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The Gospel according to Spielberg in *E.T.*: *The Extra-Terrestrial*

Frank P. Tomasulo

In the Spring 1985 issue of *Cineaction!*, Robin Wood characterized the decade of the 1980s as “the most reactionary, the *emptiest*, in the entire history of Hollywood” (5). Indeed, the early 1980s saw the release of a series of covertly conformist “escapist” films that reflected the dominant ideologies of Reaganite America: *The Great Santini* (1980), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Superman II* (1981), *An Officer and a Gentleman* (1982), *First Blood* (1982), *Star Trek II* (1982), *Return of the Jedi* (1983), *Uncommon Valor* (1983), and countless others. Although many counterexamples suggest that Hollywood offered the occasional alternative vision—for example, *Reds* (1981), *Missing* (1981), *Gandhi* (1982), and *Silkwood* (1983)—the big box-office successes, represented by the former group, responded to the “pulse” of the American (and worldwide) public, while the latter movies were rewarded with Academy Award nominations and Oscars.

Just as Karl Marx’s materialism turned Hegel’s idealism on its head, so the notion of Hollywood “escapism” needs to be turned on *its* head. So-called escapist movie fare functions not to take our minds off our problems but, rather, to allow us to *wallow* in our national woes, albeit in disguised or symbolic form. Furthermore, escapist films frequently provide covert symbolic *solutions* to our national and international dilemmas.

As the Reagan “revolution” continued throughout the 1980s, mainstream Hollywood films displayed their right-wing “Stripes” more *overtly* in such movies as *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), *Rocky IV* (1984), *Terminator* (1984), *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* (1985), *Red Dawn* (1985), *Top Gun* (1986), *The Untouchables* (1987), and *Robocop* (1987). This is precisely the era that Yves Picard so aptly dubbed “neo-Hollywoodian” because of the preponderance of neoclassical narrative paradigms and neo-conservative moral and political rhetoric.

The American films of the mid- and late-1980s generally fit the macho male Reaganesque pattern elucidated in Susan Jeffords’s study of the period, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*. Although limited in many ways (Tomasulo,

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1995), Jeffords's analysis links Ronald Reagan's political agenda and persona to the "hard body" physiognomies of the primary American action heroes of the 1980s. Beyond the tough guys, patriotism, and militaristic anticommunism of the decade's commercial movies, however, the rise of a fundamentalist and superpatriotic Religious Right in U.S. society, media, and government found expression in a series of films that merged Christianity and America together in a new and politically aggressive covenant (Hart, 70-72).

A MYTH FOR ALL SEASONS: THE "UNIVERSAL" *E.T.* IN 1980s CONTEXT

Rather than rehash old shibboleths about the right-wing political "messages" and "sunny, peculiarly Reagan-era attitude of happiness bought with ignorance, magical wish-fulfillment, and historical mutability" (Bick, 25) of the era's movies, this article will investigate the reincorporation of religious values, motifs, and iconography into 1980s American cinema, specifically in the work of the Hollywood icon of the epoch, Steven Spielberg. In particular, the director's blockbuster hit *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (Universal, 1982) marks a site for investigating the role of the Moral Majority's New Right rhetoric in the context of a hugely popular and ostensibly apolitical "feel-good" entertainment movie, despite the bittersweet "up-cry" at the film's conclusion (Brode, 82). That the film amassed more than \$228 million in net rentals in the U.S. and Canada alone (*Variety Annual*, 30) by 1986 and over \$400 million by 1994, when combined with the knowledge that the *E.T.* videotape had the highest sales volume ever (over 14 million copies sold), suggests that the movie struck a responsive chord with an American and international audience (*Entertainment Tonight*). Indeed, the film still ranks as the second-highest-grossing film of all time (next to *Titanic* [1997]), with \$720 million in worldwide revenue (Royal, 133). What explains this cultural and financial phenomenon?

Just as Spielberg's previous film, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, established a mythoreligious substratum for Moral Majority and New Right political messages (Tomasulo, 1982), so the director's next film, *E.T.*, created an even more overt representation of Christian iconography and ideology. As a latter-day American Rudyard Kipling, Spielberg combined sentimental religiosity and patriotic colonialism within the context of the jingoistic juvenilia and imperialistic imperatives of the Age of Reagan. In fact, Spielberg used Christianity just as President Reagan did: as a referent for political rhetoric (i.e., the Soviet Union as the Evil Empire), thus providing a moral base for governmental legitimization while simultaneously clothing the state in religious robes to achieve popular acceptance. This political use of sectarian myth, the sublation of America-First chauvinism and theology, amounts to the creation of a "civil religion."

Of course, Karl Marx once wrote that, "The criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism" (243). And Marx is better known for saying, in the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, that "Religion...is man's search for a supernatural being in the fantastic reality of heaven. It expresses real misery and at the same time protests against it...*Religion...is the opiate of the masses*" (244, emphasis added). It is especially ironic that religious themes reappeared in a latter-day

Hollywood where cocaine and substance abuse were apparently rampant (Biskind) because, in that 1980s environment, Marx's famous formulation could be reversed: "Opiates are the religion of the masses." In fact, in many ways, considering the ideology of Reagan-era American movies, Marx's maxim could be revised and paraphrased still further: "*Hollywood cinema is the opiate of the mass audience.*"

Karl Marx's notion that "criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics" (244) prompted this expansion on the conjuncture of myth, religion, and Reaganism originally established in my essay on *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Tomasulo, 1982). When that article first appeared in *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, there was no way of knowing that the criticism of religion would not be as crucial as Karl Marx anticipated, given that the right-wing television ministry in the United States soon became a national laughing stock due to the personal and financial scandals involving prominent televangelists (Jimmy Swaggart, Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, etc.). Nonetheless, until that ecclesiastical turpitude was uncovered, the dominant ideology had been taking on a mythic and religious cast, both in U.S. politics and Hollywood cinema.

It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that *Raiders* and *E.T.* both follow the tripartite mythopoetic morphology of (1) Separation; (2) Trials and Victories of Initiation; and (3) Return and Reintegration with Society delineated in mythographer Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (36–37); indeed, it is now well-known that a photocopied seven-page "Practical Guide to Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*" (which later became a published book, *The Writer's Journey*) was required reading at many Hollywood studios during the Reagan years (Vogler, 5). Furthermore, other Spielberg films conform to Campbell's monomythical formula—namely, *The Color Purple* (1985), *Amistad* (1997), and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). In that regard, consider the following three-act narrative, for instance:

A preternatural being comes down to Earth from the heavens and is found in a small shack or "manger" behind the main house (Separation).

He spreads good will and love during his brief time on earth, and acquires disciples in the process (Victories of Initiation).

He is hunted down and dies at the hands of the ruling authorities (Trials of Initiation).

He is resurrected from the dead, and rises again to his heavenly home (Return).

Is this the Gospel According to Matthew, from the best-selling book of all time, the *Holy Bible*? No, it is the Gospel According to Spielberg, from the second-highest-grossing film of all time, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*. Indeed, on the macro level, the plot of *E.T.* exactly parallels and schematizes the narrative armature of the familiar New Testament account of the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth. On the macro level, other "mythologemes" are analogous to "the greatest story ever told."

E.T. AS CHRIST FIGURE

For instance, both *E.T.* and Christ are "extra-terrestrials" who come into the world from "outside in." Both begin their trials on earth in less-than-auspicious

circumstances—E.T. in a suburban tool shed behind a larger home; Jesus was, of course, born in an animal shelter (the manger) behind the inn. Both beings arrive on earth at night, during a literal darkness that signifies a figurative and spiritual blackness. At Christ's birth, "the people who sat in darkness saw a great light" (Matthew, 4:16); stranded in the gloom of a California night, E.T.'s first earthly contact (a close encounter?) is with a family sitting around at dinner, deeply troubled by the absence of the father. Both hero figures are physically unattractive males. E.T. is scary and slimy, and the biblical redeemer is described as having "no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah, 53:2-3).

Both have miraculous powers of healing and control over nature, including levitation, and both show great compassion and warmth. In fact, great visual emphasis is placed on both the pint-sized creature's "sacred heart" (which glows bright red in the film's "resurrection" scene) and his fingertip touch of life (the movie's advertising poster pictured the alien's bulbous/phallic index tentacle touching a human finger in an exact reproduction of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel depiction of God the Father creating Adam). Furthermore, both beings are hounded and tortured by hostile legions, die, and are resurrected from the dead, appearing at first only to their most trusted companions. (Indeed, E.T.'s death scene—which takes place in a state-of-the-art scientific environment—might be described as a high-tech crucifixion.) Both narratives even have "empty tomb" scenes. The children in *E.T.* whisk away the resurrected space traveler and, when the police open the van, according to the post-film novelization, "when the doors were fully opened, it was seen to be empty" (Kotzwinkle, 237).

In the New Testament, before Christ's ascension, he tells his followers, "I am with you always" (Matthew, 28:20); similarly, E.T. tells Elliott (Henry Thomas), "I'll be right here," his fingertip glowing over the young boy's heart. This poignant scene takes place just as the "Mother" ship descends to earth in all its celestial radiance to pick up E.T. And the back lighting on the assembled children in that final scene creates an aura or halo around their heads reminiscent of Gothic religious paintings (Giotto, Duccio, Cimabue). The boy Elliott—whose telekinetic drunkenness and later illness are exact replicas of states undergone by his alien mentor—has a mother named . . . guess what? Mary (Dee Wallace). In addition to several direct allusions to Christmas in the film's diegesis (including the screenplay's opening description of the spaceship as "a Christmas tree ornament"), a major event occurs on Halloween, the carnivalesque night before the solemn Roman Catholic holy day, All Soul's Day. Other correspondences connect the Christ story to Spielberg's film: first, E.T. is essentially *baptized* when he is submerged in the family bathtub, just as Jesus was immersed by John the Baptist in the biblical account. There is a large "Enter" sign on Elliott's bedroom door, an inscription in perfect keeping with Christ's injunction that "unless you . . . become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew, 18:3). The special, childlike, quality of faith is, of course, an important theme of both the Gospels and *E.T.* The film's many correspondences to the accounts of Jesus's life and death suggest that it might be called a veritable Space Age hagiography.

The novelization of the film's script goes even further with these Christomorphic parallels. When E.T. dies, for instance, people did not "fully perceive the

trembling of the house, the valley. This was reserved for other men, other equipment, those that monitor disturbances deep in the Earth's core" (Kotzwinkle, 229). Likewise, when Jesus died, "the earth shook, and the rocks were split" (Matthew, 27:51). These "coincidences" may only reflect the upbringing of the screenwriter (Melissa Mathison, now married to actor Harrison Ford), who was educated at a Catholic school in Hollywood, but they may also represent a larger system of discourse in recent films. Certainly, "Christ figures" are no strangers to literature and film (Ziolkowski, 273). They abound in movies from all eras, genres, and nations in cinema history: from *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) to *Nazarin* (1958), *Ordet* (1954) to *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), *The Old Man and the Sea* (1958) to *Star Wars* (1977), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) to *Spartacus* (1960), *The Diary of a Country Priest* (1950) to *I Confess* (1953), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) to *Tommy* (1975).

Of course, as André Bazin tells us, the cinema is itself analogous to the Holy Shroud of Turin (which purportedly depicts the visual imprint of Christ's body and face on his burial cloth) in its indexical features, its existential and ontological bonds to a mysterious reality—"The camera is...like the veil of Veronica pressed to the face of human suffering" (163)—never minding that scientists have since dated the Shroud (using radioactive carbon technology) to the Middle Ages at the earliest, *not* biblical times. Some Hollywood producers of the 1980s took Bazin's suggestive and poetic-religious analogy quite literally, however, and released a series of movies in which the imprint of Christ functioned more as the narrative scaffolding and political subtext of accommodation to the Age of Reagan than as a holy relic. Indeed, Sarah R. Kozloff uncovered a pattern of Christian imagery in the *Superman* movies (78–82) and Hugo Ruppensburg pointed out that several such films of the mid-1980s featured "alien messiahs": *Dune*, *The Last Starfighter*, *Starman*, *The Terminator*, and *2010* (all 1984); *Cocoon* (1985); and *The Flight of the Navigator* (1986) (158–166).

In addition to Christological parallels, E.T. can be viewed as both a sanctified and sentimentalized outsider like Kipling's Gunga Din and as a father figure to Elliott (whose name begins and ends with E...T). E.T. and Elliott can also be likened to prior examples of interracial friendship in classic American literature (e.g., *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Huckleberry Finn*). In *E.T.*, the dark alien and the alien-ated white boy Elliott function as archetypal symbols of psychic integration, the Jungian synthesis of ego and shadow. On the political level, this dream-image of social and psychological harmony has always haunted the American conscience (and American cinema—e.g., *The Searchers*, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, Hans Solo and the Wookiee in *Star Wars*, the *Lethal Weapon* films). As Vivian Sobchack put it, "The 'difference' of the alien Other becomes absorbed in the homogeneity of a new universal 'humanism'" (293). On the patriarchal-paternal level, Elliott's father is initially missing (having run off to Mexico with "Sally"), then replaced by the scientist "Keys" (Peter Coyote), whose phallic passkeys jangle and dangle at his groin (Bick, 29). At least temporarily, Keys possesses (like the Gospels' St. Peter, who went on to become the first pope) "the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew, 16:18–19) and the mantle of the patriarch. Indeed, Elliott appears to go through a Lacanian mirror phase when he first sees his reflection in Keys's protective facemask. In the end, however, E.T. assumes the (nonthreatening, noncastrating) fatherly role and brings some semblance of order and solidarity to the chaotic, Law-less, and fatherless household.

UNLESS YOU BECOME LIKE CHILDREN, YOU WILL NEVER ENTER THE KINGDOM OF SPIELBERG

Although the father is restored at closure, the spectator is left as a child. Furthermore, as Robin Wood points out, this subject construction produces a particular kind of child: a male child. The heartwarming ending of *E.T.* shows the rubbery alien transmitting his power to young Elliott while dismissing his little sister Gertie (Drew Barrymore) with an injunction to "Be good" (Wood, 5). Throughout the film, low-angle point-of-view shots also inscribe a child's eye view of the proceedings, including several subjective shots through the eyes of the diminutive space man and his immature doppelgänger, Elliott. This inscription of childhood refers us back to the mythic figure of the *puer aeternus*, the eternal child. According to Marie-Louise von Franz, "*Puer aeternus* is the divine youth who is born in the night, a god of vegetation and resurrection" (1). And, indeed, E.T. is a botanist by profession who returns from the dead. Examples of the *puer aeternus* would be Adonis, Hyacinthus, and Narcissus—whose deaths produced blooming flowers, just as E.T.'s demise and rebirth are related to his emblematic geranium plant. There is even a subset of the *puer aeternus* myth dealing with "ascensionism": a fascination with flying. This subgenre would include Icarus, who flew too close to the sun on wax wings, Bellerophon, who tried to ride to the top of Mount Olympus on the winged horse Pegasus, Jesus Christ, who ascended to Heaven after the crucifixion, and, of course, E.T. on a bicycle flying across the harvest moon. The primary trait of the eternal child is the refusal to grow up, the refusal to resolve one's Oedipal crisis by remaining in—or regressing to—the pre-Oedipal attachment to the idealized mother.

The most famous case of *puer aeternus* (of the flying variety) is no doubt *Peter Pan*, which Mother Mary actually reads to Gertie in Spielberg's *E.T.* James M. Barrie, the author of *Peter Pan*, was preoccupied with the Christian meaning of death and immortality. Hence, Tinker Bell's sacrifice to save Peter Pan has obvious Christian overtones, not to mention her eventual return from the dead. Instead of Peter Pan, the little boy who teaches children how to fly, we have E.T., the mini-creature who introduces a group of children to flying on bicycles and wants to "go home." Thomas Wolfe said that, caught in the inexorability of time, "You can't go home again," yet *E.T.* suggests that you *can* go home again and even reach Never-Never Land—if you believe strongly enough in the myths and religious of the past.

HOLLYWOOD POSTMODERNISM: REGRESSION BACK TO THE FUTURE

The Wizard of Oz (1939) is another important intertextual influence on *E.T.* because of the general situation of returning home and because of some specific images, most notably the bicycle soaring across a full moon—an image reproduced on the movie's publicity poster and print advertisements. *Wizard* shows both the Wicked Witch flying on her broom and Miss Gulch riding on a bicycle. More important, Mary, the mother in *E.T.*, dresses up in a Halloween costume as the Good Witch from *The Wizard of Oz*, complete with star wand. Finally, a rainbow figures prominently in both films.

E.T.'s postmodernist pastiche of allusionism also pertains to the screenwriter, whose previous credit had been the script for *The Black Stallion* (1979), another film about a fatherless boy and his dark-colored pet. But *E.T.* is all but a sequel to Spielberg's own *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), with *E.T.* being a more corporeal form of alien creature than those seen at the conclusion of *Close Encounters*. In addition, the mother ship that descends at the end of *E.T.* closely resembles the one seen at the conclusion of *Close Encounters*, and telepathic communication between aliens and human is common to both movies. Spielberg often intersews such postmodernist self-references; in fact, he usually lays on intertext with a trowel. His use of composer John Williams (*Jaws* [1975], *Close Encounters*, *Raiders*, *E.T.*, etc.) creates a recurring motif of similar (and unmistakable) musical themes. (Williams is not above practicing subtle allusionism himself: the opening strains of *E.T.* closely resemble Bernard Herrmann's opening bars of *Citizen Kane* [1941], especially when accompanied by a tracking shot along a fence. Spielberg, of course, referenced *Citizen Kane's* last scene—the mammoth warehouse containing all of Kane's possessions—in the final shot of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*—the mammoth warehouse containing all the government crates.) More directly, Spielberg alludes to *Jaws* in *E.T.* through synecdoche: the scoop in Elliott's fish tank is shaped like the head of a shark. The director also referenced *Jaws* in 1941 (1979).

Mythological and psychoanalytical critics might read Elliott's releasing of the live frogs in the classroom dissection (castration?) scene as a ritual of puberty, a symbolic representation of the novice's coming to grips with and giving free rein to his oncoming adolescent sexuality—provoked by an "adult" kissing scene from *The Quiet Man* (John Ford, 1952)—especially given that Bruno Bettelheim, for instance, interprets the frequent appearance of frogs in fairy tales as symbols of the male genitalia (102, 231, 289–291). The intertextual analyst, however, might note that the young girl in the frog scene is paralyzed into immobility by the sight of the free-hopping amphibians, just as Marion Ravenwood was by the sight of snakes in Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. In addition, the frog scene may be a reference to Kermit the Frog, especially since the Muppets are mentioned twice in *E.T.*

The gleaming white headgear of the invading scientists closely resembles those used in George Lucas's *Star Wars*. And, during the Halloween scene, *E.T.* passes by and momentarily acknowledges a child dressed up as Yoda, the gnostic gnome from *The Empire Strikes Back*. Of course, these self-reflexive cinematic "in-jokes" function to make the audience complicit with the discourse, but if postmodernism is defined, at least in part, as the deliberate stylistic substitution of pastiche and the imitation of past styles for the impossible invention of adequate (or even postcontemporary) aesthetic articulations, then what *E.T.* valorizes is *une mode rétro*, a regression to mankind's (and filmdom's) childhood.

In fact, childhood passivity is engendered not only through subtle (and not-so-subtle) narrative and character citations but by the very *ethos* of postmodernism. *E.T.*'s intertextual allusions and lighthearted (and lightheaded) "supply-side" aesthetic are part and parcel of the eclipse of the high seriousness and radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s modernist tradition. That tradition, epitomized by the Hollywood Renaissance filmmakers (Kubrick, Altman, Penn, Scorsese, etc.) and the European art cinema auteurs (Godard, Truffaut, Fellini, Bergman, Fassbinder,

etc.), also used self-conscious style and deconstructive intertextuality in the service of a serious autocritique of passive spectatorship. The difference is that 1980s Hollywood "postmodernism" involved "the retreading of archaic styles and the mobilization of transparently remodeled characters, stereotypes, moods, and plots" (Carroll, 52) for the opposite reason: its accessible vacuity serves the end of spectatorial accommodation to the social and cinematic status quo. True, *E.T.* is a Lévi-Straussian bricolage, a recombinant text that depends on an imbricated mosaic of citations to religious parables, classical literature, cinema, and television as its organizing armature. But what *are* these influences and allusions, these *déjà vus* and *déjà reçus*? The New Testament, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Peter Pan*, *Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang* and other Disney films, the "marital rape" scene from *The Quiet Man*, the Muppets, previous Lucas/Spielberg productions, and prominent product placements for kiddie products (e.g., the Reese's pieces used to lure the alien from his lair). The overall "feel" of a Disney picture is particularly apposite because screenwriter Mathison originally wrote the script—entitled "A Boy's Life"—with the idea of pitching it to Disney, and the *Variety* review asserted that "*E.T.* may be the best Disney film Disney never made" (qtd. in Brode, 81). Ultimately, the question arises, "What is the political effectivity of these kinds of intertextual inscriptions?" The simple answer is: the infantilization of the audience, making us all children of multinational corporate capitalism. Thus viewed, Hollywood postmodernism is just another form of opportunistic American cultural imperialism, a reactionary "après-garde" that reworks old film forms into what Jürgen Habermas called a "diagnosis of our times" (3). In *E.T.*, that diagnosis is a retreat to Christian iconography.

"A MYTH NEVER DISAPPEARS," BUT IT CAN BE HISTORICIZED

Each generation produces lives of Jesus adapted to the *Zeitgeist* of its particular historical conjuncture. Certainly, *E.T.* hardly resembles the big-budget Biblical "blockbusters" and insipid trivializations of the 1950s and 1960s that we usually categorize as classical "religious films"—*The Robe* (1953), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *King of Kings* (1961), *Barrabas* (1962), *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), and *The Bible* (1966). Some films of the 1970s, however, parodied the Christ legend almost to the point of sacrilege: *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1970), *Godspell* (1971), *The Ruling Class* (1971), and *Tommy*. Similarly, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964) featured a Marxist Jesus and Milos Forman's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) presented a rebellious transfiguration of the Messiah through the character of R. P. McMurphy. Needless to say, *E.T.* takes a much more reverential and childlike approach to its subtextual subject matter.

Leslie Fiedler once described "the regressiveness of American life, its implacable nostalgia for the infantile" (144). This article has argued, as its author has elsewhere, that there is a nexus between religious myth and popular entertainment, although it must be said that Fiedler's essentialist, universalistic, and reductionistic statements are more extreme than necessary. Nonetheless, by historicizing the intersections of the sacred and the profane, the divine and the divertissement, the

Holy Word and the Holly-Wood film, one can begin to see how the “escapist” artifacts of the American culture industry serve a much deeper and more profound role in U.S. society: they reinforce and reify—even *create*—an ideology at one with the prevailing political climate. In the Reagan era, putatively and ostensibly apolitical movies such as Steven Spielberg’s *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* simultaneously interacted and collaborated with their immediate sociopolitical circumstances, while also drawing on timeless, “Universal” images (pun intended), characters, and themes in an effort to efface all contemporary ramifications to the New Right and the Moral Majority. As Mircea Eliade once said, “A myth never disappears. . . . It only changes its aspects and disguises its operations” (27). The danger is that such mystifications of the culture industry and the resultant regression to the “always already” known will result in a one-dimensional spectator-citizen, one who is “incapable of critical thinking and action, futureless and ahistorical, at home in a system that is now his home and his permanent tomorrow” (Marcuse, 97).

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