

## Aliens, Predators and Global Issues: The Evolution of a Narrative Formula

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**ABSTRACT:** The article tackles the genre of science fiction in film by focusing on the *Alien* and *Predator* series and their crossover. By resorting to “the fictional worlds” theory (Dolezel, 1998), the relationship between the fictional and the real is examined so as to show how these films refract political issues in various symbolic ways, with special reference to the ideological construct of “global threat”.

**Keywords:** film, science fiction, narrative, allegory, otherness, fictional worlds.

**RESUMEN:** en este artículo se aborda el género de la ciencia ficción en el cine mediante el análisis de las películas de la serie *Alien* y *Predator* y su combinación. Utilizando la teoría de “los mundos ficcionales” (Dolezel, 1999), se examina la relación entre los planos ficcional y real para mostrar cómo estas películas reflejan cuestiones políticas de diversas formas simbólicas, con especial referencia a la construcción ideológica de la “amenaza global”.

**Palabras clave:** film, ciencia ficción, narrativa, alegoría, alteridad, mundos ficcionales

In 2004 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox released *Alien vs. Predator*, directed by Paul Anderson and starring Sanaa Latham, Lance Henriksen, Raoul Bova and Ewen Bremner. The film combined and continued two highly successful film series: those of the 1979 *Alien* and its three successors *Aliens* (1986), *Alien 3* (1992) and *Alien Resurrection* (1997), and of the two *Predator* movies, from 1987 and 1990 respectively. *Alien vs. Predator* never achieved the critical and commercial success of its predecessors. Nevertheless three years later the brothers Colin and Greg Strause came out with yet another sequel/crossover, *Aliens vs. Predator*:

*Requiem*, which was slashed by the critics and even nominated for the *Golden Raspberry* award. Artistically and commercially, these two last productions may not have made much of a mark. Yet their bringing together in a deathly combat two memorable alien monsters is indicative of more than a desire to capitalize on the earlier box-office hits.

Clearly falling into the genre of the popular cinema, *Alien vs. Predator* and *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* open themselves to critical interpretation as works which refract issues extending beyond those related to their genre and artistic medium. In what follows, I will examine this relationship between the fictional and the real in the two crossovers and their predecessors from the perspective of the fictional worlds theory. This is an angle that allows a deeper look into the composition and the dynamics of their fictional universes, as well as into the way they engage with the current political problematic, more specifically the issue of global threat. The premise on which my analysis is built is that although the movies' formulaic character seems to reduce the power of their referentiality outside their own genre, their worlds inevitably rely on the structural principles of the real world. In the words of philosopher Nelson Goodman (1978: 6), "worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking". The potential for change and for the production of conflict, I contend, lies not only in the generic requirements of the formula that they follow but also in the way they respond to the idea of global threat.

That global threat has become an intrinsic aspect of the whole notion of globalization hardly needs defending. *Alien vs. Predator* and *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* came out at a time when globalization had ceased to be just a term bandied among a select group of scholars and economists. Some years before, R. Robertson (1992: 8) in his now classic study *Globalization* had defined it as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole". Issues of market economics, trade and politics may have trivialized the metaphor and turned the debate away from the process of conceptual change it implies. The events from 9/11, however, together with daily reports on successful and barely averted terrorist attacks, environmental issues such as global warming, the spreading of diseases originating in one part of the earth to geographically distant places and, at present, the ever widening grip of the financial crisis – all these have activated the awareness of the oneness of the individual and the world, the sense that the world is truly small enough to be contained in the individual consciousness. The instantaneous access to information from every corner of the earth builds up a narrative of globalization that brings into this consciousness not only the freedom of being able to move within a world without borders but also the opposite process of the convergence of the world with all its invisible borders within the self. As a result, the very notion of personality becomes dependent on a string of related questions. Is a global solution to the global threats outlined

above at all possible? If yes, is it contingent, while a local one permanent, and *vice versa*? Should local threats be dealt with locally or should they always be treated as potentially global? And finally, is there such a thing as a global hero? Because of their pertinence and importance on an institutional and a personal level, these questions have shaped public discourse and have found a way into the arts, including the popular ones. This has resulted in a corresponding change in the semantic content of the worlds of their fictions, which have become more centred on the actuality of the present than on the escapism of an impossible, wholly invented past or future.

By “fictional worlds” here I mean aesthetic constructs constituting state of affairs whose “truth” is intentionally validated – that is, the truth of its propositions can be verified only within the system of the fictional world itself. Fictional worlds do not really “exist” in the ordinary sense of the word and cannot be accessed directly but only through semiotic channels (Dolezel, 1998: 20). For the reader of literature or the film audience, reaching and understanding a fictional world depends on the extent to which its elements coincide with or depart from those in the real world. At work in this operation is what Ryan calls “the principle of minimal departure” – “we reconstrue the world of a fiction as being the closest possible to the A[ctual] W[orld], given the information provided by the text” (Ryan, 1991: 558). In science fiction proper, as she points out, identity and compatibility of properties and of members may be absent: quite often, imagined new technological advances lead to a new inventory of human and non-human elements such as extraterrestrial beings, planets with strange life-forms and even different physical laws (Ryan, 1991: 563). Still, unlike absurdist literature, the world of science fiction preserves the logical and linguistic laws that humanity on Earth is familiar with, so that the audience do not experience any difficulty establishing and putting together its facts, however imaginary or “other-wordly” they may be. Another important aspect of fictional worlds is that they constitute not a single entity but a unity, a universe of subworlds, each of which is created by the knowledge, desires and the intentions of the fictional characters and the constraints imposed upon them by others. Plot is the result of this modal differentiation – that is, of the conflict between individual worlds. Consequently, resolution is the minimization and possibly the elimination of difference between intention, hope and desire and their fulfilment, which happens as the outcome of the interaction between the different characters’ individual subworlds (Ryan, 1985: 735-7; Dolezel, 1998: 113).

The two film series I am considering here require a minimum of effort in accessing their worlds, for they make use only of certain elements of science fiction. Their action takes place in spaces that closely resemble or are identical to those of the real world – rooms in spaceships filled with familiar objects, the jungle of Guatemala, the ice and snow of Antarctica, the streets and buildings of

Los Angeles, and finally Gunnison, Colorado. Moreover, looking at the changing locale of the *Alien* and *Predator* series chronologically, we can observe an increase in the degree of the accessibility of their fictional worlds. Each series in fact charts a trajectory that from a geographical point of view eventually brings the action within the confines of the real. The earliest film, *Alien*, and its successor, *Aliens*, are set on the planetoid LV-426 and in spaceships. The action in the third film, *Alien 3*, takes place exclusively within the enclosed spaces of the penal space colony Fiorina 161, which, even by today's standards, is identifiable as an obsolete foundry facility of no obvious use except to keep the violent prisoners busy. The locale of the action in *Alien Resurrection* is still a space research vessel, *USM Auriga*, but the end of the film shows the survivors heading for Earth. Earth is in fact a controlling point in the spatial disposition for the action throughout the series as it is the headquarters of the Weyland-Yutani Corporation which steers the activities of its ships' crews in its criminal interests. With each of the four films, the Corporation's earthly interests acquire a more central position, with the result that the ethical issues that in the first film take quite abstract forms gradually become the concrete motivation for action. Thus, in *Alien* the conflict is born out of a clash between loyalty to the Corporation, on the one hand, and loyalty to the other members of the crew, friendship and trust, the courage of one's convictions, on the other. In *Alien 2* the main character Ripley already acts mostly in defense of the little girl Newt but also of the independence of the individual as inviolable biological territory. In *Alien Resurrection* we are immersed in twenty-first-century ethical debates such as those around cloning and the privatization of biological and medical innovation, and on loyalty to the company against that to humanity as a whole.

The two *Predator* films are seemingly more formula-bound and therefore less prone to exploiting the difference between the actual and the fictional world. Even here, however, there is a movement closer and closer to "home" as the wild vegetation of Guatemala in *Predator* gives way to the streets and buildings of Los Angeles in *Predator 2*. In *Alien vs. Predator* and *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* remoteness is again replaced by closeness as the second film takes the action from the Antarctic island, where its predecessor ends, to Gunnison, Colorado. Such geographic relocation makes the fictional world of the second film highly accessible by virtue of the familiarity of the locale and the homely atmosphere around the protagonists – ex-prisoner Dallas Howard and his brother Ricky in their less than modest home, Sheriff Eddie Morales in the main street, army veteran Kelly O'Brien at her own home, the teenagers at the High School swimming pool. There is much less "science" and a great deal more "fiction" in this movie, which continually brings the evocation of horror to the fore of its intentions by setting it forth against the ordinary and the normal – teenage love, marital problems, social inequalities, distrust of governments of any kind.

Certainly, as Carroll (1990: 13) and Neale (2000: 51) point out, the genres of science fiction and horror are frequently almost indistinguishable. Moreover, when they are combined with action and adventure, they double and triple their effects of “fictionality” and “horror.” Sequels, however, tend to disappoint by becoming too repetitive. The makers of the *Alien* and *Predator* series sought to eliminate that danger by combining the two sources of horror – the alien and the predator – in a crossover. First created in comic books and then in computer and video games, just as were those of Superman and Batman and of Superman and Spiderman, the crossover was presaged in *Predator 2*. Its director Stephen Hopkins prepared for a future box-office hit by placing among the predator’s trophies the skull of an alien from the other series. Hollywood’s typical foresight for commercial success aside, the crossover and Earth as its location would require some narrative justification. Aliens and predators inhabit different fictional universes, and as narrative semantics has it, their coming together involves radical changes in their ontological status (Dolezel, 1998: 17-18). To have them side by side or facing each other needs a change in their ontological identity by making them inhabit a common world where their characteristics may be compatible with the characteristics of this world, but also with those of the Earth to which the action is eventually brought. That is why *Alien vs. Predator* presents a complex, and highly improbable, prehistory to the two series. As the Italian archeologist Sebastian explains, it was predators that actually brought civilization to Earth. Every hundred years they journey here to fight aliens as a rite of passage. For this purpose they themselves breed aliens, using humans as their biological hosts. Aliens and predators therefore fight each other much as toreadors and bulls do, with the difference that the ritualistic nature of the conflict may have a deliberately fatal conclusion. For if the aliens win, the predators destroy the whole area – or the whole civilization that has developed in the area.

As this account shows, there is little justification for a global conflict between aliens and predators, on the one hand, and the Earth’s population on the other, unless the extraterrestrial creatures somehow transcend the boundaries of their fictional worlds, not only in ontological (and geographical) terms but also in terms of their intentions. For as long as they remain bound to their original domains, they will not present any threat outside the local one. Yet, the first three of the *Alien* films show that such limits are untenable – both because of the presence of the Corporation as a composite character with its own intentions (to have the aliens in their laboratories on Earth) and also because of the alien’s biological nature. Aliens, as the films and the trivia around them inform us, are xenomorphs – life forms that have no rational or emotional powers; their only reason for being is biological, that is, they exist only in order to multiply. As philosopher Stephen Mulhall (2002: 19) aptly defines them, they are “Nature

incarnate or sublimed, a nightmare embodiment of the natural realm understood as utterly subordinate to, utterly exhausted by, the twinned Darwinian drives to survive and reproduce". In terms of the theory of fictional worlds, they are almost identical to natural phenomena and so do not create the possibility for a balanced antagonistic relationship between them and humans (Ryan, 1985: 735). The whole burden of the construction of conflict therefore falls on the human characters' private domains – their worlds of knowledge, moral values, obligations, wishes and intentions, in whose differentiation is concentrated the entire dynamic potential of the fictional world. This is done not only on the level of the action but also by using the narrative codes of the cinema to focus attention on the image of the body as a symbolic node of meanings that transcend those evoked by the plot. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that *Alien* (1979) and the next three films in the series have attracted so much scholarly attention. Chiefly discussed from a feminist perspective (Newton, 1990; Creed, 1990; Kavanagh, 1990), the encoded meanings are seen by Stephen Mulhall as a debate on such metaphysical issues as the relation between human identity and embodiment, between subject and subjection. The seriousness with which the *Alien* series has been viewed by scholarly criticism is in large measure due to the masterful way in which its directors – Ridley Scott, James Cameron, David Fincher and Jean-Pierre Jeunet – wield the iconography of the visual medium for an exploration of these issues. But the achievement of these established names in the cinema world can be seen also in terms of the enrichment of the semantic content of the formulae within which they are working. What we find in the *Alien* series is that it has managed to build modal domains within the narrow scope of a narrative world whose characters are by definition highly functional.

Tzvetan Todorov (1981: 50), in his now famous formulation of narrative, specifies its basic structural model as a progressive change from equilibrium or plenitude through the intervention of a disrupting force to a new equilibrium or plenitude. The latter is not the same as the first. But given that within the social world the disrupting forces come through social interaction and are part of human life, conflict cannot disappear completely. As Ryan (1985: 733) points out, this can happen only when the ending is either eschatological or apocalyptic: "all the villains should join the ranks of the good guys, or everyone should die". Yet, it is an obligatory part of the formula of horror fiction that neither of these possible endings should be allowed: at least one of the protagonists should survive and it is the monster that should die or be expelled from the world, albeit temporarily. The paradox of horror fiction, as Noel Carroll indicates throughout his comprehensive study of the aesthetics of the genre, resides in its ability to offer the mutually compensating emotions of disgust and fascination. It does so, according to Carroll (1990), by providing readers or viewers with an ending that asserts their cognitive power, the ability to understand the physical and the



cultural framework within which we, as humans, operate. “The confrontation and defeat of the monster in horror fictions”, he writes, “might be systematically read as a restoration and defense of the established world view found in existing cultural schemas” (Carroll, 1990: 200). Carroll’s approach explains why, even though we may suspect that not all aliens have been destroyed, or may believe that yet another predator will come back to earth for his safari, our pleasure on seeing the plot of each film in the series come to a closure is in fact increased rather than lessened by the knowledge that the familiar order is reinstated, that what we know and who we are is confirmed, rather than rejected by the intrusion of the alien.

But what is this “familiar” order, the model-world, to which, presumably, each of the films I am examining here returns us as we watch, with relief, the alien being left outside the physical borders of the human at the end of each film? It is one which is still regulated, as it is at the outset, by corporate forces whose power knows no borders. In the *Alien* series, it is symbolized by the Corporation which seeks to retrieve alien eggs from the *Sulaco*. Its transnational identity is expressed in its evocative double-barrelled name – Weyland-Yutani. Although its activities are never clearly specified, it is this commercial enterprise that both sets and destroys the distinctions between cognitive and cultural categories. For while the crew, with the exception of Ash, at first believe – and the audience do as well – that they are on a quest to unravel a secret, it turns out that the goal is appropriative rather than merely epistemological. The Weyland-Yutani Corporation ostensibly desires the acquisition and the possession of the alien for scientific purposes, and claims it will keep it within the strictly delimited territory of the laboratory. In fact, the Corporation’s true goal is to use the new life form for military purposes. The company’s intention and the events that it triggers therefore mock the Enlightenment myth of the triumph of reason over matter, of culture over nature. For the alien, which is pure Nature, cannot be contained in the laboratory, which is Culture understood as science and technology. Nor can it be held outside the bodies that symbolize and place limits on Culture – the spaceship’s crew and especially Ripley’s own human frame. Given its generative peculiarities – its ability to reproduce using any human or humanoid host – there are really no barriers to the alien’s propagation. It is an adversary that acts without constraints and this is a fact that disbalances the plot in its favour. As Ash in *Alien* says, “You can’t kill it [...] I admire its purity [...] a survivor [...] unclouded by conscience, remorse or delusions of morality”. Ash’s words equally apply to the Corporation itself, for it is the ultimate survivor. The battle between it and common humanity takes on a symbolic significance by being staged in locales more and more stripped of human content. In the course of the series the spaces in which it is fought become more and more enclosed, until finally they converge into the surrealist locale of a chase along the corridors

of the prison ship in *Aliens 3*. Along with this the illusion that the monster, be it biological or corporate, can be read as a local threat that can be eliminated using local means grows into an ironic comment on the *hubris* of modern humanity and the vacuity of its statements regarding global order. That is why it is only logical that contrary to generic expectations, the ending of *Aliens 3* is eschatological. In spite of her resistance, Ripley is impregnated to give birth to the alien queen. To prevent this happening, she sacrifices herself and in this way eliminates the apocalypse, which offers itself as the only alternative narrative closure. What she does, in fact, is use the only locality that she fully controls – her own body, which has served as the ground and the basis of her self-identification, having progressively lost all others, such as those of a warrant officer, member of a team and comrade, a free person among convicts, and, most importantly, a real and then a surrogate human mother.

In addition to this, as critics Zoe Sofia (1987: 128) and Yvonne Tasker (1993: 49-53) observe, the extraterrestrial monster as a figure in science fiction evokes analogies between the alien, on the one hand, and the racial and cultural “other” as seen by the Western and in particular by the American cultural paradigm, on the other. The association is particularly transparent in the *Predator* series. Predators, according to this fiction, are humanoids from a technologically advanced but culturally primitive civilization, signalled by their dreadlocks and the grafting of advanced weapon power onto spears and knives. They are hunters with a strict code of honour which includes respect and mercy for pregnant women, children and unarmed adults. Defined in this way through their visual image and their actions and especially through the wilful self-destruction which ends their lives in case of failure, they blend a nostalgic backward glance towards the noble savage with the imaginary figure of the technologically endowed superman. However, because they are constructed as a patchwork of features associated in popular imagination with the culturally primitive, the predators’ fictional existence is also grounded in their civilization, which defines for them a narrow but extremely potent narrative universe. Like the aliens in the other series – and like the West’s dangerous Other – they have an intention-world which defies rationality. There is a major difference, though – the predators’ obligation-world, whose semantic content boils down to sticking to their ritualistic culture at all costs, overpowers all other private domains. This specific disbalance is important for the delineation of their scope of action. A specimen of the imagined primitive, the predator can only function locally, that is, within the area he has designated as his hunting ground. Yet, his other side – the possession of advanced technology – is just as salient. The combination of the two prompts fears that he can turn any place in the world into his space of action. Indeed, it seems only logical to see him moving from the jungles of Guatemala – his hunting ground in *Predator* – to the thickly inhabited Los Angeles in *Predator 2*, where he causes destruction



on a massive scale visually reminiscent of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre. The contemporary viewer may well find the associations with this attack difficult to ignore. For, while he is single-mindedly focused on the collection of trophies, the predator is nevertheless equipped with a nuclear device. This is what he triggers when he has no chance of winning, and destroying himself like a suicide bomber, he destroys all others in a vast area. The power of savage tradition, the blind following of ritual, the total disregard for the suffering of his victims – all these qualities that make up his world of moral values create a dynamic of response insisting that humanity has to fight for its survival not only in physical but also in civilization terms.

At any rate, the predator being and the first two films in which it features are also solidly ensconced in the conceptual and narrative space of the masculine, iconographically represented in the visual imagery of the extraterrestrial creature and its action-hero opponents played by Arnold Swarzenegger and Danny Glover in *Predator* and *Predator 2*, created in 1987 and 1990 respectively. Possessed with superior bodily strength, the predator as a generic alien requires that civilization offer a counterpart, a human icon whose supreme masculinity is contained in an equally supreme body. As Tasker (1993: 104) points out, “the cinematic representation of the hero is bedevilled by the need to provide a space in which he can perform”. Arnold Swarzenegger and Danny Glover with their bodybuilder’s frames are well placed to satisfy this requirement. They are modern versions of Odysseus, who can combine muscular power with immense courage and cunning and thus outwit any adversary and eventually kill him. But what helps the arch-heroes most is not just biology and intellect. It is the structure of their own personal universe of worlds, in which the constraints related to ethics and morality endow them with the necessary advantage over the cultural primitive. For the secret of their success is, as with Ripley in *Alien*, the assumption of sovereignty over their bodies in the interest of humanity and even against the power structure that initially directs their actions. So, Dutch in *Predator* deviates from the army regulations when he does not kill his guerrilla hostage Anna and, later, when he saves her at the peril of his own life. The severance of the link between the organization and the hero is even more evident in *Predator 2*, where Harrigan’s worlds of obligation and moral values eventually merge. He acts against orders, defying his superiors from the Police, but never betraying his intention to do the impossible in order to save the city from the menace. The ideological emphasis thus emerging is that the local threat can be eliminated through the unquestionably American version of masculinity. Typically, Dutch and Harrigan are self-reliant but also loyal to the team, able to act on the moment and at the same time possessing enough foresight to predict the enemy’s moves, tough and tender-hearted at the same time – in short, they are the die-hards who will save the world.

This certainty is, however, undermined in the 2004 *Aliens vs. Predator* film. Again, the plot is triggered by the Weyland-Yutani Corporation but the film removes the ideological levers of its predecessors. Mr. Weyland himself now appears on the scene, which is this time an abandoned whaling station on an island off Antarctica, from where a Corporation satellite has received strange signals. Fatally ill, the tycoon wants to make his mark in person and, as a person, bequeath to humanity some kind of legacy in the form of a discovery. A breeding ground for aliens which the expedition unwittingly sets out of control, the subterranean structure built by the predators for their centennial visits, becomes not only the researchers' last destination but also the beginning of humanity's destruction. Like the *Alien* series, this film also features a woman in the central role, yet the beautiful, athletic African American Alexa Woods, played by Sanaa Lathan, presents a singular gesture to political correctness. Unlike Ripley, Dutch and Harrigan, she is not part of any organization – like the other members of the team she is free-lance, hired for this expedition with her own consent. The team itself is international, reversing the negative meaning of the transnational attached to the Weyland-Yutani Corporation in the *Alien* series, but also removing the narrow American dimensions of the two *Predator* films. The combination of new circumstances – the loosened grip of the Corporation / the organization and its head, the earth as the place where evil is literally bred, the genuine quest on which the characters have embarked – all these paradoxically disempower the fighters against the mortal enemy. A truly Arnoldian emanation of the best of civilized humanity separately embodied in each human character, political correctness, intellectual curiosity and moral integrity prove to be helpless before the aliens. Nothing but political maneuvering can stop the latter from starting their infestation of the earth. So, left entirely on her own, Alexa has no choice but to resort to an alliance with the predator. “The enemy of my enemy is my ally”, she says, and teams up with the technological savage who alone can overpower the biological perfection of the alien. The contingency of her tactical move reverberates with echoes from political decisions made by the West through the 1980s and 1990s. Its rationale emerges from the awareness that evil has the power to transcend borders and should be contained by collective, rather than individual effort. There is in this a strand of the optimism characteristic of the post-2001 years when the hope that international threats such as Al Qaeda, or the drug cartels in Latin America, could be quashed, if not eliminated, provided there was concerted international effort. But what the film ultimately shows through its narrative is that the victory achieved in this way is only provisional. For the dangerous Other to civilization has yet another quality not envisaged by its humanistically-minded opponents – it can produce hybrids not only with its superior humans but also with its own enemy. Ash's assertion in *Alien* that pure biology has no limits seems to find its confirmation in this sequel, reverting the

film's narrative back to its earlier ideological underpinnings derived from racial and ethnical issues. In the final account, the alien proves its invulnerability, as it manages to impregnate the predator to produce the most dangerous being on earth – the hybrid Predalien.

*Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem*, whose protagonist the Predalien is, has been found to be the least successful of the *Alien* and *Predator* series. Yet, in terms of the content and dynamics of its fictional world, it is the richest among them. The latest transformation of the extraterrestrial monster, the supreme form of Freud's uncanny, the Predalien finds itself in small-town America and the beginning of the film is devoted to such occurrences as can be found in the majority of mainstream works about daily life in the USA. Marital problems, social divisions and their impact on the very young, the fate of ex-criminals – all these quickly reel off in the film's opening and leave their stamp on the ensuing horrific events. However, this saturation with realistic detail and mini-narratives hampers rather than propels the main plot, precisely because the particulars are not functional, unlike the everyday objects and the minimalistic setting on the spaceships in the *Alien* films, or the familiar natural and urban jungle in the *Predator* ones. The characters in *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* are so immersed in their everyday problems that none of them can become the kind of hero who has the potential to fight and conquer evil. The only means to deal with it is in the control of the force that supersedes the individual: the government. Its weapon is a nuclear bomb that will bring about the desired end – the Predalien's and the predators' destruction but at the cost of much predictable "collateral damage". Those who escape death do so by sheer force of luck while the ones who die are in no way less deserving to live.

The appearance of the American military as the new and the only successful agent in the battle against the uncontrollable threat seals the narrative line built by the *Alien* and *Predator* series in an unexpected yet logical way. Colonel Stevens directs the offensive against the alien intruders with the nonchalance of a predator. As a character whose actions alone bring the narrative to its closure, he takes up the role of the victor without the required complexity of a private constellation of worlds, and most importantly, without a domain of moral values. His sphere is in fact limited to just one world: that of necessity and possibility. As scholars such as Dolezel (1998: 12-24) and Ronen (1994: 17-34) have pointed out, however, this is a world only in logico-semantic and not in fictional terms. According to philosophical logic, necessity and possibility can form simple counterfactuals, whose exemplification in *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* can be stated as follows: if a threat of that magnitude appears, then the all-destructive military attack is the only option. Such reduction naturally involves cancelling the richness of the fictional world from which it emerges. In other words, the true global hero turns out to be the opposite of the generic stereotype employed

in horror and science fiction. He is ruthless and unimaginative, selfish and unthinking, physically powerful yet prompted to action by automatic responses to the situation. Put otherwise, the new global hero is a human predator and a moral alien.

I will not go so far as to claim that this makes the conclusion to the *Alien* and *Predator* movie series consciously allegorical but I cannot help seeing how close it comes to de Man's view of the prevalence of allegory in modernity as "the unveiling of an authentically temporal destiny. This unveiling takes place in a subject that has sought refuge against the impact of time in a natural world to which, in truth, it bears no resemblance" (de Man, 1983: 206). In cinematic terms, the ever growing reliance on scenes of violence and carnage and the very disappearance of the conventional action hero that mark *Aliens* vs. *Predator: Requiem* seem to me an indication of the powerlessness of the horror genre featuring extraterrestrials to live up to its moralistic underpinnings. Nor is it capable of accommodating the idea of a global order "naturally", enforced by the moral or ethical constraints that formulate the "civilized" human identity. Civilization's Other – primitive, untamable, irrepressible Nature – proves to be the only productive element in the narrative of global struggle against evil. For all its effort to somehow engage in its formula, the belief in rational knowledge, ethical obligation and basic moral values, the film ultimately represents an ironic comment that dismisses their validity. Hardly a single viewer among the millions who have watched the film all over the world will believe the woman who, shortly before Colonel Stevens gives his final order, says, "The government wouldn't do anything to harm its own citizens". I, for one, don't.

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