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Critical Response

Science Fiction

Films And

Their

Cold War Context

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¹The 1950's are widely regarded as the 'golden age' of Science Fiction films as it is a popular genre. This genre has borrowed from others, such as fantasy, horror, war, film noir, adventure, westerns and romance. The films were also vehicles for other focuses, in particular, 1950's Science Fiction films portrayed representations of the Cold War context. The films were commonly a way to express anxiety about technology and the impact it has on the human society. The idea of technology and nuclear weapons being used to destroy humankind is shown. The films also depict the common struggle between good and evil. In this context 'good' was understood as 'us' and the evil as 'them'. The 'Them' were represented by diabolical aliens, creatures from the sub-conscious and from other dimensions. In a Cold War context of the battle between the free, capitalist west's struggle against the alien, communist Russia was implicit in this struggle that adapted elements of 'Horror Film' genre to add to the horror of this Science Fiction period.

The writers of Science Fiction films raised the question; "What if?" What if creatures from outer space invaded earth? Whatever the question may be, the answer is always plausible and satisfying. The films displayed the destruction of humanity by world – wide disaster and were popular because of this reason. The quality of the film was not a necessary requirement for it to succeed. The ²³appeal of this genre was such that expensive scriptwriters, new special effects and the produces didn't need to know too much about Science Fiction for the film to be successful. Well-known actors were not necessary.

¹ Frederick Pohl, *Science Fiction Studies In Film*, (New York: Ace Books, 1984) 7-12

² Lucanio, Patrick, Joseph, *Them Or Us*, (Bloomington: University Press, 1987) 19-20

The context of the United States during 1950's is important to understanding the success of this genre as it was a period of prosperity and fear. The Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union threatened the world with nuclear destruction. Americans saw themselves crusading against the evil, godless and expansionist communism. The Korean War was a powerful example of this threat. However, there was also the fear of communism undermining American strength from within. To be a communist in the United States during this period was not only to be a traitor but un-American. The inquiry of Senator McCarthy into un-American activity showed how paranoia could be easily generated. It is not hard to understand how these concerns would be represented in film. The fears of the film writers were a way of sharing it with the public, quite often that fear was more a reflection of the sub-conscious rather than a deliberate political statement.

Plots based on the idea of "Alien invasion" were very popular. Science Fiction films depicted the destruction that unfamiliar races could have on mankind. This idea is of course taken on many levels, one that society feared was the future and what it could bring. Alien races are usually portrayed as superior to mankind and represent the idea that a more advanced culture of people could mean the destruction ⁴of a particular society. The films are American, which shows that they were made to explore the reality that the United States could one day become inferior to other cultures, which could lead to the downfall of America.

³ Haycock, Kate, *Science Fiction Films*, (England, Wayland, 1991) 16, 17.

⁴ Lucanio, Patrick, Joseph. 74-75

Science Fiction films tend to make a definite distinction between the hero and the villain. The villain is usually an extra-terrestrial or unbelievable mass of creatures that add to the illusion of evil. The hero tends to be a distinct hero whose morals and mental ability show this individual to be more capable than others to defeat the enemy. The society never regains control without this distinct character and has become accustomed to the "hero myth." Often this type of character is 'a wise old man,' who uses recollections from his past to defeat the enemy. This type is often only a psychological hero and acts as a 'backbone' to the real hero's who actually carry out the process to prevent world destruction, but the audience like to think as the 'wise old man' as the true hero. The American concept of the importance and value of the individual is reinforced through this.

The titles of Science Fiction films generally tell the audience that 'something unfamiliar is coming,' often suspected to be life threatening and disastrous. The titles function like newspaper headings and suggest that they are a parody of current events. The enemies, whether it is an invading army or a "thing" will destroy, replace or metamorphose the human race. Representations of the conflict tend to be all too human and easily understood World War Two scenarios.

The Day The Earth Stood Still (1951) depicts the Cold War paranoia of the destruction of mankind through a nuclear war. A giant flying saucer, which lands in Washington DC in the USA, has aboard an alien, Klaatu, who is sent to Earth to warn 'earthlings' to stop the production of Nuclear weapons. Klaatu warns the American Governments that if atomic

tests do not stop, then the Earth will be destroyed by advanced civilisations. The messenger moves in with a family as a boarder and blends into society to observe the full range of human experience. The American Government refused the message of Klaatu.

The rejection of Klaatu's message is mirrored in the production of the movie, as the US Department Of Defense wouldn't allow their equipment to be used in the film as it may suggest that they are against nuclear weapons. However, National Guard, a reservist military unit under the control of the States, was more willing to lend their equipment than the Federal Government.

'The Day The Earth Stood Still', borrows elements from the New Testament and follows a hero's plight to put the lives of others before his. It also depicts ⁵allusions to the apocalypse. Many of the invasions or films depicting the destruction of ⁶humanity are set in highly populated areas. This is to emphasise the parallel to nuclear war and the effect that a single nuclear bomb is capable of having on a mass of people.

To demonstrate that the aliens have the power to destroy the Earth, Klaatu uses his unimaginable power, by stopping just about everything on Earth. By making the 'Earth stand still,' Klaatu intelligently and dramatically gains everyone's attention. This action ironically parallels the impact that atomic warfare could have on Earth.

⁵ Lucanio, Patrick, Joseph. 74-75

⁶ Wise, Robert, *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, film (1951)

One may even argue the point that the noble figure from an intelligent “superior” race was prepared to murder over five billion men, women and children if the human beings resisted his dictatorship. The alien is meant to be showing the message of peace and tolerance, but instead it becomes an ironic tale of a master race that is willing to commit the ultimate act of destruction in order to preserve their racial purity in space. Such a view is closer to the idea that the Alien is representing Hitler, in that Klaatu is only interested in freedom and justice.

During this period of time, America was deep in the Cold War and was obsessed with the destructive capabilities of the atomic bomb. However, while many American’s may have feared nuclear weapons, they would have considered it unpatriotic to oppose the American strategic arsenal. The movie represents a small, though growing resistance to this unquestioning acceptance of the need to maintain the nuclear arsenal. The alien, Kaatu articulates this view in the movie.

⁷⁸ *‘The Day The Earth Stood Still’* portrays aliens in a different light and differed from the traditional, evil, demoniac Hollywood alien. Klaatu, the alien commanding the space ship, is friendly, rational and peaceful. The physical appearance is very similar to an American astronaut. He wears a shiny silver space suit that is a stereotyped livery for space fearing aliens and humans. His morality is in contrast to many of the human characters. He delivers the message that if Earth continues its War- like ways in space, it

⁷ Haycock, Kate. 13, 14

⁸ Benson, Simon, Red Planet’s UFO Frenzy, (Daily Telegraph, 13/6/01)

will be destroyed. The film is important as it is making a strong statement about man and society and how there is an extreme importance for us 'all to get along together.'

People were stuck in the UFO craze and there were mass sightings of UFO's represented by the regular appearance of the flying saucers. Their appearance suggested that aliens were vicious killers. In most films, the aliens were portrayed as evil invaders, but "The Day The Earth Stood Still," places the creatures in a different perspective.

The minimal detail of the UFO craft, suggests that technology is so far advanced that the audience can fill in explanations with their imaginations. The soft light ⁹ allows for this and the focus is then put onto the moral message behind the film rather than the special effects.

The fear of technology advancing and the detrimental effect it may have on humans is shown by the positive future depicted by Klaatu. Klaatu is seventy-eight, yet he looks a lot younger with a life expectancy of one hundred and thirty, shows that the aliens' way of life is beneficial. They have medicine so superior that it can heal a bullet wound overnight. Ironically, Klaatu's world has weapons of unimaginable capabilities. It shows what can happen to American civilization if 'other' alien civilizations, such as the USSR advance ahead of them. A possibly positive future for mankind is shown if science can be directed towards areas that are beneficial rather than being hypnotized by war.

⁹ Pohl, Fredericl. 113-116

When the space craft is first seen traveling over Hong Kong, towards Washington DC, it is described by the head of state as simply “a craft designed to travel outside of the Earth’s atmosphere.” The government doesn’t want the public to think that it is a threat of world destruction, despite the overload of machine guns and army tanks upon its arrival. The ironic scene when Klaatu is interviewed as an innocent bi-stander begins to offer a point of view that shows there is more to the fiasco than just an “alien invasion.” The journalist is not interested in this intelligent perspective and this represents censorship in the media and in the Government.

The film was made during the Cold War, after mankind witnessed the atomic bomb’s¹⁰ devastation on Japan. The pacifist message of the film is still relevant more than fifty years later and the possibility that a third world war could mean the first nuclear war and unimaginable destruction.

After several rather humane attempts made to stop atomic warfare, Klaatu decides to leave earth with the disappointment of the human race’s resistance to change. He informs them that if their technology enables them to leave earth and if their violence threatens any other planet, Earth will be destroyed.

It Came From Outer Space (1953) shows the need of an extra-terrestrial life form has to repair their ships. Humans are kidnapped and are replaced with identical replicas and are then used to repair the damaged crafts. Details are soon given away that the replicas exist and answers begin to be demanded. The film has impressive credentials and is based on a

story by Ray Bradbury, 'Comet.' One may even say the film created hysteria, as it was the first movie to use the theme of aliens taking over the bodies of human beings.

The film was released in the "moralistic" era of the 1950's. The two main characters, John and Ellen are 'lovers' living under the same roof and are not married. This created a stir and immediately set the mood of the film and it's new political suggestions. The ¹¹couple is viewed within the society as slight "troublemakers" and when they reveal that they witnessed a meteor falling from the sky into the desert, they are not believed. As a result they are laughed at and mocked by society. A landslide covers up the evidence of ¹²the alien spacecraft and one may even interpret this as a representation of the US Government and their attempts to cover up unexplained phenomena's. The sheriff even suggests that the authorities have had recent suspicions of human astronomers living on the outskirts of the desert. It also supports the idea that it is easier to say it didn't occur, than it is to attempt to explain the unfamiliar. Another idea the film criticizes is the American value of not trusting anyone who doesn't "fit in," and the aliens are even eventually portrayed in a rather sympathetic light. The 3D technology is understated to emphasise the idea that the aliens are not out to cause harm.

The film unwittingly paints a vivid picture of the context. During this year, Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing successfully climbed Everest and created the idea that if "we" can make it to the top of the largest peak on Earth, perhaps we can make it to the stars. In the same year, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were tried and executed for selling

¹¹ Pohl, Frederick. 122-123.

atomic secrets to the Russians. The film industry, bearing the brunt of anti-communist hysteria led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, released *'It Came From Outer Space'* as a form of retaliation. The audience was already conditioned to fear the unknown and the aliens need for secrecy undermines their credibility.

¹³The aliens take over the bodies of Frank and George and the truth is conformed to John when he notices that the replicates can stare unblinkingly into the sun. The aliens become angry when the sheriff strongly decides not to accept their proposal, "we just want to repair our ship in peace and love." The aliens believe they have not been given a fair trial and consider redirecting the ship's power towards the destruction of Earth. The Lynch mob arrives and as they watch the spaceship depart, they justify the situation by, "it wasn't the right time for us to meet." Their very technological mastery is suspect, marking them as masters of secrets of space travel and the human soul, that the film warns us Americans may not be ready to hear. This is suggesting that the human culture is resistant to change and are not ready for such an unfamiliar occurrence.

The idea of portraying the aliens as secretive or a master race adds to the paranoia of undetected, conflicting spies that could be surrounding the ordinary people of the country. John is viewed as an inappropriate influence on Ellen, who is seen as a stereotypical fearful female lead who is vulnerable and open to make mistakes. The aliens even use the vulnerable female character to warn John to keep the townspeople away from the local mine. Ellen is excused for her allegations of seeing the aliens, as society

¹² Haycock, Kate. 18, 19.

¹³ Lucanio, Patrick, Joseph. 33-42

puts it down to being an unintelligent observation from a less credible “female.” John is described in the beginning of the film as almost “insane,” even though his sightings in the atmospheric desert were the same as Ellen’s. This demonstrates the gender inequalities present within this paradigm.

The character of Matt also portrays inter-textualities as he speaks of Ellen frequently; this is showing a severe case of sexual frustration. A racial subtext is also apparent in the film when Matt sees an alien roaming the town and responds to the other characters who have a similar outlook on life with, “ look at him, walking around like he belongs here.” It is also debatable whether the film has elements of anti- communism, which was a big factor¹⁴ in the fifties. Some take into account that the film is set in the Southwest, and view it more like a racial subtext than an ideological one.

The film is considerably different to earlier science fiction films, as it presents a more thoughtful, optimistic and hopeful view of mankind’s future encounters with alien races. The director Jack Arnold, even allows the opportunity for aliens to present their views on certain issues. The audience is however reminded of the problems with unfamiliar creatures as he utilizes a weird, watery visual effect that is decidedly scary. The film is capitalising on post- World War II fears of Communist infiltration and the remarkable scientific advances of the time. It more effectively mixes elements from horror films of the 1930’s and 1940’s with the intensely xenophobic American mindset of the early Cold War era.

This Island Earth (1955) is similar in principle to, *It Came From Outer Space*, as mysterious aliens with oversized heads, kidnapped nuclear scientists to help them save their planet Metaluna. In this film, the alien planet is on the verge of annihilation and it brings visitors to Earth for the purpose of recruiting the World's best scientists to aid the salvation of an alien world.

The appearance of the scientists is stereotypical for a "mad scientist" and their white hair corresponds with the hair of the aliens, 'snow white hair.' This is supported when the nuclear scientists are gullible enough to believe that the aliens need the ¹⁵"intelligent" help of the human scientists to enhance their research. The human's are unaware that they themselves are the core of the research and are too caught up in the excitement of finding out unknown secrets about Nuclear weapons.

In a documentary called "Confirmation" on Prime, (24/6/01) it is shown that people became familiar and comfortable with the common appearance of the spacecraft. After the first alien invasion movie came to the view of society, endless reports of UFO sightings were recorded. In *This Island Earth*, the spacecraft appears like the typical craft known at the time. The craft is disc like in shape and travels at high speeds with the ability to hover over buildings in the city. The alien craft is be-littled when another life form attacks the craft.

¹⁴ Arnold, Jack, *It Came From Outer Space*, film, (1953)

¹⁵ Prime Television, *Confirmation*, (24/6/01)

The alien crafts produce powerful projectiles that decimate the surface of the planet. The human's are then forced to live underground to escape the danger of the invasion. This visual aspect would relate specifically to innocent people who had to hide in bomb shelters from the fear of nuclear bombs and other invasions.

The human scientist is again portrayed as inferior as "he" fails to save Earth from the destruction of the Aliens. However, the scientist (Cal Meachen) conveniently manages to escape the hysteria with the help of the stereotypical female character. The Aliens have the intentions of uncovering enough Uranium to keep the planet's force field from collapsing, permitting enemy invasion. The two humans were taken to the "off World" to attempt to restore the Alien planet which had decimated both politically¹⁶¹⁷ and physically. The leader wishes for the area of Earth to become an evacuation post for the other alien creatures.

The appearance of the Aliens themselves is also similar to the images spoken of in the documentary. The very common and familiar image of "tall, luminous, disc like eyes, snake like tentacles" in *The War Of The Worlds*, were also similar to the aliens in *Mars Attacks*. Which bear an uncanny resemblance to the Insectoids of Metaluna.

The film also makes direct reference to an "Interociter," an advanced communications device used to persuade the human's that they would be helping to "end all Wars." This makes a parody of the Government policies that were often promised and disregarded

¹⁶ Arnold, Jack, Newman .M. Joseph, *This Island Earth*, film, (1955)

¹⁷ Wells. H.G, *The War Of The Worlds*, (England, Nightfall Inc, 1986) 20-21.

throughout the time of the Cold War. There is also a distinct scene in the film, which shows a remote country house with basement laboratories where many of the efforts of scientists were performed. This may be representing the base of 'Area 51' or could also be representing the only base present at the time that housed atomic weapons. This was mentioned in the documentary mentioned previously. The film also makes assumptions about the cover up of Roswell and how the US Government could be represented by the Aliens who use a fabricated version of the truth to manipulate the human's into their command. The images in the film are particularly making a parody of the UFO hysteria and how certain people were persistent enough to make 'pretend' footage to gain attention. It satirises the hysteria of Alien invasion present at the time and makes these strong assumptions with the context of the Cold War.

Forbidden Planet (1956) is a film where the role is reversed in that it was the journey made by American astronauts to the distant planet of Atlair-4. The film re-worked Shakespeare's '*The Tempest*' and is known for its repressed sexual desires and stars the popular 'Robbie the Robot.' When the crew of a spaceship lands on the planet, they become aware of an invisible force that threatens to destroy them.

The futuristic title that first appears on the screen is closely compared to the flying saucer spacecraft. Today it appears almost comical and fake. But in the 1950's it would have been startling in its realism. The first sound heard is a tune almost like an air-raid signal and helps to build tension and add to the dark, scary mood. The film represents the gender inequalities of the 1950's, even though the film's setting is the twenty-first

century, when presumably gender equity would be the dominant value of the society. The crew of the spacecraft is entirely male. Furthermore, they are 'typically' American. They are tall, dark hair, moderately pale and strongly built. They appear to be more like the crew of an American naval vessel in World War Two than of a highly advanced spacecraft. They represent the colonisation of outer space by American culture, which is more desirable than totalitarian and valueless communism.

"Robbie the Robot," is introduced driving a futuristic car to the American base. Various machines, including Robbie, genetically manufacture the food, grass and plants. One of the American crew questions how the advancing of technology may become too advanced and lead to human destruction. The Dr Morbious uses Robbie as an example, as he explains that Robbie has a safety device and is conditioned to not harm rational human beings. This parallels the common fear that, although nuclear weapons are very advanced, they could lead to the destruction of the entire world. The chief is dressed in black clothing and creates the idea that he is "evil," and is represented as a Dr. Frankenstein type character, which relies on physical science rather than military assistance.

Dr Morbious tries to hide his typical remittal type daughter. However, she is curious to see these males from Earth, who she's fascinated with in a girlish sense. This stereotype of female behaviour is reciprocated by the male crewmembers. Their chauvinism is evident in their competition to gain her affection. The sight of a beautiful, Marilyn Monroe type

character excites them. She even has the beauty spot, blonde hair and pale skin and is able to tame wild animals with her charm, literally.

Religious symbolism defines this new Eden. The daughter may even be representing “Eve” as she doesn’t see a problem with swimming naked in the pool of water. She is tempted by what is represented as evil, man, and then feels the need to wear longer dresses and hides her body. The serpent is even represented by the tiger and it fails to recognise her after she has changed. The roles of Adam and Eve have been altered to fit the time period, but the basic ideas are still there.

The Dr Morbius changes to brown clothes, which let the audience think that maybe, he isn’t quite so evil. He explains how a previous group of people perished as they tried to¹⁸ make a perfect world. This represents the idea that not any government can make a perfect world. The interior of the office is mysterious. A powerful machine created by the Doctor, can transfer human thoughts into actions and this is how “Robbie the Robot” was created.

After the commanding officer takes a turn at the test, it has low results. Dr Morbius replies by saying, “Don’t worry, commanding officer doesn’t need brains, just a loud voice.” Showing his disregard for the mental ability of the military, but also representing a popular cliché of the period. The scene around the ships looks almost like a war base with electric devices set up to stop intrusion, almost like land mines.

An invisible, mysterious monster represented by eerie electronic music, the sound and view of monstrous feet, representing the Russian communists attempts to break through the barriers, it is very comical and is a strong political statement. The Chef accidentally kills the chief and a traditional funeral occurs, with the 'ashes to ashes, dust-to-dust theme.' The doctor explains that he had a premonition of the death and that this was a warning to mankind to stop altering the outer space world.

The daughter is now able to feel emotion and no longer perceives her father as always right and leaves with the Americans to go back to earth. Dr Morbius cannot handle this and has further premonitions of destruction He dies in order to save the others and may be representing the "Savior," but at the same time representing an evil monster. This idea, although contradictory, is basically showing that power is destroying mankind and this is¹⁹ shown by the Monsters from the Id. The daughter is now fully conditioned to be like the Americans as she now wears typical clothes that will be familiar to the audience. It shows the trouble with playing God, but also has the typical idea of "the Americans save the day," and that American inventions are tribe over evil triumphs.

In a contemporary society, the 1950's UFO phenomenon and its Cold War context is still widely recognized. The idea is portrayed this time in a different form, as the hysteria is satirised in a recent "Bongo" comic book. The cover of the comic closely represents the newspaper headings and articles created by the "Roswell incident." It has a large comical, alien creature at the centre of the page with its dark, luminous, disc-like eyes. That is

¹⁸ Wilcox, M. Fred, *Forbidden Planet*, film (1956)

¹⁹ Morrison, Bill, *Bongo Comics* (1996) 1-2.

ironically described later in the comic as 'a little green man.' The idea of placing such a world wide issue in the context of a contemporary comic suggests the satire and disrespect the UFO craze later formed. The characters who stand off-centre are typical Mexican civilians. We have a femm fetal female who appears to be startled by the alien and the "re-assuring male" stands over the female in an attempt to protect her.

The satire continues into the first page of the comic book as the 'fatal female' is portrayed in a more sexual manner as she holds a bottle of the American known brand, 'Coke-Cola.' Representing commercialism. A foreign object is placed on the picnic blanket that suggests that mechanical devices were as common as 'having a picnic.' A through line is created by the alien craft that travels to the 'atomic mushroom cloud' hiding behind the hills. There is clearly no reaction of the character to the nuclear engagement behind her and this suggests a feeling of normality. The satire is made evident by the writing present on the comic page. This writing includes, "Retro Sci-Fi humour! You've probably heard about the flying saucer that crash landed in the 40's and how the Government collected the wreckage along with the bodies of the aliens." This text is a credited example of the 'craziness' of the UFO hysteria that lead to the success of the 1950's Science Fiction films.

The question raised throughout the science fiction films is generally, "What if Aliens invade Earth?" This question however has been given new meanings and can often mean, "What if Earth engages in nuclear warfare." This idea is presented throughout the films and is successful due to the ability of the audience to see other focuses and inter-

textualities. In this case the underlying truth is elements of nuclear Warfare and the Cold War.

There was a growing concern of the possibility of nuclear holocaust being triggered unintentionally or even intentionally. People feared the “Doomsday Nightmare,” even though they were confronted with the idea regularly in the films. Each of the films mentioned take on the idea of world destruction, but in the end, “America saves the day.” But the audience was not convinced that the film’s resolutions were genuine. Society also told that the safeguard systems were designed to prevent serious risks, but they could not be given any guarantee that an international crisis would not occur. That is why the “Aliens” were so easily portrayed as the enemy as it was almost impossible for the United States Government to monitor “the next move” of the Aliens.

²⁰In a contemporary society, the fears of nuclear Warfare are different to the 1950’s. Even though the technology and weaponry has advanced considerably since this time, people are more at ease with the prospect of World destruction. Due to this paradigm shift, the films that were regarded as “horror” are viewed today in a more denoting fashion, slightly satirical. Although, some of the films still create a fear of problems that no longer constitute any danger and the audience aren’t familiar with the proposals set by the United States and Soviet Union to prevent the breakout of nuclear war.

Films of the “Golden Age” of Science Fiction reflected the Cold War context and as such were the subject of other focuses. The simplistic plots reveal complex problems of the

threat of authoritarian and alien cultures that reflected the Cold War concerns of 'them'
²¹to an American and western audience. Common through most of these films was the
dominance of technology. Technology can be a threat, but more often, the message is that
backward societies are the victims of the more advanced.

²⁰ Frei, Daniel. 1-3, 174-175.

²¹ Pohl, Frederick. 758-759.

REFLECTION STATEMENT

Throughout the analytical study of nineteen fifties and sixties Science Fiction films, I developed a detailed knowledge of how the films were used as a vehicle for other focuses. Each of the films portrayed elements of a cold war context and was very similar in their ideas. The “aliens” and their attacks were often used as a metaphor for the unfamiliar, yet imaginable effects of Nuclear Holocaust. The audience of this “Golden Age” was subjected to two main fears, ‘Nuclear Warfare’ and a ‘UFO craze.’

These focuses created hysteria and I found myself asking, “were the films a reaction to the fears of society? Or did they simple trigger the ‘UFO’ and Nuclear War hysteria?” I came to the analogy that the ‘UFO craze’ was colloquially seen as an escape from the fear of nuclear warfare. I found that if society placed their anguish on a “scientifically impossible” event, (alien invasion) then the reality of atomic war might have seemed minimized. But one may consider the extent of this escapism, as the underlying truth in the films was the risk of nuclear war set in a cold war context.

The major work can function to cater for a widely ranged audience. It could appeal to a contemporary audience who is involved in the analytical study of films. My main intention for the essay was to show the didactic elements of the films. I intend to demonstrate that films are much more than just a form of entertainment. Some films function to educate and the science fiction genre depicts this idea primarily. Some may argue that films depicting “alien invasions” are superficial and unintelligent. Although

the films are widely fictional, one must realize that this 'unrealistic' notion must be "bypassed" to critically interpret the film.

This may be in relation to people who have viewed the films, whether it be 'some' years ago, or recently. The audience was likely to have watched the films on the basis of entertainment or an interest in the science fiction genre. I was limiting my imagination to simply "alien invasions." It wasn't until I studied the context of the Cold War and nuclear warfare that I was able to experience the intelligence of the inter-textualities.

I was able to effectively develop this concept due to my studies in Module A of Advanced English. Although the overall idea differed from 'comparative study of texts and context' it generally followed similar guidelines. Particularly with the study of the Science Fiction film, *Bladerunner*. This film shows fears of a second Cold War and it taught me to take into account such elements as tone, lighting, framing and how they interact to create representations of context. The continuous study of science fiction films was also similar to the Extension one area of study in which we examined the different formulas of crime fiction.

I learnt that the science fiction genre has become more technical over time. The fifties and sixties did not rely on 'special effects' for the film to be successful. But my year eleven study of *Independence Day* demonstrates the contextual differences among the genre and its time. Visually, the aliens during the 'UFO craze' were often depicted closely to resemble humans. This created a sense of belief and allowed the audience to

question the reality of the films. The aliens in *Independence Day* were however shown as very evil creatures. This alludes to the satire in contemporary science fiction films as a response to the many from the 'fifties,' demonstrating the change in values. A contemporary audience are not as willing to be subjected to the chance of "alien invasion" or more scientifically, nuclear invasion.

I began the essay with the intentions of looking simple for a cold war context. But due to my general studies in English, I was able to seek other focuses. One in particular I found was in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. It contains elements of the 'New Testament' and 'The Book Of Revelations,' in which we see a representation of the apocalypse. Similar to the metaphor of Cordelia's death being associated with 'the end of the world' in *King Lear*, studied in advanced English.

In *Forbidden Planet*, I discovered that it has elements of religious symbolism. These connotations allude to the story of 'Eve and Adam' in the Old Testament. I found that it has the 'fatal female' representing Eve and man representing Adam, the serpent is represented by the Tiger. *Forbidden Planet* is also a representation of Shakespeare's, *The Tempest*.

I found that many of the 'female' characters in the film were portrayed as typical 'femm fetal.' This idea was carried through from the early thirties and continued through to the late fifties. An example of this is the 'Marilyn Monroe' types character in *Forbidden*

Planet. I also found racial subtexts in *It Came From Outer Space* and evidence of a 'master race' or dictatorship is shown in *The Day The Earth Stood Still*.

My studies have enabled me to realize that films and other related texts are produced for many different purposes. The development of this concept has been shown throughout the course of the essay. I began with the intentions of watching the films in hope of finding "enough" cold war elements to finish the essay. I later developed other concepts such as; racial subtexts, dictatorship, a femm fetal era, religious symbolism – both from the Old and New Testaments' and appropriated texts such as Shakespeare. I found that once I started writing my essay I was really enjoying it. As I reached the end of the essay I found myself with too much to write. This is a clear indication of the knowledge I have obtained by completing the English Extension Two course.

Not only do I feel I've obtained a lot of valuable knowledge about the Cold War era I have learnt to critically analyse films and I now find them far more interesting than I would have if I viewed the films in a superficial way. I feel that my writing skills have developed considerably over the past seven months, which I feel had a major influence on my other subjects studied in the HSC. I am now able to answer an individual question raised; Science fiction films were a reaction to the fears of society, but at the same time created a new level of hysteria.

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