

## In the heat of the moment: Notes on the past, present, and future of *Born in Flames*

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In these brief notes, the author's aim is to situate *Born in Flames* historically, including within the history of feminist theory. His starting point for thinking through this film was the presumption that what it means now differs from what it meant in its own time. While that would be true of almost any text, it has seemed to the author that *Born in Flames*, as an incendiary text, is extraordinarily provocative in the very ways that make it now seem "dated." It remains inspiring, however, because it offers a vision of intersectional political coalition more radical than any feature film that we are likely to see now, despite the influence of decades of feminist, queer, and critical race studies. Revisiting the discourses the film generated at the time of its release, the author has come to recognize that, though times and the trends in theory have changed since 1983, the stakes of the revolution in the film have not. It presents a desire to make the world otherwise, economically and culturally.

**Keywords:** *Born in Flames*; feminist film studies; cultural history

*Born in Flames* begins with a statement of historical positioning, as a male telejournalist states: "This week in celebration, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the war of liberation, is a time when all New Yorkers take pride in remembering the most peaceful revolution the world has known. It is time to look back on the events of a decade ago, to consider the progress of the past 10 years, and to look forward to the future." The film makes a call for historical consciousness, though director Lizzie Borden insisted at the time of the film's release that it was set in the future.<sup>1</sup> That future has always looked like 1983 and now seems like the past. The film never fixes a specific date for its setting, giving it a productive temporal ambiguity.

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decades of feminist, queer, and critical race studies. Revisiting the discourses the film generated at the time of its release, I have come to recognize that, though times and the trends in theory have changed since 1983, the stakes of the revolution in the film have not. It presents a desire to make the world otherwise, economically and culturally.

### History in theory: fantasy

If understood as an alternative vision of the film's historical moment (1983), *Born in Flames*' announced tenth anniversary of the Socialist Revolution seems to imagine that, following the revelations of the Watergate investigation in 1973, there was neither a delayed voluntary resignation nor pardon of Nixon, but instead a revolt and socialist reinvention of the American political system. The 1970s were marked by negotiating cultural shifts that first erupted in the 1960s – from the sexual revolution to new forms of questioning and spiritualism – simultaneous with economic stagflation, oil shortages, a hostage crisis abroad, and urban decay domestically. Indeed, upon its release, the film was accused of returning to 1960s radicalism in ways that seemed naïve by the 1980s. As David Harvey has succinctly suggested, New York City, the locus of the film, became an early testing ground for major economic and political shifts toward neoliberalism in the mid-1970s. When the city fell into fiscal crisis, the national government refused a bailout. (An oft-quoted *New York Daily News* headline asserted, “Ford to City: Drop Dead.”)<sup>2</sup> The “solution” that was devised amounted to class warfare: social programs were cut, minorities and working-class laborers who had struggled for enfranchisement were further marginalized, and the business sector was privileged as a way to rebuild the city's capital. In the film, one scene features a consciousness-raising discussion during which a woman states that the city has been cutting social programs for women, and revolutionary leader Adelaide Norris (Jean Satterfield) is repeatedly identified with Lehman College, referencing one of the CUNY schools that was defunded during the 1970s economic restructuring of the city. Looking back, Harvey writes: “This amounted to a coup by the financial institutions against the democratically elected government of New York City, and it was every bit as effective as [a] military coup ... It was ‘an early, perhaps decisive battle in a new war,’ the purpose of which was ‘to show others that what is happening to New York could and in some cases will happen to them.’”<sup>3</sup> These statements, which Harvey quotes, date from 1977, reportedly the year that Borden began production on *Born in Flames*. Such rhetoric from the period suggests that the film, though imagining a parallel political trajectory, was closer to the street than science fiction.<sup>4</sup>

The devastated landscape of late-1970s New York was the fertile ground for new nothing-to-lose cultural formations, such as hip-hop in the South Bronx and punk music and no-wave cinema downtown.<sup>5</sup> It was in this depressed landscape that the alternative-space movement fostered a scene in which artists squatted in empty buildings until 1980s gentrification changed the cultural geography of the city.<sup>6</sup> Simon Reynolds vividly describes the late-1970s Lower East Side: “Most ‘regular’ folk had fled to the suburbs, leaving the area to bums, bohos, junkies, and the ethnic poor. Unable to rent out all their rooms and unwilling to sell because property values had plummeted, landlords increasingly resorted to insurance scams. They’d set fire to their buildings, or *let services deteriorate to the point where the tenants burned down their own tenements in order to get rehoused by the city.*”<sup>7</sup>

Such radical practices extended to other critical and experimental movements. *Born in Flames* was part of a wave of feminist experimental narrative cinema dating from the 1970s into the mid-1980s that bridged critique, fantasy, and new representational forms: work by Yvonne Rainer, Chantal Akerman, VALIE EXPORT, Ulrike Ottinger, Laura Mulvey, Michelle Citron, Sally Potter, Su Friedrich, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Julie Dash, and Jill Godmilow, among others, as well as the more conventional realist narrative feature films of Margarethe von Trotta and Bette Gordon. There was also a parallel history of explicitly politicized “Third World Cinema” and a strong Marxist-Leftist commitment in cultural critique, art and film criticism, and scholarship of the era.<sup>8</sup>

But perhaps the most important cultural-historical intertexts for the film were women-of-color feminist critiques that emerged during the film’s production, and of which the most urgent claims resound in the film itself.<sup>9</sup> The Combahee River Collective’s 1977 statement seems to provide a pitch for the film’s premise: “We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. ... We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation.”<sup>10</sup> Toni Cade Bambara’s foreword to *This Bridge Called My Back* explicitly called for a coalitional, revolutionary future: “This Bridge needs no Foreword. It is the Afterward that’ll count. ... The work: To make revolution irresistible.”<sup>11</sup> *Home Girls* likewise ends with a call for coalition, with Bernice Johnson Reagon’s urgent call for women to join forces: “You don’t go into coalition because you just *like* it. The only reason you would consider trying to team up with somebody who could possibly kill you, is because that’s the only way you can figure you can stay alive.”<sup>12</sup> Although some of these writings have now become part of the canon, the worlds they envisioned – like the one imagined in *Born in Flames* – have yet to be realized. In their moment, these writings importantly spoke and resounded beyond academia to broad, politically engaged publics.

*Born in Flames* appeared amidst life-and-death calls for revolution grounded in women-of-color feminist coalition politics – at the time commonly termed Third World Feminism, suggestive of a radical pan-ethnic militancy (though some usages of the term distinguished between “Black” and “Third World,” which referred to Latinas, American Indians, and Asian-Americans). The rhetoric of coalition preceded more recent discourses of intersectionality. Coalition across races and sexualities was central to *Born in Flames*’ vision of revolting against the state’s institutionalized oppression and continued economic disparities to create a new order. Building from Lisa Lowe’s work, Roderick Ferguson argues, “[i]f racialization has been the ‘site of a contradiction between the promise of political emancipation and the conditions of economic exploitation,’ then much of that contradiction has pivoted on the racialization of working populations as deviant in terms of gender and sexuality. As formations that transgress capitalist political economies, surplus populations become the locations for possible critiques of state and capital.”<sup>13</sup> During the 1970s financial crisis, the income disparities between white and black families grew, thus disproportionately affecting people of color.<sup>14</sup>

*Born in Flames* stands out as a particularly rich historical text of political imagination because it presents the convergence of so many strains of its time. The film’s “war of liberation,” though clearly picking up the language of women’s and gay liberation, suggests that even an economic revolution toward a socialist system will fail if it cannot address

the marginalization of women and people of color. In one of the most compelling critiques of leftist politics of the past 30 years, Lisa Duggan argued that multicultural identity politics have created splintered agendas that have failed to recognize the structural reorganizations of neoliberalism; what the Left needs is a coalition politics that returns attention to economic structures.<sup>15</sup> In part, this is what *Born in Flames* was already envisioning 20 years before Duggan's text, and, though there might have still been time to forestall some of the effects of neoliberalism, such action was fantastical even then. The film presented an apocryphal future and a set of possibilities that remain unrealized in retrospect.

The film was, importantly, a fantasy: a fantasy of another model of society in which there is the possibility of changing the system, of revolution, of economic equality, and even of post-racial solidarity. Afro-futurism had already begun a similar project of fantastically imagining the world otherwise. In interviews, Borden declared that she was not portraying a utopia in the film. The future the film presents might, however, be termed an *altertopia*: an imagined time and place that presents the world as it otherwise might be.<sup>16</sup> In a 1983 interview, Borden spoke to the ambiguities of science fiction and history in *Born in Flames*:

It was always to be a borderline between what is present and therefore documentary and what would be fiction, therefore science fiction. I didn't want to make a conventional science fiction film because I wanted it to refer to the present. The reason for setting it *after* a social democratic revolution is that so many people think the Left will solve the problems of women and "minorities." ... So the science fiction is to posit this thought: what IF the very ordinary oppression that women have been experiencing for generations finally became something that would force a group of women to become armed and take over the media in order to redirect meaning, reclaim the language. This is "science fiction" because I don't believe it will happen.<sup>17</sup>

That the film has repeatedly been positioned as science fiction, including by the filmmaker herself, speaks more of the impoverishment of ways to understand a work of socio-political fantasy than it does to any actual genre elements in the film.

Although *Born in Flames* may not look the way we have come to expect of science-fiction cinema, the genre has generally been understood as richly symptomatic of cultural anxieties. During the period between 1977–82, some of the most popular texts of mainstream culture reflected a despair about contemporary life on earth and a search for extra-terrestrial existence: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Star Wars*, *Alien*, and *ET*, most famously. These range from films that suggest a kind of alienation to, in George Lucas's family-friendly saga, a whimsical take on war. Prior to its "majestic" conclusion, *Close Encounters* is unexpectedly social realist for most of its running time, and *Alien* represents a futuristic commercial mining ship in the wake of the U.S.'s energy crisis and the privatization of research, as the commercial crew is contractually called upon to investigate an extraterrestrial signal.<sup>18</sup> But science during this historical moment could also be understood as speculation, not just as fiction. As Melinda Cooper has suggested, the concurrent recognition of ecological disaster and economic malaise in the 1970s mobilized not just a shift toward neoliberal policies but specifically toward research in regenerative bioscience as a site of speculative investment. In other words, the apocalyptic culture of the 1970s instigated a venture toward the invention (and capitalization) of *other forms of life*.<sup>19</sup>

The film suggests that the socialist revolution has failed, but it stages the possibility of further revolutions—the possibility to dismantle the system and start again. The insistence on the film’s futurity further suggests the continued desire for a new social-economic-political system.<sup>20</sup>

Borden explained:

It criticizes an opportunistic manifestation of a government that calls itself a Social Democracy but which has not restructured at all its capitalist underpinnings. The women in the film see themselves as the *true* socialists because they had such high hopes for the culture and begin to fight back when it slips back. That’s another point – a socialism can never be a thing, it always has to be a process, *toward* egalitarianism, because the minute it stops moving forward it slips back. Actually some people have criticized the film as a manifestation of ‘60s mentality. For me, it’s about reformulating some of the same questions because everyone has become so cynical and hopeless now that all desire to act is gone. Everyone knows nothing will work. But even if the questions are old, they must be renewed to mean something different today: it’s about reformulating desire, rekindling hope.<sup>21</sup>

The film’s climactic progressive black lesbian terrorist attack on the World Trade Center – which I can only assume seems more radical and shocking *after* the events and discourses of 9/11, when I first encountered the film – is not just an attempt to destroy capitalism but is also, in its demolition of a skyscraper, a deconstruction of a phallic symbol and its attendant power in a patriarchal culture. This was, after all, late during the apex of feminist psychoanalytic theory (as I will discuss below). In terms of futurity, the film *did* offer a premonition of a bombing of the World Trade Center 10 years later (1993), though it didn’t predict the meaning of the site’s ultimate and spectacular destruction in 2001, which provoked a turn toward reactionary patriotism rather than radical progressive feminism.<sup>22</sup> Although I had always misread the film’s final action as an assault on a World Trade Center tower in its entirety (probably an effect of seeing the film only after their real-life destruction), pre-9/11 writings on the film specify that the bombing specifically targeted the *broadcast antennas* atop the WTC. This was an assault on the media, not necessarily capitalism altogether. Perhaps the total destruction of the twin towers seemed implausible even in “science fiction.”

In another interview with Borden, Anne Friedberg set up the question of authorial intentionality (which Borden bypassed) by relating genre and politics: “The film poses a Coalition politic – a coalition between many different factions. That’s what the Women’s Army is. This is part of the fiction’s conceit. It happens at a particular historical moment when conditions lead to a coalition. As a fantasy, as a science fiction film, it is about a moment when women of all sorts, across race and class, across certain arguments within theory, are aligned. How do you see the film functioning as a prescription through fantasy?”<sup>23</sup> What is so alarming in the 1980s responses to the film is that *coalition among women* seems as *fantastical* as a socialist revolution.<sup>24</sup>

### History in theory: feminism

Different feminist accounts from the period suggest that it was precisely *Born in Flames’* integration of gender, race, and sexuality that seemed most threatening.<sup>25</sup> The film was produced

at a moment when the category of “woman” and the essentialism of feminism was being questioned; the film became productive in rethinking gender and identity in more intersectional ways – as raced, classed, and sexually oriented. But it also appears to have been instrumental in shifts from psychoanalytic to historical lenses in feminist film theory. In 1983, feminist film critic B. Ruby Rich remarked: “*Born in Flames* is already controversial as one of the least assimilable films for male viewers (they hate it) due to its assumption of an all-woman non-racist universe. I suspect the film will be called many things: naïve, utopian, separatist, violent, antisocial.”<sup>26</sup> The language here signals both an “already” and speculation for the future (“it will be called ...”); such is the uncertainty of commenting on the culture of the present. Recalling a conference session in which 150 people discussed the film, Patricia Mellencamp wrote: “I was flabbergasted by the outcry against the film. Black women in the audience severely objected to the film’s representation of black women as anarchists and lesbians.”<sup>27</sup> Yet, she asserts: “Paradoxically, like the film which upset so many speakers, differences among (and within) women in the audience were additive, combative, and positive; *difference* was not to be feared; *differences* were productive.”<sup>28</sup> Such responses were expressed within the context of feminist film criticism and theory.

I have previously understood feminist film theory of the 1970s–80s to have been one primarily invested in psychoanalytic analysis and secondarily drawing from Marxism and semiotics, and as a field marked by vociferous debates between individual thinkers. Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) remains the most influential work of this mode, and it remains surely the best-known essay outside of film studies.<sup>29</sup> However, this single essay should be recognized as an early catalyst for a decade’s worth of subsequent revision and debate over different viewing positions and pleasures for a diversity of women, including women of color and lesbians, rather than the endpoint of feminist film theory. Perhaps not unlike a consciousness-raising group, feminist film theory would repeatedly revisit its recent history and self-assess its methods and debates.<sup>30</sup>

*Born in Flames* seemed to have already worked through issues central to psychoanalytic feminist film theory, such as the (presumed) male gaze, the objectification of women, and the paradoxes of identification. That the film effectively negotiates such key “problems” differently from dominant Hollywood cinema may have as much to do with the conditions of its production (it was filmed in bursts over an extended period, largely unscripted, and with non-actors) as with feminist intent. Women’s speech in the film tends to take the form of either *discussion between women* or *direct address*, this latter category exemplified by radio broadcasts spoken not only to an imagined broadcast audience but also to the film’s spectators, particularly in scenes when Honey is framed frontally, looking directly into the camera and countering any notions of “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Mulvey’s phrase) head-on. Rather than film, the film foregrounds other, more immediate and accessible media, such as radio (Phoenix Radio, Radio Regazza), newspapers (*The Socialist Youth Review*), and television (local and national news, the *Belle Gayle Show*). Reviewer Karen Jaehne suggested that the film asserted “that women have gained control, perhaps only temporarily, of the language.”<sup>31</sup> Such broadcast and print media forms may now seem dated in the age of digital communication networks, but, as unidirectional forms of communication from a centralized location to a broad and receptive audience, the stakes for determining the ideologies that could be expressed were paramount. This emphasis on modes of communication reflect

an absorption of Marxist-semiotic analysis of the power of speech and the potential influence of the media.

Formally, the film represents women, even when nude, “naturalistically” and as self-determining actors rather than as eroticized objects; it also refuses any singular character as the primary figure of identification. Also employing feminist film aesthetics of the time, the film often disarticulates women’s voices and images of their bodies by avoiding synchronization, as well as refuses shot/reverse-shot editing structures. Although stylistically, musical-montage sequences in the film evoked the then-new look of music videos, the footage presents everyday sites of labor and domestic life rather than glamorous or non-sensical postmodern imagery.<sup>32</sup>

Significantly, the scholars who embraced *Born in Flames* seem to have been the ones most skeptical of the efficacy of psychoanalysis as a feminist methodological lens. These scholars’ always-already historical approach to the film may have been grounded in Marxist historical materialism, but the film also seems now to have anticipated a major disciplinary turn within film studies from psychoanalysis to historiography. In an essay published in early 1984, Jane Gaines signaled the troubling ways that even reductive chronological coincidences – recognizing the invention of cinema as contemporaneous with the development of psychoanalysis, thus justifying their analytical conjunction – had “dropped out” of recent wholly ahistorical theoretical interpretations.<sup>33</sup> Speaking of productive temporal parallels, women’s studies and film studies both became institutionalized in the 1970s.<sup>34</sup>

Already in the mid-1980s, feminist film theory was engaged in practices of retrospection. Teresa de Lauretis cogently worked through foundational theoretical claims by Althusser and Foucault, tracing feminist critiques and/or revisions of this work as well. Her exegesis not only carefully parsed the theoretical positions but also situated this theory historically. This work also, importantly, prefigures moves within early queer theory to destabilize the conceptions of gender identity. (de Lauretis would later be credited with coining the term “queer theory” when she edited a 1991 special issue of *differences* on the topic.)<sup>35</sup> The recent moves in feminist politics and criticism that de Lauretis referenced spoke to the moment in which the film *Born in Flames* would have been produced and first exhibited. de Lauretis clarified: “By radial epistemological potential I mean the possibility, already emergent in feminist writings of the 1980s, to conceive of the social subject constituted in gender, to be sure, though not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations; a subject en-gendered in the experiencing of race and class, as well as sexual, relations; a subject, therefore, not unified but rather multiple ...”<sup>36</sup>

In a separate essay that became part of the same book (first published in 1985), de Lauretis offered one of the most substantive analyses of *Born in Flames*, indicating that her recognition of these issues came into focus by way of the film. She wrote that the film “bring[s] home to me with greater clarity the question of difference, this time in relation to factors other than gender, notably race and class – a question endlessly debated within Marxist feminism and recently rearticulated by women of color in feminist presses and publications. That this question should reemerge urgently and irrevocably now is not surprising, at a time when severe social regression and economic pressures (the so-called ‘feminization of poverty’) belie the self-complacency of a liberal feminism enjoying its modest allotment of institutional legitimacy.”<sup>37</sup> Here, again, de Lauretis located the ways that conceptual

understanding and critical categories emerge in specific historical circumstances: “In spite of the divergences, the political and personal differences, and the pain that surround feminist debates within and across racial, ethnic, and sexual lines, we may be encouraged in the hope that feminism will continue to develop a radical theory and a practice of sociocultural transformation.”<sup>38</sup> de Lauretis understood feminism as a process very much still in development, as a project motivated by “hope” for continued “sociocultural transformation.” Thus, feminism in the early to mid-1980s was not only defined by opposition but also by aspiration. *Born in Flames* reflects both of these positions. Part of the film’s allure for me is returning to a moment when revolution remains imaginable.

During a scene that presents the *Socialist Youth Review* editors on a women’s talk show, the host accuses the Women’s Army of generational envy, asserting that the young militants desire to experience the excitement of the revolutionary past. Such a statement would have spoken as strongly to the young adults of the 1980s who had missed the storied 1960s youth revolt as much as it does to generations of lefties who have come of age since. The film simultaneously counters vague but pervasive notions of a complacent Reagan 1980s and continues to seem more radical than any feature film today.

*Born in Flames* imagined an alternative future-present and now seems prescient in terms of historical events and theoretical developments to come. Indeed, it is ripe for revisitation through a number of more recent frameworks: queer utopias; queer temporality and cross-generational readings; (refusals of) futurity; violence and the state; or “cruel optimism” and “desire for the political,” to name just a few that come quickly to mind.<sup>39</sup> I list these here because the film remains so potentially generative, intellectually, though, I would also insist that the film be understood in its historical context. *Born in Flames* is that queerest of texts, in that it enacts the *fabulous* project of inventing a fictional narrative of radical political action. Borden has revealed in retrospect that the final image of the World Trade Center explosion was produced by filming, in slow motion, glitter shooting from a miniature model.<sup>40</sup> In an obscure way, this film even anticipated glitterbombing! But this bit of production history also reminds me of a Brazilian saying: gays don’t die; they turn into glitter. May generations of progressive queer thought and action continue to be born in flames of glitter.

### Notes on contributor

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### Notes

1. See Oxenberg and Winer (1983, 17).
2. *New York Post*, 30 October 1975.
3. Harvey (2005, 45–46). Quotations from R. Zevin (1977) “New York City Crisis: First Act in a New Age of Reaction,” in *The Fiscal Crisis of American Cities: Essays on the Political Economy of Urban America with Special Reference to New York*, edited by R. Alcalay and D. Mermelstein, 11–29. New York: Vintage.



4. Elements in the film also seem to reference recent counter-revolutionary conspiracies: the questionable prison suicide of female revolutionary Adelaide Norris recalls the death of Ulrike Meinhof of the Red Army Faction in Germany, and Isabel (Adele Bertei) suggests during a Radio Regazza broadcast that the insidious government will pacify dissent by flooding targeted neighborhoods with “smack,” referencing the covert government efforts to undermine the efficacy of the Black Power movement through the promotion of drug addiction in African-American ghettos.
5. For an introduction to no-wave cinema, see the documentary *Blank City* (Celine Danhier, 2010).
6. See Ault (2002). My understanding of the context for the film has been enriched by conversations with my doctoral advisee Kristen Galvin.
7. Reynolds (2005, 144). Emphasis added.
8. See, for instance, the journals *October* and *Jump Cut*. The Marxist orientation in U.S. cultural studies may have reached its zenith with the publication of Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg’s collection *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (1988).
9. Women-of-color feminist publications concurrent with the film’s production include *Conditions: Five, the Black Women’s Issue*, edited by Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith (1977); *Sojourner: A Third World Women’s Research Newsletter* (1977); Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981), Joseph and Lewis (1981); Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith (1982), and Smith (1983); Lorde (1984) would be published the year after the film’s release.
10. Combahee River Collective (1983, 275–276). For a survey of Third World Feminist theory, see Chela Sandoval’s chapter “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I,” (2000).
11. Bambara (1981, viii).
12. Reagon (1983, 356–357).
13. Ferguson (2004, 15).
14. Joseph and Lewis (1981, 15).
15. Duggan (2003).
16. The concept “altertopia” appears in Jones (2006, 42).
17. Lizzie Borden and Betsy Sussler (1983, 27).
18. Throughout the 1970s, such science-fiction fantasies had already infused popular music ranging from David Bowie to Parliament to the Carpenters’ “Calling Occupants of Interplanetary Craft.”
19. Cooper (2008, 15–31).
20. Borden’s follow-up film, *Working Girls* (1986) focused on middle-class female labor through its setting in an upscale brothel. It presents a very different image of class and gender than the later 1980s Cinderella story of corporate climbing, *Working Girl* (Mike Nichols, 1988). Even the shift in title from collectivity to individualism (from *Girls* to *Girl*) signals a turn from any imagination of solidarity.
21. Borden and Sussler (1983, 29).
22. Beckman (2002) explores slippages between “feminism” and “terrorism” after 9/11.
23. Friedberg (1984, 38–39). Italics appear in the original.
24. Coalition, comprised of affinity groups, would be the organizing principle of the late-1980s grassroots organization ACT-UP (the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power). Made early in the epidemic, *Born in Flames* imagines a New York unaffected by AIDS.
25. The backlash against disco a few years before the film has widely been understood as a white, straight male reaction against music culturally coded as feminine, gay, black, and Latino.
26. Rich, “The Feminist Avant-Garde” (1983), reprinted in (1998, 284).
27. Mellencamp (1990, 156).
28. Mellencamp (1990, 157).
29. Originally published in 1975, though widely anthologized.
30. See, for instance, Mayne (1985).
31. Jaehne (1984, 23).
32. In a 1983 interview for *The Independent* film magazine, the film is described thusly: “With its ragged on-the-run look, the film itself has a street style as tough as the members of the Women’s

- Army. Scenes shift abruptly, cutting from trashy urban scapes to the flickering video of incessant TV newscasts on the ‘deteriorating situation.’” Oxenberg and Winer (1983, 16).
33. Gaines (1984/1990, 80).
  34. Rich, “In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism,” (1979), reprinted in (1998, 65).
  35. See *differences* 3 (summer 1991).
  36. de Lauretis (1987, 2).
  37. de Lauretis (1987, 138).
  38. de Lauretis (1987, 11).
  39. See, respectively, Muñoz (2009), Freeman (2010), Edelman (2004), Reddy (2011), and Berlant (2011).
  40. See Borden’s interview in *Blank City*.

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