
E.T. Go Home: Indigeneity, Multiculturalism and 'Homeland' in Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema

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In Gwendolyn Audrey Foster's investigation of the performance of whiteness in Hollywood cinema, she claims that Science Fiction cinema is 'a zone in which issues of race can be evaded' (2003, p.11). Indeed, both Science Fiction books and cinema have often been seen as escaping the 'reality' of contemporary debates of race, imagining instead a future in which ethnic divisions have given way to a unified 'humanity'. There are two central problems with this understanding of the genre. Firstly, such a formulation of the 'unity' of the human race is most often enacted through an erasure of difference, particularly in the centralisation of white male characters. Secondly, and more importantly for this article, one of the most persistent tropes of the genre is in fact a figure of spectacular racial otherness: the alien.

Previous critiques of Science Fiction cinema, such as Vivian Sobchack's seminal *Screening Space*, have understood the figure of the alien as reflecting a general interest in difference, collapsing it into a host of uncanny others, such as the robot, the monster and the cyborg. However, unlike the otherness of these creations, the alien's otherness is biological, naturally occurring and has evolved independently of human culture. In 'man-made' figures of difference, anxieties are often reflected concerning humanity's quest for knowledge, particularly scientific knowledge. In contrast, the difference manifested in the imagining of the alien utilises the rhetorics of human cultural difference that have historically involved the reification of the alien through biology as race. The two concerns are not oppositional: 'man-made' technologies of communication and interspatial colonisation often facilitate contact with alien races, just as certain technologies (the rifle, the sailing ship, the telegraph) informed 'real world' colonial actions.

This article, however, will focus on some instances of 'real world' racial discourses available through Science Fiction narratives in their imaginings of inter-species contact, specifically in the most mainstream and widespread aspect of this genre—the contemporary Hollywood Science Fiction film. This article will examine a selection of such films as discursive sites for the expression and debate of contemporary concerns of racial identity, particularly as it relates to the spaces of 'home' and 'homeland'. Key in

this investigation is the constantly metamorphosing, over-invested figure of the American 'Indian', a construct far removed from actual Native American culture.

Many of these films, such as *E.T.*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Star Wars* and *Cocoon* are family blockbusters and so cater to child audiences, most obviously through the inclusion of children who are centrally involved in their narratives. As Sobchack points out, such films often overtly draw an analogy between the alien and the child, with the 'alien or Other . . . somehow implicated in family life'. This, she argues, is a reflection of anxieties concerning the breakdown of the patriarchal domestic order by the 'invasion' of the outside world, whether figured as 'extra-terrestrials, or one's own alien kids' (1986, p.8). Other films examined in this essay, such as the *Alien* series and *Species*, while not 'teen films' (in that they do not feature teenager characters) are almost stereotypically of interest to adolescent males. With their high levels of sex and bloody violence, such films in fact draw strongly on generic traditions of horror cinema. As Timothy Shary points out, by the 1980s and 90s, horror made for some of the highest grossing 'teen movies' (2003, p.503), hence there is considerable overlap in the implied spectatorship of the teen movie and the hybrid science fiction/horror movie.

Constructing Alien Race

The most immediate expression of how alien figures function to soothe contemporary anxieties of racial difference is found in the depiction of their corporeality. Whereas contemporary understandings of race focus on the importance of culture rather than of biology—as Paul Gilroy says, race is 'a precarious discursive construction rather than the achievement of primordial or biocultural emanations' (2003, p.76)—aliens are always depicted as corporeally homogenous. This is emphasised by their routine nakedness, which displays their 'natural' corporeal similarity, in contrast to the clothed and racialised diversity of humans. An alien is easy to identify, and particular judgements about them are thus easily drawn from their appearance alone, so rooting their 'racial nature' in their biology. Homogeneity in alien corporeality is mirrored by a homogeneity of alien culture, and routine subsuming of individual characteristics by racial ones. In Steven

Spielberg's *E.T.*, for example, the alien creature central to the narrative is only ever named 'E.T.'; that is, the name of his race from a human point of view.

These techniques of de-individualisation and biological reification are routine in racist constructions of non-European cultures. This has led critics such as Charles Ramirez Berg to draw parallels between depictions of aliens and *particular* 'real-world' human 'races'. In his essay 'Immigrants, Aliens, and Extraterrestrials', Berg argues that the depiction of aliens in the contemporary Science Fiction film reflects a fear by white America of an invasion by Hispanic immigrants. He suggests that, 'the movie Alien now symbolises real-life Aliens – documented and undocumented immigrants who have entered, and continue to attempt to enter, the United States' (1989, p.5). He believes that such films speak of anxieties concerning the borders of the nation, and the necessity of the erasure of difference within. Berg's focus on white American fears of Hispanic invasion needs to be broadened if we are to understand the full range of representations of the alien in contemporary Hollywood cinema. This is especially important given that Berg primarily takes into consideration *negative* depictions of 'otherness' that are most usually identified as racist, whereas in fact many Science Fiction films, such as *E.T.*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Contact* and *Cocoon*, involve extremely *positive* representations of racialised alien difference.

Aliens and Indians

Key to understanding these 'good aliens' is the idea of the 'Indian'. Within the history of the United States, the figure of the 'Indian' resonates strongly, and has played an important role in the formation of the United States' national identity. This is not to deny that genocidal practices were routinely perpetrated on actual indigenous communities. However, the imagined Indian has been important to the creation of a sense of 'authentic', 'natural' American-ness, a fundamental part of which was the sense of belonging to the land. In *Playing Indian*, Philip J. Deloria demonstrates how the figure of the 'Indian' has been used in disparate movements, literatures and performance cultures for such various ends as Nationalism, Republicanism, Modernism and Counter-Culturalism. What draws all these discourse together is the feeling that 'Indianness offered a deep, authentic,

aboriginal Americanness' (1998, p.183). In contemporary society, Deloria shows how discourses of 'Indian-ness' are particularly in use in the New Age, a movement primarily concerned with self-help and spiritual development, that grew out of the counter-culturalism of the late 1960s. Deloria argues that the Indian of the New Age is 'imagined in almost exclusively positive terms – communitarian, environmentally wise, spiritually insightful (p.174). Such tropes have been facilitated in contemporary times by an increasing detachment of Indian-as-sign from the actual cultures and practices of Native American peoples. Yet, as Deloria notes, the Indian still remains 'a sign of something unchanging, a first principle' (p.167).

Home + Land = Homeland

An aspect of this sort of imagining of the Indian is the ongoing and fundamental characterisation of the Native American as having a unique relationship with the land. Such a relationship is especially important in contemporary culture, where trans-national movements of population are commonplace, and many people are displaced (temporarily or permanently, voluntarily or involuntarily) from their original homeland. As Arjun Appadurai points out, today 'ethnicities' and 'nationalities' have 'become spread over vast and irregular spaces as groups move, yet stay linked to one another through sophisticated media capabilities' (1993, p.332). Such groups form diasporas, which, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak says, 'are what defines our times' (2002, p.47). The diasporic subject has a sense of belonging to a place where s/he does not live and, as Ien Ang suggests, '[i]t is the myth of the (lost or idealised) homeland, the object of both collective memory and of desire and attachment, which is constitutive to diasporas' (1994, p.5). Such possibilities of *multiple* senses of belonging are also implicit in multiculturalism, in which where one is *from* as well as where one *is now* is of considerable import. For many people in self-avowedly multicultural nations such as the United States, their status as migrants, be it forced or economic, recent or later generational, means that 'home' has become a complex, multiple and sometimes fraught notion. That such multiple belongings to place is not confined to recent migrants can most immediately be seen in the labelling of many ethnic groups through the joining of two place-names (*African-American*, *Japanese-American*). Such a complication of the 'nation', that construction that

once firmly tied 'place' to 'race' through the notion of 'homeland', has led to anxieties such as those expressed by conservative critic Jonathon Friedman, who argues that the nation is now 'besieged from within and from without by a general process of fragmentation' (1997, p.71).

The consideration of such multiple senses of belonging has generated a yearning for a 'simpler' and more 'authentic' sense of being with the land, which has focused on appropriations and imaginings of indigenous culture. Indigenous are stereotypically considered to have a strong, spiritual connection to a particular place and a firm alignment between their 'ethnicity' and their 'land'. In the United States, such a characterisation builds on the links 'forged between Indianness and the land' in many representations of the Indian from the time of the earliest European colonists (Deloria, 1998, p.183). Even though the United States has a familiar colonialist history of dispossession of indigenous peoples from their land, the type of 'Indian' currently in fashion is 'the peaceful, mystical, spiritual guardian of the land' (Bird, 1996, p.3), with a secure sense of belonging to place. The longing that non-indigenous people have for such an attachment is well represented by Joel Martin's evocation of feeling 'out of place' in Southern America: 'We know the land belongs to other peoples—to Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Seminoles, Catawbas, and other southeastern Indians—in a way it can never belong to us' (1996, p.145).

Indians and Land on Film

Within filmic representations, the Indian has most often appeared in the Western. Once again, this figure has a particular relationship with the land and landscape which is that genre's defining feature. Richard Slotkin points out that the Western acted to disseminate 'a myth of solidarity and progress' (1998, p.658) central to the imagining of the nation of the United States as arising out of the land of the American continent. An element of this in the traditional Western has been the recurring characterisation of Indian characters as aggressive and bloodthirsty, intent on violence against the settlers forging their 'homes' out of the 'wilderness' of the American West. Jose Armando Prats argues that such films work to detach the Native American from his/her land, through pushing him or her to the margins of both the narrative and the frame of action, thus showing

'the *native* as an alien' (2002, p.74, emphasis in original) in their own land. Prats says that the white hero and the Indian move through the space of the West in different ways, with the white hero 'complete in his humanity and clear in his purpose' while the Indian 'lurks, he skulks.... He blazes no trail; neither does he grow up with the country. He has no future' (p.71). However, it could be argued that the strategies at work in the Western are more complicated than a simple visual dispossession of indigenous peoples. Rather, the Indian emerges from the land, often literally, and so must be subdued or endured in much the same way that other 'natural' forces of landscape and weather must. The 'toughness' and 'brutality' of Indians is that of the land itself, a harsh world, but also an admirable one. This genre involves at its heart a struggle between two groups of people who had claims to the land—one because of a 'natural' attachment, the other because of 'manifest destiny'—and the conflict between the two was so compelling that it created a large body of work.

Although markedly fewer Westerns are now being made (perhaps due to the new awareness of claims of Native American peoples for positive or accurate representation) this does not mean that the concerns of the genre have entirely disappeared. As Richard Slotkin notes, many of the themes and tropes of the Western have been transferred to Science Fiction cinema. Particular Science Fiction films were in fact remakes of classic Westerns and some, such as the seminal film series *Star Wars*, contain homages to the Western (1998, p.635). Also, some 'revisionist' Westerns have been made, such as *Little Big Man*, *The Last of the Mohicans* and *Dances With Wolves* (with its typically New Age tagline, 'Within everyone is a frontier waiting to be discovered'). In such films, which Rick Worland and Edward Countryman see as presenting 'a "new", essentially *popularised* history of the American west vis-à-vis treatment and image of the Indian particularly' (1998, p.187), Indians have become the 'good guys'. An intrinsic part of this is their 'spirituality rooted in the natural environment' (Washburn, 1998, p.ix). The new Western shows the brutality of colonialism, and emphasises the (heavily romanticised) Indian's 'homeliness' within the land.

Home and the Alien

Such contemporary constructions of and interest in notions of home and homeland are reflected in Science Fiction's positive constructions of alien life, in that 'good aliens' place overwhelming importance upon the concept of home. In *E.T.*, for example, the narrative is centred round the need for the alien character, E.T., to go home. E.T. has been accidentally left behind by his countrymen when their craft briefly lands on Earth. E.T. is found and 'adopted' by a dysfunctional, white, American family, who live in a suburb on the frontier of the city, a raw, half-built place on the border between the civilised world and the wild forest. E.T. becomes an intrinsic part of that family, developing an especially close relationship with the young boy, Elliot. However, E.T. cannot stay on Earth, but must go home and in his childlike, limited, English repeats the word 'home' more than any other. For example, when Elliot declares his wish for E.T. to stay, E.T. responds only 'Home, home, home'. Likewise, in a moment of intertextuality, when E.T. sees a child dressed up as Yoda (from *Star Wars*), he staggers towards him, crying 'Home'. Elliot's famously heart-rending cry of 'E.T. phone home' is not so that he can ring up and communicate with his 'people' while still staying on Earth, his new 'home'—he has no desire to become a migrant—but rather, so that he can be picked up and delivered back to his homeland. This desire for home is not only one of psychic want but also of physical need. E.T. gradually becomes sicker and sicker the longer he stays away from his homeland. His connection to a particular place is profound. His 'countrymen' know this, and do return in order to 'save' one of their own, who is otherwise unable to survive in the Western world.

Critics such as Vivian Sobchack, Marina Heung and Anthony Magistrale all see this attachment to home as being indicative of a re-imagining of family life prevalent in films of the 1980s. For example, Heung argues that E.T. becomes Elliot's 'surrogate father', and that E.T. must go home so that Elliot can finally accept the 'loss of the father' and thus start to grow up (1983, p.84). Such readings, while undoubtedly valid, downplay the obviously racialised nature of E.T.'s difference. I would argue that E.T. must return home in order to limit Elliot's *interracial* contact to a short period of affect, thus keeping both the family and the nation safely 'white'.

A similar narrative trajectory underpins *Cocoon*, in which a group of aliens comes to Earth where long ago they had to evacuate an outpost, and so left behind, deep under water, cocoons containing their countrymen. When the aliens' existence is discovered by a human, he becomes anxious that the aliens are going to invade America. An alien reassures him that, 'All we need to do is get our friends and leave'—and that they do. Likewise, in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the positive representation of the alien encounter relies on the fact that the aliens leave at the end of the film. And the advanced aliens in *Contact* are so good that they never leave their planet at all, instead safely communicating with humans through technological means.

That these aliens can even make the voyage to Earth suggests a level of technological advancement that would seem to radically remove them from traditional imaginings of indigenes as technologically inferior. However, these films undermine such a distinction between the natural and the technological by consistently using images of naturalness in connection to alien corporealities and technologies. In *E.T.*, the inside of the alien spaceship is filled with a verdant rainforest. When the aliens move and speak to each other, they use snuffling noises and bounding movements reminiscent of a cute animal. Indeed, E.T. is often believed to be an animal—at one stage, a dog-catcher is after him, at another, he is imagined to be a coyote, and at a third, Elliot's brother suggests he may be 'a monkey, or an orang-utan, or something'. In *Cocoon*, alien artefacts and movements are constantly accompanied by and could be mistaken for natural phenomena, such as the eclipse of the moon, the fog rolling in or a pod of playing dolphins. The cocoons themselves are covered in barnacles and are egg-shaped and irregularly formed so as to suggest a naturally occurring phenomenon. In *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the landing of the alien spaceship occurs at Devils Tower, a site which, as John Dorst points out, is a key and recognisable site of Native American claims to land. All these films, in their construction of an alien race, are drawing on recognisable, New Age understandings of Indian-ness as showing the importance and virtue of a connection to nature and land.

Cross-cultural exchange

Constructions of the ‘spiritual’ Indian and imaginings of alien encounter are, of course, common within the ‘shifting vocabulary of images’ (Deloria, 1998, p.167) that characterises New Age discourses, which draw on the objects and practices of many different cultures and knowledges, from crystals to Zen meditation to Indian (that *other* Indian, from another continent) incense. As previously discussed, this is expressive of that tendency prevalent in the New Age where, as Deloria notes, ‘Indianness—even when imagined as something essential—could be captured and marketed as a text, largely divorced from Indian oversight and questions of authorship’ (p.170). Thus New Age discourses, filled with signs detached from their origins, can be argued to be particularly prone to semiotic slippages. The feelings of wisdom, spirituality, and connection to the land that this movement has drawn from a scant understanding of Native American cultural difference, are hence easily available for use when imagining the radical difference of alien race. That this is a peculiarly New Age construction of the other can be seen in the particular type of exchange enacted through the meeting of humans and aliens. They do not share knowledges of their respective cultures—as would be hoped for in multicultural or hybridic exchange—but rather, the aliens give a particular affect to the humans.

This is particularly evident in *E.T.*, where the alien and the little boy, Elliot, share a psychic bond. When Elliot’s brother is questioned by scientists about the nature of this bond, he makes it clear that the two do not share *thoughts* so much as *feelings*. E.T.’s connection to the world of emotion is a bodily one: his warm, red heart visibly pulsates at times of particular emotional intensity, and the red tip to one of his elongated fingers lights up as he touches and heals the humans who surround him. When E.T. begins to sicken, Elliot knows that this means that the little alien is now ‘feeling everything’. Elliot becomes ill as E.T. does: their identities are now physically and psychically joined. Elliot finds out nothing about E.T.’s culture, but rather, E.T. teaches him about love and ultimately reinvigorates his family life. Although this film is entitled *E.T.*, the narrative is fundamentally about the rejuvenation of Elliot’s culture. Such increase in warm feelings of love and family is also evident in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, a film which overtly ties alien experience to spirituality, from saffron-

robed masses in India singing the tune played by the alien spaceship, to the Americans going on a ‘vision quest’ to Devils Tower. Likewise, in *Contact* and *Cocoon*, contact with the aliens inspires a rebirth of traditional relationships of romance, family and love.

In fact, the aliens in all these films allow the white characters a chance to escape their contemporary alienation. The aliens do not teach the white characters anything about their culture, but rather create in the humans positive feelings so that they can self-improve and better enact their own lives. This is tied to the particular link that the aliens have to their homeland, which ultimately contains and constrains them in spaces well away from Earth. The possibilities of cross-cultural exchange are limited to what affect the aliens can provide to the white dominant culture. It is their teachings rather than their continued presence that is vital. This emphasis parallels the way in which contemporary New-Age imaginings of the Indian rely on the physical absence of actual indigenes. As Deloria argues, spatial separation ‘helped fuel the sense of Indian-white difference that made Indianness meaningful. Indians lived poverty-stricken lives on faraway reservations. Their poverty and geographical and social distance marked them as different—and thereby authentic’ (1998, p.176). Likewise, in Science Fiction cinema, this spatial separation is reinforced by the fact that the viewer never actually sees the alien’s homeland. It exists as a place of internal affect rather than geography.

Homelessness

When aliens do not want to return to their home planet, they are often imagined extremely negatively. In such scenarios, human/alien contact is couched in the language of invasion, colonisation and conquest. Films such as the *Alien* series, *Independence Day* and *Species*, could be argued to appeal to the teenage spectator by overturning the ‘childish’ attachment to aliens demonstrated in the films discussed earlier. On the surface, these films seem to be reworkings of colonialist narratives, putting humans in the place of indigenes, as technologically inferior, innocent victims of unprovoked attack. Indeed, such narratives draw on ‘triumph of the underdog’ stories so prevalent in much young adult literature. Likewise in these films, familiar

colonialist narratives are almost invariably rewritten so that humans triumph over their more powerful invaders.

These films could be understood as anti-colonialist, in that they depict all that is brutal and bloody in the processes of invasion and colonisation. Indeed, some contemporary Science Fiction films do consciously express the idea that colonialist action could justifiably cause rage in the colonised peoples. For example, in *Alien*, the attacks on the humans by the aliens are depicted as being the humans' fault, given that they were the ones who disturbed the aliens in an act of colonisation, landing on a planet in order to exploit its resources. Such a possibility is also mentioned in passing in the parodic *Starship Troopers*, when a news reporter suggests that the alien attacks on Earth 'were provoked by the intrusion of humans into their natural habitat.'

However, a fundamental part of the viciousness, venality, brutishness and aggressiveness of invading aliens is their total lack of home. They are not in search of a new homeland, as the majority of colonists of the United States were. Instead, they seem to attack out of pure destructiveness, a part of what Despina Kakoudaki argues is the 'simplification of the agent of destruction' (2002, p.120) in recent Science Fiction films, which 'makes war against alien invaders legitimate in ways that other wars are not' (p.121). For example, in *Independence Day*, whose plot involves the invasion by and consequent destruction of aliens by a 'coalition of the willing' naturally led by America, one of the very few details we are given about the invading alien culture is that it is nomadic. They have no home, instead moving from planet to planet 'like locusts', consuming all natural resources and then moving on. Similarly, the monstrous aliens in the *Alien* series wreak havoc by attaching themselves to various spacecrafts and human bodies, travelling far from their planet of origin (to which they have no particular attachment) on the coat-tails of the humans. These creatures are rootless, and this lack of identification with place facilitates their destructive actions.

The feeling of homelessness associated with evil aliens is, ironically, sometimes connected to a particular place. For example, *Species* shows a dangerous human/alien hybrid finding her natural home in Los Angeles. In this film, alien

DNA has been sent to Earth, with instructions to mix it with human DNA. The humans do so, believing that they can control the resulting hybrid, who initially appears as a white, blonde young girl and who by the end of the film has undergone metamorphosis into a grossly sexual and fecund slimy, tentacled alien. While still in human form, she escapes, and heads for Los Angeles. This globalised metropolis on the edge of America is the ideal home for such a character—an antisocial racial hybrid who kills with impunity. As one character (a comparative anthropologist) says: 'Of course, Los Angeles is perfect for her. It's the city of the future. Anything goes. Totally mobile population. Everyone's a stranger. Very little in this town is taboo or unacceptable. Whatever she does, nobody's going to notice.' The *lack* of attachment to place makes the city space of LA dangerously amoral and un-social, with the promiscuous multiculturalism of LA represented as part of this overall degeneracy. The mixing of multiple races, the sense that home is elsewhere, the mobility of the population, the lack, in short, of a permanent and spiritual belonging to place often ascribed to the Indian, means that a dangerous racial other can exist unnoticed.

There are also 'zones of homelessness' in the *Star Wars* series, which features at its core the relationships between many different races in outer space. In these films, the group of heroes often contains an alien, such as the appealing and indecipherable Chewbacca, the wise and powerful Yoda, or the bumbling Jar Jar Binks, which suggests that the inclusion of racialised difference can be an element of a positive alliance. However, these aliens are always overwhelmed numerically by humans. In fact, the aliens are sidekicks, which, as Gwendolyn Audrey Foster suggests, is a formula that works to limit racial difference 'exemplified in hundreds, perhaps thousands, of mainstream films' (2003, p.8). In the *Star Wars* films, depictions of spaces of degradation are marked by the fact that humans are numerically in the minority. For example, the famous cantina scene in the original *Star Wars* movie shows a conspicuous level of alien-racial mixing, and 'unproblematically correlates [this] with moral degeneracy, for this carnivalesque atmosphere is a mercenary world without law or compassion' (Weinstock, 1996, p.331). The cantina quickly breaks out into murderous, drunken inter-racial fighting. The trading city where Anakin Skywalker

lives in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* is a similarly degraded space where there is no rule except for money. Pure-of-heart human slaves are owned by venal alien masters. Life is cheap. Bloodsports are popular. The food smells weird. There is shit on the pavement. Both these spaces are recognisable translations of the traditional Western's frontier town, a place where both settlers and Indians, uncertain of their place in the world, still making a home, or adjusting to the loss of their home, take part in a-social, degraded acts.

All of these bad aliens are characterised by a lack of connection to place. They are imaginings of the negative possibilities of trans-national movements of people intrinsic to the globalised world. Contemporary theory may understand the migrant, the diasporic subject, as inhabiting a state of possibility, of the new, the in-between, the hybrid. However, these films reflect contemporary anxieties concerning the migrant—detached from their original homeland, and not compelled to assimilate, they do not 'know their place', and this leads to violence and terror against the proper citizens of the land.

A less reactionary approach to complicated experiences of home can be found in the *Men in Black* films, which are set in a hyper multi-cultural New York. In these films, Earth acts as a place where alien refugees can safely stay. Aliens and humans freely co-mingle, albeit with the aliens mostly in human disguise. The narrative is formed around the workings of the eponymous Men in Black, whose task is not to eradicate the alien presence from New York, but rather to control the flow of alien immigrants into the nation, separating the worthy refugees from the criminal and the homicidal. The histories and cultures of alien peoples are talked and worked through, and the Men in Black have friends and colleagues who are of alien races (although humans inevitably take central leadership roles). The Men in Black are also poly-lingual, and so are able to communicate with various different aliens. This state of multicultural exchange is, however, only achieved by once again emphasising the importance of homeland. For these alien immigrants are refugees, and as such have been forced to leave their 'true places'.

Conclusions

In 1939, Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz* said, 'There's no place like home', clicked her heels together, and was transported back to the rural heartland of America. Today, there is a fear that if an American clicked her heels, unless she were a *Native American*, she might not know where to go at all, or might be transported well beyond the national borders of the United States. In its vast intergalactic spaces, contemporary Science Fiction cinema writes such an anxiety large. It imagines narratives where aliens and humans roam the universe, looking for a home, or looking to take one away. A clear dichotomy emerges from these films—aliens who know their home and are spiritually attached to it are positively represented, whereas mobilised aliens, degraded by their lack of attachment to place, are negatively depicted. Although films such as *E.T.*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Cocoon* and *Contact* all welcome their alien visitors, this is on the proviso that they eventually and happily go back where they came from. These films are anxious to place the racial other elsewhere, far way, and thus contain interactions with human characters to valuable lessons learned, of New Age-like personal development, rather than ongoing cultural exchange. The fundamental lesson taught by the alien to the human is also that of the New Age Indian to white America—know where your home is. Permanent migration is not an option in these films, and can only be imagined as an act of invasion. A notable exception to this is the *Men in Black* series, which does posit the possibility of alien migration, although this is available only to that worthy group—the refugee. In general, these films worry that the most violent and degraded acts are possible to those who do not inhabit a home or homeland. These Science Fiction films work as a denial of the contemporary realities of mass migration and globalisation (including the fact that these films move freely across national boundaries), constructing racial difference as something occurring 'elsewhere'.



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