. There are a number of close-ups and medium shots of the crew when in conversation but the most of this sequence is filmed in extreme long shots with the actors appearing as small figures entirely engulfed by the oppressive landscape (fig.4.2 & 5.2). It becomes a dangerous setting for the crew as they tumble down huge sand dunes and escape falling boulders. It shows how insignificant humans are in comparison to their creations (computers, guns, bomb) and the natural landscapes they are continually trying to tame and develop. Associate producer Mort Abrahams commented on the importance of this sequence for setting up the entire film when he said that the audience, ‘had to see the isolation, we had to feel the isolation, we had to see how helpless [the crew] were against the environment, [and their] struggle to get to the green zone’.<sup>20</sup>

The Forbidden Zone and desert landscape of the trek sequence is followed with a slightly more advanced ape settlement. As a science fiction feature set thousands of years into the future *Planet of the Apes* presents a futuristic world which is representative of the United States’ past. As discussed in the previous chapter the frontier is referenced in the

<sup>20</sup> Mort Abrahams quoted in Pendreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes*, 88.

film and the ape city forms part of this as it sits on the edges of civilisation. The Forbidden Zone is framed as the wild West of the American Frontier it is land that is unchartered and untamed by the apes. The ape city is the symbol of ape achievement and culture it positions the apes in a pre-industrial state with retrograde technology that indicates that they have yet to reach an equivalent level of technological advance as the astronauts or that perhaps they are unable to do so. The following section discusses the position of the city in science fiction and how *Planet of the Apes* subverts this for its own allegorical purposes.

### **THE APE CITY: A DIFFERENT DYSTOPIA**

The city often appears as a symbol of achievement, it is ‘humankind’s most sophisticated and complex ‘technology’.’<sup>21</sup> The city in *Planet of the Apes* is a clear visual indicator of the change to the way Earth is run and exists. The technology of the city as we know it is replaced with a more simplistic one. The ape settlement does not appear to be part of a wider community and exists in isolation from, potentially, the rest of the planet. It is a purposely alien looking structure, so chosen because the filmmakers wanted to make the ending (the Statue of Liberty) a total shock, and so making the world of the film unfamiliar (and yet eerily recognisable) was very important for achieving the desired reaction to the closing image.

Science fiction film cities usually fall into two categories. Some offer a ‘generally dystopian vision of an undifferentiated ‘city’ which is either unidentifiable with any actual place or only loosely so.’<sup>22</sup> For example the doomed city in *Logan’s Run* that does not clearly refer to any specific contemporary city making broad comments about society in general without focusing attention on any one city. Some science fiction film cities are, however, ‘identifiable’ and they are often named or visually signalled by monuments and buildings that are commonly known to come from a particular city.<sup>23</sup> As shown in the vision of Los Angeles presented in *Omega Man* where the future Los Angeles is presented as an urban nightmare of disease and danger where a government researcher

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<sup>21</sup> James A. Clapp “‘It was the City Killed the Beast:’ Nature, Technophobia, and the Cinema of the Urban Future,’ *Journal of Urban Technology* 10:3 (2003), 15.

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ‘Cities: Real and Imagined,’ in Shiel, *Cinema and the City*, 101.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

(Heston), who believes himself to be the last man alive, fights for survival against a colony of psychotic albino mutants called ‘The Family’.

An identifiable setting gives the future, as depicted in these films, grounding in the present and provides the film with ‘a specificity that makes its imminent destruction seem an immediate, contemporaneous event.’<sup>24</sup> By setting a film in a recognisable place with culturally significant and symbolic landmarks, such as the Golden Gate Bridge, the Washington Monument or the Statue of Liberty, the commentary found within the film seems more pertinent, as the events of the film are not happening on some far-off land but amidst a setting that is hauntingly identifiable.

There is a distinct difference between the cityscape as presented in *Planet of the Apes* and the cityscapes found within the majority of science fiction films in this period. *Planet of the Apes* includes images of both the undifferentiated and identifiable cityscape. For the majority of the film there is an unrecognisable landscape created in the aftermath of a man-made disaster in the form of the ape settlement purposely created to fool the audience and in turn the protagonist into believing that filmworld is alien. However, with the final revelation the setting of the film changes completely and shows an identifiable iconic part of the New York skyline as a half buried ruin and in so doing clearly and forcefully places the film back within an ‘immediate [and] contemporaneous’ U.S. context.<sup>25</sup>

Designing the ape city was a lengthy process as it needed to convincingly represent a new natural order, the production designers needed to create a cityspace that reflected not only intelligence and design ability but also link into the apes’ primeval heritage. *Planet of the Apes*’ art designer, Bill Creber, decided that the ape city should make reference to the ape’s primitive animal past as Mort Abrahams explained,

I suddenly opened a book on Gaudi...if you look at this architecture, a lot of it resembles trees and I said to Bill, if apes were gonna build something they would have some kind of a primitive, primal instinct to build it toward the kind of habitation that they’re familiar with – namely trees.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Vivian Sobchack, ‘Cities on the Edge of Time: The Urban Science Fiction Film,’ in Kuhn, *Alien Zone II*, 130.

<sup>25</sup> Sobchack, ‘Cities on the Edge of Time,’ 130.

<sup>26</sup> Mort Abrahams, quoted in Russo *Planet of the Apes Revisited*, 39.

The futuristic ape city imagined by Boullé in the source novel was rejected for both artistic and budgetary reasons and instead the work of Spanish architect and designer Antonio Gaudí became the primary influence for the designers. Gaudí's buildings, for example the Casa Milà (fig. 7.1) and the La Sagrada Família Basilica, are curvaceous and organic representing a modern design aesthetic alongside natural lines and shapes. Gaudí's work 'evinced a strikingly ambidextrous ability to go both forward and backward in history simultaneously.'<sup>27</sup> It was 'both western and non-western in nature' making use of modern building techniques together with 'an artisanal approach to traditional materials'.<sup>28</sup> The ape city is simultaneously contemporary and prehistoric drawing upon modernist design whilst referencing the apes' uncivilised past (fig. 7.2).



7.1: The Casa Milà commonly known as La Pedrera (the quarry) because of the stonework that looked like caves in construction



7.2: The ape city with its irregular curved stonework and cave-like interiors.

The apes are not given the same position as the human they have replaced. The progressive/regressive city positions the apes as inferior as they have created structures that imitate their animalistic habitats. The filmmakers are unable to allow the apes to become equals to human beings; they are intelligent but dress in simple robes and live in tree houses. Taylor is still shown to be at the pinnacle of the evolutionary scale cut-off from his own kind but still seen as their moral and intellectual superior.

The science fiction city of the late 1960s into the mid-1970s is negative space. It is a representation of the evils and naivety of contemporary society, which, despite its advanced knowledge and technology, cannot save itself from disease, destruction and destitution. In some cases the city appears as a prison for its inhabitants unable to escape

<sup>27</sup> David Craven, 'The Latin American Origins of "Alternative Modernism",' in Rasheed Araeen, Sean Cubitt and Ziauddin Sardar (eds.), *The Third Text Reader: On Art, Culture and Theory* (London: Continuum, 2005), 28.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.



their problems and in others the city literally falls apart. A prominent example of the dystopian cinema of the period is *Soylent Green* which deals with fears concerning cities of the future and their inherent problems. In *Soylent Green* the city is overpopulated and food shortages have become so extensive that government agencies have resorted to feeding the starving with the remains of other humans who have been encouraged to commit suicide, a substance named 'soylent green'. It produces a future that is similarly damning of humans as *Planet of the Apes* but instead of one where humans are herded and culled the future presented in *Soylent Green* has too many humans to the point where cannibalism is the government's solution, an act that makes the humans inhumane as they destroy themselves in order to survive.

In *Planet of the Apes* the cities of the sixties have been destroyed and at the end of the film we learn that Taylor was on Earth the whole as he stumbles upon a remnant of 'the ultimate symbolic city of America'.<sup>29</sup> New York City often acts as a character as well as a location holding a certain set of values and expectations to be co-opted and questioned. Fragments of the Statue of Liberty, are found 'strewn on an abandoned landscape on a radically altered planet'.<sup>30</sup> The Statue of Liberty is one of New York's and in turn United States' most easily recognised monuments. It 'is an icon of the twentieth century and a metaphor for the concept of progress'.<sup>31</sup> By symbolically felling the statue, the film highlights the fragility of human achievement. As Eric Greene wrote 'the statue scene [juxtaposes] a bright shining myth with a corroded reality' and without dialogue or music produces one of the most singularly memorable images created in Hollywood.<sup>32</sup> This remnant of the most recognisable U.S. city is left half buried in the sand as a 'monumental gravestone',<sup>33</sup> and a warning against continued human activity that damages the Earth and its inhabitants. The film constructs a vision of destruction, but offers no hope or resolution.

*Planet of the Apes* does not entirely wipe out the world as elements remains intact as a reminder of what came before. According to director Franklin J. Schaffner, the film

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<sup>29</sup> Christina Kennedy, Tianna Kennedy, & Mélisa Kennedy, 'Science Fiction/Fantasy Films, Fairytales and Control: Landscape Stereotypes on a Wilderness to Ultra-urban Continuum,' in Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner (ed.), *Cinema and Landscape* (Bristol: Intellect, 2010), 291.

<sup>30</sup> Sobchack, 'Cities on the Edge of Time,' 123.

<sup>31</sup> Anna Claydon, 'CityScope: The Cinema and the City,' *Global Built Environmental Review* 5:1 (2005), 64.

<sup>32</sup> Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, 53.

<sup>33</sup> Sobchack, 'Cities on the Edge of Time,' 123.

was intended to '[underscore] the fact that the world is headed for self-destruction unless we somehow learn to control human nature.'<sup>34</sup> *Planet of the Apes* is an allegorical film and it shows that 'human mores are no different than that of the ape society and they were fairly ridiculous, and [that] a lot of mores, habits, customs, attitudes, etc are pretty ridiculous'.<sup>35</sup> It puts the world into the hands of a different species and in doing so imagines a reality when humans are the animals that are scientific test subjects, hunted for sport, and culled to protect ape agriculture and towns. The astronauts are stranded on a planet with devolved humans without material evidence of their intelligence, their technology that is destroyed by the planet's humans, condemning them to the same fate as their primordial descendants.

### **TECHNOLOGY IN THE HANDS OF THE OTHER PRIMATES**

The primitive humans strip the astronauts of their technological twentieth-century identity. The final two-thirds of *Planet of the Apes* is set in a primitive future where the machinery that had defined the astronauts and their surroundings have been destroyed or stolen. The white clinical technology of the twentieth-century, as represented by the interiors of the ship and the costumes of the astronauts, is replaced with limited technology. The most advanced is seen at the archaeological dig and in the hands of gorillas that brandish rifles during the hunt and at the end of the film in a shoot-out with Taylor. The transfer of technology is also a transfer of power to the apes; they hold the guns and therefore dominate over the humans and other animals.

### **Medical Research/Animal Rights**

Other than weaponry and dug-up human artefacts, much of the technology possessed by the apes in *Planet of the Apes* is seen in the murky labs of the chimpanzee animal scientist Dr. Zira and her veterinarian colleague Dr. Galen (Wright King). Dressed in her green robe with its leather panel of religious markings Zira is clearly marked with her social status and in turn the limitations of that status.<sup>36</sup> The chimpanzees on the planet are

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<sup>34</sup> Winogura, 'Dialogues on Apes,' 21.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of costume and social status within the ape's theocracy see chapter four: 'Framing the Subject: Identity Politics in *Planet of the Apes*.'

the educated class who are represented in the film most frequently by Zira whose medical research is in human psychology and physiology which is used to learn more about her own kind and their origins. It is also revealed that the apes use the humans as test subjects for new medicines and procedures. Non-human animals have been used throughout the history of scientific research. During the late 1960s the animal rights movement began to grow alongside the other protests movements of the period.

The first wave of the contemporary animal rights movement ‘began hesitantly in the 1960s in the United Kingdom’ in protests against bloodsports (fox/deer hunting) and the cruel treatment of animals in farming.<sup>37</sup> The intellectual underpinning of the more radical movement of the late 1970s and 1980s was formed in the 1960s but at the release of *Planet of the Apes* the animal rights movement was still developing in the midst of the other equal rights movements.<sup>38</sup> The sixties response to animal ethics drew upon the ‘return-to-nature element’ of the ‘still maligned ‘hippy’ culture of that decade which placed a new value on compassion ... [that] helped to blur the dividing line between human and non-human, implying that *all* sentients should be respected.’<sup>39</sup> In 1966 the ‘Animal Welfare Act’ was signed into Federal law partially in response to a ‘wave of public sentiment’ where thousands of U.S. citizens wrote to Congress protesting against the suspected theft of pet dogs for sale into research.<sup>40</sup> This public outcry can be seen as a reaction to an article and photo essay published in 4<sup>th</sup> February 1966 edition of *LIFE* called ‘Concentration Camps for Dogs.’<sup>41</sup> The ‘Animal Welfare Act’ regulated the

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<sup>37</sup> Peter Singer, ‘Introduction,’ in Peter Singer (ed.), *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 1. See Ruth Harrison, *Animal Machines: The New Factory Farming Industry* (London: Vincent Stuart Publishers, 1964) and Brigid Brophy, ‘The Rights of Animals,’ *Sunday Times* (10 Oct., 1965); reprinted in Brigid Brophy, *Don’t Never Forget: Collected Views and Reviews* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1966), 15-21.

<sup>38</sup> The movement gained momentum following the publication of the movement’s canonical text by philosopher Peter Singer *Animal Liberation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1975) that argued the ethical case against animal misuse and was developed in response to a review he wrote of an edited collection released in 1972 – Stanley Godlovitch, Roslind Godlovitch and John Harris (eds.) *Animals, Men and Morals* (London: Gollancz, 1972). For further details on the Animals Right Movement across Europe and the United States see Richard D. Ryder, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Speciesism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1989; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford: Berg, 2000), Chapter 10: ‘The Revival of the Movement after 1960.’

<sup>39</sup> Richard D. Ryder, *Animal Revolution: Changing Attitudes Towards Speciesism* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 3.

<sup>40</sup> Dale F. Schwindaman, ‘The History of the Animal Welfare Act,’ in Charles W. McPherson (ed.), *Fifty Years of Laboratory Animal Science: 1950-2000* (Memphis, T.N.: American Association of Laboratory Animal Science, 1999), 147.

<sup>41</sup> Stan Wayman, ‘Concentration Camps for Dogs: Pets for Sale Cheap – No Questions Asked,’ *LIFE* 60:9 (4 Feb., 1966), 22-29.

treatment of animals in exhibition, transportation and in the hands of breeders and dealers. However, it was not until 1970 that the act was augmented to include the rules on the use of certain mammals in research.

*Planet of the Apes* is a ‘fable of species role-reversal;’<sup>42</sup> with humans rather than non-human animals being caged and experimented upon. In introducing the apes on the planet as creatures capable of human cruelty the film questions human use of animals. When the tables are turned and Charlton Heston is put in the position of the helpless animal is it as easy to accept and explain away the reasons for having human test subjects, reflecting greater contemporary concern with vivisection. The line between different types of sentient beings was beginning to ‘blur’ during the late sixties and throughout the seventies (when all other original *Apes* films were released) as a dialogue developed concerning the position of non-human animals and whether they deserved to be considered to have rights alongside other marginalised groups.<sup>43</sup>

The research that Zira is conducting has the potential to revolutionise the ape society. She is looking into the evolutionary stages that led to the rise of the apes as the dominant species and comes to the conclusion that apes evolved from a lower species of primates, namely humans. Yet the orangutan governing class curtails her research and she is called a heretic and is put on trial for treason. This part of the narrative takes a look at the discovery and eventual acceptance of Darwin’s theory of evolution and questions the role of the state in guiding and controlling the areas which scientists can or cannot investigate questioning the conflict between ethics and scientific advancement. The issue concerning the clash between science and religion is discussed in detail in the chapter on religion in *Planet of the Apes*.

*Planet of the Apes* comments upon government interference with research in medicine and evolutionary biology. In the film the government, and specifically Dr. Zaius, cuts Zira’s funding and rejects her conclusions on the grounds that they contradict the sacred scrolls, which are the basis for both the government and the state religion. Zira’s finding on the evolution of apes from humans is backed up by the discoveries of

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<sup>42</sup> Rickard Slotkin, ‘Foreword,’ in Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth*, vii.

<sup>43</sup> The issue of animal testing and whether it can be justified is a far more prominent issue in the 2001 reimagining of *Planet of the Apes*. In Burton’s version the humans have a position within the society as slaves and pets. Ari (Helena Bonham Carter) is an animal activist, she buys and releases humans into the wild and helps the film’s protagonist, Leo (Mark Wahlberg), escape from captivity.

Cornelius, who is an archaeologist. At some point before the beginning of the film's narrative he was given permission to dig in the Forbidden Zone. In one of the final sequences in the film, Taylor, Zira, and Zaius are shown Cornelius' excavation site, where he has discovered evidence of a society that predates the records of the ape society.

Cornelius' work in the Forbidden Zone uncovers artefacts including spectacles, false teeth, a pacemaker and a human doll; all of these human relics (except the doll) represent their weaknesses. However, these items could be read differently as they show that these humans had the intelligence to also use their technology to resolve or at least decrease the difficulties associated with common medical problems. They were designed to make the weaker stronger. The spectacles and false teeth allow their wearers to continue with life hardly noticing their disability, and the ability to fit a heart device, which will save and extend a human life is a sign of ingenuity. The body has many failings but the mind has the capacity to develop and design things that can correct, protect and prolong life.

*Planet of the Apes* as well as questioning unrestricted technological advancements also shows that research into our origins and other species is required in order for the human race to develop and progress. Discussion of animal rights, research and the scientific advancements is interlinked with the prior analysis of the religious discourse present within *Planet of the Apes* in chapter five. The government navigates a fine line between restriction and freedom, and ethics/religion and science. The constitution defines the rights of the people but leading into the discussion of gun control and but with the discoveries that will save lives there will inevitably be discoveries which will lead to the development of technology with destructive potential (e.g. Atomic energy).

### **From my Cold Dead Hands: Aping the Right to Bear Arms**

'In the early 1960s gun control was not a term that was broadly used... it was not an issue on the mass public agenda.'<sup>44</sup> Kristin A. Goss suggests there were gun control 'movement moments' rather than cohesive movement inline with other activism of the period and that these moments were often 'promoted by a particularly traumatic shooting

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<sup>44</sup> Kristin A. Goss, *Disarmed: The Missing Movement for Gun Control in America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 110.

or wave of gun violence.<sup>45</sup> The first moment occurred following the assassination of John F. Kennedy on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1963 as ‘the world grieved as if they had terribly lost their own leader, friend, brother.’<sup>46</sup> The U.S. public wrote letters of complaint to Congress concerning the fact that the weapons used to kill Kennedy were purchased through interstate mail and they were calls for limitations on purchasing firearms. In 1961 the Dodd Committee (the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency) began investigating the ‘the interstate mail order gun problem’ and between 1961-63 a series of studies were conducted on the use of guns by teenagers.<sup>47</sup> Hearings were held in 1963 to draw attention to the proposal that there should limitations on how and who could purchase guns.<sup>48</sup> The Dodd Bill failed to pass along with another 18 gun control bills and more than 150 introduced at state legislature level. ‘The gun rights supporters seemed to perceive, accurately as it turns out, that the hue and cry for gun control would quickly fade as the aroused but unorganized citizens returned to their everyday lives.’<sup>49</sup>

By the 1960s gun lobbies had ‘succeeded in infusing public discourse on gun control issues with the Second Amendment rhetoric.’<sup>50</sup> This became part of the discussion that surrounded the Gun Control Act with the NRA, in particular, claiming that restrictions to gun access were unconstitutional emphasising harsher punishment for criminals rather than laws to prevent gun deployment.<sup>51</sup> In 1967 the National Council for a Responsible Firearms Policy was formed, which was essentially a think tank made up of government officials and policy experts. But after Robert F. Kennedy was killed ‘the council proved critical in harnessing and directing the spontaneous and intense desire on the part of many Americans to express their support for gun control’.<sup>52</sup> President Johnson

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 1031.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Dodd, *Federal Firearms Legislation, 1961-1968* (unpublished report) quoted in Franklin E. Zimring ‘Firearms and Federal Law: The Gun Control Act of 1968,’ *Journal of Legal Studies* 4 (1975), 145.

<sup>48</sup> The proposed Dodd Act would have meant that when purchasing handguns (concealable weapons) through the mail buyers would have to provide a notarised statement to prove that they were over eighteen, had not been convicted of any felonies and that their purchases did not violate any state laws.

<sup>49</sup> Goss, *Disarmed*, 37.

<sup>50</sup> Robert J. Spitzer, *The Right to Bear Arms: Rights and Liberties Under Law*, (Santa Barbara, C.A.: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2001), 81.

<sup>51</sup> The Second Amendment to the constitution, part of the United States Bill of Rights, says that ‘the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.’

<sup>52</sup> Goss, *Disarmed*, 38.

had made several attempts between 1964-1967 to introduce legislation but ‘when the political tenor of the country changed dramatically in 1968 [he] exerted new pressure for gun and crime legislation.’<sup>53</sup> The Gallup Poll and the Harris Survey show that ‘never have fewer than two thirds of the U.S. electorate wanted access to guns to come under some kind of official supervision.’<sup>54</sup> In October 1968 the Gun Control Act was finally passed banning the shipment of firearms to individuals across state lines and strengthening other regulatory processes.

*Planet of the Apes* was put on general release between the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy when the political discussion of gun law was prominent.<sup>55</sup> The only weapon technologies seen in *Planet of the Apes* are guns. The apes use them against humans but not against each other perhaps confirming the idea that the gun is not the problem but rather the individual that wields it, as Heston would later say in his work with the NRA:

There are no good guns. There are no bad guns. Any gun in the hands of a bad man is a bad thing. Any gun in the hands of a decent person is no threat to anybody – except bad people.<sup>56</sup>

Predominantly the apes use their guns to hunt and control humans in same way that farmers shoot pests to save their crops and livestock. Zaius’ snipers do shoot at Zira, Lucius and Cornelius at the end of the film but it is mainly because these chimpanzees have aligned themselves with Taylor. They are seen to be as much of a threat as he is in the closing sequence as they not only broke the law to save a human but have uncovered too much about the origins of the ape species.

Guns only appear in *Planet of the Apes* at the beginning and at the end of the film. The first gun on screen is the semi-automatic pistol in Taylor’s survival pack (fig 5.1) and it is never fired. The gun is a Colt Model 1903 Pocket Hammerless which was a military

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<sup>53</sup> Raymond, *From My Cold, Dead Hands*, 177.

<sup>54</sup> Hazel Erskine, ‘The Polls: Gun Control,’ *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36:3 (Autumn, 1972), 455. Erskine’s study looks at figures released between 1938 and 1972.

<sup>55</sup> King was assassinated on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1968, one day before *Planet of the Apes* was put on general release across the United States, and Kennedy was assassinated on 15<sup>th</sup> June

<sup>56</sup> Charlton Heston, Interview on *Meet the Press*, NBC News, May 18, 1997.

weapon that was dispatched as a General Officer pistol from the 1940s until they were replaced by the M15 General Officers pistol during the 1970s. This handgun remains in its case and is supposedly destroyed or simply discarded by the primitive humans that do not recognise its power or purpose. Taylor and his crew do not get the opportunity to use their weapons to defend themselves or the other unarmed humans. As the film continues the humans are shown to be without rights. The ape society does not have a constitution but rather a religious text that denies rights to the human-animals.



6.1: The first shot of ape weapons



6.2: The armed apes on horseback



6.3: Taylor with the adapted carbine rifle



6.4: Nova looks on as Taylor shoots

The hunt sequence finally introduces the apes; gorillas dressed in leathers, riding horse and brandishing rifles. The gorillas use modified M1 semi-automatic carbine rifles (fig. 6). Taylor is also seen to use one of these weapons after his aided escape from the ape city. He uses it to protect himself and his future out in the Forbidden Zone. Yet, it is only the gorillas and Taylor, the lowest denominators on the ape caste system, who are seen to comfortably use the weapons,<sup>57</sup> perhaps suggesting that the use of the gun indicates a lower level of intelligence and education. The gorillas are the lowest caste who have been kept as the working-class through manipulation of the religious texts and a lack of education. The gun is positioned as a dangerous weapon, the reason why humans destroyed themselves allowing for apes to take over. The orangutans have used

<sup>57</sup> When Cornelius, Nova, Taylor, Zaius and Zira enter the underground archaeological dig Lucius is seen holding a gun in a defensive position. He is the lookout and only uses the weapon to warn Taylor when the Zaius' gorilla snipers attack. As the main chimpanzee representatives Cornelius and Zira are seen to be uncomfortable with weapons. They arm Taylor but are not seen to use the weapons themselves.



their intelligence (fostered through education) to maintain the ape way of life without having to personally resort to violence; the gorillas may have guns but they do not have power.

During the Second World War the U.S. military used both of the weapons that appear in the film as the standard firearms and updated versions were used in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The Carbine rifle is a recognisable U.S. firearm and had few alternations made to it before it appeared in the film. If compared to the creation of the ape settlement (see following sub-chapter for analysis) the guns have not been unrecognisably altered in order to detach them from the contemporary viewing audience. When *Planet of the Apes* was shot both the Colt and Carbine rifles were still being used in active service. This raises questions about why the filmmakers chose to use relatively modern weapons in the film when so many resources were used to create an alien landscape.

The planet of the apes is a pre-industrial society. The mise en scene situates the apes in a period development far behind the contemporary audience. The apes depend upon horses; they are only other non-human animals shown in the film.<sup>58</sup> The use of wagons and other smaller items like the camera that is used in the post-hunt sequence indicate the apes' regressive position in comparison to the space-age Taylor. There are also a number of extreme long shots of the environment the escaping Zira, Cornelius, Taylor and Nova must encounter on their way to the archaeological dig site and then eventually into the Forbidden Zone, which positions Taylor as a new (post-apocalyptic) frontiersman rediscovering the Americas. This presents an image of a society that has more in common with the frontier communities that moved their way across the American plains in the late nineteenth century than the United States of the 1960s. Yet it should be noted that the guns used are far more advanced than the lever action rifles which the frontiersmen used.<sup>59</sup> The decision to use modern firearms potentially offers another point of contact for sections of the audience to ensure that they read the world created in the film as a comment upon the United States. The development of these far more advanced firearms possibly suggests that more time has been spent developing weapons

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<sup>58</sup> For further discussion of the horses and the relationship between humans and non-humans and the representation of race and species difference see McHugh, 'Horses in Blackface,' 40-72.

<sup>59</sup> For discussion of the use of frontier imagery and mythology see previous chapter.

than exploring the frontiers or developing the technology at work in the ape society. Mirroring the apparent importance that weapons hold in contemporary culture, millions are spent on weapons programmes and the arms race, yet millions live below the poverty line and in a society rife with social injustices.

The Carbine rifle used in the film is an identifiable U.S. military firearm yet until the weapon is in the hands of Taylor it is not an instrument of war. It is only shown to be used by the apes as a hunting weapon and not against one another. Both instances of ape gun use are in a hunting situation, at first in the hunt scene where Taylor, and every other wild human, is the target and again in the second part of the film where Taylor returns the gorilla's fire. The gorilla snipers do not approach him as an equal enemy; he is an animal that needs to be culled. Taylor is able to singlehandedly repel the threat of the guards despite being massively outnumbered suggesting that the gorilla guards are not part of a trained militia. Taylor is shown to be far more skilled with the weapon despite his initial stance where he rejected and condemned humanity's penchant for war and destruction.

During the trial Zira and Cornelius are labelled as heretics and charged with treason and they escape with Taylor and Nova into the Forbidden Zone. Taylor insists on bringing a gun, which both of the chimpanzees frown upon, showing that they have had little contact with weaponry and that prior to Taylor's appearance they have not needed to. Once armed Taylor's gun never leaves his side. He remains in the mindset of the Earth that he had left behind, believing that in order to stay in control individuals must be armed or have the right to bear arms so that they can protect themselves against aggressors. There is nothing to contradict this notion because in this sequence it is the gun that saves Taylor. He uses it to force Zaius to call off his guards and to get him to provide him with sufficient supplies and a horse so that he and Nova can go out into the Forbidden Zone with a greater chance of survival. Zaius shows disgust as Zira and Cornelius' decision to allow Taylor to carry a weapon by saying: 'only a fool would give a gun to an animal.'

Although Zaius's allegiance to the faith is questioned as it restricts progress and technological and medical advances, it could be said that his approach to weapons is not entirely condemned. It is revealed at the end of the film that Zaius has known about humanity all along and that he had intentionally covered up evidence about human

dominance claiming that it was humanity's violent tendencies and dependence upon weaponry (from the gun to the nuclear bomb) that led to their demise. Zaius fears that Taylor's continued existence and potential procreation with Nova could lead to a return of the destructive predecessor (humanity) and the end of the apes.<sup>60</sup> The sacred scrolls, as recited by Cornelius at Zaius' behest, declare that humans are 'the harbinger[s] of death' who made a 'desert of his home and yours.' Further confirming the idea that the film looks at the destructive nature of humanity, and the perception that the United States specifically have become too reliant upon the power invested in the weapons technology, fearing that the world could be destroyed following the decisions of a few elected officials. The Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world incredibly close to nuclear annihilation in October 1962 and the fear of nuclear annihilation although lessening towards the end of the decade was still an issue that infiltrated political discussions and also popular culture.

Daniel Dinello suggests that 'science fiction expresses a technophobic fear of losing our human identity, our freedom, our emotions, our values, and our lives to machine... reflecting the real world of weaponized, religiously rationalized, and profit-fuelled technology.'<sup>61</sup> To some extent this is true in *Planet of the Apes* as the post-apocalyptic world shown in the film represents the human race stripped of its identity and power thanks to the proliferation of weaponised technology. But the machines do not take over instead quite the opposite happens and civilisation is seen to regress not just technologically but also biologically. The natural order is reordered showing that humanism is not inherent and will not necessarily be retained following an apocalyptic event. The ape world is not a mirror of human world of the late 1960s but an isolated pre-industrial settlement that simultaneously presents the Earth's future and its past.

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<sup>60</sup> In *Beneath the Planet of the Apes* Zaius' fears are realised when Taylor destroys the entire planet by detonating the Omega Bomb which is found in an underground city guarded by mutated humans. The bomb-worshipping mutants are another consequence of the nuclear holocaust.

<sup>61</sup> Daniel Dinello, *Technophobia!: Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 2.

## CONCLUSION: UNTAMED TECHNOLOGY

*Planet of the Apes* imagines a future where humans are able to not only travel into space but also land on other planets. Taylor and his crew travel far beyond the reaches of the space technology available in 1968, although they ultimately end up back on Earth they have survived in space for more than a year.<sup>62</sup> The first moonwalk took place on 21 July 1969 just over a year after the release of the film fulfilling Kennedy's goals for the United States. Technology had succeeded in putting a man on the Moon and demonstrating U.S. power and aptitude. *Planet of the Apes* was conceived and released in the build up to these achievements and imagines a future where space travel is possible. It also one where the United States can explore beyond its existing territories, the planet and even the solar system. *Planet of the Apes* was created at a time when 'science reality overtook prophecy' as space travel become reality rather than fiction and narratives were 'catapulted further into space' for a new space-age generation.<sup>63</sup>

The issue of technology arises throughout *Planet of the Apes* and it is treated ambivalently. The film's opening points to a future of possibility. It begins as a dream of advanced technology with a crew who are protected by a functional set of machines that have allowed them to explore the universe for the potential benefit of mankind. Yet, with the failure of this technology, this dream is replaced with a nightmare future, as the protagonist is thrown into a pre-industrial society under the rule of non-human animals. According to James Clapp:

Wiping the slate clean presents some interesting dramatic opportunities for exploring the notion that civilisation contains the seeds of its own undoing and that the culprit is not so much technology as the moral failings of its makers.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Taylor notes in the prologue that the film's narrative begins six months into the crew's deep-space journey. When the crew discuss when and where they are following the crash Taylor says that they have been asleep for months and that mourning for Stewart is pointless as she's been 'dead nearly a year.' It is difficult to establish a timeline of the astronauts journey as no specifics are given in the script or on screen.

<sup>63</sup> Anon, 'The Moon Has Been Eclipsed For Movie Audiences: Films Must Go Further Into the Future – Even Beyond Mars,' *Los Angeles Times* (28 March, 1970), M12.

<sup>64</sup> Clapp 'It was the City Killed the Beast,' 3.

It is not the technology itself that causes destruction but rather the people who misuse it. *Planet of the Apes* envisages a future where technological advancements have led to the end of humanism. Humans have been replaced not by advanced technology or machines but by a supposedly lower-level primate.

As a cultural document *Planet of the Apes* highlights the contradiction between the desire for and fear of advanced technology. It responds to the growing power and influence of technology in the household, the international battlefield and out to the edges of the Earth's atmosphere. Science fiction films made between 1968 and 1977 stand as examples of the extremes of these fears, in a period when the United States was in the middle of war at home (race riots) and abroad (Vietnam). Warfare had been changed by the actions of the United States in the Second World, which had used its technological advantage to end the war and save their own troops but it had also killed hundreds of thousands of civilians, decimated its homes and obliterated huge areas of the Japanese landscape. The threat of technologically advanced warfare loomed over the rest of the century with atomic warfare being threatened and discussed as a possible strategy for success.

Technological advancement had allowed for the development of atomic energy that had the power to both elevate and decimate human civilisation. It was still an issue in sixties society referenced in presidential addresses and discussed as a possible tactic in the battlefields of the Cold War. It was used to defend the United States by powering military vessels and it could provide huge amounts of electricity that would be used in homes across the nation. But this technology has also created the atomic bomb. It had been used to force 'unconditional surrender on Japan' during the Second World War, an act that eventually ended war in the Pacific theatre.<sup>65</sup> The bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima killed 'possibly as many as 250,000' people although an accurate number is impossible to register.<sup>66</sup> As Barton J. Bernstein notes 'America was not morally unique – just technologically exceptional. Only it had the bomb, and so only it used it.'<sup>67</sup> If 'any'

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<sup>65</sup> Dennis D. Wainstock, *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 49.

<sup>66</sup> Barton J. Bernstein, 'The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered,' *Foreign Affairs* 74:1 (Jan/Feb, 1995), 135.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 152.

other nation (Japan, Germany, Soviet Union) had managed to harness that technology they 'surely would have used it.'<sup>68</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* does comment upon the stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons through its infamous closing image. As discussed in the previous chapter this is linked into wider concerns about the Vietnam War and how far the United States would be prepared to go in order to win the war. But it also concerns the aftermath and the image of the post-apocalyptic where all the societal structures have been wiped out and the natural order is upturned. Although the humans survive the end of the world they do not recover their position of power. Exceptional technology has destroyed rather saved humanity and the natural landscape has become a dominant and overpowering feature of the new world. As shown throughout the opening and closing sequences the Forbidden Zone is inhospitable and even the remainders of the astronaut technology cannot tame it. Outside of its historical context the technology of the futuristic past is ineffectual, it does not have purpose or power beyond its own period.

The only surviving technologies are the guns that the gorillas use to control and cull the humans. The animals gain their rights at the tip of a gun no longer the subject of tests and vivisection the apes are able to retain their position of power through guns and backed up by religious fervour. The weapons in *Planet of the Apes* make reference to the United States' militarised past and how weaponry has been used to subjugate weaker less technologically advanced nations and peoples. *Planet of the Apes* simultaneously questions and reinforces the U.S. right to keep and bear arms. The apes as human replacements use weapons to reduce and repress the human race. They have the weapons and the power over the lesser species. But it can also be shown to support the gun lobbies in their opinion that weapons allow for the protection of the current order. The apes do not use their weapons against one another but as a defensive measure to ensure ape continuation and human subjugation. Guns are used against the 'bad people' who created this future through their mishandling of weapons technology. Suggesting that is not the technology that needs to be replaced and restricted but those who control it.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 151-2.



## CONCLUSION:

### ***PLANET OF THE APES: CONTINUING RECEIVERSHIP & HISTORICAL VALUE***

*Historians (like moviemakers) are products of the times in which they write (or film).*

- Peter C. Rollins & John E. O'Connor<sup>1</sup>

*I hate every ape I see, from chimpan-A to chimpan-Z.*

Troy McClure, *The Simpsons*

Despite major changes in the way in which historians approach film and the way it is used and taught in higher education, the study of film is still looked upon as a sideline to the major study of history. There is a continuing tendency to look at films defined as history/historical films as the most relevant type of film for historical inquiry. Historical studies focus upon film as a way of interpreting and understanding history rather than analysing film as a document in its own right regardless of the genre. In contrast, by evaluating *Planet of the Apes* in this way I have shown the breadth of information held within the filmic text and the complicated nature of understanding and interpreting its range of audio-visual components. In presenting *Planet of the Apes* as a historical document I suggest that films should be appreciated as constituting a valuable data set for historians because of the position these documents hold within modern society.

Films are integrated into contemporary culture and they 'reproduce dominant (or oppositional) currents of thought.'<sup>2</sup> Film is an interpreter of nations, cultures and concerns regardless of the genre; it acts as a record of or even a chastisement of attitudes and prejudices. The symbols and images that are embedded into these audio-visual texts are 'so deeply part of a particular social and historical context that the "foreign observer" may be unaware of their emotive value.'<sup>3</sup> This symbolism must, therefore, be uncovered

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<sup>1</sup> Rollins, *Hollywood's West*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Marc Ferro, *Cinema et Histoire*, 162.

<sup>3</sup> Short, 'Feature Films as History,' 28.



and explained in order to highlight the iconographic and socio-political value of each film.

Cinema is more than just a reflection of the period, people, nation(s) and culture that created it. It is part of that culture. A film does not simply mirror its context but engages with it, confirming, conceiving, and commenting upon ideas about trends, fashions, and intellectual and social issues. It responds to political matters and policies by engaging either directly with the subject matter or by immersing issues into a filmic subtext that can be displayed with varying levels of subtlety. *Planet of the Apes* acts as an inscription of issues that were present within the United States at the end of the 1960s. The film offers a particular perspective that feeds into existent feelings within society, ideas that are then highlighted by the studios as they market the film to the intended audience.

#### **1960s AMERICA: FALLING APART/TEARING APART**

Released in 1968, the pivotal year ‘of the American decade’,<sup>4</sup> *Planet of the Apes* responded to the cultural and military conflicts that had had been building throughout the post-war period. The film, as a historical document, shows that U.S. society was being torn apart by external and internal conflicts. *Planet of the Apes* simultaneously reacts against and responds to changes in societal attitudes, with particular reference to race and gender. In a discussion of 1968 William Chafe concludes:

By 1968 [U.S.] society was almost at a point of cultural and social civil war. As that year unfolded virtually every conceivable conflict exploded into public view. First came the Tet Offensive, highlighting the vulnerability of American forces in Vietnam and the American government’s lack of credibility when it claimed that the war was almost over. Then came the political turmoil of the ‘Dump Johnson’ movement, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, the trauma of the Chicago Democratic Convention, and the riots in the streets. Everything seemed to be falling apart.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Isserman, *America Divided*, 222.

<sup>5</sup> William H. Chafe, ‘American Since 1945,’ in Eric Foner (ed.), *The New American History* (Philadelphia, P.A.: Temple University Press, 1997), 169.

*Planet of the Apes* forms part of a collection of films and a wider range of cultural forms that declared that the United States was falling apart. In the case of *Planet of the Apes* this extended to a future where the United States *had* fallen apart. The film reflects a society in transition, one in the midst of an identity crisis, with internal conflicts that are exposed and expounded via a number of creative and political discourses. Throughout this dissertation the duality of the *Planet of the Apes*' commentary is repeatedly highlighted – it tries for racial equality and fails, simultaneously upholds and distains traditional gender roles, values science *and* religion, and critiques the technology (often associated with war) that mutually creates and destroys.

*Planet of the Apes* was not regarded as an historical document when it was released, but it has since become one. It is reflective of its own historical context whilst simultaneously (with varying degrees of success) reacting against the establishment. This is achieved through presenting an alternative often represented via the apes (who act as human replacements) or showing the consequences of the continuation of current policies and prejudices. It is a countercultural document that, while intertwined with its own socio-political context, is also shown through this thesis to counter dominant trends, presenting ideas that reflect the opinions of the vocal minority. *Planet of the Apes* is an historical document not because it purposely tells or interprets specific historical events or personalities, as history films and biopics attempt to do, but because it reveals 'the complexity of popular ideology.'<sup>6</sup>

The shifting nature of *Planet of the Apes*' context within both U.S. history and Hollywood history is entirely relevant to interpreting *Planet of the Apes* as an historical document. Through the study of its paratexts (including scripts, PCA documentation, marketing material, correspondence, etc.),<sup>7</sup> this film has been presented as one in transition. It is part of Hollywood history as one of the last films to be passed for release by the Production Code Administration (PCA) as part of an industry that was finally moving 'beyond the historical borders of the studio system',<sup>8</sup> and it is also a 'landmark film in the history of American science fiction' that signified a new, actively intellectual

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<sup>6</sup> Dawson, *Hollywood for Historians*, 8.

<sup>7</sup> See 'Introduction' and the bibliography for details of archival material consulted.

<sup>8</sup> J. E. Smyth, 'Introduction,' in Smyth (ed.), *Hollywood and the American Historical Film*, xx.

cycle of science fiction that more openly commented upon the tensions present within the transitory state of the United States.<sup>9</sup>

In *Planet of the Apes* 'the New World' has to literally start again. The United States becomes part of a forgotten history and its remnants are stripped of their ideological and social identity because they have been extracted from their original context. The transient nature of power and meaning is commented upon as *Planet of the Apes* proposes a future where human civilisation and specifically U.S. culture has been almost entirely obliterated,<sup>10</sup> creating a narrative world where the filmmakers can imagine alternative realities to play out fears and fantasies about their own reality. The film projects a disastrous future that is 'a development, often inevitable, of forces already at work within civilization.'<sup>11</sup> This 'violent future of death' is not a product of some unknown alien technology or philosophy but the result of the breakdown and literal destruction of extant contemporary culture.<sup>12</sup> *Planet of the Apes* is bookended with clear visual cues that place the film within an U.S. socio-political setting through the use of the flag and icons, both objects (the Statue of Liberty) and people (Charlton Heston), to represent the United States and its value system.

During the 1960s the majority of the U.S. population were predominantly 'unyoung, unpoor and unblack.'<sup>13</sup> The protest movements and their conclusions and continuances, although revolutionary, were not the result of the actions of the entire nation but of a primarily young disenfranchised and/or disaffected minority. *Planet of the Apes* and its allegorical content has more in common with the views expressed by this vocal section of the population than what President Nixon referred to as the 'silent majority'.<sup>14</sup> But because *Planet of the Apes*' commentary was subsumed into a science

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<sup>9</sup> M. Keith Booker, *Alternate Americas: Science Fiction Film and American Culture* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger, 2006), 91.

<sup>10</sup> The remnants of the human/U.S. culture are the white human-animals, the truncated Statue of Liberty, and the carbine rifles that are used by the gorillas.

<sup>11</sup> Franklin H. Bruce, 'Future Imperfect,' *American Film* 8 (1983), 48-49.

<sup>12</sup> Margot A. Henrikson, *Doctor Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 377.

<sup>13</sup> Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenburg, *The Real Majority: An Extraordinary Examination of the American Electorate* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970), 57-58.

<sup>14</sup> Nixon's 'Silent Majority Speech' at the end of 1969 outlined the President's policy of 'Vietnamization', which proposed a reduction of U.S. troops in Vietnam but a continuation of fighting, allowing the United States to achieve 'peace with honor'. At the end of the speech Nixon asked for the support of the 'the great silent majority'. Nixon counteracted the vocal antiwar movement's demands and instead appealed to the

fiction film it was possible for the filmmakers to make a ‘potent satire’ without provoking more conservative elements of the audience.<sup>15</sup> *Planet of the Apes* is, as Charlton Heston noted, a ‘wild adventure’ story but with a ‘social comment’ that is situated just beneath the surface of the *Planet*.<sup>16</sup>

### ***PLANET OF THE APES’* CONTINUED RECEIVERSHIP**

The iconic images and quotes from *Planet of the Apes* have taken on their own meaning beyond the constraints of the film, becoming intertextual reference points within the fabric of U.S. popular culture.<sup>17</sup> References to the film are no longer purely reliant upon familiarity with *Planet of the Apes* but rather familiarity with the texts that have become equally or more popular than the original. In the case of *Planet of the Apes*, an episode of the *Simpsons* called ‘A Fish Called Selma’ (24 March 1996) featured a stage-musical version of the film called *Stop the Planet of the Apes, I Want to Get Off!*, which has itself become a part of the *Planet of the Apes* myth. Its independent popularity highlights *Planet of the Apes’* indelible mark upon U.S. culture, with viewers being able to recognise and engage with the film without necessarily having watched the original.<sup>18</sup>

*Planet of the Apes* continues to have relevance for a 2000s audience as a canonical text, as a parodied text, and as an originating text. It has inspired and led to the creation of six sequels (prequels and remakes) with a seventh in pre-production.<sup>19</sup> In 2001

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middle-American majority to allow for the war to be fought to a ‘peaceful’ conclusion. See Richard Nixon, ‘Address to the Nation on War in Vietnam,’ 3 November, 1969. Available at: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws>> [Last accessed: 05/09/2011].

<sup>15</sup> Xan Brooks, ‘*Planet of the Apes*,’ *Sight and Sound* 11:10 (Oct, 2001), 56.

<sup>16</sup> ‘August 10, 1967,’ Charlton Heston, *The Actor’s Life: Journals 1956-76* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976), 277.

<sup>17</sup> References to *Planet of the Apes* (1968) have appeared in several major U.S. television programs, most famously in the long-running animated satire *The Simpsons* (1989-present). Other examples of series that reference the film include: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *The Critic* (1994-1995), *Family Guy* (1999-2003 & 2005-present), *Futurama* (1999-2003 & 2008-present), *Glee* (2009-present), and *Seinfeld* (1989-1998). This is not exhaustive list but is intended as indication of the variety of texts, not simply parody shows, that have used the film as a reference point.

<sup>18</sup> ‘A Fish Called Selma,’ *The Simpsons* (series 7, episode 19, first broadcast 24 March 1996). *Stop the Planet of the Apes, I Want to Get Off!* starred educational-video star/actor Troy McClure (Phil Hartman) as Taylor, singing songs such as ‘Dr. Zaius’ (sung to the tune of ‘Rock Me Amadeus’ by Falco) and ‘You’ll Never Make a Monkey Out of Me!’ ‘A Fish Called Selma’ comments not only on the film itself and its iconic position in U.S. culture but also parodies the Broadway fashion for adapting popular and increasingly unlikely films for the musical theatre.

<sup>19</sup> Correct as of February/March 2013. *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* is the working title for the sequel to *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*. The sequel is in pre-production and currently has a projected U.S. release

there was a failed attempt to resuscitate the franchise under the direction of Tim Burton. This post-millennial remake was marketed as a re-imagining of the original film and novel but it diluted the nihilistic milieu of the original series in favour of a more spectacle-led action film. Most recently *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (dir. Rupert Wyatt, 2011) was added to the canon with its cautionary response to stem cell research, a commentary that was aligned more closely with the existing mythology and tone of the original series.<sup>20</sup> This new potential franchise is neither a remake nor a reimagining of the original films (1968-1973) but instead makes a clear attempt to give the franchise grounding within a post-millennial context. It shows that the key ideas of the original series have continuing relevance not only for academics but also for the cinema-going audience.

*Planet of the Apes*' ongoing and active role in American popular culture highlights the impact and power of the original 1968 *Planet of the Apes*, which enjoyed success not 'just because of its use of perspective of incongruity, but also in the way the text contained such a range of possible interpretations.'<sup>21</sup> New instalments and increased interest in the original series and its future indicate the enduring importance of the initial film, further confirming its position as a document deserving of study. In advancing the study of *Planet of the Apes* this thesis explored in depth the reasons for *Planet of the Apes*' continued relevance positioning it as both important film source and valuable historical document that acts as a record of the ambivalent contradictions of the sixties.

*Planet of the Apes* and its closing shot has become one of the most iconically powerful images of the 1960s cinema. It is vital to underscore the enduring position that *Planet of the Apes* holds in popular cultural memory in this debate about film and history. The continuing receivership of *Planet of the Apes* should be understood not only as a transient postmodern reference point but also as one whose longevity has more than proved its position as an image and concept equal to those found in other iconic films of the era, including: *2001: A Space Odyssey*; *The Graduate* (Nichols, 1967); and *Bonnie*

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date from Twentieth Century Fox of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2014. It is currently due be directed by Matt Reeves, best know for directing *Cloverfield* (2008), and adapting/directing *Let Me In* (2010), following the departure of the original director Rupert Wyatt in September 2012.

<sup>20</sup> A plot outline for *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* can be found in 'Appendix I'.

<sup>21</sup> Besel, 'Polysemous Myth,' 57.

and *Clyde* (Penn, 1967).<sup>22</sup> These films were ‘game changers’ that began the process of freeing Hollywood from its self-imposed censorship and restrictions that had compelled the industry to depend upon literary and stage adaptations, remakes, and safe genre output.<sup>23</sup> All of these films were released in the same transitional historical period and they all betray an attitude towards the turbulence of the end of the decade. They include iconic sequences – the desecrated Statue of Liberty; the monolith and weapon-wielding ape-man; the provocative stocking-clad leg of Mrs. Robinson; the bloody final shootout – all of which symbolise a shift in Hollywood that influenced a range of major genres and allowed for more serious responses to major historical and political discourses of the 1960s.

### **THE PROTEST DISCOURSE – RACE, GENDER, WAR – AND THE *PLANET***

The movements and debates that define the sixties in the United States did not occur in isolation; rather, they co-existed, enmeshed into an understanding of the decade and its cultural and political output. The interwoven nature of the commentaries present in *Planet of the Apes* indicates the way in which the various key issues were similarly interconnected in the U.S. political arena of the late 1960s. Each protest formed a part of the constellation of pressure groups that often coordinated efforts to promote their appeal for social and political reform. *Planet of the Apes* refers to several of the key antiestablishment movements and the issues against which they were protesting.

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<sup>22</sup> See Mark Harris, *Scenes from a Revolution: The Birth of the New Hollywood* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd., 2009). Journalist, Mark Harris discusses the transition between classical and post-classical Hollywood cinema mainly through detailed analysis of three films released in 1967 and shortlisted for the best-picture Academy Award – *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Graduate*, and *In the Heat of the Night* (Jewison, 1967) – that are indicative of the ruptures in U.S. society in terms of representation of crime, class, gender, race, and sexuality, all framed by the tension of the generational gap. Harris interprets the industry (prior to the breakdown of the restrictive Production Code) as being out of touch with the rapidly deteriorating and fragmented nature of U.S. society. Harris documents through anecdote, archival research, and textual analysis what he identifies as the origins of the ‘new’ Hollywood – a brief and exhilarating period in Hollywood history that lasted between 1967/8 and the mid-1970s. This period allowed for a reinvention of what Hollywood was following the introduction of the rating system, and how it would be defined and define itself as an industry following the turbulent ‘American decade’ (Chafe, in Foner, 1997, 169). Studio heads did not lose control of Hollywood or its output, as Harris seems to suggest, but rather it was an industry adjusting style, form, and content in an attempt to work out how to recapture and increase its audience. For further anecdotal evidence and interviews with key characters in the transition see Peter Biskind, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex, Drugs and Rock ‘N’ Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), and the later documentary of the same name *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex, Drugs and Rock ‘N’ Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* (dir. Kenneth Bowser, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Harris, *Scenes from a Revolution*, 1.

There is only one direct reference made to the array of sixties protest movements in *Planet of the Apes*. A short interchange made between Taylor and the Zira's nephew Lucius at the end of the film presents the young ape as a symbol of the youth movements that the film concurrently supports and maligns. Lucius represents the seeds of change, the beginnings of a movement against orangutan hegemony that Taylor openly supports in the following exchange:

**LUCIUS:** I still think you're making a mistake! [by going into the Forbidden Zone]

**TAYLOR:** That's the spirit, keep them flying.

**LUCIUS:** What?

**TAYLOR:** The flags of discontent. Remember, never trust anyone over thirty!

Taylor's closing line in this exchange directly references one of the 'most ubiquitous slogans of the era.'<sup>24</sup> Popularly attributed to Jack Weinberg, a prominent activist of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, the statement 'never trust anyone over thirty' highlights the generation gap (in both the film diegesis and within the United States) and further confirms the alignment of *Planet of the Apes* with the New Left, the shifting nature of Hollywood output, and the overarching attitudes of the counterculture.<sup>25</sup> Despite its use by a man who is clearly over thirty,<sup>26</sup> Taylor is solidified as a symbol of the counterculture. His actions evoke those of the New Left (fighting against inequality and subjugation) and his words encourage Lucius to fly the flags of discontent and revolt against the religiously-motivated orangutan authority.

Taylor escaped the United States and its 'cultural civil war' where the flags were being flown for a range of issues.<sup>27</sup> Despite the optimistic and rather jovial tone in which the exchange between Taylor and Lucius is delivered there is an underlying cynicism about the effectiveness of the protest movements. There are competing interpretations that can be drawn from this exchange and the film as a whole. On one hand it suggests

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<sup>24</sup> Andrew Hunt, 'How New was the New Left?' in John McMillian and Paul Buhle (eds.), *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia, P.A.: Temple University Press, 2003), 148.

<sup>25</sup> In Wilson's 1967 script Taylor's line was 'The flags of discontent. It's the only way anything ever gets done' but was changed to purposely include Weinberg's famous slogan. Wilson, *Planet of the Apes*.

<sup>26</sup> Charlton Heston was born 4<sup>th</sup> October 1923. He was 43 years old during the shooting of *Planet of the Apes* between May-August 1967.

<sup>27</sup> E. J. Dionne, *Why American's Hate Politics* (New York: Touchstone, 1991), 11.

that despite the positive ideals of the movements they cannot actually resolve the problems plaguing the United States. War, racial and gender prejudices, and the use of atomic weapons have continued beyond the confines of the twentieth century as predicted in *Planet of the Apes*.<sup>28</sup> But on the other hand it encourages the movements to increase their pressure on government in order to avert the post-apocalyptic future that *Planet of the Apes* depicts, presenting the film as a warning rather than a prediction.

#### **FURTHER WORK:**

This study of *Planet of the Apes* has significantly broadened the existing scholarship surrounding the film itself as an allegorical and iconic text of the 1960s. It has demonstrated the depth of information contained within a single filmic text; this wealth of information would not have been possible if this study had attempted to analyse the entire *Planet of the Apes* franchise in equal detail. It was beyond the scope of the study and would not have allowed for such a developed discussion. This ‘further work’ section presents possible developments beyond my initial project that build upon the foundation that this dissertation has provided.

This study was in part intended to develop a method that could be applied to other film texts. For example, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* could be considered a forerunner to Oliver Stone’s *JFK* as a turning point in Hollywood’s allegorical output and a film that has popularly been received as a historically relevant document. But it did not drive development in scholarship as *JFK* did in 1991; instead it could be seen as the intellectual root of this particular shift towards analysing film as history rather than analysing the filming of history. A similarly extensive study of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* would encourage research into the initial reception of the film and analysis of its particular *zeitgeist*.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The human tribe shown on the planet of the apes is all-white and Dodge (the black crewmember) is presented in the ape museum as a curiosity suggesting that the human race has been ethnically cleansed. The film may suggest that rather than achieving racial equality the human race will ultimately conclude with the elimination of all non-white races. The remnants of the human race are understood to have survived (in body, if not mind) a nuclear apocalypse but they are not representative of the broad range of races and cultures within the contemporary human race.

<sup>29</sup> Existing analysis of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* include Booker, *Alternate Americas*, Chapter 3; Barry Keith Grant, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (London: BFI, 2010); Stuart Samuels, ‘The Age of Conspiracy and Continuity: The *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956),’ in O’Connor & Jackson (eds.), *American History/American Film*; Fraser A. Sherman, *Screen Enemies of the American Way: Political*



My thesis has contributed to the study of the under-researched film *Planet of the Apes* and the work of its equally under-researched director Franklin J. Schaffner. The research led to the discovery and use of the 'Franklin J. Schaffner Collection', held at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster P.A., which contains the director's personal papers. The collection is not widely publicised, and has not been used in any of the previous critical studies of *Planet of the Apes*. The archive has been used once, in Erwin Kim's 1985 *Franklin J. Schaffner*,<sup>30</sup> however Kim is more concerned with detailing the production and Schaffner's involvement in projects than analysing the productions themselves. Schaffner's extensive collection is ripe for further study and analysis; this specific study focussed upon the section devoted to the *Planet of the Apes*, but there is a significant volume of material that may offer further insights into the director's work beyond the constraints of a study of a single film. Of particular interest are the papers referring to Schaffner's television work, particularly those involving *Person to Person* hosted by Edward Murrow between 1953-59, as well as Schaffner's work with President Kennedy (who requested Schaffner direct all of his television appearances following the success of 1962's *Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy* [NBC, 14 February 1962]).

As noted in the methodology chapter, fan magazines have been 'a major part of film culture' in the United States; a survey of their content and the letters sent in by members of the magazines' readerships could offer further avenues of research.<sup>31</sup> They offer 'supporting discourses' that sit alongside more traditionally published film reviews and critical writing, representing the fans and their reaction to the films.<sup>32</sup> In the preparation of this thesis only one fan letter was found pertaining specifically to *Planet of the Apes*; *The New York Times* published a letter sent to the paper by Isaac J. Black who forcefully criticised Renata Adler's scathing review of *Planet of the Apes*.<sup>33</sup> It is

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*Paranoia about Nazis, Communists, Saboteurs, Terrorists and Body Snatching Aliens in Film and Television* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Kim, *Franklin J. Schaffner*.

<sup>31</sup> Richards, 'Film and Television,' 81.

<sup>32</sup> Desser 'Introduction,' in *Hollywood Goes Shopping*, xvi.

<sup>33</sup> Isaac J. Black, 'Beautiful *Planet*,' *The New York Times* (14 April, 1968), D11. Black criticises Adler's reviews of the film published in February 1968 see Renata Adler, 'Monkey Business,' *The New York Times* (9 February, 1968), 55; and 'The Apes, the Fox, and Charlie Bubbles,' *The New York Times* (25 February, 1968), Arts & Leisure, Section 2, 1D.

unknown as to whether this was a representative letter or an isolated example of the point of view of the original audience. Although outside of the scope this dissertation, an extensive study of amateur responses to the film may offer ‘a glimpse at fan culture’ and the roots of the *Planet of the Apes* franchise’s popular longevity.<sup>34</sup> This could also be extended into a wider study of fan magazines and amateur responses within the science fiction genre and wider fan community.

By analysing the ‘documents of [the] fandom’,<sup>35</sup> including science fiction and fantasy fan publications such as *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (1958-1983), *Castle of Frankenstein* (1962-1975), and the British fanzine/clubzine *Simian Scrolls* (2000-present), we may be able to theorise how the original, and perhaps intended, audience, responded to the film both at the time of release and in the years since. Many of these artefacts circulated in a specific community, are not widely available to scholars, and tend to be held in personal collections, so collection of these sources will prove difficult. As noted by Jenkins and Tulloch, this ‘unauthorized knowledge’ can be used to make further sense of the complex ‘narrative universe’ that audiences create and engage with.<sup>36</sup> This is a form of documentation requiring development and further study that has yet to be completed in a systematic fashion.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis supports an approach to the moving image source that is interdisciplinary, showing that the work of a contemporary American historian can be enhanced by utilising the textual analysis methods of the film studies scholar. It brought together methodologies from the disciplines of contemporary history and film studies and contributed to the discussion surrounding film and history within an Anglo-American context. It provided a method of analysing and recognising the value of *all* types of films by showing that they form part of an historically-bound discourse, not necessarily constrained by issues surrounding discussions of accuracy. This extends into a broader consideration of how historians analyse and utilise contemporary primary sources beyond the confines of the archives.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>35</sup> Street, *British Cinema in Documents*, 77.

<sup>36</sup> Jenkins, ‘Beyond the *Star Trek* Phenomenon’, 17-18.

Historians should understand and appreciate the importance of the individual film text as a primary source in the study of contemporary history. Feature films of all genres can be seen as an expression of the zeitgeist. Films can be used as evidence to form part of an understanding of a historical period that has been both shaped and recorded by the filmmaker. Information is not only contained in the narrative or the dialogue but in every aspect of the moving image. This audio-visual source must be understood as the complex text that it is. It cannot be interpreted in the same way as a written source; the study of the related archival artefacts provides further insight into the film but the examination of such items (scripts, correspondence, artwork) should be used to enhance and support the information gleaned from the film rather than overshadowing them. The original unmediated film is what was shown to the initial audience and should therefore be appreciated as a valuable document. Film is a primary source of information for the audience that consumed it, and should therefore be considered one.

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## APPENDIX I: PLOT OUTLINES

### ***PLANET OF THE APES (1968)***

*Planet of the Apes* opens on a space ship with astronaut Colonel George Taylor (Charlton Heston) on a deep-space explorative mission from near-future Earth (January 1972) along with his three crewmembers Stewart (Dianne Stanley), Landon (Robert Gunnar) and Dodge (Jeff Burton). The crew put themselves into a state of induced hibernation and during their journey out into space their ship malfunctions and they crash-land into a body of water on an unknown planet in the year 3978. The crew has only aged by 18 months during its 2006-year journey, except for Stewart who dies due to her malfunctioning sleep pod.

Taylor, Landon, and Dodge abandon their sinking ship unharmed and they escape on a raft with basic survival-kits that include weapons, medical supplies, and enough food and water rations for three days. The astronauts speculate that they are on an unnamed planet in the orbit of a star in the constellation of Orion. They paddle out to land and trek through long stretches of the desert landscape in search of food and shelter. Far in the distance shadowy figures are seen to be watching the astronauts as they journey across the arid region. Eventually Taylor, Landon, and Dodge come across a series of scarecrows and an oasis where they disrobe and take a swim. The unknown creatures that had followed them are shown as primitive humans who steal the futuristic clothing of the stranded crew and destroy their surviving technology.

The astronauts, in pursuit of the animals that have stolen their clothing, discover a large herd of primitive humans foraging in a cornfield. Arrogantly Taylor declares that 'If this is the best they've got around here, in six months we'll be running this planet.' Suddenly gorillas on horseback brandishing rifles attack the humans (both astronaut and primitive) and many are killed, or injured and captured. Dodge is shot and killed as he tries to escape, and Landon and an injured and unconscious Taylor are captured. Some humans are rounded up and forced into wagons and the bodies of those who are killed piled up and photographed as hunting trophies.

When Taylor regains consciousness he discovers that he has crash-landed on a planet run by intelligent apes, and he is imprisoned in a cage with one of the primitive humans whom he later names Nova (Linda Harrison). An injury to Taylor's neck renders him mute and therefore indistinguishable from the other mute primitives.

On the planet of the apes humans are animals who are hunted and dissected in medical experiments and Taylor is put in the lab of the leading animal (human) scientist a chimpanzee called Dr. Zira (Kim Hunter) and he make several attempt to make contact with the apes.

Taylor is shown in a huge human cage with the other human captives with Zira, the orangutan minister for science Dr. Zaius (Maurice Evans), and Cornelius who is Zira's archaeologist fiancé (Roddy McDowall). Still unable to speak Taylor writes in ground 'I CAN WRITE'. A playful Nova scrubs out the word 'write' and Taylor pushes her aside. This act provokes another primitive male to bite Taylor and they fight; two gorilla guards break up the fight hurting Taylor in the process and are ordered to take him back inside. The words 'I CAN' are still visible in the dirt and Zaius uses his foot to wipe out the residual inscription intentionally preventing the chimpanzees from finding out about Taylor's abilities. From this early stage it is clear that Zaius is aware of human intelligence and following this Zaius orders for Taylor to be emasculated and has Landon lobotomised.

Taylor eventually convinces Zira and Cornelius that he is an intelligent human through his ability to write and, once his throat recovers, through his voice. He shows that he can not only communicate but also reason by showing knowledge of technology and also the mechanics of flight, as shown through a paper aeroplane. The apes first hear Taylor speak when he famously exclaims 'get your stinking paws off me, you damned dirty ape!' when he escapes his ape captors who have threatened to castrate him. Once he proves his intelligence Taylor is viewed by the ape orangutan government and the vocal Dr. Zaius as an abomination.

A tribunal is held to establish Taylor's origin and in the course of this trial it is discovered that the apes have lobotomised Landon. Following the trial Taylor and Nova escape the ape city with the help of Zira, Cornelius, and Zira's young nephew Lucius (Lou Wagner). They travel out into an area of land called the 'Forbidden Zone'. In this prohibited region Cornelius shows Taylor an archaeological dig where human artefacts have been uncovered that predate ape civilisation proving that the apes were preceded by a race of intelligent humans. Zaius follows the fugitives out into the Forbidden Zone, he arrests Zira and Cornelius for heresy and destroys the dig site and therefore the evidence of human technology. But he allows Taylor and Nova to go free. In the final and most famous scene of the film Nova and Taylor are seen riding on horseback into the Forbidden Zone only to find the half-buried remains of



the Statue of Liberty. This powerfully reveals that Taylor did not crash-land on an alien planet but on a post-apocalyptic Earth; it is implied that humans destroyed themselves allowing the apes to evolve to a position of dominance.

### ***RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (2012)***

In *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* the main human character Will Rodman (James Franco) develops a cure for Alzheimer's disease in the form of retroviral gene therapy that repairs brain cells. Initial tests on chimpanzees are encouraging and a female ape called Bright Eyes (Terry Notary) shows a steep increase in brain function.<sup>1</sup> She is prematurely killed following an aggressive outburst that is later shown to be protective behaviour for her newborn male.

Will adopts the baby chimp (Bright Eye's offspring) to save him from being euthanized as his research programme and other test subjects are terminated. The chimp, named Caesar (Andy Serkis), inherits his mother's increased brain function, but progresses well beyond her through the nurture of the Rodman family. Will tests the drug with some success on his father Charles (John Lithgow), who has advanced Alzheimer's, but more aggressive treatment is required as the effects of the treatment diminish. A more virulent viral strain is successfully tested on apes after the programme is reinstated but the virus mutates, giving the simian test-subjects the potential to develop a level of intelligence equivalent to humans.

The drug is also shown to be fatal to humans as the chimp handler Franklin (Tyler Labine) dies from accidental exposure to the virus. Caesar is taken away from Will and placed into captivity with regular apes and, seeing the way in which these animals are cruelly treated, revolts against his human captors. Caesar steals vials of the test drug and infects his fellow ape captives, giving them increased cognitive function. Caesar is revealed to be able to talk and leads the apes to freedom in a redwood forest beyond the confines of the urban setting (San Francisco). In the post-credit sequence an airline pilot is shown to have caught the virus, and a graphic representation of a global pandemic emerges as the virus is spread from city to city.

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<sup>1</sup> Bright Eyes was the name given to Taylor by Zira before he is able to talk; it is a clear reference to the original film. Interestingly the name is now applied to a female ape, reversing the gender/species of the original character meaning that Bright Eyes becomes part of the fall of humanity (by bearing intelligent chimp Caesar who will go on to release the virus that will kill off the human race) rather than an observer of its consequences.

## APPENDIX II:

### AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION

It is difficult to identify a comprehensive and satisfying definition of science fiction because it ‘shape shifts and transmographies’ in accordance with cultural trends and fashions.<sup>1</sup> In terms of genre theory science fiction is notable because, unlike the other major genres found within Hollywood, such as the western,<sup>2</sup> science fiction’s iconography is fluid. One of the key critics in the study of science fiction, Vivian Sobchack, asserts that there are many iconographic images associated with the genre and that they ‘do indeed evoke the genre, but are specifically and physically not *essential* to it.’<sup>3</sup> There are many recurrent images/themes such as space travel, time travel, aliens, utopias/dystopias, nuclear apocalypse, futuristic clothing and technologies but they are not required and, in some instances, not even expected.

Spaceships work as a suitable example of the fluidity of the meanings in science fiction. In the original television series of *Star Trek* (1966-69), for example, the Starship Enterprise is an image of wonder and awe as it allows for play and exploration giving its crew and the audience ‘the sense that great efforts are possible and can succeed.’<sup>4</sup> Whereas *Silent Running* (1972), released only few years later, presents the spaceship as an isolating environment that literally becomes a ‘coffin for its crew.’<sup>5</sup> *Silent Running* depicts a future where Earth is no longer able to sustain plant life. The narrative focuses upon the ultimately suicidal efforts of Freeman Lowell (Bruce Dern) to save the forests from destruction. In order to preserve the last of the forests they are sent out into space in huge greenhouses under the care of botanists, awaiting a time when the reforestation of Earth is possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Sean Redmond, ‘The Wonder of Science Fiction’ in Sean Redmond (ed.), *Liquid Metal: The Science Fiction Film Reader* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>2</sup> The Western has several easily identifiable iconographic artefacts such as: saloons, cowboys, horses, spurs, guns, Stetsons, frontier towns, the American West. Although the genre has many different forms and has developed throughout its long history many of the narrative and iconographic elements by which it was first identified have been retained. See Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre’s First Half-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

<sup>3</sup> Vivian Sobchack, ‘Images of Wonder: The Look of Science Fiction,’ in Redmond, *Liquid Metal*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids, M.I.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 254.

<sup>5</sup> Sobchack, ‘Images of Wonder’, 6.

Science fiction films are not simply defined by a set of recurrent images and themes but by the mercurial nature of these elements. Sobchack concludes:

The visual connection between all SF films lies in the consistent and repetitious use not of *specific* images, but of *types* of images which function in the same way from film to film to create an imaginatively realized world which is always removed from the world we know or know of. The visual surface of all SF film presents us with a confrontation between and mixture of those images to which we respond as “alien” and those we know to be familiar.<sup>6</sup>

It is because of the mercurial nature of the science fiction genre that it is often seen to cross over with horror. Much of the work done on these genre and specifically American science fiction discusses how, and if it is, generically separate from horror. Stephen Neale notes that even ‘if there are areas and instances of hybridity and overlap, there are also areas and instances of differentiation’ and that horror and science fiction should be treated as ‘related, but also as distinct.’<sup>7</sup> According to Barry Keith Grant, the distinction is founded in the way people approach the text ‘the appeal of science fiction is primarily cognitive’ while horror is a body genre focusing on an ‘essentially emotional’ response to what can be done to the body and whether we can control it.<sup>8</sup> Hollywood horror films are shot and constructed in order to maximise the feelings of discomfort or outright fear for the audience, fear that is ‘based upon common fears of everyday life.’<sup>9</sup> In science fiction films there may indeed be moments of suspense but anxious feelings are a by-product of these implications suggested by the narrative backdrop rather than being the central focus. Science fiction and fantasy are also often confused but as *Planet of the Apes* writer Rod Serling put it: ‘Fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science fiction is the improbable made possible.’<sup>10</sup>

Literary and film theorist Susan Sontag was one of the first critics to give the science fiction film the same treatment and respect as other film genres. She claimed

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<sup>6</sup> Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 87.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000), 92.

<sup>8</sup> Barry Keith Grant, ‘Reason and the Visible in the Science Fiction Film,’ in Redmond, *Liquid Metal*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Dennis L. White, ‘The Poetics of Horror: More than Meets the Eye,’ *Cinema Journal* 10:2 (Spring, 1971), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Rod Serling quoted in: Gareth McLean, ‘The New Sci-Fi,’ *The Guardian* (June 27, 2007), Media Section. Available at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2007/jun/27/broadcasting.comment>> [accessed: 24/02/2008]

that science fiction was ‘as predictable as a western.’<sup>11</sup> Although with research conducted by later critics such as Sobchack, Telotte, Kuhn, Grant and Booker the genre has been shown to have developed and diversified into a far more complex generic form. Despite the later changes in the genre, Sontag’s work is significant as she identified key trends, thematically, within the science fiction genre.

According to Sontag, science fiction looks at humanity’s anxieties about the dehumanising and depersonalising aspects of modernity, imagining a future where technological advances have been unrestricted to the point of domination and where humanity is beholden to its own creations. Arguing that science fiction films are not about science but about disaster, Sontag looked at the themes of disaster and destruction and the pleasure derived from experiencing this on screen. She proposed that the films made in the 1930/40s had an ‘essentially innocent’ relationship with disaster, the threat was often thwarted by the ‘invulnerable hero’ and no lasting damage was done.<sup>12</sup> However, science fiction began to change in the 1950 and ‘60s, as these films had ‘a decided grimness, bolstered by their much greater degree of visual credibility.’<sup>13</sup>

The history of U.S.-made science fiction film can be dated back to the 1930s with the Fox Film Corporation’s *Just Imagine* (1930), a comedy musical science fiction set in a ‘technologically driven utopia[n]’ vision of New York City in the 1980s.<sup>14</sup> The film’s opening sequence visually compares the huge changes made to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York between 1880 and 1930, and asks the audience to imagine the changes the future will bring, saying:

If the last fifty years made such a change, Just imagine the New York of 1980...  
when everyone has a number instead of a name, and the government tells you whom  
you should marry! Just imagine... 1980!<sup>15</sup>

*Just Imagine* was an elaborate film, presenting a futuristic city with a set/model that outscaled that of Fritz Lang’s 1927 *Metropolis*.<sup>16</sup> In *Just Imagine* a man from the

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<sup>11</sup> Susan Sontag, ‘The Imagination of Disaster,’ in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 425.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 427.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 427.

<sup>14</sup> J. P. Telotte, *Science Fiction Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 86.

<sup>15</sup> This is taken text is taken from the intertitle that accompanies the opening non-diegetic monologue for *Just Imagine* (1930) which includes the ellipsis and italicisation.

1930s is experimentally revived and shown around a futuristic world where he is given a number instead of a name. The state controls marriages and births, there are flying machines and part of the film is set on Mars. The film was very light-hearted with a traditional love-story and a series of musical numbers. Despite its seemingly frivolous nature *Just Imagine* still helped to lay the foundations for the genre, not only visually through the recycling of its large-scale expensive sets, but also through its message. As J. P. Telotte suggests: ‘*Just Imagine* ultimately suggests that, for all the superficial alterations our advanced technology will surely bring, everyday human activities and concerns will ultimately change very little.’<sup>17</sup>

*Just Imagine* was a box office flop and thereafter few large budget science fiction films were made until the fifties. Nevertheless, the genre continued in popular film serials like *Flash Gordon*,<sup>18</sup> which began production in 1936. Serials, or chapter plays as they were sometimes known, were made up of a number of chapters of around twenty minutes in length following a central narrative, which was resolved by the end of the serial’s run. Each serial ran, on average, for ten to fifteen weeks. They were shown before feature films and tended to be based upon popular syndicated comic strips, such as *Buck Rogers*,<sup>19</sup> and became independently popular peaking with the production of over thirty serials in 1920.

Serials encouraged regular cinema attendance as audiences wanted to find out the resolution to the previous episode’s cliffhanger. The first *Flash Gordon* serial consisted of thirteen twenty-minute episodes shown in conjunction with other films in that year, following the adventures of Flash Gordon (Buster Crabbe) and his archenemy Ming the Merciless (Charles Middleton). Flash Gordon was a popular science fiction serial character and reappeared in later productions including *Flash Gordon’s Trip to Mars* (1938) and *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* (1940). The

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<sup>16</sup> Although the film was not considered a financial success the set and equally impressive props were so expensive that they were reused in a number of early science fiction works including 1936 serial *Flash Gordon* and the 1939 serial *Buck Rogers*.

<sup>17</sup> Telotte, *Science Fiction Film*, 86.

<sup>18</sup> *Flash Gordon* was created by Alex Raymond, premiering as a Sunday strip on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1934. It was intended as competition for the already popular *Buck Rogers* comic strips it began to be published daily from 27<sup>th</sup> May 1940 and continued to run in newspapers until 2003.

<sup>19</sup> *Buck Rogers* was another popular science fiction narrative to be adapted into a film serial. It was based upon a character that first appeared (as Anthony Rogers) in *Armageddon 2419 A.D.* by Philip Francis Nowlan in *Amazing Stories* (August, 1928). It was adapted into a comic strip and syndicated with its first newspaper appearance on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1929. *Buck Rogers* was produced as a 12-part chapterplay by Universal in 1939 with Buster Crabbe appearing as the titular character. It tells the story of a Buck Rogers and his companion Buddy Wade (Jackie Moran) who are awoken by scientists in the year 2440 after being preserved in a state of suspended animation to find a world under the control of the tyrannical Killer Kane (Anthony Warde) and his army of ‘super racketeers’.

science fiction serials of the thirties and forties showed ‘a growing fascination with the technological and its potential for reshaping the human’ they drew upon the tension between the excitement for and fear of rapid developments in technology in interwar and wartime America.<sup>20</sup>

Science fiction serials became the ‘staple of Saturday matinees’ that ‘effectively served as a device for containing – that is, depicting *and* keeping at a distance – various significant and potentially disturbing concerns that mainstream cinema often marginalized.’<sup>21</sup> They were the main way in which science fiction narratives appeared on U.S. cinema screens in the thirties and forties following *Just Imagine*’s failure to ignite popular interest in science fiction cinema. The science fiction serial did however become an essential part of the cinema experience and through these audiences were introduced to visual components that would define fifties science fiction such as flying saucers, robots, rocketships, ray-guns, and death rays.<sup>22</sup>

Following the Second World War the science fiction genre was revitalised. The war had provided material and inspiration for the writers and the developing political situation was also ripe for science fiction’s allegorical treatment, specifically the dropping of the atomic bomb and the growing fear of communism. The post-war period of the later 1940s and 1950s is commonly thought of as a time of growing prosperity and optimism in the United States as the economy grew and many people were able to afford a more luxurious lifestyle distracting them from ‘the unique crisis which confronted the era.’<sup>23</sup> This image of a golden age and suburban bliss is contradicted by the cultural products of the time that ‘reveals themes of despair and flight to other-worldly alternatives.’<sup>24</sup>

The first ‘golden age’ of science fiction is said to have occurred in the 1950s identified by the sheer volume of films produced within Hollywood.<sup>25</sup> This cycle is popularly considered to have been inspired by Cold War paranoia, with aliens that

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<sup>20</sup> J. P. Telotte, *Replications: A Robotic History of Science Fiction* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

<sup>22</sup> See also *The Phantom Empire* (1935), *Undersea Kingdom* (1936), *The Purple Monster Strikes* (1945), *The Lost Planet* (1953).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Sandels, ‘UFOs, Science Fiction and the Postwar Utopia,’ *Journal of Popular Culture* 20:1 (Summer, 1986), 146.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 146.

<sup>25</sup> Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction: Between Fantasy and Reality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 82.

acted as ‘deliberate stand-ins for communists’ constantly threatening the borders and bodies of the United States.<sup>26</sup> The period was exemplified by films like *The Thing from Another World* (1951) in which a frozen alien life-form found in the Arctic is accidentally defrosted and released upon the inhabitants of a U.S. Army research facility. The alien is given little characterisation and is wholly occupied with destroying the human race, eventually being killed by electrocution and fire. *The Thing* closes with the warning ‘Watch the skies, keep watching the skies!’ playing upon fears of communist invasion and the impact that this would have upon the American way of life. Another key example of this period is *Invasion of the Bodysnatchers* (1956), based upon Jack Finney’s 1954 short story *The Body Snatcher*,<sup>27</sup> which tells the story of a doctor who discovers that his small town community is being replaced by emotionless alien duplicates. The characters are literally taken over; the enemy moves inside their minds infiltrating the body, and hence metonymically the U.S. body politic. These emotionless pod people can be seen in part to represent ‘what life under communism would be like.’<sup>28</sup>

The internalisation of the enemy in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* reflects the claims of Senator Joseph McCarthy amongst others who asserted that communists had already infiltrated U.S. borders. However, the science fiction films of this period were not simply looking to external threats; the meanings that can be taken from these films draw on a number of different socio-political concerns beyond the perceived communist threat. For example Gordon Douglas’ *Them!* can be interpreted as reacting to internal threats (implications of the atomic bomb, changing gender roles) alongside the popularised external threats (the Soviet Union). The film draws upon several ‘paranoiac postwar fears’ specifically ‘devolution, extinction, totalitarianism, [and] giant insects.’<sup>29</sup> The film plays upon fears of nuclear holocaust; it is the radiation from an atomic bomb test that turns harmless insects into killers that threaten the supremacy of postwar America, and potentially the continuation of the human race. The menace is the creation of both internal and external factors. Additionally Peter Biskind suggests that *Them!* has ‘as much to do with the sex war as it does the cold

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Rogin, ‘Kiss Me Deadly: Communism, Motherhood and Cold War Movies,’ *Representation*, 6 (Spring, 1984), 9.

<sup>27</sup> Jack Finney, ‘The Body Snatcher,’ in *Colliers Magazine* (26 November, 1954), A53.

<sup>28</sup> Carol Schwartz Ellis, ‘With Eyes Uplifted: Space Aliens as Sky Gods,’ in Redmond, *Liquid Metal*, 145.

<sup>29</sup> Cyndy Hendershot, *Paranoia, the Bomb, and 1950s American Science Fiction Films* (Bowling Green, O.H.: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 82.

war.<sup>30</sup> The ant society is a matriarchy and the monstrous ants can be seen as reflecting the anxieties of a male dominated society that wishes to reject powerful and sexually aggressive females. *Them!* presents postwar paranoia on a global, national, and domestic scale.

By the beginning of the 1960s the number of science fiction features being produced had tailed off the postwar paranoia plots that had formed the foundation of the first golden age were no longer drawing audiences. The paranoia of the immediate postwar period had started to decline, and instead there was a growing rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union as the Space Race superseded the arms race. This competition between the two superpowers was a major obsession for both the U.S. policy-makers and the public impacting upon science fiction cinema and the narratives produced. As Christine Cornea comments:

Rather than passively ‘watching the skies’ (or the silver screen) in fear of alien invasion, the general populace was encouraged to engage with the real science story of the day in which the States was actively promising to conquer the skies. The competitive thrust of the Space Race therefore answered to the paranoia of the 1950s invasion films and promised to boost morale and reassert scientific superiority over the ‘alien Other’.<sup>31</sup>

This change in the political landscape was accompanied by a transition between two eras of Hollywood where filmmakers were experimenting with and challenging the censorship rules that had been in place since the 1940s.<sup>32</sup> European and art cinema

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Biskind, ‘The Russians are Coming: Aren’t They? *Them!* and *The Thing*,’ in Redmond, *Liquid Metal*, 322.

<sup>31</sup> Cornea, *Science Fiction*, 77.

<sup>32</sup> Between 1934 and 1968 Hollywood enforced a set of industry moral censorship guidelines called ‘The Motion Picture Production Code’ popularly referred to as the ‘Hays Code’ after the code’s originator William H. Hays. The code clearly laid out what was deemed acceptable content for a motion picture. Films that failed to meet the initially strict guidelines would be denied a certificate of approval, which was required in order to receive a general release. The code began to weaken its grip on Hollywood output from the late 1940s as more controversial themes and storylines appeared on screen and public opinions on what was acceptable content began to change. By the late 1950s more explicit films were released sometimes without the required certification (e.g. Billy Wilder’s *Some Like it Hot*, 1959) further diminishing the power of the code. Over the course of the sixties films increased in their challenges to the code with the majority of films being released following the editing out of particularly contentious scenes. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) letter ratings system was established in 1968 and it replaced the Production Code; a film was rated according to its suitability for certain age ranges rather than being judged on a scale of moral values. See Leonard J. Leff, Jerold L. Simmons, *Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001); David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Linda Ruth Williams and



influenced films being produced in the sixties and the ‘so-called film school generation’ who reintroduced and also subverted established American genres.<sup>33</sup>

There were far fewer science fiction films released in the sixties but those few, mainly released in the later part of the decade, can be seen to have transformed the genre from B-movies to big budget feature films. Between 1968 and 1977 a new cycle began in science fiction; these ‘new art’ films, as termed by Christine Cornea, were ‘marked by a simultaneous display of the creative energies and sensibilities associated with the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s/70s.’<sup>34</sup> They responded to the issues raised by the vocal minority who engaged in the protest movements of the period, experimenting with and satirising possible futures in a variety of distinctly dystopian settings.

In 1978 Joan F. Dean theorised the dystopian cycle of science fiction films released 1968 and 1977. In her article: ‘Between *2001* and *Star Wars*’ she identifies 33 films released between 1968 and 1977 which fit into this generic turn.<sup>35</sup> The dates of this period are specific as they refer to the release dates of certain films, opening with *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Planet of the Apes* and commencing with the release of *Star Wars* (1977) and *Close Encounters* (1977). These were transitional films heralding a ‘new seriousness’ in the genre and they formed part of a series that bridged the gap between the invasion narratives of the fifties and the science fiction fantasies and horrors of the seventies and eighties.<sup>36</sup>

The films identified by Dean were infused with a pervasive paranoia displayed through narratives dealing with the consequences of humanity’s ‘mishandling of both natural and scientific resources.’<sup>37</sup> According to Dean these films ‘relied, to varying degrees, upon the traditions of the science fiction film’ and ran across a variety of different subgenres including comedy and the musical.<sup>38</sup> Alongside the four abovementioned films which mark the beginning and the end of the cycle she names

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Michael Hammon (eds.), *Contemporary American Cinema* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005); Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema* (Malden, M.A.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003); Geoff King, *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Peter Krämer, *The New Hollywood From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 86.

<sup>34</sup> Cornea, *Science Fiction*, 82.

<sup>35</sup> Joan F. Dean, ‘Between *2001* and *Star Wars*,’ *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 7:1 (1978), 32-41.

<sup>36</sup> I. Q. Hunter, ‘Devil Girls and Pepper Pot Nazis,’ *Little White Lies* 34 (Mar/April, 2011), 28.

<sup>37</sup> Dean, ‘Between *2001* and *Star Wars*,’ 38.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

(in alphabetical order): *The Andromeda Strain* (1971), *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, *A Boy and His Dog* (1975), *Chosen Survivors* (1974), *Clones* (1973), *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes*, *The Death Machine* (1976), *Death Race 2000* (1975), *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*, *Frogs* (1972), *Futureworld* (1976), *Gas-s-s-s or It Became Necessary to Destroy The World in Order to Save It* (1970), *The Hellstrom Chronicle* (1971), *The Little Prince* (1971), *Logan's Run* (1976), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), *The Omega Man* (1971), *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), *Rollerball* (1975), *Silent Running* (1972), *Slaughter House-Five* (1972), *Sleeper* (1973), *Soylent Green* (1973), *The Stepford Wives* (1975), *THX-1138* (1971), *Westworld* (1973), *Zardoz* (1973) and *Z. P. G* (1972).<sup>39</sup>

The release of George Lucas's phenomenally popular *Star Wars* and Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters* signalled a 'radical shift in generic attitude and a popular renaissance of the SF films.'<sup>40</sup> These later films presented science fiction stories infused with 'playfulness and pleasure' showing the boundless possibilities of the future.<sup>41</sup> They were a great change of style from the 'critical dystopias' that had dominated during the preceding years.<sup>42</sup> The narratives in these new art science fiction films, such as *Planet of the Apes*, attempted to 'suggest causes rather than merely reveal symptoms' of the damaged planets and civilisations presented.<sup>43</sup>

In the films of the late sixties and early seventies the semantics of science fiction changed; the genre for a time lost its sense of wonder and became overtly despairing. Space had become crowded, domestic, and infinite; however this was not a future of hope and unity but one of poverty and futility. The future depicted in this brief period is portrayed as being markedly worse than the present; these films vocalised and visualised the 'dystopian despair of country negatively involved in both domestic and international contestation.'<sup>44</sup> These films provided what Patricia Metzler terms 'blueprints of our imagination' by representing narrative that discussed

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<sup>39</sup> The films in the cycle are predominately U.S. productions.

<sup>40</sup> Sobchack, 'Postfuturism,' in Redmond, *Liquid Metal*, 221.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 221.

<sup>42</sup> Constance Penley, 'Time Travel, Primal Scene, and the Critical Dystopia,' in Constance Penley, Elisabeth Lyon, Lynn Spigel and Janet Bergstrom (eds.), *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 64.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 64.

<sup>44</sup> Vivian Sobchack, 'Postfuturism,' in Redmond, *Liquid Metal*, 220.

prevalent issues,<sup>45</sup> in particular nuclear annihilation, poverty, technological advances/failures, overpopulation, powerlessness, the dystopian post-apocalyptic world and many other similarly negative tropes reflecting upon the perceptibly depressed state of the United States at the end of the sixties.

Films like *Planet of the Apes* cultivated ideas that were later located and furthered in films like *Silent Running* and *Soylent Green*. *Silent Running* reveals a future where all plant life on earth has been destroyed. The only remaining specimens are being preserved in giant geodesic domes attached to a space station orbiting Saturn which are due to be destroyed. Bruce Dern plays a botanist who makes the decision to take the domes into deep space to avoid destruction; he kills the other two crewmembers and eventually himself in his attempt to save the space-bound Eden. *Silent Running* critiques humanity's disregard for nature and complacency about the world's natural resources and the immutable damage being done. This issue was growing in stature in the early seventies with the rising environmentalist protest movement. In a similarly pessimistic fashion, *Soylent Green* envisions a futuristic dystopia where New York (and the rest of the world) is so overpopulated that walking around is impossible without stumbling over the sleeping destitute. The Earth relies upon government manufactured food items, which turn out to be made of human remains. Other films of this type include *The Omega Man* which envisages a post germ-warfare world where the few survivors defend themselves against plague victim zombies, *Z.P.G.* or *Zero Population Growth* which is set in an overpopulated future where childbirth is made illegal for a generation, *The Stepford Wives* where a suburban community of women are replaced with vapid android duplicates and *Logan's Run* which imagines a hedonistic world where all citizens must submit to death at thirty.

All of the examples of the new art science fiction cycle projected an image of a 'future of no future' where the fears of generation would transpire.<sup>46</sup> The United States' biggest threat was not external, as it had tended to be in the films of fifties, but almost exclusively internal. The mistakes and decisions made in these narratives indicate catastrophic if not apocalyptic consequences for not only the United States but also the entire world. Some of the most influential American science fiction films

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<sup>45</sup> Patricia Melzer, *Alien Constructions: Science Fiction and Feminist Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Sobchack, 'Postfuturism', 221.

were made in this period, they began a new cycle in science fiction where the genre was taken from its B-movie roots and re-imagined as a major Hollywood staple. As Brian Pendreigh comments:

It would be a huge leap from *The Incredible Shrinking Man* and *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians* to *Star Wars* and *Alien*, an inconceivable leap perhaps without *Planet of the Apes*.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Pendreigh, *The Legend of Planet of the Apes*, 59.