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“Not Your Grandmother’s Bible”—A Comparative Study of the Biblical Deluge Myth in Film

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Abstract: The biblical story of the Flood, which portrays a humanity worthy of annihilation, is the fundamental myth used by generations of interpreters as they radically criticized the society and culture in which they lived. Accordingly, the Deluge myth’s various versions and interpretations over the years mirror ever-changing cultural dilemmas and values. Our comparative–historic study observes this mirror and how changes in modern Western culture are reflected in it through the analysis of selected films. It exemplifies the representation and evolution of the Deluge myth in cinema from its inception to the present day, and demonstrates that the myth’s cinematic adaptation and its infusion with current interpretations turn it into an imminent apocalyptic threat. Apparently, the Flood becomes a relevant concern involving a wide scope of cultural, theological, and ethical issues, e.g., the problem of evil, ecology, the treatment of animals, family values, feminism, the Other, and deification of science and technology.

Keywords: popular culture; deluge; flood; apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic films; bible films; ecology; theodicy; ecofeminism; science-fiction; feminism; comparative study

1. “The Myth as Consisting of All Its Versions” (Lévi-Strauss)

Several ancient books mention the “Book of Noah”, which fiercely criticizes humanity. However, since this criticism is expressed in varied and contradictory ways, some scholars believe that this book never truly existed, but was rather an imaginary object used to make religious–social criticism (Werman 1999). In fact, the biblical story of the Flood, which portrays a humanity worthy of complete annihilation, is the fundamental myth used by generations of interpreters as they radically criticized the society and culture in which they lived. Accordingly, the Deluge myth and its various versions and interpretations over the years mirror ever-changing cultural dilemmas and values. In our study, we observe this mirror and how modern Western (mainly American) culture is reflected in it.

For this purpose, we shall trace the cinematic representation of the Deluge myth and its development: how is this myth appropriated by mainstream American films? What associations does it evoke? How is the myth used toward the promotion of values, in criticizing the ailments of contemporary society so much to warrant its destruction? What are the contexts that portray the need to destroy humanity? How is the religious aspect of the story perceived: and does it undergo secularization and how? Does the film criticize God? How is nature perceived? What role do women play in the plot? These questions and more will be discussed via selected cinematic Midrashim (Moore and Ruah-Midbar Shapiro 2018). A “Midrash” is a Jewish Rabbinic literary genre, an exegesis to the Bible in a highly creative manner. Naturally, one of the characteristics of Midrashim (plural of midrash in Hebrew) is a multiplicity of views and stories that contradict one another (Neusner 1990). The term “midrash” is often borrowed by other historical and cultural contexts, and by creative interpretations or variations thereof, including cinematic ones.

Every mention and retelling of a myth is, in effect, more than a reinterpretation: it is a reappearance of the myth itself, a part of its multidimensional picture. Lévi-Strauss (1955, p. 435) puts it beautifully: “the myth as Consisting of all its versions”. The historic-cultural context changes, and with it—the way in which the ancient myth is formulized. The original biblical story of the Flood consists of different stories/sources with contradicting messages. It is interlaced with ancient sources which reflect fundamentally different views—e.g., in one of the original stories animals entered the Ark two by two, while another story mentions seven specimens of each pure species; one ends with the rising smell of sacrificial animals, while the other—with a symbolic rainbow; one views Earth and all living things as sinners, while another mentions the evil of man alone (Knohl 2010, chps. 2–3). Alongside the biblical story, this myth appeared in various versions throughout the ancient East (Collins 2017; Kramer 1967) and other cultures. They carry a plethora of messages, local and universal alike—from the problem of overpopulation, to appeasing the gods, etc.

As mentioned, the representation of the Flood in films is more than innocent recreation of the biblical story, or, in the words of director Darren Aronofsky, “it’s not your grandmother’s Bible” (Collins 2014). Rather, this is a new statement, to be analyzed and uncovered for the moral—sometimes even unconscious—content filmmakers express through it. Accordingly, in this article, we shall delve into the meanings of the Deluge myth in film, so it may teach us about Western culture over the past century, and the values and dilemmas of the current emerging culture.

After presenting the rationale to our study, along with our research question, Section 2 will review 13 main films which exemplify the development of the representation of the Deluge myth in film from its inception to the present day: *The Deluge* (1911), *Noah’s Ark* (1928), *The Deluge* (1933), *The Bible: In the Beginning* (1966), *Deep Impact* (1998), *Sky Captain* (2004), *Evan Almighty* (2007), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (2008), *2012* (2009), *40 Days and Nights* (2012), *The Humanity Bureau* (2014), *Noah* (2014), *The 100—Netflix Series* (2014—ongoing). Section 3 will explore the central filmic elements and conceptual and moral/ideological characteristics which we have identified in these films, and sort them into five categories. Section 4 shall summarize our conclusions regarding the picture that arises from the cultural mirror of these films.

2. The Cinematic Flood from 1911 to 2018—A Review

Kozlovic (2016) divided the films into genres and types, e.g., cinematic re-creations of the Flood as historic or fictional events; sci-fi; disaster; comedy; animation; etc. In our attempt to discern the ways in which the Flood was cinematically adapted, we survey those films that constitute meaningful cornerstones in the evolution of the Flood’s cinematic versions, and which address cultural trends, prevalent public concerns, and gender views.

2.1. *The Deluge* (1911)

The Flood appeared in films close to the inception of cinema. *The Deluge* (director’s name unknown; Kozlovic 2016, p. 35), an American silent film, starts with opening titles about the Flood in ancient cultures, and George Smith’s discovery of the Chaldean Account of The Deluge, which connected the Gilgamesh Flood mythos to the Abrahamic traditions. The film was produced by the Vitagraph Company of America.

2.2. *Noah’s Ark* (1928)

Michael Curtiz’s *Noah’s Ark* (Kozlovic 2016, pp. 35–36; Shepherd 2017, pp. 87–89), was released when biblical epics followed a formula which paralleled the biblical story with actual events (Mitchell and Plate 2007). Accordingly, this film is an epic melodrama which equates the biblical Flood with the blood of WWI victims flooding the world. This analogy between the war and the Flood criticizes human cruelty, and hints at the danger posed to humanity’s survival in light of its violence. As the character of a modern-day priest passionately exclaims in the film:

Above this deluge of blood, and the graves of ten million men, shall not the rainbow of a new covenant appear—the covenant of peace?

This statement may have given the film the religious context its makers desired, as it does not address the biblical story apart from the depiction of a global flood.

2.3. *The Deluge* (1933)

Felix E. Feist's *The Deluge* (Kozlovic 2016, pp. 38–39), opens with text stating the “tale of fantasy” is intended for “entertainment” and “remembering God’s covenant with Noah”. The quote from Genesis 9:11 emphasizes that Earth will never again be destroyed. This statement may frame the film in a religious context as it does not address the biblical story apart from depiction of a flood.

The plot begins with a state of emergency preceding powerful storms but with unclear reasons. The military is requested to clear the air and seas; a solar eclipse occurs; an earthquake leads to the collapse of New York skyscrapers; the US West Coast collapses into the ocean; newspapers announce the end of the world; clergymen declare God’s intention to destroy humanity. Panicking people are seen running through the streets, while massive waves pass the Statue of Liberty and flood New York. A couple, Helen and Martin, and their two children, try to find cover near their collapsing house. When Martin wakes alone on a beach, the world around him appears primordial. He finds Claire, who is on the run from men who fought over her after one tried to rape her, and the two fall in love. When Martin finds out his family survived, he confesses he loves both women. Helen accepts it, but Claire is enraged and runs to the beach, strips naked, and swims toward the horizon.

This film, which is based on Sydney Fowler Wright’s 1928 novel of the same name, has become a prototype of both flood films and disaster movies. It demonstrates the earliest depiction in cinema of the now compulsory apocalyptic imagery of tidal waves overcoming the Statue of Liberty, which appears in many of the subsequent Flood films.

2.4. *The Bible: In the Beginning* (1966)

John Houston’s *The Bible: In the Beginning* (Bachmann 1965, pp. 7, 11; Kozlovic 2016, p. 36), presents stories from Genesis, including the Flood. The film attempts to adhere to the source material, incorporating voice-over of biblical quotes. Nevertheless, the 1960s’ hippie style is evident, for example in the Creation scene wherein the characters are nude and portrayed having a virtuous kinship with nature.

Noah’s generation comprises people enjoying themselves and mocking the Ark’s construction. They are dressed in red shawls and wear necklaces of seashells, and animals’ skulls and bones. This attire hints at violence and carnivorousness, while Noah’s family is dressed in simple grayish clothes, works hard, keeps taciturn, and eats plants and bread. Noah’s family’s expectation to leave the Ark echoes the hopes of 1960s’ counterculture, to create a better society that lives in harmony with nature.

2.5. *Deep Impact* (1998)

Mimi Leder’s *Deep Impact* depicts an “Extinction Level Event” catalyzed by the appearance of a giant comet en route to Earth. The event is kept from public knowledge until an aspiring reporter uncovers it. President Beck, portrayed by Morgan Freeman, reassures the general public that the US and Russia intend to send a spacecraft called “Messiah” to alter the comet’s path. When the Messiah’s first attempt fails, President Beck reveals that governments worldwide have been building underground shelters. The US’ shelter is named “Ark Cave Site”, and is designed to inhabit “The Ark National Lottery”’s’ 800,000 selected American citizens under the age of 50. The latter are to be joined by 200,000 skilled individuals, e.g., scientists, philosophers, and artists, along with samples of significant animals and plants. The Messiah’s crew decides to sacrifice their lives in another attempt to save humanity, and crash into the comet, destroying most of it. Although some parts of Earth are

completely destroyed by the broken comet's impact—the Statue of Liberty and the World Trade Center are flooded and crushed by the massive tidal wave—humanity rebuilds the world. There are no moral or religious dimensions to the destructive event, just “sheer bad luck” (Reinhartz 2013, p. 215).

2.6. *Sky Captain (2004)*

Kerry Conran's *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* is a science-fiction film that blends actors with computer graphics (CG) settings (Telotte 2010). The leading characters, a reporter for *The Chronicle*, and her ex-lover, also known as “Sky Captain”, the commander of the Flying Legion, join forces to stop an attack by robots that seems to be linked to the disappearance of prominent scientists. They discover that the robots are part of a German Nazi plan. They travel to Tibet to locate the base, where they build a technologically advanced Noah's Ark rocket. Dr Totenkopf's plan is to destroy humanity and start the world of tomorrow with samples of animals and human genetic material, which have been stored in the Ark. Apparently, the Ark rocket is controlled by the hologram of the deceased Dr Totenkopf, and his robots, and is programmed to launch into space, releasing a deadly bomb that will destroy all life on Earth.

While the couple struggles to break the heavily guarded ark's technological system and stop it from launching, they also engage in interpersonal power struggles, with Joe constantly mocking Polly's technological inadequacy.

2.7. *Evan Almighty (2007)*

Tom Shadyac's fantasy comedy *Evan Almighty* depicts “unabashedly born-again Christian Evangelistic” character (Rigby 2008, p. 165). Evan Baxter is a married politician who has three sons (like Noah). His political partners, who have wealthy relations, expect him to help pass a bill that would open up fringe areas of the national parks for development. Environmentalists obviously protest the bill, and Evan gradually becomes a protector of the environment, defending it from the moguls, following God's command of him to build an ark and tell the world of the forthcoming flood on September 22nd.

Evan becomes a local laughingstock. The Flood does come, but not as a natural phenomenon, but the result of a technical glitch—the collapse of a dam built for the purposes of financial gain while damaging natural assets, due to political corruption. Consequently, the vote on the anti-environmentalist bill gets canceled.

2.8. *The Day the Earth Stood Still (2008)*

Scott Derrickson's *The Day the Earth Stood Still* is a remake of Robert Wise's 1951 film of the same title, which had no connection to the Flood. However, the latter includes a unidentified flying object (UFO) religious theme, which allowed Christian interpretation of their arrival as a manifestation of the Second Coming (Etherden 2016; Gabbard 1982).

The 2008 film combines the messianic concept with the story of Noah's Ark. It is a sci-fi film with an ecological emphasis and apocalyptic flair. It tells of a spaceship that lands in New York City. The humanoid alien onboard asks to speak with world leaders on behalf of extraterrestrial civilizations which sent him to save Earth from humanity, claiming: “if Earth dies—you die, if you die—Earth survives”. Apparently the spaceship came to collect fauna (humans included) and flora specimens that would survive Earth's expected annihilation, acting as a sort of “ark”. The ark's presence evokes fears of an approaching flood alongside resistance and desire to fight it.

A swarm of biotechnological insects begins to destroy humanity but stops due to the relationship that forms between the alien and a scientist and her son; however, all electrical activity on Earth ceases.

The film criticizes humanity's extermination of species, damage to the biosphere, and violence, which the alien encounters in its attempt to form a helpful dialogue.

2.9. 2012 (2009)

Roland Emmerich's blockbuster, *2012* (Von Mossner 2012), is the story of an American geologist who discovers that Earth is rapidly heating up. The scientist then approaches the White House, and the government decides to keep his discovery a secret. Finally, the G8 (which was founded following the world energy crisis) is notified. Nine "Arks" are built, massive powerful ships, made to save the "perfect gene pool to repopulate".

Each ark will save 100,000 people, and each ticket to board the Ark is sold for 1 billion euro; therefore, only multi-billionaires and their families are afforded a chance to survive. Anyone who leaks information on the project is exterminated by the government. A variety of animals are also brought onto the arks, including an art collection for which the American president's daughter is responsible.

In one discussion surrounding those deemed worthy of survival, the geologist tells the president's daughter:

I believe that nature will choose for itself what will survive, just like you preserving those great artworks. Our culture is our soul, and that's not dying tonight.

The plot follows a failed author and an eccentric who warns him of the coming apocalypse, mentioning the Mayan prophecy of the world's end in *2012* (Sitler 2006).

The author manages to get his son and daughter on one of the arks. The son's name, Noah, suggests that the progeny of the film's protagonists will be the true survivors of this story—as they will board the Ark, and that the heroes themselves were never meant to survive.

The lack of human compassion becomes evident toward the film's end, criticizing the choice to save the wealthy. Another human flaw presented is the disregard of the grim ecological predictions. Finally, Africa, the site of the origin of humankind, is all that has survived, and the geologist and president's daughter—both African-American—fall in love.

2.10. 40 Days and Nights (2012)

Peter Geiger's *40 Days and Nights* is an ecological disaster film depicting "an apocalyptic disaster of biblical proportions" (as noted on the poster). It depicts the US's preparations toward the arrival of a massive tsunami, as the army builds an "ark", and collects the DNA of all organisms to re-create a stable ecosystem. The authorities plan to save 50,000 people, while the populace is unaware of the approaching destruction of the world, as the government claims they are just undergoing an intense storm season.

The film's release in 2012 was laden with apocalyptic expectations fueled by the claim that Mayan culture has predicted that the end would occur that year (Sitler 2012). The film makes no criticism of humanity.

2.11. The Humanity Bureau (2014)

Robert W. Kings' dystopian film, *The Humanity Bureau*, portrays Earth as a postwar wasteland—water has dried out and plant life is nonexistent. The surviving population must live in accordance with the laws of a central regime, and those who do not "contribute" (in terms of "productivity rating") must move to "New Eden". However, the promise of that place is a lie, and millions are sent there to be systematically exterminated to reduce the population, leaving behind only productive and obedient civilians.

The protagonist, Noah, attempts to save a woman and her son, and decides to run away with them to a lake beyond the borders. The journey to the lake involves entering a zone said to be radioactively contaminated. They pass through dry wastelands, and, in one scene, Noah sits on a boat stranded on dry land, and wonders if the lake still exists. On their way, they discover the government is concealing a perfectly habitable region, where the land is not polluted, and vegetation is abundant. It is also revealed that Noah is the biological father of the boy he saves, who was compassionately adopted by

the mother. Finally, the mother is murdered, and Noah sacrifices himself so that his son and a group of rebels can survive. The message of their rebellion is aimed at the viewers: “Be scared, be very scared. You may be next”.

2.12. *Noah* (2014)

Darren Aronofsky’s film, *Noah*, is a biblical retelling of the Flood, which uses Judeo-Christian and Midrashic interpretation. It also engages with contemporary contexts, such as environmental concerns, spiritual/religious worldviews, gender issues and other traditions (Ruah-Midbar Shapiro and Moore forthcoming).

The world in which Noah lived before the Flood is characterized by a parched land where animals are on the verge of extinction and vegetation is scarce. Humans are cruel and greedy. Noah receives a message from God of a Flood that would destroy the world. He and his family are shown to be secluded from the rest of the population. He builds an ark, and the animals board it in a spectacular scene, followed by Noah, his wife Naameh, their three sons, and Ila, their adopted daughter (a novelty absent from the Bible). Noah believes God intends to end humanity and tries to aid in this task, as his animosity towards humanity grows and even extends to his own family. Gradually, his wife and adopted daughter teach him the importance of compassion, and to recognize the good in people.

2.13. *The 100—Netflix Series* (2014—Ongoing)

The TV series, *The 100*, is a post-apocalyptic tale beginning with a group of hundreds of people from different nations, who survives a nuclear holocaust on Earth and resides on a spaceship called “The Ark”. Repeatedly, the show raises dilemmas regarding the annihilation of humanity. Its main characters struggle to choose between actively choosing who survives, and a passiveness which may lead to extinction, as they confront the inclination to save those closest to them over bigger groups of “Others”. They wonder whether “good” and “evil” do exist, and whether humanity should be saved. The series incorporates fascinating religious symbolism which demonstrates the process involved in the formation of new religions. Female characters hold key roles in the storyline.

The *Salvation* series (2017—ongoing) depicts an advanced space rocket called “Ark” built to escape a cataclysmic disaster that is expected to destroy Earth. It is equipped to restart humanity and Earth’s ecosystem on Mars. The scientist that initiated the “Ark” is mentioned as a “Noah”. Important roles are given to women in this series as well, although not at The 100’s rate.

3. From God to Noah’s Wife: Cinematic Representation of the Deluge Myth

The Flood’s tale depicts an event from the dawn of civilization. In the biblical version, God promises that the Flood would not reoccur. However, the myth’s cinematic appropriation and its infusion with current interpretations turn it into an apocalyptic tale that delivers an imminent threat. In that sense, the Flood becomes a relevant issue. It significantly deviates from the biblical genre and from the narrow field of theology, branching out into various genres (Kozlovic 2016), and touching upon a wide scope of cultural issues. In this section, we shall discuss the cinematic representations of the myth in five sub-discussions: recurrent visual themes and characters; theology and ethics; family and the other; animals and ecology; and lastly: female, feminine, and feminism.

3.1. *Recurrent Visual Themes and Characters*

The films rely on the popular star persona of Hollywood’s actors in leading roles. The above-mentioned films feature well-known actors in central roles, e.g., Morgan Freeman is God in *Evan Almighty* and the president in *Deep Impact*. Jennifer Connelly plays the female lead in two of the films—Noah’s wife in *Noah*, and the scientist who mediates between humanity and the alien in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

Visual themes are also cited from film to film and generate an inter-filmic aesthetic dialogue. Indeed, the Deluge myth provides filmmakers with an opportunity to develop the recurring visual

concepts and produce a cinematic spectacle that improves with the advancement of film's technology and special effects (Copier 2017).

As early as 1909, the Flood was featured in Arthur Melbourne-Cooper's animation, *Noah's Ark*, which combined live action with stop-motion animation. It brought to life the themes and images of popular British children's picture books and toys based on Noah's tale (Shepherd 2017). In 1928 the impressive *Noah's Ark* was released, and in 1933, *The Deluge* became the prototype of American disaster films, with scenes of tidal waves, and the destruction of skyscrapers and cultural symbols. Recent films involved the return of a digital apocalypse with visuals of tsunami and flooded cities. The Statue of Liberty and World Trade Center became apocalyptic icons in disaster and apocalyptic films including those that have nothing to do with the Flood, e.g., *Deep Impact*, and *The Day After Tomorrow*. The Sistine Chapel also crashes in a few of the films, such as *2012* and *Armageddon* (1998).

The repetition of visual themes is not a mere artistic quotation but implicates a critical expression. These structures represent contemporary Western culture—the white liberal world, and the Sistine Chapel specifically signifies the Western religious establishment. Accordingly, their devastation is an expression of anxiety and perhaps, occasionally, a passion for their destruction. This is the filmmakers' mode of sounding out the social voices that harshly criticize these institutions, insinuating that should they stay their course, they might end in ruin, or such would warrant their ruination. Some films criticize the first—(or white)—world by presenting the new world that would rise in developing countries as the birthplace of the post-apocalyptic world. *2012*, for example, ends as the ships dock in front of the African continent, which “has lifted”, as the rest of the world was submerged by water. The combination of this event with the African-American main characters insinuates that humanity's new beginning will spring from the neglected third world.

3.2. Theology and Ethics

Theological and moral questions lie at the heart of our discussion, which seeks to understand the cultural contexts and meanings that accompany the Flood theme. Our discussion shall be divided into three aspects: God in a secular-modern framework, the question of evil, and matters of survival, justice, and leadership.

In a modern-secularized context, the biblical myth in the cinema requires creative consideration and treatment of both current events and traditional questions. When the audience that frequents Hollywood films comprises secular people, people who adhere to different movements and religions, and agnostics—a myriad of theological questions arise, and among them criticism of the religious establishment and God himself. Allegedly, we could expect a cinematic critique of God's cruelty within the religious narrative, as He destroys both humanity and the world. However, the reality is far more interesting: in some versions, the criticism revolves not around God, but rather around humanity, or a specific group or sector within it. In these cases, the disaster is depicted as man-made (*The Day the Earth Stood Still*), or described as bad luck (*Deep Impact*), in which case the way the catastrophe is handled is criticized. Other versions (e.g., *2012*) contain no criticism, and no one is culpable for the human suffering that follows the annihilation, seeing as, if there is no God—there is no reason to criticize Him. As we shall see, sometimes we find an intriguing combination of social-cultural criticism and theological views. *Noah*, for instance, expresses an ecological and moral critique of humanity, which deserves to be exterminated, and yet the Flood is not a direct result of man's destruction of nature, but rather mediated through a divine verdict.

The secular-contemporary presentation of a traditional Judeo-Christian story is also tightly linked with an attempt to comprehend the tale's universal context through the positive reference (or integration) of other traditions. This syncretistic approach, typical of New-Age spirituality (Ruah-Midbar 2012), is common throughout Flood films, and blends in with the prevalent trend which criticizes mainstream Western culture and its establishments. For example, when the Sistine Chapel collapses in *2012*, the disaster begins with a symbolic crack that forms in the tiny gap between the fingers of God and Adam in Michelangelo's famous fresco.

The age-old theological question of theodicy, evil, and suffering challenges any religious viewpoint that questions the nature of God. However, from a secular perspective, this question undergoes transformation.

The matter of humanity's destruction, or its inherent evil, and the right to exist despite itself, are raised frequently in depictions of the Flood. Sometimes, it is dealt with via a radicalization which simplifies and reduces questions of evil to black-and-white answers: e.g., the bad guys are bad, and therefore get punished, while the good guys are just, and are saved accordingly.

The Deluge myth provides the perfect template for such a story—as expressed in the earlier movie versions (e.g., *Noah's Ark*) and more religious-conservative ones (*Evan Almighty*). Some films raise the question whether those who were saved were truly worthy (e.g., 2012), or the plot revolves around the attempt to prevent the destruction of Earth by those who are building the Ark (*Sky Captain*). Other films bring up the complexity of mankind, claiming that each of us has aspects of kindness and maliciousness, and that we must choose to see the good (Na'ameh's outlook in *Noah*). *The 100* presents the issue of evil as necessary for survival, thus raising questions of whether this vicious cycle of human wars for survival can ever be broken, and shall we ever obtain the long-awaited moment of "finding our humanity again". Some characters even argue that humanity may not deserve saving, as it is inherently evil.

Another question relevant to these matters is that of modern science and its place. In the enlightened, secularized world, science is perceived as a substitute for religion/God, therefore the question of its goodness is a secular replacement for theodical discussions. Moreover, the Western world's extensive cultural reliance upon science begs the question whether enlightened humanity is indeed good. Accordingly, Flood films question whether modern science is good or evil. The answer is usually ambiguous. Some films present science and technology as the causes of the ecological decline that leads to the Flood. For instance, in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, humanity is accused of risking all life on Earth, and, to prevent this risk, humanity must be destroyed. Eventually, humanity receives a "reduced" sentence—all electric power is cut off, paralyzing the contemporary technological industry and way of life. In other films, science is presented as the tool that would save humanity from the Flood, and/or provides a new opportunity to restart humanity. For example, in *40 Days*, scientists discover the imminent disaster, and scientist Tessa generates a pool of plants and animals to restore the ecosystem in its wake. In *The 100*, a creative and complex show, the global calamity, as well as its solution, were created by scientist Becca.

With the secularization of the Flood story, matters of survival and choice become social questions rather than merely theological ones. According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, God chooses a righteous man from within humanity and maintains a preferential relationship with his progeny: Noah, and then Abraham, and the "chosen people". The question of selection raises intense moral issues, thus allowing films to reflect various contemporary cultural and ideological dilemmas pertaining to survival, partiality, and selection: who decides (or should decide) who will survive, and by what criteria?

2012, for example, presents an economic logic where gaining the right to survive by purchasing a ticket to board the "Ark" is justified as it funds the Ark project. In *40 Days*, the scientists and technicians that build the Ark are saved, along with the politicians who know of the oncoming disaster, and their families, and it remains unclear who else were saved beyond this well-connected group.

Deep Impact raises pragmatic considerations that favor people under the age of 50 and secures a quarter of the spots aboard the Ark for skilled individuals, such as scientists, doctors, engineers, teachers, and artists. In *The 100*, the leaders have lists of required professionals, and favor younger fertile women. In the films that depict saving animals, the declared goal is to save the species (or their DNA) rather than the animals themselves. The notion of a lottery, a fascinating combination between secularized and fatalistic perceptions, is realized in *Deep Impact*, when a computer randomly selects citizens under the age of 50. A lottery also happens in *The 100*, which would give each person an equal opportunity for survival, forsaking utilitarian considerations (when in reality the lottery

allows people to give their loved ones a double chance to win at their expense), but it is eventually abandoned. These different considerations of survival and prioritization are reflected in our society in a wide variety of current issues: from the contamination of land toward exploiting natural resources, to state-funded medical care.

The question of survivor's choice is directly linked with another issue: should the masses be informed of the imminent disaster, or kept in the dark? Some Judeo-Christian traditions have emphasized that Noah called upon his neighbors to repent and warned them of the Flood (Moore and Ruah-Midbar Shapiro 2018), performing his moral obligation before their lethal punishment is carried out.

The secret can be justified by the wish to keep the public from unnecessary suffering as they cannot change their destiny, and knowing the truth would only cause additional panic and suffering (*Salvation, Deep Impact*). Another explanation has to do with the predestined survivors' preference to maintain the preparations without interruption as the public would be inclined to disrupt them. Certainly, informing the public of secret governmental or corporate information is a real current issue, such as the distribution of military information among the civil population will also expose it to the enemy, and the liberal distribution of pharmaceutical companies' intellectual property will impair their ability to fund future developments for the greater good (or for a wealthy elite).

The matter of confidentiality has to do with another current hot topic: fake news. For example, in *40 Days*, the public is told they are experiencing a bad storm season, so that they would believe it will pass. In *Deep Impact*, there is a secret mission to destroy the meteor using a missile, while at the same time "arks" are being built for the survivors in case this mission fails. Eventually, the public is informed of the missile mission, but not of Plan B. *2012* also presents the public's confusion regarding contradicting theories presented by different groups, so they do not know who to believe. The most extreme of these is madman Charlie Frost, who spreads conspiracy theories about the coming end and how the government is keeping it a secret, and eventually it turns out that he was right all along.

Another question that arises following the discussion on those worthy of survival, is whether humanity is worthy of survival at all. Optimistic approaches which affirm humanity and the current values of Western culture (such as family values, or compassion), appear in only a few of the films (2012). We sometimes witness arguments between opposing opinions on this topic in the plot. In Noah, for example, the biblical hero identifies with the annihilation plan, and believes that neither he nor his family should survive, and so opposes procreation. In *The 100*, different characters wonder whether the moral price required for survival is indeed worth it, or whether it would be better to let humanity die out.

3.3. Who Should We Care For? Family and the Other

Having discussed survivor's choice dilemmas, including concerns for those who would not survive, we will now discuss moral questions of treating the Other, from caring and compassion towards strangers, to belonging, loyalty, and love of one's tribe or family.

Family values are certainly prominent in American films (Reinhartz 2018). Messages which support these values are at the core of Flood films, be it through a retelling of the biblical story of Noah's family (who is saved), or through the re-creation of the Flood myth in an imaginary context which does not include this particular family. The dominant conservatism of the films presents a choice to remain loyal and prioritize the nuclear family. In *The Deluge* (1933), the family that gets torn apart as a result of the Flood is then reunited and the protagonist returns to his wife while his lover flees. *Evan Almighty* also exalts family values (Reinhartz 2018, p. 296). At first, Evan experiences a marital crisis, but eventually following an encounter with God dressed as a waiter, the wife realizes she must take courage and stand by her husband, and building the Ark becomes a project that brings Evan and his three sons closer together, as they also choose to stand by him despite jeering crowds. *2012's* plot focuses on a divorced couple and their children as they get closer throughout the film, realizing that

“wherever we are all together, that’s home”. In *Deep Impact*, a career woman waives her opportunity to be saved and promote her career and stays by her father when the tsunami hits.

The connection between family values and the issue of rescue and survival is crucial because though it is obvious that numerous people die during the plot, the viewers may still find satisfaction when they discover a character’s loved one has been saved. This is a well-known plot device in cinematic narrative structures that is linked to our ability as viewers to form alliance and identification with specific fictional characters rather than with general disembodied traits (Smith 1994). E.g., *40 Days* ends with the ships that were spared, leaving us wondering whether the protagonists’ families are there. In *2012*, the US President decides to stay behind with the masses who would die, but not before making sure his own daughter boards the Ark. *The 100* criticizes people’s ideological choices (for example, choosing to save one group over another, or picking a certain battle strategy), when it is revealed that their ideology was guided by familial preferences rather than objective or moral factors.

Several films express alternative values regarding compassion in their representation of a model of adopted rather than biological family members. For example, in *The Day*, the scientist adopts her spouse’s son, and in *Humanity Bureau*, the plot entails a clerk who rescues a woman and her son. Later it appears that the boy was adopted by her and is the clerk’s biological son. Both parents sacrifice themselves so that the child may live. In *Noah*, the family adopts a daughter in addition to their three sons, and later raises the question of whether they should adopt more daughters in order to save them from the Flood, and at the same time save Noah’s sons from childlessness.

The issue of nepotism, with the adoption of non-biological family members, raises a broader issue of how one treats the Other. This topic is central in contemporary Western culture, which has dealt with questions of the Other ever since the 1960s. The disadvantaged groups on the agenda of Western critical discourse inspire minor and main characters in Flood films who provide an opportunity to explore how the male white Western world treats such groups. For example, the main characters of *2012* are African–American, and in some films, women play a central role (see Section 3.5). Moreover, humanity’s treatment of animals in nature overall is connected to the question of the Other (see Section 3.4). In *The Day*, the Other extends to aliens, given that humanity is required to consider other civilizations in the galaxy, which object to man’s violence and destruction of Earth’s unique ecosystem. This outside look at humanity begs the question of whether mankind is indeed the pinnacle of creation, or which creatures are morally superior. These criticisms in Flood films express suspicion and discomfort towards modern privileged Western societies, or even the whole of humanity.

3.4. Treatment of Nature—Animals and Ecology

The Flood myth is used in cinema in various relevant current contexts. In the mid-20th century it correlates with the Cold War, while from the 1960s onwards it is gradually associated with various ecological issues. A clear example of this is the cinematic adaptations of the short sci-fi story *Farewell to the Master by Harry Bates* (1940). The 1951 film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* depicts the threat posed to humanity by the Cold War, while its 2008 version models the same story on the Deluge myth within an ecological context.

Since 2008, there has been a rise in cinematic Deluge myth adaptations, and it (almost) always appears within an ecological context. This phenomenon is in line with the rise of both waves of the ecological film genre, during the 1950s and 1970s (Brereton 2005; Brereton 2015; Murray and Heumann 2009), which has recently become quite prominent (Kaplan 2015).

Some of the films do not explain humanity’s actions as the reason for the Flood, and indeed, in the biblical story, God is the one who directly creates the Flood, not man. In other films, humanity creates the Flood by breaking Earth’s systemic balance via industrial activity and the exhaustion of natural resources. This difference can be viewed as a reflection of the animated public debate in the West around the question of contemporary society’s responsibility for global warming, which has caused oceans to rise and the creation of radical and dangerous climates (Kaplan 2015). These public polemics also appear in the background to these films’ plots, for example in *2012*, which shows the

G8 summits and the protests. The movie also presents a lake that has dried up at Yellowstone Park: a symbol of the variety of species that inhabit it and their preservation. Between 2008–2009, hundreds of earthquakes shook the park, and it was considered a “ticking time-bomb” that would lead to a massive natural disaster. Thus, the ancient biblical myth becomes a current issue on the public agenda. Another testimony of the film’s relevance is the videos distributed to promote it before its release, which invited people to sign up to a lottery to be saved from the disaster expected in 2012; the videos went viral and many people did indeed buy a ticket.

Whether natural disasters are man-made or not, there is no dispute that disasters themselves create an ecological crisis. Thus, humanity must deal with the same moral issues that arise in the Deluge myth—survival, rescue, etc. As Noah’s tale is both apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic, some of the films focus on the disaster itself (e.g., *Deep Impact*, 2012), while some (significantly less—e.g., *Humanity Bureau*) centers on the aftermath of the disaster. However, the picture these films paint emphasizes the disastrous destruction of the world, and hardly ever deals with its optimistic or even utopic dimension.

The ethical issue of animals and their treatment (Pike 2017) has evolved gradually in Flood films. In the early days of cinema this issue was mostly ignored. From the 1960s onwards, with the rise of interest in issues of nature and ecology, the treatment of animals on films started to attract critical attention. *The Bible* reflects the hippie culture of the time, characterized by vegetarianism when it was still uncommon in the West. According to the director, the animals were “very fine actors”, which he even fed on set. In the film, when the animals arrive at the Ark, Noah explains that they must not be feared, for “there is no evil” in them, and they do not harm each other or man. The vegetarian perception comes across in the film when the animals on the Ark—like Noah’s family—are fed fruit and milk alone. In addition, despite the film’s close adherence to the biblical text, when Noah leaves the Ark, he does not raise an altar to sacrifice animals to God.

Animal protection is also prominent in *Evan Almighty*: one of the politicians presents Evan as St. Francis, the saint the Vatican declared in 1979 as the Patron Saint of Animals and Ecology. Additionally, the film’s evangelical-style message is unveiled in various ways, such as the saying that the animals that reached the White House could somehow return to nature, seeing as “if God got them here, he can probably get them home”. Thus, the ecological–vegetarian message takes on a conservative religious mentality. In various films (2012, *Deep Impact*) animals appear as some of the survivors on the Ark(s) but have no meaningful role in the plot. Even when the movie mentions the great lengths taken to save them, the reason given is a utilitarian one—the need to preserve the ecosystem (*40 Days*). Noah explicitly criticizes hunting animals for food, which causes their extinction. The film’s production avoided harming animals, and the creatures’ visuals were computerized and slightly modified. As a result, the creatures are obviously different from the actual, modern animals they are meant to represent. It demonstrated the radical ecological activism (Pike 2017) implemented both in backstage ideologies and the filmic narrative. Interestingly, animal veneration reaches a climax with this film, alongside a corresponding hatred of humanity, which is deemed by the protagonist as unworthy of survival (for most of the film), much like the claims made throughout today’s radical vegan movement (Cianchi 2015; Bookchin 1987).

As the preoccupation with ecology involves crossing political boundaries, and the disaster is global and sometimes even leads to dramatic geographical/geological changes—the discussion takes on a universalist angle. Accordingly, the spiritual/religious/ideological discussion on ecology sometimes make syncretistic combinations between the various religions, and expresses a Western idolization of non-Western cultures. Therefore, although the story of the Flood comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition, the different films include elements and concepts from other traditions and cultures (Moore and Ruah-Midbar Shapiro 2018), e.g., the Flood’s apocalyptic associations in 2012 coincides with the Mayan culture’s apocalyptic traditions (Sitler 2006).

Nature’s worship—even deification—is evident in contemporary Western spiritual culture (Albanese 2002). Accordingly, in Flood films, even when natural disasters lead to ruin, they are

presented as a “shock and awe” spectacle. Indeed, the change with regards to nature is evident throughout different religious perceptions—in the Bible, Earth is perceived as sinful and is punished alongside man; Shamanic traditions of the past acknowledged nature’s danger to mankind, unlike contemporary Western spirituality, which usually portrays nature as benevolent (Hanegraaff 1998). In Flood films, nature is perceived as positive/divine, and the fault for the disasters is also attributed to mankind, who either caused—or deserves—them. As aforementioned, a 2012 character asserts: “Nature will choose for itself from itself . . . what will survive”.

3.5. Female, Feminine, Feminism

In previous sections, we dealt with the place of nature and the Other, while this section tackles an example of both: women and femininity. Women are the Others of patriarchal society and the objects of the cinematic male gaze. They are usually identified with “nature” as opposed to “culture”, as we shall demonstrate. The femininity theme allows the examination of the filmmakers’ conscious and perhaps unconscious ideologies, along with current cultural stances regarding nature, science, technology, relationships, among other values.

Most of the films express a clear patriarchal stance, which, although maybe devoid of explicit misogyny, intensely reflects a lack of feminist awareness. Women are depicted as the passive objects of men’s desires, and as vessels of the narrative’s emotions and anxieties. Even in the few films that depict femininity and female characters in a positive light, there are sometimes problematic views of women. For example, a representation of female victimization reproduces their perception as passive victims. In very few films, we can recognize the beginning of more revolutionary perceptions of femininity.

Our analysis shall begin with a distinct example of women’s identification with nature and the Other: their depiction adjacent to animals. Women’s fate and attributes, together with their position in the plot, occasionally put them near animals as an expression of their perceived closeness to the animalistic aspect of nature. Much like the male gaze that objectifies women, the human gaze which objectifies animals stems from an Anthropocentric perception and presents them in a passive, ludicrous, exploitive and problematic light (Malamud 2012). Women, who are identified with animals get the same treatment in film plots.

In *The Bible*, since the sun and moon are not visible in the Ark, the boys ask Noah how many days passed since the Flood began. The women are the only ones who have the answer, and the men marvel at their knowledge: “How does thou know what is hidden from us?” Apparently, Noah’s wife observed the behavior of “the beasts who carry the days within them”, such as egg-gathering times. She knotted a yarn to count the passing days. In *2012*, the mistress of one of the oligarchs who bought an “ark” ticket finds out he did not purchase a ticket for her, and sneaks in with her dog, only to sacrifice herself later to save the pooch. After her vicious death, the plot apathetically continues. In *Noah*, both women and animals are depicted as victims of humanity’s greed and cruelty in a scene that shows antagonist Tubal-Cain’s group participating in a hedonistic celebration. One example of the women’s portrayal as prey to male violence and greed is a girl who falls into a trap meant for beasts as she runs from the waves of the Flood. Unlike the above examples, the female scientist in *40 Days* collects samples from animals and plant life, necessary for the preservation of the ecosystem, thus her relation to animals/nature manifests through her scientific knowledge, as she enables the salvation of all living things, humanity among them.

The identification of women and “nature” is dominant in Western culture, as in other cultures, in contrast to men, who are identified with “culture”, including science and technology (Arthur 2002; Ortner 1972), while presenting the nature–culture dichotomy as hierarchical. Although this perception of women has an oppressive potential, certain feminist movements have adopted this identification and reinterpreted it as an expression for the uniqueness of feminine nature, and for the identification of women with “natural” qualities along with a kinship with nature. Thus, maternal feminism views women’s ability to bear children as an expression of the natural quality which also bestows upon them moral advantages and superior unique attributes (Gilligan 1993), such as a deep-rooted connection

to the human race, past generations, Others, and life overall (Carter 2009). Ecofeminism has a more profound identification of women—and their oppression throughout patriarchal history—with Earth and its oppression (Taylor 2010, p. 163). Religious/spiritual versions of these feminist perceptions parallel nature-worship with the worship of femininity (Hobgood-Oster 2005, pp. 534–37). Accordingly, women have a place of honor in this perception, albeit limited to essentialist perceptions that view women as inherently and powerfully magical, lending to their portrayal not as proactive characters who produce scientific, technological, or political solutions, but rather as passive characters who make an unconscious and unintentional contribution toward advancing the plot or redeeming the world. In *Noah*, for instance, adopted daughter Ila is known to be barren, but the script bothers to incorporate an event in which Methuselah cures her of her infertility so that she may procreate and become humanity's savior (Burnette-Bletsch 2017). Ila's ability to save, if so, requires her ability to become a mother.

Therefore, the films can be divided into three groups. The first displays an ignorance of feminism, and even degrades women, and is clearly expressed in films made in the first half of the 20th century. The women in these films are passive objects of male needs, emotions, and sexual desires. For example, *Noah's Ark* portrays Marie as a member of a cancan dance group who amuses soldiers during World War I, as the passive objects of their penetrating gaze. Another scene, at the start of the Flood, shows Japheth, Noah's son, as he searches for his beloved Miriam, only to find her lying helpless in the water, and saves her. (The names of those heroines—Marie and Miriam—are associated with the Latin word "Mare", meaning sea, alluding to their affinity with nature.) The women's passive and helpless portrayal, as opposed to the potent men, creates a thematic and visual link between the disaster of the Flood and that of WWI, when, in both cases, women played the passive victim to the events while men called the shots and rescued them. In *Deluge*, women are also depicted as particularly passive, transition between victims to objects of male lust (ill, laying down, raped, etc.). Even when the plot "gets rid" of them, it is done with their "cooperation", just like when the female lover disrobes and swims toward the depths, leaving her destination and plans unclear. The identification of women with the depths may romanticize them, but in this plot, it merely expresses a convenient way for the male protagonist to dispose his lover once he has found his family.

In a later group of films, women are still stereotyped, downplayed, lacking in agency (*Humanity Bureau*), sidelined (*Evan Almighty*), or playing a relatively marginal role (2012). Although women's passiveness—or readiness to make sacrifices—can sometimes have a positive aspect which "gains them points", their identification with traditional femininity is unsettling. Some films even go as far as to give women roles that poke fun at them to emphasize their helplessness and dependency upon the active, scientifically, and technologically informed men. A clear example is *Sky Captain*, whose female lead is presented as technologically impaired, presses the wrong buttons whenever she attempts to meddle with technology, and even endangers the mission to save the Earth. In the end, she uses her last roll of film to photograph her sweetheart, instead of the spectacular sight of the animals falling into the water, but the lens is still closed, and the film closes on ironic comment from the male lead regarding her mistake.

The third group of films gives women significant roles. In some, they have a meaningful supporting part, such as the scientist that collects samples of nature in *40 Days*, or the reporter whose actions forced the president to expose the truth in *Deep Impact*. Some of the films even defy popular cinematic norms in their portrayal of female characters, such as *Humanity Bureau*, in which the heroine does not fall in love with the hero, contrary to the pattern typically exploited by Hollywood to procure the viewers' emotional connection through romance. Unlike these examples, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* gives a more significant role to its female scientist, who lectures in university and works in a lab, and is recruited by the government due to her scientific knowledge. As the film progresses, it is revealed that she possesses a unique capability to communicate with the alien—because of interpersonal skills stemming from her femininity rather than from the scientific knowledge she acquired. Her openness

and curiosity, coupled with the close relationship she had cultivated with the male alien, finally save humanity.

In very few movies, we found women in more prominent roles, as leaders or as redemptive characters. Such examples are significant because in all the above examples, women and femininity were still marginalized or suffered problematic representation. For example, although the woman in *Humanity Bureau* was compassionate, and did not fall into the Hollywood romance trap, she was still just a supporting character, and when she sacrifices herself for the child, the moment is not as pivotal as when the male hero sacrifices himself. Moreover, she is entirely dependent upon the hero who prevented sending her and the child to their deaths.

Noah provides us with a more complex example. The whole of humanity is male-dominated with Tubal-Cain at the forefront, facing the hero Noah along with the wise old man Methuselah. However, the women at the periphery of the plot embody the ideology Noah must eventually adopt (Ruah-Midbar Shapiro and Moore forthcoming).

An exception is *The 100*, wherein feminist perceptions are not mere “seeds” of women’s liberation concepts, nor are they breaks in the narrative, but are expressed throughout the plot. Interestingly, this series does not possess an essentialist perception of women, which identifies them with nature, and perhaps this is the reason they are so creatively and centrally represented. They are leaders in an assortment of fields—military commanders and warriors (Lexa, Indra), priestesses (Gaia), conniving politicians (Clarke), the most gifted technician (Raven), the head physician who also researches and discovers new healing methods (Abby). The scientist who saved humanity and became a religious role model is a woman (Becca), and sent her virtual reality (VR) female counterpart (A.L.I.E.) to try and save it after she almost accidentally destroyed it.

At the same time, some female characters commit terrible acts—thus preventing a romanticization of femininity—alongside positive male leaders—thus preventing a gender-identified dichotomous perception of good versus evil. This complex image of gender presents an equal—and even prominent—place for women within the plot. These innovations coincide with developments in television series production, the greater involvement of women filmmakers alongside implementation of radical feminist ideologies in this media genre (Press 2018).

4. Conclusions: The Innovative Function of the Flood Films

Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps [=Thehomoth]

[Psalms 148:7—King James Version]

How “binding” is the DNA of the biblical story of Noah and the Flood in its contemporary reincarnations? Does the story’s original patriarchal format necessitate the preservation of the myriad aspects that stem from its cultural premises? For instance, is there significance to the preservation of the father-and-three-sons model? Does the concept of the destruction of humanity or the selection of one group that would survive issue from the logic of a commanding monotheistic–hierarchical perception? Does the Flood as a body of water have a different significance than that of other global disasters?

Our journey over the past century teaches us that ideas and elements remain and evolve within Flood films’ artistic/narrative chain of influences. However, we have witnessed several meaningful changes. Despite the “citation” of visual motifs, presently the Ark can be more often found in space rather than on water. Despite the preservation of the global disaster narrative, today’s films may portray it as a chance occurrence rather than a direct result of the sins of humanity. God is sometimes altogether missing from the plot, or undergoes psychologization; the moral questions that arise from the plot are sometimes entirely new rather than merely an interpretation of the ancient myth; ecological concerns become increasingly central, and depicted in connection to the Flood; the status of women/femininity changes, etc.

If we analyze the films, in order to study our cultural dilemmas and choices –we may find that contemporary Western culture prefers to save its politicians, scientists, youth, fertile individuals—a

utilitarian–functional and programmatic–practical choice that attests to the Western secular–modern character of our society. Even the preservation of important cultural/artistic works is a functional one—paintings and books are saved, but not paintbrushes and paints, nor the reasons for the greatest of stories—that is, the importance is attributed to the artifacts rather than the sources for its creation. Spiritual matters or aspects of compassion receive no meaningful attention, and only appear in the plot’s margins, with very few characters and in rare moments.

If we observe the mythic Flood using a Jungian approach (Christopher and Alister 2001) that attempts to highlight the collective archetypes hidden in the story and its cinematic portrayals, it may be viewed as an attempt to bravely deal with the accumulation of impurity, sin, failure, and unwanted negative elements. When our world is full of those, sometimes the need arises for a symbolic Flood—to eradicate all failures, to purify the system, to clarify the contrast between “good” and “evil” in order to expel and destroy all undesired elements and allow for a rebirth of a positive and pure world. The rebirth process contains an element of cruelty—of a comprehensive annihilation, coupled with an element of planning—the selection of all elements from the system that must be brought into the emergent new world, to create a balanced system.

The ancient myth told the tale of a male God who created the world, and who vanquished the monster or ancient wild goddess of the deep and the waters (the biblical Tehom, or Tiamat in the Babylonian source), of primordial chaos (called Tohu-Vavohu in the Bible). God (either Mardukh or the biblical Creator) then created the world, established boundaries and natural laws, and placed man within the dissected body of the goddess of the chaotic deeps, allowing him to exist so long as he shall abide by God’s law. Since the world’s primeval matter is the goddess’ body, the impure forces constantly threaten to restore the world to its previous chaotic state. Consequently, God or His earthly partner, man, are forced to stand guard and purify it, remove all evil, and preserve its boundaries to keep Creation from destruction (Knohl 2010, chp. 2). However, when the powers of impurity and chaos grow, there is escape from purifying the world and restoring order, by allowing the waters to rise from the deep and flood the whole world as an act of salvation, leaving nothing behind, but a “seed” of a new beginning, thus ensuring purity and regeneration (Rigby 2008, pp. 170–71). Therefore, the ancient apocalypse also contains a post-apocalypse, and accordingly, some films also end on a hopeful picture: the vision of a beautiful pristine world.

This myth has different versions across different civilizations and generations, representing diverse cultures. Most of these transcribed the patriarchal version, which deals with the destructive and punishing God who makes conscious and active use of the chaotic forces of nature to manipulate humanity. Very few are focused on the feminine–natural aspect, which depicts the system as the embodiment of implicit nonverbal knowledge which has no agency and can restart the universe—that is, the goddess, nature, and all they encompass—with the kind of inner wisdom and massive strength that dwarfs humanity (being one element of nature among countless others), and which even embodies a redemptive force (much like Lovelock’s (Lovelock 2000) semi-scientific spiritual Gaia hypothesis). The first model emphasizes masculinity and its essentialist traits, while the latter stresses femininity—namely the difference between a God who creates, through war and legislation, and a goddess who is creation, embodied in nature.

In our films, much like throughout the cultural history of mankind, the patriarchal model is clearly prominent. However, over the past few years, we can identify an interesting deviation from that model. A few of these films depict and shape female characters who can combine their own essentially intrinsic abilities as passive, chaotic, sexual, reproductive women, with abilities formerly identified as “masculine”, namely relating to science and technology, military and political leadership, and the establishment of a religious and mythological system. We may be witnessing the spirit of the mythic Flood, rising from the deeps, stirring chaos with regards to gender questions and taking the opportunity to redefine femininity/humanity anew.

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