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**CONTENT ANALYSIS ON THE IDEOLOGY OF
HOLLYWOOD SCIENCE FICTION**

BY

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts**

MARCH 2000

Dedication

This Thesis is specially dedicated

To

My Beloved Parents

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph T K Lau

For their love, encouragement, concern all through my life's journey

To

Celine LF Liang

For her moral support, inspiration and her tender loving care all my years in
Penang

To

My Dearest Friend, Shirley BL Oon

For her benevolence, prayers, loving-kindness and inspiration through all
these years

Acknowledgement

A very special thanks

to

My Supervisor, Professor Madya Dr. Indrajit Barnerjee

For his guidance, constructive criticism and encouragement in helping me complete this thesis successfully,

To

The Dean, Professor Ramli Mohamed

To

The Deputy Dean, Dr. Khor Yoke Lim

and

Lecturers and Staff in School of Mass Communication

For their guidance, assistance and assurance

To

All my Brothers and Sisters

For their long suffering, concern, love and patience in bearing with my childishness,

To

All my Primary School Teachers at St Anthony's Branch School

For all their kindness, guidance, constructive canning, strict supervision, during those naïve six years of schooling

To

All my respected Teachers at Sarikei High School, Sarikei,

To

My House-mates Eva LP Liang and Wendy SL Liang

for their understanding, patience and forbearance

To

Wong Yuen Mei for her constructive criticism and comment

To

Amos EH Teoh

My boss and friend for his encouragement, help and understanding

To

Mr. VP Mohan & Ms. Lye Siew Ean

For their editing

To

All my colleagues in Tunku Abdul Rahman College, Penang Branch for their kind support

To

Mr. Lee Chee Soon

For helping me in many little ways

To

Mr. John Lahade

For his guidance and suggestions on researching Films

To

All my friends and associates who have in one way or the other helped me in completing this thesis.

ABSTRACT

Analisis Ideologi dalam Film Fiksi Sains Hollywood

Filem fiksi sains Hollywood adalah genre filem yang popular dan diterima ramai sehingga mencapai koleksi “box office.” Ia bukan bahan hiburan semata-mata. Namun filem fiksi sains Hollywood adalah bahan kebudayaan yang mempunyai pelbagai kepentingan komersil. Ini adalah kerana filem fiksi sains Hollywood adalah produk material di bawah sistem ekonomi kapitalis. Lanjutan ini, ideologi yang mengekalkan hegemoni dan memperlanjatkan orde perkembangan kapitalis tersirat dalam filem yang dihasilkan dalam sistem tersebut.

Hegemoni adalah proses (melalui filem) yang berusaha untuk mencapai persetujuan dengan penghasilan imej-imej filem secara meluas, iaitu melalui pengulangan, susulan and pembuatan semula imej-imej filem supaya ideologi dapat diperkukuhkan. Dalam industri penerbitan filem Hollywood, korporat gergasi (pemilik Hollywood) mewakili kuasa ekonomi sistem kapitalis. Justru, sinergi di antara korporat gergasi dan penerbit filem Hollywood tidak dapat dielakkan, iaitu ia menjadikan filem sebagai produk material dan ideologikal daripada sistem dominan tersebut. Persoalan-persoalan tentang apa dan bagaimana ideologi tersirat dalam filem fiksi sains adalah tumpuan kajian tesis ini.

Filem mempunyai makna tersirat and tersurat. Makna tersurat adalah maksud yang ketara dalam filem. Sebaliknya, makna tersirat adalah maksud yang tersorot dalam jalan cerita, filem, perwatakan, latar dan dialog. Untuk mengenali makna tersirat dalam filem, semiologi digunakan sebagai metodologi untuk menentukan ideologi-ideologi yang dipaparkan dalam filem. Semiologi adalah sains untuk mengkaji tanda-tanda dalam sesuatu

masyarakat. Semiologi filem bertujuan menjelaskan bagaimana makna tersirat dibentuk dan dipaparkan (signify) melalui filem. Dalam kajian ini, ideologi-ideologi kapitalisme, seksisme dan budaya America yang bercorak optimis sememangnya tersirat dalam filem fiksyen sains Hollywood demi mempertahankan kepentingan kelas kapitalis.

ABSTRACT

Content Analysis on the Ideology of Hollywood Science Fiction Films

Science fiction film is a popular genre with wide audiences as proven by box office collection. Science fiction films are not just entertainment per se. In other words, films are cultural commodities with commercially vested interest (since they are a material product of a capitalist economic system). Therefore, it is only legitimate that films are embedded with ideology which helps to sustain the hegemony or to perpetuate the going order in the capitalist environment.

Hegemony strives for consensus and the way to achieve consensus is through proliferation of filmic images. The images are reinforced through leitmotifs, sequels and remakes. Since the giant corporation are representatives of the economic power, there seems to be an inevitable synergy between the dominant elite and Hollywood film makers, to make film both an ideological and a material product of the dominant system. The questions of what and how ideologies are embedded in films are central in this study.

Film has both manifest and latent meaning. The manifest meaning is the direct meaning that is obvious when we watch a film. On the contrary, the latent meaning is hidden within the film story, characters, settings and dialogue. To articulate the latent meaning in a film, semiology will be used as a methodology to identify the ideologies present. Semiology is a science that studies the life of signs within a society. Film semiotics proposes to construct a comprehensive model capable of explaining how films construct meaning and signify to audience. In this research, ideologies of capitalism, sexism and American Culture-optimism are found embedded within films. This is done to perpetuate the interests of the ruling class.

| Chapters | Content | Page |
|------------------|---|-------------|
| | Title | i |
| | Dedication | ii |
| | Acknowledgement | iii |
| | Abstrack | iv -v |
| | Abstract | vi |
| | Table of Contents | vii - x |
| Chapter 1 | Introduction | |
| | 1.1 Background | 1 - 4 |
| | 1.2 Research Problem | 5 |
| | 1.3 Objectives | 6 |
| | 1.4 Methodology | 7 - 8 |
| | 1.5 Significance of Research | 8 - 9 |
| | 1.6 Thesis structure and Outline | 9 -10 |
| Chapter | 2 Science fiction Films | |
| | 2.1 Definition of Science fiction Films | 10 -13 |
| | 2.2 The Origin of Science Fiction Films | 14 -18 |
| | 2.3 Blockbusters of the 80s and 90s | 19 -21 |
| | 2.4 Science Fiction Films as a popular Genre | 21 -24 |
| | 2.5 Influential ideology Embedded in Science Fiction Films | 24 - 27 |
| Chapter | 3 Theoretical Framework: Ideology (Research Area) | |
| | 3.1 Film and the Capitalist Economic System | 28 |
| | 3.2 Definition of Ideology | 29 -30 |
| | 3.3 Ideology and the Power in Films | 30 -35 |
| | 3.4 Hegemony | 36 -38 |
| | 3.5 How ideology appears in Science Fiction Films | 39 -45 |

| | | | |
|----------------|--------------|--|---------|
| Chapter | 4 | Semiology as a Method of Analysis | |
| | 4.1 | Introduction | 46 -47 |
| | 4.2 | Semiology as a method of Analysis: A Structuralist Approach | 47 - 49 |
| | 4.2.1 | Signifier and Signified | 49 - 50 |
| | 4.2.2 | Denotation and Connotation | 50 - 53 |
| | 4.3 | Semiology as a Means to unmask Ideology in Films | 53 -55 |
| | 4.3.1 | Settings | 55 -56 |
| | 4.3.2 | Characters | 56 -58 |
| | 4.3.3 | Dialogue | 58 - 59 |
| | 4.3.4 | Story Line | 59 - 60 |
| | 4.4.1 | Conceptualization | |
| | 4.4.2 | Capitalism as an Ideology | 61 -64 |
| | 4.4.3 | Sexism as an Ideology | 64 -65 |
| | 4.4.4 | American Culture as an Ideology | 65 -66 |
| | 4.5 | Operationalization | |
| | 4.5.1 | Setting | 67 |
| | 4.5.1.1 | City | 67 |
| | 4.5.1.2 | Town | 67 - 68 |
| | 4.5.1.3 | Rural/Suburban | 68 |
| | 4.5.1.4 | Wilderness | 69 |
| | 4.5.1.5 | Outer Space | 69 |
| | 4.5.2 | Characters | 69 |
| | 4.5.2.1 | Optimistic | 70 |
| | 4.5.2.2 | Pessimistic | 70 |
| | 4.5.2.3 | Pragmatic | 70 |
| | 4.5.3 | Dialogue | 70 - 71 |
| | 4.5.3.1 | Sexist | 71 |
| | 4.5.3.2 | Gender Conscious | 71 |
| | 4.5.3.3 | Unclear | 71 |
| | 4.5.4 | Story line | 72 |
| | 4.5.4.1 | Happy Ending | 72 |
| | 4.5.4.2 | Tragic Ending | 72 |
| | 4.5.4.3 | Open-ended Ending | 72 -73 |

| | | | |
|---------|--------------|---|----------------|
| Chapter | 5 | Analysis: Decoding Ideology in science Fiction Films | |
| | 5.1 | Introduction | 74 -75 |
| | 5.2 | Setting | 75 -77 |
| | 5.2.1 | Capitalist Ideology in the Setting in <i>Species I</i> | 78 |
| | 5.2.1.1 | Modernisation, Freedom and Consumerism. | 78 - 80 |
| | 5.2.1.2 | Night Life and Entertainment Outlets | 80 - 81 |
| | 5.2.1.3 | Sophisticated Technology | 81 - 82 |
| | 5.2.2 | Capitalist Ideology in the Setting in <i>Godzilla</i>. | 82 |
| | 5.2.2.1 | Urbanization and Concentration of Populations | 82 - 85 |
| | 5.2.2.2 | High Rise Buildings, and Transport Networks | 85 - 86 |
| | 5.2.2.3 | Sophisticated Technology | 86 - 88 |
| | 5.2.3 | Capitalist Ideology in the Setting in <i>Jurassic Park</i> | 88 - 89 |
| | 5.2.3.1 | Wilderness characterized by Lush Tropical Forest | 89 - 90 |
| | 5.2.3.2 | Theme Park/Wild Life Park | 90 -91 |
| | 5.2.3.3 | Modernization and Technology in the Wilderness | 91 -93 |
| | 5.3 | Characters | 93 -95 |
| | 5.3.1 | Optimism – American Culture in <i>Species I</i> | 95 |
| | 5.3.1.1 | A Person of Intelligence, diligence and perseverance in the face of problem | 96 - 97 |
| | 5.3.1.2 | Very Brave and Confident who possess the ability to overcome difficulties and problem in life | 97 - 98 |
| | 5.3.1.3 | Independent, self-reliant, understanding and forgiving | 98 -99 |
| | 5.3.2 | Optimism – American Culture in <i>Godzilla</i> | 99 |
| | 5.3.2.1 | A person of intelligence, hardworking and enthusiastic | 99 - 100 |
| | 5.3.2.2 | Brave and confident that all difficulties and problems in life can be solved | 101 |
| | 5.3.2.3 | Will power, self-confidence, forgiving, understanding, magnetism and charm | 102 -103 |
| | 5.3.3 | Optimism – American Culture in <i>Jurassic Park</i> | 103 |
| | 5.3.3.1 | Intelligent, rational and Reliable | 104 |
| | 5.3.3.2 | Brave, Resourceful and Confident and persevering in the face of problems | 104 -105 |
| | 5.3.3.3 | Caring, supportive and understanding and a round person | 105 -106 |

| | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| 5.4 | Dialogue | 107 -109 |
| 5.4.1 | Sexism as an Ideology in <i>Species I</i> | 109 |
| 5.4.1.1 | Woman as sexual object or image | 109 -111 |
| 5.4.1.2 | Girl/ Woman is weaker, more gentle, less aggressive | 112 |
| 5.4.1.3 | Woman can only be subordinate | 112 - 113 |
| 5.4.2 | Sexism as an Ideology in <i>Godzilla</i> | 113 |
| 5.4.2.1 | Woman as sexual object or image | 113 - 114 |
| 5.4.2.2 | Assuming women are inferior and must be subordinate to men | 114 - 114 |
| 5.4.2.3 | Women are weak, stupid and emotional | 115 - 116 |
| 5.4.3 | Sexism as an Ideology in <i>Jurassic Park</i> | 116 |
| 5.4.3.1 | Women as sexual object or image | 117 |
| 5.4.3.2 | Women are inferior and subordinate to men | 117 |
| 5.4.3.3 | Females are weak, sickly, gentle more docile | 117 -118 |
| 5.5 | Story line | 118 -120 |
| 5.5.1 | Happy Ending to depict American Optimism in <i>Species I</i> | 120 -123 |
| 5.5.2 | Happy Ending to depict American Optimism in <i>Godzilla</i> | 123 -126 |
| 5.5.3 | Happy Ending to depict American Optimism in <i>Jurassic Park</i> | 126 -128 |
| Chapter | 6 | Conclusion |
| | 6.1 | Stronghold or Stranglehold? 129 - 134 |
| | 6.2 | Imaginary Relationship 134 |
| | 6.3 | The invisible hands of Interpellation and Disempowerment 134 -1 42 |
| | 6.4 | Difficulties Encountered during the research 142 - 143 |
| | 6.5 | Areas of Future Research 143 - 144 |
| | | Bibliography 145 - 149 |
| | | Appendices 150 -156 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

“The history of science fiction is also the history of humanity’s changing attitudes toward space and time. It is the history of our growing understanding of the universe and the position of our species in that universe.”

(Scholes, Robert & Rabkin, S. Eric:1977:3)

Every time we watch a film, consciously or unconsciously, our mind and feelings (emotion) are influenced not only by the events in the film but also by the behaviour of the characters, the background pictures or even objects which are a part of the images. The remarkable thing is that the impact or impression of the films differs from one person to another. This is due to the fact that every individual responds differently to the events based on his or her own experience and knowledge. Hence, it is difficult for us to decide accurately how a film could influence the behaviour of the viewers.

This phenomenon indicates that film is a powerful medium made up by a unique blend of ‘photographic realism and dramatic illusion’. This is because a film obscures the distinction between authentic and staged events, making the viewers eyewitnesses to what is in fact fictional or distorted reality. According to Jurij Lotman, a Russian semiologist (1976), film images are conveyors of information that are transformed into signs which convey meaning. Therefore, a film carries messages that are channelled through a film either implicitly or explicitly. Whether implicitly or explicitly, a film (of science fiction)

transmits values, norms and propositions about a certain issue apart from the story of the film. According to Arthur Schlesinger Jr.(1979:x) 'films have been the most portentous vehicles for the American Imagination to tell us not just about the surfaces but the mysteries of American life'.

As such, a film should not be evaluated at surface value as being merely telling a story. A film should be analysed in depth to unmask the ideologies or embedded meanings. Taking a closer look from the perspective of science fiction film, it could be extremely far-fetched, disruptive in its portrayal of some popular earthly phenomenon or scientific preconceptions which usually carry more than just a story or phenomenon. It has got "American imagination" or in simpler terms American ideology i.e. to support the legitimacy of the dominant value system. Film makers shrewdly explore certain popular controversial scientific preconceptions and define them according to the rightness of the dominant social values, and project the preconceptions according to acceptable norms.

Eileen Meehan (1986) says that film is a peculiar culture industry that reprocesses the symbolic stuff from which dreams and ideologies are made of. In short, she means a film story is not just a story per se, with some characters and particular settings. There are other symbolic elements in which American values, dreams and ideologies are subtly inserted.

Likewise, art (because film is also a form of art), according to Raymond Williams (1976:11) has 'the ability to learn, describe, to understand and to educate'. This obviously implies that a film possesses intrinsic values. Moreover, Williams is quick to point out also that films have a variety of political, cultural and aesthetic meanings and functions. If

that is the case, what are the ideologies embedded in science fiction films and who advances those (political, cultural and aesthetic meanings) ideologies and for what purposes?

In this context, a researcher delves into the depth of a film to uncover whatever elements can be found within the film that has such influences on cinema-goers. In other words, a researcher seeks to find the hidden message that is embedded within a film. The ultimate purpose in this writing is not to find out how a film, through its hidden message influences an individual but to endeavour to discover what kind of ideologies are embedded within a film.

Films of all genres carry ideologies through the stories and different levels of ideology exist in films of different genres, either on first or second-order- levels. Films that are ideological of the first-order-level are those by virtue of explicit treatment of social, political and historical topics, while films of the second-level-order are those that present social messages and portraits of society that are implicit, indirect and subtle (Prince:1955). Through the ideologies that are underlying in films elements, films are endowed with great mobilizing power to structure or short-circuit the audience' thinking and thus suppress cognitive evaluation through repetition to generate automatized reaction and ultimately weakens the forces of individual resistance.

In this study, I shall base my research specifically on three science fiction films, chosen purposively. The reason for choosing science fiction films (in particular) as my medium to study ideology is because Science fiction film genre is one of the media artifacts that has mass appeal, wide circulation proven by the Box Office Collections. The three samples science fiction films chosen purposively to identify the ideology interposed

are based on the following criteria and rational. The criteria are theme, popularity and year of production.

Very briefly, the three films that are purposefully chosen for this research address the scientific innovation of:

- DNA innovation on animals (Jurassic Park)
- Genetic engineering on human beings and alien DNA (Species)
- Accidental creation – mutation (Godzilla)

The rational behind choosing films of the same theme – creation is to see how consistent is Hollywood in portraying ideology of a similar theme in different social settings. Besides, it is less complicating to analyze films of the same theme, since I am carrying out a qualitative research.

Secondly, the films are chosen based on their Box Office Collection and films awards given and rave reviews by critics. For example, *Species I* has won Catalonian International Film Festival, Sitges, Spain (1995) and also MTV Movie Award (1996) while grossing 3.323m pound (UK) and \$60.05m (USA); *Godzilla* won Academy of Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy Films, USA (1999) and European Film Awards (1998) grossing 4.176m (UK) and \$55.726m (USA) during the opening Weekends alone; *Jurassic Park* won the Oscar Award (1994), British Academy Awards (1994), Hugo Awards (1994), People's choice awards, USA., grossing \$913.1 m worldwide. The popularity of the three films is based on the theme which is an extremely controversial issue (DNA and cloning) of the 1990s. Hollywood capitalizes on the sensation and fear of the new scientific discoveries to appeal to the mass which accounts for the wide

circulation (internationally and locally). The wide circulation implies the higher mobilizing power of science fiction films to structure thinking and disseminate ideology.

Lastly, the three films are chosen based on the year of production. *Jurassic Park* (1993); *Species I* (1995) and *Godzilla* (1998). The rationale being the three films are easily accessible because they are still available in the market.

Although science fiction films could be extremely far-fetched, disruptive in their portrayal of popular preconceptions, they usually conclude by supporting the dominant social value systems. Hence film makers take extra care to explore certain popular scientific preconceptions that are problematic and controversial, define them according to the dominant social values, and project the preconceptions according to acceptable norms. Preconceptions actually come from a system of thoughts that leads to prejudices and distortion of truth and these eventually create illusions. Ideology embedded in Hollywood Science films try to preserve and sustain certain interests for the good of a certain groups of people who have wealth and power. In other words, Science fiction films contain ideologies of the dominant group that are produced and reproduced to internalize their ideologies and make them natural. The preconceptions and ideology embedded in these films ultimately become a systematic way of thinking of the viewers.

1.2 Research Problem

Films are the product of Hollywood and the capitalists. The reason, being the capitalists play an important role in financing the making of every film. Therefore, every film becomes an inevitable mouthpiece of Hollywood to propagate the ideologies of these dominant elite who have the means of material production. Hollywood's mission in film

making is how to subtly interpose these ideologies in between the films to make them acceptable, and sensational in order to reap box office revenues.

In science fiction films, ideologies embedded in films are aimed to change and mould global society on the ticket of current scientific innovations. Science innovations, which represent bourgeois progress in the modern society, are exploited to put them in the service of consumer-oriented-capitalism, done to maintain hegemony and power. Besides, it is done to perpetuate American imagination in terms of film technology.

In this thesis, I want to find out how Hollywood through science fiction films actually convey its social and cultural values and commitments to the world via its films. Given the assumption that science fiction films have social and cultural significance, there is a need and purpose to look at Hollywood science fiction films, and to analyze them so as to uncover how they actually perceive and exploit scientific innovations to conjure ideologies that need to be reckoned with.

Therefore, this writing is concerned with the following problem statements:

- How does Hollywood project its ideologies in science fiction films?
- How does Hollywood circulate its ideological beliefs and reproduce them through the means of scientific innovation in the science fiction films?

1.3 Objectives

The invisible hand of the capitalists in the making of Hollywood science fiction films can be felt through the ideologies that are interposed in the films. These ideologies are very influential as the way of life, or culture of the people in general are determined

by the ideologies embedded within filmic images. Therefore, this research aims to find out the ideological meanings and values embedded in Hollywood Science fiction films.

Besides, it also endeavours to find how Hollywood disseminates the ideological beliefs or the dominant interests of the dominant elite to appropriate the thinking and tastes of the audiences. Finally, it seeks to understand how Hollywood capitalizes scientific discoveries to produce and reproduce the acceptable dominant ideologies of the ruling class.

1.4 Methodology

There are three ideologies specific to Hollywood films that I wish to identify within the science fiction films: They are Capitalism, Sexism and American Culture – Optimism. In order to identify these three ideologies, I intend to focus on four (4) unit analyses within film elements. These are setting, characters, dialogue and the story line. Capitalism is to be identified in film settings; American Culture-Optimism in Characters and Story-line; and Sexism in Dialogue, respectively.

In this research, three science fiction films have been identified purposefully, based on the same theme (creation) and same time frame, that of the nineties: *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Species I* (1995) and *Godzilla* (1998). Each film is segmented individually, according to the spatio-temporal break(fade) or transitive link (dissolve), normally indicated by a fade and change of setting.

In each segment, a set of codes for the three ideologies are specified to identify the ideologies embedded, quantitatively. Quantitative here means, the frequencies of occurrence of the prescribed code for the ideology (Please refer to page 77) for code

identified for capitalism in *Species I*. The total frequencies are then tallied on the coding sheet to find the percentage of each individual ideology. The segment is not only analyzed in terms of filmic images but also other elements connotated through signs and symbols. This kind of analysis is called semiology. Semiology is a science that studies the life of signs within society and is advocated by a linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure(1916).

Hence, I will look at the elements within filmic images and categorize them as signifier (has potential but not the actual meaning) and signified (mental concept or reference of an object). The other way is to look at filmic images as denotative (manifest content) or connotative (underlying content).

1.5 Significance of the Research

Ostensibly, science fiction films play the role of entertainer, especially in this age of new technology, providing a more variegated, imaginative and highly exploratory scientific topics while portraying a sprinkle of romance/myth occasionally. What people generally fail to see in this kind of film is the solemn yet influential agenda of Hollywood, whereby it shrewdly and subtly inserts ideologies within as stated by Raymond Williams (1976).

Central to this discussion are the questions why ideologies are interposed in film and how are they done. Although nobody can exactly draw a fine line as to how much or to what extent the movie could succeed in imparting or reinforcing ideologies within

filmic images in the audiences' mind, consciously or unconsciously, the audiences are influenced by the ideologies conveyed.

Metz (1982) argues that films operate as a kind of mental machinery, whereby spectators accustom, internalize and adapt themselves to film reality. This clearly shows film is a powerful ideological apparatus, manipulated by the dominant classes to reinforce certain preconceptions in the audiences' mind. It is empowered to change the audience's beliefs, attitudes and value system and tend to resonate with the dominant beliefs, attitudes and values of American society.

Therefore, the significance of this research is as follows:

- 1 To decode the ideologies that occur in Hollywood Science fiction film.
- 2 To contribute to the ideological study of Hollywood Science fiction film .

1.6 Thesis Structure and Outline

Chapter 1 briefly discusses film and its power to change our beliefs and value system. It also justifies why a research on this topic is required, the methodology used to analyze the films and the objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 of this thesis describes science fiction films of their origin and development. It explains how Science fiction filmstries to satisfy the inquisitive nature of human beings by capitalizing on some science discoveries. It also explain why Hollywood begins to produce blockbusters in the 80's and 90's which is aimed at reconquering the market lost to video cassettes and other entertainment media.

Chapter 3 examines the Political-economy Theory. This theory seeks to explain the unholy liaison between Hollywood and the Capitalist Economic System that have resulted in films being made into instruments of the ruling class (dominant elite) to perpetuate their hegemonic position. Political economy theory also aims to explain how the capitalists exploit films to put them in the service of consumer-oriented capitalism in order to maintain power and control.

Chapter 4 looks at the notion of film text as a language, possessing surface and deep structure. It explains that the deep structure can be articulated using semiology, which is a science that studies the life of signs within society. Film semiotics looks at signs in film in a systematic and objective way to decode its meaning.

Chapter 5 is the discussion and analysis of the findings in this thesis. It examines how the three kinds of ideologies (capitalism, sexism and optimism –American Culture) are subtly embedded within the filmic images to appropriate the tastes and interests of the audience and to position the capitalists and thereby sustaining their hegemonic position.

Chapter 6 is the Conclusion of the Thesis. It sums up briefly the objectives of the study and gives a short discussion of the findings of the three films. It also reinforces the understanding of the political-economy theory and how films exert power and control over the subjects via interpellation and disempowerment, and disguises the needs and reality of the audience. Additionally, this chapter concludes by giving a brief account of the difficulties encountered during the research and proposes some areas for future research.

Chapter 2 Science Fiction Films

2.1 Definition of Science Fiction and Science Fiction Films

Science fiction films emerged as a genre in the silent era as another narrative form of entertainment, with its theme based on literary science fiction novels. It is defined as a kind of film that shows a narrative derived from some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology (Kinsley:1961). According to Scholes and Rabkin (1977), the beginning of this genre marks humankind changing attitudes towards space and time and the history of our growing understanding of the universe and position of our species in that universe.

In terms of content, Science fiction film is not one hundred percent science, there is also a certain percentage of myth present. According to Albert Wendland (1985), science fiction can be categorized into two modes, the experimental and the conventional. The experimental mode is all tied to science while the conventional mode is all tied to myth. Science fiction film is experimental when it deals objectively with social trends, extrapolation, social satire, prophetic warning (apocalyptic), or speculation on scientific discoveries that might affect the world. In short, science fiction film is a kind of scientific theorizing in which hypothetical situations are analyzed. It ponders on our position in history and space, discusses what we might encounter, what might become of this universe and what we might do about it.

On the other hand, the conventional mode refers to science fiction as an entertainment commodity that appeals to more of the readers' or audiences' subjective longings rather than objective analysis. As convention requires, it repeats and supports

the assumptions of the genre, the notions passed down and agreed upon by the science fiction writers and fans. These assumptions are common futuristic scenarios that support the actions of special groups within a technological society. In other words, conventional science fiction perpetuates and adds to the collection of agreed-upon scientific predictions, settings, a self-contained scenario of the future that is supportive of the myth present in science fiction. Therefore, Wendland (1985) defines science fiction (film) as fantasy posing as realism because of an apparently scientific frame.

The myth element in science fiction (books or films) is as vital as the scientific notion. It is in fact one of the magical ways to keep a reader/audience engrossed. As a matter of fact, a reader/audience is more attracted to the fantasy of the myth rather than the scientific notion. In truth, fantasy provides a means of escape, adventure or dreams of power, although most readers want to think they prefer science fiction to fantasy. Science fiction writers are given the allowance to "bend" scientific laws, as long as they do not "break" them on this premise (Rottensteiner:1975). This obviously has paved the way for myth to be present in science fiction, thinly disguised to pander to our dreams of power. In contrast, the element notion of science is incorporated into the story background to lend an official aura to this kind of genre - the realism of science fiction story. Although the story line in a science fiction might be highly unbelievable, (for instance Mary Shelley's Frankenstein) we could somehow believe the logic in the story. To make science fiction realistic, dense backing of scientific data are inserted in a logical manner in a science fiction. This lends to credibility, in the sense that their events depicted can possibly occur.

The context of the science fiction genre is often based on a large-scale scenario on the premise of some scientific assumption. It could be a collective set of beliefs concerning the future history of humanity, the worth of space travel and technological advancement, and the faith in the value of humanity spreading its predominantly capitalist notions across the universe. The large-scale scenario could be both, experimental or conventional in function. When these assumptions are questioned, demonstrated and examined, they become experimental. On the other hand, when the assumptions of the scenarios are presented without examining and theorizing or even demonstrating them, it becomes conventional.

In essence, a science fiction writer aims to dupe the reader, make the sense of a story's reality palatable and trustworthy, reassure a reader (who wants to enter into the story world) that the world created is authentic, consistent and logically established. A good analogy of a science fiction writer is that he/ she is like a religious zealot who quickly grabs any current story of a miracle to prove to others the reality of his religion (Linda Fleming: 1977).

Hence, science fiction (film) is a genre that certainly implies that humankind possesses an imaginative, inquiring and penetrating mind that probes beyond the horizon of what human senses could perceive through their mental faculties. Based on this, literary writers and movie makers have stretched reality by creating this new genre - Science fiction to quench the audiences' thirst for extraordinary phenomenon backed by newly discovered scientific theories, pseudo-science with a sprinkle of superstition, fantasy and truths.

2.2 The Origin and Evolution of Science Fiction and Films

In Europe, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, there was an intellectual and literary movement known as the Enlightenment. This movement was characterized by rationalism, that is by the principle or habit of accepting reason as the supreme authority in matters of opinion, belief, or conduct. It was an age that advocated the use of scientific method to test old theories and to develop new knowledge. It was during the Age of Reason (1660 -1780), that The Royal Society was founded in England by a group of learned men and scientists. Two years later, (1662) King Charles II chartered The Royal Society to make official the scientific activities and investigations. It was during that age, writers cut themselves off from the mainstream of literary culture to support new discoveries in science and technology (Helen Mc Donnell et al:1987). Literary works that were originally dominated by myth, fear of spiritual presence and misconception about natural calamities as punishment by an angry god began to lose their grip on humankind. In response to this awareness, coupled with technological advances and scientific discoveries, writers stumbled upon this new genre – science fiction. Apparently, the scientific way of understanding the world has brought about a shift of world-view, from “a supernatural explanation of phenomena to a rational explanation based on known or hypothesized laws of the universe” (Hillegas: 1979).

The period of scientific outlook, which is an ideology justifying scientific research as intrinsic to nature and purpose of human existence began with the technological triumphs and the erosion of traditional religious beliefs caused by the

Industrial Revolution. Science fiction then was moulded and shaped by scientific thoughts.

The history of science fiction film is intrinsically tied to the development of film itself. In 1895, Robert Paul conceived the idea of creating an illusory voyage through time, obviously inspired by H G Well's novel *The Time Machine*, followed by *The Men in the Moon* (1901) which explored the idea of space travel and aliens. Other topics explored were space travel and many followed the grand tradition of mad scientists meddling with "Things That Man Was Not Meant To Know" (Brosnan, 1991). *Frankenstein* (1910), based on a novel by Mary Shelley (1818) was directed by J Searle Dawley for the Edison Company, starring Charles Ogle as the monster. It was a story about the madness of scientific ambition of a scientist, Dr. Victor Frankenstein who dared to play God, meddled with human life, and created a monster. Shelley's work was indeed the offspring of the society that was increasingly interested in technology advancement and its potential. Yet films of this kind did not gain much respectability during that period of time.

The theme (of a mad scientist meddling with nature) also set the tradition of most scientist fiction films. Hence, after *Frankenstein*, many other science fiction films of a similar kind were produced during this silent era but the response towards these scientific romances acquired a bad reputation in Hollywood that was to last for a short while (Brosnan:1991). Refer to Appendix A

The Golden Age of Science Fiction films began only after World War II. It boomed for a short while in the fifties (1950 –1956). Apparently, American society was very uneasy and paranoid in the fifties. For one, it was just after the post-nuclear decade

and atomic war was imminent. Secondly, there was also the fear of communist infiltration. The science fiction publishing scene in America flourished with a new breed of science fiction writers such as Isaac Asimov, AE Van Vogt, James Blish and Damon Knight (to name a few) who exploited this new found fear. New science fiction magazines such as The magazine of Fantasy, 1949 and Science Fiction and Galaxy Science Fiction, 1950 began to appear, reflecting the increasing popularity of the genre (Brosnan: 1991). The two magazines ushered in a rich period of science fiction writing based on some very original reactionary themes on the use of atomic bombs such as the impact and horror of atomic bombs and the mutation of creatures due to radiation from atomic bombs. Other prominent themes were UFOs and alien invasion. Hollywood, fully aware of the cultural pulse of America exploited the situation, as they could actually make a lot of money out of horror films caused by mutation, a kind of prophetic awareness. However, the golden fifties lasted a short while and by 1956 the appetite for science fiction started to wane and the genre lost its popularity (Refer to Appendix B for Some Popular Science Fiction Films of the Fifties).

The science fiction films production of the sixties continued to produce Bomb movies. The Hollywood screenwriter worked on the treatment about the Bomb with specific messages embedded to create awareness of the serious threat brought about by bomb. After 1966, Hollywood science fiction took off on a new beginning with the – creation of high budget films. The film, *Fantastic Voyage* made by 20th Century Fox was the first high-budget science fiction movie. A lot of money was spent on the making of this film using special effects, directed by Richard Fleischer. When the film was released, it also became a big box office success (Brosnan:1991).

Another landmark in the development of science fiction film was Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). This film which was deliberately ambiguous was to have important repercussions for science fiction cinema later, in that science fiction film was more than what would meet the eye. In an interview in *Playboy*, Kubrick revealed that *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) was created to "penetrate the subconscious with emotional and philosophical content, and ... you are free to speculate as you wish about the philosophical and allegorical meaning of the film" (Brosnan, 1991). *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) actually revolved around the giant question mark of humanity's relationship with both the Universe and the mysterious entities that had been manipulating the development of species. (Refer to Appendix C for Films made in the Sixties)

The Science fiction movie boom began in the Seventies, when film-makers experimented with special sensory effects to appeal to the audience. It was during this decade that science fiction gained a firm footing as a popular genre. Movies have also recycled themselves either in the form of remakes or in the form of sequels during this decade and it has continued towards the eighties and nineties. Some of the remakes are *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, (1978) *Lost Horizon*, (1973) *The Thing*, (1982) *Frankeinstein*, (1993). Films of this category are apparently an attempt to appeal to adults, who had seen the original as children. Popular science fiction film sequels are designed in trilogy forms. Three such popular sequels are Lucas's *Star Wars*, (1977) *The Empire Strikes Back*, (1980) and *The Return of The Jedi*, (1983). Films directed by George Lucas during this era initiated the use of special technical effects in science fiction films that deployed electrifying visuals which succeeded in appealing to the

emotion of the audience. Another sensory element put to good use was music that was used for amplifying the films' effect. Filmic scenes were given greater impact by being juxtaposed with music.

In addition, Science fiction films that were originally made for adults soon branched out to audiences of different age groups *Star Wars*(1977) and *Close Encounter of the Third Kind* (1978) were two other very popular films in the seventies. These two films were instances of films that appealed to audiences of different ages. Just as *Star Wars* appealed to children dreaming of blowing up entire planets and shooting down an endless series of adversaries with a ray gun; *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Steven Spielberg) appealed to the child imaginatively and skilfully within the adults, using special effects. *Close Encounter of The Third Kind*, set a new pace in the development of science fiction, in that it employed the art of special effects. The optical effects consumed \$3,500,000 of a total budget of \$19,000,000 supervised by Douglas Trumbull. (Filmmakers Newsletter, Vol. 11, No 2, 1977.)

In 1979, *Alien*, directed by Ridley Scott was yet another important development in science fiction film. Science fiction films were no longer looked upon as a vehicle carrying a message but also with vested commercial interest. Studios were willing to lavish budgets on science fiction production. Ridley Scott introduced the visual richness and sophisticated special visual effects to attract the audience. However, many of the science fiction films made during this period of time were set in the bleakness and pessimism of technological advances such as robots overcoming humankind and other ecological disasters (Refer to Appendix 4).

2.3 Blockbusters of the Eighties and Nineties.

It is important to note that new technology has charted the history of Hollywood films making in the eighties and nineties. Firstly, we note that digitalization has caused many telecommunication and broadcasting services to converge into industrial activity. The technical convergence leads to institutional convergence and to the consolidation of national and international provision of information into the hands of a few mega-providers. To remain competitive in the communication world, separate mergers have developed across hardware and software interests such as in the case of Sony purchasing Columbia Pictures and CBS Records or Matsushita acquiring MCA and Universal Pictures. Another network creation of Time-Warner with recently developed ties with companies such as Toshiba and AT & T (Cees J. Hamerlink: 1994). Time incorporation purchased Warner Incorporation in January 1990, creating an enormous combination of interlocking media companies (Prince:1997).

Secondly, Hollywood diversifies its market to reposition itself to compete in an integrated entertainment market. Time-Warner company has Six Flags Entertainment, which encompasses seven theme parks, leading magazine publishers, recorded music and music publishing, Home Videos etc. In the mid-eighties, Hollywood embarked on the remake and adaptation of many successful foreign movies, like *Godzilla* and *Sommersby*. Except for the new technological development, the format for science fiction film is always the same. For example, Hollywood changes from Dinosaur to *Godzilla* or from Harrison Ford to Kevin Costner. Hollywood science fiction films are powerful means to disseminate ideology in familiar scripts.

Thirdly, Science fiction films of these two decades came in the form of blockbusters based on eclectic themes like lost in space, space movies, rogue robots, angry androids and crafty computers, mutation of genes etc. A blockbuster is any hugely profitable film that grosses hundreds of millions of dollars in the world markets. Most blockbusters feature a fantasy narrative and state-of-the-art special effects. The emergence of blockbusters comes in the dawn of severe decline in box-office revenues in 1986. For the first time, revenue from home video rental surpassed box-office revenues and box-office tickets represented less than 30 percent of the total film revenues (Prince:1995). The market for motion pictures is now integrated and corporate survival depends on diversified control of these markets. This environment creates a distinct rationale for blockbuster production. These kinds of films are more than just the films. The blockbuster motion picture is in fact the hub of a giant wheel of interconnected services and products. Films made also provide the stimulus for a huge array of merchandising and marketing a huge network of theme-based and associated products on blockbuster film characters. One of the all-time top money makers of the nineties was *Jurassic Park* (1993). The film grossed \$14 million in the first week in the United Kingdom, \$15 million in Japan, \$13 million in Germany and \$ 14 million in France. Products associated with *Jurassic Park* included ice-cream, frozen pizza, cakes, juices, cookies, key rings, chairs, sneakers, *Jurassic Park* video games and toy dinosaurs. Other blockbuster that features this theme-lined product is *E.T.* It features the character *E.T.*, an ugly little alien.

Science Fiction Blockbusters made by Hollywood are watched by millions of people throughout the world. It implies the dominance of Hollywood films as a popular

form of entertainment through the box-office collection. As Metz wrote, 'the cinematic institution is not just the cinema industry which works to fill cinemas, not empty them, it is also the mental machinery –another industry-which "spectators accustomed to the cinema" have internalised historically and which has adapted them to the consumption of films.' (Metz, 1982:7) Therefore, it is impertinent for cinema to achieve this aim. To achieve this aim, they need to counter-react against the prevailing forces of the Home video such as cable TV and VCR.

2.4 Hollywood Science fiction films as a popular Genre

Hollywood Science fiction film has become popular and has gained much popularity over the years and successfully entered into the category "public classics", meaning films that have grossed big box-office collection. One sure reason as to why Hollywood science fiction films is popular is that science fiction films not only inform but also entertain. Basically, science fiction films are based on a collective set of beliefs concerning the future history of humanity; the worth of space travel and technological advancement, both biologically and technically and have attracted many audiences because human beings are fundamentally curious beings. We all want to know what is going on in this universe, what the universe will be like with all the on-going scientific exploration. Perhaps the prophetic message offers the best attraction. Many reasons have contributed to the popularity of science fiction film.

Susan Sontag (1979: 491), in her book, *Against Interpretation*, says science fiction (film) has more literature ideas. Science fiction is based on the futuristic and

scientific phenomena. The story is not just actions but “an encounter with a new phenomenon”. As such, film makers need to create “sensuous elaboration” to make fantasy pose as realism. This sensuous elaboration naturally demands modern technological know-how. For example, missiles and rocket combat, toppling of skyscrapers require sophisticated technology and special cinematic effects to bring about a real true experience for viewers.

Another aspect of science fiction film is concerned with the aesthetic of destruction (not just science), with the peculiar beauties to be found in the massive havoc and mess created by the encounter. And it is in the imagery of destruction that the core of a good science fiction film lies. Psychologically, it becomes a form of primitive gratification in every individual. According to the catharsis hypothesis originally proposed by Aristotle, accumulated aggressive urges are supposedly drained after watching violence, with the result that the individual behaves less aggressively (Collins: 1984). The hypothesis holds that any one can purge their aggressive impulses through vicarious catharsis experience. Therefore, watching destruction becomes a kind of outlet for us to purge our pent-up feelings.

The organization of the American film industry has a unique way of facilitating the international marketing of its product. Hollywood is an integrated entertainment producer catering to integrated domestic and international markets. Integration arose from declining importance of theatrical box-office revenues and the growth of ancillary markets or alternative media environments in which consumers watch films. Due to the overwhelming popularity of Hollywood films, the distribution arm of the industry supply and make multiple prints of a film (whenever necessary) when the film is released to

thousands of theatres and cinemas across the entire globe. The popularity is also attributed to the increase in the number of motion picture screens, which also indirectly creates a demand for films. To meet the convenience of its audience, distribution companies have also supplied films to TV networks and VCD and video makers in recent years.

The marketing strategy employed by Spielberg - limited disclosure of information about the film, using only one graphic illustration from the film ensured that the audience would stay interested and be kept in suspense about the film. For example, in *Jurassic Park* only an image showing the head of a dinosaur tipping over the Park vehicle is seen. As the film premiere drew closer, minimal teasing information gave way to media blitzes. This strategy has helped boost Hollywood blockbusters.

There are always the fierce and aggressive promotional campaigns that assisted Hollywood in making the world its marketplace for its science fiction films. Special effects advanced by technology helped Hollywood to make a come back after the drastic decline caused by television and home video by incorporating elements that television cannot provide to rack up astonishing gross receipts. One of the special effects is the creation of visual spectacles on a grand scale and showed audiences things they have never seen before. With the advance in technology, many elaborate special effects are possible. Special effects are for example, credible effects to recreate in dramatic form a familiar, historic or real event. Incredible effects stimulate potentially real events in a heightened or extreme fashion, such as the one used in *Star Trek III*. Amazing effects create people, creatures, places or even occurrences that are beyond what is presently considered possible as in *Encounter with the Third Kind* or even in *Godzilla*.

Science fiction film requires not only high-technology but also creative sensuous elaborate details that could only be produced by Hollywood that has the advantages of advanced technology, creativity of both local and emigrant film makers and the financial backing of multinational companies to produce science fiction blockbusters. Blockbusters of this genre that are outstanding, spectacular and most of all palatable (having cultivated the taste) have also indirectly cultivated a ready market, globally.

By naming the above reasons, I am not denying other contributing factors such as it is always more economical to rent films than to make our own kind of films. Besides, the cinematic effect produced by Hollywood is always something of a “hoo-ha” to Third World Nations that lack the technological know-how and the financial means. Having cultivated their tastes and desire for the Hollywood films over the years, it is not surprising that Hollywood films play a dominant role in this entertainment industry.

2.5 Influential Ideology embedded in Science Fiction Films

Up to this point in time, science fiction film by Hollywood continues to be moulded and shaped by scientific innovations. In the past, science and technology holds the key to progress and thus represented bourgeois society’s investment in its own future. Today, likewise, the capitalists exploit it to put them in the service of consumer-oriented capitalism in order to maintain the hegemony and control. This viewpoint is very much supported and developed by the cultural critics of the Frankfurt School, according to Althusser-Lacan film theory (Classical Realist Film), i.e. Hollywood movies are solely responsible for the positioning of capitalist subjects (Colin MacCabe:1974). According to