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**“There is evil there that does not sleep...”:
The Construction of Evil in American Popular
Cinema from 1989 to 2002**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of
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Abstract – The Construction of Evil in American Popular Cinema from 1989 to 2002

In The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, Boromir refers to the lands of Mordor as the place where evil never sleeps. Cinematic evil itself never sleeps, always arising in new forms, to the extent that there exist as many types of evil as there are films. This thesis examines this constantly shifting construction of evil in American popular cinema between 1989 and 2002 – roughly, the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the attack on the World Trade Center – and how this cinema engaged with representations of enemies and of evil per se. The thesis uses content and thematic analysis on a sample of the 201 most successful films at the U.S. box office during the period. In these films, cinematic evil is constructed according to a visual aesthetic that attempts to engage with societal values, but fails to do so due to the emphasis on its visual construction and its commodification. As Baudrillard argues, evil has become a hollow concept devoid of meaning, and this is especially so for cinematic evil. It is recognised, and is recognisable, by the visual excessiveness of its violence (or potentiality for violence), and by certain codes that are created in reference to intertextual patterns and in relationship to discourses of paranoia and malaise. But cinema in this period failed to engage with the concept of evil itself in any meaningful way. Cinematic evil mirrors the descent into the chaos and disorder of a postmodern society. All cinematic evil can do is to connect with this sense of unease in which the ‘reality of evil’ cannot be represented. Instead, it draws on earlier icons and narratives of evil in a conflation of narrative and spectacle that produces a cinema of nostalgia. Moreover, stripped of narrative causality, these films express a belief, unproved and unprovable, that evil things and evil people may arise in any form, in

any place and at any time: a cinema of paranoia. Together, these factors produce a cinema of malaise, perpetually confronting an evil it is unable to define or locate.

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Chapter One: Introduction – ‘It’s Just Like a Movie’: Evil as Cinematic Spectacle

1.1: Introduction

This thesis attempts to examine the construction of evil in American popular cinema between 1989 and 2002, roughly the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the attack on the World Trade Center, and how this cinema engaged with representations of its enemies and expressions of evil per se. In the conflation of text and commercial practice, and narrative and spectacle, constructions of evil were found to be too complex to define simply as opposition to a defined ‘good’. Cinematic evil attempts to engage with societal values, but it fails to do so due to the emphasis on its visual construction and its commodification. As Baudrillard states:

We can no longer speak evil.

All we can do is discourse on the rights of man – a discourse that is pious, weak, useless and hypocritical¹.

This is especially so for cinematic evil. It is recognised, and is recognisable, by the visual excessiveness of its violence (or potentiality for violence) and by certain codes that are created in reference to intertextual patterns and in relationship to discourses of paranoia and malaise. But cinema in this period failed to engage with the concept of evil itself in any meaningful way. Instead, cinematic evil mirrors the descent into the chaos and disorder of a postmodern society. All cinematic evil can do is to connect with this sense of malaise in which ‘reality’, in the first instance, cannot be

represented, and in the second reflects a tendency, unproved and unprovable, that evil things and evil people may arise in any form, in any place and at any time.

1.2: Understanding Cinematic Evil

To understand the construction of contemporary cinematic evil, we must take a multi-faceted approach. That is, discourses of cinematic spectacle, the image as product, and discursive constructs of evil itself need to be recognised before building a schema of how filmmakers construct evil visually. Using these as clues, we can then look at cinematic evil and what it ‘means’ (if it can mean anything at all).

Following the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, and the tsunami that devastated parts of Asia in December 2004, the concept of evil was used to provide an explanation for events too horrific for any other cause to be adequate. But the meaning of evil has been rendered complex in a postmodern society in which the image is prevalent. Jane M. Gaines wrote:

how often have we asked ourselves, “Were the first theorists of mass culture thinking about motion pictures when they wrote about the visibility of consumption and the interrelatedness of the products of mass society?” This is a particularly important question to ask today, given the hypothesis of postmodernism that the representational products of consumer culture (motion pictures and television) are now indistinguishable from our lived reality.²

Gaines argues that mass culture, largely represented in academic discourse by the film and television industries, has permeated all facets of the social order to the extent that in contemporary capitalist society all culture is mass culture and the constructed image has blurred human perceptions of reality. Evil itself must be examined in the wake of this shifting of perception in a postmodern world. Its concept retains its foundational roots in its theological, philosophical or pagan origins, thus it retains its potential to define an event so horrific that no other explanation seems adequate, but this vision is undermined by the cinematic commodification of the spectacle of evil in the 'high concept' film³ that coincided with shifts in global geo-political structures. The collapse of America's ideological foe in the Cold War era, which occurred at the same time as commercial cinema was undergoing significant economic and technological change⁴, has contributed to a cinematic culture of evil based primarily upon its visual aesthetic rather than on underlying causes.

What we find is that we begin and end with the proposition that 'we know it when we see it'. Evil, both cinematically and in the social world, is indefinable but it becomes largely recognisable by its manifestation as spectacle. We can witness a spectacular act of violence that causes massive death and destruction, and we label it evil because the act becomes too much for human capacity to explain otherwise. We therefore attach the word 'evil' to specific events because no other label seems adequate. The ways of understanding evil beyond its visual representation, in both its cinematic and social forms, is elusive.

Increasingly the primary evidence of its existence is in its mediated representation. Few of us directly experience evil, but we are continuously made aware of its

presence through televised news reports, newspaper images, and, importantly, in the stories that we collectively share through television and movies. Crucially, these images are enough to convince that evil exists in the world, and whether we watch planes flying into skyscrapers, giant waves destroying beachfront resorts, meteorites decimating cities, or megalomaniacs plotting World War Three, we defer all meaning or cause of the act to the simple explanation that we are witness to evil.

But how do we recognise evil when we see it? A multitude of factors contribute to our understanding of evil, which include traditional formations (in the western world largely based on a Judeo-Christian fundamentalism and revised by the likes of Kant, Nietzsche and Arendt) that have evolved into the types of evil found in film and television. But across the period under consideration in this thesis, the construction of evil has been problematised by the lack of a specifically definable villain in the social world that can be transposed into a comparable cinematic representation, the collapse of traditional values upon which good and evil were previously defined, and the increased sophistication of special effects technology that allows filmmakers to construct filmic events to increased levels of photo-realism. The collapse of the Soviet Union as an ideological opposite to America has coincided with the rise of a postmodernist sentiment that emphasises that in a disordered and chaotic world, evil can arise from any source, thus society must be vigilant of threats to its borders. But these borders are not simply geographical ones. The frontier of the Western has been replaced in both a physical and metaphorical sense by the boundaries formed between the body and its environment. The primary fear is manifested in two ways; firstly, the direct act of a bodily or mental breach that may harm the capacity of the individual body or mind to function, and secondly how this breach serves to undermine and

overwhelm the physical and the psychological. This second manifestation translates as the loss of identity, which is now, at the least, as big a fear as annihilation or apocalypse. The questions of ‘who am I?’ and ‘who are we?’ become central in the depiction of the evil that threatens nation and citizen, but in the spectacle of contemporary cinema these are questions that commercial cinema does not and cannot attempt to answer.

Because of the importance of the spectacle of evil, this thesis will argue that in the chaos and disorder of a postmodern collapse, cinematic evil is emblematised by the excesses of its visual aesthetic. This is not to suggest that American commercial cinema fails to reflect, nor contributes to, the construction of social and moral landscapes of good and evil, but that within a complex interweaving of traditional definitions of evil and the commodified cinematic image, all is conflated to the extent that neither reflects the other. Or rather, commercial cinema often directly engages with varying theological and philosophical paradigms of evil (as I will describe in Chapter Four), but it uses these not as a means to define specific forms of evil but to create visual representations of evil, specific to each film, that defy meaning beyond being simply evil. Moreover, these paradigms are used to create specific and recognisable constructs of evil for specific films, but across the range of films in the sample an overarching moral schema through which evil may be defined is lacking. That is, individual films may clarify and even define evil within their own narrative and visual aesthetic but overall there is no definable pattern through which Hollywood defines evil. What is evil in one film may not be evil in another.

Far from simply mirroring or reflecting the society which produces these cultural forms, the context of cinematic evil, and cinematic evil itself, has been shaped and reshaped not only by society but by the continuous process of the technological, political, cultural and economic change within the Hollywood film industry. That is, within a crudely drawn dichotomous structure, evil has become both repulsive, for evil by its very nature must be horrific, and attractive, in order to entice audiences into cinemas. Evil is constructed on a multitude of levels that work simultaneously to attract and repulse, to create distinctions of evil but also to collapse them, and to render solid a concept that, in a postmodern sense, has lost meaning.

The problem of cinematic evil as it exists in American cinema is, therefore, not so much one of representation but at a more elemental level one of the possibility, or impossibility, of the reconciliation of the abstract paradigm of evil (horror, repulsion) with the cinematic commodification of evil (spectacle, attraction). In other words, cinematic evil shows a kind of double movement in that it must be defined as horrific and antithetical to moral and ethical standards of contemporary western society, but it also contributes largely to the profit-based function of film studios in that the spectacle of evil – massive explosions, death, destruction, for example – is used to attract audiences to increased levels of visual and aural sophistication. Further, questions arise of the morality of violence and how a spectacle of violence condemns or condones the presence of evil itself.

The primary question becomes one of whether commercial cinema is capable, even if only in part, of contributing to the construction of a moral and ethical framework within which human society can develop an understanding of evil. Whereas evil may

have been defined as objections, or oppositions, to social values based on a capitalistic liberal democracy, the question can be refined to ask whether instead this evil now expresses the (unanswered) contradictions of contemporary social values and their failure to account for desires that exceed the social milieu as it exists. Or maybe the postmodern collapse into disunity makes such questions irrelevant. The mutual interweaving of theological, philosophical and postmodern paradigms of evil has denied evil its former meaning and has shifted its status so that it exists solely in its visual representation. In other words, cinematic evil relies upon a visual aesthetic of doom and destruction for its existence, and this visual aesthetic has seeped into the social world to the extent that evil in the social world has been disrupted by this spectacle.

Daniel Boorstin labelled the image a ‘pseudo-event’, a ‘new kind of synthetic novelty which has flooded our experience’⁵, noting the ambiguity of the relationship between the image and the underlying reality of the situation represented in the image. The image is constructed to represent a kind of reality but in the process of creating this reality the relationship between image and subject is blurred. Specifically, in the commodification of evil, the attractiveness of the spectacle of evil and the horror of evil itself is confused to the extent that one no longer reflects the other. Contemporary cinematic evil is emblematic of the collapse of the symbolic, marking a shift towards the attraction of the image. Evil is, as Baudrillard suggested, ultimately hollow. Baudrillard writes, ‘Good is no longer the opposite of evil, nothing can be plotted on a graph or analysed in terms of abscissas and ordinates.’⁶ Thus evil has been stripped of substance and reduced to spectacle. As I will show, the contemporary commercial film places the emphasis on the ride effect, or experience, offered by the film, and

narrative and characterisation exist to serve this end. The defeat of evil common in contemporary narratives becomes less important than the experience offered by the film in getting there (after all, the defeat of evil is in most cases taken for granted in the average commercial film).

1.3: Paradigms of Change in the Social and Cinematic Constructions of Evil

On the basis that we know evil when we see it, we must look at what affects this visual construction, specifically those factors that emerged in the period analysed here. Primarily, five significantly changing social paradigms have rendered both the meaning and the representation of cinematic evil and evil itself as indistinct. They have all contributed to the postmodern interweaving of commodity and culture, and the real and the image. These are, the changes in the global geo-political order that followed the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the increased importance of the foreign market to American film producers and the development of a global-Hollywood industry, the rise of the high concept movie, technological developments in the production of the moving image, and the continued rise of the ‘blockbuster’ movie as a primary focus of the Hollywood studios.

1.3.1: Paradigm 1 – The New World Order

Francis Fukuyama argued that, with the collapse of Soviet communism, we had reached the ‘end of history’, ‘in the sense that liberal democracy and market capitalism had triumphed over their ideological rivals and were the only viable systems of modernising societies’⁷. He explained, ‘My hypothesis was that there was such a thing as a single, coherent modernisation process, that it led not to socialism or to a variety of culturally determined locations, but rather to liberal democracy and

market-oriented economics as the only viable choices’⁸, and further, ‘in the long run, it is hard to see that Islamism offers much of a realistic alternative as a governing ideology for real-world societies’⁹. While, prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Soviet Union was not the singular direct supplier of villainy in American cinema, the established hero/villain – West and East – structure prevalent in the geo-political order informed a similar ‘us versus them’ structure in film narratives; not only in liberal democracy against communism, but also in Cowboys and Indians, humans and aliens, heterosexual and homosexual, male and female (particularly in films noir), and in a large range of other defined groups. One of the questions that arise from this post-Cold-War loss of a dichotomously based villain is whether this signified a shift in the construction of the cinematic villain towards another recognisably defined group. But instead of looking for some Other to replace these various groups as villain, Hollywood filmmakers in the 1990s approached evil as an elemental spiritual or psychological force that could emerge from any source. In a postmodern world of tolerance (which I will pick up on in Chapter Four), in which there were no longer any definitive answers to fundamental questions, right and wrong was no longer delineated by cultural, political or racial difference – ‘us and them’ – but by the visual spectacle of death and destruction. Who was evil mattered less than what: the visual representation in which buildings were brought down or giant waves reeked havoc on human society. Villains were ciphers of a general malaise that permeated society rather than indicative of a specifically defined villain in the social world.

In a sense, Hollywood embraced the precepts of postmodernism. Despite the strong sense of patriotism that forms the core of many commercial feature films made by Hollywood studios, Hollywood remains liberal, and this manifests itself in the films

that are produced. These films trace the patterns of popular culture as both incorporation and resistance, as defined by John Storey¹⁰, supporting the basic discourse of consumerism while hinting at the problems of capitalism (although always offering solutions from within the capitalist system), but it does so in a cinema of nostalgia and paranoia, as I will detail in Chapters Eight and Nine.

1.3.2: Paradigm 2 – Global Hollywood and Global Markets

Due to increasing costs of production and a highly competitive domestic market, not every film could achieve profitability in the domestic arena, even if, on box office alone, it could be considered highly successful. Foreign markets, which were previously considered to be merely additional sources of revenue, were increasingly targeted in order to exploit differing revenue streams. In this way, Hollywood needed to be mindful of both the ‘American-ness’ of its product, and more specifically of its villains and the ways in which any stereotypical depictions could offend an important sector of the global market. The groupings of people perceived to be villains of the USA in the social world could not be used because of the risk of appearing to tar all of that social class, race or culture with the same brush. Hence Middle Eastern peoples are conspicuously absent as cinematic villain even though they are politically perceived to be so with the rise of Al Qaeda and its terrorist activities. Furthermore, whenever another specifically defined Other is chosen to be the nemesis of the hero, attempts are made to balance this representation with an equal and opposite representation within the forces of good. As examples, the Asian villain of Rush Hour 2 (Brett Ratner, 2001) is offset by Jackie Chan as hero, and the South African villain of Lethal Weapon 2 (Richard Donner, 1989) is balanced by the South African woman the hero, Martin Riggs, falls in love with.

1.3.3: Paradigm 3 – The Rise of the High Concept Movie

The ‘High Concept’ movie is ostensibly defined as one in which its plot can be refined to a single sentence, such as Speed (Jan De Bont, 1994) defined as ‘Die Hard on a bus’ (referring to John McTiernan’s 1988 hit) or Armageddon (Michael Bay, 1998) as astronauts saving Earth from a direct asteroid strike. Justin Wyatt, author of the seminal work on the topic¹¹, argues that the high concept movie emerged in the 1970s and 1980s at a time when stylistic excess triumphed over narrative or character development. As he suggests, the commercial aesthetic of the advertisement and the music video was emphasised over cinematic techniques of storytelling, to the extent that movies became commercials for various products ranging from the film itself to its soundtrack albums, books, and other tie-in merchandise. This apparent binary opposition between stylistic excess and storytelling became less distinguishable across the 1990s due to the shift towards global audiences (as already stated) and the development of digital technology (as will be described below), that, on the one hand, increased the reliance of the Hollywood blockbuster on visual spectacle, but on the other integrated spectacle and narrative in new ways¹². Director David Fincher mentions in his commentary for the film Seven (1995) that, ‘There’s not so much room for characterisation in films anymore. You’ve got to kind of get to the fucking point, get to the digital effects.... You don’t have that time in movies.’ Fincher here denies that these effects can enhance narrative intent, but an important point is made. To ‘get to the digital effects’, the abstractness of evil is rendered in a solid form and in ways that are instantly recognisable by audiences. This recognition emerges largely from the constant repetition of images of evil in films, television shows, books, and other forms of mass media that in effect primes the audience. That is, the construction

of codes forming a schema of cinematic evil in its simplest and most polemic form, spreads beyond generic boundaries (such as these may be) and are visually represented on screen via a series of common techniques; the glare, the pose, the threat, and the act, for example, to mention components of the *mise-en-scène*, and use of framing, colour, camera movement, and so on, as examples of filmic technique. Any psychological or other explanation for the presence of evil is either defined simplistically – as revenge or greed, for example – or not hinted at at all. The high concept movie usurps exposition for spectacle, or simplifies the story and the message to enhance the experience. I will argue that narrative is not necessarily lost but that visual representations of evil become easier methods of communicating evil than expositional means.

1.3.4: Paradigm 4 – The Development of Digital Technology

Computer Generated Images (CGI) became particularly important both to the continued development of the high concept movie and to global Hollywood itself as they not only allowed filmmakers to create images that would be either too costly to create by other means or impossible to create at all. The filmic image could be altered to an extent previously unheard of, from the unnoticed manipulation of a cinematic sky to photo-realistic representations of the impossible, from dinosaurs interacting with human characters to human characters acting within believable historic or imaginary worlds. ‘Special effects’ in contemporary filmmaking are, thus, ubiquitous, not restricted to the special effects sequence.

With the use of computer generated images to create scenes of massive destruction and to subtly enhance the darkness of the primary villain, the photo-realism of the

spectacle of evil lends an additional component of verisimilitude to the image and to the event depicted. When, say, eyes are manipulated to darken them, evil is rendered in visible form that, as we saw with the high concept movie, negates the need for exposition, but does not forsake narrative intent. Thus, though there remains a residual narrative drive to these films, evil is in general de-narrativized. Evil simply exists.

1.3.5: Paradigm 5 – The Rise of the Blockbuster Movie

The blockbuster movie not only signifies a new development of high concept but also the ways in which the marketing and distribution of contemporary commercial films has changed. Visual style is aided by the development of the ‘money shot’¹³, used in advertising campaigns, and, consequently, in how the creation of a commercial visual aesthetic assists in the rise of importance of opening weekend box office results. Films must succeed immediately and they must be manufactured, marketed and distributed in such a manner as to increase their chances in the marketplace. Evil is not only rendered simplistically through visual cues, but also contributes in this fashion to marketing campaigns. Evil is not described within these campaigns as something to be defeated but as contributing to the visual spectacle, and entertainment, offered by the movie. Again, the conflation of narrative and spectacle to create a visual aesthetic of evil is emphasised. The narrative closures of the films, the common ‘happy endings’, are rendered less important than the experience offered, with any boundaries, if they ever existed, between spectacle and storytelling dissipated by the ways these are used to create a visceral experience. This is stressed in advertising campaigns, with trailers and posters attempting to signal the types of

‘rollercoaster ride’, as blockbuster films are often compared with, the film promises; horror films pledge shocks, comedies laughs, action films explosions.

1.4: Thesis Layout

These paradigms have directly or indirectly affected the construction of cinematic evil in the period under consideration, and become the initial assumptions by which this analysis will begin. I will first outline the relevant literature on the subject and the theoretical frameworks that will be considered. Mention will also be made of the difficulties encountered in attempting to reconcile commercial cinema with the construction of moral landscapes of good and evil. The various discourses of evil, primarily based on theological and philosophical debates, must be explored because these directly or indirectly inform its cinematic construction despite the postmodern collapse of meaning in the image. Using content and semiotic/thematic analysis, I will then provide narrative and visual schematics of cinematic evil, looking primarily at how evil is commodified and packaged to create an entertainment product.

Having deconstructed representations of cinematic evil, as spectacle, as product designed to entertain, as founded on theological and philosophical discourses, and as dissected into specific codes, I will then build up my argument of how the postmodern descent into chaos and disorder may be the only means of explaining the contradiction between evil as abhorrent and evil as entertainment. As the spectacle of evil is largely predicated on the violent act, we must first look at the morality of violence, and, through Fanon, deduce the effects of violence on cinematic constructions of evil if evil can also be used for the good. Then, by using Jameson’s work on the nostalgia film, combined with theories of contemporary social paranoia, I will argue that

contemporary cinema draws on representations of the past in order to make sense of a present that is unrepresentable. From this, cinematic evil itself emerges from a general cultural malaise in which society and culture are unstable and the meanings of evil as offered by contemporary cinema are based on its visual aesthetic rather than any underlying meaning of what evil may be.

1.4.1: Chapter Two – Literature Review: Testing Postmodern Discourses of Cinematic Evil

Although social forms of evil must be considered at some point (and will be in Chapter Four), this literature review will focus on what has been written on cinematic evil. As Martin F. Norden states in his introduction to the Summer 2000 issue of the Journal of Popular Film and Television which concentrated on screen evil, an extensive analysis of this subject has not been undertaken¹⁴. What has been written tends towards an emphasis on specific films (Richard Dyer's analysis of Seven, for example¹⁵) or on specific genres or themes (Cynthia A. Freeland's look at horror films, Jerome F. Shapiro on 'Atomic Bomb Cinema', Marina Warner and the Bogeyman, Anne Forest and the corporate villain¹⁶) or on psychoanalytical approaches (such as Barbara Creed on the Monstrous Feminine and Laura Mulvey on visual pleasure¹⁷). The problem with these approaches are that they are limited to the text, emphasising narrative or character concerns within specific films or genres without consideration of broader concerns, such as film as a product manufactured to entertain, for example. That is, literature on cinematic evil tends to ignore the production decisions that inform its visual aesthetic. Narrative and character are important in themselves but are not self-explanatory phenomena. Nevertheless, limited as they may be, some important ideas emerge from this review that will

inform the rest of the thesis, including Warner's theory that the monster of popular culture is a metaphor for the fear of being consumed, or, in Freeland's variation, as a metaphor for life being sucked out. Both of these authors are influential in my argument concerning the postmodern collapse into chaos and disorder in which the individual questions their role in an increasingly corporatised world.

1.4.2: Chapter Three – Methodology and Theory

This chapter will review the methodology used to undertake this research. 201 films make up the sample base for this research, and the methods used to analyse these must take into account the uses of images of evil to construct a product designed to entertain. I have found that content and semiotic analyses are the best forms of research to do this, with the latter augmented by a shift towards a thematic analysis.

This chapter will also review the 'popular' and theories of spectacle through which this study will be carried out. In the first instance, I will define the parameters of this study and what constitutes the popular in terms of the films analysed in this research. That is, why the threshold of \$US 100 million at the US box office was chosen as marker of the 'popular' (including the problems inherent in this usage), and a quick discussion of the 'popular' in popular culture. This is followed by a look at the theoretical constructs of spectacle (including Baudrillard and Bataille) that will inform this research.

1.4.3: Chapter Four – A Theological, Philosophical and Postmodern Summary of Evil

This chapter will engage with the primary philosophical and theological discourses of evil that informs its cinematic counterpart, primarily the Augustinian, the Manichean, Kantian and Arendtian (with Nietzsche important within the framework constructed by these four primary theorists). In theological discourse, Augustine argued that evil was the absence of good, while Manicheanism postulated that good and evil were two equal and opposite forces that operated at the level of the spiritual, and that the physical world was the realm of evil. Moving from spiritual to philosophical constructs of evil, Kant argued that evil could be rationalised, and that the evil figure emerged as a result of human motives, such as greed, avarice or revenge. He argued that reason was both intrinsically human and intrinsically good, so to act unreasonably was to act a-socially and ill (if not specifically evil). Following the Jewish Holocaust in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, Arendt noted that Nazism effectively rationalised evil, which directly contradicted Kantian definitions of evil as monstrous. In its ‘banality’, Arendt argued, the monstrous or satanic figure was in fact an anomaly and evil could arise from any source or in any form. Evil, Arendt argued, was unexplainable in terms of individual motivations.

Arendt’s argument has been highly influential in contemporary debates on evil, and leads towards postmodern ideas of evil, notably in whether evil is an anachronistic concept in a postmodern world. In an analysis of cinematic evil, the question of whether evil can exist in a pluralistic society is irrelevant. Commercial cinema constructs evil as existing absolutely, so the debates on evil must shift to how this evil can exist as such in popular film. As I will argue, it does so by using these prior

discourses as iconic constructions that are however bereft of their original intentions. In other words, they are used as pastiche.

1.4.4: Chapter Five – Narrative Codes of Cinematic Evil

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the ‘meaning’ of evil as it arises from contemporary cinema has collapsed into the chaos and disorder of the postmodern. I will show that the creation of a definable model of evil is not possible or even necessary. In Chapters Five and Six I will outline a schema of cinematic evil, based on narrative and visual codes, which the commercial film industry uses as tools to create recognisable images of evil. Cinematic evil, as a specific visual aesthetic, is prevalent, and it exists within predefined codes, but it does so at the surface level of the image only. That is, we can establish the visual codes that signify the presence of evil without specifically needing to define evil itself. Further, these visual codes mask the ability of cinema to interrogate social forms of evil; evil becomes merely evil.

Essentially this chapter is the first half of a taxonomy of cinematic evil, here defining the narrative codes of cinematic evil in the films represented. I will introduce the concept of positive and negative poles that exist within each narrative so that forces of good and evil can play off each other, while allowing a strong level of ambiguity between the two extremes. I will then outline those narrative codes that can signify the presence of evil in any given film, including such characteristic traits as rationality, the inability to love, and the lack of history displayed by the villain of good.

1.4.5: Chapter Six – The Visual Aesthetic of Evil

Narrative assertions of the construction of evil in cinema are important but they are unable to resolve discussions on how evil contributes to film as entertainment. In this chapter, I look more closely at the visual aesthetic of evil. To do this, I look at the framing of cinematic evil, primarily in camerawork, sound, the use of colour symbolism and visual metaphors of hell.

These two chapters emphasise the construction of evil as absolute but also, obliquely, interrogates these constructions as ultimately problematic. No doubt remains as to who or what is evil, and yet collectively, across the range of films analysed, no single, or clearly defined, source of evil is created. These chapters, and the thesis as a whole, must therefore explore the several possibilities of what screen evil is; whether evil is the absence of meaning, or merely the loss of sensation; whether evil is a-rational (rather than irrational), taking the logic of Kantian rationality to the extreme; whether evil is ubiquitous and humans must resist because we alone can do so; or whether evil is absolute lack, rendering narrative as a kind of Pandora's box, visually manifesting the horrors of evil in an attractive form.

1.4.6: Chapter Seven – The Morality and Marketing of Violence

Energy, excess and evil are the antithesis of reasonable human behaviour, and villains instead exhibit rage, murder and sexual predation, the obverse of the ordinary. Fanon labelled this a 'revolutionary violence' or a necessary kind of violence the oppressed required to break free from the shackles of the oppressors, which suggests that violence has a purpose in the construction of the good. But what of the role of violence in the construction of cinematic evil? On the one hand, the violent act (or the

palpable threat of violence) is crucial in this construction, but on the other it is problematised by the role of violence in defeating evil and in contributing to the film as a product of entertainment. In this sense, rage becomes commodified. Violence is not so much revolutionary as packaged and marketed. In order to examine evil, screen violence itself and its excess must be examined.

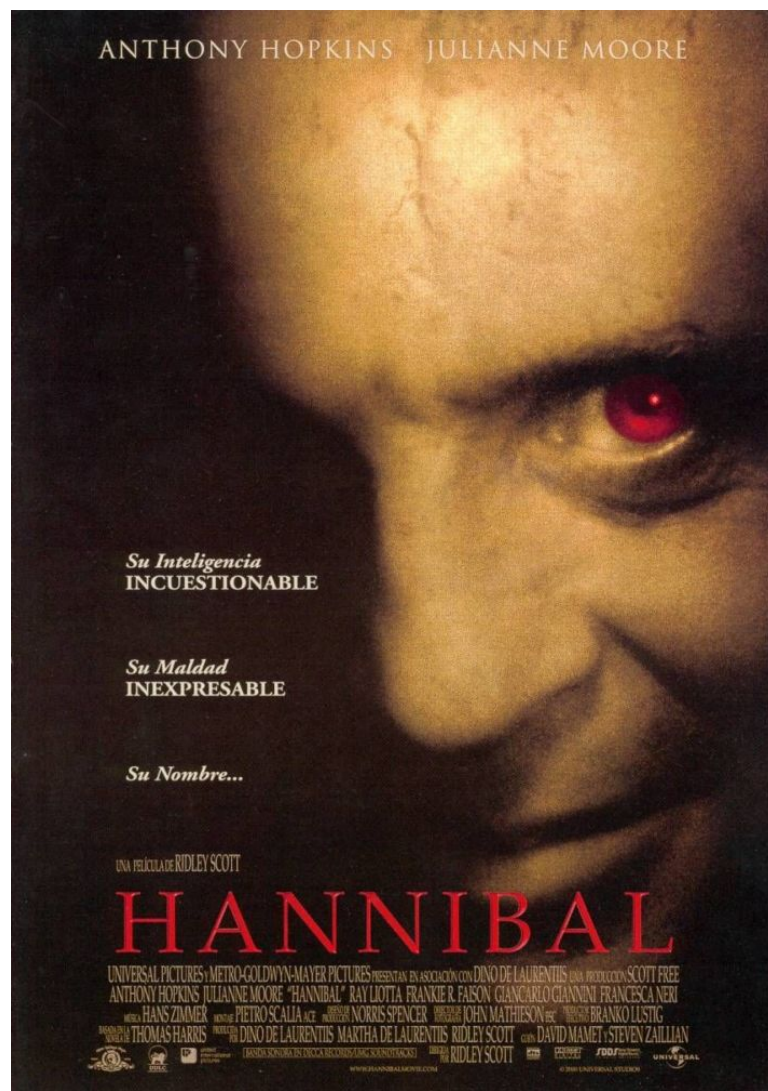


Fig. 1.1: Poster for Hannibal.

The marketing of evil becomes important through the emphasis that posters and trailers place on the attraction of evil by emphasising the desirability of the aesthetics of violence (even if evil is not immediately apparent in the final film). These further

complicate the construction of evil because as they are designed to repel they are also designed to attract. For example, the poster for Hannibal (Ridley Scott, 2001) (Fig. 1.1), showing the staring eye of the title character, is a fearful image that is also aesthetically pleasing. While I will touch on other posters that create impressions of evil, I will more closely examine movie trailers, looking specifically at how evil is constructed as an enticement for audiences.

1.4.7: Chapter Eight – Nostalgia, Paranoia and the Cinema of Malaise

Defining commercial cinema as entertainment suggests that the social discourses of evil seem to act contrary to the commodification and attraction of the visual aesthetic of evil. That aesthetic assists in the creation of a medium without a message, films that are ultimately depthless and messages that are at worst meaningless and at best banal. On top of this, a cinematically defined morality of violence may be irreconcilable in popular film particularly when cinema both condones and condemns it. Together these point to contemporary cinema registering a postmodernist collapse into chaos and disorder; not only is a defining model of cinematic evil impossible but the contemporary cinema of malaise is unable to represent the complexities of the contemporary social, political and moral universe.

Before shifting into evil in postmodernist cinema in general terms, two specific thematic and aesthetic paradigms that directly influence this cinema of chaos and apocalypse must be examined. The first of these is nostalgia, which refers to Jameson's thesis that film cannot represent the present so instead reiterates an ideal past, when morality, politics and social behaviour are considered to have been more comprehensible. The second paradigm is the paranoiac; that is, contemporary

commercial cinema perpetuates a ‘paranoid style’ that encapsulates the loss of self-identity within a highly bureaucratised world that, additionally, is strongly affected by an increase in global corporatisation. That is, secret agendas, whether governmental or corporate, remove the ability of the individual to have some semblance of control even in an ostensibly democratic society. Combined with nostalgia, this creates a cinema of malaise, in that films can no longer specifically locate or define evil but that evil maintains a very real presence which can surface at any time in any place.

1.4.8: Chapter Nine – The Postmodern Breakdown of Evil

After peeling away all the layers that make up the construction of evil in contemporary commercial cinema, we find that little remains: the visual aesthetic of evil signifies the collapse of meaning into the chaos of the postmodern. Evil cannot be represented because all representations are ultimately false. To the extent that evil exists, it is inhuman, and to that extent it resists or exceeds representation. Yet as an object of fascination, and one that has given structure and meaning to narratives historically, it must be visualised in cinema. Thus the crisis in the representation of evil is more than symptomatic of a general crisis of representation; it lies at the heart of the collapse of the moral order and those binary oppositions on which meaning has traditionally rested.

The taxonomy of evil developed in Chapters Five and Six, and the use of cinemas of nostalgia and paranoia, points to the construction of postmodern discourses of evil, in which the meaning of evil is undermined by the image, and has been stripped of its symbolic intention. More specifically, as mentioned above, these contribute to the creation of a cinema of malaise, in which image and reality are interchangeable, and,

more specifically, evil is pervasive, lurking ready to strike at any time and in any place.

1.4.9: Chapter Ten – Conclusion: Cinematic Evil in a Post 9/11 World

Evil is an ambiguous term that is complicated by its cinematic representation. The double movement of the visual aesthetics of cinematic evil is too complex to permit the creation of moral and ethical frameworks by which people can construct ‘meanings’ of evil. This makes extremely difficult the interpretation of evil beyond its appearance: even when referring back to theological and philosophical constructions of evil, evil can no longer be defined or made meaningful in their terms. Cinematic evil is depthless, being both fully formed as absolute and ephemeral in that the evaporation of the image, the spectacle, from the screen signals the ‘hollowness’ of the paradigm of evil in the image. Evil is also continually evolving and shifting, and I will outline how constructions of cinematic evil have already changed following the 9/11 attacks.

The postmodern collapse into chaos and disorder allows evil to maintain a strong presence on screen while at the same time disallowing its very self-definition. The conflation of image and reality, in which the boundaries between the two are at best fluid, creates a false representation of evil that nevertheless feeds into social recognitions of evil; in the words of one eye-witness to the destruction of the World Trade Center, ‘It was just like a movie’.

¹ Baudrillard, Jean (2002), The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena, Verso, London, p. 85.

² Gaines, Jane M. (2000), ‘Dream/factory’, in Gledhill, Christine & Linda Williams (eds.) (2000), Reinventing Film Studies, Arnold, London, p. 100.

³ Wyatt, Justin (1994), High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood, University of Texas Press, Austin.

⁴ I refer primarily to the continued development of the 'blockbuster' or 'high concept' movie and computer technologies. In the first instance, the film as marketable product (rather than, say, art) affects the very nature of its making. Argued to have begun in the early to mid 1970s, especially with the release of Jaws in 1975, new ways of marketing film continue to emerge, such as Independence Day and its highly effective campaign centred on the single shot of the destruction of the White House released months before the films' completion, and, for The Blair Witch Project, successfully developing an internet based fan culture long before the film was released. In the second instance, through computer generated images and new forms of editing, narrative and frame compositions have changed significantly. Pulp Fiction's narrative is more a network of interacting stories rather than a linear one, while Jurassic Park, particularly the sequence using a handheld camera as Dr. Grant and the children escape a stampeding herd of dinosaurs, hinted at the possibilities of integrating special effects with live action. This is exemplified by the freeway shot in War of the Worlds (Steven Spielberg, 2005) in which what appears to be a single tracking shot, the camera moves around, into and out of a speeding car.

⁵ Boorstin, Daniel (1992), The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, Vintage Books, New York, p. 9.

⁶ Baudrillard, Jean (2002), The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena, Verso, London, p. 6.

⁷ Kerr, Roger (2002), 'Introduction', in Francis Fukuyama (2002), America and its Allies: Growing Together or Growing Apart?, Wellington, New Zealand Business Roundtable, pp. 5-6.

⁸ Fukuyama, Francis (2002), America and its Allies: Growing Together or Growing Apart?, Wellington, New Zealand Business Roundtable, p. 7.

⁹ Fukuyama, p. 8.

¹⁰ See Storey, John (2001), Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction, Prentice Hall, Harlow.

¹¹ Wyatt, Justin (1994), High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood, University of Texas Press, Austin.

¹² See Richard Rushton's excellent article on Gladiator. While debates still exist between the role of spectacle and narrative in the blockbuster film (personal conversation with author, Screen Conference, 2005), this article provides one means of looking at the breakdown of these. Rushton, Richard (2001), 'Narrative and Spectacle in Gladiator', CineAction, No. 56, pp.34-43.

¹³ This is a single shot that is usually one of the most expensive to produce and invariably uses star, special effects or action to the greatest extent. As the shot also encapsulates the desired ride effect, it becomes an integral part of marketing campaigns for the movie. I will explain the 'money shot' fully in Chapter Six.

¹⁴ Norden, Martin F. (2000), 'Introduction: The Changing Face of Evil in Film and Television', Journal of Popular Film and Television, Vol. 28 No. 2, p. 51.

¹⁵ Dyer, Richard (1999), Seven, British Film Institute, London.

¹⁶ Freeland, Cynthia A. (2000), The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror, Westview, Boulder. Shapiro, Jerome F. (2002), Atomic Bomb Cinema, Routledge, New York. Warner, Marina (2000), No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock, Vintage, London. Forest, Anne (2002), 'An image in need of work: The corporate as villain', The Independent, 30 October, p. 25.

¹⁷ Creed, Barbara (1983), The Monstrous Feminine, Routledge, London. Mulvey, Laura (1975), 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in Hollows, Joanne, Peter Hutchings, Mark Jancovich (eds.) (2000), The Film Studies Reader, Arnold, London, pp. 238-248.

Chapter Two: Literature Review – Testing Postmodern

Discourses of Cinematic Evil

2.1: Introduction

In this chapter, I review existing literature on the construction of evil in contemporary commercial cinema, and test the approaches advanced against representative films from the sample. I will begin with an assessment of this literature, how its analyses of evil are limited to specific genres or films, how it largely ignores how cinematic evil is commodified and what this means for representations of evil on screen. Cinematic evil appears in many generic guises, including horror, action/adventure, science-fiction, fantasy, drama, and comedy, thus depictions of evil in one genre may or may not be transferable to other genres. Further, the visual construction of evil is largely designed to attract audiences, but also to maintain some sense of recognition that may or may not correlate with social discourses of evil. As I will explain, particularly in Chapter Nine, commercial cinema creates perceptions of evil based on its visual representation. Thus, on the one hand, the perception is retained that ‘we know it when we see it’, but on the other, the image of evil becomes a simulacrum and devoid of meaning. Therefore, an analysis of evil must attempt a reconciliation between the textual constructions of evil with evil as cinematic commodity.

In the midst of this reconciliation we find that a cinema of malaise prevails, in which evil can emerge at any time and in any form. We must therefore question ascribing the label of morality tale to commercial feature films, as John Stone has done with Oliver Stone’s films, before moving on to the perceptions of specific discourses of cinematic evil. The discussion of these discourses begin with representations of evil

as a supernatural force (primarily represented by images of hell and apocalypse), before looking at work on 'body horror' and 'intellectual horror'. These are important as they focus on visual representations of evil and the effects of violence on the body and mind. This leads to the significant but not all-encompassing trope of the loss of self-identity that is crucial to postmodern cinema. I am aware however that not every film engages with ideas of identity, just as not every film engages with hell as metaphor for evil, nor body horror and intellectual horror, thus pointing to the limitations of current literature and providing a jumping-off point for the rest of my thesis.

In his introduction to an edition of The Journal of Popular Film and Television on evil, Martin F. Norden notes that:

Evil as a general subject has long been an area of inquiry for theologians, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, among others, but it has attracted relatively little in-depth writing from film/television scholars. There are, of course, numerous studies of specific genres that trade heavily in evil, such as noir, horror and science fiction; it is the rare monograph or edited volume, however, that goes beyond generic boundaries or individual films and programs to take an overarching perspective on the moving-image construction of evil.¹

This thesis aims to respond to this challenge, but acknowledges that previous studies offer an enlightening, if confusing, array of texts on what, specifically, cinematic evil

might be. It must be noted here that while many of the authors cited do not specifically link these themes to the construction of evil, they do analyse them in terms of discourses of villainy.

Commercial cinema frames discourses of cinematic evil as existing within representations of worlds that are too simplistic because they are based on binary oppositions. As Jonathan Rosenbaum observes, many filmmakers and authors split social roles into heroes and villains² with few variations in-between. Norden offers a starting point for more complex definitions of cinematic evil when he asserts that:

Judging from the sheer number of films and television programs that have trafficked in good and evil over the decades, evil has proved a particularly serviceable abstraction for legions of film/TV practitioners. They have changed the face of evil frequently, conflating the concept with just about every conceivable demographic variable at one time or another and also associating it with a host of non-human subjects: animals, inanimate objects, extraterrestrial aliens, etc. In so doing, they have turned evil into nothing short of a ubiquitous commodity for our consumption³.

This commodification of evil is a crucial point. While not specifically engaging with cinematic evil in their work on commercial filmic spectacle, Eileen R. Meehan and Geoff King stress that Hollywood cinema in particular works as both cultural artefact and commodity. Through this double purpose, the commercial imperative problematises the role of evil in popular film. Commercial cinema, at the same time,

attempts (but fails) to engage with social concerns while manufacturing a product that is designed to appeal to as broad an audience as possible. As King argues, it should not be:

suggest[ed] that Hollywood films can be read unproblematically as simple reflectors of American culture, even when they attract large audiences. Hollywood cinema remains the product of highly specific industrial and institutional mediations. The popularity of any film can be shaped by arbitrary factors such as promotional expenditure and the presence or absence of competition at the moment of release.⁴

In other words, popular film by itself will rarely, if ever, directly correlate with the culture in which it is produced and consumed. Thus both text and production of text, the latter including its promotion and marketing, must be analysed together in studies of cinematic evil.

This simultaneous analysis of text and production is problematic. As I explain below, little has been written on this beyond the generic or broadly hermeneutic. While these are important, as there is a vast range of films and genres, these examinations only treat evil as it pertains to individual films or genres, rather than to how cinematic evil is constructed and used across a wide range of commercial films. Rather than analysing texts in isolation, we must consider that cinematic evil is constructed in a matrix of commerce and art. As such, these representations are not reflections, as filmmakers interpret and comment on the times they live in and on occasion even

refuse to accept the nature of the world they live in. The message, if one exists in commercial cinema, is distorted by the amount of time taken from initial greenlight to final release, thus their particular expression is affected by this time lapse. This distortion is aided by the commodity form as a medium in its own right, as use-value, as exchange-value, and, as Baudrillard argues, as sign-value⁵. As commodity, commercial cinema requires specific technical and aesthetic choices based on the levels of investment and business planning that may enhance or constrain the original concept of the filmmakers. The question of what constitutes cinematic evil can be reframed as what factors contribute to the construction of evil at the production stage⁶, and thus as commodity.

2.2: Resolving the Question of Cinematic Evil

Exploring the unstable nature of evil in the context of commercial decisions does not require a specific model of evil, as I will explain in Chapters Five and Six. As explained above, commercial cinema operates on many different levels simultaneously and so offers ambiguous and contradictory textual meanings. All of the ways of analyzing cinematic evil that I discuss in this chapter offer small pieces of a larger puzzle but even so remain largely incompatible. What of the notion, for example, that commercial cinema constructs evil as a metaphor for the loss of self-identity in a post-modern world when it also engages with the child-like joy of seeing spectacular images?

One possible way of unifying these disparate arguments appears in work on evil in the horror film by Cynthia A. Freeland, who argues that ‘the sources of evil are unstable and shifting and often lie hidden beneath the surface.’⁷ More relevant:

Most of all, horror movies are about the very picturing of evil. Monsters in horror are, like Count Orlok, made of light and shadow, creatures born of film. There are recurring allusions in horror films to the nature of our very fascination with horror – allusions to the processes of cinematic depiction, pleasures of spectacle, and to traditions of symbolic representation of evil and monsters.... By “picturing” I mean the whole of cinematic art: special effects, sound, and music as well as images, plot, and acting.... The allure of horror is that such monsters come out of their box to entertain, perplex, disturb, and provoke us, as they confront us with a multitude of visions of evil.⁸

The question is whether Freeland’s conclusions on the cinematic depiction of evil in the horror film can be transposed to commercial cinema in a more general sense. It must be pointed out that Freeland analyses evil from a cognitivist perspective. As she describes it:

Current cognitivism continues [the] tradition of philosophical aesthetics by drawing upon recent scientific accounts of human psychology and the human mind to describe our responses to artworks. Obviously, we humans are capable of being frightened, excited, horrified, and the like by artistic representations, including horror films; cognitivists try to analyse how this occurs.⁹

While to a large extent cognitivism is a valid form of research into cinematic evil, by only examining human response to filmic images, it is too limiting. As John Searle argued, ‘syntax is not semantics’¹⁰; just as a computer programme is purely syntactic while understanding requires semantics, so cognitivism reduces understanding to the orderly functions of the brain to the detriment of the paradigmatic substitutions of which it is capable and which constitute the specifically semantic dimension of understanding. Moreover, Freeland’s cognitivist analysis of evil, while including the spectator’s experience, excludes how the commodification of evil intrudes on these perceptions. That is, cognitivism can engage with modes of interaction between film and viewer but cannot also take account, as King argues, of the ‘highly specific industrial and institutional mediations’ that are crucial in the shaping of those same texts. In order to achieve a greater understanding of how evil is constructed in contemporary commercial cinema, we must reconcile the textual construction of evil with evil as a cinematic commodity, rather than analysing the effects those images of evil have on certain audiences or spectators.

Anton Kaes argues that cultural history cannot be analysed in terms of specific texts, but, ‘instead, we must examine how individuals and groups of individuals construct meaning from the profusion of things they encounter’¹¹. The explicit and implicit interpretations of this statement are that films cannot be separated from other texts that audiences encounter, and that the context for the production of these ‘things’ is also dependent upon the various constituent parts that contribute to their production, distribution, exhibition and reception:

A cultural study of film explores historically specific contradictions and tensions between economics and aesthetics, intended and actual functions, genre conventions and idiosyncratic styles, historical structures and individual articulations. It also examines how economic, social, political, ideological, and institutional constraints are translated into constitutive elements of a specific film.¹²

Kaes suggests that individual films can be analysed in the context of a broader cultural history which will account for variable factors present at the time of both production and reception. These variables may include social and cultural factors that may impact on the success or failure of any given film (a general audience may no longer want to watch a certain type of film), technological achievements that may assist in film production, and contemporary constructs of social evil (as I will analyse in Chapter Four) that may affect cinematic evil.

While referring specifically to the study of German film, Kaes' comments are appropriate to the study of contemporary Hollywood, particularly when he states that such a study does 'not take cultural production as self-evident, but investigates the conditions and functions of a film's manifest appearance in a certain place at a certain time.'¹³ The film as text is symptomatic of social contexts, just one of these, the focus of this thesis, being the decisions made at the time of production towards the construction of cinematic representations of evil. Kaes applies temporal and spatial elements to the contextual make-up of the study of film, an application that Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard concur with; 'Viewed in historical terms, cinema occupies a

space where the global forces of industrialism, consumerism, technology, and popular culture merge into a hegemonically powerful *ensemble*¹⁴. By de-emphasising production over exhibition and distribution (see also Maltby, for example¹⁵), the analysis of contemporary cinema, as Boggs and Pollard write:

must be situated within a framework of corporate mergers, economic restructuring, and product diversification – structural processes that force adoption of novel production and marketing strategies that demand technological innovation, thematic difference, and thematic diversity within a greatly competitive international market.¹⁶

This adds to my belief that the spectacular nature of the presentation of evil has caused a loss of moral potency in cinematic narratives of evil. That is, the commodification of cinematic evil de-emphasises (but does not entirely remove) its ability to engage with notions of social evil.

2.3: The Failure of Commercial Cinema as Morality Tale

Any assumption that commercial feature films contribute to the creation of a moral or ethical framework through which society engages with the concept of evil in the social world is therefore flawed, but as this is an assumption that many authors have made, it is one that requires some discussion. Importantly, the cinema of a spectacle of evil, while engaging with discourses of paranoia and malaise as primary themes of postmodern film, consistently fails to address evil as it exists in the social world. Whether cinematic evil is constructed as a supernatural force or a more humanised

one, evil itself is not defined beyond its visual representation. This lack of affirmation means that commercial cinema fails to engage with discourses of social evil and negates its ability to offer moral meaning. Instead, the incoherence of the spectacle, as Thomas Schatz argued of the blockbuster film¹⁷, leaves it open to multiple meanings, none of which is singularly 'true'.

John Stone, Morris Dickstein, and Steven G. Herbert are authors who have argued that certain films (the early films of Oliver Stone, the modern thriller, and the range of films that engage with the Dracula myth respectively) offer ways of explaining what evil is and how it works by describing these films as morality tales. Robin Wood, Meagan Morris, Marita Sturken and Paul Arthur note more specifically how cinema interrogates those social values we use to determine right and wrong, and good and evil. But again in each of these works the focus is limited to specific genres or individual films, so that it is difficult to transpose their arguments onto popular commercial cinema generally. Horror films, for example, directly engage with notions of good and evil, and, while some of the conventions of horror-film making can be found across genres (such as the point-of-view shot, as I will explain in Chapter Six), its constructions of good and evil are specifically directed at younger target audiences.

Herbert and Dickstein maintain that cinema is capable of offering moral judgements of good and evil, and of identifying a specific kind of evil that arises from the human psyche. Dickstein argues that the modern thriller creates oppositions of good and evil that are easily distinguishable while Herbert defines the character of Dracula as a cinematic metaphor for this internal evil which 'help[s] us to look at our own shadow

in a less threatening way. [These films] aid us in examining these unintegrated aspects of ourselves, which seek to be brought back into balance. For that is what evil is; good out of balance.’¹⁸ Hannibal Lecter is clearly a character both of these writers might allude to, the Dracula-like figure in two thriller movies¹⁹ that clearly offer a balance between his evil and Clarice Starling’s unswerving good. Julianne Moore, who played Starling in Hannibal, stated that the film’s appeal arose from the examination of this balance; ‘It’s about complete extremes. People are fascinated by the pull between good and evil.’²⁰

Herbert’s definition of evil, however, as good out of balance, is again too limiting and cannot be applied to every film analysed. Rather than being clearly defined in commercial cinema, evil can become ambiguous to the point where, for example, it shifts to another character in order to retain its clarity. In The Rock (Michael Bay, 1996), Colonel Hummel threatens to fire missiles containing a deadly nerve agent at San Francisco. But his motives, compensation for soldiers lost in the first Gulf War, are honourable. Hence he is never inherently evil, simply forced to use evil means to enact an honourable intention. Two of his mercenaries, who are only in it for the money, become the true figures of evil and display all the traits (see Chapter Four) before they are spectacularly killed. Likewise, in Minority Report (Steven Spielberg, 2002), evil is again interrogated when protagonist John Anderton faces the possible murderer of his son. But evil is then rendered unambiguous in the form of his boss, the Pre-Crime director, Lamar Burgess (Max Von Sydow), who displays clearly evil tendencies.

John Stone argues that the early films of director Oliver Stone, particularly Platoon (1986) and Wall Street (1987), are more clearly constructed as morality tales; 'the narrative form in which conflicts between allegorical depictions of good and evil leave plenty of room for moral lessons to be drawn'²¹. Again, Herbert's limited assertion that evil is good out of balance is prominent. In each film, Stone says, the protagonist must embrace evil before it is defeated with Chris Taylor of Platoon and Bud Fox of Wall Street (both played by Charlie Sheen) falling under the spell of evil before rising from these temptations to embrace the good. Evil in these films is drawn through framing and lighting with little ambiguity in the villainous characters, Platoon's Barnes (Tom Berenger) and Wall Street's Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas). Evil here is not driven by any supernatural force: 'They are too human'²², writes Stone. In this way, the differences between protagonist and antagonist are simply human ones, their separation signified by the hero's lack of malice. For John Stone, in these films evil is human-born, rational and explicit; 'evil is as evil does'²³.

Interestingly, and correctly, Stone notes that a central theme in the depiction of evil occurs in the recurrence of excess, not only in the villains' acting excessively but in justifying their excessive acts rationally. These characters are 'ultimately judged and castigated for their inability to identify [their excess as evil acts]'²⁴. This emphasis on the excessiveness of evil is crucial and I will later develop this argument beyond the thematic and into the visual aesthetic of evil as a whole. At this stage it is important to note that the excessiveness of evil can be engaged with on multiple levels; including the thematic, as John Stone does, the theological and philosophical, and the spectacle. This excessiveness negates the contention that good and evil balance each other out. Particularly in the spectacle, the excessiveness of violence is clearly displayed and

only more violence can provide any equilibrium. As I will explain in Chapter Seven, commercial cinema is ambivalent on the use and representation of violence, hence the balance between good and evil is at best ambivalent.

Another of the primary problems with commercial films as morality tales is that they locate evil as an internal psychological force, as if the individual must battle their own inner demons to ultimately develop their own sense of the good. But a common theme running through many contemporary commercial feature films is not so much an internal struggle as an ideological or societal one. That is, the protagonist is not battling inner demons but external forces in society that attempt to sway them away from the good. These are evident in the multitude of paranoid or conspiracy films that, as Meaghan Morris argued, show that ‘the evil emanates from Western institutions. The truth is out there but *They* are right here, insidiously warping reality. They are scientists, doctors, bureaucrats, teachers and academics. They are vengeful feminists, ‘extreme’ blacks and irresponsible queers.’ (emphasis in original)²⁵. In morality tales, it is apparent that the protagonist is ‘good’ and evil is constructed not as something that can be defined in and of itself but simply as the opposition to that good. For example, Chris Taylor, the protagonist of Platoon, is always basically good. But, again, over the entire sample this good is defined ambiguously, so the paranoid tract does not offer a way to create understandings of moral parameters but a means to provide the kind of grand spectacle required of the contemporary blockbuster. The theme of excess, particularly violent excess as I will argue in Chapter Seven, is one unifying element that can bind together most of the forms of cinematic evil displayed; as commodity it allows filmmakers to create excessive displays of violence. This is not to suggest that I define spectacle as ‘excess’. As Scott Bukatman writes, cinematic

spectacle is not excess, since each film is in itself self-contained (in the limits of the frame and the duration of the screening), but a representation of excess. To suggest that the visual aesthetic of cinematic evil is excessive is not contradictory; a contained spectacle, unique to each film²⁶, founded on a strongly visual and aural image allows for specific constructions of evil that ‘fits’ each particular film.

2.4: Leading Towards a Cinema of Malaise and Paranoia

If commercial cinema as morality tale is problematic, and the visual construction of evil is paramount, the question arises of what commercial cinema does when it engages with discourses of evil. I argue that contemporary commercial cinema, as postmodernist discourse, constructs the world as chaotic and disordered, so that evil is able to arise from any source and any form. Cinema becomes paranoiac fantasy, and in many films it engages with evil as a metaphor for the fear of the loss of self-identity.

To begin to explain this, we can start with the idea that a visual aesthetic of evil alludes not only to a scopophilic desire to see what should not be seen, but also to Elsaesser and Mallin’s theory that cinema taps into child-like fears and wonders, and to Marina Warner’s assertion, matching Mallin’s, that popular culture plays into the childhood fear of being consumed. Elsaesser argues that the blockbuster directly alludes to childhood themes in order to connect with a nostalgic past while also maintaining a child-like wonder at the image among adult spectators²⁷. More specifically, Mallin argues that there is a direct link between the cinematic image and memories of childhood, and between spectacle and a child-like joy in looking while engaging with the fairytale-based fear of being consumed²⁸. Harking back to fairy

tales like 'Little Red Riding Hood' and 'Hansel and Gretel', commercial cinema has updated these fears of being consumed by representing political, social, cultural, economic and technological forces as conspiring to diminish the place of the individual in contemporary society. Sometimes this metaphor of being consumed is represented on screen as literal, with the Jurassic Park (Steven Spielberg, 1993, 1997, Joe Johnston, 2001) films, Godzilla (Roland Emmerich, 1998), A Bug's Life (John Lasseter, Andrew Stanton, 1998), Chicken Run (Peter Lord, Nick Park, 2000), Honey I Shrunk the Kids (Joe Johnston, 1989), and the Hannibal Lector films all featuring creatures or characters that eat, or attempt to eat, living flesh. In a more oblique fashion, this fear of being consumed is also represented by the use of disease, nerve agents and gas as tools of death by the primary villain, including The Rock (Michael Bay, 1996), xXx (Rob Cohen, 2002), and Signs (M. Night Shyamalan, 2002). In a more spectacular and figurative sense, water is often used as a visual representation of the forces of nature that threaten to overwhelm, or indeed consume, us. Titanic (James Cameron, 1998) and The Perfect Storm (Wolfgang Petersen, 2000) both feature shots of characters sinking into oceanic oblivion, while Deep Impact (Mimi Leder, 1998) conjures up tidal waves as a more literal representation of this watery engulfment.

In a discordant cinema, the idea of evil becomes inexplicable, as either an unknowable supernatural force or as some hidden part of the human psyche. Richard Dyer, in his essay on the film Seven goes so far as to suggest that evil can only be defined as a supernatural force and argues that, as such, it does not exist in this film²⁹; evil, he says, offers a 'get-out' clause for cinematic serial killers, providing a context or explanation for the actions of the villain when all other explanations are

inadequate. (Dyer here cites Halloween [John Carpenter, 1978] ‘where the psychiatrist admits that there is no explanation for the remorseless killer Michael other than he is evil incarnate.’³⁰) Instead, Dyer suggests, John Doe demonstrates sinful tendencies, ‘the notion of badness being constitutive of humanity and the world we have made’, whereas evil is ‘a malevolent force outside of human beings, though capable of possessing them.’³¹ Dyer then defines cinematic evil as some supernatural force that tempts humankind away from the good, whereas sin is something rooted in human psychosis. Sin is thus its own explanation (as in the doctrine of original sin), and thus can be rationalised as a natural state of being requiring no supernatural agency to explain it.

Christopher Sharrett, on the other hand, argues that evil does maintain a direct presence in Seven through the character of John Doe; ‘The film insists on the notion that crime is rooted in an unknowable “evil” rather than social causes, and is therefore beyond the remedy of science and reason as marshalled by modern institutions’³². Despite this direct disagreement as to whether evil is present in Seven or not, Dyer and Sharrett do appear to agree that evil is a supernatural force, and may be used to offer explanations for horrific acts that cannot be explained by any other cause. Further, Sharrett sees that this version of evil has been particularly prevalent in the increasing numbers of paranoiac fantasies of the last years of the second millennium that alluded to the end of all things, and thus to the ultimate form of loss of identity that, in fact, directly referenced a shifting in the construction of masculinity:

In the last years of the twentieth century, the apocalyptic continued to hold a powerful fascination within dominant ideology and

commercial entertainment culture.... Apocalypticism's basic thematic was furthered by the rise of religious fundamentalism since the rightist backlash of the Reagan era. The apocalyptic became associated with the rise of male hysteria reacting against gender equality, gay liberation, and the supplanting of male authority by various phenomena, including the cybernetic revolution³³.

Sharrett here deftly draws together social and ideological accounts of evil with the imagery of supernatural evil, while also alluding to anxieties attached in cinema to paradigms of nostalgia, paranoia and malaise.

As Sharrett suggests, confirmed by the use of the word 'evil' by American President George W. Bush following the 9/11 attacks, this anxiety was fuelled by a conservative fundamentalist backlash rallying against the effects of postmodernism. Despite Hollywood's liberalism, its visions of apocalypse threatened a good made up of individualism and the sanctity of male/female relationships (and marriage), the nuclear family, the American Dream, and deployed the language and visual tropes of both Catholic and Puritan Christian beliefs. Direct visual references to hell in such films as Armageddon, Gone in 60 Seconds (Dominic Sena, 2000), and The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise, 1996) appear to assert a Christian construction of the world, but at the same time to hide its contradictions. These films include Catholic superstition in the form of crucifixes and exorcisms, and forms of Puritanism, such as extreme Lutheranism in which pictures are disallowed but in which nightmares of witchcraft, for example, flourish. In fact, in attempting to

maintain dominance by a white male patriarchy, this fundamentalism could arguably contribute to a consideration that a Y2K meltdown was desirable in order for masculinity to display its true value as undertaking the immediate tasks of survival. ‘Wimpish’ secondary societal needs such as government, education, and business could be set aside as ‘real men’ saved the world. As confirmation, we can note the relative failure of wimp-oriented action films such as Waterworld (Kevin Reynolds, 1995) and The Postman (Kevin Costner, 1997), compared with the strongly masculine ‘everyman’ hero of Bruce Willis in Armageddon and Die Hard 2 (Renny Harlin, 1990), and Mel Gibson in The Patriot (Roland Emmerich, 2000) and Ransom (Ron Howard, 1996). Highly intelligent characters are either unambiguously evil, for example, scientists Hannibal Lecter in The Silence of the Lambs (Jonathan Demme, 1991) and Norman Osborn in Spider-Man (Sam Raimi, 2002), relegated to role of sidekick to a strongly masculine hero, such as David Levinson in Independence Day (Roland Emmerich, 1996) and Stanley Goodspeed in The Rock, or must acquire action-man status by favouring brute strength over intellect in order to succeed, such as Alan Grant in Jurassic Park and Bruce Wayne in Batman (Tim Burton, 1989)³⁴. Successful wimp-oriented fantasies are largely the domain of comedies (American Pie [Paul Weitz, 1999], for example), but this engages with wish-fulfilment of a different kind.

2.5: Body Horror as Visual Representation of the Loss of Self-Identity

On the one hand, then, a postmodern discourse of cinematic evil engages with a paranoiac fear of being consumed, while on the other, cinematic evil is recognisable largely by its visual representation. These two paradigms are conflated by what Linda Mizejewski, writing on horror films, labelled the ‘body genre’, but I will more

broadly label as 'body horror'. Largely, most popular films released since 1989 that contained constructs of evil describe the effects of this evil upon the body of the victim, which leads to the assertion that evil is marked by an excessiveness of violence. Warner and Freeland correctly assert that this excessiveness can be further refined within popular culture as the fear of, respectively, being consumed or having the soul sucked out, or in the case of Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me (Jay Roach, 1999), his 'mojo' removed. As the reference to Austin Powers suggests, commercial cinema tends to reduce soul to identity so to remove one is to remove the other.

Mizejewski states that, in relation to films featuring female law enforcement officers, 'the textual excesses as well as the physical responses of its audiences ally the horror film with melodrama as a similar 'body genre''³⁵. This is a claim that can be widened and applied to most films within the sample on which this research is based, particularly as this structure reflects the dynamics of good and evil, especially those movies that could be labelled 'adventure films'. By using elements of melodrama – heightened and overplayed emotionalism – combined with an excessive imagery of death – bullet impacts, impalings, drownings, burnings, eviscerations, and so on – an eroticism of violence is created that compels audiences to watch when they normally would not. This suggests that a visual aesthetic of evil engages strongly with the effect on the victim, again reducing evil to its visual construction. By concentrating on the effects of evil on the body, the spectacle of body horror, which aligns with the visual excessiveness of violence, both engages with the postmodern sense of malaise in contemporary commercial cinema as well as providing the experience demanded of the contemporary commercial feature film.

We can start to look at the visual aesthetic of cinematic evil and how the image itself creates impressions of evil. Within the paradigm of body horror, it is not so much who the villain is but how this villainy acts on the body of the victim that offers a primary insight into the construction of the antagonist. The aliens of Independence Day, for example, are not specifically marked as female or homosexual but became so through the framing of the effects on the male body, primarily through some form of penetration that acts as a metaphor for, as Michael Rogin argued, the AIDS virus³⁶. Rogin is thus incorrect when he tries to apply a metaphorical identity to evil, while neglecting the visuality of the effects of evil upon the body. Richard Dyer rightly argues that the film Seven displays a contemporary tendency in the horror genre, and I argue, in other genres in which evil is present, marks a shift away from the monster figure towards 'its effect on the body, the horror of the damaged, distressed, suffering body'³⁷. As he states:

The turn to such body horror in recent cinema has been related by several commentators³⁸ to two aspects of contemporary culture. First, there is a perception that the body is in our times ever less safe from injury and mutilation.... Secondly, there is the part-Puritan, part profit-driven obsession with the body, and with that a heightened dread of disease, death and decay.³⁹

This fear of disease and decay is a metaphoric stand-in for the fear of the loss of self-identity. Broadly speaking, this fear is manifested in the constant stream of images that describes how the world acts insidiously upon the human body, from AIDS,

SARS and Bird Flu, through to surveillance systems (as seen in Enemy of the State [Tony Scott, 1998]) and computer networks (Terminator 2: Judgment Day [James Cameron, 1991]) that threaten to undermine the autonomous nature of the self. Michael Rogin uses Freudian theory to argue that Independence Day facilitates a paranoia centred on the AIDS virus. Dyer more convincingly removes the Freudian context to describe body horror as based more firmly on a commercial visual aesthetic. The effect of violence on the vulnerable body achieves a greater emphasis in cinema, he suggests, because of the look/do-not-look binary opposition that exists in spectacle cinema. On the one hand, commercial cinema dwells on the viscosity of the ruptured body (but not excessively, Dyer argues of Seven) because, firstly, the body itself is excessively emphasised in most media streams, and secondly, cinema can achieve this safely in a fictional context. But on the other hand, these visions play to a spectator's fears driven by mediated messages that warn of diseases or that constantly attack the body image as being too fat or too thin. 'Is it chance,' Dyer asks, 'that the two hideous bodies actually shown in Seven are those that tap into the most obvious manifestations of this, over-eating (Gluttony) and under-exercising (Sloth), twin horrors of US body fascism?'⁴⁰ Dyer succinctly encapsulates the malaise found in commercial cinema and how this fuels the paranoid fantasy in terms of the effects on the body of the individual.

This paranoid fantasy, as I will fully analyse in Chapter Eight, tends to involve the individual overwhelmed or consumed by forces greater than themselves. As stated above, Cynthia A. Freeland and Marina Warner's argument that this fantasy is represented in popular culture by fears of being sucked dry or consumed is important to my thesis in that these, at least partly, demonstrate the visual representation of the

loss of self-identity that exists in a postmodern commercial cinema. Freeland argues that vampirism is the primary metaphor of this fear of being overwhelmed. The bite of the vampire may not kill but it sucks out the soul to the extent that, at worst, the body has become a malleable husk bending to the will of the master, and at best the body becomes the site of struggle between the original self-identity and this will of the master. In this case, it is the loss of identity as embodied in the soul that provokes fear, particularly where this sense of individuality may be sucked out by another. Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles (Neil Jordan, 1994) is the only literal cinematic manifestation of this vampiric condition in my sample (although The Mummy [Stephen Sommers, 1999] plays on this with Imhotep sucking out the life-force of his victims in his attempts to reconstitute himself), with Lestat (Tom Cruise) offering the grieving Louis (Brad Pitt) immortality in place of his sense of loss for his wife. But this loss of his former self is replaced by his manifest unease in his new identity, and the answers that he seeks are inconclusive, so he is forced to live for eternity trapped in a body that is no longer his.

This literal ‘sucking-out’ of the self is manifested in various other forms, sometimes by supernatural means, but more often by the technological. In Monsters, Inc. (Pete Docter, Lee Unkrich, 2001), and Batman and Robin (Joel Schumacher, 1997), a device exists that is directly able to draw out some part of the soul. Monsters, Inc. directly plays on the nightmares of a child, speculating on the possibility that the monster under the bed or in the cupboard is in fact real. Here, the child’s nightmare of being eaten by the monster is changed to the monster literally sucking out parts of their personality in the form of screams that the monsters then use to power their cities. As a kind of superficial commentary on the supposed debilitating effects of

television, in Batman and Robin Ed Nygma, as his alter-ego The Riddler, creates a machine that draws out the individuality of the watcher so they become malleable pawns. The criticism that television (frequently the butt of critique in Hollywood films⁴¹) creates an unthinking mass is concretised, albeit satirically, within the spectacle of technology.

While this ‘sucking out’ of the inner self or soul is important in discussions of the constructions of cinematic evil, it is less common in commercial cinema than images of the individual being overwhelmed or consumed. Warner writes, ‘many myths explore obsessively a deep and insistent fear: that the thing that comes in the dark wants to gobble you up’⁴². Psychoanalytic theory would argue that, as the fear of being penetrated is the obverse of the fear of being swallowed, they are therefore expressions of the same fear. This cannot be the case; penetration addresses the desire for wholeness within one’s own skin, while the fear of being consumed addresses fears of being lost or swallowed by the outside world. In other words, penetration engages with psychological discourses of the inner being, stating that such fears are elements of a universal human condition. Consumption, however, discusses the postmodern thematic of paranoia and malaise in which one of the key fears is that the individual has no real place in the world, and no control over their own destiny, due to the ubiquitous nature of global political and commercial imperatives. It is not the individual here that is diseased but the society of which that individual is a part: the fear is of penetration by outside forces, such as disease, technology, consumption by state or corporation, and, at its extreme, by a vengeful nature.

Although still limited in the ways they engage with the visual aesthetic of cinematic evil, Freeland's vampirism and Warner's consumption theories start to describe ways in which cinematic spectacle and narrative together assist the construction of cinematic evil.

2.6: Evil as Intellectual Horror

Even though body horror assists in the creation of a visual aesthetic of cinematic evil, neither vampirism nor consumption accounts for how loss of identity is also played out in the mind. In what I call 'intellectual horror', the visual aesthetic of the ruptured body masks deeper anxieties about mind control exercised by higher powers. Modes of constraint differ from body horror in that where body horror displays the physical effects of evil on the human body, intellectual horror suggests that evil is an ideological function that blinds human perception to the real. A variation of this idea of a veiled reality comes in those stories in which the protagonist is effectively isolated from the rest of society either by having knowledge of some truth that no-one else believes, or because they lack knowledge of their own identity and must embark on a quest for truth. This again engages directly with a cinema of paranoia and malaise as these films make the suggestion that nothing is as it seems and the role of the individual in a liberal democracy is compromised.

Slovoj Žižek wrote of The Matrix (Larry and Andy Wachowski, 1999) that the true horror displayed was in how the mind was shackled by the machine world⁴³. In an argument that can be applied to other films including The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998) and Clear and Present Danger (Philip Noyce, 1994), Žižek claims that, in The Matrix, it is the clouding of perception of the real world that is the true horror. Not

specifically mentioning evil, he argues that reality exists conceptually ‘elsewhere’, beyond The Truman Show-like dome that hides the truth from our vision. Evil in this form is not that inflicted on the human body, as subject to violent penetration (the multiple penetrations of the human batteries of The Matrix), but the loss of freedom when the mind is shackled by the bonds of false worlds. The Matrix runs counter to the bodily invasion stories in that it is the chains on the mind that are the true evil.

The Matrix, The Truman Show and Clear and Present Danger specifically engage with ideas of a veiled reality, but other films achieve a similar end by presenting the existence of a corporate or political agenda that hides the truth behind a veil of lies. Erin Brockovich (Steven Soderbergh, 2000) and Gladiator (Ridley Scott, 2000) both assert the presence of an evil that masks the truth from the general population, and each film asks questions of this veiling. In the first instance, an energy corporation hides the horrific side-effects of its production plant behind falsified paperwork and judicial smokescreens, and it is up to a single individual to dig beneath the conspiracy and find the truth. In Gladiator, again a single protagonist acts to unmask the truth, albeit as secondary to his primary aim of avenging the death of his wife and child. Here Maximus (Russell Crowe) becomes a gladiator in the Roman coliseums as part of a weeks-long celebration of the Emperor Commodus rising to power, celebrations that the Emperor is carefully employing to quell the senatorial call for a return to the Republic, here as in Star Wars a thinly veiled reference to US-style democracy.

This notion of a single protagonist against a seemingly overwhelming evil is common in commercial cinema, promoting the ideological standard of the power of the individual within a democratic society. This becomes more important in those films

that exhibit traits of the intellectual horror film. These films can be split into two categories; one where the main character knows some truth that the rest of the world does not, hence placing themselves in danger of being incarcerated or assassinated, and the second where the identity of the main character is fractured and they must embark on a quest to fill in the gaps in their memory, once again placing themselves in danger. In the first category we can include The Fugitive (Andrew Davis, 1993), The Pelican Brief (Alan J. Pakula, 1993) and The Santa Clause (John Pasquin, 1994). The Fugitive follows Richard Kimble's (Harrison Ford) attempts to clear his name after being wrongfully convicted of the murder of his wife. Not only is he being relentlessly pursued by US Marshal Sam Gerrard (Tommy Lee Jones), but he inhabits a society which collectively believes him to be guilty. In The Pelican Brief, a university paper speculating on a recent series of murders of court judges alleges a political conspiracy that is remarkably close to the truth thus putting the author, Darby Shaw (Julia Roberts), in danger. The Santa Clause, although devoid of evil, retains the presence of the wronged individual when Scott Calvin (Tim Allen) is transformed into the mythical Santa Clause in a world that has lost its belief in the fantastical.

The second form of intellectual horror in commercial cinema occurs when, as noted above, a primary character is unsure of their own identity, either through memory loss or through some clue that hints at a past they know nothing of, and must embark on some journey for knowledge that will fill in the gaps. Jason Bourne of The Bourne Identity (Doug Liman, 2002) and Wolverine in X-Men (Bryan Singer, 2000) are each characters whose memories of the past are hazy at best, and these memories tend to suggest a former villainous life. Each is compelled to seek answers as part of their

quest to battle evil. Doug Quaid, the protagonist of Total Recall (Paul Verhoeven, 1990), is a villain but has had his memory erased in order to infiltrate the group that seeks an end to the tyranny of corporate life on Mars. In piecing together the clues of a past life, Quaid sides with the good. While the film does not ask why this change should occur, the complex relationship between fantasy and reality is effectively constructed through a series of sequences in which Quaid questions whether he is living a dream. The interrogation of the themes of intellectual horror is played out directly within the workings of the mind.

Intellectual horror challenges notions of reality by locating the primary characters in a world that is constructed by others. While it is impossible to suggest that body horror is not ideologically charged, nevertheless intellectual horror more overtly engages with the tenets of a western, capitalistic discourse. Further, it allows protagonists to retain or regain their own identities in a postmodern world that threatens to void all individualism. The irony is that this challenging of modes of reality occurs within a commercial cinema that is, as Baudrillard suggests, more than real or hyperreal. Disengaging itself from the very questions it asks in the interests of creating a good spectacle, film as commodity takes precedence over an American culture, raising questions based on common fears about the nature and location of evil, only to dismiss any answer in explosions, mayhem and spectacle.

2.7: Conclusion

In reviewing the literature on cinematic evil, I have pointed out the problems in equating commercial cinema with morality tales, and instead, primarily using Warner, Freeland and Žižek, argue that commercial cinema does not engage with social or real

evil, but simply contributes to a cinema of malaise and paranoia. Warner's assertion that the horror film engages with the fear of consumption is metaphorically linked to this cinema of malaise. The notion of self-identity is crucial in many of the films analysed and evil is constructed in these movies as spectacular threats to the place of the individual in a democratic society. Evil can be seen to be present in commercial cinema as a series of textual patterns, which I will analyse in Chapters Five and Six, but in the interrogation of self-identity it also signifies the threat of meaninglessness; apocalyptic visions of fire and water threaten to overwhelm all. Evil can be seen as the threat of meaninglessness because, firstly, it is irrational, secondly, it is the creator of illusions (as Žižek argued of The Matrix), and, thirdly, in many cases it is inhuman or supernatural. Therefore, as the opposite of the good (or meaningful), evil does not simply threaten it, but demonstrates that meaningfulness is good, guaranteeing meaning at the same time that it shows the horror of not having meaning. Thus it reinforces the meaningfulness of whatever ideological message is attached to the good, so it can serve both commodity spectacle functions, as per Baudrillard, but also a social function. Richard Maltby suggests that an analysis of Hollywood film must tread the line between form and economics, creating what he called a 'commercial aesthetic'⁴⁴. Citing Graham Murdock, Maltby observes that 'the economic determines in the first instance rather than the last: "it is a necessary starting point for analysis but not a destination"'.⁴⁵ In the next chapter I will propose the methodologies and theories that I will use to analyse evil in the contemporary commercial feature film, and at how the commercial aesthetic can be analysed in order to determine how evil works in commercial cinema.

¹ Norden, Martin F. (2000), 'Introduction: The Changing Face of Evil in Film and Television', Journal of Popular Film and Television, Vol. 28 No. 2, p. 51.

² Rosenbaum, Jonathan (1997), Movies as Politics, University of California Press, Berkeley, p. 20.

³ Norden, p. 50.

⁴ King, Geoff (2000), Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster, I. B. Tauris, London, p. 6.

⁵ Baudrillard, Jean (1980), For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, Telos Press, St. Louis. Baudrillard argues that the sign-value is the value in a system of objects. That is, an object is assigned a value based not on its usage or its symbolic meaning but on its appearance. For example, a Mercedes is valued higher than, say, a Nissan even if each can be purchased for the same price, because a Mercedes has a higher social status. Baudrillard argues (p. 148), 'the object of this political economy, that is, its simplest component, its nuclear element – that which precisely the commodity was for Marx – is no longer today properly either commodity or sign, but indissolubly both.' Thus, every object has greater or lesser value based not only on its functional or exchange value but also on its sign value. Films, as a series of images on a screen is purely sign, but is also commodified thus its functionality or exchange value is based purely on its basis as sign.

⁶ Cinematic evil can, of course, be considered also in terms of its construction at its reception. That is, the ways audiences make sense of this evil when they see it and experience it for themselves. By necessity however, this thesis will limit itself to the decisions made at the time of production that create a particular visual aesthetic of evil.

⁷ Freeland, Cynthia A., (2000), The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror, Westview, Boulder, p 274.

⁸ Freeland, pp. 275-276.

⁹ Freeland, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰ Wikipedia (2006), 'Cognitivism', Wikipedia, 14 January 2006, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitivism_\(psychology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitivism_(psychology)), (accessed 31 January 2006).

¹¹ Kaes, Anton (1995), 'German Cultural History and the Study of Film: Ten Theses and a Postscript', New German Critique, No. 65 (Spring/Summer), p. 50.

¹² Kaes, p. 52.

¹³ Kaes, p. 57.

¹⁴ Boggs, Carl, and Tom Pollard (2003), A World in Chaos: Social Crisis and the Rise of Postmodern Cinema, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, p. 1.

¹⁵ Maltby, Richard (2003), Hollywood Cinema, Blackwell, Malden.

¹⁶ Boggs and Pollard, p. 8-9.

¹⁷ Schatz, Thomas (1993), 'The New Hollywood', in Collins, Jim, Hilary Radner, Ava Preacher Collins (eds.) (1993), Film Theory Goes to the Movies, Routledge, New York, p. 34.

¹⁸ Herbert, Steven G. (2004), 'Philosophical Discussion: Dracula as Metaphor for Human Evil', Journal of Religion and Psychical Research, 27 April, p. 62.

¹⁹ To date, Hannibal Lector has been a principal character in four films, Michael Mann's Manhunter (spelt Lektor here), Jonathan Demme's The Silence of the Lambs, Ridley Scott's Hannibal, and Brett Ratner's Red Dragon. Manhunter is too old to enter this sample, while Red Dragon did not achieve sufficient box office takings.

²⁰ Quoted in Keck, William (2001), 'Facing up to a killer reputation', The Los Angeles Times, 4 February, <http://www.calendarlive.com/top/1,1419,L-LATimes-Print-X!ArticleDetail-19929,00.html?>, (accessed 5 February 2001).

²¹ Stone, John (2000), 'Evil in the Early Cinema of Oliver Stone: Platoon and Wall Street as Modern Morality Plays', Journal of Popular Film and Television, Volume 28 No 2, p 81.

²² Stone, p. 82.

²³ Stone, p. 82.

²⁴ Stone, p. 86.

²⁵ Morris, Meaghan (1997), 'The truth is out there...', Cultural Studies, Volume 11 No 3, p 368.

²⁶ What I mean by this is that each film sets up its own boundaries of what it can and cannot show in its depiction of evil. Excessive spectacle can exist but filmmakers are very astute in knowing where the boundaries lie and rarely, if ever, cross them. For example, the visual cues of evil in Armageddon, scenes of massive destruction, explosions, quick editing, bombastic music scores, and so on, are not appropriate for, say, Seven (and vice-versa), yet each engages with a fundamentally similar form of evil.

²⁷ Elsaesser, Thomas (2001), 'The Blockbuster: Everything Connects, But Not Everything Goes', in Lewis, Jon (ed.) (2001), The End of Cinema As We Know It: American Film in the Nineties, New York University Press, New York, p 20.

²⁸ Mallin, Eric S. (2001), 'The Blair Witch Project, Macbeth, and the Indeterminate End', in Lewis, Jon (ed.) (2001), The End of Cinema As We Know It: American Film in the Nineties, New York University Press, New York, pp. 105-114.

²⁹ Dyer, Richard (1999), Seven, British Film Institute, London, p. 13.

³⁰ Dyer (1999), p. 13.

³¹ Dyer (1999), p. 13.

³² Sharrett, Christopher (2001), 'End of Story: The Collapse of Myth in Postmodern Narrative Film', in Jon Lewis (ed.) (2001), The End of Cinema as We Know It: American Film in the Nineties, New York University Press, New York, p 321.

³³ Sharrett, p. 320.

³⁴ Like many arguments in this thesis, this can be refuted if we look at American television drama in the same period. The strongly masculine is constructed as brutish in the likes of The Sopranos while the heroic is purveyed by scientists (CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, Numbers, Bones), politicians (The West Wing, Commander-in-Chief), and doctors (ER, House).

³⁵ Mizejewski, Linda (1993), 'Picturing the female dick: The Silence of the Lambs and Blue Steel', Journal of Film and Video, Summer-Fall, p. 11.

³⁶ Many authors have written on the metaphoric interpretations of the identity of the aliens in Independence Day. Karen Schneider, for example, argues that the film directly displays an interrogation of the aggressive feminine within a paternalistic discourse, where male superiority is enacted by the symbolic rape of the feminised villain (Schneider, Karen (1998), 'With violence if necessary: Rearticulating the family in the contemporary action-thriller', Journal of Popular Film and Television, Volume 27 No 1, pp. 2-11.). Michael Rogin argues that Independence Day asserts not the dominance of the male over the female but the heterosexual over the homosexual, referring to the 'perverse sexual climax' in which Russell Casse flies his aircraft into the 'alien asshole' of the spaceship poised to destroy the planet (Rogin, Michael, (1998), Independence Day, British Film Institute, London).

³⁷ Dyer (1999), p. 59.

³⁸ Dyer (1999) here cites Pete Boss (1986), 'Vile Bodies and Bad Medicine', Screen, Vol. 27 No. x, pp. 14-24, Barbara Creed (1993), The Monstrous Feminine, Routledge, New York, and Isabel Cristina Pinedo (1997), Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing, SUNY Press, Albany.

³⁹ Dyer (1999), p. 59.

⁴⁰ Dyer (1999), p. 59.

⁴¹ This is evident in movies including Network, Ed TV, The Truman Show, Videodrome, The Ring, Poltergeist, and Pleasantville. The Hollywood film industry tends to exclude itself from the criticism of passivity; at the least one needs to go out and be with other people.

⁴² Warner, Marina (2000), No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock, Vintage, London, p. 10.

⁴³ Žižek, Slavoj (2002), 'The Matrix: Or, The Two Sides of Perversion', in Irwin, William (ed.) (2002), The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real, Open Court, Chicago, pp. 240-266.

⁴⁴ Maltby, Richard (1998), '"Nobody Knows Everything": Post-Classical Historiographies and Consolidated Entertainment', in Neale, Steve, and Murray Smith (eds.) (1998), Contemporary Hollywood Cinema, Routledge, London, p. 27.

⁴⁵ Maltby, p. 27.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Theory

3.1: Introduction

In this chapter I will define the parameters of this research thesis, both in terms of the methodologies used and the theories that will provide the foundations for my conclusions. Content and semiotic analyses are used to codify both narrative and visual constructions of cinematic evil, although as I will explain later the semiotic analysis will give way to the thematic in my research. In order to understand these results we must be aware of the role of spectacle within the contemporary commercial feature film, and of the definition of 'popular' as it applies to a product designed to be consumed by as large an audience as possible.

Popular film emerges from a complex relationship between producer and consumer, thus the study of the text itself is only one part of determining the construction of cinematic evil. We must also examine evil as a tool used by filmmakers in order to entice audiences into theatres. In fact, textual analysis becomes entwined with the material conditions of production to the extent that one cannot be considered without the other. The methodologies used to examine the dual nature of commercial cinema as text and entertainment are content and semiotic analysis. The first provides a taxonomy of the narratological codes of cinematic evil while the second examines more closely the visual representations of evil. To make sense of these symbolic constructions of cinematic evil I will analyse these results in relation to theories of the popular and spectacle. This approach will illuminate the relationships between popular film as text and as commodity, and their synthesis in commercial film as entertainment. From this, I will argue that the image as text and commodity allows

evil to be recognisable but does not define it, leading to my assertion that a cinema of malaise and paranoia fails to engage with evil in any meaningful way.

The primary principal that underlines this thesis is the assertion that the commercial feature film is both text and product. As Geoff King explains:

Particular meanings, or leanings, can be identified at a textual level. Commercial imperatives go some way to explaining their presence, as does the broader social or historical context.... The broad social-cultural context imposes certain horizons of interpretation – limitations on the kinds of interpretations likely to be made.¹

Or, as Eileen R. Meehan states, ‘economics must be considered if we are fully to understand the texts and intertexts of American mass culture’². While this is true, Meehan does, however, de-emphasise the role of the text when she argues that ‘corporate imperatives operate as the primary constraints shaping the narratives and iconography of the text’³. King is correct when he argues that socio-cultural contexts may help determine what, how, and when films are made and released, but that there is an interplay between text and economics, even if only to the extent of what filmmakers believe will sell⁴. Hence the text, the production decisions, and the response of the audience are equally important. I will however limit my research to the first two of these, as I explain below.

At each moment in the processes of production and reception, any film's meaning is simultaneously emphasised and undermined in a process that emphatically displays a dominant hegemonic position (based on a white, patriarchal, capitalism) while offering, to some extent at least, the means for this position to be interrogated. Within these discourses, evil must be analysed not on the basis of *what* is evil but *how* that evil is represented.

I argue that cinematic spectacle is integral to the visual aesthetic of cinematic evil. I disagree with Richard Dyer's thesis when, discussing the Hollywood musical, he separates out the representational (narrative) and the non-representational (the musical numbers), or in a broader sense, his separation of narrative and spectacle. Dyer denies the ability of what he considers the non-representational to advance narrative and characterisation in classical Hollywood. Today, however, even if at the same time it pushes narrative and character into the background, spectacle provides a means to drive the narrative, and to construct evil, for example, as an excess of violence, or in the Bataillean sense, as fascination with the eroticism of death.

Audience ethnography is sidelined for two primary reasons. First, the text and the production process are crucial in the construction of cinematic evil and require substantial analysis in themselves, and second, even though ethnographic research in this case would be valuable, it would provide more data than could be included here. The analyses that ground this thesis form the necessary precondition of any subsequent audience response. Essentially, this thesis performs a task of groundbreaking after which further research, primarily on the audience, could be built. By developing an understanding of text and production and how these interact, I

hope to offer an insight into how evil is constructed in popular commercial cinema, and how the textual meaning of the concept is formed, created and contradicted by the process of production, prior to the engagement of the audience in interpretation.

This is not to suggest that I ignore audience research. As I explain below, in providing a working definition of the 'popular' I have used box office results as a prime determinant. This is the American film industry's preferred tool for measuring success, and studio executives, in operating a profitable business, are expected to use them to demonstrate an awareness of audience trends. This awareness is encoded in the range of films that are made in the expectation that they will find a mass audience. What I am doing is putting aside the research into the specific response of viewers to constructions of evil in cinema.

3.2: A Discussion of 'Dominant' or 'Preferred' Meanings

Before outlining my research methodologies, a quick discussion is required of 'dominant' or 'preferred' meanings in commercial cinema, and how this affects my role as researcher. As stated above, audience response to previous films is embodied in new films through feedback encoded into the text as dominant meanings. That is, studios make assumptions of what films will be popular based on previous success and will attempt to make films with specifically determined or preferred readings, in order to generate a specific emotional or physiological response. In the context of this research, the exact status of preferred meaning requires clarification. David Morley asked:

Is the preferred reading a property of the text per se? Or is it something that can be generated from the text (by a 'skilled' reading) via certain identifiable procedures? Or is the preferred reading that reading which the analyst is predicting that most members of the audience will produce from the text? In short, is the preferred reading a property of the text, the analyst or the audience?⁵

In response, Merris Griffiths argues, 'Perhaps the most important point to note is that forms of textual analysis can reveal the underlying meanings within (media) texts that are unobtrusive and likely to be only subconsciously recognised by the 'reader'.'⁶ In line with Hall's assertion, that primary meanings are encoded into the text at the time of production, these unobtrusive meanings are ideologically coded messages, appearing 'naturally' within the texts. Textual analysis is used here to establish not simply dominant meanings (I would argue that in many films evil does not have any 'meaning' beyond evil itself) but naturalised patterns deployed in establishing a visual aesthetic of cinematic evil. Every film contains a more or less thinly disguised preferred meaning or dominant mode of reception. An audience member's involvement is dependant upon their own position in relation to the film and its dominant meanings, but the film must exist as a bearer of meanings before the audience can interpret it. I do not subscribe to what Abercrombie referred to as the 'dominant text view'⁷ where the audience is essentially passive, but rather to Hall's thesis of polysemy; that a preferred meaning exists but that there are a number of layers of meaning that are also encoded in any given film. Dominant meanings alone do not account for the popularity of, say, Gladiator (Ridley Scott, 2000), over similar

generic types released later such as Troy (Wolfgang Petersen, 2004) and Kingdom of Heaven (Ridley Scott, 2005). Because it offered richer experiences of subtext, the example of Gladiator suggests that audiences respond, albeit not necessarily consciously, to polysemic subtexts. This also indicates a drawback of audience ethnographies, in that, firstly, they ascribe the statements of interviewees with truth, even though the ethnographer must subjectively interpret this 'truth'. Secondly, they rely on the presumption that all responses to media are conscious when clearly some are not, especially those physiological or naturalised responses in which either, or both, the text acts upon the body (eliciting tears, laughter, frights and so on) or in ways that are not consciously noticed.

While Hall, in his seminal article on encoding and decoding, was primarily discussing the televisual discourse, his conclusions are relevant for commercial cinema, particularly through the requirement that films be seen by as many people as possible, reaching domestic and global audiences on platforms including not only theatrical release but also pay-TV, DVD, internet, and free-to-air broadcasting. The 'determinate' moments of encoding and decoding are constantly shifting in order to maintain the commercial imperative of the cinematic feature film; 'the production process has its own routines and practices that comes from prior practice and feedback – circulation and reception are 'moments' in the production process and are re-incorporated into the production process itself'⁸. In other words, both encoding and decoding are mutually reinforcing processes, producers taking cues from the box office as to what kind of films to make next, and audiences taking cues from release patterns and marketing strategies as to which kinds of films to see.

3.3: Methodology

In this section I will provide an outline of the research methodologies used for this research – content analysis and semiotic analysis – and the strengths and weaknesses of each type. By using both methodologies I was able to analyse both narratological and symbolic constructions of cinematic evil and I was able to use these results to formulate my conclusion that images of evil lack meaning, and instead contribute to a cinema of malaise and paranoia.

3.3.1: Content Analysis

Berelsen defines content analysis as a ‘research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication’⁹. The assumption is made that the frequency at which certain representations or techniques appear on screen correlates with the films’ dominant meaning. As a quantitative form of research, this provided an excellent starting point for this analysis, and an initial entry point into how evil is constructed and depicted on screen. This method of research involved watching all of the films in the sample and counting those moments when evil appeared on screen and how it was manifested cinematically. (In Chapter Four, I will outline how this recognition was codified and counted.) As this suggests, content analysis can only be meaningful if a large enough sample is checked that can adequately stand in for all texts. In my case, 201 films were analysed, those films chosen on the basis of their release (between 1989 and 2002) and popularity (earning over \$US 100 million at the American domestic box office. Later in this chapter I will define the reasons why these criteria were selected and the limitations they impose). Each of these films was watched and in 133 of these

evil in some form was found to be present (see Appendix A). All further analysis was concentrated on those films.

To some extent this part of the research draws its inspiration from a Proppian analysis. By breaking down the narratives into narratemes or narrative functions, we can begin to map the ways in which cinematic evil is constructed. That is, as Vladimir Propp proposed, a narrative schema of cinematic evil may be developed based on fictional characters' role in terms of plot function. I do not suggest, however, that this kind of analysis can create an inclusive model of how cinematic evil is presented on screen. As a structuralist analysis, Propp's work is limited by the types of narratives and characters that it can be applied to. For instance, Propp suggests that the folktales he analysed must contain a hero (usually male) and a villain, who act and react in a certain defined order. Contemporary commercial cinema often defies these structures in order to maintain a freshness that attempts to defy predictability. Pulp Fiction (Quentin Tarantino, 1994) clearly contradicts the Proppian narrative structure, by skipping backwards and forwards across time, while Godzilla breaks the conventions of the Proppian villain by not developing a specific hero/villain structure. While Dr. Niko Tatopoulos (Mathew Broderick) is clearly the hero, the title character, a giant lizard, is not the villain, and, in fact, it is difficult to determine if a villain exists here¹⁰.

Even given its limitations, the Proppian analysis remains useful as a starting point. I am aware that an all-inclusive model of cinematic evil that might be suggested by a structuralist approach is not possible, and in fact its impossibility aids the further development of my argument concerning the approach of the visual aesthetic of

cinematic evil feeding the postmodern collapse towards chaos and disorder. A cinema of malaise occurs because of what falls *outside* the Proppian analysis of cinematic evil.

I have hinted here that content analysis is not as objective as Berelsen suggested. Krippendorff was correct when he argued that content analysis was ‘primarily a *symbolic* method because it is used to investigate symbolic material (media texts). Certainly, it is not as objective and starkly empirical as critics suggest. In conducting content analysis there is much interpretive work to do, relying on a good knowledge of the texts under examination’¹¹. When carrying out content analysis the researcher must be aware of the limitations of the method, such as, in this case, whether content analysis can indicate underlying causes or reasons (it does not consider such aspects as audience response, commodification or spectacle, for example), and whether my definitions of the codes of evil will necessarily be the same as another researcher’s. It is possible to argue that differing characteristics of evil may be relevant if other forms of coding are applied. Rather than applying a pre-formed definition to the sample, my approach to the development of these codes of evil was to allow the films themselves to determine the categories, a bottom up approach in which the visual representations of evil of each film were noted and compared with other films in order to identify common representations. The results of this bottom-up approach were then re-applied as a top-down analytical device, with the films themselves compared and contrasted in order to develop further analysis of the visual aesthetic of cinematic evil.

3.3.2: Semiotic Analysis, Leading to the Thematic

Content analysis is limited in that it does not attempt to determine codes of evil based on its visual representation or to describe their impact on its commodification. It is used here as an entry point to establish a field which is then categorised or mapped using semiotic analysis, or an analysis of the assembling of visual signs into codes of evil. This then feeds into an implicit thematic analysis of the films studied, allowing a more coherent and explicit explanation of *how* evil is presented rather than simply identifying *what* type of evil exists. Furthering Hall's thesis of encoding, these types of research are useful for determining how the filmic artefact is loaded with preferred meanings by the filmmakers, even when the term 'preferred experience' might be favoured. This form of research is relevant here because it allows for a textual analysis that extends beyond the narrative functions which form the major object of content analysis, and engaging with cinematic techniques that can function as signs, or cinematic actions that can invoke specific reactions and experiences. These will include such elements as camera technique, special effects, aural cues, colour, lighting, casting, and set and costume design. In light of my conclusions on the postmodern collapse, I am not necessarily looking at these signs for meanings but for ways in which they may be divested of meaning, providing instead particular experiential effects and sensations.

Griffiths explains that semiotic analysis is:

Traditionally defined as the 'science of signs', where 'signs' refer to anything that has 'meaning' or can communicate messages to people. The most important consideration of signs is how they are

built together into organised structures of codes, relating to one another in certain perceptible ways.¹²

Saussurian semiotics argues that texts are organised into codes, ‘vertical’ rules for the substitution of signs (paradigms) and ‘horizontal’ rules for their combination (syntagms), and that these codes evolve to meet changing needs. Intertextuality occurs as these codes transfer across to other media texts and types of film. The strength of the semiotic technique is that media texts can be dissected and examined ‘in a way that is sensitive to the many interpretational subtleties that exist within cultural systems’¹³. The content analysis suggested that cinematic evil is not constructed in the narrative functions of characters but as a set of actions or rules, which I will analyse in depth in Chapter Five. These rules are realised in the screen image in the form of the combinations of cinematic techniques available to the filmmaker, which, through repetitive use, develop into recognisable codes in which audiences can identify cinematic evil without the requirement for narrative exposition.

To take one example, in the aptly named Signs, the alien invaders are represented as evil by the use of codes previously seen in the likes of Jurassic Park and Independence Day. These are augmented by director M. Night Shyamalan’s particular filmmaking practices developed through his previous works, notably The Sixth Sense (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999) and Unbreakable (M. Night Shyamalan, 2000). These intertextual references include the use of the point-of-view shot, from the view of the aliens, the holding back of direct shots of the aliens to enhance the threat posed, and the design of the aliens themselves that, while not overtly similar to those seen in Independence Day nevertheless retain certain general features such as the mottled

skin and dark eyes. In terms of Shyamalan's particular filmmaking techniques, his use of sound is crucial. In keeping with the more low-key narrative (centred upon a single rural family's personal battles rather than apocalyptic end-of-the-world spectacle), the soundtrack maintains a pervasive suspense, through James Newton Howard's string based music and subtle sound effects track. In this sense, Shyamalan borrows cues from the horror genre and places them within more introspective narratives that concentrate primarily on contemplation of the image rather than direct shocks.

The construction of cinematic evil, then, is, according to a semiotic regime, a characteristic group of paradigmatic substitutions combined according to a characteristic syntagmatic organisation of shots, rather than a one-to-one equivalence between visual and aural cues and concept. Semiotic analysis is used here to engage with these combinations and in doing so the filmic concept of evil may be examined. In this way, we can move beyond various narrative or characteristic formations of heroism and villainy to engage with the ways the visual aesthetic of evil is constructed, thus allowing for new conceptions of evil to be analysed. For example, in Saving Private Ryan (Steven Spielberg, 1998), the visual aesthetic of evil exists as a conceptual veneer. That is, it allows for the inclusion of evil within its cinematic depiction of war but, unlike the majority of films in the sample, it does not specifically locate evil in any character or object. The idea of war itself is where the film engages with notions of good and evil.

The primary limitation of semiotic analysis is that despite its efforts to establish formal analytic tools, it retains some subjective elements. Because semiotic research is dependent upon the interpretation of signs, it cannot avoid relying on the skills, or

bias, of the individual researcher. The same is true of content analysis; the decision on what constitutes ‘content’ depends on the personal skills, biography, and predilections of the researcher. Likewise, two semioticians might analyse the same text and draw out different meanings. Philosophical hermeneutics, the study of textual interpretation, suggests that reading is guided on the one hand by tradition, and on the other by the text itself, so that interpretations can be shown to be ‘wrong’ where they fail to observe either traditional knowledge concerning a text or class of texts or characteristics of a specific text. However, within these bounds, reading is open to multiple interpretations. Commercial cinema is ‘traditional’ in that it is reliant upon repetition, attempting to offer a standardised and, from an audience perspective, a predictable experience (although, of course, offering differences from previous films to enhance that experience). This repetition of codes can be mapped and incremental change observed to show how these have developed and are continuing to develop, while offering a benchmark against which to measure the degree of specificity in the representation of evil in particular films. Semiotic analysis of the encoding of evil can also help identify contradictory structures in encoding (that will ultimately lead to evil as symptomatic of a postmodern cinema of malaise, discussed in Chapter Nine). For example, analysis of how cinematic evil is encoded may give some clues to its failure to correlate with social and other non-cinematic evil.

It is important to note that I do not intend to catalogue these codes of evil in terms of genre. As I mentioned pertaining to Shyamalan’s films, certain filmic techniques common to the horror genre are frequently used in other types of films (as I will explain in Chapter Six, the point of view shot showing the ‘monster’s’ view of its victim is, for example, also used in Twister), just as, say, prosthetic effects are not

limited to science-fiction or comic-book movies. While variations may occur, the construction of cinematic evil is not generic and cannot be treated as such.

As stated earlier, this semiotic analysis implicitly gives way to a thematic analysis of the films sampled. In determining the semiotic codes that define evil visually, I am also developing a foundational basis of what themes are present in the texts and how they contribute to the construction of evil. As Elsaesser and Buckland state, ‘the theme refers to that text’s substance, its principal idea, what it is about.’¹⁴ They go on to argue that

Thematic criticism begins from the particular nature of a film, and then relates it to a set of general, fundamental categories. It is therefore similar to a symbolic analysis of a film, in which the film is read, not in its own terms, but in the context of general human values.¹⁵

Through the semiotic analysis, therefore, we can analyse the clues offered by the films on how to construct the meanings that each film contains, or as if often the case here, the lack of meaning. For instance, I argue in Chapter Eight that the nostalgia film utilises narratives, filmmaking techniques and styles from older films, the contemporary movie divests them of sub-text. Elsaesser and Buckland point out that Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, 1956) is about the result of communist brainwashing¹⁶, whereas Independence Day, which utilises a 1950s-type alien invasion narrative, does not imply any deeper meaning – the aliens here do not stand

in for anything else. The implied thematic analysis, then, clarifies the ways evil is used in the contemporary commercial feature film.

This visual aesthetic of cinematic evil, as codified by content and semiotic analysis, is designed to provide a specific experience to any audience member. At this stage, whether the films are successful or not is less important than what decisions are made by the filmmakers in their attempt to manufacture an experience on film. In other words, the construction of cinematic evil is commodified in order to make the image of terror and destruction desirable. It will therefore be beneficial to theorise the results of the content, semiotic and thematic analyses in terms of the popular and of spectacle.

3.4: Theory

The key theoretical issues that inform this research are the popular and the spectacle, both of which will be examined in this section. The commodification of the image and how evil is made desirable as a result is also important but I will discuss this concurrently with the above issues.

3.4.1: The Popular

Culture, to use two of Raymond Williams' key definitions, is 'a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group'¹⁷, one example of which is 'works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity'¹⁸. 'Popular culture', then, can refer to a way of life either generated by the people themselves (as in folkloric tales) or belonging to the ordinary people (as opposed to elite culture). In addition to this, we must also consider popular culture as 'mass culture', which emphasises the

commerciality of the popular medium. Whereas 'high culture' is the manifestation of an individual creative mind, the popular cultural artefact is the product of a labour-intensive industrial process; as John Storey notes, 'It is mass produced for mass consumption.'¹⁹ In this way, popular culture is held to be inferior to high culture, not because it is distinct from high culture but because it is produced to be consumed unthinkingly by a mass audience. Popular cinema may be condemned for the creation of audiences as mindless consumers but the status of mass audiences in society threatens other more traditionally defined cultures. In the period under study, popular culture most frequently refers to mass-mediated culture, characterised by a heterogeneous connection between creator and spectator/user which serves simultaneously to distance the two and to draw them together. On the one hand, such industrialised popular culture, mediated through the filters of economics, the spectacular image and globalisation, is accused of weakening the ties between the viewer and her or his social reality. On the other hand, popular culture, by way of its ability to directly connect with the everyday without the barrier of intellectual aestheticism, held to be inherent in high culture, can be said to create a social reality of its own. At the same time, in its most basic contemporary usage, 'popular' means well-liked by many people, and it is this definition which best describes the Hollywood industry's conception of popularity. This double definition allows an analysis of both the cultural and the commodity forms of popular Hollywood films.

In order to fully analyse the location and construction of evil in contemporary popular American film, a range of movies are required, their selection based primarily according to a notion of the 'popular'. Within the Hollywood industry, the point at which a film shifts from failure or moderate success to blockbuster status in

commercial terms occurs when the take exceeds \$US 100 million at the domestic (that is, North American) box office²⁰. In the period from 1989 to 2002, 201 movies crossed this threshold. The films covered include the final remnants of Cold War narratives (The Hunt for Red October [John McTiernan, 1990]) and the first indications of the effect on popular cinema of the 9/11 attacks (Spider-Man, Black Hawk Down²¹ [Ridley Scott, 2001]).

The figure of \$US 100 million is problematic, particularly since films with high production costs require considerably more than the threshold simply to break even. Both Godzilla and Wild Wild West (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1999) are included in the list, with box office receipts of \$136.3 million and \$113.8 million respectively, even though these films were considered failures. Further, by using theatrical box office solely as marker of the popularity of a film, other problems occur. Multiple revenue streams, including video and DVD sales and sales to television broadcasters, allows for films that failed on theatrical release to recoup their costs in these differing formats. While a general correlation may be made between the popularity of a film on theatrical release and its later video incarnations, this simplification of the ‘popular’ does not account for those films that contradict the trend and ‘find’ an audience on video release. (One example of this is Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery [Jay Roach, 1997]. This film was only moderately successful at cinemas, but the success of its video release prompted the production of two sequels, both of which achieved box office success sufficient to be included in this thesis.) Further complications occur in the exclusion of ‘cult’ films, or films that achieve success in their specific target market to the extent that many of them enter the common vernacular but without achieving the ‘breakout’ or crossover success into other

markets that would see them earning more than \$US 100 million at the North American box office. Not included, for example, are the Star Trek films²², six of which were released during the period under consideration here.

Noticeably absent to a large extent are horror films, with Scream (Wes Craven, 1996) and its first sequel and The Blair Witch Project (Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sanchez, 1999) as the only examples, although psychological thrillers that contain elements of the horror film are exemplified in Seven, The Silence of the Lambs and Hannibal. Horror films specifically and directly engage with discourses of good and evil, and they do so in specific ways, both narratively and visually, being designed specifically to scare an audience. Similarly, The Addams Family (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1991), the Batman films, Armageddon, Twister, Ghost (Jerry Zucker, 1990), Ghostbusters II (Ivan Reitman, 1989), the Harry Potter movies, Jurassic Park, and Scooby-Doo (Raja Gosnell, 2002), all borrow horror techniques, even if they are not specifically designed to horrify. And on top of this, what could be loosely termed the action film (which comprises a range of films from Speed, Die Hard 2, and Rush Hour [Brett Ratner, 1998] through to Spider-Man, The Matrix [Larry and Andy Wachowski, 1999] and Die Another Day [Lee Tamahori, 2002]), also engages with notions of good and evil. Thus the sample base is broad enough to engage with horror codes without representing the horror genre.

The problematic \$100 million threshold is, however, one of the few indicators of popularity that is accepted by the Hollywood production industry. No matter what the perceived success or failure each individual film attained, to achieve this figure remains indicative that a large number of people viewed these films in a cinematic

setting. As a simple quantitative measure, the threshold of \$100 million in theatrical earnings must be considered here as a practical step in delineating a body of films which pass the industry test of popularity, rather than a final answer to the problem of defining the popular.

It can be asked whether popular culture as 'mass culture' assists in maintaining a dominant order or challenges it. Storey notes that the artefacts and practices of popular culture are 'understood as a collective dream-world'²³, or a form of transportation away from the real into the realm of fantasy and desire. Richard Maltby claims that popular culture provides 'escapism that is not an escape from or to anywhere, but an escape of our utopian selves'²⁴. In other words, popular cinema provides a way of articulating and acting out the wishes and desires of its spectators. As Maltby notes, 'If it is the crime of popular culture that it has taken our dreams and packaged them and sold them back to us, it is also the achievement of popular culture that it has brought us more and more varied dreams than we could otherwise ever have known'²⁵. Popular culture as collective dream is empowered to take its' spectators to places they would not or could not normally go and to somehow identify with characters we would not normally associate with. The commerciality of the contemporary feature film engages with collective social fantasies, but as Eileen R. Meehan argues, these fantasies are not those of the audience but of the Hollywood studios; 'mass-produced culture is a business, governed by corporate drives for profit, market control, and transindustrial integration. While movies may (and do) flop, the decision to create a movie is a business decision about the potential profitability of a cinematic product.'²⁶ In our studies of the popular then, we must strike a balance between the text and the commodity, or the collective dream and the product.

Postmodernist theory addresses how the image as collective fantasy is undermined by the hollowing out of meaning through its commodification. Storey notes that popular culture is informed by these debates and particularly ‘the claim that postmodern culture is a culture which no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture’²⁷. A postmodern culture erodes the boundaries between high and low culture, creating not a homogenous blending of the two but a chaotic melange of differing cultural forms that continuously incorporates other artefacts in a constant process of intertextuality and self-referentiality. I accept that self-referentiality is not a common trait of the sampled films. Likewise, irony may stand out as a postmodern aspect, but again there is little in the films analysed, and even less in those films that depict the presence of evil. Importantly, the exemplification of spectacle over ‘meaning’ and, as I argue in Chapter Eight, the use of modes of nostalgia and pastiche, as defined by Frederic Jameson, are critical elements in the construction of cinematic evil, thus specifically engaging with postmodern theory in this regard. Thus cinematic evil is shaped by a visual aesthetic that both represents evil and deprives it of meaning at the same time.

3.4.2: Spectacle

The idea that cinematic evil is shaped by a visual aesthetic suggests that spectacle is critical in its construction. We must therefore look at theories of spectacle and how these may assist in creating a cinema of malaise and paranoia. Thomas Schatz argues that the notion of a ‘cinema of attractions’, to borrow from Tom Gunning²⁸ and used to describe a cinema that emphasises its visual qualities over ‘meaning’, is crucial in defining the contemporary Hollywood blockbuster. As Schatz argues, this is a form

that is ‘increasingly plot-driven, increasingly visceral, kinetic, and fast paced, increasingly reliant on special effects, increasingly “fantastic” (and thus apolitical), and increasingly targeted at younger audiences’²⁹. The emphasis on spectacle reduces the need for narrative causations and exposition. Narrative is not usurped in place of spectacle in the contemporary feature film, but rather the visual integrates narrative, in Schatz’s terms reducing it to ‘plot’, into the temporal ordering of (spectacular) events in which traditional narrative causality and coherence are optional. Thus, evil in its overtly violent form is spectacle, but also serves narrative functions and in its visualisation alters the kinds and modes of narrative. In these circumstances, narrative does not explain evil as such; premised on its visual aesthetic, the idea of evil exists but without theological or philosophical foundation.

Before we define spectacle, it is perhaps necessary to explain what spectacle is *not*. While Gunning applied Eisenstein’s definition of ‘attraction’ to the ‘aggressive... subject[ion of] the spectator to sensual or psychological impact’³⁰, the cinema of attractions is, in itself, too broad to refer to spectacle as a specific form of attraction. Kristin Thompson argues that spectacle is ‘excess’. She suggests, following cues offered by Russian Formalists, that films ‘can be seen as a struggle of opposing forces. Some of these forces strive to unify the work, to hold it together sufficiently that we may perceive and follow its structures. Outside any such structures lie those aspects of the work which are not contained by its unifying forces – the “excess”’.³¹ In Thompson’s definition, ‘excess’ incorporates all those cinematic techniques that are extraneous to the film’s intended interpretations or narratives, such that, for example, the colour of a car a character drives may have no purpose. Thompson further suggests that the study of excessive elements ‘can allow us to look further into

a film, renewing its ability to intrigue us by its strangeness; it also can help us to be aware of how the whole film – not just its narrative – works upon our perception’³². Especially applicable to avant-garde and arthouse films, Thompson’s thesis suggests that all stylistic elements are ‘excess’ to the purpose of clear narration. Contemporary films, especially those exhibiting evil in the sample, are however less dependent on narrative than classical Hollywood, and therefore more reliant on stylistic excess. However, entertainment films typically contain their excess, restricting it to the screen for the duration of projection (see Bukatman³³). But if spectacle itself is not excessive, evil is. Its visual representation, befitting the postmodern condition of contemporary cinema, breaks the boundaries of its own discourse. That is, the excess of evil is represented through a spectacular visual aesthetic that gives it symbolic form beyond the narrative function of the merely bad antagonist through visual qualities that emphasise its violence.

A perverse view of spectacle, but one difficult to ignore in the construction of a visual aesthetic of evil, comes from Georges Bataille. In his theories of a General Economy of Excess, Bataille postulated that humankind was driven towards a system of production in which general energy flows generate excesses of energy that must be expended by non-productive means. These non-productive means included the construction of arts and spectacles, ‘which, at least in primitive circumstances, have no end beyond themselves’³⁴.

Bataille was fascinated by sex and death, and amidst an analysis of the spectacle, found a link between the ‘little death’ offered by orgasm and ‘definitive death’. In his writing on a photograph taken in 1905 showing a Chinese man being brutally tortured,

he noted the horror of the spectacle juxtaposed with the look of pleasure, or more precisely, ecstasy on the face of the man. Following this, Susan Sontag noted that this analysis contradicted modern views of pleasure and pain as direct opposites³⁵. Both could be possible simultaneously but, according to Jeremy Bentham, ethical action was based on the pleasure derived outweighing the pain caused. Bataille, however, refuted this view by stating that pleasure was possible *because* it is painful. In his conceptualisation of pleasure and pain, the spectacle of excessive violence and evil becomes enjoyable through this non-rational pleasure/pain principle. The pleasures of the 'little death', equated with the spectacle, sees the boundaries of the self overcome at the moment of sexual climax, just as Bataille argued that cinema should act as the visual sensation of the loss of self. Cinema as spectacle should, he said, shatter the composed rationality of individual experience to open onto a mode of communication that exceeds language and the rational.

Commercial cinema is too dependent on the maintenance of American ideologies and on the codes and conventions of a classical cinema to fully utilise Bataille's concepts of what cinema should be, but nevertheless opens up the spectacle of violence and evil towards explanations commencing from its characteristic combination of horror and wonder. Bataille's eroticised death is formlessness, the allure of the shapeless, unknown and unknowable at the other side of consciousness and rationality. The frightening spectacle of the unknowingness and excessiveness of death elicits both mortification of feeling and release of tabooed erotic knowledge. In other words, in the non-productive excessiveness of the commodified cinematic image, humankind contemplates its own ultimate demise; the death of the self.

Freud wanted to recruit the unconscious for the cure of the conscious mind, but Bataille embraced the paradoxes of the unconscious, particularly, for example, in the eroticism of death and pain for their own sake, promoting cultural practices that encouraged self-loss, or unconsciousness, rather than the Freudian unconscious. Bataillean spectacle creates such self-loss by stimulating irreconcilable contradictions. Postmodern film touches on such techniques by perpetually rescuing its protagonists from loss and unconsciousness and identifying the dangerous attractions of pleasure-pain as, precisely, evil. Thus the contemporary spectacle of cinematic evil is Bataillean to the extent that it shows us the abyss of our desires, but postmodern in reducing that abyss to the purely superficial effects sequence.

In a general sense, spectacle, then, forms a framework within which film as commodity, filmic image, and audience responses and interpretations collide in ways that few people can predict. In this way, I would subscribe to Bill Nichols argument that 'The visual now constitutes the terrain of subjective experience as the locus of knowledge, and power.'³⁶ In the commercial cinema, the surface of the filmic image itself is where the polysemy of meaning is to be found, at a point where the visual and aural qualities of the image meet to create dominant preferred meanings such as narrative cues but also to generate excess effects which open up to complex affects. Commercial cinema operates on creating a depthless image which privileges emotion and affect/sensation over meaning or relationships to social reality. I would argue, then, that any research on evil in commercial cinema must be based exclusively not on *who* is constructed as evil, but *how* that evil has been constructed, both on filmic and interpretive levels.

This ‘how’ in commercial cinema is located on the surface of the filmic image, and more specifically in the spectacle. From this shallowness emerges an ambiguous play of meaning that may maintain the dominant meanings of the film but may also subvert them. These may range from the triviality of the Michael Bay ‘hero shot’³⁷ to the spatial complexity of Black Hawk Down and the temporal complexity of The Matrix. Constructions of evil emerge from this spectacle, this ‘rollercoaster’ of sound and image that strikes viewers at visceral, emotional, and conceptual levels.

What is evil, then, in the contemporary commercial feature, when evil is defined as a sensation rather than by description or exposition? First and foremost, the visual aesthetic of evil is a tool for filmmakers to use in creating a cinema that provides the type of experience that has become expected of the contemporary commercial feature film. A series of repetitions – codes of cinematic evil – provides a standard impression or construction of evil which each film builds upon, redefines or contradicts. In Chapter Six, I analyse these codes and conventions more fully, but it is important to introduce them here; colour symbolism, representations of hell and apocalypse, framing conventions, sound design, and the excessiveness of bodily violence. My semiotic/thematic approach draws out how filmmakers use these conventions to construct evil on screen. Semiotic and thematic analysis also allows for contradictions to be discovered, such that evil can remain ambiguous.

Through commodification, a regime of sensation (moving towards Angela Ndalianis’ ‘architectures of the senses’³⁸) prevails, and the definition of evil is rendered ambivalent. Evil is both the antithesis of human morality and the enticement into cinemas of a paying audience. Cinematic evil as both inducement and ideological

determinant becomes enigmatic, save only that it is clear that ideology feeds off the cinema as popular attraction. By describing the cinematic experience as 'event', we can begin to see how evil-as-commodity feeds into the manufacture of the sensual experience itself. What this experience is and how a film works as experience then becomes primary in the examination of the construction of evil in contemporary popular cinema. To understand how evil is used instrumentally in the fabrication of the feature film is to understand how, simultaneously, the abstract concept of evil becomes solid within the imaginary spectacle and in many cases, defines the essence of the experience itself. The codes of cinematic evil are part of the framework on which the film-as-experience is built, while cinematic evil within the spectacle remains ambiguous. Evil is used to entice audiences, to thrill them, but is also defined, and defied, by the experience itself.

Thomas Elsaesser describes this as 'engulfment', the mode of cinema-going that re-defines the boundaries between narrative cinema and a cinema of spectacle, and between the physical screen in the theatre and the space of the theatre itself:

Engulfment... is meant to indicate a distinct mode of consequence, of implication and interrelation, signifying at once an attenuated kind of causality, but also something more dangerous, because no longer capable of being kept at the sort of distance that engagement via the eye and mind assures. Instead of the bounded image, the mode of engulfment works with the ambient image, in which it is sound that now 'locates', 'cues' and even 'narrates' the image, producing a more corporeal set of perceptions; instead of

voyeurism and fetishistic fixation, there is spatial disorientation; instead of the logic of the ‘scene’, it is semantic clusters, mental maps, spatial metaphors that organize comprehension and narrative transformation.³⁹

Elsaesser suggests that cinema itself has been redefined in the movement towards a post-classical Hollywood cinema; the formerly primary objective of story-telling has been subsumed into ‘elaborate semantic puzzles, crafted in order to engage narrative on its own terrain by deconstructing its logic of agency, motivation, temporality and the causal chain.’⁴⁰ Further, this ‘proposes a kind of articulation where consequence, motive and implication are still vital, but where none the less a different form of participation and engagement [follows].’⁴¹ Narrative is still ubiquitous in cinema but today is inextricably interwoven with spectacle. Elsaesser’s engulfment effect allows evil to be described as a visually and aurally constructed depiction rather than as a specifically social discourse.



Fig. 3.1: Frame capture from trailer for Seven.

Exemplifying the experience of the film rather than its narrative, the trailer for Seven defines evil as a quality that permeates a space rather than one located in an object, a person or an animal (See Fig. 3.1⁴²). While other film trailers do explicitly locate evil in specific characters, the metaphor created by Seven remains apt. Cinematic evil is constructed and located within spatial parameters defined by the frame (which includes Elsaesser's development of sound's contribution to the 'engulfment' of the audience). In other words, evil exists on screen as an idea that is applied visually and aurally. It may assist the narrative function of the film, or it may exist as spectacle in its own right. Either way, evil becomes commodified, moulded by the Hollywood industrial complex in order to be bought and sold.

3.5: Conclusion

Cinematic evil is a creation of production process and textual meaning, interacting to offer an audience a version of evil that is clearly delimited but still ambiguous. The mutual interweaving of spectacle and narrative – as the reduced form in which narrative persists in contemporary commercial feature films – creates a visual aesthetic of evil that is recognisable through a series of codes that will be analysed in detail in Chapters Five and Six. The study of evil in commercial cinema must combine textual analysis with theories of spectacle and the popular. The visual aesthetic of evil combines narrative structures, the visual excessiveness of violence, codes of cinematic evil, and the necessity to produce a commodity that will be consumed by as many people as possible. In the midst of this, spectacle in itself is not excessive but the displays of evil offered are. The fascination with body horror and death continues to intrigue and it is through these fascinations that cinematic evil is produced. I therefore concentrate on content and semiotic analysis of the screen

construction of evil and on decisions concerning its construction made at the time of production to the exclusion of audience ethnography, but with reference to industry appreciation of audience tastes as read off from box office figures. I further offer analyses of these findings through theories of the popular and spectacle. It remains to confront the theorisation of evil, as both a social and theological topic and as cinematic construct.

¹ King, Geoff (2000), Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster, I.B.Tauris, London, p. 7.

² Meehan, Eileen R. (1991), "'Holy Commodity Fetish, Batman!': The Political Economy of a Commercial Intertext", in Hollows, Joanne, Peter Hutchings, Mark Jancovich (eds.) (2000), The Film Studies Reader, Arnold, London, p. 24.

³ Meehan, p. 24.

⁴ A clear example of this is the post 9/11 period in which some films already made were held back from release (examples, Bad Company, Collateral Damage [Andrew Davis, 2002]), some films were altered to remove certain images (examples, explosions in The Bourne Identity, and the Twin Towers in Zoolander [Ben Stiller, 2002]), and some in pre-production were never made. Although patterns of distribution and limited marketing may have largely affected box office receipts, Bad Company and Collateral Damage failed to find an audience.

⁵ Morley, David (1980), The Nationwide Audience, British Film Institute, London, p. 6.

⁶ Griffiths, Merris (2004), 'Chapter 3: Methodologies', Children's Toy Advertisements, http://users.aber.ac.uk/lmg/chapter_3.html, (accessed 11 October 2005).

⁷ Abercrombie, Nicholas (1996), Television and Society, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 199-200.

⁸ Hall, Stuart (1990), 'Encoding, Decoding', in During, Simon (ed.) (1993), The Cultural Studies Reader, Routledge, London, p. 92.

⁹ Quoted in Deacon, David, Michael Pickering, Peter Golding, Graham Murdock (1999), Researching Communications, Arnold, London, p. 115.

¹⁰ Evil appears in the climax when the eggs in the Madison Square Garden complex begin to hatch and the offspring of Godzilla, unlike Godzilla itself, display the characteristics of evil, especially the propensity towards the rational destruction of humans who cross their path. However, because of their limited screen time, they are certainly not villains in the Proppian sense.

¹¹ Quoted in Stokes, Jane (2003), How to Do Media & Cultural Studies, Sage Publications, London, p. 56.

¹² Griffiths.

¹³ Griffiths.

¹⁴ Elsaesser, Thomas and Warren Buckland (2002), Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis, London, Arnold, p. 117.

¹⁵ Elsaesser and Buckland, p. 118.

¹⁶ Elsaesser and Buckland, p. 119.

¹⁷ Williams, Raymond (1983), Keywords, London, Fontana, p. 90.

¹⁸ Williams, p. 90.

¹⁹ Storey, John (2001), Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction, Harlow, Prentice Hall, p. 8.

²⁰ The importance of the \$US 100 million dollar threshold was clearly displayed with the release of the remake of The Italian Job (F. Gary Gray, 2003). After 14 weeks on release the film was showing at 64 theatres having accumulated a total revenue of \$96.8 million. To assure that the film achieved 'hit' status, the film was re-released over the American Labor Day weekend in an additional 1,900 theatres. Its four-day take of just shy of \$4 million ensured its success. Its theatrical run finished at a final total

of \$106.1 million. (Figures: Box Office Mojo, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=italianjob.htm>)

²¹ The trailer for Spider-Man was amended to remove a sequence in which a helicopter carrying thieves is caught in a web strung by the titular hero between the two towers of the World Trade Center. Further, to draw upon the patriotic fervour of the nation in the months following the attacks, an additional shot was inserted during the climactic battle between Spider-Man and the Green Goblin in which a crowd of onlookers throw rocks at the villain and voice their support for the hero. Tellingly, one of these onlookers yells, 'You mess with one of us, you mess with all of us.' Black Hawk Down created a conundrum for producer Jerry Bruckheimer and director Ridley Scott. With the film almost complete at the time of the attacks and American troops having rolled into Afghanistan, a film about a recent American military defeat might have been box office poison. In a bold move, the release date was brought forward and, I suspect, the film was re-edited to emphasise the courage of the soldier on the ground and brotherhood in the Marines and the Rangers. While Bruckheimer, Scott and others involved in the production of the film deny that such re-editing occurred, nevertheless the three-disc DVD release suggests otherwise. The deleted scenes hint at a more 'downbeat' narrative arc and an epilogue focusing more on the question of why American men died for a cause that had no relevance to them.

²² These are Star Trek V: The Final Frontier (William Shatner, 1989), Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country (Nicholas Meyer, 1991), Star Trek: Generations (David Carson, 1994), Star Trek: First Contact (Joanthan Frakes, 1996), Star Trek: Insurrection (Jonathan Frakes, 1998), and Star Trek: Nemesis (Stuart Baird, 2002).

²³ Storey, John (2001), Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction, Prentice Hall, Harlow, p. 9.

²⁴ Richard Maltby (1989), 'Introduction', in Richard Maltby (ed.) (1989), Dreams for Sale: Popular Culture in the 20th Century, London, Harrap, p. 11.

²⁵ Maltby, p. 14.

²⁶ Meehan, p. 24.

²⁷ Storey, p. 13.

²⁸ Gunning, Tom (1990), 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant Garde', in Elsasser, Thomas (ed.) (1990), Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative, London, British Film Institute, pp. 56-62.

²⁹ Schatz, Thomas (1993), 'The New Hollywood', in Collins, Jim, Hilary Radner, Ava Preacher Collins (eds.) (1993), Film Theory Goes to the Movies, Routledge, New York, p. 23.

³⁰ Gunning, p. 59.

³¹ Thompson, Kristin (1981), 'The Concept of Cinematic Excess', in Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen (1999), Film Theory and Criticism, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 487.

³² Thompson, p. 498.

³³ See Bukatman, Scott (2003), Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Superman in the 20th Century, Duke University Press, Durham, pp. 1-9. Specifically on p. 9, Bukatman argues that, 'While it is acknowledged that there is something *more* in the entertainments, that "something" has frequently been tarred or celebrated under the rubric of "excess". The term is misapplied. These entertainments do not exceed *themselves* but rather the arbitrary conditions of narrative's hierarchical dominance (or, similarly, the bounds of linguistically based signification.' In other words, Bukatman argues that we should no longer analyse and critique the entertainment movie solely through discourses of narrative (by which spectacle is excessive) but rather through discourses of spectacle. In Bukatman's argument the visual aesthetic of evil becomes crucial to its construction and representation.

³⁴ Batailles, Georges (1985), Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939, The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p. 118.

³⁵ Sontag, Susan (2003), Regarding the Pain of Others, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, p. 98-99.

³⁶ Nichols, Bill (2000), 'Film Theory and the revolt against Master Narratives', in Gledhill, Christine, and Linda Williams (2000), Reinventing Film Studies, London: Arnold, p. 42.

³⁷ Perhaps originating in Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch, this shot occurs in all of Bay's movies, The Rock, Armageddon, Pearl Harbor, and depicts the films' heroes striding side-by-side and in slow-motion towards the camera, this shot was parodied in Monsters, Inc.

³⁸ Ndalianis, Angela (2004), Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., p. 199. Reconsidering Deleuze's 'architectures of vision', Ndalianis argues that a theme park attraction centred on, but not limited to, a projected moving image 'demarcates audience space from the performance... and the audience becomes a participant in an enveloping entertainment spectacle', thus the audience engages with the moving image not only within the space

of the frame but within the cinema itself. As my research is limited to cinema and not theme parks, I cannot entirely go so far as to suggest that the experience is similar. However, Geoff King and Thomas Elsaesser successfully argue that the differences are not insurmountable. See King, Geoff (2000), 'Ride-Films and Films as Rides in the Contemporary Hollywood Cinema of Attractions', *CineAction*, No. 51, pp. 2-9, and Elsaesser, Thomas (1998), 'Specularity and engulfment: Francis Ford Coppola and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*', in Neale, Steve, and Murray Smith (eds.) (1998), *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, Routledge, London, pp. 191-208.

³⁹ Elsaesser (1998), p. 204.

⁴⁰ Elsaesser (1998), p. 204.

⁴¹ Elsaesser (1998), p. 204.

⁴² The trailer for *Seven* concentrates on seeing and looking at and through spaces, including corridors, bedrooms, city streets, and police offices. At one point, Detective Somerset asks Detective Mills, 'Have you ever seen anything like this?' Mills replies simply, 'No'. Later, on discovering the victim of gluttony, a disembodied voice of a policeman calls out, 'Come take a look at this', as the camera tracks in on the bloated body slumped at a dining table. The killer is referred to as insane and as male, seen only in long shot, thus placed within the spatial dimensions the film develops. And in the dark cinematography, this space is represented as cold, inhuman, and depressing.

Chapter Four: A Theological, Philosophical and Postmodern

Summary of Evil

4.1: Introduction

In this chapter I provide a summary of the primary paradigms of evil, based on theological, philosophical and postmodern approaches, and how these may or may not influence its various cinematic depictions. It is important to note that commercial cinema does not distinguish between the differing paradigms of evil but nonetheless uses them systematically, mixing and matching them as each film sees fit, as codes: thus, evil is always recognisable, even if each film constructs evil in incomparable ways. In order to establish these codes, it is important to outline the primary paradigms of evil which I loosely periodise into three separate phases¹: the theological phase, established in the Middle Ages and drawing upon Augustine, Aquinas, and the Manicheans, the philosophical phase established in the Enlightenment period, and including Kant, Nietzsche and Freud, and, following the Second World War, the postmodern phase in which Arendt, Baudrillard and Cashman questioned the rationality of Kantian evil in a technological era. I will describe each of these in turn.

In this chapter I will outline how evil is currently conceptualised, based on these historical paradigms. But in these postmodern, pluralist times, the question must be asked whether evil is still legitimate as a concept. If there are no longer any answers – and no ultimate questions – and every point of view is valid, can there be any room for evil as an absolute? In the study of cinematic evil, this is a crucial question, since cinema does establish evil as existing absolutely, and largely by reference to established conceptions of evil. It is, therefore, important to establish the taxonomy of

pre-cinematic conceptualisations of evil because the visual aesthetic of evil, and the cinematic codes in which it is articulated, draw, firstly, on popular, folkloric beliefs in Satan and hellfire, secondly, on theological traditions that include those represented by Augustine and the Manicheans, and, thirdly, on philosophical traditions concerning reason and the will to do good or evil. Arendt's realisation that evil could be performed by perfectly ordinary people in perfectly rational ways demonstrated that Enlightenment ideas of evil as a universal force or as a failure to act in accordance with reason no longer held. Similarly the Enlightenment banished the theological, just as the theological had banished the folkloric before it. Yet what defines the postmodern is not just that it supersedes the modern, but that it absorbs it as well as all its predecessors. It flattens out history, altering it from a process of change into a melange of resources in what Jameson called pastiche. This becomes the source code of evil in a postmodern world, and commercial cinema. The spectacle of evil is a mosaic made up from irreconcilable fragments of all previous ways of thinking about evil. This is why it cannot be defined, and why at the same time it is instantly recognisable as absolute.

The cinematic coding of patterns of recognition of evil requires more analysis. As Lance Morrow asks:

Is evil... to be judged by the sensibilities – by the instinctive revulsion we feel, rather than by some more objective, rational measurement? A good question: Is there such a thing as an objective standard of evil? Or is evil always registered in the emotions, the instincts – by a sort of moral sense of smell, a gag

reflex? Is the degree of evil to be judged by the strength of the recoil, or at least by some, so to speak, aesthetic response?²

Morrow suggests that the recognition of evil may be apparent but its definition is elusive, arguing that, ‘The perception of evil always has something to do with the optics of the moment.’³ Crucial here is a two-fold recognition of evil; its detection by sight and as registered emotionally. The cinematic image assists in this resolute but indistinct formation of evil, allowing it to be easily recognisable without necessarily needing to be defined. In fact, cinematic evil resists definition. The multiple encodings involved make definition difficult and perhaps impossible; but nevertheless these encodings ensure that evil is identifiable as a screen phenomenon. Based on a postmodern conflation of theological and philosophical debates on evil, the question of what is evil can be rephrased as: how is evil professed?

4.2: Theological Conceptions of Evil

4.2.1: Augustine

In the 4th century, St. Augustine⁴ defined evil as the absence of good in the same way that darkness is the absence of light. Equating evil with absence, or ‘nothing-ness’, Augustine suggested that the lack of good created a moral vacuum that was not so much filled with evil but was in itself evil. The battle that raged on a spiritual level was not only between good and evil but between Being and non-Being. Plato had suggested this in his writings several centuries earlier, but Augustine added that humankind had been entrusted by God with free will. Each individual had the choice to follow God and be rewarded in Heaven, or to fall from the good and into ‘nothing-ness’ after death. Positing free will as a component in the construction of evil was

crucial, for it answered critical questions on the problems of evil. These problems arose from the attempt to reconcile the existence of an omnipotent and all-good God with the presence of evil. The human individual lived halfway between God and nothingness. Augustinian free will allowed for the kinds of evil acts that were evident in human society. God, he said, had given each individual the ability to choose between good and evil. Life, then, was a test of the soul, enacted by God, as to whether the individual deserved to join Him in Paradise⁵. In The Divine Comedy, Dante echoes Augustine's concept, when he suggests that 'man, when filled with God, will rise to Heaven, but when weighed down by stupidity and sin, will go to hell.'⁶

This set the battle between good and evil on a spiritual plane; Plato had already intimated as much by dividing evil and good into two opposite poles represented by the body and the spirit; 'if we want to know what [the soul] is really like, we shouldn't look at it in the form we currently see it in, crippled by its partnership with the body and other evils, but in its pure state.'⁷ In a dichotomy that would be mirrored later by Manichean accounts, the physical body was the site of evil and the spirit, or soul, the site of good. Christian theology developed this opposition further in the concepts of heaven and hell, a spiritual paradise balanced by a physical torment. This set God, the creator, against the Devil, the destroyer. The identity of the latter was hazy, dependant upon whether God retained ultimate power over him (for he is usually described as male) or if he has fallen away from God and has become His foe. Either Satan originally sat alongside God, creating wickedness in the world to test the faith of humankind, or Satan was the fallen angel, having fallen away, or been cast out, from the good and, in Hell, creating the antithesis of heaven. Either way, evil is

not a separate entity autonomous from good but a corruption of, or slippage from, the good. Evil is the absence of a perfection which ought to be present but is not.

Augustine postulated that no explanation for evil was necessary as evil, being a corruption of the good, was merely a deficiency with no origin other than the lack of the good. Writing nine centuries later, St. Thomas Aquinas argued that evil must have a cause, and noted the distinction between the good *per se* and the good *per accidens*. Evil *per se* can not exist because, since good is the cause of all things, it can not be the direct cause of evil. Evil is never a directly intended consequence of a good act. On the other hand, evil *per accidens* suggests that evil can occur as an accidental consequence of the good act⁸. Aquinas explained this through the example of the lion eating the lamb. This may appear to be evil but the lion eats the lamb to survive, thus maintaining the natural order, as well as the good. The evil act, as perceived by the lamb, is thus an accidental consequence of this devouring⁹. This perception of evil as an unintended consequence, or as a necessary element of a fundamentally good and natural process appears often in commercial cinema, in that the hero often has to commit evil acts in order to preserve the good. James Bond, for example, consistently breaks legal, moral, and social rules in order to protect a greater good.

4.2.2: The Manichean¹⁰

In Gnosticism and Manichaeism this spiritual battle acquired its truest dualistic form, with the material world, including the body, the realm of evil and sin, while the spiritual world was the realm of purity and goodness. On another level, the battle was also one of light against darkness, a narrative inherited from the ancient Zoroastrian faith. Adib Rashad describes how, prior to the creation of the material world and

humankind, light and dark existed in separate realms, with ‘dark relegated to one of its corners’¹¹. Darkness, seeing that light was good, sought to invade it. The Father of Greatness, seeing that the particles of light were in themselves unable to resist the advancing forces of dark, called into being another form of existence, the Mother of Life, to combat the evil forces. The Mother of Life, in turn, created Primal Man, a physical existence within which evil could be contained. These particles of light were then housed in the envelope of the physical human body. But, rather than acting to turn the body towards good, this particle of light was trapped within it, doomed to live within a world, and a body, that was inherently evil. One could only hope that, upon death, this particle could escape the physical body that had imprisoned it and return to the realm of light and good.

While Manichaeism was labelled a heresy and overwhelmed by the Christian Church in the 13th and 14th Centuries, much of its doctrine still persists, particularly the dualistic opposition of good and evil as symbolised by light and darkness, black and white, and day and night. This dichotomy is clearly evident in The Blair Witch Project (Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sanchez, 1999), where evil emerges only at night, and the daylight hours are spent in trying to escape, to no avail, the forest in which that evil exists. Two frame captures below further exemplify this. In the first (Fig. 4.1), Darth Vader, in Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope (George Lucas, 1977), is dressed completely in black, while in the second (Fig. 4.2), from Eraser (Charles Russell, 1996), John Kruger (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is visually assisted in his portrayal as a guardian angel in this shot which bathes him in a white glow.



Fig. 4.1: Darth Vader enters the Rebel blockade runner (Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope).



Fig. 4.2: John Kruger prepares to enter the house of a state protected witness (Eraser).

Gnosticism and Manichaeism created a problem that arose out of the reasons for the existence of humankind. If the fight between good and evil was fought on a higher plane, unaffected by the inherently evil material world, and if the particle of light and goodness within each individual was simply trapped there and thus had no effect on the actions of the body, then humankind was, as it were, let off the hook. The material world was simply and unalterably evil. Thus all moral judgements were deferred until death when the soul could rejoin the spiritual realm. All manner of evil could, thus, be enacted by the individual with no effect on where the soul goes in the afterlife. The individual, existing in the realm of evil, was being acted upon by an evil external

force and could not be reasonably expected to be able to choose between good and evil while still in the physical world.

Instead of some free-for-all in which morality was not an issue until death, the increasingly rationalist Christianity of the post-Reformation shifted the onus onto the individual who had to make righteous choices in life. This suggested that the battle between good and evil was fought in not one place but two; the higher spiritual plane, as posited under Manichaeism, and also within the individual. Further, by combining the tenets of mainstream Christianity and Gnosticism, it could be seen that this individual struggle was either (or both) the work of those external forces as each tried to win the soul of the body (as satirised by C. S. Lewis in The Screwtape Letters), or a more internalised confrontation between good and evil inherently contained in the hearts of humankind. Continuing with Augustine's notion of free will, Buber labelled this seed of evil within each individual the 'yeast in the dough', 'the ferment placed in the soul by God to allow it to grow and be tested'¹². Thus, while the spiritual element remained paramount, the onus was placed on the individual to choose the path of either good or evil, the choice determining where the soul would spend eternity.

4.3: The Enlightenment and Kantian Evil

Kant shifted the focus away from the theological when he studied evil as part of a rationalist system of philosophy. According to Richard J. Bernstein¹³, his claim was that evil was to be found solely within the individual, arising from their moral decisions, and whether they choose to emphasise the self or society in their actions. Self-love, Kant argued, was the foundation of evil for it usurped moral and social laws in favour of one's own being. The evil individual existed according to the wrong

moral principles, of love of the self rather than of the law. Evil, Kant writes, ‘can only have originated from moral evil (not just from the limitations of our nature)’¹⁴. Humans are inherently good and predisposed towards the law, but from their own free will are able to develop other (evil) codes contrary to this law. Evil, Kant argued, arose directly from corruption of the will, so, while he suggests that humankind retains a propensity towards the morally righteous, evil is the intentional adoption of evil maxims. Monstrous acts and monstrous people, therefore, arose from monstrous intentions. Self-love, in the form of what we could call avarice or greed or a number of other defined sins, enacts a direct causal chain of events that creates the monstrous figure from the monstrous act.

There is a deliberate dislocation in Kant between what could be called human evil and natural evil, where the former arose from the acts of humankind and the latter from storms, pestilence, earthquakes, and other natural disasters completely out of the control of the human individual or society. Kant excluded such events from the category of evil because he was more interested in a rational theory of ethics, which he described as ‘the science of freedom’. This is a specifically human matter since humans are forced to choose, whereas animals simply act by instinct and know nothing of choice. Thus he asks the question, what makes people commit evil acts. There are, then, certain consistencies with the theological construction of evil as supposed by Augustine and Aquinas, but by excluding spiritual explanations (which he regarded as fundamentally unknowable and therefore not the territory of philosophy), Kant argued that the moral choices made by the individual were not based on some test that determined where the soul went after death but on the propensity for the individual to act in ways contrary to duty, especially duty towards

others. There was no outside influence on what the individual did or did not do, no Screwtape sitting on the shoulder, but rather merely the choice of the individual to place self over society as a whole.

Bernstein argues that Nietzsche went further in his deliberations on evil, arguing that ideas of good and evil were ultimately irrelevant, because truth itself no longer existed¹⁵. Good and evil, he argued, were fictive dichotomies based on moralities that were constructed from the language of social order rather than from natural laws. According to Nietzsche, the original perception of the good was developed by the powerful, who stood in for what was considered to be the ideal. But Christianity replaced this culture of the powerful nobility with a morality based on the protection of the weak. Nietzsche argued that this brand of morality restrains society from moving ahead through the actions of the strong. Thus society needed to move ‘beyond good and evil’, away from the constraints of a false morality founded in weakness, and towards a noble morality, one founded in aristocratic principles. This Nietzschean individual who considers themselves above all values (for example, Cyrus ‘the Virus’ [Con Air (Simon West, 1997)] and Hannibal ‘the Cannibal’ [The Silence of the Lambs and Hannibal]) is a significant trope in cinematic discourses of evil. While Nietzsche’s ideas are contentious¹⁶, as Bernstein argues, ‘if we read him as posing hard questions, as warning us about the dark side of modern morality and modern socialization processes, then I think we must conclude that he has made a major contribution to the ongoing discourse of evil.’¹⁷ And, I would add, a major contribution to the construction of cinematic evil as signified by the characters listed above, adding to the overall melange that makes up screen evil.

4.4: Arendt and Postmodern Discourses of Evil

Hannah Arendt disputed Kant's contention that the monstrous figure is created through the intentional adoption of evil maxims, or that the intentionally monstrous act creates the monstrous figure. In her seminal work on the Holocaust, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, Arendt argued that the rationality and efficiency of the Nazi regime contradicted Kant's view of monstrous evil. After observing the trial of Adolph Eichmann, the man who controlled the transportation of Jews to death camps within Nazi Germany, she hypothesised that evil was not so much radical as banal. Any individual, in the right (or wrong) circumstances, may act evilly without necessarily being evil. Or rather, they could become evil from the most mundane and rational of circumstances, including in this case unquestioningly following the orders of their superiors.

Arendt argued that the prosecuting counsel at the trial of Eichmann attempted to define him as a monster and the architect of the Final Solution, as to do so would make him a truly evil figure¹⁸ that was deserving of the ultimate punishment. Arendt suggested that the truth was in fact worse; 'The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal.... this new type of criminal... commits his crimes under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong.'¹⁹ In other words, evil is not necessarily the act of the person that intentionally counteracts or contradicts all known moral, ethical and legal precepts, but the act which the person believes, or is led to believe, is in itself, and in some way, moral, ethical or legal. Eichmann was not the monster the prosecution defined him as but a loyal soldier who was good at his job, loyal to his

superiors and desired career promotion. In his own eyes, he did no wrong but was simply carrying out his orders to the best of his abilities.

Equally important to the construction of a post-Enlightenment evil was Arendt's contention that it did not emerge from some shift away from the civilised and towards the primal. The German people were not barbaric, Arendt noted, but were educated, organised and very industrious²⁰, or, in other words, rational. Civilisation and modernisation, it seemed, aided and abetted in the development of this form of evil, rather than providing a rationale for civilised people to understand evil. Nazi Germany and its policies of a final solution in effect disproved Kant's notion of self-love as the root of evil, because complicity was achieved by equating the evil act with the law, and the performance of a duty.

Arendt argued that language becomes an important medium for normalising evil acts as part of a perceived societal good; 'Evil in the Third Reich had lost the quality by which most people recognize it – the quality of temptation.'²¹ By being normalised, the act of murder had in itself lost its 'appeal'. The temptation that was resisted, in Arendt's terms, was the temptation to do good, or *not* to commit murder, or not to let authority commit murder on their behalf. Evil remains extreme but it possesses neither depth nor demonic dimension because it had achieved the status of normality (hence the 'banality of evil'). It is thought-defying because of this depthlessness, for thought tries to scrape away the surface and expose the roots, roots that ultimately do not exist. Eichmann had revealed that he had committed monstrous acts without being motivated by monstrous intentions. That is, he was well aware of what he was doing but never within a framework that questioned the morality, ethicality or legality of

what he was doing (except within the legal precepts of the society of which he was a part. Arendt explains that those who did acquire a perverse pleasure in killing were weeded out of such positions.)

This type of evil figure, a person believing that they are protecting the greater good, appears in such films as Enemy of the State and The Bourne Identity (Doug Liman, 2001). Thomas Reynolds (Jon Voight) in the first film and Alexander Conklin (Chris Cooper) in the second work for governmental security agencies and as such are not specifically acting in self-interest. In the belief that the security of the nation is paramount, they overstep the boundaries of their role by casting out the personal freedoms of the nation's citizens. Like Eichmann, they become monstrous figures by working within what they consider to be their legal mandate.

A rule emerges in that each new phase in the debates on good and evil accuses its predecessor of ritual magic. Just as theology decried paganism and philosophy condemned theology, so Arendt accuses Kantian rationality of permitting the banal evil of the Third Reich. As a result, all traditions, whether real or invented, are classified as a kind of black magic. This helps to explain the existence in stories of an ancient evil, waiting to be awakened and to take control of the world, as is seen in the likes of Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (Simon West, 2001) and The Mummy. In the first film, the secret order of the Illuminati have reached the long awaited moment when an alignment of the planets will bring into action an ancient machine that will assist in their assuming control of the world. The Mummy mixes several ancient belief systems to create a pastiche of evil. Its confused narrative mixes biblical apocalypse (such as rivers turning blood red and fire raining down from the skies) with pagan

rituals, as Imhotep, the priest of an ancient Egyptian order arises from the dead to destroy the world that had enslaved him in darkness.

4.5: Evil in a Postmodern World

This pastiche of evil is crucial in the recognition of evil in the contemporary social world. Theological and philosophical constructs of evil continue to inform contemporary definitions of the term, but, simply stated, the old binary oppositions of good and evil are no longer relevant. Theology and philosophy sit uneasily in overarching postmodernist discourses, and evil, as an explanation for the actions of individuals or groups of people and particularly as an absolute, can no longer be taken for granted. As Jennifer L. Geddes states, ‘there is a relativism that refrains from making any moral judgements whatsoever, either out of fear of offending someone (or anyone) or out of apathy, a kind of bland tolerance towards everything’²².

Jean Baudrillard suggests that evil as an idea is hollow; the word continues to be in use but it no longer has meaning. Baudrillard bases his argument on religious absolutism having been eroded by the doctrine of tolerance and the image having risen to prominence in the postmodern construction of meaning (or non-meaning). The language of evil, he says, has been stripped of its substance ‘because [people] have lost the moral frameworks and vocabularies by which such a language would make sense, and instead... [they] live under a tyranny of consensus.’²³ Baudrillard is correct only to a certain extent. Evil still exists as an idea, as Geddes says when she balances her arguments concerning relativism by stating that, ‘there is a fundamentalism that does not shy from labelling the other “evil”, and therefore deserving of any violence that might come his or her way’²⁴. Geddes thus notes a

persistent absolutism amongst fundamentalists, which leaks to some extent into general society. So, while we may be unable to define specifically what evil is, we are still able to recognise it when we see it. Thomas Cashman, however, argues that the persistence of modernist conceptions of evil are more important, suggesting that '[e]vil is not an essential quality of human beings, but is *intentional action*, the result of the conscious reflection of actors and the wilful decision to do something severe to someone else'²⁵ (emphasis in original). This appears to rely on Kant's argument in that there is no internal struggle between good and evil but a rational and conscious action of individuals to cause pain and suffering to others.

The use of words such as 'intentional', 'conscious' and 'rational' raises the important point, that insanity is a separate issue, and is not to be confused with evil. As I will describe in the following chapter, this trait is especially important in the construction of cinematic evil. It is the intelligent, conscious and rational mind that is unexplainably evil rather than the mind of the insane, which is not evil since their acts can be explained. Evil then has, according to Cashman, a component of being willed. Yet as Geddes argued, we have no fixed grounds on which to judge whether that will is evil, unless society conforms to a specific, singular system of belief. But, as we have already seen, Hollywood does not have such a moral system. What it draws from these earlier descriptions of evil is not a system of ethics but a visual language.

This visual language recognises that theological, philosophical and postmodern paradigms of evil are flawed, but that they remain valid in the creation of a visual aesthetic of evil. On the one hand, a postmodern generation is no longer persuaded by theological and philosophical traditions, but, on the other, the idea of evil persists in

contemporary theological models in Christian and Islamic fundamentalism²⁶ where it is used to explain the fear of the Other, conspiracy theories and catastrophic natural disasters. Further, there is a residual Kantian modernism in the idea of the rational will to harm among scholars and as a theme in social constructions of evil, as manifested, for example, in American Presidential rhetoric, such as Ronald Reagan's 'evil empire' description of the Soviet state, and George W. Bush's 'axis of evil' used to define the west's current perceived enemies. But there is also a social construction of the allure of evil, alluded to in the last chapter when discussing Bataillean spectacle. Despite how wrong evil acts may be, there also persists the idea that the image of the evil act is attractive, an idea that commercial cinema directly engages with.

Thus postmodern relativism, which contain elements of the pre-modern (theological) and modern (philosophical), as well as postmodern (Bataillean) visions of evil as enticing, cannot provide a clear description of the current landscape of social constructions of evil. Not surprisingly, this results in an inability to define evil, since these competing and mutually contradictory moral systems co-exist in a postmodern melange of ideas and concepts.

Relating this back to American commercial cinema, these mutually contradictory ideas of evil co-exist in Hollywood. Coherence is not a characteristic of the sample's occurrences of evil. This incoherence, alongside the lack of a systemic belief structure in American commercial cinema, encourages a description of Hollywood's evil as postmodern, and as such indefinable. What can be done, however, is to describe

examples of the various paradigms of evil that inform Hollywood cinema, and which provide a basis for spectacularising the act of evil.

4.6: Paradigms of Evil

Placing these various paradigms of evil into a cinematic context we can see that evil can be engaged with in a multitude of ways. I summarise these here.

4.6.1: The Pervasiveness of Evil

Here, the world itself is evil and humankind must endure it as best as possible, and as unblemished as possible. To do so requires strength of will and the ability to abstain from evil pleasures. Filmic examples include Seven and Batman.

4.6.2: The Evil Other

There exist classes or groups of Others, based on social or cultural paradigms, who are inherently evil and should be treated as such. Contemporary scapegoats of such social mores are paedophiles, migrants, homosexuals, wife-beaters, rapists and colonisers. Those who believe that these groupings of people are inherently evil also maintain the belief that all must be done to remove this evil. Filmic examples of this include Con Air and Sleeping with the Enemy (Joseph Ruben, 1991).

4.6.3: Supernatural Evil

There are those who believe that there is a supernatural force that exists adjacent to the natural world and harbours hatred towards the good and towards humanity. This force is capable of entering our world in the guise of people, animals, weather patterns and other objects. These supernatural forces take pleasure or feel no guilt in torturing

their human victims. Filmic examples include Armageddon, The Perfect Storm and Twister.

4.6.4: The Conspiracy

In this paradigm there is a system or a group of individuals that run the world. These thrive on war, poverty, environmental destruction and disease. Further, this system, or group of individuals, is essentially immortal, as the death of one individual, or part of the system, will simply result in that individual or part being replaced. Filmic examples include Enemy of the State and Lara Croft: Tomb Raider.

4.6.5: The Nietzschean ‘Superman’

Here, there exist individuals (and sometimes self-selecting groups) who believe that they are beyond moralistic concepts of good and evil. In the belief that they have been separated out from normal human society, they are capable of heinous crimes against humanity without any remorse, guilt, or common humanity. Filmic examples include Die Hard 2, Con Air and Hannibal.

4.6.6: The Work of God

There exist individuals who falsely believe that they are doing the work of God, which permits them to commit any crime. This equates to some aspects of the sin of pride in Christian theology. Unlike the Nietzschean Superman, guilt is superseded not by any concept of the place of the self but by a perceived higher calling that one must place above and beyond earthly morals. Filmic examples include Seven, True Lies (James Cameron, 1994) and The General’s Daughter (Simon West, 1999).

4.6.7: The Omnipresence of Evil in the Universe

We live in a universe perpetually cloaked in evil. The world is simply brutal and it will kill us if it can. To believe otherwise is naïve. Filmic examples include The Perfect Storm, Twister, and The Mummy.

4.6.8: The Natural Battleground of Good and Evil

As a variation of the previous paradigm, parts of the world or universe are good, but the rest is evil. In this way, humankind has the right to do what it can to survive. And if an afterlife exists, then it will be a world of fire and brimstone. Filmic examples include Armageddon, Independence Day, Black Hawk Down and Ghostbusters II.

4.7: Contemporary Commercial Cinema and the Paradigms of Evil

These miscellaneous pockets of belief in evil, which draws on theological, philosophical and postmodern concepts, provide Hollywood with a mythology that can be transferred across to films, albeit one that cannot provide a definitive version of evil across all films. Nevertheless, whether evil is some outside force that exists beyond the physical world, or if it is individualised as a rational act or as the unconscious darkness within the human soul, cinematic evil is constructed as some thing that exists absolutely and recognisably, without singling out any specific source. A schema of evil can be determined based on narrative and visual codes that filmmakers use to draw evil unambiguously. The assumption must be made therefore that cinema, by accepting the existence of evil, albeit formlessly, also accepts that evil acts as a binary opposition to good. Therefore, evil and good are absolutes, although commercial cinema is aware of the ambiguities that exist between these two extremes.

One assumption that must be removed is that American commercial cinema is in some way directly reflective of American fears and concerns. As one website stated, ‘You can always tell the nationality the United States and the popular media are currently most unhappy with because that nation sends all their villains to star in Hollywood movies during those times’.²⁷ Douglas Kellner reiterated this idea by explaining:

It is not by accident that Hollywood films follow the trajectory of US foreign policy: films are highly capital-intensive and the producers of the cultural industries closely follow political and social trends.... Hollywood adventure films must have an Enemy, an evil “Foreign Other”, and both Hollywood and Reagan and Bush turned to Arab “villains” for the political demonization necessary for the narratives of Hollywood film and US politics....²⁸ Arabs were thus the villain of choice for Hollywood adventure films and the conservative US administrations.²⁹

But my initial research refuted these claims (as I describe fully in Appendix B). If Kellner was correct, we would see a pattern emerging in the ethnic or social origins of the cinematic villain. But such a pattern cannot be found. In a cursory glance across the films, and making a liberal interpretation of the definition of an ‘adventure film’, only two feature Arab villains; Disney’s animated version of Aladdin (John Musker, Ron Clements, 1992), and True Lies³⁰. Interestingly, both of these productions were controversial because of these depictions. Of the former, Empire magazine reported that, ‘When Aladdin opened in America, it came in for furious criticism from certain

quarters who said it insulted Arabs. But Aladdin, the nice boy, is an Arab too, was the defence. Yes, but Aladdin, the nice boy, is of a much lighter hue than the Arab nasties.’³¹ Likewise, True Lies reduces its villain, an Arabic terrorist intent on destroying Miami with a nuclear weapon, to a demonic stereotype, thus branding an entire ethnic group as evil.³²

Further, it can be seen that the effect of the ethnicity of the ‘bad guy’ is reduced by the kind of balancing that has been prevalent in Hollywood productions over the last decade. James Cameron tried to introduce such a balance into True Lies by having a minor Arabic character as part of hero Arnold Schwarzenegger’s spy team. More successful were the likes of Rush Hour 2, in which the Asian villain is balanced by Jackie Chan as hero (who is, further, aided by an African-American man and a Hispanic woman), and Black Hawk Down, where it is shown that black soldiers formed part of the US Marines regiment that fought in Mogadishu.

In revising the coding structure, referred to earlier, of the representation of evil in commercial cinema, it became more relevant to shift analysis away from the characters that displayed evil tendencies towards what could be more correctly defined as the codes of cinematic evil. This latter is based on looking at the visual aesthetic of evil and how the interweaving of narrative and spectacle (such as in the use of the paradigms of evil described above) created specific codes by which cinematic evil could be recognised. For example, to use True Lies again as an example, rather than examining the key villain, Salim Abu Aziz, head of the fictional Crimson Jihad, in terms of ethnicity, gender, political beliefs, and so on, it is more relevant to analyse instead the construction of his visual representation. In other

words, it is easier to define Aziz as an evil character in terms of a visual construction based on the generalised paradigms described, rather than by specific characteristic traits that cannot be correlated across the sample. To explain, the film defines Aziz as Middle-Eastern but de-emphasises any political or moral causation that may explain his actions. At one point in the film, Aziz is allowed to articulate his political beliefs, but, in a kind of cinematic sleight of hand, his message is undermined and rendered meaningless. As he attempts to record a video message to be played to the world after a nuclear attack on Miami, the camera's batteries die and the cameraman is fearful of what Aziz may do when he discovers his message is not being recorded. This interplay between Aziz and his cameraman diverts attention away from the cause such that it becomes irrelevant to the narrative (and indeed confirms that the cause of the terrorists' actions was never relevant – a 'McGuffin' as Alfred Hitchcock defined it).

Director James Cameron uses both narrative devices and camera to remove any legitimate cause for the terrorists' acts and to represent them as plain evil. He does so here by constructing Aziz as a psychopath. In the offices of the Omega Sector, hero Harry Tasker and his team discuss the past activities of Aziz, referring to him as 'psycho'. Asked why Aziz called himself the Sand Spider, Faisal answers, 'Because it sounds scary', again using comedy to deflect any deeper meaning. Later, when Helen Tasker asks Juno Skinner why she would assist psychotics in their terrorist activities, Skinner replies, 'Because they are very well funded psychotics'. This again deflects attention away from causes towards another standard motivation of evil; greed. Aziz's apparent rationality tends to contradict this plea for insanity, but this contradiction only serves to paper over cracks in the narrative while maintaining Aziz as a figure of evil. In other words, Aziz, like Hannibal Lecter and others, exhibits not the irrational

but an *excess* of rationality; rationality at the expense of all other thought and emotional processes. The first time Aziz appears in the film, he slaps Juno across the face, thus signalling his evil very early. He is constructed as relentless, remorseless and wild-eyed, but not insane. We can compare this portrayal with the villain, Dusan Gavrich, in The Peacemaker³³ (Mimi Leder, 1997), another terrorist with similar ambitions; detonating a nuclear device in an American city. This character is seen to be carrying out the same activities, including the impassioned plea into a video camera, but here there is an attempt to understand the motives of the character, even if these remain wrong. Cameron never attempts to elicit any sympathy for Aziz's cause, allowing the visual representation to mark him as wild and dangerous. In Fig. 4.3, note how Aziz is the dominant figure in the frame, against the captured Harry Tasker, and is marked as villain through his wide staring eyes.



Fig 4.3: Aziz (Art Malik) confronts the captured Harry Tasker (Arnold Schwarzenegger) in True Lies.

True Lies suggests that *what* is representative of evil is less important than *how* this evil is represented. In Chapters Five and Six, I will engage with the signifiers of evil delineated in Table 4.1, and their visual representations. These latter primarily include the point-of-view shot, the use of specific colour choices, the manipulation of sound,

and symbolic representations of hell. All of these are common tools for constructions of cinematic evil which function without reference to narrative and characterisation.

<u>CODES OF EVIL</u>	<u>SYMPTOMS</u>
Rational Thought	Intelligence
	Logic
Chaos	Disruption of Moral/Social Order
Incapacity to Love	Sexual Predation
	Asexuality
All-powerful and consuming	Ultimate force
	Immorality/Amorality
Revenge	Retribution
	Anger, Jealousy, Envy
	Anti-Justice
Irredeemability	Evil can only be destroyed
History of evil	No past of good
	No hope of good in future
Self-Love	Evil works for itself
	Act of the individual
Influence of evil	Attraction/Hedonistic desires
	As test of good
Unknowingness of evil	Stubbornness
	Unwavering

Table 4.1: Characteristics of Cinematic Evil. These will be fully explained in Chapter Five.

4.8: Conclusion – The Separation of Social Evil and Cinematic Evil

Defining evil in the postmodern sense requires the balancing of spiritual doctrine, philosophical axioms and the postmodernist tendency to question the validity of each of these discourses while at the same time using them to create recognisable, if not definable, ideas of contemporary evil. But, as I will point out in the next chapter, this recognition is not based on specific representative codes of culture, gender or religion (in other words, it is not coded as Other), but on the codes contained in the visual aesthetic of cinematic evil.

How important evil is to Hollywood commercial cinema can be explained by reference to two disparate but not conflicting sources. Baumeister, first, suggests that, ‘the very fact that villains endure in popular entertainments despite being discredited by high literature, theology, and psychology is a testimony to how strong the appetite for them is... to the extent that movie villains depart from reality, we can safely conclude that they speak to a deeply rooted preference for understanding evil in certain ways’³⁴. Secondly, Baudrillard, as interpreted by Geddes, suggests that ‘evil has become an object of aesthetic fascination, rather than moral sheen. Evil has taken on a glamorous sheen’³⁵. In other words, on the one hand, the simplified view of the world in Hollywood cinema, divided as it is into binary oppositions, provides society with the means to view and understand the world (hence the common remark that the World Trade Center attacks were ‘just like a movie’³⁶), and on the other, providing the vast spectacle required to satisfy modern audiences, without having to supply the villain with psychological motivation. Villains are thus not explainable, but simply exist as an individual will, or as a force of nature given a malign presence. While drawing on some modern ideas (such as will), evil in contemporary commercial cinema is often seen as a cosmic force operating through possessed individuals or objects. This lack of explanation suggests a Baudrillardian sense of pure surface without depth and thus evil exists as spectacle. It also suggests another Baudrillardian theme: the self-replicating code that no longer bears on reality. Cinematic evil thus deploys codes for affect (the emotional state of audiences), and also narrative codes which it picks up from older traditions of evil. In the following two chapters I address these topics and describe the narrative and visual codes that popular cinema draws on to create recognisable representations of evil.

¹ By necessity these periods are loosely defined, as it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace the beginning and end points. By historicising three distinct phases, I can trace the development of discourses of evil from the theological or spiritual, to the philosophical or rational, and on to the postmodern or relativistic. The three authors, on which this chapter is based, define each of these periods: Augustine offering a spiritual description of evil that remained largely unchanged through the Middle Ages, Kant shifting the focus of evil away from the spiritual towards a human based system of morality and duty in the Enlightenment period, while Arendt directly critiqued Kant in her seminal work on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, first published in 1963.

² Morrow, Lance (2003), Evil: An Investigation, Basic Books, New York, p. 209.

³ Morrow, p. 77.

⁴ See Evans, G.R. (1982), Augustine on Evil, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, and Bernstein, Richard J. (2002), Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation, Polity, Cambridge.

⁵ While many are satisfied with the concept of free will as the ultimate answer to the problem of evil, the author remains unconvinced. By giving humankind freedom of choice, God has deferred some of his power to the individual, and either admitted that evil is an equal and opposite force that he cannot control, or creates evil acts in order to test humankind.

⁶ Stanford, Peter (1996), The Devil: A Biography, Heinemann, London, p. 190.

⁷ Plato (2000), The Republic, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 333-334.

⁸ I understand that *accidens* has a slightly differing meaning in medieval latin. This differentiates between the eternal and the material, with the latter as what actually befalls (the literal meaning of *accidens*). My explanation is simplistic but it does suffice.

⁹ For more information, see King, Bill (2002), 'Thomas Aquinas on the Metaphysical Problem of Evil', Quodlibet: Online Journal of Christian Theology and Philosophy, Summer, <http://www.quodlibet.net/king-aquinas.html>, (accessed 24 January, 2006), Aquinas, St. Thomas (1995), On Evil, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Aquinas, St. Thomas (1993), Selected Philosophical Writings, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

¹⁰ Adib Rashad provides a very good summary of Manichaeism in his article, 'Zoroastrianism and Manichean Duality', from which this is largely based. Rashad, Adib (2000), 'Zoroastrian and Manichean Duality', The Marcus Garvey Bulletin Boards, 9 June, <http://www.themarcusgarveybbs.com/board/msgs/10174.html>, (accessed 23 March, 2002).

¹¹ Rashad.

¹² Stanford, p. 12.

¹³ Bernstein, Richard J. (2003), Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation, Polity, Cambridge, pp. 11-45.

¹⁴ Kant, Emmanuel (1998), Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 64.

¹⁵ Bernstein, pp. 103-131.

¹⁶ Nietzsche is accused of condoning the principles of Nazism, specifically the weeding out of the 'weak', the Jews, and the subsequent creation of a master race.

¹⁷ Bernstein, p. 131.

¹⁸ Arendt, Hannah (1994), Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, Penguin Books, New York, p. 276.

¹⁹ Arendt, p. 276.

²⁰ Arendt, p. 58.

²¹ Arendt, p. 150.

²² Geddes, Jennifer L. (2001), 'Introduction', in Jennifer L. Geddes (ed.) (2001), Evil after Postmodernism: Histories, narratives, and ethics, London; Routledge, p. 1.

²³ Quoted in Geddes, p. 7.

²⁴ Geddes, p. 1.

²⁵ Cashman, Thomas (2001), 'The Reflexivity of Evil', in Jennifer L. Geddes (ed.) (2001), Evil after Postmodernism: Histories, narratives, and ethics, London; Routledge, p. 83.

²⁶ This became clear after the Boxing Day tsunami which struck South East Asia at the end of 2004, and became, for some, an explanation for a catastrophic event.

²⁷ 'Film Cliches', <http://www.martweiss.com/cliche/v.shtml>, (accessed 23 November 2001).

²⁸ Kellner, Douglas (2001), Media Culture: Cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern, London; Routledge, pp. 83-84.

²⁹ Kellner, p. 87.

³⁰ The Mummy and its sequel certainly also contains an evil that emanates from the Middle Eastern region, but in directly equating this evil not with contemporary Middle Eastern culture and society (as Aladdin does to a large extent), but with both ancient paganistic rituals and Christianity, the geographic and societal source is largely negated.

³¹ Hibbert, Tom (1993), 'You've got three wishes', Empire, No 54, p. 95. Further, Disney was forced to amend one song in the movie, 'Arabian Nights', after cries that it set Arabic barbarism to music. The original line was, "They'll cut off your ears if they don't like your face".

³² Arabs are not the only ethnic group that has protested against the depiction of themselves in Hollywood productions. Chinese-Americans rallied against Year of the Dragon (Michael Cimino, 1985), Japanese against Pearl Harbor, and North Koreans against Die Another Day, to name just three.

³³ The Peacemaker did not achieve the required box-office result to enter my sample, and any reasoning of why this may be is pure speculation. Nevertheless, it is interesting that a film that attempts to explore the causes and motivations of a terrorist is commercially unsuccessful compared to True Lies which sidestepped these issues and was successful. See also Three Kings (David O. Russell, 1999), GoodFellas (Martin Scorsese, 1990) and Heat (Michael Mann, 1995) as further examples of films that attempted to engage with causations of evil but were financially unsuccessful, at least on the basis of this thesis.

³⁴ Baumeister, Roy F. (1997), Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty, W.H. Freeman & Co., New York, p. 64.

³⁵ Geddes, p. 7.

³⁶ See, for example, Rosenberg, Howard (2001), 'Amid tragic and heroic images, TV does itself proud', Los Angeles Times, 11 September, <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-091101wraprosenberg.story>, and, Wallwork, Rebecca (2001), "'Just like a movie'", Empire (Australian edition), December, pp. 10-11.

Chapter Five: Narrative Codes of Cinematic Evil

5.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided a brief summary of some of the primary perspectives that inform Western discourses of social and cinematic evil. Using these, I will in this chapter outline a narrative schema of cinematic evil. These include common rules, primarily based on the actions or make-up of the primary villain, which constructs them as specifically evil rather than merely bad. I will begin by describing the use of positive and negative poles, characters or objects that represent the absolutes of good and evil thus defining for each film a diegetic world within which the battle between the two extremes is played out. I will then outline common characteristic traits of the evil villain that include the overload of rationality, the propensity to create chaos out of order, the incapacity to love another, the revenge motive, histories of evil, and the irredeemability of the villain. This list is not exhaustive, in that not every villain must display *all* of these narrative codes to be evil but a combination of several of these, as specified by each film, will delineate them as such. This will lead, in the next chapter, towards the formulation of a schema of visual codes through which cinematic evil is recognisable despite the lack of exposition to explain it.

It is important to note that many of these characteristics are distinguishable as narrative codes of excess. That is, evil is marked by the emphasis on excesses of normal social behaviour in a liberal democracy. The characteristic of overt rationality is the excessive use of reason over other intellectual and emotional factors that may affect individual behaviour. The creation of chaos may arise from the excess of order

or disorder. The incapacity to love emerges from the excessively sexual, or excessive lack in physical affection. The excessive visual display of violence is also crucial in the construction of evil, but this will be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

To summarise the last chapter, theological and philosophical concepts of evil are not dismissed by cinema but mobilised in visual form. In other words, these concepts remain crucial, based on the atavistic nature of the spectacle's mobilisation of theological and philosophical conceptions of evil. All previous social constructs of evil provide the raw material for its cinematic construction, which draws on them to create recognisable, if not definable, forms of evil that remain implicit rather than explained.

Evil in cinema becomes recognisable through the construction of a basic dichotomy of good and evil that still allows ambiguities of evil to emerge within both narrative and spectacle. It is important to reiterate that evil cannot be defined, but that it can be approached from various angles incorporating layers of description, leading to a multitude of variations of what evil is considered to be. As Lance Morrow observes:

Evil... is, in any case, such an elusive term that it can only cause mischief in human affairs, and has a way of evaporating – or turning into something else as time passes. But even if evil is elusive and even if the term is used brainlessly, evil is still there – a mystery, a black hole into which reason and sunshine vanish, but nonetheless there.¹

Morrow suggests that the existence of evil is unquestionable. It may be indefinable but it is recognisable when it manifests itself. This recognition, and the contention that evil exists absolutely, does not contradict my arguments concerning a postmodern cinema. In fact, far from avoiding contradiction, the cinematic spectacle positively embraces contradictory classifications of evil. The postmodern cinema of paranoia and malaise (as I will discuss fully in Chapters Eight and Nine) is dependent upon the very indefinability of the villain, evil, and the social world itself. It can only draw on historic representations of each of these in order to make some sense of a world in which the simulacrum of evil is as much as can be expected. All we can hope to do then is to formulate how this evil is recognisable in its cinematic form.

It must be stressed that evil is stronger and more decisive a discourse than the merely bad or wrong. Villains in film may be bad but this is not necessarily enough to define them as evil. The codes described in this chapter make the assertion that cinematic evil requires the existence of specific traits. Where these do not exist, then the villain is merely wrong. For example, the Japanese of Pearl Harbor (Michael Bay, 2001) are not defined as evil despite the death and destruction they bring upon the American Navy in Honolulu. Because few of the following rules apply in this film, these villains are constructed as honourable men faced with an untenable situation. In other words, they are the enemy in a narrative sense, but are not constructed as evil.

5.2: The Characteristics of Evil

5.2.1: The Positive and Negative Poles

Initial content analysis focused on the construction of a binary opposition between good and evil. The results for the sample are shown in Table 5.1 below.

<u>Films</u>	<u>Positive Pole</u>	<u>The Protagonist</u>	<u>Negative Pole</u>	<u>The Antagonist</u>
The Addams Family	Class, style, and joie de vivre, as represented by the Addams	Gomez Addams	The real world, as represented by the lawyer, Tully Alford	Tully Alford
Air Force One	President James Marshall	President James Marshall	General Radek	Ivan Korshunov
Aladdin	Aladdin	Aladdin	Jafar	Jafar
Apollo 13	Rationality, logic	Jim Lovell	Fate, destiny	
Armageddon	Grace Stamper	Harry Stamper	The asteroid	The asteroid
Austin Powers in Goldmember	Foxy Cleopatra	Austin Powers	Dr. Evil	Dr. Evil
Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me	Felicity Shagwell	Austin Powers	Dr. Evil	Dr. Evil
Back to the Future: Part 2	Marty McFly's future (the one unseen)	Marty McFly	Biff Tannen	Biff Tannen
Basic Instinct	Gus	Nick Curran	Catherine Trammell	Catherine Trammell
Batman	Alfred	Batman/Bruce Wayne	Jack Napier/The Joker	Jack Napier/The Joker
Batman and Robin	Alfred	Batman/Bruce Wayne	Poison Ivy	Poison Ivy, Mr. Freeze
Batman Forever	Robin	Batman/Bruce Wayne	Two-Face	Two-Face, The Riddler
Batman Returns	Alfred	Batman/Bruce Wayne	Max Shreck	The Penguin, Max Shreck
A Beautiful Mind	The heart, love	John Nash	The mind, intellect	
Big Momma's House	Sherry Pierce	Malcolm Turner	Lester Vesco	Lester Vesco
Black Hawk Down	Sfc. Norm 'Hoot' Gibson	SSgt. Matt Eversmann	Mohamed Farah Aidid	Mohamed Farah Aidid
The Blair Witch Project	Day	Heather Donahue	Night	The Blair witch

The Bodyguard	Rachel Marron's son	Frank Farmer	Nikki Marron	Nikki Marron
The Bourne Identity	Marie Helena Kreutz	Jason Bourne	Alexander Conklin	Alexander Conklin
A Bug's Life	Flik	Flik	Hopper	Hopper
Casper	Casper	'Kat' Harvey	Corrigan Crittenden	Corrigan Crittenden
Charlie's Angels	Charlie's Angels	Charlie's Angels	Eric Knox	Eric Knox
Chicken Run	Ginger	Ginger	Mrs Tweedy	Mrs Tweedy
Clear and Present Danger	Jack Ryan	Jack Ryan	Chief of Staff James Cutter	Chief of Staff James Cutter
Con Air	Cameron Poe's daughter	Cameron Poe	Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom	Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom
Contact	Palmer Joss	Ellie Arroway	Joseph (Jake Busey)	
Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon	Li Mu Bai	Li Mu Bai	Jade Fox	Jade Fox
Dances with Wolves	Lieutenant Dunbar	Lieutenant Dunbar	The Pawnee/Army	The Pawnee/Army
Dick Tracy	Dick Tracy	Dick Tracy	Big Boy Caprice	Big Boy Caprice
Die Another Day	Jinx	James Bond	Gustav Graves	Gustav Graves
Die Hard 2	Holly McClane	John McClane	Gen. Ramon Esperanza	Colonel Stewart
Die Hard with a Vengeance	New York	John McClane	Simon Gruber	Simon Gruber
Double Jeopardy	Matty Parsons	Matty Parsons	Nick Parsons	Nick Parsons
Enemy of the State	Carla Dean	Robert Dean	Thomas Reynolds	Thomas Reynolds
Eraser	John Kruger	John Kruger	Undersecretary Harper	U.S. Marshall Robert Deguerin
Erin Brockovich	The individual, the 'little guy'	Erin Brockovich	The faceless corporation	Pacific Heat and Gas
Face/Off	Sean Archer's dead son	Sean Archer	Castor Troy	Castor Troy
The Firm	Abigail McDeere	Mitch McDeere	The Chicago mob	Avery Tolar
The Flintstones	Barney Rubble	Fred Flintstone	Cliff Vandercave	Cliff Vandercave
The Fugitive	The truth	Richard Kimble	The cover-up	The one-armed man

The General's Daughter	Sarah Sunhill	Warr. Off. Paul Brenner	Col. William Kent	Col. William Kent
Ghost	Love	Sam Wheat	Greed	Carl Bruner
Ghostbusters II	The Statue of Liberty	The ghostbusters	Vigo the Carpathian	Vigo the Carpathian
Gladiator	Destiny, reuniting with loved ones in the afterlife	Maximus	Lack of destiny, the son who does not inherit the mantle of power from the father	Commodus
Godzilla	Rational individualism as represented by the scientist and the title creature	Dr. Niko Tatopoulos	Irrational collective as represented by the military and Godzilla's offspring	
GoldenEye	Natalya Semyonova	James Bond	Trevallyan	Trevallyan
Gone in 60 Seconds	Memphis Raine's mother	Memphis Raines	Raymond Colitri	Raymond Calitri
The Green Mile	God, not specifically name-checked by apparent in the gifts of condemned prisoner Coffey	Paul Edgecomb	The devil, as represented by the evil guard Percy Wetmore	
Hannibal	Clarice Starling	Clarice Starling	Hannibal Lecter	Hannibal Lecter
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Harry Potter	Harry Potter	Lord Voldemort	Tom Riddle
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Harry Potter	Harry Potter	Lord Voldemort	Prof. Quirrel
Hook	Jack Banning	Jack Banning	Captain Hook	Captain Hook
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	Love	Quasimodo	Lust	Frollo
The Hunt for Red October	Jack Ryan	Jack Ryan	Dr. Petrov (political officer)	
Ice Age	Sid the Sloth	Sid the Sloth	Soto the Sabre-Toothed Tiger	Sabre-Toothed Tiger
In the Line of Fire	Agent D'Angelo	Frank Horrigan	Mitch Leary	Mitch Leary
Independence	America	Captain	The aliens	The aliens

Day		Steven Hiller		
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade	God (the grail)	Indiana Jones	The devil (Nazism)	Walter Donovan
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	Truth, restraint, the natural order	Louis	Hedonism, immortality	Lestat
Jumanji	The game	Alan Parrish	The game	
Jurassic Park	Science as respectful of natural order (including natural chaos)	Dr. Alan Grant	Science as perverting natural order (including unnatural chaos)	Gennaro
Jurassic Park III	Impetuousness, friendship	Dr. Alan Grant	Rational thought, logic, collectivism (the velociraptors)	
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	Lord Richard Croft	Lara Croft	Manfred Powell	Manfred Powell
Lethal Weapon 2	Roger Murtaugh's family	Martin Riggs, Roger Murtaugh	Arjen Rudd	Arjen Rudd
Lethal Weapon 3	Roger Murtaugh's family	Martin Riggs, Roger Murtaugh	Jack Travis	Jack Travis
Lethal Weapon 4	Roger Murtaugh's family	Martin Riggs, Roger Murtaugh	Wah Sing Ku	Wah Sing Ku
The Lion King	Mufasa	Simba	Scar	Scar
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Samwise Gamgee	Frodo	The ring	Sauron
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Samwise Gamgee	Frodo	The ring	Sauron
The Lost World: Jurassic Park	Benign science	Ian Malcolm	Business, greed	
The Mask	Stanley Ipkiss	Stanley Ipkiss	Dorian Tyrell	Dorian Tyrell
The Matrix	Neo	Neo	Agent Smith	Agent Smith
Men in Black	Agent J	Agent K	Edgar	Edgar
Men in Black II	Laura Vasquez	Agent K	Serleena	Serleena
Minority Report	John Anderton's dead son	John Anderton	Lamar Burgess	Lamar Burgess

Miss Congeniality	Cheryl Frasier, Miss Rhode Island	Gracie Hart	Kathy Morningside	Kathy Morningside
Mission: Impossible	Ethan Hunt	Ethan Hunt	Jim Phelps	Jim Phelps
Mission: Impossible 2	Nyah	Ethan Hunt	Sean Ambrose	Sean Ambrose
Monsters, Inc.	Boo/Mary	Sully, Mike	Mr Waternoose	Randall
Mulan	Mulan	Mulan	Shan-Yu	Shan-Yu
The Mummy	Love, comradeship, God	Rick O'Connell, Evie Carnahan	Love, pagan magic	Imhotep
The Mummy Returns	Love, family	Rick and Evie O'Connell	Pagan magic	Imhotep
Ocean's Eleven	Danny Ocean	Danny Ocean	Terry Benedict	Terry Benedict
101 Dalmatians	The Puppies	Anita	Cruella DeVil	Cruella DeVil
The Patriot	Susan Martin	Benjamin Martin	Colonel William Tavington	Colonel William Tavington
The Pelican Brief	Darby	Darby	Chief of Staff Cole	Chief of Staff Cole
The Perfect Storm	Christina	Bobby Shatford	The storm	The storm
Planet of the Apes	Perocles	Captain Leo Davidson	General Thade	General Thade
Pocahontas	Pocahontas	John Smith	Governor Ratcliffe	Governor Ratcliffe
The Prince of Egypt	God as saviour of the dispossessed	Moses	God as destroyer of the greedy	Rameses
Pulp Fiction	The suitcase	(ensemble cast)	The suitcase	
Ransom	Sean Mullen	Tom Mullen	Jimmy Shaker	Jimmy Shaker
The Ring	Aiden Keller	Rachel Keller	Samara Morgan	Samara Morgan
Road to Perdition	Michael Sullivan	Michael Sullivan	John Rooney	John Rooney
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	Maid Marian	Robin Hood	Sheriff of Nottingham	Sheriff of Nottingham
The Rock	Goodspeed's unborn child, Mason's daughter	Stanley Goodspeed	Captain Frye, Captain Farrow	General Francis X. Hummel
Rush Hour	Chief Inspector Lee	Chief Inspector Lee, Detective	Juntao	Juntao

		Carter		
Rush Hour 2	Chief Inspector Lee	Chief Inspector Lee, Detective Carter	Ricky Tan	Ricky Tan
The Santa Clause 2	Principal Newman	Santa Clause	The Clone Santa Clause	The Clone Santa Clause
Saving Private Ryan	Private Ryan	Captain John Miller	War	
Scooby-Doo	Scooby-Doo	Mystery Inc.	Scrappy-Doo	Scrappy-Doo
Scream	Sidney Prescott	Sidney Prescott	'Ghostface'	'Ghostface'
Scream 2	Sidney Prescott	Sidney Prescott	Mrs Loomis	Mrs Loomis
Seven	Tracy Mills	William Somerset	John Doe	John Doe
Shrek	Princess Fiona	Shrek	Lord Farquaad	Lord Farquaad
Signs	Morgan Hess	Graham Hess	Injured Alien	The aliens
The Silence of the Lambs	Clarice Starling	Clarice Starling	Hannibal Lecter	Jaime Gumb
Sister Act	The Nuns	Deloris Van Cartier	Vince/The Mob	Vince
The Sixth Sense	Awareness of the spiritual realm	Dr. Malcolm Crowe	The dispossessed spiritual being	
Sleeping with the Enemy	Laura Burney	Laura Burney	Martin Burney	Martin Burney
Sleepy Hollow	Reason, logic	Constable Ichabod Crane	The headless horseman, pagan magic, piety	The headless horseman
Speed	Jack Traven	Jack Traven	Howard Payne	Howard Payne
Spider-Man	Uncle Ben Parker	Peter Parker/Spider-Man	Norman Osborn/The Green Goblin	Norman Osborn/The Green Goblin
Spy Kids	Carmen and Juni	Carmen and Juni	Minion	Fegan Floop
Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace	Yoda	Obi-Wan Kenobi	Senator Palpatine	Darth Maul
Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones	Yoda	Anakin Skywalker	Senator Palpatine	Darth Sidious
Star Wars: Episode IV –	Obi-Wan Kenobi	Luke Skywalker	The Emperor	Darth Vader

A New Hope				
The Sum of All Fears	Jack Ryan	Jack Ryan	Dressler	Dressler
Tarzan	Tarzan	Tarzan	Clayton	Clayton
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Splinter	The turtles	Shredder	Shredder
Terminator 2: Judgment Day	The Terminator (T-800)	John Connor	T-1000	T-1000
A Time to Kill	Rape victim, Tanya	Jake Brigance	Ku Klux Klan	
Tomorrow Never Dies	Wei Lin	James Bond	Elliott Carver	Elliott Carver
Total Recall	Kuato	Quaid	Cohaagen	Cohaagen
Traffic	Family	(ensemble cast)	Drugs	
True Lies	Helen Tasker	Harry Tasker	Salim Aziz	Salim Aziz
Twister	Human society	Bill Harding	The natural world	The tornadoes
Unforgiven	William Munny's dead wife	William Munny	Little Bob	Little Bob
What Lies Beneath	Madison Elizabeth Franks	Claire Spencer	Norman Spencer	Norman Spencer
Wild Wild West	Rita Escobar	Capt. James West	Arliss Loveliss	Arliss Loveliss
The World is Not Enough	Dr. Christmas Jones	James Bond	Electra King	Electra King
X-Men	Rogue	Wolverine	Magneto	Magneto
xXx	Yelena	Xander Cage	Yorgi	Yorgi

Table 5.1: The positive and negative poles in the sampled films.

Note: Some films do not locate their positive and negative poles in specific characters or objects, but through concepts, ideas and metaphors. These films suggest a greater ambiguity between good and evil than other films, but still nevertheless provide some grounding for their depictions of evil. It will be noted that some of these concepts are interchangeable, for instance rationality and logic is good in Apollo 13 but evil in A Beautiful Mind. In The Mummy (which I describe elsewhere as being on the whole confused in its use of paganistic, Christian and Nietzschean evil) love motivates both hero and villain. In Pulp Fiction, the suitcase with its mysterious contents appears to be both poles, either an instrument of the devil or allowing bad people to 'see the light' inside. In Saving Private Ryan, the character of Ryan is not the pole in himself, but is so as a metaphor for domesticity and family. War as the negative pole is problematic. On the one hand, it causes good people to do evil things, but on the other the film also suggests that it is necessary to rid the world of evil.

<u>Films</u>	<u>Low Excess</u>	<u>High Excess</u>
Air Force One	Socialism	Capitalism
Aladdin	Order	Disorder
Armageddon	Order	Disorder
Back to the Future: Part 2	Order	Disorder
Basic Instinct	Sexual frigidity	Sexual lust
Batman	Order	Disorder
Batman and Robin	Nature as paramount	Nature as conquerable
Batman Returns	Socialism	Capitalism
Black Hawk Down	Order	Disorder
The Bourne Identity	Order	Disorder
A Bug's Life	Socialism	Capitalism
Chicken Run	Socialism	Capitalism
Clear and Present Danger	Order	Disorder
Con Air	Passivity	Bloodlust
Contact	Order	Disorder
Dances with Wolves	Nature as paramount	Nature as conquerable
Dick Tracy	Sexual frigidity	Sexual lust
Die Another Day	Order	Disorder
Die Hard 2	Order	Disorder
Die Hard with a Vengeance	Order	Disorder
Enemy of the State	Order	Disorder
Face/Off	Passivity	Bloodlust
The General's Daughter	Reason, Logic	Impetuousness, lack of thought
Ghostbusters II	Christianity	Pagan magic
GoldenEye	Order	Disorder
Gone in 60 Seconds	Order	Disorder
Hannibal	Reason, Logic	Impetuousness, lack of thought
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	Sexual frigidity	Sexual lust
The Hunt for Red October	Socialism	Capitalism
In the Line of Fire	Order	Disorder
Independence Day	Order	Disorder
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	Order	Disorder
Lethal Weapon 2	Order	Disorder
Lethal Weapon 3	Passivity	Bloodlust

The Lion King	Socialism	Capitalism
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Order	Disorder
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Order	Disorder
The Matrix	Order	Disorder
Minority Report	Order	Disorder
Mission: Impossible 2	Passivity	Bloodlust
Mulan	Order	Disorder
Ocean's Eleven	Sexual frigidity	Sexual lust
The Patriot	Order	Disorder
The Perfect Storm	Order	Disorder
Pocahontas	Order	Disorder
The Ring	Passivity	Bloodlust
Road to Perdition	Order	Disorder
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	Order	Disorder
The Santa Clause 2	Order	Disorder
Saving Private Ryan	Order	Disorder
Scream	Passivity	Bloodlust
Signs	Order	Disorder
The Silence of the Lambs	Reason, logic	Impetuousness, lack of thought
Speed	Order	Disorder
Spider-Man	Order	Disorder
Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace	Order	Disorder
Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones	Order	Disorder
Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope	Order	Disorder
The Sum of All Fears	Order	Disorder
Terminator 2: Judgment Day	Order	Disorder
Tomorrow Never Dies	Order	Disorder
Total Recall	Order	Disorder
Unforgiven	Passivity	Bloodlust
What Lies Beneath	Sexual frigidity	Sexual lust
Wild Wild West	Order	Disorder
The World is Not Enough	Socialism	Capitalism
xXx	Order	Disorder

Table 5.2: The extremes of excess in selected films.

The first, and perhaps most important, characteristic of cinematic evil emerges from the construction of evil as absolute and as an easily recognisable presence. Absolute evil in the commercial feature is balanced, and eventually overcome, by absolute good (with some exceptions, Seven for example²). These absolutes are represented on screen by positive and negative poles: a sliding scale between, at one end, someone or something representing pure good and, at the other, some other thing or character representative of pure evil³. But in the consideration of evil encoded as excess, a second scale is enacted where the positive pole sits *between* two excesses (delineated in Table 5.2). That is, the good sits between, say, sexual frigidity and sexual lust, passivity and bloodlust, and order and disorder. I argue below that good is largely passive and is dependent upon the choice of the individual, but evil can emerge from either action or inaction. The villain's inability to love, as a primary example of evil, is caught between pure physical lust and a lack of desire. The hero, however, is often constructed as physically and emotionally in harmony with heterosexual love, or their bodily lust is balanced by their emotional bond with a single partner. Without this balance, the villain's excessive tendencies emerge. This is particularly clear in Batman and Robin where the two villains represent opposite ends of the films' pattern of excess. Poison Ivy desires the return to nature and the eradication of humankind to achieve this. On the other hand, Mr. Freeze wants to usurp natural laws in order to revive his dead wife.

Returning to the scale between good and evil, it is not necessary for the primary characters to represent the positive and negative poles, and in fact it is preferable in a narrative sense that at least the protagonist is not (The listing of heroes in Table 5.1 shows the differences or similarities between protagonist and positive pole). In this

way, both minor and major characters can sway backwards and forwards between good and evil as the narrative requires. So, while the poles themselves are fixed and unwavering in their devotion to pure good or pure evil, a substantial grey area exists between the two poles, which the characters must negotiate. Commonly, the journey of the hero to defeat evil will include a self-questioning of their faith and belief in the duties of maintaining the good. For example, in Saving Private Ryan, having seen the horrors of war, Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks) has separated duty from morality in order to maintain both his leadership and his sanity. At one point he tells one of his men not to rescue a child; 'We're not here to do the decent thing. We're here to follow fucking orders'. But later, privately, he reveals his fears; 'Sometimes I wonder if I've changed so much, my wife is even going to recognise me whenever it is I get back to her, and how I'll ever be able to tell her about days like today.'

On the other hand, the antagonist is commonly, but not exclusively, constructed as the negative pole (as shown in Table 5.1). Hannibal Lecter (The Silence of the Lambs, Hannibal), the Green Goblin (Spider-Man), The Joker (Batman), and Coahaagen (Total Recall [Paul Verhoeven, 1990]), for example, exist as the embodiment of evil. They are powerful and charismatic figures who are the centre of evil and will never be anything other than evil. Their defeat can only be achieved by their destruction, as they can never be reformed (as Norman Osborn/The Green Goblin in Spider-Man proves).

There are some exceptions to this general rule of the antagonist being the negative pole. Here, a lesser character or object acquires the distinction of being the prime focus of evil. To name two popular examples, it is neither Sauron in The Lord of the

Rings trilogy, nor Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader in the Star Wars saga⁴, that epitomises pure evil. In both cases, absolute evil is focussed through some other object or character so these antagonists must effectively bow before an evil that is greater than them. In The Lord of the Rings, Sauron is certainly an immensely powerful figure but there is one object that has the ability to destroy him. This object, the One Ring, can bestow upon Sauron evil at its most absolute, making him undefeatable, but the ring's destruction also holds the promise of his demise. Sauron is therefore beholden to the ring if he is to rule Middle-Earth absolutely. Further, it is the ring that is most influential in drawing characters towards evil rather than Sauron himself. The ring as focal point of evil corrupts on the basis of its purity. The Ringwraiths may answer to Sauron but they bow to the call of the ring, while the corrupted Gollum provides the template for what Frodo will become if the ring is not destroyed. The ring's power is so immense that Frodo's good is unable to counter its effects.

Likewise, Darth Vader cannot be the negative pole in the Star Wars saga. The first three films of the saga (the third of which falls outside the scope of this thesis due to its release in 2005) tracks the descent of Anakin Skywalker into evil (and in Episode VI, The Return of the Jedi [Richard Marquand, 1983], his redemption). Throughout the saga, it is Senator Palpatine who remains a constant evil presence, working to acquire ultimate power, and guiding the young Jedi towards the dark side of the force. By Episode III, Revenge of the Sith (George Lucas, 2005), Palpatine has achieved his goal of ultimate power, acquiring the mantle of Emperor of the Universe and destroying the Jedi order. It is only because the latter task was not completed, with

Yoda, Obi-Wan Kenobi and the two children of Skywalker remaining, that the ultimate downfall of Palpatine is assured.

Occasionally, the location of the negative pole can be kept hidden or deflected onto another object or character so that an element of mystery is created. In Spy Kids (Robert Rodriguez, 2001), Fegan Floop is nominally the villain, controlling the children of the world through subliminal messages in programmes and advertising, but in fact it is his henchman, Alexander Minion (Tony Shalhoub), who is the influential character. This allows for the villain, Floop, to be redeemed by assisting to foil the plot to kill the American president.



Fig. 5.1: Armand poses his sacrificial victim during a vampire ritual in a Paris theatre (Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles).



Fig. 5.2: Lector's disembowelled and crucified victim (The Silence of the Lambs).

When the negative pole is indistinct (but not indefinable), the tendency is for the narrative to centre on a spiritual battle that lies beyond the physical (as specified in Table 5.1). This Augustinian or Manichean form of evil postulates that greater forces are at work and humankind is simply caught between them: the poles still exist but on a spiritual plane that is referenced but never depicted. Ghost, Twister, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, The Mummy (and its sequel [Stephen Sommers, 2001]), Lara Croft: Tomb Raider, The Sixth Sense, The Prince of Egypt (Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner, Simon Wells, 1998), Apollo 13 (Ron Howard, 1995) and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (Steven Spielberg, 1989) all share the representation of evil as existing in some form beyond the known physical universe. In Apollo 13, for example, this representation is not strong but it emerges from the allusions to fate and destiny; primarily through the lost wedding ring, and the number 13⁵ as symbol. The vampires of Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles transcend or disregard the religious tenets of good and evil, referring instead to pagan rituals and perverted Christian traditions. There are references to voodoo magic by the Louisiana

slaves and to Christianity in the Christ pose taken by the ritualistic sacrifice in the Paris theatre (see Fig. 5.1, a similar pose integrated into The Silence of the Lambs [See Fig. 5.2], when Hannibal Lector kills his guards and escapes), but after Armand tells Louie that he knows nothing of God, God himself becomes merely a fantasy of the human imagination. This suggests that the vampires are Nietzschean *ubermenschen*, or Bataillean connoisseurs of the boundaries between pleasure and pain. They exist as the obverse of postmodern tolerance, as a belief in an amoral universe. They are a part of the world but also apart from it, as creatures who receive pleasure from the amoral utilisation of pain.

In Sleepy Hollow (Tim Burton, 1999), the evil works on three distinct levels making the delineation of the negative pole difficult, and one of the few films in the sample that uses pagan, theological, and philosophical paradigms of evil, thus conflating each into the postmodern melange; the Christian/Manichean duopoly, the pagan rituals, and the Kantian rationality of evil. The first appears with the Headless Horseman emerging from the roots of a wizened tree, metaphorically the gates of hell, and who may not cross the boundaries of the church, suggesting religious forces at work. The second is the witchcraft enacted to resurrect the Horseman, which appears to be linked with nature; the Tree of Death, the gloomy atmosphere, and the use of birds and roots to conjure up the right spells. And the third in both Lady Mary Van Tassel (Miranda Richardson) who resurrects the Horseman, and the town elders who devise a conspiracy in order to suppress patriarchal affairs. This triumvirate of evil is mirrored in the flashbacks of the childhood of the hero, Ichabod Crane (Johnny Depp). His mother is not specifically labelled a witch but a 'child of nature' who taps into the

primal energies of plants and bushes. His father is a deeply pious man who, through his own beliefs, sees his wife as a witch and proceeds to torture and murder her.

In the same way that the negative pole is the embodiment of evil, the positive pole is the site of absolute and unquestionable good. It is a character or object to which the lead character grounds him or herself, someone or something which either ties them to, or brings them back towards, the good when they begin to sway towards the evil. While it is not always the case, as we shall see, protagonists are not in themselves the positive pole. The primary characters can therefore be flawed and, before good ultimately prevails, some doubts can exist as they negotiate their way towards a conclusion in which they ultimately find good (or, in more bleak stories, such as Unforgiven [Clint Eastwood, 1992], descend into a hell from which they can never return). Borderline psychotics (Martin Riggs in the Lethal Weapon series), washed up drunkards (John McClane in Die Hard with a Vengeance [John McTiernan, 1995]), and priests fallen from the faith (Signs), amongst others, can be the lead heroic figures in popular Hollywood cinema.

To return to The Lord of the Rings, it is not Frodo who is pure good, the positive pole, but Samwise Gamgee, Frodo's travelling companion. Samwise, with his child-like innocence, has a pure heart that maintains a sense of hope even when all seems lost. His allegiance to Frodo and his quest is unquestioned and unquestionable, affirmed by his short stint as ringbearer in The Return of the King (Peter Jackson, 2003). Gollum has been corrupted by the One Ring, Frodo is being corrupted, Boromir has fallen through his desire for the ring, and Gandalf, the elf-queen Galadriel, Aragorn and Faramir have each refused to carry it, knowing it will corrupt them as well. But,

believing Frodo to be dead after the encounter with Shelob, the giant spider, Sam takes the ring, not for himself but to continue the quest to destroy it. Discovering that Frodo is alive and so rescuing him, Sam unquestioningly returns the ring to him. He has thus become the only character to possess the ring and to willingly relinquish it. His inherent sense of good, which no other character appears to possess to this extent, is so strong that he feels no pull towards the evil of the ring.

There are two films in my sample in which both the positive and negative poles are encapsulated in a single character or object. One of these, Jumanji (Joe Johnston, 1995), is the retelling of the story of Job, focusing the forces of good and evil into the game of the title. In this particular case, God and the Devil are working to opposite ends but for the same cause; endure the evils and the rewards of good will follow. In the film, the game conjures up all manners of evil, but rescinds this evil with good at the end. Despite the knowledge of what may happen upon every throw of the dice, the four players persist in the challenge, knowing that the horrors will be put right. At the end of the game, the clock is turned back 26 years, the time the young Alan Parrish had lost when he originally vanished into the game and within which he had been trapped. Armed with knowledge of the future, Parrish is able to prevent both his family business from collapsing because of his sudden disappearance and the accident that killed the parents of Judy and Peter Shepherd, two of the other players of the game.

These structural arrangements of good and evil in commercial cinema act on two levels. Firstly, they are informed by the paradigms of social evil that I described in the previous chapter, mixing the various ideas of evil into the postmodern melange. For

example, Hannibal Lecter embodies the Nietzschean superman, Thomas Reynolds (Enemy of the State) the Arendtian form of evil, and so on. Secondly, these paradigmatic arrangements also act on the level of the economic, offering forms of evil that are easily recognisable thus requiring little exposition, and providing filmmakers with ways to approach the visual aesthetic of evil.

Having established that, in a basic sense, a dichotomous structure of good and evil informs the cinematic world view, but with ambiguities between the two extremes, evil is further defined by established narrative patterns. These patterns are based primarily on visual markers contained within the diegesis of the films themselves rather than in any explanatory modes. Like the villains of Propp's folk tales, the contemporary Hollywood villain largely exists to serve the story. Visual markers associated with villainy, as explained in the next chapter, allow the narrative to develop while still eschewing any need for exposition that would slow the spectacle. The following narrative codes, combined with these visual markers, contribute specifically towards the construction of evil in contemporary commercial cinema, and provide the audience with a kind of shorthand method of establishing the presence of evil in the film.

5.2.2: Codes of Evil 2 – The Discourse of Rational Thought

Cinematic evil is specifically associated with an excess of rational thought, or rational thought that occurs at the expense of all other intellectual or emotional responses. Evil villains do not feel love or kindness towards others, but instead a cold intelligence overpowers and suppresses all other emotions or motivations. This is especially true of non-human characters, whose displays of rationality mark them as malevolent

rather than either acting on instinct (animals) or as inanimate object incapable of thought (such as asteroids and storms). Principally, this engages with Nietzsche's concept of the Superman, in which characters believe themselves to be above all others, and thus display a perverted kind of rational logic. Rational thought in these villains tends to overshadow all other emotional qualities that can assist in the promotion of the good, so also enveloping the Kantian theory of self-love as evil. Hannibal Lecter, for example, displays no emotion and acts only on his own internal logic, while Martin Burney's feelings for his wife in Sleeping with the Enemy (Joseph Ruben, 1991) have little to do with love. Further examples are shown in the table below.

<u>The Films</u>	<u>The Villain</u>
Air Force One	Korshunov
Aladdin	Jafar
Armageddon	The Asteroid
Basic Instinct	Catherine Trammell
Clear and Present Danger	Robert Ritter
Con Air	Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom
Die Hard 2	Colonel Stuart
Godzilla	The Offspring of Godzilla
Hannibal	Hannibal Lecter
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Lord Voldemort
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Lord Voldemort
In the Line of Fire	Mitch Leary
Independence Day	The Aliens
Jurassic Park	The Velociraptors
Jurassic Park III	The Velociraptors (here given the power of speech)
The Lost World: Jurassic Park	The Velociraptors
The Matrix	The Machines
The Patriot	Colonel William Tavington
The Perfect Storm	The Storm
The Santa Clause 2	The Clone Santa Clause

Seven	John Doe
The Silence of the Lambs	Hannibal Lecter
Sleeping with the Enemy	Martin Burney
Terminator 2: Judgment Day	T-1000
Tomorrow Never Dies	Elliott Carver

Table 5.3: Movies in which villains display overt tendencies towards rational thought.

Instilling some sense of intelligent logic in animals and inanimate objects elevates their otherwise random actions towards the evil. In the human character, reason and logic at the expense of emotion provides an increased level of malevolence in the character that goes beyond the bad, while animals and other objects who acquire these humanistic traits become truly evil. These differences become clear in the films Deep Impact and Armageddon, two films which essentially share the same narrative; killer asteroid on direct collision course with Earth. In Armageddon, the asteroid is specifically described as being self-aware and it appears to repel any effort made to destroy it. In Deep Impact, the asteroid is conversely not given any such awareness and it remains an inanimate object throughout the film. The tornadoes of Twister provide another, albeit subtler, example. Prior to the tornado strike on the town of Wakita, William describes the motion of the storms, ‘it comes after you,’ implying that the storms possess rational thought processes, confirming what had appeared earlier with the use of point-of-view shots, which I will describe fully in the next chapter.

Jurassic Park and its sequels combine the animalistic instinct for self-preservation and the anthropomorphism described that defines some of its dinosaurs as evil. For the most part, the dinosaurs are not depicted as evil despite their indiscriminate slaughter of humans. As animal, the codes of evil largely do not apply, primarily because there is no rationality displayed towards the destruction of humankind. This reduces the

murderous actions of the Tyrannosaurus Rex to natural, or survival, instinct. This delineation, however, becomes indistinct once cinematic representations of animals are imbued to some extent with the human qualities of apparent rational thought. That is, instinct is replaced by the power of logic. The velociraptors in particular are given the power of rational thought that enables them to ensnare and kill their prey in ways beyond the catch-and-slash of the T-Rex. In the first film in the series, the game park warden, Muldoon, is hunted down by a small group of 'raptors which ensnare him by offering one as a decoy while the others circle unnoticed around him. As Muldoon realises that he has stepped into a trap from which there is no escape, he remarks in admiration, 'Clever girl'. This power of animalistic logic and rational thought is developed further in Jurassic Park III in which the velociraptors are empowered with the ability to communicate with each other verbally.

What this suggests is that evil is specifically associated with an excess of rational thought, or rational thought that occurs at the expense of all other intellectual or emotional responses. Similarly, an American, conservative Christian distrust of science (and evolution) and liberal intellectuals can be found in the likes of Armageddon (the scientists must defer to the on-the-job knowledge of the oil-drillers) and The Nutty Professor (Tom Shadyac, 1996) (scientist is rescued by the reconciliation with his inner emotional self, manifested as 'Buddy Love'). In terms of the various creatures placed on display in cinema, the animals that display some modicum of intelligent thought in their ability to ensnare their victims are constructed as exponentially more evil than those that are driven purely by instinct. Movies create a more frightening scenario when animals become unpredictable because they are able to outthink and outsmart their human prey. This also applies to human characters.

Hannibal Lecter is a more frightening character, despite his apparent sociopathy, because he retains a malevolent logic. The sequence in which Clarice Starling first encounters Lecter in his jail cell in The Silence of the Lambs is indicative of this. As she slowly walks up the cell-block which houses the worst and most violent mental patients in the institution, Starling witnesses human madness at its worst. In turn, an old man leers at her through the bars, another seemingly comatose in a chair, and the next jumping wildly around his cell, hurling obscenities at her. In the final cell, Lecter stands waiting, motionless, in the centre of his small cubicle, and greets her with an eerie but sincere, 'Hello, Clarice' (See Fig. 5.2). This immediately suggests that Lecter is a far more malevolent character because he maintains the appearance of normality. The conversation that follows points to Lecter's powerful intellect, which as well as signifying his ability for logical thought also promotes him as somehow above the rest of society hence able to act by his own rules and his own sense of morality.



Fig. 5.3: Clarice Starling sees Hannibal Lecter for the first time (The Silence of the Lambs).

This characteristic of evil can be problematic as the hero may also display this same rationality; the anti-hero, as it were, who saves the world because they are also logical, rational beings with few moral boundaries. This movement beyond moral precepts of good and evil problematises the construction of the hero in that they may assume the ways of evil in order to defeat evil. The development of the James Bond character in the 1990s exemplifies this. Pierce Brosnan's characterisation of Bond is defined as a form of controlled evil unleashed upon the world in order to save it. He hardly sheds a tear for the murder of a former lover, Paris Carver, in Tomorrow Never Dies (Roger Spottiswoode, 1997). He kills Electra King coldly and remorselessly in The World is Not Enough (Michael Apted, 1999). By Die Another Day, the character has become an almost uncontrollable entity, escaping from MI-6 custody after having been framed as a double agent, but being steered by M towards the source of evil when she realises that Bond is an unstoppable, but useful, force.

It is important to note that insanity is not a marker of cinematic evil. Insanity is antithetical to the presence of rational thought, a fact made clear in the sequence from The Silence of the Lambs described above which locates Lecter as separate from his insane cell-mates. Insanity is a mitigating circumstance, or an affliction which causes a character to act wrongly, and sometimes horrifically. But such a character cannot be absolutely evil because their insanity is a prior cause of what they do. Seven specifically makes note of this. Early in the film, the policemen attempting to find a serial killer state that he or she must be insane, but after John Doe turns himself in, and on the ride out to the final climactic meeting, Doe suggests that this explanation is too easy; 'It's more comfortable for you to label me as insane', he tells Detective

Mills. What this suggests is that insanity is a practical explanation for the excessively violent act, but one that does not and cannot explain Kantian rationality or the Arendtian banality of evil.

5.2.3: Codes of Evil 3 – Chaos

Cinematic evil has a tendency towards the chaotic, or at least a chaotic disruption in the transition to some new order that will replace the one that currently exists. In other words, evil attempts to disrupt human order, largely defined by liberal democratic ideals, by use of excessive force, libido, greed, or political ambition. In some films, chaos is portrayed as the state of nature, which the good must fight against. In other films, the natural state is one of order which evil tries to destroy. Thus in each instance, chaos is the domain of evil. Table 5.4 below lists those villains whose primary objective is the creation of a chaotic disorder that serves their own needs. Again, the idea of excess is crucial. This can occur, firstly, in the excess of order, or the emergence of chaos from excessive attempts to create ideologically based social order, as found in The Patriot and some of the political thrillers. This parallels old Cold War fears (alluding to the nostalgic mode that I will discuss in Chapter Eight), when communists were constructed as fascistic, as well as the conspiracy theory, in which governments are acting in accordance with their own secret agendas. The characteristic of chaos, secondly, occurs with the excess of disorder, as in The Perfect Storm where social normality is disrupted by seemingly random and violent occurrences. Chaos, in this sense, is aligned with the fear of terrorism and the ubiquitous nature of disorganised violence (linked, paradoxically, with organised crime and alternative social orders).

<u>The Films</u>	<u>The Villains</u>	<u>Villain's Intent</u>
Air Force One	Ivan Korshunov	The return of hardliner General Radek to power of ex-Soviet state, Kazakhstan
Armageddon	The Asteroid	The destruction of the Earth
Back to the Future: Part 2	Biff Tanen	Financial wealth and power
Batman	Jack Napier/The Joker	Power over Gotham City
Batman and Robin	Two-Face, The Riddler	Power over Gotham City
Batman Forever	Mr. Freeze, Poison Ivy	The revival of dead wife, the saving of the natural, ecological order
Batman Returns	Max Schrek	Wealth and power
Black Hawk Down	Mohamed Farrah Aidid	Power over Somalia
Con Air	Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom	Freedom and power
Dick Tracy	Big Boy Caprice	Power
Die Another Day	Gustav Graves	Reunification of North and South Korea
Enemy of the State	Thomas Reynolds	State intervention into affairs of citizen in the name of state peace
Ghostbusters II	Vigo the Carpathian	Power
GoldenEye	Trevelyan	Revenge
In the Line of Fire	Mitch Leary	Death of the President
Independence Day	The Aliens	Annihilation of the human race
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade	Walter Donovan	Supernatural power
Jurassic Park	The Velociraptors	Dominance in the natural order
Jurassic Park III	The Velociraptors	Dominance in the natural order
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	The Illuminati	Power
The Lion King	Scar	Power
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Sauron	Power over Middle Earth
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Sauron	Power over Middle Earth
The Lost World: Jurassic Park	The Velociraptors	Dominance in the natural order
Mulan	Shan-Yu	Power over China
The Mummy	Imhotep	Reincarnation and re-uniting with lover
The Mummy Returns	Imhotep	Reincarnation and re-uniting with lover

The Patriot	Colonel William Tavington	British rule over North America (and, personally, land)
The Perfect Storm	The Storm	Destruction
The Ring	Samara Morgan	Maliciousness
The Rock	Captain Frye, Captain Farrow	Wealth
Saving Private Ryan	War	The advancement of evil in the world
Scream	'Ghostface'	Because they can
Scream 2	Mrs. Loomis	Revenge
Seven	John Doe	Ironically, ridding the world of evil
Signs	The Aliens	Annihilation of human race
Speed	Howard Payne	Revenge over social order
Spy Kids	Alexander Minion	Power
The Sum of All Fears	Dressler	Return of fascist order
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Shredder	Power
Terminator 2: Judgment Day	The Machines	World domination
Tomorrow Never Dies	Elliott Carver	Control of world events for media coverage
Traffic	Drugs	Breaking down the social order based on family and domesticity
True Lies	Salim Abu Aziz	Advancement of Muslim beliefs
Twister	The Storms	Random destruction
Wild Wild West	Arliss Loveliss	Power
The World is Not Enough	Electra King	Control of world's oil supplies
X-Men	Magneto	Rid the world of non-mutant humans
xXx	Yorgi	Return of socialist order

Table 5.4: Films in which the villain usurps the social order for own ends.

The representation of chaos does not contradict the rationality of the evil villain, but sits alongside it: as can be seen in Table 5.4, in many films the creation of chaos emerges from an excess of logic as the villain attempts to reshape their world in a new form, based on their desire for wealth, power or the overthrow of one political system for another. Systems of social, political, and cultural order are seen to collapse in the aftermath of the plans of the evil villain to assert themselves and their apparent wants, ranging from the incarceration or death of a single person (Mitch Leary's attempts to kill the President in *In the Line of Fire* [Wolfgang Petersen, 1993], for example), the

threat to destroy or takeover a city or nation (the poison-gas rockets aimed at San Francisco in The Rock, and the attempted overthrow of the Chinese Emperor by Shan-Yu in Mulan [Barry Cook, Tony Bancroft, 1998]), to the destruction of the world (the aliens of Independence Day, the terrorists of The Sum of All Fears [Phil Alden Robinson, 2002], and most James Bond villains). While the villain is invariably defeated in their plans, these films still conclude with a world that has to rebuild after the death and destruction that has occurred. This however is glossed over by narrative constructions that consider these to be unimportant. As I stated when introducing Richard Dyer's 'utopian' allusions in contemporary entertainment, these films are not so much about the (narrative) development of a better world but about the experience on offer, so the films tend not to reconcile Dyer's utopian intentions of entertainment with the aftermath of the defeat of the villain. Indeed, the blockbuster takes the destructive element of utopia, the smashing of the old world, but without the accompanying move towards building a new one (in a way we find in the Westerns of John Ford, for example).

5.2.4: Codes of Evil 4 – The Incapacity to Love

Evil characters are unable to love, instead either displaying little more than a selfish physical lust towards another character, or not portrayed as having any emotion for another at all. In other words, villains tend to be either sexual predators (excessively sexual) or asexual (excessively lacking in physical affection). In Seven, Jonathan Doe is guilty by his own admission of the sin of envy because he is unable to love as Detective Mills can. In Ocean's Eleven (Steven Soderbergh, 2001), Terry Benedict places his greed for wealth over his relationship and loses the woman, and in The

Mummy Returns, Anck-su-namun forsakes her former love for Imhotep in exchange for survival and power. Other examples are given in the table below.

<u>The Films</u>	<u>The Villain</u>	<u>Sexual Predator or Asexual</u>
101 Dalmatians	Cruella DeVil	Asexual
Aladdin	Jafar	Sexual Predator
Back to the Future: Part 2	Biff Tanen	Sexual Predator
Batman	Jack Napier/The Joker	Asexual
Big Momma's House	Lester Vesco	Asexual
Charlie's Angels	Eric Knox	Asexual
Dick Tracy	Big Boy Caprice	Asexual
Face/Off	Castor Troy	Asexual
The General's Daughter	Col. William Kent	Sexual Predator
Ghost	Carl	Sexual Predator
Gladiator	Commodus	Asexual
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	Frollo	Sexual Predator
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	Lestat	Sexual Predator
The Mummy Returns	Anck-Su-Namun	Asexual
Ocean's Eleven	Terry Benedict	Asexual
The Ring	Samara Morgan	Asexual
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	Sheriff of Nottingham	Sexual Predator
Scream	Billy Loomis	Asexual
Seven	John Doe	Asexual
Shrek	Lord Farquaard	Sexual Predator
Sleeping with the Enemy	Martin Burney	Asexual
Tomorrow Never Dies	Electra King	Sexual Predator
Total Recall	Lori	Asexual
True Lies	Salim Abu Aziz	Asexual
xXx	Yorgi	Sexual Predator

Table 5.5: Villains displaying the incapacity to love. (Note: Only included here are those villains whose inability to love forms a significant plot-point. The likes of Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom (Con Air) and Colonel William Tavington (The Patriot), to name just two examples, are not shown to desire another, thus are essentially asexual. While this may contribute to their identification as evil, this is not a point that the narrative asserts, thus their non-inclusion.)

The good is invariably symbolised by love, hence it is not intelligence, quick thinking, or physical strength that succeeds – although these may be useful – but the love of a

good woman (or man on the less common occasion when the hero is female), family or home. Shrek is saved by his love for Princess Fiona, as is Harry Tasker for his wife in True Lies, Neo for Trinity (and vice versa) in The Matrix and A. J. Frost for Grace Stamper in Armageddon. Certainly, there are asexual heroes, such as Frodo in The Lord of the Rings trilogy and Flik in A Bug's Life, but these are less common, and, importantly, display an albeit abstract formation of love. In these examples, both Frodo and Flik act out of devotion for their home, the Shire and the ant-hill respectively. If love is lost, then the lead character spirals down a path of destruction that they are not always able to return from. In Seven and Unforgiven, the loss of love is a deprivation too large to bear, and as a result both Mills and Munny succumb to evil.

In the contemporary commercial feature film, love is largely constructed as a spiritual force that acts as a beacon of both good and hope, and therefore is implicated in the construction of the positive pole. In A Beautiful Mind (Ron Howard, 2001), for example, the mathematician John Nash discovers that the love of his wife, Alicia, is a more powerful force for good than his schizophrenia is of evil; 'Perhaps it is good to have a beautiful mind, but an even greater gift is to discover a beautiful heart'. The film postulates that intelligence, as symbolised by reason and logic (already determined as important in the construction of cinematic evil), is countered by love. The lack of love, the film suggests, is implicated in the construction of the Augustinian moral vacuum, which of itself is evil. In Nash's case, the evil of the intellect is defeated by the ephemeral power of love. An extreme lack of love in cinema is symbolic of evil, whether the villain displays asexuality, or lack of interest,

like Calitri in Gone in 60 Seconds, or is consumed by pure lust, as Frollo is in The Hunchback of Notre Dame.

5.2.5: Codes of Evil 5 – The All-Powerful and Consuming

Evil retains a sense of being all-powerful and consuming. In the films listed below, the world is inherently evil and out to destroy its inhabitants. Evil is thus a force that attempts to engulf and consume humankind. This can, but does not always, refer to spiritual battles of good and evil beyond the physical realm, as postulated by Augustine and the Manichean, as represented by ‘the force’ in the Star Wars films. Arendt’s analysis of Kantian rationality can also surface in that human society as a whole, by the choice of its inhabitants, has fallen into a cycle of selfishness and greed, succumbing to the desires of self-love. This occurs in such films as Seven, Tim Burton’s versions of the tales of Batman and Black Hawk Down, in which essentially good characters attempt to survive within a world that has collapsed into chaos. Alternatively, a Kantian judgement is implied, as in the case of Traffic (Steven Soderbergh, 2000), where the greed of the individual drives them to illicit acts. These and other examples of villains as all-powerful are listed in the table below.

<u>The Films</u>	<u>The Villains</u>
Armageddon	The Asteroid
Basic Instinct	Catherine Trammell
Batman	Jack Napier/The Joker
Batman Returns	Max Shreck/The Penguin
Black Hawk Down	Mohamed Farrah Aidid
The Blair Witch Project	The Blair Witch
Clear and Present Danger	Chief of Staff Robert Ritter
Con Air	Cyrus ‘the Virus’ Grissom
Erin Brockovich	Pacific Gas and Electric
The Firm	Avery Tolar
Ghostbusters II	Vigo the Carpathian
Gladiator	Commodus
Hannibal	Hannibal Lecter

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Lord Voldemort
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Lord Voldemort
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	Frollo
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	Lestat
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	The Illuminati
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Lord Sauron
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Lord Sauron
The Matrix	The Machines/Agent Smith
Minority Report	Lamarr Burgess
The Mummy	Imhotep
The Pelican Brief	Chief of Staff Cole
Pulp Fiction	The Suitcase
The Ring	Samara Morgan
Saving Private Ryan	War
Seven	John Doe
The Silence of the Lambs	Hannibal Lecter
Sleepy Hollow	Lady Mary Van Tassel
Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace	Senator Palpatine
Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones	Senator Palpatine
Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope	Emperor Palpatine
Terminator 2: Judgment Day	The Machines
Traffic	Drugs

Table 5.6: Films which display traits of evil as all-powerful.

In some films, the world is inherently good, but evil forces exist and must be defeated as they arise in order to maintain that good. Armageddon and Saving Private Ryan follow this pattern, despite the representation of murderous acts carried out by allied soldiers, with the latter film constructing the American forces as on the side of right. This is reinforced by the framing story of the search for the last surviving Ryan brother. Establishing the characters within Captain Miller's (Tom Hanks) platoon as average 'Joes', and associating their mission with rural Americana (in the sequence where Mrs. Miller receives official news of the deaths of her other sons), exemplifies the statement made by author Stephen Ambrose in a documentary accompanying the DVD release of the film; that the world had to act to defeat evil⁶.

In most cases, however, no such defining characteristics of the world arise, and instead the social, cultural and political constructions of the world remain ambivalent. In other words, the world is constructed as neutral with small outbreaks of good and evil surfacing that must somehow be balanced out to preserve a state of equilibrium. In Erin Brockovich, the evil corporation is defeated by the titular character, a down-on-her-luck woman finding a job in a small legal firm. While in Clear and Present Danger, the battle between good and evil takes place in the Oval Office, with the President succumbing to the lure of power ultimately defeated by the moralistic and righteous Jack Ryan. Thus these films display familiar theological proposals: that the world is evil; that the world is a battleground of good and evil; or that the world is good, but threatened by an evil force from outside. This is made clear in Table 5.6 where it can be seen that in many cases the villain listed is neither the antagonist nor the negative pole, hinting at the overreaching power of evil.

5.2.6: Codes of Evil 6 - Revenge

Commercial cinema constructs a distinction between justice and revenge. Justice is the socially and judicially permissible use of violence to end evil, while revenge is the selfish act of one who believes that they have been wronged. Because the act of revenge falls outside societal forms of justice it becomes a characteristic of evil. The act of revenge, in terms of Christianity, is ambiguous, between revenge enacted by God ('Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord') and the code of vengeful justice. This ambiguity is evident in the table below in which revenge is a major factor in the actions of either hero or villain.

<u>The Film</u>	<u>The Revenger</u>
Air Force One	Korshunov
Batman	Bruce Wayne/Batman
Die Another Day	James Bond
Die Hard with a Vengeance	Simon Gruber (1)
Face/Off	Sean Archer
Gladiator	Maximus
GoldenEye	James Bond
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Lord Voldemort
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Lord Voldemort
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	Lestat
The Patriot	Benjamin Martin
Ransom	Jimmy Shaker
Scooby-Doo	Scrappy-Doo
Scream 2	Mrs. Loomis
Speed	Howard Payne
Spider-Man	Peter Parker/Spider-Man
Spy Kids	Alexander Minion
Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones	Anakin Skywalker
A Time to Kill	Carl Lee Hailey

Table 5.7: The revengers in commercial cinema (including heroes).

Note (1): Here, the revenge motive is a red herring, a cover for Gruber's plans to rob the gold reserves of the Federal Bank.

Craig Harris argues that revenge has been considered an act of evil since Elizabethan times. Writing about 'revenger' tales of the period, he states:

A villain is a person who, for a selfish end, wilfully and deliberately violates the standards of morality sanctioned by the audience or reader. From the start, the Elizabethan villain had been entirely self-conscious, and entirely black, a complete embodiment of evil. With the growing consciousness that revenge was evil, revengefulness... became almost exclusively a villainous characteristic. Revenge is not a Christian attribute. Christian virtue, with its great emphasis on forgiveness, is a

higher mode of behaviour than pagan revenge. As Prospero observes in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, forgiveness is a nobler action than revenge.⁷

Specifying the prime motivations of the revenger as anger, jealousy, and envy, Harris explains that the latter 'was considered the greatest Elizabethan vice, and it may be one of the most powerful of the passions inducing revenge. Envy's passion was so great that, in contrast to anger, no wrongs were necessary to become the recipient of its malice; indeed it was often directed against the most virtuous and peaceful men (sic)⁸. The difference between the Elizabethan revenger and the vengeful justice of the Christian (which was transposed into the justification for judicial murder, the death penalty) is that the Christian is regretful of their actions whereas the revenger gains satisfaction from their revenge and it is this satisfaction that is sinful.

Contemporary Hollywood cinema often contradicts this regret by using vengeance narratives to allow audiences to enjoy acts of torture and murder that we normally would not condone under other circumstances. Examples abound of jealousy, anger, and envy, with the latter not necessarily invoked against the guilty, as motivation. In Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones (George Lucas, 2002) Anakin Skywalker not only kills those Tusken Raiders who tortured and murdered his mother but all in the tribe. This act exacerbates his downward spiral towards his transformation into Darth Vader, the right hand man of evil. In Interview with the Vampire, Lestat (Tom Cruise) grows increasingly jealous of the growing father-daughter relationship between Louis (Brad Pitt) and Claudia (Kirsten Dunst), forcing Louis to retaliate violently and flee to France. In Spy Kids, envious of his boss's fame and

nefariousness, Minion usurps Floop to take what he sees as his rightful place as head villain.

Harris states that forgiveness is the restorative act of revenge, but based on the sample, forgiveness has been replaced by the requirement for justice. In the postmodern world, it seems, villains cannot be forgiven for their sins but rather they must repay society in some way for them. Revenge and justice, however, are not opposing forces as they both centre on this repayment of some perceived debt. A fine line exists between the two, based upon the nature of retribution sought and the level of malevolence behind the act. The excess of rationality surfaces again here with revenge emerging from a single-minded logic that demands compensation for some perceived wrong. The ‘eye-for-an-eye’ scenario, to the revenger, is the only logical outcome. Justice, however, is based on a moderated rationality which takes account of emotional logic as well as reasoned argument. This approach, coupled with the use of legal means, incarceration, recompense, and so on, is sufficient to provide a satisfactory outcome. It is, however, rare in commercial cinema that justice is meted out, with the likes of Erin Brockovich, where the evil corporation is ordered to pay up, and The Fugitive, where the villains are taken away by the police at the end, exceptions rather than the rule. This suggests that evil as spectacle requires an equally spectacular defeat. But filmmakers must tread a fine line between heroes exacting revenge rather than justice. For instance, Peter Parker as Spider-Man faces two primary villains: the robber who killed his uncle and the Green Goblin, who not only terrorises the city of New York, but directly threatens both his aunt and close friend, Mary-Jane. The defeat of these villains, in which both die, is attributable to Parker’s need for revenge, but while the film uses this device to instil some ambiguity into the

lead heroic figure, it also falls short of taking the revenge motive to its fullest conclusion. The deaths of both villains are accidental⁹, but that of the robber is distinguishable by Parker's excessive desire for revenge. This has been intended to teach Parker to control his anger, and to live by the code of his uncle who had told him that, 'With great power comes great responsibility'. Again the principle of excess applies, with revenge as justice taken to an extreme, and enjoyed for its own sake.

Ghost uses the same cinematic device, that of accidental death, to kill its villains to avoid any revenge motifs undermining the heroic stature of the lead character, this time by car and broken window. On the odd occasion, a film will cross this line and the hero will directly enact his revenge on the villain; Murtaugh cold-bloodedly shooting Rudd in the head at the climax of Lethal Weapon 2, for example. This act is, however, explainable by the film and its character, as Murtaugh is forced to use this form of justice against a man who would otherwise escape. More problematic is the death of Dressler in the epilogue to The Sum of All Fears. Being the mastermind behind a successful nuclear strike on the city of Baltimore, Dressler is not brought to justice but assassinated. The eye-for-an-eye revenge motif is enacted because it provides a useful counter-balance in cinematic terms with the death of a city and its inhabitants.

5.2.7: Codes of Evil 7 – Evil as Irredeemable

The revenge-as-justice motif, as evidenced by Dressler's murder at the end of The Sum of All Fears suggests that evil is irredeemable. There is no hope for anyone who is totally consumed by evil, thus it is not enough that they survive the events of the film and so must be destroyed. While characters may lurch towards the dark side and

then pull themselves back at pivotal points in the narrative, the source of evil, the negative pole, has no such choice. Pure evil cannot be redeemed. While Augustine touched upon this idea, in the Manichaeian heresy it achieved its truest form. Evil was a power that entered the physical realm, and at the points at which it surfaced, it could only be fought, contained, even defeated, but never rehabilitated. The following table lists those villains who are irredeemably evil and are killed in the climax of their respective movies.

<u>The Films</u>	<u>The Villains</u>	<u>Method of Destruction</u>
Air Force One	Ivan Korshunov	Thrown out of plane
Aladdin	Jafar	Self-consumed by power
Armageddon	The Asteroid	Destroyed by nuclear blast
Batman	Jack Napier/The Joker	Fall from great height
Batman Returns	The Penguin	Caught in conflagration in penguin pen at zoo
Big Momma's House	Lester Vesco	Shot
The Bourne Identity	Alexander Conklin	Assassinated by own accomplices
A Bug's Life	Hopper	Consumed by bird
Charlie's Angels	Eric Knox	Destroyed by missile fired
Con Air	Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom	Ultimately killed by pile-driver on construction site
Die Another Day	Gustav Graves	Killed in crashing plane
Die Hard 2	Colonel Stewart	Killed in exploding plane
Die Hard with a Vengeance	Simon Gruber	Killed in helicopter crash
Double Jeopardy	Nick Parsons	Shot
Enemy of the State	Thomas Reynolds	Shot
Face/Off	Castor Troy	Killed by spear-gun
Ghost	Carl	Killed by glass in broken window (and carried down by spirits to hell)
Ghostbusters II	Vigo the Carpathian	Destroyed by Ghostbusters
Gladiator	Commodus	Killed by Maximus in the Coliseum
Godzilla	The Offspring of Godzilla	Nest in Madison Square Gardens destroyed by air force jet
GoldenEye	Trevelyan	Fall from great height (and finished off by antenna array falling on him)

Gone in 60 Seconds	Calitri	Falling from great height
Hook	Captain Hook	'Consumed' by statue of alligator
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	Frollo	Falling from great height into fire
The Hunt for Red October	The Russian submarine commander	Killed by a torpedo from his own submarine
In the Line of Fire	Mitch Leary	Falling from great height
Independence Day	The Aliens	Computer virus weakening defences, destroyed in military action
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade	Walter Donovan	Drinks from wrong grail, ages in seconds
Lethal Weapon 2	Arjen Rudd	Shot in head by Roger Murtaugh
Lethal Weapon 3	Jack Travis	Shot by Martin Riggs using armour piecing bullets
Lethal Weapon 4	Wah Sing Ku	In final showdown with Riggs, shot, stabbed and speared
The Lion King	Scar	Falling from great height into fire
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	The One Ring	Destroyed in the fires of Mount Doom (in The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King)
The Lord of the Ring: The Two Towers	The One Ring	Destroyed in the fires of Mount Doom (in The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King)
The Matrix	Agent Smith	Neo infiltrating his computer programme (this however only applies to this film, as Smith reappears in the two sequels as a rogue programme)
Men in Black	Edgar	Having swallowed Agent K whole, destroyed from inside
Men in Black II	Serleena	Reverts to alien form, shot and killed by Agents K and J with 'bigger' guns
Minority Report	Lamarr Burgess	Kills himself when realising his plans have failed
Mission: Impossible	Jim Phelps	Killed in helicopter crash in Channel tunnel
Mission: Impossible 2	Sean Ambrose	Killed by Ethan Hunt in climactic fight on beach
The Patriot	Colonel William Tavington	Speared by Benjamin Martin during climactic battle
Planet of the Apes	General Thade	Killed in final battle between apes and humans when Leo finds the truth
Ransom	Jimmy Shaker	Killed by Tom Mullens after final attempt to extort money
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	Sheriff of Nottingham	Killed in swordfight by Robin Hood after attempting to marry Maid Marian
The Rock	Captain Frye, Captain Farrow	One by rocket, the other by swallowing a vial of nerve agent
Rush Hour	Juntao	Falling from great height

Rush Hour 2	Ricky Tan	Falling from great height
Scream	Billy Loomis	Killed by Sidney Prescott
Scream 2	Mrs Loomis	Shot in the head by Sidney Prescott
Seven	John Doe	Killed by Detective Mills after Mills finds his wife's head in a box
Shrek	Lord Farquaard	Swallowed by a fire-breathing dragon
Signs	The Aliens	Defeated by their aversion to water
The Silence of the Lambs	Jaime Gumb	Shot by FBI agent Clarice Starling
Sleeping with the Enemy	Martin Burney	Killed by Laura Burney after breaking into her house
Speed	Howard Payne	Decapitated during climactic fight with Jack Traven on top of a moving train
Spider-Man	The Green Goblin	Speared by his own rocket sled
The Sum of All Fears	Dressler	Assassinated
Tarzan	Clayton	Falls into burning forest
Terminator 2: Judgment Day	T-1000	Melted in iron furnace
Tomorrow Never Dies	Elliott Carver	Killed in whirling blades of boring machine/torpedo
Total Recall	Cohaagen	Sucked out into Martian atmosphere and head bursts
True Lies	Salim Abu Aziz	Hooked on missile, fired at henchmen in a helicopter
Unforgiven	Little Bob	Shot by William Munny
What Lies Beneath	Norman Spencer	Drowned
Wild Wild West	Arliss Loveliss	Killed by James West in his walking machine
The World is Not Enough	Electra King	Shot in cold blood by James Bond
xXx	Yorgi	Shot by Xander Cage while unleashing his nerve agent upon the world

Table 5.8: Villains who are irredeemably evil, and the manner of their deaths.

Note 1: There is some ambiguity here with the identity of the villain split between Norman Osborn and his alter-ego, the Green Goblin. But despite the doubts of Osborn of what he is doing, there is no hope for him because his own greed brought out this side of his own evil personality that once released could not be suppressed by any other means than his death.

As can be seen in the table above, these narratives require that evil be destroyed, mere incarceration is inadequate. The One Ring can only be thrown into the fires of Mount Doom, the evil Russian submarine commander in The Hunt for Red October sunk (by his own torpedo as it happens), Korshunov thrown out of the back of a plane in Air

Force One (Wolfgang Petersen, 1997), the aliens of Independence Day obliterated by a computer virus that breaks down their defence systems allowing airborne forces to strike, and the aliens of Signs wiped out by water. Even in Disney cartoons, notably Frodo in the case of The Hunchback of Notre Dame and Scar in The Lion King (Roger Allers, Rob Minkoff, 1994), evil must be annihilated. (Interestingly, both Frodo and Scar meet their end by falling into fiery conflagrations.)

5.2.8: Codes of Evil 8 – An Evil History

Evil characters or entities have no history of ever being good, and no possibility of ever being good in the future. They are constructed as having always been evil, either specifically given a malevolent back story (as with Ricky Tan, the corrupt cop of Rush Hour 2 and Gustav Graves, the surgically altered Korean General of Die Another Day) or not given a history at all (to the extent that Jonathan Doe of Seven, to all intents and purposes, is not ‘born’ until five years before the events depicted in the film)¹⁰. There are no attempts to explain evil; in its omnipresence, evil exists absolutely. The table below shows those villains who are significant in having no history or an evil history.

<u>The Films</u>	<u>The Villains</u>	<u>The History</u>
Aladdin	Jafar	No history
Armageddon	The asteroid	No history
Austin Powers in Goldmember	Dr. Evil	A history of evil going back to boarding school (shown in flashback)
Back to the Future: Part 2	Biff Tannen	Given a history that alternates between various parallel universes
Basic Instinct	Catherine Trammell	It is hinted that Trammell killed her parents
Batman	Jack Napier/The Joker	Before his transformation into The Joker, Napier is a gangster
Batman Returns	The Penguin	The prologue to the film suggests that Penguin’s evil stems from his physical

		deformities occurring at birth
Big Momma's House	Lester Vesco	Vesco escapes from jail where he was serving time for a previous violence offence
Black Hawk Down	Mohamed Farah Aidid	No history
The Blair Witch Project	The Blair Witch	The student filmmakers initially go into the forest to investigate the centuries-old stories of the witch
Con Air	Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom	A previous history of violent crime for which he has been incarcerated
Die Another Day	Gustav Graves	A North Korean General before surgery transformed his looks
Die Hard with a Vengeance	Simon Gruber	Known as a terrorist
Eraser	US Marshall Deguerin	No history
Face/Off	Castor Troy	Kills the son of protagonist Sean Archer in the prologue, mention of other violent crimes
The Firm	Avery Tolar	Hints of previous lawyers 'disappearing' when asking too many questions
Ghostbusters II	Vigo the Carpathian	An evil figure resurrected from the dead
Godzilla	Godzilla's offspring	No history, born evil
GoldenEye	Trevelyan	Descended from the Cossacks, thus inherent evil implied
Gone in 60 Seconds	Raymond Calitri	No history, always known as evil
Hannibal	Hannibal Lecter	Always evil, flashback to cause of Mason Verger's horrific injuries years before
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Lord Voldemort	Always evil
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Lord Voldemort	Always evil
Hook	Captain Hook	Reference back to previous Peter Pan stories, so always evil
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	Frollo	No history
In the Line of Fire	Mitch Leary	Hints that Leary was trained by US government to carry out evil acts against other governments
Independence Day	The aliens	No history
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	Lestat	No history, always evil
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	The Illuminati	The Illuminati are an ancient order that has always had evil intent
Lethal Weapon 2	Arjen Rudd	Suggestion that, as South African, Rudd has always been evil (See Chapter Eight)

Lethal Weapon 3	Jack Travis	Crooked Cop
The Lion King	Scar	Always evil
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Sauron	Always evil (hence title of thesis, 'there is an evil [in Mordor], that never sleeps')
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Sauron	Always evil
The Matrix	The machines	Always evil (although qualified in The Animatrix)
Men in Black II	Serleena	Prologue set in 1950s suggests Serleena has always been evil
Mission: Impossible 2	Sean Ambrose	A rogue IMF agent. Suggestions made that Ambrose always had own interests in mind
Monsters, Inc.	Randall Boggs	As lizard, always evil
Ocean's Eleven	Terry Benedict	Mention made that Benedict is bad, suggesting that he has always been that way
101 Dalmatians	Cruella DeVil	No history
The Patriot	Colonel William Tavington	Mention made of Tavington's previous military endeavours
The Ring	Samara Morgan	Born evil, as soon as she arrived on Moesko Island, bad things began happening
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	The Sheriff of Nottingham	No history
The Rock	Frye and Farrow	No history
Rush Hour 2	Ricky Tan	Crooked cop
Scream 2	Mrs Loomis	The 'monstrous feminine', always evil
Seven	Jonathan Doe	Not only no history but specifically mentioned that no record can be found of the man prior to five years before the events of the film
Shrek	Lord Farquaad	No history
Signs	The aliens	No history
The Silence of the Lambs	Hannibal Lector	Always evil (Not referred to but related in the original novel 'Red Dragon')
Sleeping with the Enemy	Martin Burney	No history
Sleepy Hollow	The Headless Horseman	Evil history, and resurrected from the dead because of this
Spider-Man	Norman Osborn/The Green Goblin	Suggestion that Osborn suppressed his anger but when pushed too far it would, and does, surface
Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace	Senator Palpatine	Always a Lord of the Dark Side of the Force
The Sum of All Fears	Dressler	Specifically described as a Neo-Nazi
Terminator 2: Judgment Day	T-1000	Always evil, programmed that way
Tomorrow Never Dies	Elliott Carver	Hints at ruthless past

True Lies	Salim Abu Aziz	Always evil
Wild Wild West	Arliss Loveliss	No history
xXx	Yorgi	Always evil

Table 5.9: The evil history of the villain.

This is not to suggest that evil villains are not provided with motivations for their actions, but where intentions are displayed, these tend to be ciphers, socially constructed, thus easily recognisable, metaphors of evil, such as Rudd as South African (in the time of apartheid) in Lethal Weapon 2, the Orcs and Uruk-Hai as ugly and deformed in The Lord of the Rings, Russian ex-KGB agents in xXx, Randall Boggs as snake or lizard in Monsters, Inc., Salim Abu Aziz as Middle Eastern in True Lies, Mrs Loomis as aggrieved mother (a play on the ‘monstrous feminine’) in Scream 2 (Wes Craven, 1997), and the Penguin as deformed in Batman Returns (Tim Burton, 1992).

5.2.9: Codes of Evil 9 – The Selfishness of Evil

In this category evil exists to fuel its own desires while good works for the greater good of society. The evil act is used to further the villain’s own personal desires whereas the hero works for the greater good of society and thus acts selflessly. Selfishness is characteristic of evil as it opposes universal principles of the good. Even with the Nietzschean ‘Supermen’, such as James Bond, the good of society remains a clear by-product of their borderline evil acts. Commonly, this is represented by the hero saving the world, seeking justice (as opposed to revenge) for a previous wrong. In the table below, I list villains and their motivations for committing evil acts.

<u>The Films</u>	<u>The Villains</u>	<u>The Vice</u>
Aladdin	Jafar	Money
Back to the Future: Part 2	Biff Tanen	Money
Basic Instinct	Catherine Tramell	Sexual Power

Batman	Jack Napier/The Joker	Power
Big Momma's House	Lester Vesco	Money
Black Hawk Down	Mohamed Farrah Aidid	Political Power
The Bourne Identity	Alexander Conklin	Political Power
A Bug's Life	Hopper	Political Power
Chicken Run	Mrs. Tweedy	Money
Con Air	Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom	Egocentrism
Dick Tracy	Big Boy Caprice	Political Power
Die Another Day	Gustav Graves	Political Power
Die Hard 2	Colonel Stuart	Egocentrism
Die Hard with a Vengeance	Simon Gruber	Money
Face/Off	Castor Troy	Egocentrism
The Flintstones	Cliff Vandercave	Money
Ghost	Carl	Money
Gladiator	Commodus	Political Power
Gone in 60 Seconds	Raymond Calitri	Egocentrism
Hannibal	Hannibal Lecter	Egocentrism
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Lord Voldemort	Power
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Lord Voldemort	Power
Hook	Captain Hook	Egocentrism
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	Frollo	Lust
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade	Walter Donovan	Supernatural Power
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	Lestat	Egocentrism
Lethal Weapon 2	Arjen Ruud	Money
Lethal Weapon 3	Jack Travis	Money
The Lion King	Scar	Power
Minority Report	Lamarr Burgess	Political Power
Mission: Impossible 2	Sean Ambrose	Money
Ocean's Eleven	Terry Benedict	Money
101 Dalmatians	Cruella DeVil	Egocentrism
Planet of the Apes	General Thade	Political Power
Ransom	Jimmy Shaker	Money
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	Sheriff of Nottingham	Egocentrism
The Rock	Captain Frye, Captain Farrow	Money
Rush Hour	Juntao	Money
Rush Hour 2	Ricky Tan	Money
Scream	Billy Loomis	Egocentrism
The Silence of the Lambs	Hannibal Lecter	Egocentrism
Sleeping with the Enemy	Martin Burney	Egocentrism

Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace	Emperor Palpatine	Political Power
Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones	Emperor Palpatine	Political Power
The Sum of All Fears	Dressler	Egocentrism
Tomorrow Never Dies	Elliott Carver	Egocentrism
Total Recall	Cohaagen	Political Power
What Lies Beneath	Norman Spencer	Lust
Wild Wild West	Arliss Loveliss	Egocentrism
The World is Not Enough	Electra King	Egocentrism
xXx	Yorgi	Money

Table 5.10: Villains driven by self-love.

As can be seen in the above table, the common root of this form of evil is the selfish quest for wealth or power. I have omitted from this table instances where revenge motivates the villain even though wealth or power may be a direct consequence. The righting of a perceived wrong, against either another individual or against society, is a motive in itself, as described above, and is not primarily connected with self-love as a root cause. If the acquisition of wealth or power by the individual is the primary motivation, and it is manifested in the breaking of moral boundaries in order to acquire them, then it is relevant to speak of selfishness as the cause of evil.

I have also included those films where egocentrism is the primary driver of the villain. This is largely akin to Nietzsche's concept of the individual who acts beyond good and evil, but also includes those, such as Billy Loomis in Scream, that act in evil ways simply because they can. Largely, these characters have already achieved a certain position within society, so the further acquisition of wealth, power or even status as serial killer is irrelevant. Instead, these characters are determined by who they are and the internal desire to remain that way (as I stated earlier, evil is irredeemable, so evil characters will always remain evil).

The one exception to self-love as marker of evil is when the motivating factor is the villain's own survival. If they are taking a certain action and the only reason for this action is self preservation, then the action is not necessarily evil. When this action goes beyond mere survival and thus becomes self-love, then it becomes evil. A clear example of this occurs in Godzilla. The creature of the title is the antagonist but its actions are revealed to be not some causeless rampage against the human race, but motivated by the survival of its species. It does what it does, inflicting damage on skyscrapers and squashing dozens of New Yorkers, based purely upon an instinct to survive that all animals possess. Its natural instinct is to find a suitable place to procreate and this is the extent of its actions. On the other hand, its offspring, hatching within a large nest inside New York's Madison Square Gardens, clearly do show evil tendencies, specifically when coupled with the earlier rule of the application of logic and reason. The younger dinosaurs are constructed as clearly malicious and more intelligent creatures than their parent. By malevolently hunting in packs, these creatures kill for the sheer fun of it, so overstepping the line and becoming evil.

5.2.10: Codes of Evil 10 – The Influence of Evil, and Evil as Test

Evil is influential, pulling in those around it. Evil becomes attractive through appeals to personalised hedonistic or visceral pleasures, as opposed to a moralistic and dutiful appeal to do good, based on a combined rational and emotional logic. This allows for the main characters to sway between personal gain and societal good, but also allows the evil villain to appeal to others to assist them in their cause. This refers directly back to the negative pole of evil I described earlier (see Table 5.1) in which a specific object within a film represents the focus of evil and draws weak-minded and unsure

individuals towards it to do its bidding. This influence of evil references the Judeo-Christian traditions of evil in that good and evil are opposite forces in the world and that the individual has the freedom of choice as to which path they will ultimately follow. The tables below provide details of villains and heroes and the temptations offered that either influence or test the characters.

<u>Film</u>	<u>Villain</u>	<u>The Temptation</u>
Air Force One	Ivan Korshunov	Ideology
Aladdin	Jafar	Wealth
Back to the Future: Part 2	Biff Tannen	Hedonistic pleasure (casinos)
Basic Instinct	Catherine Trammell	Sexual pleasure
Dick Tracy	Big Boy Caprice	Hedonistic pleasure (gambling, prostitution, illicit booze)
Die Hard with a Vengeance	Simon Gruber	Wealth
Enemy of the State	Thomas Reynolds	Political power
Eraser	U.S. Marshall Deguerin	Wealth
Ghost	Carl Bruner	Wealth
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	Lord Voldermort	Power
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Lord Voldemort	Power
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade	Walter Donovan	Immortality
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	Lestat	Immortality, hedonistic pleasure
Lethal Weapon 2	Arjen Rudd	Wealth
The Lion King	Scar	Wealth (food, shelter)
Mission: Impossible 2	Sean Ambrose	Wealth
Ocean's Eleven	Terry Benedict	Hedonistic pleasure (gambling, wealth, women)
The Rock	Colonel Hummel	Righting a perceived wrong
What Lies Beneath	Norman Spencer	Sexual pleasure
xXx	Yorgi	Sexual pleasure

Table 5.11: The villain and their influences.

<u>Film</u>	<u>Hero</u>	<u>The Test</u>
Aladdin	Aladdin	Wealth
Armageddon	Harry Stamper	Self-sacrifice
Basic Instinct	Nick Curran	Sexual pleasure
Batman	Batman/Bruce Wayne	Revenge
Dick Tracy	Dick Tracy	Sexual pleasure
Die Another Day	James Bond	Hedonistic pleasure (women, violence)
The Firm	Mitch McDeere	Partner in a successful law firm
Jumanji	The players	Sacrifice
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	Louis	Immortality
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	Lara Croft	Immortality, power
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Boromir, Galadriel, Gandalf, Bilbo Baggins, Frodo	The One Ring (power)
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	Gollum, Frodo, Faramir	The One Ring (power)
The Mask	Stanley Ipkiss	Hedonistic pleasure
The Matrix	The human race	Unaware compliance, life, comfort
Minority Report	John Anderton	Revenge
The Perfect Storm	The crew of the Andrea Gail	Lack of fish, accidents, the storm
The Prince of Egypt	Moses	Faith, saving his people
Saving Private Ryan	Captain John Miller	Remaining good in a time of evil
Seven	Detective Mills	Revenge
Spider-Man	Spider-Man/Peter Parker	Guilt
Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace	Anakin Skywalker	Power (of the dark side)
Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones	Anakin Skywalker	Power (of the dark side)
Tomorrow Never Dies	James Bond	Hedonistic pleasure (women, violence)
Unforgiven	William Munny	Violence
The World is Not Enough	James Bond	Hedonistic pleasure (women, violence)

Table 5.12: Heroes and their tests.

One key example, the misogynistic xXx offers the lure of sex as enticement towards evil. Yorgi's gang of villains is strongly masculine and women exist in his world merely as sexual playthings. At the club where Yorgi and hero Xander Cage first

meet, Yorgi bestows his trust on Xander by bringing on a group of women to kick-start a party. Their command to enter, 'Come bitches', strongly signifies the placement of these women as providers of masculine pleasure. This is emphasised when Xander returns to Yorgi's castle to find more bikini-clad women in a large hot tub literally waiting to be plucked by the returning men. Xander cannot resist the temptation offered, availing himself of the woman he finds pole-dancing in the bedroom he has been shown to. To Yorgi's men, the wealth offered by the lure, or test, of evil is not based on money or possessions (one character uses priceless vases found in the castle as skittles) but the pure physicality of sexual pleasure and excess. The link between evil and loveless bodily pleasure is explicit.

In a variation of this narrative code, the protagonist may have to confront evil as a kind of test to determine how good they are; Harry Stamper must sacrifice himself to save the world in Armageddon, the kids must continue to play the game in Jumanji and Peter Parker has to work through his guilt at the death of his uncle (and his reaction to the robber who killed him) in Spider-Man, to name just three examples. Good therefore requires some form of self-sacrifice in order for one to be redeemed. The table above shows the kinds of sacrifices heroes make in order to protect the good. The chart also details the protagonists who succumb to the temptations offered (such as Detective Mills in Seven), as well as the ambiguities in this narrative code. For example, Dick Tracy resists hedonistic pleasures in order to protect the good while James Bond embraces it to the same effect.

In The Lord of the Rings, several key characters are directly or indirectly challenged by the temptations of evil, and the conclusion is largely premised on where the

individual stories of these characters end. Aragorn, the king-in-waiting, only rises to the challenge of his position after Sauron unleashes evil upon Middle-Earth. Gandalf is not tempted by evil per se – he immediately rebuts Saruman’s offer to join him – but by facing evil directly through the encounter with the Balrog in the Mines of Moria, he is ‘rewarded’ by the elevation of his status from grey wizard to white. Despite their recklessness, the hobbits, Merry and Pippin, develop across the trilogy towards a mature, if still not intelligent, response to evil. Boromir, on the other hand, fails the test, his temptation towards the One-Ring becoming too great. For the sake of the narrative, he must fall, but in sacrificing himself, his noble death allows a large measure of redemption. Boromir’s brother Faramir, is later similarly tested, but proves his worth by letting Frodo and Sam continue their quest to destroy the ring. As ring-bearer, the testing of Frodo is ultimately ambivalent. When the time comes to destroy the ring, dropping it into the fires of Mount Doom, he cannot do it. It is only in the struggle for the ring with Gollum that it surreptitiously but finally falls. Despite his position as hero within the narrative, Frodo’s stature is tenuous, as effectively he has also failed the test. Like Boromir, Frodo must also fall, and he does so in the final coda when, with Bilbo Baggins and Gandalf, he is carried away by Elven ships into the west. This makes the final shot of the trilogy – Samwise Gamgee entering his hobbit-hole with his family – extremely important. The true hero of the story gets to live happily ever after. This suggests that good is sociable (as well as social), while evil is alone, even when surrounded by henchmen. (Although this latter is not true when evil occurs within a nest, as with the aliens of Independence Day or the offspring of Godzilla in the Madison Square Garden climax.)

In The Perfect Storm, Seven and Unforgiven, key characters also fail the test. In each case, the crew of the Andrea Gail, Detective Mills, and William Munny respectively, all descend into a kind of hell from which they do not return. The fishermen of the first film are faced with a string of mishaps before the climactic storm, from the lack of fish caught, Dale 'Murph' Murphy (John C. Reilly) being hooked through the hand and dragged into the sea, to the breakdown of the refrigeration unit. In tracking down the killer, John Doe, Mills manages to keep it together despite the horrors he witnesses, but cracks under the final test; discovering the severed head of his wife in a cardboard box, he is compelled him to shoot Doe in cold blood. William Munny's fate is less clear, with a final voiceover suggesting that he may have been reunited with his children and lived a quiet and happy life. But this is not determined. In many respects, Unforgiven represents a world that is similar to that of Seven. That is, the world is an evil place and it is difficult not to succumb to the darkness within the hearts of man and country. But there is one crucial difference, Unforgiven is a paean to a time that is passing, whereas the old can succumb but the young need not do so. The young impetuous killer, The Schofield Kid (Jaimz Woolvett), once having killed, vows never to do so again whereas the old killer, Munny, knows that he cannot escape his violent past and that he cannot change. He succumbs to what he always was, knowing that he cannot be anything different. The life of family and domesticity in which we first saw Munny merely suppressed his evil instincts rather than cast them out. In the ambivalent conclusion, when Munny simply disappears after he has killed Little Bob (Gene Hackman), there is hope that the new world can be better than the old one. In Seven, the impetuosity of youth is overcome by evil and there is no apparent hope left for either Mills or the world.

More often than not, in the quest to defeat evil, the happy ending prevails and the protagonist passes the test and in several cases mimicking the biblical story of Job, concludes with greater riches than they began. Aladdin, a street urchin, defeats Jafar and is rewarded with a beautiful princess and sultanate. In Double Jeopardy, Libby Parsons (Ashley Judd) defeats the husband who had framed her for murder and, presumably, inherits his wealth. While in Chicken Run, the chickens escape from the Tweedy farm and find paradise, a bird sanctuary.

5.3: The Postmodern Collapse of Evil

This chapter has codified the significant narrative conventions that are used in contemporary constructions of cinematic evil, and I have argued elsewhere in this thesis that these codes are more relevant than markers that identify villains as belonging to specific social, cultural or ethnic groups. In Chapters Eight and Nine I will examine how the postmodern collapse of moral value systems informs the constructions of cinematic evil. However some introduction is required here because semiotic codes no longer function flawlessly in postmodern blockbusters. Primarily, the postmodern construction of cinematic evil is rooted in the creation of a visual aesthetic that allows it to be recognised as unambiguously evil, but also as unfixed on any specific understanding of what evil may be. These codes engage with the spectacle of evil, in that they provide a referential means of recognising a specific form of evil within a specific film while minimising exposition. Since obviously not all of these codes apply to every villain in all of these films, filmmakers must choose which of these versions (or which combinations of codes) they will use to enhance the affective power of their entertainments. As I explained in Chapter Four, there is no singular definition of evil, but in a pluralist, postmodern society, filmmakers can

engage with multiple discourses of evil. While each may be significantly different, none are 'wrong', thus the Kantian monster, the Manichean battle between light and dark, and the Arendtian banality of evil, to name just three paradigms of evil, all compete for screen space not only between films but also within them. For example, as a result of the double demand for a credible representation of the Somalian civil war in Black Hawk Down, which nonetheless gave off a tangible whiff of evil, the primary villain remained unseen. The Arendtian concept of evil as duty, as represented by Atto, one of Aidid's generals, sits easily alongside the Kantian monster which always lurks just outside the frame.

5.4: Conclusion

Cinematic evil is constructed according to codes that recapitulate a multitude of beliefs about evil. Evil can be a symptom of the psychological darkness of the individual soul, or it may be the nature of the world. Likewise, the world may be inherently evil, or inherently good, or it may be the neutral battleground on which the forces of good and evil go to war. Similarly, people may succumb to the temptation of evil, in the form of wealth, political or social power or sexual pleasure, they may be driven by their own internal or external demons, or there may exist some Other that threatens to destroy the natural or social order from outside. That the creature Godzilla is acting on instinct and is thus not evil suggests that evil is in itself artificial or unnatural. This explains the innocence of instinct as well as the kind of impious behaviour of the mad scientist, such as Magneto, the Green Goblin, and the Joker. The markers or codes defined in this chapter go some way towards engaging with the ways in which the contemporary commercial cinema grapples with these various forms of evil, and effectively naturalises each within the cinematic discourse.

This chapter, based on a close content analysis of the films in the sample, has been largely descriptive but has also delineated the ways in which, at least in a narrative sense, evil is implied in contemporary commercial cinema. It is important to reiterate that these depictions are largely driven by basic discursive practices, based on theological, philosophical and postmodern paradigms of evil, centred upon the dichotomous relationship between good and evil. But within this basic structure, as defined by the positive and negative poles, ambiguities in the definition of evil emerge. Typically the primary villain remains the centre of evil in those films where evil exists, but the protagonist must tread a path between the temptations of evil and upholding the social good, even when one may directly impact upon the other. This suggests that cinematic evil is an active force, constantly striving to sway the individual towards the immoral, whereas good is passive and is based on the choices that the individual must make in life.

It must be stressed that these codes do not locate evil in any one social group. While there clearly remains a strong fear of the Other in American film, this other is either defined indistinctly, or, even across the sample, in insufficient numbers to constitute a meaningful trend. This tends to suggest that films contend that the world is generically a dangerous place. Rather than specifically identifying the enemy, they display a general malaise or paranoia that evil may emerge at any time in any place (discussed more fully in Chapters Eight and Nine). Evil is immoral and anti-social, but cinema also constructs evil as attractive and pleasurable. This attraction emerges from the visual construction of evil, which alludes to Baudrillard's argument that, as

image, evil is a concept that no longer has meaning. In the next chapter I will provide my analysis on how evil is constructed visually.

¹ Morrow, Lance, (2003), Evil: An Investigation, Basic Books, New York, p. 16.

² Notwithstanding some ambiguity to allow for the possibility of a sequel, nine films, including Seven, conclude without the clear defeat of evil. These are; Black Hawk Down, The Blair Witch Project, Dances with Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990), Interview with the Vampire, The Perfect Storm, The Ring, and Traffic. I also include Basic Instinct in this list. While the film is unclear in identifying the killer, director Paul Verhoeven states in his DVD commentary that Catherine Trammell is unquestionably the murderer.

³ There has, to date, been one exception to this, in that a single object is both the positive and negative pole. This will be detailed later.

⁴ Although it was released in 1977, before the period analysed in this research, the original movie in the saga – renamed Episode IV – A New Hope – enters the sample on the basis of its 1997 re-release in which it made \$US 138.5 million at the North American box office.

⁵ At one point, Marilyn Lovell, the wife of astronaut, Jim, loses her wedding ring down the plughole while taking a shower. This is directly alluded to as a sign of bad luck. Later, Jim's car stalls inexplicably. 'Second time it's done that', he says. Reference is also made to the 'unlucky' number 13; not only in the designation of the spacecraft, but also the reporter who asks the astronauts before they blast off, 'the number 13 doesn't bother you?', referring to the launch time scheduled at 13:13 (1:13pm on the 24-hour clock). These references to the tempting of fate are not strong but neither are they subtle.

⁶ This documentary is entitled The Art of War and can be found on the DVD release of Saving Private Ryan.

⁷ Harris, Craig (1994), 'To prove a villain – the Elizabethan villain as revenger', Craigswweb, <http://www.craigswweb.com/villain.htm>

⁸ Harris.

⁹ Spider-Man battles the robber in an abandoned warehouse. The robber trips on a broken pipe protruding through the floor, and falls backwards to his death through a window. The Green Goblin is killed by his own rocket-sled, which Spider-Man narrowly avoids as it races towards him.

¹⁰ One film that breaks these cinematic conventions of evil, but is all the more confusing for it, is The Mummy. In the prologue, Imhotep is shown to be in love with the Pharaoh's wife, and once resurrected wants nothing more than to be reunited with her. While he does nasty things, ripping eyes out of his hapless victims, unleashing a plague of flies, Imhotep is not necessarily constructed as evil. Evil does exist in the film, but the origin of it is unknown. Because there is a curse on the tomb of Imhotep, there appears to be some higher power at play that enacts the curse once it has been opened, thus the fire raining from the skies, the water turning to blood, even Imhotep himself, are manifestations of this. It is feasible to suggest that the evildoer is God himself, as, just as in the Biblical story of Moses, humankind is being punished for its sins. After all, it is only sin, notably greed, which can compel humankind to open the tomb.

Chapter Six: The Visual Aesthetic of Evil

6.1: Introduction

In this chapter I will describe, continuing the shift from content to semiotic analysis (and leading to a thematic analytical interpretation), how evil is constructed and enveloped as cinematic spectacle, and how cinema visually constructs evil as attraction using various cinematic processes. Cinematic evil maintains a kind of double movement, having to be simultaneously repulsive and attractive. Thus the mutual interweaving of social and cinematic forms of evil is crucial in the development of my argument towards the postmodern collapse as symbolised by a cinema of paranoia and malaise. As I explained in the last chapter, representations of evil appear through the use of common narrative codes that emphasise the paradigms of evil defined by one or more of the theorists discussed in Chapter Four, but using these as pastiche rather than message. In this chapter, I move beyond narrative constructions of evil towards its visual construction. Narrative is important to provide a necessary context for cinematic evil, but narrative is assisted and surpassed by visual markers that both add to the construction of evil and directly inform its attractive qualities.

In the conflation of spectacle and narrative, the attractiveness of evil in Hollywood cinema becomes crucial. Each plays on the other to engage with particular forms of evil that may be founded on traditional definitions of evil, but also to divest it of any deeper meaning. Commercial cinema acts as an address without a message, hinting at the possible depthlessness of the image. What commercial cinema offers are simulacra, or iconic images, of evil that are bereft of their original meaning, while

offering resonance within the experience offered. Hollywood evil can emerge from the darkest parts of the human psyche, and engage such socially taboo emotions as sexual predation, murder, rage, and other excesses. And yet the transgression of such taboos is commodified in Hollywood, converted into products which also pass the standard test of popularity. This double movement of evil is conflated within an image-based construction of evil that emphasises energy and excess, specifically in the excessiveness of filmic violence. I will examine the use of violence in the construction of evil in the next chapter, but it is important to note here how the spectacle of violence is central in this construction. All of the visual codes defined below link violence directly or indirectly to the construction of cinematic evil.

The spectacular manifestation of evil contributes to the production, distribution and exhibition of a large proportion of popular films. Because these films have achieved success at the box office, it is apparent that audiences want to see spectacular images that display the effects of evil, and stories that, largely, promote its defeat. Unsurprisingly, this basic contradiction leads to others. For example, the Hollywood production system is unable to cope with Arendt's idea of the social formations of evil, indicating a deficiency of mechanisms within the Hollywood production system. That is, on the one hand Arendt argued that evil could arise from within social and legal discursive patterns such that whole societies may comply with immoral actions and ideologies. But on the other, Hollywood does not and indeed cannot question these social formations of evil, instead shifting the blame for evil to other influences; the Other (at least in terms of the representation of the villain. See Appendix B), the betrayal of patriotic values, the conspiracy, to name just three. As we will see, such contradictions are integral to the presentation of evil in the sample films.

I emphasise again that, while I refer to the experience offered by the film, I refer not to audience response but to the decisions made at the time of production that attempt to enhance this experience. I will look first at the cinema of engulfment before analysing how Die Hard 2 offers multiple concepts of evil and its attraction. I will then analyse some of the key production techniques that assist in the cinematic construction of evil, primarily the use of the camera and framing, point-of-view, sound, colour, visual metaphors of hell, and, leading into Chapter Seven, touching upon the excessiveness of violence. This description of visual codes of evil is not exhaustive as the sample is too large to provide a close analysis of all films and all codes. Nevertheless, a summary of the common visual codes is necessary to pinpoint the loss of specificity between the paradigms of evil defined in Chapter Four and the cinematic image, which can then directly engage with the postmodern cinema of paranoia and malaise.

6.2: The Cinema of Engulfment

To understand how evil is used instrumentally in the fabrication of the feature film is to understand how evil is defined absolutely by spectacle, and how this, in many cases, defines the essence of the experience itself. That is, the visual aesthetic characterises evil, even if it does not give it meaning, and is used to entice audiences and to thrill them. In the case of Die Hard 2, as I will describe below, the villain is constructed as a bad character by a narrative structure that hints at the codes of evil described in the last chapter, but he is finally confirmed as evil by the excessiveness of a specific, spectacularly violent act. This act, the deliberate crashing of a fully laden passenger jet, is set up to produce a particular visceral and emotional response

in the audience. The sequence both highlights the intensity of absolute evil and provides the type of spectacle that the viewer expects on seeing a film such as this.

The complicity of the audience with the kinds of spectacular violence on display is best described in Thomas Elsaesser's theory of engulfment, described in Chapter Three (see pp. 80-81). Importantly, Elsaesser limits the mode of 'engulfment' to the contribution of aural landscapes. However, Angela Ndalanian argues that the shift towards a neo-baroque cinema accentuates the totality of the experience of a film:

The (neo-)baroque complicates classical spatial relations through the suggestion of the collapse of the representational form. Rather than relying on static, stable viewpoints controlled and enclosed by the limits of the frame, the (neo-)baroque highlights the theatrical, spatially invasive nature of representation, dynamically engaging the audience in what Deleuze has characterised as 'architectures of vision'. He suggests (via Michel Serres) that the baroque offers architectures of vision that situate the viewer in a spatial relationship to the representation. Rather than providing a statically ordered perspectival arrangement, the center continually shifts, the result being the articulation of complex spatial conditions.¹

Peter Jackson's constantly moving camera in The Lord of the Rings trilogy provides an excellent example of this. On several occasions in The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001), the camera rises up to the top of the tower of Isengard before plunging down into the caverns beneath the earth where Saruman's army is

being forged. This breaks the boundaries of the image by effectively immersing the audience *into* the image. That is, by using the moving camera rather than editing cuts to move from one space to the next, the audience remains aware of what has slid outside the field of vision (the screen frame). Thus the audience has become situated in relation to the off-screen space. As the audience plunges into the caverns of Isengard, they are aware that the tower is located ‘above’ them, the fires of the forges below, the armies of Urak-Hai behind them, and so on. All the while, the audience is also cognisant of the ‘theatricality’ of the image and the exemplary technological achievement that constructed the shot(s). The pleasure derived from the sequence is therefore from immersion or engulfment in the film experience, as well as complicity in enjoying the film *as* film. In addition, as Elsaesser suggests, contemporary sound systems place the audience at the centre of the film’s auditory space, and cinematic evil is further enhanced through the manipulation of this sound-scape. This is typically accomplished by accompanying visual evil with lower-pitched sounds, the use of unnatural and manipulated sounds, and the villain tending to speak more slowly (as I will explain fully below).

The image becomes crucial in commercial cinema in its construction of evil. Narratives are still informed by the paradigms of evil discussed in Chapter Four, but the image, and spectacle in particular, enhances the experience of evil. Through engulfment in the image, evil is exemplified and affects the complicity of the audience in the act. That is, the image becomes the primary signifier of how evil the villain may be, and at the same time provides the kind of experience that audiences expect.

6.3: Die Hard 2

Die Hard 2 specifically uses the spectacular act to signify how evil the villain is. Filmmakers often tread a narrow path between the visual representation of evil through spectacle, the necessity for narrative explanation, and the excessiveness of the act of evil itself. For the villain to be constructed as evil the film must show him or her committing an act that is excessively violent (or in some cases threatening to commit an act that is excessively violent), but an act that cannot exceed parameters of acceptability that are specific to each film². Die Hard 2 sits on the margins of this boundary. It is excessively violent, but this violence is also overtly stylised so that it sits easily within a Bruce Willis action movie.

In order to secure the freedom of General Esperanza, a drug lord being transported to a U.S. jail, former marine, Colonel Stewart, takes command of Washington D.C.'s Dulles International Airport control tower functions rendering it completely helpless. After a failed attempt by John McClane (Bruce Willis) to retake the airport, Stewart demonstrates both his intent and his remorselessness; he brings down a fully laden passenger plane to a fiery crash on the tarmac. On the director's commentary on the DVD, Renny Harlin explains:

This sequence...was a target for much debate and disagreement. I felt very strongly that these terrorists had to do something *extremely* evil and horrendous in order to make their threat real. As terrible as it seems, I felt that they had to bring a plane down in order for us to believe that they are capable of doing this. It's not empty threats. This is a real situation, and the stakes are extremely

high. Fox executives were against this. They felt that it was something the audience could never recover from and just too gruesome to bring an entire plane filled with people down to the ground. I said, well, this is reality. It has happened. It happens in the world. In order to create these villains as the true evil we just had to go for it. Until the last moment the argument was that it should be an empty plane. It's a cargo plane. It doesn't have any people in it except for the pilot and I said, I don't believe that. I just don't think that that's going to ring true. And I guess therefore I got the reputation of having killed more people in one action movie than anybody else and I'm sorry to have that label but I felt it was important for this film. And until the last moment my agreement with the executives was that in case the audience – as you know these movies are tested before they come out – in case the audience feels that it's too much and they turn against it, we will then say, we will not show the interior of the plane. And we will actually say it was a cargo plane and it was empty. And I held to that opinion and we tested the movie and obviously the audience was very upset by that scene but at the same time that made them extremely upset with the villains. And the very simple belief that I have about these types of movies is that the more powerful your villain is, the more powerful your hero is³.

Renny Harlin argues that the sequence is specifically constructed to polarise the two primary characters definitively: the protagonist becomes more heroic if he or she

faces an antagonist who is absolutely evil. The scene cuts between four primary locations: firstly, McClane in the skywalk annex, secondly, the villain, Colonel Stewart, in his lair, third, the airport control tower, with the staff cognisant of the danger but powerless to act, and, finally, inside Windsor Flight 114, the plane brought down (See Fig. 6.1-6.4). The characters in the latter two locations are passive, either unaware or unable to act against the direct threat posed, leaving the action to centre on McClane and Stewart. In his alternative control tower, Stewart talks down the jet as if he were an aircraft controller. His transmissions are also heard by the actual control tower, and by McClane listening in on a portable radio. McClane tries to act, running on to the runway with two flaming torches, but in the swirling mists his warning comes too late and the plane plunges into the ground.



Fig. 6.1-6.4: Principle locations in the plane crash sequence (*Die Hard 2*). Top Left – The Control Tower, Top Right – Colonel Stewart, Bottom Left – McClane in the Skywalk Annex, Bottom Right – Inside Flight Windsor 114.

The power relationship between Stewart and McClane is represented largely by shot composition (with relative size within the frame of the characters as symbolic of this relationship). As he talks on the radio, Stewart is largely shown in close-up, still, composed, his face filling the frame (See Fig. 6.5). Key lighting darkens his face,

making his features look stark and angular (a feature Stewart, incidentally, shares with animated characters, such as Jafar of Aladdin), with points of light reflected in the eyes. (The villain of Mission Impossible 2 (John Woo, 2000), Sean Ambrose, is also represented in this fashion, thus suggesting that antagonists are commonly photographed with that evil glint in the eye.) McClane, on the other hand, is always frantic, always moving, and largely shown in medium-shot (thus he is smaller within the frame – see Fig. 6.6) and, in one crucial shot, as he stands on the runaway waving his torches forlornly into the sky, in long-shot (See Fig. 6.7). McClane is powerless in relation to Stewart's omnipotence. After the crash, Willis collapses in tears while Stewart smirks.



Fig. 6.5: Colonel Stewart talks down Flight 114 (Die Hard 2).



Fig. 6.6: McClane attempts to stop Stewart crashing Flight 114 (Die Hard 2).



Fig. 6.7: John McClane attempts to signal the danger to Flight 114 (Die Hard 2).

To further enhance the opposition between good and evil, two crucial shots are included in the sequence. First, before the plane crashes, we see the interior of its cabin, the camera tracks in to an older woman, a grandmother, as she asks the stewardess about the risks of landing in bad weather (as shown in Fig. 6.4). Later, after the plane has crashed, a long tracking shot follows fire engines and ambulances to the wreckage, closes on McClane standing on the tarmac, and cutting to a close-up of McClane reaching down towards a doll lying in the snow (Figs. 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10). The evil is displayed explicitly with the literal death of motherhood and innocence, between the grandmother presumably visiting family for Christmas when the film is set, and the child as symbolised by the toy.



Fig. 6.8: The beginning of the tracking shot of the Windsor Flight 114 crash site (Die Hard 2).



Fig. 6.9: Mid-tracking shot, the ambulances approach the crash site (Die Hard 2).



Fig. 6.10: McClane stops to pick up a doll from amidst the wreckage of Flight 114 (Die Hard 2).

The visual aesthetic of evil is highlighted in this sequence through the excessive violence that marks Colonel Stewart as not merely the villain but as evil. That is, Colonel Stewart's evil is not explained but shown. Evil is depicted not only by the excessiveness of the act, emphasised by the references to innocent victims, but also by framing which highlights, at that specific point in the narrative, the power relationship between Stewart and McClane. The sequence thus works on several different levels, including, crucially, the visceral. On a personal level, I remember seeing the film on its original theatrical release in 1990 and both marvelling at the audacity of the filmmakers in taking such an act to its worst conclusion, and feeling in the gut the

consequences of such a scene. While this was not the first action sequence in the film, it did shift the tone of the film from enjoyable action-adventure (as befitting a film starring Bruce Willis) to emphasising the connotations of cinematic evil. It primarily propelled the narrative, the spectacle, and the audience in unexpected directions. The visual aesthetic of evil concretises evil within the narrative structure of the film but without having to define it beyond the excessiveness of the visual.

6.4: The Cinematic Processes of Evil

The visual aesthetic of evil contributes to the experience offered by the film through the cinematic techniques that film-makers use to depict evil, such as lighting, colour symbolism, camera placement and movement, and sound effects. All of these elements, many hinted at in the analysis of the plane crash sequence from Die Hard 2, contribute to the construction of the villain and evil, no matter what narrative themes may be present, and can be found across different cycles and types of film. For example, the shot from the point of view of the villain (commonly characterised by the use of hand-held cameras or steadicams) is a common convention of the horror genre⁴ but has also been used in films as diverse as Armageddon, Twister, and Enemy of the State (I will analyse this further below).

If we are to fully analyse cinematic evil as a specific visual aesthetic we must move beyond the narrative conventions of evil analysed in the last chapter towards the visual and the technical. As we saw with Die Hard 2, the construction of cinematic evil as developed by narrative is assisted by visual markers that can move beyond narrative codes. I will look here at specific instances of camera movement and framing (specifically point-of-view shots), sound effects, colour symbolism and

religious allusions and how they contribute to cinematic constructions of evil. In the following table I have listed major examples from the films in my sample of each of these codes, and how they delineate the presence of evil through visual means.

	<u>Camera Movement /Framing</u>	<u>POV</u>	<u>Sound</u>	<u>Colour</u>	<u>Religious Allusions</u>
Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls	Camera circles Ace when he sees the animal heads mounted on the wall. He is confronted by evil.				
Air Force One		The long steadicam shot as Marshall tries to find somewhere to hide.			
Aladdin	When Jafar is first seen, and a narrator mentions that, 'a dark man waits with a dark purpose', his eyes are glowing bright. Later, after acquiring the powers of a genie, the image compares him with the devil, especially his hat which appear as horns.				The snake Jafar turns into at the climax.
Armageddon		Constant POVs of Earth from asteroid.	The deep rumbling soundscape of the asteroid.		The hellish surface of the asteroid.
Batman			The maniacal laugh of The Joker. The hissing sound as Joker calls	Green – The contents of the vat Jack Napier falls into.	The nightmarish cityscape

			Bob his right-hand man, and on Brand X ad.		
Batman and Robin				Green – representing both nature and envy (Poison Ivy).	
Batman Forever	Death symbolised by circles, The Grayson's bodies lie within the circle of a circus ring, while, in flashback, the parents of Bruce Wayne lie within a circle painted on the sidewalk.		When the Riddler, states, 'If knowledge is power, then a god am I', the final syllable is enhanced and becomes a deep bass rumbling.		
A Beautiful Mind	The circling camera as Nash's brain is working, and particularly when he is hallucinating				
The Blair Witch Project	From Night 4, at several points the screen goes completely black.	POV from the protagonists. Significant in that they do not see anything.	Lots of banging and thrashing in the bush, hard to determine the cause, also mention of 'a cackling', later, sounds of children.		The Manichean light and dark, day and night.
The Bodyguard				Black – the assassin drives a black SUV.	
A Bug's Life			The grasshoppers' first appearance is heralded by the drone of their wings.		
Chicken Run	Mrs Tweedy is introduced				

	with a shot only of her gumboots walking through the chicken yard.				
City Slickers	A play on images of cinematic evil; the camera tracks on Curly ending in close-up on face as he turns to camera (similar to shot on Mola Ram in Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom).		Everytime Curly appears on screen, he is accompanied by a sinister western-style music score. Curly also has a gruff voice.		
Clear and Present Danger	The camera circles around Escobedo when he hears the helicopters dropping off the Marine incursion squad.				
Con Air	Slow motion shots of first views of villains embarking on to aircraft.	From Greene's POV of little girl, the camera skews suggesting malicious intent.			The junkyard as hell.
Dick Tracy			Big Boy Caprice's rasping voice.		
Die Hard 2	The tracking shot after the plane crash ending on McClane picking up the toy of a murdered child.				
Die Hard with a Vengeance	When child states to McClane, 'you could	Simon looks over the Wall Street area from his high			

	steal city hall', the camera circles around him ending on close-up of face Size differentials – all bad guys in lift are bigger than McClane, McClane follows huge dump-trucks in small car, when McClane gets a truck this is engulfed by massive wall of water.	vantage point.			
Enemy of the State		The surveillance footage as the eyes of the villain.			
Eraser				Green – the electro-magnetic pulse rifles beam of light is green.	
Erin Brockovich	The Pacific Gas and Electric plant is only ever seen from a distance – it remains faceless.				
The Firm				Green – the tinge on the skin of the killers as they kill Lomax.	
The Fugitive				Green – Kimble meets Nichols at sports club. Nichols face is momentarily lit by a green traffic light Green lights behind	

				Nichols the Marshals visit him in his office.	
Ghostbusters II				Red – when Janosz arrives at Dana’s apartment, he stands bathed in red light.	
Gladiator	Commodus and the model of the Colosseum, he looks over it as if omnipotent.	Maximus first enters the coliseum, the camera circling around him.	Groaning sound, similar to Ghost, when soldiers arrive to kill Maximus’ wife and son.	Particularly in costume and set design, colour palette changes from reds and maroons in early sequences to blues and greens.	The afterlife
Godzilla			The reptilian sounds.		
Gone in 60 Seconds	Opening credit sequence – montage of memories in childhood bedroom, including toy devils and saints.			Green – this toning is often used when villains are on-screen.	The credit sequence with images of toys saints and devils. Calitri’s hellish scrap metal yard.
Hannibal	When Pazzi talks to Lecter, the camera looks up at Lecter but down a Pazzi, a power relationship.		The slow melodious voice of Lecter.		
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	When Harry first hears the snakes’ voice, the image tilts.		Lucius Malfoy’s slow melodious voice. Slithering voice of the snake saying ‘kill, kill, kill’.		
Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone				Green – the house colours for the villain Slytherin is green.	

Home Alone	When Kevin wishes his family to disappear, cut to shot of clouds covering moon, and the rise of a wind through trees that leads to tree branch hitting transformer, cutting off power.		The sound of the furnace, which to a child makes it sound malevolent.		
Home Alone 2: Lost in New York	Similar to first film, the moon covered by clouds.				
Hook	When evil makes an appearance in Peter Banning's house in London, the camera tilts, as it does in later sequences in Hook's lair.		Matching the first appearance of evil, the soundtrack has wind effects, string instruments, and bass trumpets		
The Hunchback of Notre Dame				Black and White – shadows as symbol of evil (e.g. 'Hellfire' song), heavenly beams of light in the cathedral.	The song, 'hellfire' and constant images of flames.
The Hunt for Red October				Green – Tupolev, Russian submarine commander, bathed in green light.	
In the Line of Fire	Circular tracking motion when evil is enacted – when Leary pops the balloons and Horrigan		Leary speaks slowly and purposefully.		

	believes a gun has been fired.				
Independence Day			The sound of the alien fighter craft sounds animalistic	Green – when the alien ships open up in readiness to fire their weapons, the light that emanates is green, likewise the beams that the alien fighter ships fire, and the interior of the alien mother ship.	The aliens destroy cities with a wall of fire.
Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles	The camera lingers on the neck of Yvette, turning her into an object of desire.			Green – seen in the eyes.	The Christ-like pose of the Paris sacrificial victim.
Jumanji			Low rumble in haunted forest at the beginning of the film.	Green – the messages in the board game come up in green text.	
Jurassic Park			The film opens with deep bass rumbling, but a trick as its actually a forklift. The T-Rex sequence when we hear a deep bass throb.		
Jurassic Park III			The velociraptors communicating.		
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider	Landscape shot of Venice, dark grey clouds roll across skyline, speeded up.			Green – in the raid on Lara's house, the commandos, with their night-vision goggles, appear to have green	The Illuminati as a society protecting the spiritual

				eyes.	
Lethal Weapon 2	Camera tracks back as Rudd talks to one of his men about killing policemen.	POV of villains as they break into the Murtaugh household.			
Lethal Weapon 3	The shootout between Murtaugh and Darrell. Close-ups on Murtaugh suggest a claustrophobia.				The climax in the burning houses.
The Lion King			Scar has a deep slow voice.	Green – Scar has piercing green eyes. The hyenas lair is green.	
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	The moving camera traversing Saruman's lair.		The 'whooshing' and rumbling as Frodo enters ringspace. The animalistic scream of the Ringwraiths. The 'black speech' whispering of the ring.	Green – as the Ringwraiths leave their fortress, background lighting is green. When Galadriel succumbs to the temptations of the ring, she turns a shade of green.	
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers			The 'whosshing' and rumbling as Frodo enters Ring-space. The Ringwraiths on their steeds, the flapping of the wings creates a heavy and deep sound that resonates.		
The Lost World: Jurassic Park		The camera follows Eddie as he throws a rope around a tree trunk, through a	Attacks are preceded by ominous rumblings and wind-like sounds.		

		truck and over the edge POVs of various compys as they attack Dieter.			
The Matrix			Agent Smith's deliberately slow drawl.	Green – the tinge on image while in the artificial, constructed world.	
Maverick			Angel's throaty voice.		
The Mask			The throaty voice of the Damian/mask persona.	Green – the mask has a green tinge.	
Men in Black II				Red – Serleena's make-up stands in stark contrast to drabness of MIB HQ.	
Minority Report		The constant reference to the visions of the precogs.			
Mission: Impossible	The skewed angle of shots in villain's lairs.				
Mission: Impossible 2	Children as framing device. When doctor leaves Biocyte at beginning of film, a group of schoolchildren run, laughing, past him. In the epilogue, Ethan and Nyah are surrounded by masses of children in the park by the Sydney Opera House.			Green – when the doctor injects himself with the Chimera virus, he is bathed in green light. The Chimera bug itself is later shown to be green.	
The Mummy			The growling		The signs

			of evil.		of the apocalypse, fire raining down from the skies, the rivers turning blood red, and so on.
The Mummy Returns		POV of the pygmy mummies running through the jungle.	When Imhotep is resurrected, an animalistic growl appears on the soundtrack.		
101 Dalmatians	Cruella DeVil's first appearance, 9 shots in all, that shows her exiting a car outside her fashion house. Despite not showing her face, the character is fully realised as evil.		DeVil's maniacal laugh.		
The Patriot	Benjamin and Gabriel stand in an abandoned mansion. The camera tracks to look out the window to see a battle taking place. War encroaches the domestic.				The burning of the villagers in the church.
Pearl Harbor		Following the bomb down to the U.S.S. Arizona.			
The Pelican Brief	When Darby is followed into an elevator, the villain is identified by the eyes. The camera rises over shoulder of somebody				

	in foreground so we can see the eyes Later, the villains are lit from beneath.				
The Perfect Storm		The camera flying from space, through the storm and down to the Andrea Gail, battling heavy seas.	The rumbling sound within the storm-space.		
The Planet of the Apes	The opening credits – close-up of apes helmet, pans down to eyes.			Black – the blacker the ape nastier they are.	The credit sequence, apes linked with fire.
Pocahontas			The deep slow voice of the villain, Ratcliffe.		
Ransom	The final shot; the camera cranes up from the body of Jimmy Shaker, then in a couple of time-lapse cuts, the body has been removed and the blood is being hosed off, then a bus driving past. Evil recedes again only to surface once more later.				
Road to Perdition	The murder of John Rooney, the camera tracks around him in the rain while henchmen are cut down out of focus The killings by bad guys are displayed explicitly	The child-like view of the killing that sets up the narrative.	Sound – when Rooney is murdered all that is heard is the rain.		

	whereas Sullivan's murders are more abstract.				
Saving Private Ryan	The D-Day landings as documentary.	POV shots from German bunkers during D-Day landings.	The sounds of raindrops on leaves fades into gunfire.		The troop seek shelter in an abandoned church.
Scooby-Doo				Green – eyes of the possessed glow green, the green 'breath' that knocks out the heroes.	
Scream		The steadicam shots inside Sydney's fraternity house.	The ringing phone as a sign of the presence of evil, loud, penetrating.		
Scream 2		The use of steadicam following characters.			
Seven				Colour – a greenish tinge across most of film.	
Shrek	In the first appearance of Farquaad, a play on the stature of evil; the camera looks up at him until it is revealed that he is short in stature.				
Signs	Hero and villain separated by allusion to heaven and earth, low camera angles in cornfields when aliens are suspected to be there, high angle shots looking down on protagonists		The clicking sounds of the aliens.		The protagonist as a priest fallen from the faith.

	such as sequence with baby monitor.				
The Silence of the Lambs		Jaime Gumb with his night-vision goggles in the climax.	Breathing/his sing sound – extraction of moth from body, as camera closes on Lecter at airport.		The Christ- like pose of the security guard strung up by Lecter.
Sleeping with the Enemy	Martin Burney finds his wife, wearing long black coat he strides towards camera, surrounded by children playing, a stark juxtaposition.	Several key POV shots, particularly of Martin Burney looking through windows on Laura and her new boyfriend.	When Laura returns to her house, the foreboding is enhanced through a kind of breathy soundtrack.		
Speed	The angular frame when Payne leaves elevator in prologue.				
Spider-Man			The maniacal laugh of the Green Goblin.	Green – The Green Goblin, the green gas.	
Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope	Opening shot, size differential. The small blockade runner is run down by the massive star destroyer.				
The Sum of All Fears	Rapid edits prior to bomb blast, that show the victims before they are killed.		Wind sounds signal evil. Clark's raid on bomb- making area is accompanied by wind sounds, and prominent when Ryan emerges from the downed helicopter, no other diagetic sound.	Green – the Russian decommissio ning plant is green, the backdrop to Dressler's speech is green, and the post-nuclear blast shots are tinged green.	
Tarzan				Red and	

				White – the red of fire signals the death of the ship and when Clayton uses red flares to round up the gorillas. White as hope, as when father first sees the tree the house will be built in Green – The tiger's eyes glow green.	
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	When Shredder enters the boys' hideout, a high-angled shot shows his shadow spread out before him.				
Terminator 2: Judgment Day				Red – The machines have red eyes.	
A Time to Kill		POV of the man with a bomb approaching Jake Brigance's house.			
Tomorrow Never Dies		The television screens as eyes.			
Twister		The aerial shots that appear to track the main characters.	The growling sound when twister first appears or leaves.	Green – in dialogue, when twister is about to appear, sky is 'going green'.	
What Lies Beneath	The crane shot that appears to go through the floor.				

Table 6.1: Significant examples of the visual codes of evil. (Note: This table is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but to point out examples of image-based depictions of cinematic evil.)

6.4.1: Camera and Framing

As can be seen in the table above, the camera is used in specific ways to delineate the presence of evil, even if the villain is not on screen. These include the circling camera, the play on relative size of hero and villain, the track into or away from the villain, and the tilting camera.

The circling camera, when it revolves around a specific character, is largely used to identify the inner turmoil or confusion of that character at that particular moment. In classical cinema, the 180-degree rule maintains the audience's orientation. By breaking this rule, as the circling camera does, postclassical cinema (the neo-baroque cinema of engulfment) relies on the audience's ability to navigate the screen-space described through fluid camerawork, but also selectively disorients the viewer in order to emulate the confusion of the character. This technique was earlier common only in horror films and films in which characters underwent extreme psychological shifts, for example when drugged. In many cases in contemporary cinema, these psychological shifts occur as a direct result of the presence of evil so there is a kind of symbiotic relationship within the image between the two. In In the Line of Fire, the camera circles around Frank Horrigan as he calls for the President to be removed from an election rally because of what he thinks is a gun having been fired. The confusion largely stems from Horrigan's dose of the flu, but it is also revealed that Mitch Leary, the villain of the film, instigated the rush of events by deliberately popping a balloon. In Road to Perdition (Sam Mendes, 2002), the camera moves around mafia boss John Rooney while his henchmen are being slaughtered, out of focus, around him, and in Clear and Present Danger (Phillip Noyce, 1994), the roles are reversed when drug lord

Escobedo looks out from his veranda when he hears the helicopters in the distance dropping off an American incursion team charged with wiping him out. Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls (Steve Oedekerk, 1995) plays on this circling camera motif when the title character, an animal-loving private detective, enters a trophy room to see the walls covered with heads of various kills. The camera registers his inner horror at the evil that produced such a sight. In The Sum of All Fears (Phil Alden Robinson, 2002), editing is used to similar effect, when William Cabot (Morgan Freeman) becomes aware that a nuclear device is positioned in the Baltimore Stadium, where both he and the President are watching a football match. As he stands up to look around him, a quick series of shots of the people in the stadium effectively details the scale of death the bomb will cause when it goes off⁵. Abandoning the 180-degree rule, the circling shot is intended to disorient the viewer thus engulfing them in an emulation of the character's psychological state of mind.

The camera is often used to provide a physical relationship between hero and villain based on physical stature. I have already mentioned the former in relation to the sequence analysed above from Die Hard 2, but other examples of the technique include Die Hard with a Vengeance, Hannibal, Chicken Run, and Shrek (Andrew Adamson, Vicky Jensen, 2001). In the first example, John McClane has returned to the Federal Reserve Bank where he suspects a robbery is underway. As he enters the elevator that will take him underground, he is surrounded by the villain's henchmen disguised as security guards. Each of these henchmen is bigger within the frame than McClane, thus heightening the overwhelming threat of violence against him (See Fig. 6.11). In Hannibal, when Lecter talks to Inspector Pazzi after Lecter's presentation, the camera is placed slightly below Lecter, but slightly above Pazzi in reverse shots.

This has the effect of increasing the relative size of Lecter in comparison with Pazzi, emphasising the power relationship between them (See Figs. 6.12 and 6.13). In Chicken Run, the first view of Mrs Tweedy is of her gumboots striding through the chicken pen, so immediately stressing the size of the villain (See Fig. 6.14). This is parodied in Shrek in the sequence that introduces the villainous Lord Farquaad. He strides imperiously through his castle, the tracking camera looking up at him (See Fig. 6.15). It is only when he reaches the door to the torture chamber and two guards let him in that we become aware that he is in fact short (See Fig. 6.16). This parody of the normal use of scale reveals its status as a standard practice in the construction of evil.



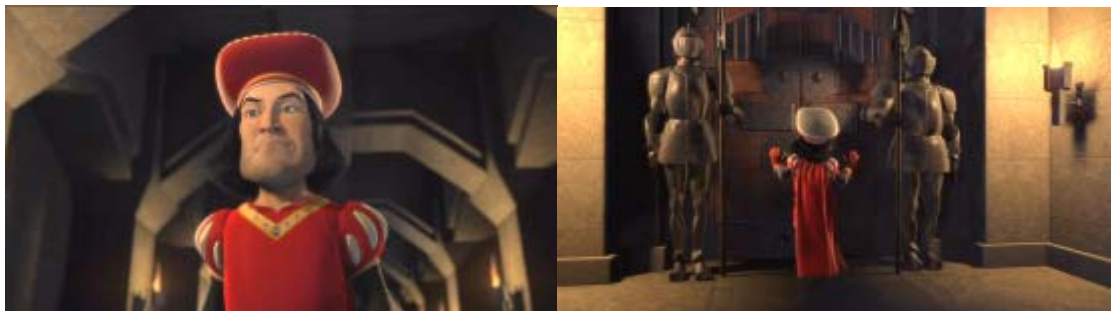
Fig. 6.11: McClane in the elevator dwarfed by the villain's henchmen (Die Hard with a Vengeance).



Fig. 6.12, 6.13: Shot/reverse shot of Lecter and Pazzi (Hannibal).



Fig. 6.14: Mrs Tweedy strides into the chicken coop (Chicken Run).



Figs. 6.15, 6.16: Farquaad approaches and enters the torture chamber (Shrek). Note the play on the delineation of size in each shot.

A variation of this technique occurs by emphasising the power relationship between hero and villain through relative altitude. That is, when one is higher up than the other, looking down from a high place. If the villain is raised, as in Die Hard with a Vengeance when Simon Gruber looks down on a mob of disorganised police in the streets of Manhattan, the ability to see all (surveillance) locates the villain in a position of power. This is especially prevalent not in the villain themselves as raised but in their use of surveillance technology to place them in that position by proxy. Enemy of the State and The Bourne Identity directly uses these in its use of spy satellites and networks of fixed cameras, and it is also seen in the Las Vegas casinos

of villain Terry Benedict in Ocean's Eleven. Conversely, if the hero is raised, this tends to emphasise their helplessness in the face of evil. For example, in Hannibal when Starling is searching for Lecter in the train station, the station itself becomes a vast hiding place. Panoramic vision, or lack of it, becomes paranoia, when the antagonist has the gift of extended vision but the protagonist does not. This greatly informs the ubiquity of postmodern constructions of cinematic evil that I will discuss in Chapter Eight.

The track into, or away from, the villain is not overly common in commercial cinema, but some films do copy an iconic shot from Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (Steven Spielberg, 1984) when the camera tracks in to a close-up on the villain's face as he turns towards the camera. This occurs in City Slickers (Ron Underwood, 1991) to suggest early in the film that the lead cowhand, Curly, is evil, when in fact he is not, while in Lethal Weapon 2, the camera tracks back from a henchman in villain Arjen Rudd's office to signify his loss of power – he is shot in the head immediately after. The Patriot offers a variation on the technique when father and son, Benjamin and Gabriel Martin, meet in an abandoned mansion during the American Revolution. The camera tracks to and through the window to show a battle taking place in the fields outside. This signifies that the horror of war has invaded the domestic sphere.

The tilted camera (or Dutch Tilt), which shows a skewed angle of a particular scene can be used in ways similar to the circling motion described above, and occurs when the hero is confronted with information that will hinder his quest to defeat evil; in Speed, Jack Traven is confronted in the prologue by the sight of villain Howard Payne holding his partner hostage, in Mission: Impossible (Brian De Palma, 1996) Ethan

Hunt, while sitting in a Prague restaurant, becomes aware that he is the main suspect in the leaking of information to the enemy, and in Hook (Steven Spielberg, 1991), Captain Hook's cabin is often filmed on this skewed angle. This latter was a hallmark of the shots of Orson Welles as Harry Lime in The Third Man (Carol Reed, 1949), and has become a standard shot since in evoking paranoia and evil.

6.4.2: The Point-of-View Shot as Marker of Evil

Robin Wood wrote of horror film in 1983, 'Much has been made of the strikingly insistent use (of both teenie-kill and violence-against-women movies) of the first person camera to signify the approach of the killer, perceived by many critics as an invitation to sadistic indulgence on the part of the spectator'⁶. This is evident in the horror films that enter the sample under discussion here. Scream 2, while satirising conventions of the horror movie, also uses them to scary effect, such as the stalking of 'CiCi' Cooper while alone in her fraternity house. The use of a steadicam rather than a simpler handheld camera set-up, thus eliminating the usual camera shake, creates what Wood describes as a 'sense of indeterminate, unidentified, possibly supernatural or superhuman menace'⁷. It also pulls the audience into the film, generating a voyeuristic complicity between them and the villain, creating the dilemma that the viewer wants to warn the potential victim but cannot do so. The villain's action is apparently ineluctable, thus this kind of shot makes the witness helpless in the face of an action that cannot be stopped, so increasing the sense that they are trapped in an unstoppable evil. The Ring (Gore Verbinski, 2001) often uses the moving camera, mimicking the point-of-view shot, as a red herring. For example, while Rachel is standing at the railing of the ferry sailing to Moesko Island, and before a horse is spooked into jumping overboard, the camera 'creeps' up behind her, but when she

turns around she sees nothing there. This plays on the expectations of the audience to understand the presence of an unseen evil, while also signifying that it is unseen by the characters on screen as well.

This technique is not confined to horror films, and in several cases endows inanimate objects with a life of their own, evoking the Judeo-Christian belief that the natural world, when it is not subordinated to human will, is dangerous, even Satanic. As already described, the tornadoes in Twister are not evil in terms of the narrative – they are simply objects to be studied and analysed – but they become evil through the use of the camera. One way the film achieves this is by providing the audience with the point-of-view of the tornado. This film contains a large number of helicopter shots which in themselves cannot all be construed as ‘first-person’ shots. These sequences in general create a sense of space within a vast, flat middle-American landscape and define the physical relationship between the two teams competing to study the twisters. However, there is also a third use of these shots that becomes apparent in the spectacular sequences. Generally the storms are constructed as merely natural, if destructive, wind patterns to be analysed and mapped. And yet some hint of an internal logic surfaces, and nature is rendered ambiguous through the use of point-of-view shots. The most consistent with Wood’s analysis of the horror film occurs when JoAnne Thornton-Harding and Bill Harding encounter their first tornado in the film. The sequence is structured around the vehicular chase (with a few nods to The French Connection [William Friedkin, 1971], with shots of the speedometer and the point-of-view from the front of the car); with the Hardings following the twister before the tables are turned and the storm chases them. The chase begins with Jo Harding’s tornado-chasing team, as the characters indicate, ‘get[ting] ready to intercept’, and

‘tightening their seatbelts’. Chasing the twister, the Hardings’ pick-up moves off-road onto a narrow dirt track. As the Hardings realise that they are unable to get off this road, an important shot occurs; a helicopter shot looking down and following the pick-up, essentially giving a view of the Hardings as the twister would see them (See Fig. 6.17). The twister demonstrates its destructive power by destroying a barn and then begins to ‘track’ the Hardings in their pick-up. JoAnne looks back, ‘It’s starting to turn’. Another aerial shot occurs when the Hardings realise that they have nowhere left to go. The twister has them trapped. Not only does this ‘point-of-view’ imply the presence of some character, or more aptly some monster (through whose eyes we are viewing a scene), but the apparent deliberate pursuit of the truck produces an impression of logical intent. That is, the twister appears to be consciously chasing the Hardings.



Fig 6.17: The tornado chases the Hardings in their jeep in Twister.

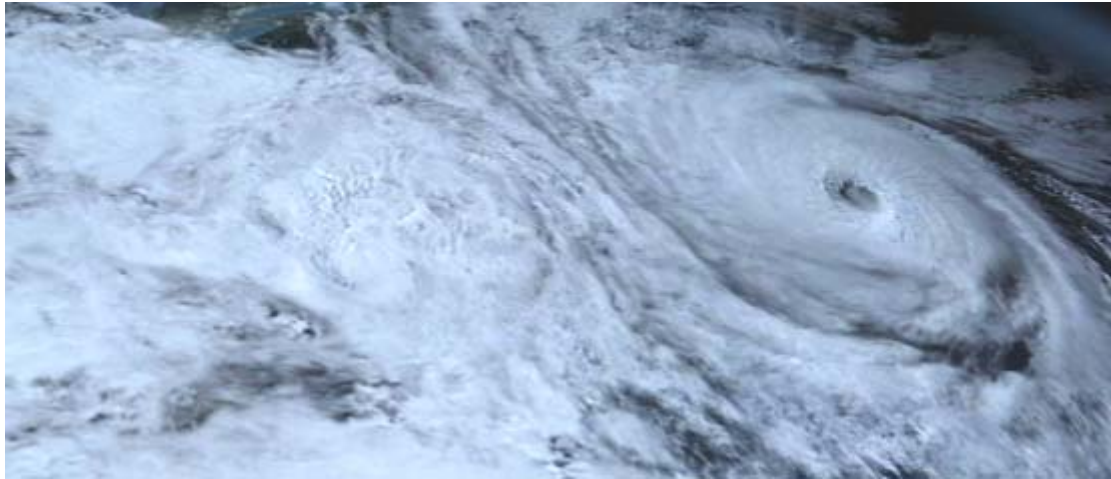


Fig. 6.18: The beginning of the tracking shot into the storm in The Perfect Storm.

In The Perfect Storm, another single shot has the same effect, as the camera begins in space (see Fig. 6.18), plunges into the storm, shaking as it does so due to turbulence, and finishing at the heavy seas. Like Twister, it is difficult to attribute some kind of intelligent thought to the storm through the use of this single shot, but nevertheless it fits into an overall pattern determined by the film that suggests some form of spiritual battle between nature and humankind. The shot emphasises the overwhelming size and power of the storm, thus is symptomatic of the form of evil in which the world is inherently evil which continually attempts to eradicate humankind.

6.4.3: The Sound of Evil

The use of sound effects, or manipulations of sound, aids the visual construction of evil but is always subordinate to it. That is, it underlines evil's obvious visual presence, or it instructs the audience that evil is present and that it will reveal itself visually. Distortions of sound and the use of specific sound effects work at an unconscious level, but also provide an intertextual reference point to the construction of cinematic evil. That is, sound in film is often used subliminally to create particular responses as combined with its visual depiction, and by using similar sound effects

across a wide range of films, these responses, including those towards images of evil, are standardised. Sound engineer, Matthew Grunau, wrote:

the American (and western) ear is used to hearing nice clean majors in their music when it is happy or joyous, and minors and other chord configurations when not. This gives them a subconscious knowledge that the evil character is “off” or wrong. Also, some distortion lends a nice hard edge to a voice and can do a lot to convey the evilness of a character.⁸

This acculturation of audiences towards certain cinematic sound effects helps to explain the role of sound in creating delineations of good and evil. Good is symbolised aurally by the presence of the gentle and the familiar, while evil takes the familiar and manipulates it until it is either a single discordant, ugly sound or a multilayered cacophony of noise.

To explain this, we can analyse the sound design in The Lord of the Rings and in particular we can compare the sequences set in Hobbiton and Rivendell and the caverns of Isengard. Hobbiton, the village that the hobbits Frodo (Elijah Wood), Samwise (Sean Astin), Merry (Dominic Monaghan) and Pippin (Billy Boyd) call home is a lush and idyllic place, far from the world of humans, elves and orcs and a backwater where innocence and beauty still reigns. In the sequence that opens The Fellowship of the Ring, beginning with Frodo reading a book under a tree, underneath the music and dialogue the sounds of birds singing and a gentle breeze in the trees is apparent. As Gandalf (Ian McKellen) carries Frodo further into Hobbiton on his cart,

the sounds of hobbit life slowly filter in; the lapping of water at the water-wheel, the indecipherable but pleasant conversation and the laughter of hobbits and the squeal of pigs at the market. These are natural, earthy sounds which emphasise the innocence of this corner of Middle-Earth ignorant of the evil arising far away.

Some of these sounds are repeated in the Rivendell sequence, particularly the birds and the rush of water, but here the soundtrack is given a slight reverberation that gives the soundtrack a dream-like quality befitting the world of the elves. Indeed, when the other hobbits welcome Frodo after his close call with death, the sound of their laughter is kept to a minimum but with a slight echo that accentuates the mystical quality of the elven land and people. A commonality between Hobbiton and Rivendell is the integration of the locations into the local natural landscape. A harmonious bond is implied between nature and its inhabitants, with the two villages merging into the landscape, the hobbits with homes burrowed into the ground and the elves with their buildings merging with the trees, their design organic and clean.

In keeping with the themes of J.R.R. Tolkien's original novels, Hobbiton and Rivendell, both visually and aurally, represent the beauty and harmony of nature while Isengard, the stronghold of the evil wizard Saruman (Christopher Lee), emblematises the destructive power of progress and industry. As the camera plunges through the caverns, which Saruman has converted to a factory for the manufacture of his war machines, the audience is immediately aware that nature has been not so much set aside as eviscerated completely. The trees that surrounded the main tower have been ripped down and thrown into the caverns to provide fuel for the kilns and materials for the various weapons. Accompanying this mass of swirling images is a

cacophony of sound; loud, busy and cluttered. Metal is beaten on anvils into swords (compare this rough sound with the ringing of the elven blacksmiths repairing the sword of Isildur in The Return of the King), huge gears grind and creak, fires roar, trees are ripped apart, and everywhere screams of agony and pain from unknown sources. Here, the dichotomy of good and evil has been delineated by the amount and the volume of sound; the gentle quietness of the hobbits and the elves with the overwhelming mass of noise of the orcs and the urak-hai. In an industrial world, the sounds of factories are not unfamiliar, but here the sheer volume of sound is representative of how evil Isengard is. Factories in themselves are not, of course, inherently evil. The climax of Terminator 2: Judgment Day (James Cameron, 1991) is set in a steel mill but despite the visual intensity of the sequence, the soundtrack minimises the factory noises to emphasis the battle between Sarah, John and the protective T-800 and the evil T-1000 terminator. In The Lord of the Rings, the factory itself is a terrifying place.

For individual characters (and in this case species), sound effects are used in different ways to differentiate good from evil. The tendency in most films that contain characters that are inherently evil is to ‘pitch down’ the vocal effect (to use a common term from the section on sound on The Fellowship of the Ring extended edition DVD), that is, to deepen the vocal until it registers in a lower bass tone. The difference in tonal qualities of the two wizards, Gandalf and Saruman, provides a case in point. Gandalf, the good wizard, is portrayed with a soft, fatherly voice, and almost melodious in his inflection of dialogue. Saruman, the evil wizard, speaks in a more monotonous tone, as befitting his position as a character of power, and his voice is modulated to a deeper pitch. The bass voice gives Saruman a greater or larger-than-

life presence, as if he towers over all around him – and the audience – and is constantly menacing and always powerful. A similar effect is also found with Hannibal Lecter (The Silence of the Lambs, Hannibal), Big Boy Caprice (Dick Tracy [Warren Beatty, 1990]), Lucius Malfoy (Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets [Chris Columbus, 2002]), Scar (The Lion King), Ratcliffe (Pocahontas [Mike Gabriel, Eric Goldberg, 1995]), and Agent Smith (The Matrix).

At three key points in The Fellowship of the Ring, ‘good’ characters are tempted by the evil of the ring and in two of these part of the transformation in those brief moments is in the vocal effect⁹. In the first, Bilbo Baggins (Ian Holm), tempted to keep the One Ring for himself, angers Gandalf, who rises up and cries, ‘Bilbo Baggins, do not take me for some conjuror of cheap tricks’. The menace in Gandalf’s statement is given visual and aural stature in three distinct phases; his physical presence enhanced as he rises over Bilbo, the lighting changing from a homely golden hue to a stark, cold blue, and his voice altered by dropping the pitch. His bass voice becomes one of strength and malevolence, and confronted with this Bilbo quickly acquiesces.

The second moment occurs when Frodo offers Galadriel (Cate Blanchett), the elven queen, the ring. Tempted by the ring, a similar but enhanced version of the sequence with Gandalf occurs; Galadriel’s physical presence is strengthened by the use of close-ups, she is starkly lit in an ice-cold blue (this time the image itself is manipulated), and her voice is enhanced and deepened to complete the image of menace. Further, her voice is altered again by multiplying the dialogue track so that it appears that several voices are emanating from the one apparition on screen. Tempted

by the ring, Galadriel fails the test she has set herself. The ring cannot be hers because she would succumb to its evil.

Many of the evil figures, orcs, urak-hai, wargs, and so on, are not blessed with the power of language, so their vocal effects are limited to growls, groans and screams. Here, natural sounds have been used but they have been manipulated, primarily by pitching down, so that the vocal track no longer resembles its original source. The Moria orcs have been given voice by the yelping of pig dogs, the cave troll by a combination of tiger and Canadian lynx, the urak-hai army of The Two Towers (Peter Jackson, 2002) by manipulating the sound of a volcanic rumble into a pulsing throb, and the Nazguls by the bellow of a donkey. The Balrog, the creature of flame and shadow that attacks the fellowship in the Moria mines, is described in the novels as a creature made of rock. Inspired by this description, the sound designers recorded the sound of a concrete block being pulled across a wooden surface, manipulating the result to provide the sound of the Balrog's movements.

One of the exceptions to the general rule that bass sounds are signifiers of evil are the ringwraiths, given an unearthly high-pitched scream, particularly in the first film. Here, both the musical analogy and the use of distortion, as suggested by Grunau, apply. Voiced by producer-writer Fran Walsh, her screams were manipulated digitally not only to remove any resemblance to a harmonious human voice but also to provide that 'nice hard edge' the characters required. So, while not pitched down in any way, evil is symbolically represented in the vocal through the manipulation of natural sounds towards the unnatural, so again hinting at the Judeo-Christian traditions of the

world as metaphysical battleground. The spiritual worlds of good and evil split between the natural and the unnatural.

The main figurehead of evil, Sauron, is largely seen only as a huge all-seeing flaming eye. As befitting the nature of the character, his sound treatment is complex, encompassing most of the techniques described. Particularly in the sequences when the ring is used and Frodo is confronted with the vision of Sauron, the sound is provided by four main elements; a deep, bass rumble based on the sound of fire, the howling of a wind, the hint of a scream similar to but not quite the same as the ringwraiths', and an almost indiscernible whispering, the 'black speech' of the evil tongue of Mordor.

This manipulation of natural sound effects to signify the presence of evil is also found in the sequence analysed above from Twister. In the moment of peace and quiet before or after a tornado strike, an animalistic growl has been added to the soundtrack. This is heard just prior to the barns being destroyed. Tornadoes may make this sound prior to striking, but here the growl is used to amplify the sense that these phenomena are alive and malevolent. Ghost uses a similar device; as the gates of hell open up to swallow sinners into the darkness below, a not dissimilar animalistic growling is heard on the soundtrack to accompany the demons as they scream into view. These animalistic sounds also accompany the flight of the alien fighter craft in Independence Day.

A variation of these manipulated natural sounds occurs with the use of breathy or 'slippery' sounds to connote the presence of evil. These directly or indirectly refer to

snakes or lizards as evil creatures (a throwback to the snake in the Garden of Eden offering Eve the apple), as in the villainous Randall Boggs in Monsters, Inc., the reptilian sounds in Godzilla, and the snake-voice telling Harry Potter to ‘kill, kill, kill’ in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Less obvious, the sound also appears in The Silence of the Lambs as the death-head moth is removed from the mouth of Jaime Gumb’s latest victim, Sleeping with the Enemy when Laura returns to her house after her abusive husband has located her, and in Home Alone (Chris Columbus, 1990) where the basement furnace is given an added dimension of aural evil to match the fears of a lonely child.

6.4.4: The Colour of Evil

As was noted in Chapter Four, a primary colour of evil is black (as befitting a Manichaeian construction of evil), which links it directly with darkness and shadows (a throwback to black and white films, particularly films noir). This is significant in The Blair Witch Project when the presence of evil only emerges at night and the three documentary makers spend the day trying to find safety before the sun sets.

Green is also prevalent as a symbol of evil in cinema. As signifier, this colour is ambivalent, connected with growth, renewal and life as well as with envy, trickery and death. Together, green is linked with nature and its dualistic meaning occurs because nature is simply what exists in contrast to the constructed world of the human. On the one hand, this represents life, but on the other the unbiased nature of death. This ambivalence offsets green from other kinds of light, including blue sky, yellow sun, orange sunset, and red fire, which are perceived as more natural. Green light occurs only in nature (particularly in the USA and North-Western Europe) as the

bioluminescence associated with decay. Green therefore can symbolise an onset of the expectation of death and destruction. At a quiet moment in Twister Bill looks up at the sky, watches the grey clouds gathering on the horizon, and states that the sky is 'going green'. Presumably a meteorological term to describe cloud formations in the moments before a tornado forms, this is a telling comment in light of the number of times that green is symbolically linked to evil (significant examples listed in Table 6.1).

More often, the colour appears within the frame at moments when evil is also present. Examples of the use of costuming and make-up effects include the Green Goblin in Spider-Man, the Riddler in Batman Forever (Joel Schumacher, 1995), and The Mask (Charles Russell, 1994). Taken further, in Batman Forever, the machine that the Riddler invents to suck out the brain waves of television watchers does so within a green mist. This is similar to Scooby-Doo where the souls of the guests of Spooky Island are housed in a kind of green ectoplasm. In Jumanji, the game that is the source of evil, offers its clues and instructions through a crystal set in the centre of the board. The text that appears within this crystal is green. More broadly, the world of The Matrix, that is the world constructed by the machines to control the minds of its human subjects, is shot with a green tinge to distinguish it from the real world. Green lighting is used in more 'reality-based' films like The Hunt for Red October, in which scenes involving the Russian submarine commander sent to find and destroy the rogue Red October submarine are photographed in progressively deeper hues of green as the film progresses.

Because green has further connotations beyond evil, most specifically in nature and ecology, some films define evil through use of differing colour schemes. The Lord of the Rings, with its themes of nature against the machine, consciously avoids the use of green to connote evil and so uses ‘hellish’ colours such as oranges and reds to signify its presence. The green-ness of Hobbiton at the beginning of the first film marks this as the site of a kind of utopian paradise, and the symbol for all that could be lost if Sauron is not defeated. When the hobbits reach Rivendell, despite the presence of the elves and their place within nature, the landscape has been rendered autumnal to represent the end of the era of elves in Middle-Earth. Evil is more closely linked with fire, as seen with the flaming eye of Sauron and the caverns beneath Isengard where Saruman builds his armies. Fire, and its connections with red and orange, is closely linked with biblical impressions of hell, and hell itself often becomes a metaphor for evil in commercial cinema. This suggests that while some colours are widely used and may draw on symbol systems of some antiquity such as darkness (and its association with evil) and hellfire any given film constructs its own discrete colour symbolism, with varying degrees of reliance on tradition.

6.4.5: Visual Metaphors of Hell





Figs. 6.19 and 6.20: Remnants of a life, in the bedroom of protagonist Memphis Raines in Gone in 60 Seconds.

While I have touched upon hell as a symbolic location of evil in contemporary commercial cinema, it is appropriate to resume discussion here of the ways in which biblical references are retained in popular film to delineate good from evil, even though these references have been separated from their original biblical context. In its biblical incarnation, hell is described as a place of perpetual torment by fire. In this literal sense, fire is commonly used as a metaphor for the 'home' of evil, such as is used in Gone in 60 Seconds. The iconic relationship to hell is made explicit in the opening credits when the camera studies in close-up the detritus of a life in protagonist 'Memphis' Raines bedroom. The good/evil dichotomy is categorically defined through the pairing of one shot of saintly figurines (bathed in a nostalgic golden glow) with, immediately following this, a shot of a toy devil, grinning maniacally (and lit in stark red hues) (see Figs. 6.19 and 6.20). This sets up a dichotomy of good and evil as represented by Raines and the villain, Raymond Calitri. Raines may be a car thief but the film carefully constructs the character as non-violent and even repentant, drawn back into crime only to save his younger brother. Calitri, on the other hand, is remorseless, arbitrarily using violence if this will assist in achieving his aims. As a kind of devil figure, it is fitting that his lair is

presented as a nightmarish vision of scrap iron and flames disgorging from unseen gas pipes¹⁰ (See Fig. 6.21).



Fig. 6.21: The evil Calitri (Christopher Ecclestone) (left) leads Memphis Raines (Nicolas Cage) and Atley Jackson (Will Patton) through his fiery lair (Gone in 60 Seconds).

An alternative vision of hell emerges primarily from a postmodern cinema centred on chaos and disorder, and is commensurate with the scrapyard images of Gone in 60 Seconds¹¹. Nightmarish cityscapes become symbols of a kind of hell without necessarily invoking images of fire and brimstone. As Amy Taubin writes in her essay on Seven, ‘urban blight is the Lord’s décor for the gates of hell’¹² (see also Dyer [1999]¹³ and Sharrett [2001]¹⁴). Unlike the visions of hell described earlier, hell here is externalised and is not some metaphoric representation of a character’s inner torment or evil, so that evil emerges not so much from within but from an apocalyptic past/future. The decaying Los Angeles of Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982) is the antecedent, matched within the period under consideration not only by Seven but Tim Burton’s versions of Batman¹⁵, Pulp Fiction, Erin Brockovich, Con Air, The Silence of the Lambs, The Addams Family, Dick Tracy, Black Hawk Down, The Matrix, Minority Report, The Ring, Road to Perdition, and Traffic. If we extend the definition of decay to include geographically or cinematically defined sites of decadence and

hedonism, centred on gambling and sexual pleasure, the likes of Ocean's Eleven, Back to the Future Part II (Robert Zemeckis, 1989), Basic Instinct (Paul Verhoeven, 1992), Indecent Proposal (Adrian Lyne, 1993), Rush Hour 2, and Sister Act (Emile Ardolino, 1992), would also fit the phrase 'urban decay' (albeit with the overlaying of moral decay).

Judeo-Christian traditions inform the construction of the diegetic world, which includes normative representations of family, gender, and moral behaviour. Religious allusions are hinted at rather than directly referenced, although these allusions are clearly constructed and largely without abstraction. In other words, iconic religious imagery is used but only as spectacle. The underlying meaning of the image has been removed in favour of the construction of good and evil as, simply, good and evil. Heavenly beams of light are one form of religious allusion, connected to the hero as saviour (as with John Kruger in Eraser, see Fig. 4.2) or to a place of safety. In The Perfect Storm this latter is significant for its representation of an ideal that cannot be reached. Near the climax of the film, a break in distant storm clouds allows rays of light to shine through, but when the clouds close over, characters and audience become aware of the ultimate fate of the crew of the *Andrea Gail*; their last chance for survival has gone. Churches, as holy spaces or as spaces of ultimate good, are relatively common in the commercial feature, with their violation by the antagonist representing a direct threat to peace and order. In The Patriot and Face/Off (John Woo, 1997), the church, which should be a place of safety and comfort, is transformed into a place of horror and death. In the former, British officer Tavington locks villagers into the local church and razes it, burning the occupants alive. In the

latter, the final climactic shoot-out begins in a church, with Sasha Hassler, mother of villain Castor Troy's child, dying in the crossfire.

Often, rather than specific religious sites appearing on screen, religious icons make subtle appearances. Returning to Twister, in the prologue when a young JoAnne is pulled out of her bed to shelter against a tornado, a picture of an angel can be seen above her bed as if watching over and protecting the child. This motif is repeated in the climax, when the successful deployment of small transmitters into a tornado is effected. Each transmitter is fitted with a set of small fluttering wings and beads of light, reminiscent of eyes, flicker off them as they fly off toward heaven. In The Rock, this Christian allusion is transposed onto the significantly named protagonist, Stanley Goodspeed, when in two sections of the film he is posed Christ-like with arms outspread. In one notable instance he kneels down and holds flares to the sky to signal that the threat of a poison gas attack against San Francisco has been nullified. The Christ-pose signifies Goodspeed as saviour, as well as the defeat of evil. This is visually similar to the sequence analysed above from Die Hard 2 in which John McClane uses flares in a forlorn attempt to signal a crashing plane. Here the Christ-pose is not obvious because McClane is standing upright and waving his arms. McClane is not (yet) the saviour that Goodspeed is.

These religious allusions resonate with the world of the film, and contribute to the film as entertainment. They do so by offering simulacra of religious icons, or iconic images that have been bereft of their religious meaning. I will talk about this loss of meaning in Chapter Nine, but it must be pointed out at this stage that the image does

not necessarily stand in for anything else, and religious imagery is used to define evil simply as evil without referring to any theological foundation for that definition.

6.5: Conclusion

Evil is constructed to some extent through narrative but is overlaid by these visual codes, to the extent that cinematic evil is pre-eminently conveyed through a carefully designed visual aesthetic. But this visual aesthetic masks the depthlessness of evil, simply stating that evil exists without question. These cues and rewards, built on a repetitive recycling of common visual markers, combine to construct a visual depiction of evil. But the possibility arises that spectacle is an address without a message; it opens up a channel of communication but ultimately does not say anything. That is, in emphasising the attractions of evil through the spectacular image, evil loses its theological and philosophical foundations suggesting simultaneously that evil exists but has lost its meaning and that, in its image, it has lost its moral repulsiveness.

The unveiling of evil in an act of spectacular violence is a common characteristic of many of the films in the sample: the slaughter of starving civilians at a Somalian Red Cross food distribution camp at the start of Black Hawk Down, the killing of Press Secretary Melanie Mitchell by Ivan Korshunov in Air Force One, the death of Congressman Phillip Hammersley in Enemy of the State, and Colonel Tavington killing Benjamin Martin's son in The Patriot all have the same effect. Each event pushes the narrative forward, specifically by intensifying the tension towards both the protagonist and the audience. Further, the action depicted is excessive to the narrative (but not, as I stated in Chapter Three, excessive in terms of the film as a whole) or, in

other words, the narrative function of the sequences is exceeded by the spectacular qualities of the image. The use of spectacular violence in commercial cinema becomes ambiguous, being both repulsive and attractive at the same time. In the next chapter I will explore the commodification of evil through the attractiveness of the image and specifically the problematic use of images of violence.

¹ Ndalanian, Angela (2004), Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., p. 152.

² What I mean is that filmmakers determine a perceived audience for their films and make them to suit. A horror film, for example, is expected to have a level of gore-based spectacle that would not be suitable for 'family' audiences, just as the opening D-Day landing sequence from Saving Private Ryan suggests a mature audience for that film. Die Hard 2 was intended to be seen by a more generalised audience thus while still violent had to be toned down to suit.

³ Director's Commentary on Special Edition DVD, Chapter 12, Die Hard 2 (2003, Renny Harlin).

⁴ See, for example, Wood, Robin (1997), 'The Spectres Emerge in Daylight', Cine Action, No 43, pp. 4-13.

⁵ Importantly, the film does not show any bodies in the aftermath of the Baltimore bombing, apart from Cabot on his death bed. These shots, as in Die Hard 2, stand in for displays of death, inferring the massive casualty list rather than explicitly stating it.

⁶ Wood, Robin (1983), 'Beauty bests the beast', American Film, September, p. 64.

⁷ Wood (1983), p. 64.

⁸ Gurnau, Matthew (2000), 'Who (sic) to create Good Mech/Bad Mech sounding personalities?', Film Sound, December, <http://www.filmsound.org/OA?mechsounds.htm> (accessed 2 June 2004).

⁹ The third key moment occurs in Rivendell when Bilbo is momentarily transformed into a beast grasping for the ring. This is a primarily visual effect so I will not discuss this sequence here.

¹⁰ Bather, Neil (2004), 'Big Rocks, Big Bangs, Big Bucks: The Spectacle of Evil in the Popular Cinema of Jerry Bruckheimer', New Review of Film and Television Studies, Vol. 2 No. 1 (May), p. 48.

¹¹ While the postmodern will be introduced more fully later, it is appropriate to note Boggs and Pollard on the connections between urban decay and postmodern cinema; 'Born out of historical crisis and the sharpening contradictions of modernity but also shaped by the contours of corporate colonization, postmodern cinema both mirrors and helps reproduce the mood of the time, lending it an aesthetic aptly described by Mike Davis as the "glamour of decay"'. Boggs, Carl, and Tom Pollard (2003), A World in Chaos: Social Crisis and the Rise of Postmodern Cinema, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, p. 3.

¹² Taubin, Amy (1996), 'The Allure of Decay', in Arroyo, José, (ed.) (2000), Action/Spectacle Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader, British Film Institute, London, p. 151.

¹³ Dyer, Richard (1999), Seven, British Film Institute, London, pp. 63-64.

¹⁴ Sharrett, Christopher (2001), 'End of Story: The Collapse of Myth in Postmodern Narrative Film', in Lewis, Jon (ed.) (2001), The End of Cinema as We Know It: American Film in the Nineties, New York University Press, New York, pp. 320-321.

¹⁵ The noirish stylings evident in Seven and Blade Runner are apparent also in Batman and Batman Returns, aided and abetted by Anton Furst's exaggerated gothic designs (replaced by Bo Welch for the sequel after the former's death). In shifting Batman Forever and Batman and Robin towards a comic-book palette, Joel Schumacher largely removed this film-noir intent.

Chapter Seven: The Morality and the Marketing of Violence

7.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter I explained, through the analysis of narrative and visual schemata, how film producers used the processes of commercial cinema to create a visual aesthetic of evil. In this chapter I will expand on this by examining more closely the location where the cinematic product, which includes this visual aesthetic to construct evil as attraction, intersects with the spectator, and the contradictions and ambiguities which arise from this conflation. The cinematic construction of evil emphasises energy and excess as primary markers (as I began to explain in Chapter Three) in that visual displays of excessive behaviour and actions are seen to be the obverse of the ordinary. These manifest typically as sexual predation, rage and murder. That images of such actions are created as attractive speaks not so much of the voyeuristic tendency of the audience, the scopophilic desire to see what should not be seen, but rather hints back to the immersive experience of commercial cinema and the primacy of the visceral experience in the safety of a fictional narrative cinema. In this chapter, I will explore the ambiguities of screen violence in terms of revolutionary violence, following Frantz Fanon, as well as other theoretical discourses of screen violence (including Mizejewski, Bataille and Sobchack), the hegemonic assimilation of violence into screen culture, and how violence, or the threat or promise of violence, is used to market popular cinema. How evil is marketed will be examined by analysing the trailer, but noting that other forms of advertising can also stress this visual aesthetic of evil.

If these schemata of evil are tools that Hollywood film-makers use to create vast spectacles to satiate audience tastes, does this mean that those audiences do not gain any understanding of how evil works in the social world? Are they, on the contrary, swept away in a flood tide of spectacular evil? Is this a one-sided and bleak view of the participation of the audience in the process of creating cinematic evil? While there is some truth in the contention that popular cinema is little more than escapist entertainment, 'an outlet from the drab monotony of everyday life'¹, we must be aware that there are hidden connections that audiences draw from the films they watch even if they do not realise it – film is both divorced from and deeply embedded in social reality at all times. As Sean Cubitt stated, 'Reality is not flat, or black and white, or ninety minutes long; it does not have a story; crime isn't always punished, nor virtue rewarded. It is not that cinema lies to us. It is that by its very nature, any representation does more than present: it cannot only denote, it must also connote'². Film thus has a large burden to bear, since Hollywood, as Charles Fleming writes, 'is the creator of our collective imagination, and perhaps the lasting record of what we are and believe and dream'³. This said we must also consider whether it is possible to reconcile this collective imagination, the consideration of evil itself, with the lack of meaning within the iconic signifiers of cinematic evil. That is, can the cinematic image provide any meaningful stance by which evil can be understood?

To begin this interpretation, I will start with the contention that this spectacle of evil is primarily centred upon excessive acts of extreme violence. What must be taken into account is that violence in itself is not specifically evil, but that the excessiveness of its filmic representation is. By excessiveness I do not refer to violence as a quantifiable act, as if a particular act is 'more' or 'less' violent than another. Instead I

refer to violence that exceeds the moral and ethical boundaries created by any specific film. This latter is important as each film engages with violence in different ways so the placement of this boundary is fluid. I have already described how Die Hard 2 exceeds its own boundaries when Colonel Stewart brings down a fully-laden passenger jet. However, in, say, Toy Story (John Lasseter, 1995), the boundary is set lower with Sid, the next-door neighbour, marked as evil because he pulls toys apart (in the world of the film, an act of horrific torture). The likes of Seven, Saving Private Ryan, Road to Perdition and the James Bond movies further problematise the placement of these boundaries, which, as I explain in more detail in Chapter Five (pp. 137-138), questions evil itself in creating a non-spectacle of violence, placing violence within wider moral boundaries (as in times of moral and ethical decay or war), or through an anti-hero who is nominally more violent than the antagonist. That is, respectively, cinematic violence can be extreme but occur off-screen, thus is non-spectacle: cinematic violence may be necessary for the protection of moral and social boundaries: and the protagonist may exist outside these same moral and social boundaries but will use extreme violence to protect them. The means and the reasons for violence, then, become contentious, and the moralities of violence require closer scrutiny. It is whether this violence is excessive or not that begins to distinguish between whether that violence is used for the purposes of good or evil. But what constitutes this excessiveness is what must be questioned.

The excessiveness of violence is important in the visual construction of evil, but more so the identity of the victim, or intended victim, of that violence. This then questions the ability of Hollywood cinema to engage with specific social constructions of evil; just as cinematic evil is composed of simulacra, so is the victim. That is, the

representation of the target of excessive violence in commercial cinema is as much a depthless image as evil itself. The child or mother figure stands in for innocence and family and nothing more. The American film industry does not interrogate social constructions of childhood or family, but merely uses them as visual signifiers of the good.

To understand how cinematic violence works within the structures of the experience offered by each film, we need to understand how the schema of evil emphasises violence as attraction. As I argued in Chapter Two in relation to Linda Mizejewski's 'body genre', cinema constructs an eroticism of violence that compels audiences to watch when they normally would not. Kellner argues that, in this sense, movie violence conflates with the technological mastery of military might that can also be seen on screen, melding together to form some distorted and perverted fetishism of violence. These:

pornographic erotics of violence replaced sexual eroticism, much as the cool killers of the Persian Gulf War were shown pornography films before going out on their "turkey shoots" against the literally defenceless Iraqis, showering their bombs on military and civilian targets in spasms of ejaculatory violence lit up by flashing infra-red photos of anti-aircraft fire exploding in orgasmic splendor⁴.

Thus Kellner re-enacts the Bataillean spectacle, and the pleasure that persists in images of chaos and death.

This conflation of cinematic violence and the sexual act is a concept Richard Dyer also uses, but in different ways, to describe the experience of watching action cinema; ‘Such movies promote an active engagement of the world, going out into it, doing to the environment; yet enjoyment of them means allowing them to come to you, take you over, do you’⁵. Dyer argues that audiences actively engage with the movies they watch, and in return for this investment the movies, through spectacle, stimulate the body in a manner not dissimilar to being sexually pleased⁶. Specifically, the spectacle of excessive violence offers strong visceral pleasures and contributes to the construction of commercial cinema as an attraction. Evil thus becomes a causative factor in the production of this attraction, most commonly referred to as a rollercoaster ride, in which, again, narrative and spectacle are conflated to produce the desired experience.

7.2: Displays of Cinematic Evil and Revolutionary Violence

7.2.1: Fanon’s Revolutionary Violence

Through the filmic rollercoaster ride, the nature of violence itself has been dislocated from its screen representation, the horrors of violence replaced by the perverse pleasure gained from its construction as attraction. What then is violence, and what does it mean when violent imagery is integrated into the cinematic experience? In itself, violence is ambiguous. It could mean, in Fanon’s terms, the uprising of the oppressed, or it could conversely be the physical response of the depravity of the human psyche and its capacity to cause harm to another. Of Fanon’s revolutionary violence, Huma Ibrahim wrote that, ‘which can only be said sarcastically, violence seems to stem from the very act of living, the very act of surviving and the very act of

governing one's autonomy as an individual or group'⁷. Fanon was writing specifically on the violence of colonisation and the revolutionary violence that was required for the colonised to acquire freedom from their colonisers. In this instance, Fanon argued that, 'Violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect'⁸. Further, '[Colonialism] is only violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence'⁹.

Violence as such is not evil in and of itself, and is not specifically the act of the evil mind. In the conclusion to his book, The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon writes that 'Europe undertook the leadership of the world with ardour, cynicism and violence'¹⁰. For Fanon, the evil of violence stems from the root – the cause or the means – of violence. That is, if the *cause* of violence is evil then the violence itself is an act of evil. As a Marxist, Fanon emphatically claimed that a European cynicism manifested itself in colonialism as a capitalist bureaucracy usurping any notion of the native, to use Fanon's word, as native. In other words, Fanon argued that, 'Every effort is made to bring the colonised person to admit the inferiority of his culture which has been transformed into instinctive patterns of behaviour, to recognise the unreality of his "nation", and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure.'¹¹ The oppressor does not convince themselves of the non-existence of the oppressed but gets the oppressed people to admit their own inferiority. The ideology of western capitalism suppresses the ability of the native to believe in themselves as native, and, as Fanon argues in White Skin Black Masks, the African puts on a European mask in an attempt to fit in, which, while it may appear to work, instead fools no-one in the establishment of discourses of power. The only

method that can give voice to the native as native, Fanon says, is to smash the masks outright, using violence to cleanse the land of the invader.

This sets in motion the contradiction of violence as meeting an ideological purpose – oppression – with violence as noble endeavour – freedom of the oppressed. Fanon specifically defines the world in Manichean terms, noting how evil is connected to the darkness of the skin of the oppressed, and that to break free from the dichotomy of the oppressor is to break down European history. This utopian desire to be absolutely free of the past requires total revolution, ‘absolute violence’, violence that purifies, destroying binary oppositions¹². To give this a crude cinematic analogy, the climax of The Lion King appears to directly configure with Fanon’s arguments. Pride Rock, the seat of power of the lions, is presided over by Scar with help from the hyenas. Simba, son of Mufasa, the previous king who was killed by Scar, returns from exile to take his rightful place on the throne. With Simba’s homecoming, the lions, the oppressed, rise up and fight off the hyenas while Simba directly challenges Scar. Lightning strikes and the withered landscape, a direct result of the exploitation of the land by Scar, burns furiously, and after a massive battle, Scar is tossed to his death in the flames. Here, fire is not used as a metaphor for hell, as I described in Chapter Six, but as a cleansing force, or as the extremity of violence necessary to break down one ideological order and replace it with another. It is not enough that Scar is killed but that the land itself undergoes a violent and radical change so as to introduce a new order.

Commercial cinema cannot reconcile the concepts of noble violence and ideological violence, and many of the problems of defining evil in this context emerge from this

impossibility. In relation to specific heroes and villains in specific films, it is apparent who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed, and the outcome of each film strengthens Dyer's assertion of the utopian ending; the villain is defeated, evil is banished once more, and the world is in some way better than it was before. But in the commodified entertainment of film, in which the visual aesthetics of evil are emphasised, the ambiguities of violence emerge which questions Dyer's utopian endings. In the prologue to Speed this conundrum is directly engaged with when villain Howard Payne (Dennis Hopper) poses a question to policeman Jack Traven (Keanu Reeves); holding Traven's partner Harry Temple (Jeff Daniels) hostage with an explosive device, it appears as if Payne will escape. But Traven shoots Harry in the leg removing Payne's ability to hold a hostage, allowing Traven to save the situation. This becomes a running joke with Harry continuously bemoaning the fact that Traven shot him. This wounding is clearly a form of noble violence as it enabled Traven to take control of the situation and to defeat evil, but to do so he has had to commit violence against a fellow police officer. Later in the film, Payne is successful in luring Temple into a trap that ends his life, thus the happy ending must be tempered by the human cost of ending Payne's tyranny.

Paraphrasing Fanon, a filmic culture of combat moulds the national consciousness, giving it forms and contours. In other words, in the stories it tells, Hollywood reiterates that a morally just society can only be created and maintained through the often literal battles with forces of evil. Cinematic evil is synonymous with Fanon's colonialism in that it 'is only violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence.'¹³ Evil in these terms can only be defeated by a greater force. This would explain why the villain must suffer a visually violent death

that exceeds the violence they have meted out on their victims. Two important paradigms of violence emerge in relation to its representation on screen. The first is violence as the antithesis of human behaviour, and the second the ways that spectacle assimilates violence into dominant economic discourse. I will go through each in turn.

7.2.2: Evil as Excessive Violence against Innocence

Violence, as stated, is not evil in itself but the formations of violence can demonstrate how it can become evil. Cinema often borrows these social patterns of violence to delineate ‘good’ violence from ‘evil’ violence, and this delineation largely emerges from violence against innocence. Whether violence is good or bad correlates directly with the victim of that violence. The villain attacking innocence is bad, while the hero protecting innocence is good. By this reasoning, sexual predation tends to be considered the most evil form of violence, with violence enacted against children only slightly worse than that against the mother figure¹⁴. Because this form of violence is comparatively rare in the commercial feature film, when it occurs, as in the conclusion of Seven, the sequence is more shocking for it.

Because of the explicitness and revulsion by audiences of sexualised violence against women and children, the tendency is for this violence against innocence to be inferred, and it is these moments that delineate the violent act from the evil violent act. I have already described how the violence in Die Hard 2 was made more excessive because it was specifically targeted at women and children. The filmmakers did so by showing a grandmother-type as passenger and symbolising the death of the child by showing a doll amongst the wreckage of a downed passenger jet. Terminator 2: Judgment Day builds its narrative totally around the innocence of the child as

symbolic of the future of humankind. One crucial sequence is Sarah Connor's dream of the future when children in a playground are destroyed by an atomic blast (See Fig. 7.1). A stark juxtaposition is created between innocence, exemplified by the sounds of children's laughter, and the violent horrors of war. The boundaries are strengthened by the fence which produces a physical and emotional barrier between Connor and the children. This not only prevents her from removing the children from the scene, but even her ability to give voice to her warning is gone. This is reflected as well in later sequences when children as the future are overtly referred to, such as in the desert hideaway Sarah runs to to access her arms supplies. As well as the children, seen playing in the dust oblivious of what their future may hold, a short but important sequence occurs when the T-800 looks at and picks up a small child in a state of bemusement (Fig. 7.2). Here, the fence as symbolic of the divide between innocence and the horrors of war is gone. So, while the innocence of childhood is directly juxtaposed against the hardened warrior, it also emphasises the ability of the warrior (innocent, perhaps, in his own way) to make a difference in protecting the future.



Fig. 7.1: The playground in Sarah Connor's dream moments before the nuclear blast (Terminator 2: Judgment Day).



Fig. 7.2: The T-800 encounters a child in the desert hideaway (*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*).

This evil violence, violence against innocence, is not necessarily the inverse of good violence, as there is little to distinguish the two forms; ‘good’ violence may necessitate, or result in, the loss of innocence at the same time. Evil violence becomes instead the obverse of the ordinary, not a reflection but a variation. As Fanon argued of colonialism (although perhaps taken out of context here), in this context, there is no truthful behaviour, and good is only what is good for ‘them’. That is, violence is not evil per se but becomes evil in the eyes of the spectator, such that should the hero enact violence to save the world, even if good people die, then that violence is good. Truth gets lost in the visual aesthetic of evil.

7.2.3: Hegemonic Assimilation

The lack of ‘truth’ in the violent act leads to the proposition that violence is contentious in its ability to assist both the struggles in and between good and evil. The double movement of evil emphasises rising up against the oppressor but also, as spectacle, the suppression of the real, as befits a postmodernist discourse. This suppression, it must be pointed out, is not the same as the loss of truth as discussed by Fanon. Fanon talked of truth as an ideological point of view, and that something

becomes true if it ‘fits’. In Fanon’s sense, violence is only evil if it upsets societal order.

Violence in the sample films is not revolutionary but packaged and commodified, losing their political significance in the realm of commercial cinema to become merely a tool available to filmmakers to entice an audience into the theatre and to provide the necessary payoff once they are there. The old purpose of evil still remains – as the basis, for instance, of morality tales, even if, as I discussed in Chapter Two, this basis is flawed – but the shift towards its commodification also signifies a shift towards its opening up to visual spectacle as a central element of the cinematic experience. This is vital in the development of cinematic evil, as it signifies both that evil maintains a narrative function in the film and simultaneously exists for its own sake for the purpose of providing the depthless spectacle required to drive the ride-film. In the last chapter, I described how the repetitions of codes of evil became a primary contributor to the visual aesthetic of evil. Evil retains its tenure as absolute bad, but its opposite only signifies a banal good, centred on such key thematics as patriotic duty and retention of the nuclear family unit. Refusing to fix evil in any specific location allows evil to become absolute but good meanwhile becomes ambivalent. What is good when confronted with the spectre of evil that, although ultimately defeated, changes the world forever?

Returning to Bataille’s death spectacle, Julian Petley argues that:

Death in fictional films is not only amply represented but is often exceedingly visible. Safely contained by narrative, in iconic and

symbolic signs and structures, cinematic fictions offer a mediated view of death which softens its threat.¹⁵

Significantly, Petley follows Sobchack in stating that ‘the most effective signifier of death is violent action inscribed on the *living* body, because it is this which most effectively signifies the transformation from being to non-being’¹⁶. In the ‘little death’ of the pleasure of the spectacle, fictional cinema offers excessive views of definitive death, and in its representation by violent means exploits both what should be reprehensible – the violence itself – and the fears of its audience.

Pulp Fiction is an overtly and excessively violent film, but uses this violence to create both complex narrative and spectacularised experience, even though several instances of extreme violence occur off-screen, including the rape of Marcellus Wallace and the accidental shooting of the back-seat passenger in Vincent and Jules’s car. By Fanon’s argument, these moments of violence can be viewed on several levels, primarily within the narrative structure itself, and in the Hollywood system of film-making. In the first instance, the film inverts the roles of hero and villain to the extent that hired killers, drug addicts and small-time criminals become the focus of the story. So the film allows these characters to gain a voice in commercial cinema that was rarely seen in 1990s cinema; a suppressed minority being given a rarely achieved status in commercial fictional story-telling. But, in the second instance, as the film both glorifies and trivialises violence, Pulp Fiction also provides a kind of voyeuristic spectacle in the Bataillian sense; packaged and commodified violence and images of death to satiate an audience wanting to laugh in the face of death.

7.3: The Marketing of Evil

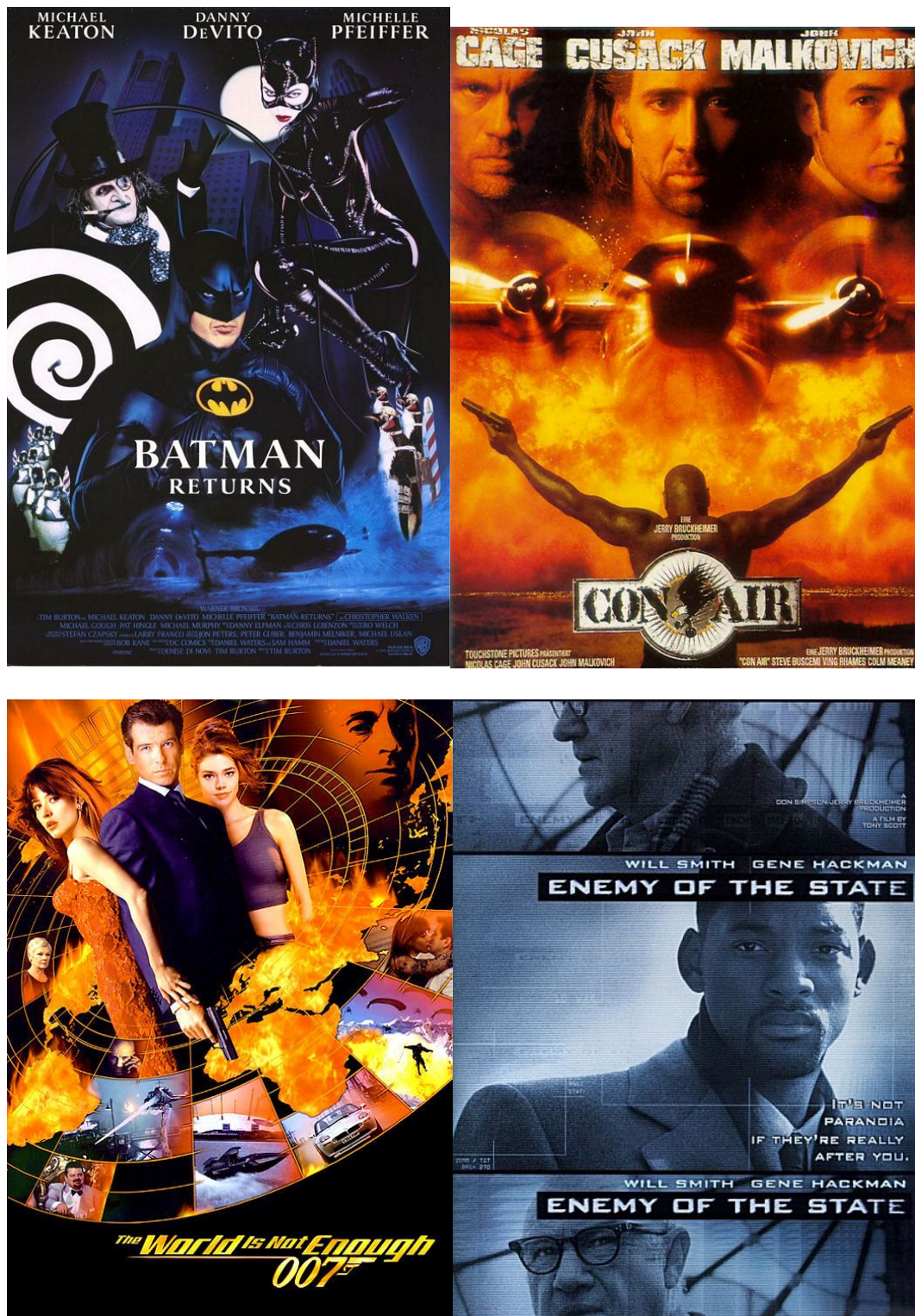
Returning to evil as commodity, filmic evil, to repeat, assists in enticing an audience into a cinema, and should provide the kind of payoff that the audience expects. The evil that is required in many forms of cinema to provide, in particular, images of excessive violence offers at the least the promise of both the heights of contemporary cinematic technology and the kinds of experience that the film suggests in its marketing. The movie trailer provides a tantalising glimpse of the cinematic experience to come, and attempts to encapsulate both the visual splendour and the experience suggested by the film it is advertising. The trailer¹⁷, which, in various forms, can be released six months or more before a film's release, is not strictly limited to the entity that is shown before a feature film at cinemas. Trailers can be constructed specifically for showing during television coverage of the Superbowl (held at the end of January and the most watched single broadcast of the US calendar year), and the internet offers a wide range of possibilities to market films. More innovative strategies include production diaries (for example, the 'featurettes' that have made their way onto the DVD releases of the likes of Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings), 'blogs' (such as Jackie Chan's regular updated entries on his website that detail his filmic career¹⁸), and for The Blair Witch Project the successful creation on-line of a complete mythology surrounding the purported disappearance of the three characters in the film. For the purpose of analysing the representations of evil in marketing, I will focus primarily on pre-release trailers, although many of these representations also appear in posters, 'making-of' documentaries, soundtrack albums, books and so on that can accompany the film on its release.

Advertising of the theatrical feature tends to point towards the levels of violence contained in the film itself. The question of violence then becomes more acute, rendered as commodity, and divulged in order to entice and attract paying audiences. The question of the morality of violence is opened up, especially whether the violence depicted is the revolutionary violence of Fanon – characters and narrative demand action to rise up against fictional oppressors – or the commodified rage of the spectacle – the ‘little death’ offered by images of violence. In a sense, the construction of evil in this paradigm becomes critical. If revolutionary violence in narrative cinema emerges as a result of acts of evil, then cinema engages in dialogues with evil in a wider social and cultural discourse. But if it does not, and cinematic violence is commodified spectacle, then the wider engagements with social and cultural discourses become less clear. By looking at movie advertising, we may find clues as to how contemporary cinema has changed the way it represents and employs evil.

Trailers are required to impart the focus of the experience, and, importantly, not necessarily the narrative or story arc. The trailer for the thriller, for example, may offer glimpses of the narrative structure in its set-up of the hero/villain struggle, while the horror trailer, although not entirely neglecting narrative, may emphasise instead the intended shock value. The effects spectacle, however, uses narrative sparingly or, in some cases, not at all. In the latter case, the special effects themselves serve multiple tasks; providing on some level the essence of the filmic plot (aliens invade earth, dinosaurs run amok, for example), without revealing the story arc and on occasion even the major characters. This includes revealing the technological achievement of, primarily, special effects, but also of stunt-people, camera operators

(and camera technology with, for instance, steadicams and cranes), and costume and set designers¹⁹.

This encapsulation of the movie in its marketing packages can also be directly inclusive of the forms of evil that will appear in the film. That is, the advertising campaigns for some films will directly focus on the types of evil present, and will play on this to entice audiences into theatres. Consider the posters for Batman Returns, Con Air, The World is Not Enough, Enemy of the State and Hannibal (See Figs. 7.3-7.6. The poster for Hannibal was shown in Chapter One). Each features the tangible presence of the evil villain, the first in the shape of the deformed Penguin, compared with the rugged masculinity of Batman, the second, the glaring eyes of John Malkovich compared with the more compassionate facades of Nicolas Cage and John Cusack, the third, eyes of Robert Carlyle lurking in the top right hand corner, in the fourth, what appears to be surveillance photographs of stars Will Smith and Gene Hackman – they are clearly being watched – and in the last, the red glaring eye of Lecter staring out, fixed on the potential filmgoer. Allied with this aesthetic of evil in the film poster is the implied threat of violence. At a basic level, the connotations between poster image and violence rests on the promise that the evil displayed will be manifested in visual displays of violence in the movie advertised.



Figs. 7.3-7.6: Posters for Batman Returns, Con Air, The World is Not Enough and Enemy of the State.

Dissecting the poster images further allows the potential viewer to discern more closely the possible types of violence that may be witnessed. The first three films

noted here belong to types of films that require little expansion of content; as comic-book movie, Bruckheimer action feature and James Bond thriller respectively, each films' villain follows prescribed duties and the role of each is emphasised in the posters as being not only evil but violently evil. The latter two films play on the look of evil, being seen by an unknown evil, or the face of evil looking out at potential victim. The role of violence is more implicit here, but the hint is given that once the looker and the subject of the look meet, violence will ensue.

Some of the ambiguity of evil can be seen in the equally stern frowns and piercing glares of Keaton's Batman and Malkovich's Grissom – Batman as stern, angry guardian; Grissom as psychokiller. While this can be accounted for by the thesis that each film has to reconstruct its own visual codes for evil from the available tools, it also indicates the ambiguity of the stare and the frown as marker of the potential for violence.

Further, the posters also emphasise positions of power between hero and villain that again signifies the potential for violence. In each poster it is clear who the hero is as each is placed in a central position, respectively, Batman, Nicolas Cage (as Cameron Poe), James Bond and Will Smith, and to a lesser extent, Gene Hackman. In Batman Returns and The World is Not Enough, the villain/s is placed above the hero providing a tacit threat that the hero must overcome despite the overwhelming odds. In Con Air a similar implication is made but this is articulated through the use of facial expressions. The evil Grissom, glaring, acts. The good Poe, passive, must react. While the villain is unseen in the poster for Enemy of the State, their powerful presence is implicated in the allusion of the heroes being watched and monitored.

More ambiguous in its use of violence and its hints at the presence of evil in a film is the trailer for Pearl Harbor. Included is a single shot that follows the path of a bomb from its release from the underside of a Japanese plane to its fatal strike on the American battleship, the U.S.S. Arizona. This ship is iconic in the history of the attack, both the subject of widely known photographic images of the event and, because its hull remains where it sank, a monument to the many lives that were lost. The shot is therefore significant on multiple levels; as violent spectacle and as contributor to the ride-effect, as emphasising national and cultural histories, as marketing tool (using both promised ride-effect and popular history), and as indicator of cinematic evil. As mentioned previously, Pearl Harbor ultimately fails to construct the Japanese attackers as evil, but making this shot, along with its historical connotations, the centrepiece of the trailer hints at a form of evil in the 1941 attacks which the release version of the film does not present, even though it retains this effects shot. As a result it is unclear whether the film represents an evil world, or a good world invaded by evil Others, so that the type or mode of evil remains ambiguous²⁰.

7.3.1: Movie Trailers – In the Line of Fire, Independence Day

In order to analyse more specifically the development of the visual construction of evil as it emerges in trailers, we can compare and contrast the teaser trailers for In the Line of Fire and Independence Day. Teasers are the initial form of trailer advertising for a film, released into theatres (and on to the internet) six months to a year prior to the release of a film. Because the film is still in production, it is not uncommon for these trailers to contain very few shots from the film, and in some cases none at all.

Teasers are designed to create a momentum from which all future marketing will build upon. They concentrate primarily on title and any pre-defined selling point; star, next instalment in a franchise, or the proposed elements of experience and technological achievement on offer. For both In the Line of Fire and Independence Day, the teasers utilise shots constructed with marketing in mind. For the former the shot was, as will be described, made exclusively for the trailer (but nevertheless building upon a finished shot in the final version of the film), while for the latter, the most significant shot was made for the film, but consciously produced with the trailer in mind. In the following table, I break down the various components of the trailer for In the Line of Fire in order to examine how it specifically implies the threat that the hero must overcome.

<u>Shot</u>	<u>Image</u>	<u>Text</u>	<u>Dialogue</u>	<u>Sound</u>
1.	Black Screen, a red second hand moves in time with ticking on soundtrack. The virtual camera tracks in on the text on screen.	Nov. 22 1963		A low musical hum, the ticking of a clock
			1 st Radio Voice: Three shots have been fired at President John Kennedy's motorcade in Dallas, Texas.	
			2 nd Radio Voice: Unconfirmed reports from Dallas...	
	As second hand reaches the 3 o'clock position, a red line remains, while the second hand continues to rotate.		Voiceover: It was his job to safeguard the destiny of the nation.	
			3 rd Radio Voice: Today, America mourns the loss of President John Kennedy.	
			Voiceover: But at a critical moment, he was a split-second too late. Now, after a	

			lifetime of second thoughts and second guesses, Secret Service Agent Frank Horrigan is about to get a second chance.	
				Phone rings, it is picked up. The low musical hum and ticking continues.
	When red hand reaches 6 o'clock position it again leaves an impression while continuing to tick. 1963 now fills the screen, and the 6 begins to revolve		Voice of Frank Horrigan: Yeah. Voice of Mitch Leary: Frank Horrigan? Horrigan: Yeah. Leary: I've read about you, seen photos. You were JFK's favourite. Dallas. What happened to you that day?	
			Voiceover: And this time, he'll be ready.	
	Camera begins to pull out again, eventually revealing that Nov. 22 has been replaced by 'July'. At 9 o'clock position another red line appears.		Voice of Leary: I see you, Frank. I see you standing over the grave of another dead president.	
	The four red lines left forms crosshairs on a black screen with text overlaid in white.	JULY 1993		As red hand reaches the top of its circuit, the ticking grows louder and reverberates.
2.	Live action shot: Close up on phone being slammed down, gun next to phone is picked up. Camera pans up to reveal Clint Eastwood, as he cocks his gun. He speaks directly to camera.		Horrigan: That's not going to happen.	
3.	Back to black screen. The title of the film appears.	IN THE LINE OF FIRE	Voiceover: Clint Eastwood	Sound of gunshot, and frightened crowds.
			Voiceover: In the Line of Fire	
4.		COMING THIS JULY FROM COLUMBIA		Low musical hum continues but

		PICTURES AND CASTLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT		with added percussion.
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Table 7.1: Composition of Trailer for In the Line of Fire.

As can be seen in Table 7.1, the teaser for In the Line of Fire contains no images from the film, although it does utilise part of its dialogue track. In combination with the spare textual image, and the single live-action shot, the trailer stresses the thrills of the cinematic experience offered. It maintains a simple visual structure, limited to text and graphics on a black screen which places the emphasis on the disembodied voice of assassin Mitch Leary threatening to kill the president. As I described in Chapter Five concerning the rationality of evil, this voice is pitched down, that is, calm, powerful and committed to the self-appointed task ahead. The single shot of Clint Eastwood that follows shows him directly addressing the audience, thus breaking the usually seamless boundary in Hollywood fiction between diegetic and theatre space. In this direct address towards the (potential) audience, marketing becomes explicit. Trailers must invite the audience to ‘come and see’, and here the star persona is used to make the invitation to the potential spectator to commit themselves to the experience that the movie offers.

It is no longer common that an actor will appear to step out of a sequence from the film to directly address the potential audience²¹, but in this instance the unusual address is accompanied by more familiar voiceovers, text and graphics, and unresolved sequences²² which serve to invite and entice. In the process, evil is exaggerated in order to provide the essence of the experience offered. For In the Line of Fire, the largely blank screen concentrates the senses on the aural, and specifically the voice of Mitch Leary, as he calmly and rationally explains his plans to kill the

President. To a large extent, the cat-and-mouse game around which the movie is structured is centred upon these telephone conversations between Leary and Horrigan. Emphasising voice over visual context in the trailer stresses the villain's intent over the hero's ability to stop him.

The 'Superbowl' trailer for Independence Day is important in several respects, but primarily because it signalled the importance of advertising US summer releases during the television coverage of the most watched event in the US broadcast calendar. Like In the Line of Fire, the trailer was constructed while the film was still in production, but unlike that film this trailer includes various shots from the film, but renders them void of plot. That is, the trailer plays solely on sensation. The trailer is constructed as follows;

<u>Shot</u>	<u>Image</u>	<u>Text</u>	<u>Dialogue</u>	<u>Sound</u>
1.	White letters on black background.	July 2 nd They Arrive.	July 2 nd , they arrive.	A metallic rumble, a hint of music score.
2.	New York Skyline. A large shadow passes across the buildings.			
3.	Panic in the streets.			The rumble and music continues, but with busy street sounds, a melange of voices and car horns.
4.	White letters on black background.	July 3 rd They Attack.	July 3 rd , they attack.	
5.	Man at steering wheel of car. Reflected in the windscreen is a wall of fire moving towards him.			The rumble increases to a cacophony, metal on metal, human screams.
6.	Direct shot of the wall of fire as seen reflected in the previous shot, picking up cars as it goes.			
7.	White letters on black background.	JULY 4TH	July 4 th is...	The rumble momentarily reduces to a very low hum.
8.	The White House is targeted by a green beam			The ray, followed by the explosion.

	of light. It disappears in a massive fireball.			The music becomes louder and more percussive.
9.	Metallic letters on black background.	INDEPENDENCE DAY	Independence Day.	
10.	Metallic letters on black background. Further text in white superimposed over the top.	ID4 ENJOY THE SUPERBOWL		As the metallic letters morph from one caption to the next, a sound similar to heavy metal doors closing.
11.	The metallic text remains, as a similar ray of green light to shot 8 brightens and reduces to reveal new white text.	IT MAY BE YOUR LAST	Coming Soon.	

Table 7.2: Trailer Composition for Independence Day.

The crucial shot here depicts the destruction of the White House. It is, in effect, the dramatic climax of the ad, the final shot before cutting to the film's title on a black screen. It summarises the essence of the film in the various ways already described; the succinct single 'sentence' of the high concept movie that encapsulates narrative (aliens destroy America), and an attractive spectacle, as well as offering glimpses of how the audience may experience the film in terms of engulfment in and awe at the cinematic achievement. This special effect shot was given high priority to be completed early so that it could become the primary focus of marketing campaigns for the movie. It is, in fact, an early version of the shot. The final version in the film includes a presidential helicopter in the foreground engulfed by the wall of fire.²³

Both trailers play on the specific construction of the violence of evil in the films they advertise, and how this will enhance the viewing experience. In the Line of Fire, through its cat-and-mouse structure, exemplifies its status as thriller movie, while the

explicit reference to its star, Clint Eastwood, calls upon his earlier iconic roles, particularly as 'Dirty Harry' Callahan. The violent imagery that is promised, but not shown, is directed towards specific individuals – the President and Frank Horrigan – and it is apparent that at some stage a showdown will occur between the key characters. As a spectacle movie, the trailer for Independence Day offers glimpses of the excessiveness of violence to be seen, and this targets both the American people in general and specifically their seat of power.

The trailer for Independence Day eschews all heroic intent, exaggerating its evil through pure spectacle. The evil in the film is unambiguous; the trailer renders this more so through the total lack of a hero figure, whether by some counter to the destruction displayed or by any reference to star or stars. Any presence of character or actor (which included Will Smith, Jeff Goldblum and Bill Pullman) has been excised in favour of spectacle, and more specifically on the spectacle of evil. The representation of shadows creeping across the Manhattan skyline is specific in its depiction of the encroaching darkness to the American light. The threat of the shadow is writ large in the subsequent shots of the walls of fire that decimate the streets of New York and the White House²⁴. Removed from its narrative context, the trailer offers a Bataillian form of spectacle, shots of mass death and destruction shown abstractly, and with explicit reference to the ability of the image to entice and cause reaction on a visceral and emotional level. This plays to Bataille's 'little death', as an orgiastic display of excessive violence that is shorn almost completely of narrative and character, but also devised as an enticement to audiences to see more. That this is also a display of contemporary achievements in special effects photography problematises this orgasmic response. Here, the enticement is not so much based on

the violence on display but on the cinematic image itself. The technological achievement in creating the images overplays the content of those same images, so the excessiveness of the violence becomes merely another part of the spectacle on display.

The White House shot does (like the rest of the trailer) forego the requirement for narrative as part of the experience. Whereas the first trailer defined a specific narrative arc – Horrigan chases man threatening to kill the president – the second drops narrative entirely for the sake of the total immersive experience. The White House shot is, crucially, not the completed shot that can be found in the final version of the film. There, the element of helicopters taking off from the lawn in front of the House as administrative staff attempt to escape the onslaught has been added. This adds a narrative dimension to the shot that is not required in the trailer, for the trailer exists only to delineate the experience through the formation of evil via spectacle.

7.3.2: Movie Trailers – Con Air, Jurassic Park III, Die Hard with a Vengeance, The Perfect Storm

The trailers for Con Air, Jurassic Park III, Die Hard with a Vengeance and The Perfect Storm begin with the vision of an ideal good into which an evil will be introduced, even though that evil may not be immediately apparent; respectively, the introduction of the character Cameron Poe, sent to jail for protecting his wife and unborn child; the successful businessman, Paul Kirby, hiring Dr. Alan Grant (from Jurassic Park I) as guide for a flyover of Isla Sorna where dinosaurs still roam; a New York skyline basking in a golden glow of a rising sun as the city awakens; and fishing boats leaving port towards a calm, early-morning sea. Into this idyllic creation of

America appears the character or event that will upset this balance. As we have already seen, the trailer's primary purpose is to entice audiences by invoking the type of experience the film purportedly offers. The trailer is produced according to how this experience is constructed. So, In the Line of Fire emphasises character while Independence Day highlights event. In Con Air, when one of the villains asks Poe, 'what are you looking at, punk?', at least for the trailer, it is apparent that the question is actually directed at the potential viewer, offering a challenge to them to 'get onboard' for two hours with the roll call of villains that the trailer now reveals. This challenge is exemplified by the projection of evil through two of its key characters, Cyrus 'the Virus' Grissom (John Malkovich) and Garland 'the Marietta Strangler' Greene (Steve Buscemi). For Grissom, the trailer concentrates on his malevolent presence, his sneers and glares and his dominant stature in the filmic milieu. He often fills the frame, and his position of dominance is enhanced by the camera set low and looking up at him. The trailer does not, in fact, directly show Grissom committing any act of violence, but in the central position of the character in the trailer, through frequency of appearances, his dominance in the frame and the star presence of John Malkovich, a direct correlation is made between Grissom and the mayhem and destruction shown. Nevertheless, the character is also portrayed as immorally rational. Greene, on the other hand, is constructed as a psychopath. His first appearance in both trailer and film sees him trussed up in a straightjacket and chains, reminiscent of the costume and face mask of Hannibal Lecter in The Silence of the Lambs, but without the malevolent presence of that character. Greene is seen singing, 'He's got the whole world in his hands', while the aircraft he is on is about to crash-land on the Las Vegas strip.

Jurassic Park III re-introduces Dr. Alan Grant, the main character from the first film, and quickly summarises the structure of the narrative that places him back in a land of dinosaurs. When his plane crashes, the premise of the trailer as a fight for survival is revealed²⁵.

Matching the opening sequence of the film, the trailer for Die Hard with a Vengeance maintains a documentary style in its first moments, with a seemingly random series of shots of New York as a new working day begins. The trailer starts with shots of the sun rising over the New York skyline, followed by a series of shots of busy Manhattan streets. In the last of these, an explosion rips out a storefront. The trailer effectively plays with the audience's expectations, not revealing the identity of the film it is advertising until after this 'prologue'. In the placement on the cinematic bill (played prior to the main feature), and opening with studio logos, viewers are aware that this is a trailer for an upcoming film. But there is little indication of what film this is until the seventh shot (and eighth with a closer angle) that reveals the explosion that kicks off the film. At this point the voiceover begins, 'In the hands of a mastermind of terror...' overlaid by a close-up on Jeremy Irons, playing the villain Simon Gruber. The villain is introduced before the hero, John McClane (Bruce Willis), thus astutely maintaining an anticipation of the unfamiliar through the projection of evil, before injecting the familiar, that this is the third in the series of Die Hard films. The rest of the trailer is a melange of different action sequences primarily involving exploding trains and car chases through Central Park. Gruber maintains a constant presence throughout the trailer, in the same way as Grissom does in Con Air, displaying in a few shots the visual aesthetic of evil as discussed in the previous chapter, including the foregrounding of a maniacal laugh.

The trailer for The Perfect Storm begins in a similar fashion, with shots of the idyllic landscape into which the protagonist will enter. It opens on a fishing settlement, with boats heading out to sea, seagulls circling in their wake as wives and girlfriends of crew watch on from the docks. As one fishing boat, the Andrea Gail, sails out of the harbour the voiceover states the severity of what is about to happen, and the *raison d'être* of the film; a meteorological event that had never occurred in recorded history. Again, any sense of narrative structure is then removed and the remainder of the teaser is a series of shots of massive seas, boats ploughing through huge waves, seamen caught up in the driving rain, culminating in the huge wave that, as audiences of the film discover, destroys the Andrea Gail.

In the following table, I specify the various components of evil that are to be found in the trailers for Con Air, Jurassic Park III, Die Hard with a Vengeance, and The Perfect Storm:

	<u>The Villain</u>	<u>The Experience</u>	<u>Excessive Violence</u>	<u>Hell</u>	<u>Point of View</u>
<u>Con Air</u>	Shown in close-up and low angle shots Key Shot: Grissom gives a maniacal grin	Fast cut montage of action sequences	Gunfire, explosions, motorbike chase, plane crash	Flames and explosions	Over the shoulder shot looking at guard
<u>Jurassic Park III</u>	The velociraptors, talking to each other, one looks at camera	Fast cut montage of action sequences	The attack of the dinosaurs	Fiery explosion in the rain	Something running through the jungle
<u>Die Hard with a Vengeance</u>	First shot of Simon Gruber, close-up on face	Fast cut montage of action sequences	The initial bomb blast, and specifically the train	The exploding ship at the end of the trailer	From rooftops looking over a chaotic

			crash at Wall Street		New York
<u>The Perfect Storm</u>	The storm, first shot is lingering and foreboding, of fishing vessel sailing into it	Montage of action shots which fade in and out of black screen	Lots of crashing water, waves, rain	Lots of water, the big overwhelming wave	

Table 7.3: The characteristics of evil in the trailers for Con Air, Jurassic Park III, Die Hard with a Vengeance and The Perfect Storm.

In these trailers, the source of the evil, or at least the villainy, is made clear through the use of visual and aural spectacle, and largely by violent imagery (see Table 7.3), while they also inscribe on the potential viewer the ways in which this evil contributes to the film as event, entertainment and ride. Simultaneously, the trailers display both the techniques through which the audience will be ‘engulfed’ by the movie, and the technological achievements of the production crew, primarily in these cases the digital effects, stunts and camerawork. All four trailers are centred on a montage of action sequences, which highlight the excitement the films offer, as well as hints of the narratives; Con Air, escaped convicts; Jurassic Park III, deadly dinosaurs; Die Hard with a Vengeance, terrorist in New York City; and The Perfect Storm, fishing boat caught in massive storm. In this way the proverbial rollercoaster ride is made explicit, based here on being on the deck of the Andrea Gail, inside the car hurtling through New York’s Central Park, or being chased by dinosaurs through a dense forest. What is critical in these trailers is the excessiveness of violence shown that exemplifies the evil of the villain. This is achieved through the image itself, and constant reference to gun battles, car chases, explosions, storm sequences and so on, as well as the rapid cutting that attempts to fit as much of these sequences in to as short a trailer as possible. What is constantly emphasised is the peril to the protagonists, that the violent situations they find themselves in could ultimately kill them in spectacular

ways. The Perfect Storm for example continuously displays shots that show the crew of the Andrea Gail trying to survive under an onslaught of massive seas and driving rain, while Jurassic Park III constantly references the characters caught in traps set by the velociraptors. With each film, a figurative hell is created, whether or not symbolised by fire or water, with evil constantly at its centre. Each trailer makes clear its source of evil.

In each case, the villain is depicted succinctly in complex visual depictions that concentrate on death and destruction. In other words, evil is defined by the visual expressiveness of the image, which overwhelms but does not completely bury narrative intent in favour of the visceral or sensual expression of the image. The cause or origins of evil in each trailer is unimportant. What is important is that evil contributes generously to the film's intended effect, both as technological achievement and as visceral and emotional experience.

7.4: Conclusion

In this chapter I touched upon the questions arising from the morality of violence and how it impacts on the construction of evil in contemporary American commercial cinema. But answers to the questions raised have not been forthcoming, for Hollywood cinema has the tendency not to reconcile revolutionary violence, evil violence, and violence as a cinematic commodity. Hollywood can evoke the just revenge of Fanonian revolutionary violence but as a capitalist cinema, it will never take it to the logical conclusion of advocating armed overthrow of unjust governments. To that extent, it depoliticises revolution. At the same time however it wants to support violence carried out for the right reasons, but finds it hard to make it

exciting, that is a saleable commodity. So its second contradiction is that it needs evil violence but cannot condone it.

Nonetheless, there exist definitive differentiations of ‘good’ violence and ‘evil’ violence and these differences are centred upon both the victim and the crime. If the victim was an innocent, usually a child or mother figure, and if the crime was one of rage, self-serving rationality or sexual predation (rather than, say, the seeking of justice), then the violent act is invariably an evil one. But, as I described when discussing revenge in Chapter Five, the boundaries between the two remain fluid, and it is not rare for a heroic character to perform an act which oversteps the boundaries between good and evil and becomes excessive.

The rules of cinematic evil, as defined in Chapter Five remain relevant, but are complicated by these issues of excessive violence. We can codify evil based on an analysis of specific narrative functions – as rational, as remorseless, or as loveless, for example – but the visual aesthetic of evil is also premised on an excess of violent imagery that, on the whole, may confirm these rules, but also sometimes contradict them. The James Bond films are cases in point, in which the evil of the villain is premised not on the excessive violence on display but the *threat* of excessive violence. In each of the four films in my sample, the villain has a master-plan that Bond ultimately stops in the climactic moments so the possibility for the spectacle of excessive violence to be displayed is averted. This is not to suggest that these films do not contain moments of excessive violence, but that the ultimate violence premised by the narrative is always avoided by a heroic violence instigated by the hero (which, in itself, is successful in negotiating the needs of the ride-effect offered by the films).

Seven also largely avoids representations of excessive violence by only displaying or referring to the results of that violence, just as Signs, by focussing on events in a single farmhouse, only refers obliquely to alien invasion through television news reports. In these cases the codes of evil are sufficient when backed up by an unseen violence, whereas in Die Hard 2 the excessive violence must be used alongside these codes in order for Colonel Stewart to be defined as evil.

Further complicating this discussion is the way that violence is used to market popular cinema, with trailers using direct visual means to define both villain and evil without prolonged recourse to narrative or character. That is, marketing campaigns focus on the elements of the film that assist in creating a ride-experience, and images of violence are crucial in this development. Highlighting violence, whether revolutionary or not, both suppresses the social condemnation of violence and emphasises it at the same time. That is, on the one hand cinematic violence becomes like the gladiatorial arena in Gladiator, satiating the spectator's need for blood albeit tailored to a capitalist discourse, but on the other fuelling the legitimization of violence as response to evil threats. This is especially clear in Saving Private Ryan and its opening sequence depicting the D-Day landings in 1944. In its visceral horror, it demands the repudiation of wartime violence as an answer to global threats, but constructing it as stark spectacle develops it into a saleable commodity (not to mention being assisted in this by the film's underlying theme of the necessity of military action to defeat pure evil).

What I suggest is that this inability of commercial cinema to reconcile the horrors of violence with its saleable visual aesthetic points to a postmodernist collapse of moral

and political values. Again, we return to the notion of commercial cinema as a medium without a message, and the point being that there may be no point. Fanonian revolutionary violence offers a reconciliation of Bataille's enjoyment with a political morality which, however, Hollywood cannot support. So Hollywood attempts to assimilate this immoral enjoyment through commodification, but cannot reconcile it with any of the available sets of values it has inherited. Nonetheless, evil is still recognisable through the codes identified in previous chapters. We have to ask then, what exactly is recognised in this condition where neither moral nor political values guide us. In the following chapter I look at how this cinema of malaise is premised on nostalgia and paranoia, constantly engaging with the past in order to visualise an unrepresentable present, and engaging with the placeless ubiquity of evil.

¹ Dickstein, Morris (1981), 'Beyond good and evil: the morality of thrillers', American Film, July/August, p. 49.

² Cubitt, Sean (2001), Simulation and Social Theory, London; Sage Publications, p. 12.

³ Fleming, Charles (1998), High Concept: Don Simpson and the Hollywood Culture of Excess, New York; Doubleday, p. 5.

⁴ Kellner, Douglas (2001), Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern, Routledge, London, p. 87.

⁵ Dyer, Richard (2000), 'Action!', in Arroyo, José (ed.) (2000), Action/Spectacle Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader, London; British Film Institute, p. 21.

⁶ In his essay on action cinema, Dyer graphically compares the favoured posture of the male viewer of action films with the positioning of the male body being fellated or anally penetrated. See Dyer, Richard (2000), 'Action!', in Arroyo, José (editor) (2000), Action/Spectacle Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader, British Film Institute, London, pp. 20-21.

⁷ Ibrahim, Huma (2001), "'We're Gonna Smash Their Heads In 'Coz They Ain't Got Nothing in 'Em': The Epistemology of Violence', Postcolonial Overview, 1 May, <http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/post/poldiscourse/casablanca/ibrahim1.html>, (accessed 23 September 2005).

⁸ Fanon, Frantz (1965), The Wretched of the Earth, MacGibbon & Kee, London, p. 61.

⁹ Fanon, p. 61.

¹⁰ Fanon, p. 252.

¹¹ Fanon, p. 190.

¹² Fanon, p. 37.

¹³ Fanon, p. 61. The inference, most clearly stated in The Patriot, is that the US, itself an ex-colonial state which waged a war of independence, was colonised and oppressed and was therefore justified in using 'revolutionary violence' against its enemies. One of the difficulties Hollywood has in specifying who is the evil Other is that there are no real colonisers of the US. This may explain why English actors appear so frequently as villains (the 'special relationship' with the UK seems to ensure that Britons are rarely alienated by this characteristic casting).

¹⁴ Con Air teases with the possibilities of sexual violence against children when Garland 'The Marietta Strangler' Greene (Steve Buscemi) comes across a young girl in a desert hideaway. The sequence is

left ambiguous with the hint given that Greene's inherent evil has surfaced and that he has killed the girl. The audience is let off the hook, as it were, when a brief shot is given showing that the child is safe soon after Greene and his fellow convicts leave the hideaway.

¹⁵ Petley, Julian (2005), 'Cannibal Holocaust and the Pornography of Death', in King Geoff (ed.) (2005), The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond, Intellect, Bristol, p. 182.

¹⁶ Petley, p. 182.

¹⁷ The word 'trailer' suggests some object that 'follows', but in placing them ahead of both the release of the film it is advertising and other films shown in cinemas, trailers are more accurately 'leaders'. Michael Quinlan explains,

I have seen it argued in all seriousness that a movie *trailer* is analogous to the scent trail of a drag race, so trailing an advertisement before the audience in the expectation (or, at least, the hope) that it will be followed. But the real story is more prosaic.

Back in the days when most film programmes were presented as double features, the piece of film advertising a forthcoming attraction was originally attached by the cinema projectionist to the end of the reel that contained the B feature or supporting film, so that it was shown between it and the main feature – so trailing the supporting film. These days... when cinemas usually show just the one feature film, the previews of forthcoming attractions have to run before it to ensure a captive audience, so making the name puzzlingly inaccurate. It's more of a technological fossil than a linguistic one. (Quinlan, Michael (2002), 'Film Trailer', World Wide Words, <http://www.worldwidewords.org/qa/qa-tra2.htm>, [accessed 16 September 2004]).

¹⁸ Titled 'Jackie's Diary', this may be found on his official website (www.jackie-chan.com) under 'Jackie's message'. These are diary entries compiled while on set, a practice, it appears, Chan started on Shanghai Knights (David Dobkin, 2003) and has continued with Around the World in 80 Days (Frank Coraci, 2004), New Police Story (Benny Chan, 2004), and The Myth (Stanley Tong, 2005).

¹⁹ Another trailer type not mentioned above is that concentrating on the star and/or main character. Star or character vehicles may usurp the characteristics of the trailers described here, instead concentrating on the actions of the lead. However, this does not contradict the argument offered. As explained in the previous chapter, stars are symbols in themselves of the experience of the film and their place in it. The trailers for Arnold Schwarzenegger films (Terminator 2: Judgment Day, True Lies, Eraser), combined with visual spectacle, offer a compact interpretation of the experience offered. Likewise with, for example, Harrison Ford (a representation of good, effectively played with in What Lies Beneath), Tom Cruise, and Sandra Bullock. To suggest that trailers are 'character-driven' is not to conflict with the notion that characterisation in the commercial feature has been overwhelmed by spectacle. In these cases, characterisation is ambiguous, becoming the focus of spectacle as much as, or more than, the centre of the potential audiences' engagement with the film. Erin Brockovich, for example, is constructed, I would argue, primarily on costuming and quirks rather than in the psychological make-up of the character herself, just as Indiana Jones is 'the man with the hat' (as the advertising for Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade states), James Bond is '007' (GoldenEye using the tagline, 'You know the name, you know the number'), and Batman by his cowl and cape.

²⁰ This event, if not the film, took on greater resonance after the World Trade Center attacks. Pearl Harbor, the film, was released only months before this incident, but media were quick to emphasise the correlations between the two events; a kind of updated 'Remember-the-Alamo'. Ironically, the Disney remake of The Alamo was a box-office failure.

²¹ Movie advertising has in the past utilised this overt direct address to the camera. For instance, Alfred Hitchcock often appeared in the trailers for his own films, playing on his own (constructed) persona to entice audiences to come and see. This practice is no longer common.

²² Shots or sequences that detail a beginning but not an end, such as Ethan Hunt leaping from an exploding helicopter in Mission: Impossible, the attack on the diplomatic convoy in Clear and Present Danger, and the car chase and fight sequences in The Bourne Identity.

²³ This practice is not uncommon. For example, in order to generate similar momentum, the mines of Moria sequence from The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring was shown to the world press at a lavish function at Cannes in 2001. Despite the praise this generated, this was an early version of the sequence, being improved upon for its final theatrical release at the end of that year.

²⁴ Later trailers for Independence Day do introduce characters and stars, but the point is made here that the evil, and thus the construction of the attraction, is created first and is therefore highlighted before any other elements are introduced.

²⁵ For the trailer, the emphasis on the technology that brings dinosaurs to cinematic existence in Jurassic Park III is reduced by the relative familiarity of those images through the first two films. The trailer, therefore, emphasises the fight for survival over technological achievement. Nevertheless, new dinosaurs are introduced, most notably pterodactyls and the spinosaur.

Chapter Eight: Nostalgia, Paranoia and the Cinema of Malaise

8.1: Introduction

Before I discuss cinematic evil in the context of postmodernism in the next chapter, it is important to consider two key thematic and aesthetic paradigms that directly influence this cinema of chaos and apocalypse; nostalgia and paranoia. Jameson argues that postmodern cinema by necessity must be nostalgic as it allows cinema to engage with a contemporary social world that can no longer be represented. Instead, cinema consistently calls on the past to explain the present, either directly placing contemporary narratives in historic settings (such as The Patriot) or using the past as pastiche in the representation of the present (such as the 1950s aesthetic in Pulp Fiction). Discourses of nostalgia become crucial in the constructions of cinematic evil. I have already described how evil is defined by the use of narrative and visual codes, but in doing so undermining its former connections to theological and philosophical paradigms. In this fashion, evil can only be defined nostalgically with reference to an imagined past in which good and evil were more easily recognisable.

The conflation of a chaotic present and an imagined past also hints at a contemporary evil that cannot be defined and thus emphasises that evil may arise at any time, in any place and in any form. The place of the individual in contemporary society, to return to Freeland and Warner's arguments on the representations of the loss of individuality introduced in Chapter Two, has become ambiguous; lost in a bureaucratic overload that threatens to overwhelm the individual, and increasingly threatened by a multitude of sources that aim to usurp moral and social order through violent means. This is

manifested in contemporary cinema by the prevalence of paranoiac narratives and spectacle.

A discussion of these narratives and spectacles of nostalgia and paranoia, and how they assist in the construction of cinematic evil, will begin to pull together the picture of evil in contemporary commercial cinema. That is, the contemporary cinema of nostalgia and paranoia will start to explain how simulacral paradigms of evil, its narrative and visual codes and ambivalent moralities of violence converge to produce a specific cinematic construction of evil.

8.2: Nostalgic Evil

Frederic Jameson points out that one symptom of a postmodern cinema is that it constantly refers back to an idealised past. Even if one had lived through a past referred to, the past is memorialised as an idealised simulacrum rather than as it was lived. This suggests that the referential present loses one more foundation in 'reality' for it constantly refers to an imagined version of the past:

The approach to the present by way of the art language of the simulacrum, or of the pastiche of the stereotypical past, endows present reality and the openness of present history with the spell and distance of a glossy mirage. But this mesmerizing new aesthetic mode itself emerged as an elaborate symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way: it cannot therefore be said to produce this strange occultation of the present by its formal power, but merely to

demonstrate, through these inner contradictions, the enormity of a situation in which we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience.¹

According to Jameson, the 'nostalgia film' harks back to past eras in which social and moral landscapes appeared to be more black-and-white, and does so by re-appropriating the formal qualities, production techniques and stylistic flourishes of older generic types. The contemporary film also draws on the past not simply to remake older films, nor even to set these films in specific historical eras, but to borrow the stylistic flourishes of historic genres thus creating a 'timeless' film. Past-oriented films can be distinguished in various ways. There are, firstly, films which portray history but do so using stereotypical characters or events that have little correlation with historical research (such as Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves [Kevin Reynolds, 1991], and, at least in its fictional characters, Pearl Harbor. Gladiator is an exception in terms of its attempted fidelity to archaeological and scholarly sources). Secondly, there are those films that use historical genres and tropes, as either, as Harry M. Benshoff argues, 'naïve nostalgia' or 'genre pastiche'². The former, which include Independence Day, recycle past styles without calling attention to themselves as recycled artefacts. The latter, including Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me and its sequel, knowingly acknowledge and engage with the genres they are recycling. Thirdly, there are some films that both represent a stereotypical past and use historical genres or tropes. The Flintstones (Brian Levant, 1994) is both set in a caveman past, and derived from a 1960s television series.

Whether films are set in contemporary times or not, they continually use visual motifs that hark back to the films that they are borrowing from. However, there are two key differences. Firstly, the contemporary nostalgia film is given an added technological 'sheen' so that the B-grade movie of the past becomes the A-list movie of the present³. Secondly, as I will explain, the subtext of the earlier films is largely removed for the purposes of enhancing this sheen. The contemporary movie therefore borrows from the past but insists on maintaining a contemporary depthlessness and superficiality.

Commercial cinema, in a Jamesonian sense, continuously regurgitates idealised versions of the past to both mask the non-existence of a 'real' present and divert attention away from its inability to imagine a future, whether utopian or catastrophic. It is important to note that the temporal tensions instigated by the psychological malady that became known as nostalgia also required a spatial dimension. Anthropologist Marc Augé, for example, argues that in the past we were used to 'anthropological spaces' marked by use, memory and tradition, but that today we inhabit 'non-spaces' without such grounding specificity⁴. Other commentators distinguish the grounded 'place' from the ungrounded 'space', in which terms we can argue that nostalgia not only marks a desire to return to some past era but to some particular place in that era, usually defined as 'home'.

Cinema complicates this spatio-temporal relationship between past and present, in that 'home' becomes completely imaginary, or a past that was never directly or indirectly experienced. Cinema creates a tension between 'the past as imagined, as idealized through memory and desire'⁵, and the present that can no longer be

represented. Cinema visually constructs a nostalgic version of the past as something that was more comprehensible thus more able to be considered and dealt with. This cinematic nostalgia must then speak of the present as too complex for the individual to grasp, chaotic to the extent that it is incoherent and unrepresentable.

Staught and Turner argue that the nostalgic paradigm has four principal components:

First there is the notion of history as decline and fall, involving a significant departure from a golden epoch of homefulness. Secondly, there is the idea that modern social systems and their cultures are inherently pluralistic, secularized and diverse; this pluralization of life-worlds brings about an intense fragmentation of belief and practice. Thirdly, there is the nostalgic view of the loss of individuality and individual autonomy, since the autonomous self is trapped in the world of bureaucratic regulation under the dominance of a modern state. Finally, there is the sense of the loss of simplicity, authenticity and spontaneity. The regulation of the individual in a bureaucratic and administered world prohibits genuine feeling and emotion. The process of civilization thereby involves the taming of savage feeling.⁶

In the first instance, there is a sense that the present is somehow lacking in comparison to some moment in the past when 'home', in a temporal rather than spatial sense, possessed its truest meaning as a place of security and belonging. But this past moment has gone and has been replaced by dislocation. In the second

instance, the concept of 'home' was unified by the convergence of traditional values founded on structures that placed everything and everyone in specific roles. But these structures have broken down and without any dominant systems there no longer exists any sense of identity, and with it any grounded sense of truth. In the third instance, 'home' signified the dominance of individuality and social relationships that were built on people working together for a common cause. In modernity, however, this was replaced by bureaucracy and capitalist rationality in which the individual was reduced to the position of a cog in the machine. Under postmodernity, the national bureaucracy and the logic of the factory have decayed. Today, transnational bureaucracies are experienced as increasingly remote, multiple and contradictory, while the logic of the market replaces the factories which it has closed, forcing people to change careers and/or migrate. The machine has become what Castells calls 'a space of flows', which no longer matches the boundaries of the modern nation state, let alone 'home'⁷. In the fourth instance, 'home' was a place in which one lived in accordance with one's own personal needs and spontaneities. But this genuine feeling and emotion has been subdued 'by the restraint of bourgeois society'⁸. In modernity, individual patterns of behaviour were overwhelmed by ideological standards that curtailed the individual's spontaneous desires. Today we are constrained by lifestyles, the continuous pressures of consumerism organised in increasingly global patterns, no longer governed by local traditions or national ideologies. Thus the hopelessness of postmodernity displays traits of dislocation and migration, marked by the loss of both truth and ideology.

This is to argue, then, that in the nostalgic paradigm, the past and present are placed side by side and from the only one that we can inhabit, we yearn for the other that has

long gone, and in fact never existed. There is a gap or disjuncture between present and past which destroys history as a process and as continuity, a gap which is simultaneously constructed and mourned by nostalgia:

Nostalgia... may depend precisely on the *irrecoverable* nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal.... This is rarely the past as actually experienced, of course; it is the past as imagined, as idealized through memory and desire. In this sense, however, nostalgia is less about the past than about the present. It operates through what Mikhail Bakhtin called an “historical inversion”: the ideal that is *not* being lived now is projected into the past. It is “memorialized” as past, crystallized into precious moments selected by memory, but also by forgetting, and by desire’s distortions and reorganizations. Simultaneously distancing and proximating, nostalgia exiles us from the present as it brings the imagined past near. (emphasis in original)⁹

The nostalgia film, then, presents as entertainment an idealised representation of the past in order to escape from the present while living it at the same time. Commercial cinema does this by offering a temporal anomaly of ‘home’, a contemporary version that engages with a past that appeared to be less complex and more understandable. In this way, cinema attempts to maintain the ideological concepts of self-identity and individuality in a post-ideological, dislocated, disordered and disorganised¹⁰ society.

8.3: The Nostalgia Film and Nostalgic Evil

The nostalgia film, as described by Jameson, constantly refers back to an idealised past that both constructs screen space as home and masks the indefinable chaos of the present. It does this through the use of pastiche, as defined by Jameson:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists.¹¹

In the constant repetition of filmic images of evil, a pastiche of evil emerges. That is, evil is clearly defined by its appearance and the methods it uses to enact itself through narrative and spectacle, as I described in Chapters Five and Six, but is then rendered indeterminate by being applied to villains drawn from past styles, cinematic structures and, indeed, without the political or social subtexts that those previous representations presented. That is, unlike the zombie-like aliens of, say, Invaders from Mars (William Cameron Menzies, 1953) as allegory for the soullessness of communism, today's villains do not specifically stand in for anything else. Fanon's 'truth', that which legitimises violence, is lost in the spectacle. Without the subtextual foundations, the image is shallow and, to reiterate an earlier point, evil is simply evil.

8.3.1: The Historic Villain

Rather than attempting to define a new villain (whether based on some fictional wrong, or on contemporary geo-political hotspots), nostalgia films look back at the past to supply ready-made villains based both on revived cinematic villains (such as The Mummy), and on an historical evil that has been clearly defined and is still recognised as such. By referring specifically to villains of the past, contemporary villains directly invoke the simpler moral landscapes of this nostalgic or mythic past, removing sub-text in the process, and so placing historic villains in contemporary settings to give sense to vast spectacle. The key to this type of film is that these villains must be obviously products of an unambiguous evil, thus evil is primarily described here by its relationship to specific uprisings of evil from specific periods of history. 20th Century villains remain as villains in the memory of many. Additionally, constant media representations, through film clips, photographs, documentaries, artefacts, stories, and especially earlier films feed into and perpetuate these forms of evil in the minds of younger generations.

The two key focal points for Hollywood's conception of evil that emerged in the 20th century were Nazism and Soviet Communism. The former arose in the 1930s and culminated in the Second World War and, more importantly, the Holocaust. The latter emerged in the Eisenhower era largely in response to the Russian development of missile technologies, before incorporating the McCarthyite communist witch-hunts, the brainwashing scares of the 1960s, and culminating in the presidency of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s during which he referred to the Soviet state as the 'Evil Empire'¹². Both Nazis and Soviets still feature strongly as villains in contemporary cinema. Some of those films where the Russian is villain acknowledge the end of the

Cold War and so locate their villain as a byproduct of that collapse, while others are more ambivalent in their political constructions. The former includes GoldenEye (Martin Campbell, 1995) and xXx which speculate on the effects of the too-rapid ascent of capitalism in the new Russia, as well as the whereabouts of the stockpiles of various weapons, nuclear scientists, KGB agents and upper-echelon military figures who are now unemployed following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Other films, however, ‘forget’ the collapse of the Soviet Union, maintaining its position as virtual superpower. The Sum of All Fears is a clear example of this, with its ‘Bondian’¹³ narrative involving the attempts by a third party to instigate World War III by escalating tensions between America and Russia. Others, as Geoffrey Macnab states of Air Force One, are unclear in their politics; ‘The terrorist boss ostensibly comes from Kazakhstan and yet he warbles on tremulously about Mother Russia. By rights, as a nationalist, he ought to hate the old Communist regime, but a tear still comes to his eyes when he hears his imprisoned colleagues sing “The Internationale”.’¹⁴ Commercial cinema ignores the independence of individual ex-Soviet states, eschewing the current complexities of the construction of the contemporary ex-Soviet Union for historic constructions of Russia-as-villain.

While the likes of The Sum of All Fears and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade directly invoke Nazis as unquestionably evil (the former, thus, invoking both major forms of 20th Century evil in a single narrative), more frequently contemporary villains are symbolically and metaphorically entwined with Nazi Germany even when Nazism is not directly mentioned. X-Men straddles this gap with the film’s prologue set at the gates of a Jewish concentration camp where Erik Lehnsherr, the boy who will become the villainous Magneto, reveals his powers. This sequence provides a

direct correlation between the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany and the persecution of mutants in this fictional narrative¹⁵. Albeit a correlation which elicits different responses from the key figures of both sides of the mutant debate; Magneto wants all humans eradicated, while Professor X wishes for humans and mutants to work together towards justice and peace. These responses are analogous to a militant and militarised Zionism and to liberal assimilationist Jews in the United States, but they are swiftly reduced to backstory, Magneto's villainy giving no further reference to its origin narrative. That is, the Holocaust provides an initial grounding for character-motivation but is immediately ignored in favour of a depthless or causeless evil that exists in the spectacle.

8.3.2: Lethal Weapon 2

A prime example of the unreferenced equating of the cinematic villain with Nazism occurs in Lethal Weapon 2. Produced and released in 1989, when South Africa was still in the grip of its apartheid regime, the film's primary villain is Arjen Rudd (Joss Ackland), the South African consul in Los Angeles. Aided by his right-hand man, the vicious Pieter Vorstedt (Derrick O'Connor) and his small army of heavies, he runs a lucrative drug-smuggling operation. As if the allusions to white supremacy and the evils of illicit drugs were not enough to delineate the characters as unambiguously evil, constant reference is made comparing these characters to Nazis. The clues are apparent from the opening sequence, in effect subconsciously priming the audience to accept the forthcoming Nazi iconography. Opening in the middle of a car-chase, Riggs (Mel Gibson) and Murtaugh (Danny Glover) in one vehicle and their police colleagues in another, are chasing two cars through the streets of Los Angeles. Besides the usual action cues on the soundtrack, squealing tyres, frenetic music score,

and the like, radio chatter is prominent. Indeed, the sequence cuts from car to car and to two separate locations in the local police station where another group of cops are listening in on the action. Riggs describes the chase suspects as ‘Caucasian, blonde hair’, and indeed all of the South Africans are white with fair hair. Soon after, the South Africans are overheard communicating to each other by walkie-talkie in a strange language, revealed later to be Afrikaans. In attempting to identify the language, the police make various guesses, the first of which is, ‘Is it German?’



Fig. 8.1: Arjen Rudd and Pieter Vorstedt in Rudd's office. Note the grey set design and the piece on the wall behind Rudd (*Lethal Weapon 2*).

The first view of Rudd's office is significant. Cold, grey and dark, the room could easily be mistaken for a bunker¹⁶, the allusions to this heightened by what is either a piece of art or heraldic crest hanging on the wall behind Rudd's desk (See Fig. 8.1). This piece bears a strong resemblance to the stylised eagle motif of Nazi Germany. The scene introduces Rudd and Vorstedt and immediately presents them as cold-blooded killers when one of the drivers in the opening sequence is killed with a single bullet to the forehead. Vorstedt is shown sporting an old-style haircut that is reminiscent of 1930s/40s (that is, World War 2) hair styles.

Working the case, Riggs and Murtaugh find a house in the hills where the South Africans have based their drug-shipping operations. Rudd and Vorstedt appear, claiming that, as diplomats, neither they nor their men can be charged under the law (as Rudd says, 'My dear officer, you could not even give me a parking ticket'), provided their credentials and identities are checked. Riggs studies Rudd and Vorstedt's passports and attempts to pronounce their names. Having difficulty with Vorstedt's name he finally acquiesces, 'Oh fuck, I'll just call you Adolph'. To Arjen Rudd, he mispronounces his first name as 'Aryan', thus in both cases, setting up a running joke throughout the rest of the film. Vorstedt is always referred to as Adolph, while constantly mispronouncing Rudd's name: 'Arjen? Arjen, is that it? Or Aryan, whatever the fuck your name is.' With these 'mistakes', the film is slowly developing its Nazism aesthetic, referencing Adolph Hitler and Nazi iconography, as well as the desire for an Aryan, or master race, described as blonde and fair skinned. These connections to Nazism are based primarily on visual and dialogue cues and do not directly label the South Africans as Nazis. That is, unlike X-Men, there is no specific correlation between, say, the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany and of blacks in South Africa. As a diversionary tactic to allow Riggs to break into Rudd's office, Murtaugh makes enquiries about immigrating to South Africa. 'But, you're black,' the South African states incredulously, providing the necessary impetus for the action to follow. This, however, is primarily played for laughs rather than offering any political statement.

Pivotal to this cinematic connection between the South African villain and Nazism is the sequence in which Riggs breaks into Rudd's office. After finding a clue on Rudd's desk, Riggs is confronted by Rudd, Vorstedt and six of Rudd's henchmen.

Riggs' first comment on seeing the line-up before him; 'Well, well, it's the master race'. Alluding to the master race is the pay-off to those oblique comments during the opening car chase sequence, when the South Africans were described as Caucasian and blonde. Riggs shoots out a large glass fish tank set in the wall, the South Africans floundering in the surge of water across the floor in their attempts to rescue the fish. Clearly amused, Riggs raises his arm in a gesture of farewell, imploring Rudd to maintain a sense of humour as he leaves (See Fig 8.2). 'Big smile', Riggs says, 'big smile, big smile'. While subtle, the references to Nazism in this last act by Riggs make the allusion complete. The raised arm is a copy of the Nazi salute, while 'big smile' is an aural play on 'Seig Heil'.



Fig. 8.2: Riggs salutes Rudd in Lethal Weapon 2.

In Murtaugh's car afterwards, Riggs recounts the events, explaining, 'It wasn't long before Aryan Crud and his brownshirts turned up'. Riggs then attempts to decipher a cryptic message he discovered on a page of note-paper on Rudd's desk, 'Alba Varden, Thursday'. On hearing the name, Leo Getz (Joe Pesci) asks, 'Isn't that the name of Hitler's girlfriend?' Murtaugh corrects him but the impression is already made. These constant references to Nazism have completed the inference and from

this point, the allusions decrease in frequency. There is, however, one further reference that is significant. Following Rika, Rudd's secretary, to a supermarket, Riggs asks her to his home for dinner. It has already been established that Rika is not complicit with Rudd's drug-smuggling operation, but she is becoming aware that Rudd is acting illegally. The separation between Rudd and Rika becomes complete when Riggs asks her about her name. 'It's Dutch,' she explains. In this simple statement, Rika is aligned with a national identity away from the German and towards the historical allies of America, thus she is confirmed as being on the side of good.

These constant allusions to Nazi Germany create a palpable sense of evil in the villain for an audience unfamiliar with the use of South Africans as villains in commercial cinema. But again the allusions fail to operate on the level of the sub-textual. Instead, they provide a superficial texture to the spectacle that acts to simplify the construction of South Africans as credible site of evil. The film does not correlate apartheid with Nazism, but at the same time it does not provide an explanation for the country's white supremacist policies that are clearly inferred in the film with the use of blonde, fair-skinned men as Rudd's henchmen. The film expects the audience to be cognisant of the situation present in South Africa at the time, but without requiring it of them. That is, in the process of creating this texture through the attraction, evil is described doubly so that should a spectator remain unaware of one defining characteristic, the political, they will pick up on the other, the spectacle based on the historical Nazi villain.

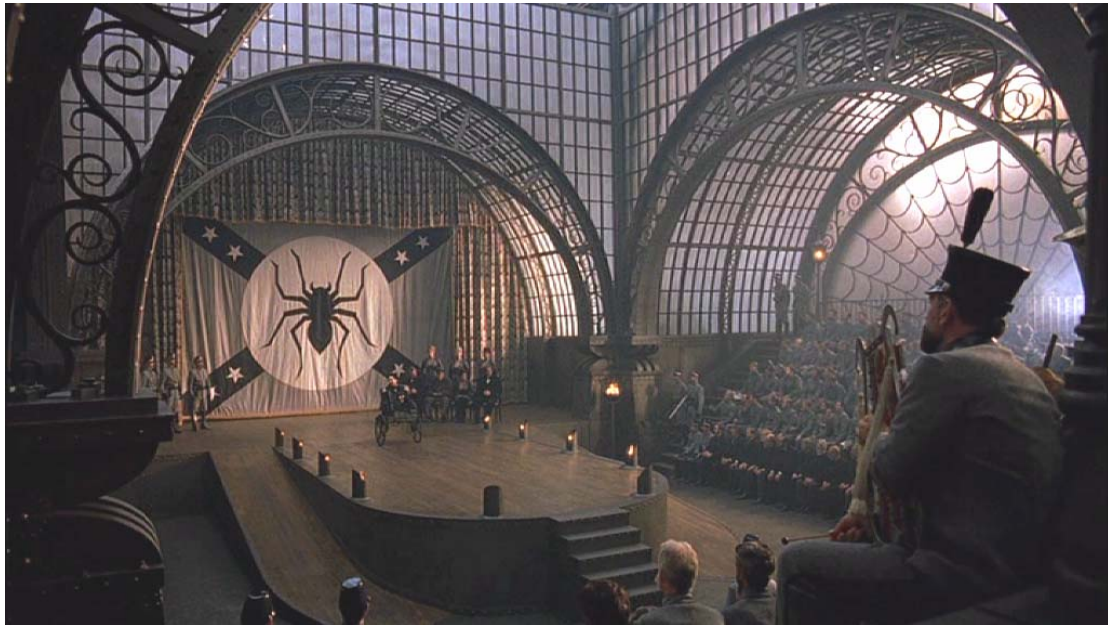


Fig. 8.3: Examples of unreferenced Nazism/Socialism 1 – Arliss Loveliss’s rally and swastika-like spider symbol in Wild Wild West.



Fig. 8.4: Examples of unreferenced Nazism/Socialism 2 – Scar rallies his troops, the hyenas, in The Lion King.

This is key to most uses of periodised villains, whether named directly or merely alluded to. The villain is unambiguously defined as evil because of some formal association with a defined sense of evil that existed in the recent past. This then forms the basis of the double-play inherent in the use of nostalgia to construct evil in the

contemporary commercial feature. On the one hand, films continue to reference a past, imagined or not, in which right and wrong appeared, in hindsight at least, to be clear and obvious (when, it is often said, ‘times were simpler’). On the other, and running concurrently with the first, is that, in the age of spectacle with its requirement for minimal exposition, the continued reference to past villains requires no explanation and allows the ‘ride-effect’ to proceed uninterrupted. Evil, and the location of that evil, become in these cases unquestioned truths that exist beyond the filmic discourse. Nazi Germany was the source of evil in the mid-20th Century and so the likes of Saving Private Ryan, directly, and Lethal Weapon 2, indirectly, can reference it without explanation (for two further examples of unreferenced Nazism and Socialism as evil, see Figs. 8.3 and 8.4). While the Germans portrayed in Saving Private Ryan are not specifically identified as evil in themselves, they are inherently aligned with an evil cause, thus empathy for them is minimised. In such examples, Hollywood demonstrates the reduction of history to a toolbox of villainous types with no concern for history as a complex process. It remains to see how the sample films understand the present period of history.

8.4: Paranoia

‘Paranoia is a term used by mental health specialists to describe suspiciousness (or mistrust) that is either highly exaggerated or not warranted at all’¹⁷. In its clinical definition, paranoia can be dismissed as mere delusion; reality and the individual’s perception of reality are distorted to the extent that one no longer supports the other. In this sense, to label a person paranoid is to insist that that person is ‘seeing’ things that are not there, and particularly that they are imagining themselves as targets for

deliberate persecution which will ultimately lead to a complete engulfment by darker forces.

Coining the phrase ‘paranoid style’, Richard Hofstadter argued that American culture had infused elements of paranoia into cultural and political thinking to the extent that this delusional state had become normalised in the mind of the collective. But, as Hofstadter argues, the differences between paranoia and the ‘paranoid style’ are significant:

In the paranoid style, as I conceive it, the feeling of persecution is central, and it is indeed systematized in grandiose theories of conspiracy. But there is a vital difference between the paranoid spokesman in politics and the clinical paranoiac: although they both tend to be overheated, oversuspicious, overaggressive, grandiose, and apocalyptic in expression, the clinical paranoid sees the hostile and conspiratorial world in which he feels himself to be living as directed specifically *against him*; whereas the spokesman of the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not only himself alone but millions of others. Insofar as he does not usually see himself singled out as the individual victim of a personal conspiracy, he is somewhat more rational and much more disinterested. His sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral indignation.¹⁸

As Marita Sturken notes, ‘This demands that we examine paranoia as a social and historical practice’¹⁹. This suggests that paranoia has shifted away from the delusional state of the individual towards the cultural indoctrination of a society in which the individual (as part of a citizen-based collective) constantly questions government actions, motives, even its powers to govern, and, more broadly, fears a changing global structure in which corporate power is on the increase, differing ideologies are asserting themselves, and societal morals are collapsing.

Peter Knight argues that the fall of the Berlin Wall marked a shift from a ‘secure’ to an ‘insecure’ paranoia, not so much in the collapse of the Soviet Union per se but in the shift from a fordist to a post-fordist global order. So, simultaneously, whether connected or not, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the ensuing change of the global geo-political order from two superpowers to a state under siege, was matched by the rise of the transnational corporation, global markets, and a ‘method of production that will custom-cater to cultural and personal needs, not to cold war ideologies of massive uniformity.’²⁰

The real secret history of paranoia... is not the simple story of the replacement of bomb-induced fears by newer anxieties resulting from the fragmentation of those former geopolitical certainties. It is instead an underground current of increasing awareness and consternation that slowly everything is becoming connected in a global marketplace.’²¹

Jameson argued that it is the normalisation of conspiracy, the assumption of ubiquitous corruption and lies, which disables political and ethical life. Sturken suggests that the paranoid culture needs to be contextualised in social and historical practice, aligned with political and commercial globalisation. As unelected and unknown corporations and global forces assimilate and appear to control national governments, and apparently incomprehensible threats like unemployment, terrorism and HIV take the place of familiar forms of villainy, familiar narrative modes are unable to cope. The visual aesthetic of evil that only deals with the surface spectacle and no more²² increasingly takes their place.

8.5: The Paranoid Film – The Conspiracy Theory

Commercial cinema constantly engages with Hofstadter's paranoid style in order both to sell tickets and to perpetuate a culture that may or may not be based on some truth. That is, by commodifying paranoia and conspiracy, the contemporary commercial feature offers it up as a kind of pastiche (in Jameson's terms), while at the same time maintaining and enhancing the reality of the culture itself. This double movement is evident in the tagline for Enemy of the State; 'It's not paranoia if they're really after you'.²³ The film tells the story of lawyer Robert Clayton Dean (Will Smith) who, unbeknownst to him, has been slipped a digital tape that shows the murder of Congressman Phillip Hammersley. The killers, rogue agents of the National Security Agency (NSA), want the tape back and so call upon the vast resources available to them to find and apprehend Dean; satellites, sophisticated tracking and surveillance systems, computer networks that can assist in emptying bank accounts and cancelling credit cards, and so on.

The film suggests that government, either collectively or through specific agents, act as patriarch of the nation, not only watching over its citizens but also manipulating and controlling them in ways that are never entirely clear, ostensibly to maintain the security of the state. The loss of individual freedom is the price citizens pay for a peaceful and orderly society, but, the film suggests, this masks the true agenda of the elite, the manipulation of the masses to further their own will. The motives of the 'mastermind', the authority figure who instigates and manipulates, fluctuates between personal gain and, more problematically, the conviction that their actions are those of true patriots, that they are in fact *protecting* democracy and freedom rather than destroying it. In these cases, democracy and freedom are broken down through the separation of country and family, thus interrogating which of these ideals is actually more important. War films, such as Saving Private Ryan and The Patriot, maintain these links as inextricable; country and nationhood emerge from the prime directive to protect the family – fighting for family and nationhood are synonymous. But in Enemy of the State, the two ideals are opposed and the film questions which is primary (but beyond the superficiality of the spectacle, a question the film neither discusses nor answers). Thomas Reynolds (Jon Voight), despite acting on his own authority, believes that his actions are justified in the name of the greater good. He has killed the congressman because Hammersley had refused to support a bill that would have placed into law the greater authority of the security and intelligence community to tap into the private lives of ordinary citizens in the name of protecting the nation. But in the effects on Dean's family it is assumed that the price for this security is too high. Dean is ostracized from his own family and is forced to go on the run in order to get his own life back.

The second level that Enemy of the State draws on to enhance its paranoid fantasy is that of surveillance. The film unquestioningly assumes that the technology exists by which any individual may be located, tracked, monitored and controlled. The belief that satellite camera systems are so sophisticated that they may read vehicle number plates and newspaper headlines, has evolved into the belief that the United States operates military installations that automatically monitor every phone conversation, as well as possessing audio and video bugging devices so small that they are virtually undetectable, and use credit card transactions as a means of monitoring an individual's movements.

The opening credit sequence of Enemy of the State encapsulates this surveillance culture. A tightly edited conglomeration of film and video footage, the sequence races through the evidence of the existence of a surveillance society. Sped-up helicopter shots of Washington D.C. monuments, symbols of American democracy, are mixed with what appears to be actual video footage and fictional (the latter identifiable by their later appearance in the film). Roof mounted surveillance cameras are shown (Fig. 8.5), interspersed with footage from police and news helicopters, as well as freeway monitors (accompanied by a glimpse of a faceless, unmoving person ensconced in a dark booth surrounded by monitors showing various sections of road. Fig. 8.6). Cars are shown evading police vehicles, men and women are running frenziedly down streets, fights, gunshots, police arrests (Fig. 8.7), mixed with footage having the appearance of satellite-based imaging of roadways and rooftops (Fig. 8.8). In this brief montage, the film postulates that concerns about the possibility of a surveillance society are too late, it is already here.



Figs. 8.5-8.8: Stills from the opening credit sequence of Enemy of the State.

The irony of the film is that Reynolds is caught out by the very use of technology that the film purports to criticise. The murder of Congressman Hammersley has been captured by an automatic camera set up to monitor geese in a Washington D.C. park. This problematises the issue of surveillance. That the benign camera – photographing wildlife – may become active by capturing more than was expected of it – a murder – is an issue that is beyond the scope of the film to comprehend, but does set up the question of where the line is drawn across which surveillance becomes a breach of human rights. Films often, and sometimes unwittingly, engage with this argument, from those that tap directly into paranoia and conspiracy theories, including Francis Ford Coppola's The Conversation (1974) and John Badham's Blue Thunder (1983)²⁴, to films in which surveillance is unquestioned. In Clear and Present Danger, a telephone monitoring station captures and records a conversation between a Colombian drug-lord and his second-in-command, an action that the film takes for granted and thus condones for the sake of the national good. While in Ocean's Eleven, the theft of the cash reserves of three Las Vegas casinos requires the neutralising of sophisticated security systems, including video cameras. Again, surveillance is a given, and simply another hurdle in the quest for the perfect robbery.

Simplifying the issue in the interests of the visual aesthetic, the commercial feature makes the reductive, matter-of-fact assertion that it is not the technology that is at fault but the people who have access to it. But this is not as simple as it looks. Conspiracy theories tend to focus not so much on the people with access to surveillance technology as on what those people may do if they have that technology at their disposal. 'In short', as Peter Knight writes, 'there is now a permanent uncertainty about fundamental issues of causality, agency, responsibility and identity in an age when many Americans' sense of assured national and personal destiny has been cast into doubt'²⁵. Relating this to the surveillance society, at its best, the constant impression of being watched, if only benignly, still affects the behaviour and indeed the identity of the individual through the self-monitoring and self-regulation of one's own actions (in a similar fashion to Foucault's panopticon). At worst, behaviour and identity are manipulated and controlled by faceless others through active surveillance, not only fuelling paranoid fantasies but also undermining the responsibilities of individual and state, and the necessary balance between the two, that is required to build a healthy nationhood.

8.6: The Cinema of Paranoia as a Cinema of Entertainment

The commercial feature film constantly invokes paranoid fears not only of the surveillance society but of the conspiracy theory in general. The double meaning of the tagline for Enemy of the State – 'It's not paranoia if they're really after you' – indicates a further engagement to that mentioned earlier. This is that the films themselves take a role in interrogating, criticising, disputing and perpetuating a

conspiracy culture. Patrick O'Donnell, writing of the postmodern novel, describes the problems of fiction when he refers to:

cultural paranoia as an intersection of contagious lines of force – political, economic, epistemological, ethical – that make up a *dominant reality*... empowered by virtue of the connections to be made between materiality, as such, and the fictional representations or transformations of that materiality which come to affect its construction²⁶ (emphasis in original).

This 'dominant reality', O'Donnell suggests, is a constructed reality created by the confluence of political, commercial, ethical and knowledge-based discourses. Because this reality is constructed, it lends itself to both questioning this reality and perpetuating it through this same questioning. Commercial discourse, for example, interrogates the possibility that the government has secret agendas, but this interrogation, by its constructed visibility in a cinematic text, maintains its position in the cultural zeitgeist.

The Rock, for example, uses conspiratorial notions on which to base its violent spectacle – recognition and recompense for US soldiers lost on secret missions during the first Gulf War – but soon overlooks this for the purpose of maintaining the spectacle. Nevertheless, it is indicative of the complications that the fictional paranoiac tract raises. John Mason, a British Secret Service agent, has been incarcerated without trial for close to 40 years (as played by Sean Connery, essentially an aged version of James Bond) because of his theft of a microfilm containing the

answers to many of the conspiracy theories that arose in the 1950s and early 1960s. Unnecessary to the main plot – the hostile takeover of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco harbour – this forms a running gag through the film with Stanley Goodspeed's retrieval of the microfilm in the epilogue the treasure trove that completes the narrative arc. On being asked who John Mason is, director of the FBI, James Womack, replies he is a British operative who stole J. Edgar Hoover's files in 1962 that contained 'dirt' on anyone of importance at that time; 'This man knows our most intimate secrets from the last half-century, the alien landing at Roswell, the truth about the JFK assassination. Mason's angry, he's lethal, he's a trained killer'²⁷. In the epilogue to the film, Goodspeed finds the microfilm in a small church in Kansas and as he drives into the sunset with his girlfriend (now his wife), he looks at the film and says, 'Do you want to know who really killed JFK?'

At the time of production, The Rock engaged with the rising popularity in popular culture of the conspiracy theory largely fuelled by the television series The X-Files (see Knight, Kellner²⁸), and continued in the likes of Independence Day, which like The Rock 'confirms' the existence of the mythical Area 51 and the Roswell alien landings. Relegating these pieces of information to the margins tends to confirm the reality of the conspiracy theory but also marginalises it by utilising it as humour. The film, then, conflates the 'real' or the 'possible-real' with overt fiction, making real what cannot be proved in order to maintain the paranoid culture.

Mission: Impossible also plays with discourses of paranoia, using the paranoiac culture as a 'truth' beyond the diegetic field of the movie but also to a large extent nullifying it within a narrative built on plot-twists and action. Ethan Hunt (Tom

Cruise), leader of a small team of spies under the umbrella of IMF, survives a mission in Prague in which all but one other member is killed. Hunt discovers that he is the victim of a conspiracy that aims to ensnare him as the mastermind of some plot to sell top-secret information to other parties. Meeting with his boss, Kittinger (Henry Czerny, virtually replaying his role as Robert Ritter in Clear and Present Danger), he is less sure how far the conspiracy goes. Discovering that the mission was a 'mole-hunt', a search for a rogue agent, Ethan goes on the run to clear his name. Kittridge's role is hazy at this point. Constructed as villain, he is either an officious superior trying to catch Hunt, the most obvious suspect, or implicated in the conspiracy, wanting to indict Hunt to deflect attention away from himself. But Kittridge is essentially a red herring, using a culture of conspiracy to deflect attention away from a standard spy thriller narrative. The true villain, Jim Phelps, the main character on whom the original television series was centred and who Hunt thought was dead after the Prague mission, is merely a rogue agent simply in it for fortune. The democratic systems of power are, overall, constructed in the film as intact and operating efficiently. Mission: Impossible 2 transfers governmental conspiracy to corporate conspiracy, with the company Biocyte manufacturing the deadly Chimera virus, which it may or may not use for commercial gain. But again the conspiracy culture is deflected by the rogue agent narrative (ex-IMF agent Sean Ambrose acquiring the virus for his own purposes) and by the shift towards spectacle, and in particular the balletic displays of violence typical of director John Woo (see also Face/Off).

In Clear and Present Danger, released in 1994, the conspiracy theory went to the top, with the President himself implicated in illegal actions. By the time of Mission: Impossible and Enemy of the State (released in 1996 and 1998 respectively), the

paranoid culture as defined by commercial cinema had shifted towards rogue individuals in government entities acting for their own purposes, whether patriotically motivated or not. I have already described how Thomas Reynolds of Enemy of the State fulfils this function. Despite his deeply-held beliefs that he does what he does for his country, the film consciously and deliberately constructs Reynolds as acting apart from the system. Eraser and The Bourne Identity maintain this premise of the good of the system undermined by a few individuals acting apart from that system. In colluding with a private company, Cyrez, US Marshal Robert Deguerin (James Caan) is acting for his own personal future, while Alexander Conklin (Chris Cooper) in the latter film, like Reynolds, believes that what he does is for the betterment of his country. Crucially, no matter what their motives are, each character is aware of the illegality of their actions. This serves the basic political paranoiac premise of the good of the nation held in higher regard than the good of the individual, but at the same time constantly re-affirms its faith in the democratic system. There are no 'shadowy' organisations, controlling and manipulating events in accordance with some secret agenda, only the villains that will always emerge from that democratic system and which that same democratic system will expose and punish.

Clinically, paranoia is defined as a specific form of delusion. Contemporary commercial cinema maintains the existence of a collective cultural paranoia, but refuses to discount this paranoia as delusion. The shallow ideological function of spectacle, as I will elaborate in the next chapter, sidesteps the issue of whether paranoiac fantasies could be real. On the one hand, it states that government does act in secretive ways, but on the other either legitimises these as crucial actions of the state towards the protection of its citizens (such as the mysterious Omega Sector that

Harry Tasker [Arnold Schwarzenegger] works for in True Lies), or relegates them to the actions of a rogue agent in the system that is discovered and punished by that same system. The system may be flawed but fundamentally the system also works. Sidestepping rather than refuting the paranoid fantasy allows commercial cinema its grip on creating a visual aesthetic that will maintain its popularity in the marketplace.

8.7: The Commercial Imperatives of Cinematic Modes of Paranoia

Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post convincingly argue that it is not the private beliefs of the filmmakers that are primary in the production of a paranoid cinema (the charge laid against Oliver Stone and JFK [1991]), but that:

They are driven by the commercial and narrative needs of the form. Popular art requires continuity and order, elements generally lacking in genuine events. The film depiction of events must grab the viewer's attention, keep him [sic] fixed in his seat, make him identify with the action and principal characters, and induce him to tell his neighbours to buy a ticket for the next performance.²⁹

Robins and Post point to five 'commercial and artistic ambitions' that the cinematic paranoid perspective advances, which it does primarily by emphasising the paranoid delusion as filmic reality. These ambitions also engage directly with the narrative and visual codes of evil defined in Chapters Four and Five, in that they provide resonance, if not substance, to the production of a film as an experience.

The first ‘ambition’ is that the paranoid or conspiracy theory film ‘gives a simplified view of reality’³⁰. That is, the film ascribes coherence to political and social events that lack any possibility of coherence. As I have already explained of Enemy of the State, the surveillance society is constructed as a danger to democratic society and, more specifically, to the family, with no attempt to explain the differences between what I have referred to as active and benign surveillance. In The Rock, complex events are drawn simply; unexplained events in history, both real and imagined, can be explained by a few words on a microfilm. This then has the effect of minimising exposition and maximising spectacle. In the simplified view of reality, the paranoid style simply exists and the visual codes of evil are used to emphasise who the villains really are.

Robins and Post’s second point is that paranoid cinema ‘presents the “truth” as simple in essence but highly complex in details’. This follows the first point in that reality and truth may be simple, but in determining the foundations of that truth requires the investigation of the complex ways in which conspiracy theories and cover-ups are enacted. Paranoiac fantasies and conspiracy theories are never based on the actions of individuals (although a single person may ultimately be responsible) but instead by secret government agencies and faceless corporations. And yet cinema attempts to exonerate the system by placing blame on that single person. The microfilm of The Rock may provide details of ‘who’ (J. Edgar Hoover as the face of the conspiracy), but ‘how’ is far more complex. Commercial cinema largely defies attempts to provide answers to problems inherent in a liberal democratic system. As I have explained, it continuously questions, intentionally or not, democratic principles, but in the

emphasis on spectacle, reduces complex ideas to the existence of binary oppositions, such as good and evil.

Thirdly, Robins and Post argue that paranoia describes a struggle, not between abstract forces, but between individuals and groups. Importantly, because American commercial cinema stresses the individualism of evil, these groups are simplified by the use of a single person who performs the evil act. The concept of individualism is a vital component of American ideology, thus it is not an all-consuming mass, or the system itself, that is the location of evil but a single person who abuses that system. In some cases, however, a nominal villain may be chosen as representative of a system that is larger than any one person. The Rock's James Womack (John Spencer) may be Mason's nemesis in terms of this paranoiac narrative but he is not in himself solely responsible for Mason's incarceration. Womack is merely acting on behalf of a system that requires secrecy in order to maintain peace and order.

Because the reach of that single person tends to be wide, it appears to the protagonist as if the system is at fault. The protagonist must then extricate themselves from this seemingly overwhelming situation using their own ingenuity and limited resources, or by discovering another person or group who are connected with the conspiracy and who can become accomplices in defeating it. Enemy of the State and The Rock both fit into the latter category. Unable to comprehend what is happening to him, Robert Clayton Dean searches for and finds the mysterious Brill (Gene Hackman, essentially re-enacting his role from The Conversation). As an ex-NSA agent, Brill is able to provide the assistance Dean needs in defeating Thomas Reynolds. The Rock's John Mason is a man overwhelmed by conspiracy theories, jailed for several decades for

what he knows. Circumstance, the hostile takeover of Alcatraz, allows him to finally escape his incarceration. Knowing that Mason has suffered a grave injustice, Stanley Goodspeed feigns Mason's death and gains the microfilm as the prize.

Clear and Present Danger and Eraser offer examples of the lone protagonist having to defeat the villain on their own resources. Both Jack Ryan and John Kruger, respectively, essentially must gather evidence of the conspiracy and then expose it before it consumes them. Despite the mayhem and destruction that may be caused by the protagonist, such as the final dockside fire fight in Eraser, the coda is always the exoneration of the hero in the wake of the unveiling of the conspiracy.

The fourth point is that the paranoid perspective 'brings powerful emotions to the narrative'. The stuff of good drama, and indeed spectacle, comes from the struggle between protagonist and conspirator. In the likes of Enemy of the State and Eraser, drama and spectacle arise from the violent confrontation between hero and villain, whereas Clear and Present Danger and Erin Brockovich use non-violent means that are no less dramatic; respectively, facing up to the President in the Oval Office and triumphing in the courtroom. In these cases, success is matched with irrefutable proof of wrongdoing. What Robins and Post also refer to here is that cohesive narrative and good drama are the prime bases for a successful commercial feature that centres on conspiracy theories. However, in the visual aesthetic of evil, cohesive narrative and drama are only part of the whole. The cinema of paranoia relies not simply on a conspiracy theory but also on good spectacle, in which the conspiracy is uncovered in ways that maximise the ride-effect. That is, the rollercoaster ride constructed from elements of narrative and spectacle must carry its audience on a visceral and

emotional journey and the film must be constructed accordingly. As stated earlier, evil arises in those spectacular moments in which hero meets villain, or where the excessiveness of violence defers conspiracy narratives in favour of spectacle.

The fifth and, in terms of this thesis, most important of Robins and Post's points is that the cinema of paranoia 'takes a moral stand: us against them, good against evil, openness against conspiracy'. That is, complex issues are rendered simply through the dramatic struggle between individuals and groups. In the broader palette of the good-versus-evil tale, evil is an overwhelming force that always appears to be larger than a single person and encompasses technologies, places and other people. Good acts in isolation and requires the direct action of the protagonist to win the day. Thus, the ideology of individualism is constructed as righteous because the individual is seen to defeat and expose the overwhelming forces opposing them. This exposure largely occurs at the moment of spectacular confrontation between the forces of good and the forces of evil. In Enemy of the State, Thomas Reynolds is fatally shot in a gunfight between his NSA cohorts, mafia stooges and FBI agents. In Eraser the confrontation occurs in the firefight on the docks, and in The Rock at the moment when the Air Force bombs Alcatraz Island. Violence is thus justified not only in order to defeat the villain but to expose the conspiracy. Making the evil visible is an element of spectacle, just as much as it is a narrative resolution.

8.8: Conclusion

Contemporary cinematic evil is then couched in cinemas which portray the present through the lens of paranoia, and the past through the lens of nostalgia. In the construction of evil, nostalgia serves multiple functions. When directly or indirectly

referencing the past, films constantly engage with an imaginary history that was morally and politically simpler, when clear distinctions could be made between ‘us’ and ‘them’, right and wrong, and good and evil. As much as evil existed in these imagined times as absolute, so did truth. The nobility of wartime sacrifice, based on ‘just causes’ for instance, existed as such a truth, and the actions of young men and women in defending their nation was unquestioned. But ‘truth’, at best, is ambiguous, and absolutes no longer exist. Noble sacrifice and nationhood themselves are questioned in the face of the increased complexity of American society and culture and how the nation places itself in the world. It is beyond this thesis to speculate directly on these, but the cinema of nostalgia at the least allows for and perpetuates the idealistic, if false, possibility that the world can still be comprehended at a time when comprehension is no longer possible.

In a cinema of attraction, nostalgia also serves another function, which is to provide the maximum spectacle with minimum exposition necessary to explain events. The visual and aural codes of evil are given greater significance because of this consistent allusion to a mythologised past that regurgitates past villains and styles of filmmaking, even without overt reference to those past histories. Lethal Weapon 2 points to a cultural shift that has become prominent across the period of my analysis. Akin to what Benshoff labelled ‘naïve nostalgia’³¹, this is the practice of appropriating past visual and aural cues, narratives, themes or attractions and building new attractions on them without specific reference to or emphasis on the source material. In the popular music industry this has become known as ‘sampling’, the practice of taking small fragments of previously released music upon which a new composition is built, while the sourced material is neither specifically referred to nor

emphasised in the music track itself. That is, it is an intertextual reference that does not specifically pay attention to itself while providing a ready foundation for new music. Amidst the layer of spectacle in Lethal Weapon 2 – the car chases, explosions, fight sequences – the references to Nazism tend to act subconsciously adding a final veneer to the construction of evil rather than adding anything new to either the discourses of Nazism (or, for that matter, apartheid in South Africa) or the narrative. Nazism is, in effect, sampled, its referents removed from its original context and, without foundation, added into another text to provide a further gloss to the superficial. Commercial cinema, then, ‘samples’ evil, constantly using intertextual references to past forms of real and fictional evil to build new forms of spectacle. Engaging with an idealistic past, in which the world was more comprehensible, allows for the retention of clearly defined villains. But masking the evidence of an incomprehensible present also masks the possibility of an undefined villain. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, nostalgia, and the cinema of nostalgia, directly interrogates the relationship between an idealised past and an incomprehensible future. In other words, the nostalgia film masks the uncertainty of the present and effectively creates and maintains a culture of paranoia and conspiracy.

The cinema of nostalgia simplifies evil but the paranoid fantasy complicates it. In the former case, nostalgic film renders evil as absolute and unsophisticated, based as it is on a known real or imagined past that may or may not be directly referenced. But paranoid cinema follows on from this nostalgic intent and states that new threats, whether based on the old or not, can arise from anywhere at any time. Dominick Jenkins argued that the American culture of paranoia has been instigated and perpetuated by a political and technological ‘machine’ that constantly invokes fears of

the enemy. Cinema plays its part in this by constantly highlighting these fears, as well as the fears created by the very invocation of those fears. Jenkins wrote that, 'the right of empire to either remake the laws in its own interests or to act outside them is asserted by depicting these causes as the kind of threat that demands such actions'³². What Jenkins suggests is that the military-industrial complex constantly invokes any apparent threat to America as a new threat, and these then create 'a blank screen for Americans' fears'³³, but then compounds this by comparison with past threats creating an impression, real or not, that these new villains have the ability to destroy American society.

American commercial cinema plays on and multiplies these fears by refusing to locate its sources of evil. Instead of offering any definition of the contemporary threat to American society, the contemporary feature tracks a descent into chaos. Certainly, specific sub-groups of films may suggest and affirm some general fears; of the 'Other', of authoritarian power, of technology, for example. But the double movements of both popular culture and the paranoid style deny the identification of any threat and any solution to deal with that threat. Commercial cinema highlights problems of liberal democracy but only offers solutions created by liberal democracy. In other words, movies offer representations of the threat but affirm the capacity of liberal democratic societies to nullify that threat. More specifically, this creates the perpetual cycle of delusional threat countered by real threat, offering as spectacle the notion that the threat may be real.

In a chaotic and disordered society, in which hell (as I described in Chapter Six) becomes the metaphor for that society, what the individual fears turns inward. The

constant bombardment of possible threats leaves the individual no longer feeling in control of their role in a liberal democratic society. Feeling themselves to be mere cogs in a vast machine, individuals know they are a part of a larger society but no longer feel they can influence its behaviour, or rather that society is so complex that the individual is overwhelmed and completely lost in it.

Like the cinema of nostalgia, the contemporary style of paranoid cinema hints that evil exists but can not be specifically located. The simplistically rendered villain of the cinema of nostalgia masks the complexity of the contemporary world and how the villain can be anyone or anything. Similarly, the cinema of paranoia masks the fears of a chaotic society by using paranoia and the conspiracy theory as a kind of pastiche. Paranoia is commodified by cinema, simultaneously making the paranoid delusion credible, so that the tenuous connection between cinematic make-believe and social reality normalises the paranoiac fantasy. The self becomes the site of a constant engagement with notions of identity and self-belief. The ephemeral qualities of faith and hope become common themes in a cinema that offers up the possibility that one person can make a difference, in a world in which logic and reason no longer offer any answers to the human condition.

In this unspecified evocation of evil, evil is thus located anywhere. The current paranoid style does not reflect specific concerns – with Soviet Russia, with the atom bomb, with Nazism, for example – but instead a general malaise that has now come to define societal concerns. Just as evil is only definable by its actions – ‘we know it when we see it’ – cinematic evil is recognised in how it acts and in how those acts appear. Cinemas of nostalgia and paranoia point to a disintegration of the capability of

cinema to represent the contemporary world and instead lead towards the chaos and disintegration defined by the postmodern. In the next chapter I will analyse evil in a postmodern cinema as a method of understanding the complexities of cinematic evil.

¹ Jameson, Fredric (1984), 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', in Durham and Kellner (eds.) *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, p. 564.

² Benshoff, Harry M (2001), 'Mars Attacks!/Independence Day', *Film Journal*, 8 January, <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/filmrev/id4-and-mars-attacks.htm>, (accessed 15 November 2004).

³ As Peter Biskind noted of the shifts in the Hollywood industry after the releases of *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977): 'every studio movie became a B movie, and at least for the big action blockbusters that dominate the studios' slates, second unit has replaced first unit'. Biskind, Peter (1999), *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex 'n' Drugs 'n' Rock 'n' Roll Generation Saved Hollywood*, Bloomsbury, London, p. 278.

⁴ Augé, Marc (1995), *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso, London.

⁵ Hutcheon, Linda (1998), 'Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern', *University of Toronto English Library*, <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html> (accessed 24 July 2004).

⁶ Stauth, Georg, and Bryan S. Turner (1988), 'Nostalgia, Postmodernism and the Critique of Mass Culture', *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 5, p. 513.

⁷ Castells, Manuel (1996), *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture – Volume One: the Rise of the Network Society*, Blackwell, Oxford.

⁸ Turner, Bryan S. (1987), 'A Note on Nostalgia', *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 4, p. 151.

⁹ Hutcheon.

¹⁰ I use 'disorganised' in reference to Lash and Urry's argument that market forces (neo-liberalism) removes the rationality of the old factory-based logic, instead letting the free-flow of money dictate business strategy and national or global policy. (Lash, Scott, and John Urry (1987), *The End of Organized Capitalism*, Polity Press, Cambridge.)

¹¹ Jameson, p. 561.

¹² It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the reasons, but Japan, despite its wartime atrocities, does not provide contemporary villains in the same way as Nazism does.

¹³ In this sense, it shares a similar narrative structure to the James Bond film, *Tomorrow Never Dies*. In both films, a third party attempts to escalate tensions between East and West to the extent that war breaks out between them.

¹⁴ Macnab, Geoffrey (1997), 'Air Force One', in Arroyo, José (ed.) (2000), *Action/Spectacle Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader*, British Film Institute, London, p. 251.

¹⁵ In the casting of the openly gay actor Ian McKellen as Magneto, the film also draws a triangular parallel between the persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany, the struggle for gay rights in contemporary society, with this same mutant narrative in *X-Men*.

¹⁶ A later sequence reveals curtains drawn back and sunlight streaming in, reducing the impact of the bunker-like aesthetic. The bunker-like effect is therefore produced in this early sequence to heighten dramatic tension as well as providing the allusion to Hitler's bunker.

¹⁷ National Institute of Mental Health (u.d.), 'Paranoia – the Word', *Useful Information on... Paranoia*, <http://www.hoptechno.com/paranoia.htm>, (accessed 4 December, 2004).

¹⁸ Hofstadter, Richard (1966), *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, p. 4.

¹⁹ Sturken, Marita (1997), 'Reenactment, Fantasy, and the Paranoia of History: Oliver Stone's Docudramas', *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History*, Vol. 36 No. 4 (December), p. 77.

²⁰ DeLillo, Tom, quoted in Knight, Peter (2000), *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to The X-Files*, Routledge, London, p. 234.

²¹ Knight, p. 235.

²² Jameson, Fredric (2005), *Representations of Globalisation*, Lecture, University of Auckland, 13 December.

²³ Possibly borrowed from The Paper (Ron Howard, 1994), in which a newspaper columnist is convinced that 'they' are out to get him:

Henry (Michael Keaton): When did you get so paranoid?

Michael (Randy Quaid): When they started plotting against me.

²⁴ One version of the release poster for Blue Thunder contains the following:

HE'S OUT THERE...

Flying the most lethal weapon ever made... The Blue Thunder Special.

At his fingertips, an infrared camera that can see right through your bedroom walls.

A microphone that can record your most intimate conversations.

And a 20mm electric cannon with six barrels that can turn your neighbourhood into a raging inferno.

But he's not headed for a war-torn country.

He'll be cruising the skies of America.

And only one man can stop him from using it on you.

A note at the beginning of the film suggests that all the technology on display in the film currently exists.

²⁵ Knight, p. 4.

²⁶ O'Donnell, Patrick (1992), 'Engendering Paranoia in Contemporary Narrative', in Nicol, Brian (2002), Postmodernism and the Contemporary Novel: A Reader, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 463-464.

²⁷ The inconsistency of dates here occurs in the film. If the files were stolen in 1962, they should not have contained any information on the assassination of John F. Kennedy that occurred in 1963.

²⁸ Knight, Peter (2000), Conspiracy Culture: From the Kennedy Assassination to The X Files, Routledge, London, and Kellner, Douglas (2003), Media Spectacle, Routledge, London.

²⁹ Robins, Robert S., and Jerrold M. Post (1997), Political Paranoia as Cinematic Motif: Stone's JFK, August/September, <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/robins.htm>, (accessed 2 December, 2004).

³⁰ Robins and Post.

³¹ Benshoff, Harry M (2001), '*Mars Attacks!/Independence Day*', Film Journal, 8 January, <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/filmrev/id4-and-mars-attacks.htm>, (accessed 15 November 2004).

³² Jenkins, Dominick (2002), The Final Frontier: America, Science & Terror, Verso, London, p. 265.

³³ Jenkins, p. 265.

Chapter Nine: The Postmodern Breakdown of Evil

9.1: Introduction

In the last chapter I looked at how cinemas of nostalgia and paranoia inform contemporary constructions of filmic evil and contribute to the postmodern collapse of the referent of social evil. In this chapter, I will open up the discussion of evil in postmodern cinema, and how the visual aesthetic of the contemporary commercial feature film has become increasingly ambiguous on what evil is and where it is located. Postmodern discourses of cinema point towards the collapse of primary dichotomies, and the breakdown of the divisions between the real and the simulacra, art and commerce, high and low culture, narrative and spectacle, and, importantly here, good and evil. Using the textual analyses used in Chapters Five and Six, I will examine how the visual aesthetic of the contemporary feature film ruptures the divide between narrative and spectacle, creating images of chaos and disorder, centred on the breakdown of distinctions between good and evil. I will then discuss how contemporary cinema, emerging from a framework of corporate and economic discourse, contributes to the collapse of the 'real', and how this influences the creation of a cinema of malaise. This is closely linked to the thematic concern of the loss of self-identity, which is present in many, but not all of the films in the sample..

In doing this, I am aware of the difficulty of proving a negative, and that claiming that postmodern evil is insignificant (in the sense that it has no referent) may itself seem to be an insignificant position. Still, I believe that cinema's abandonment of the task of providing moral and ideological guidance is significant and important. The complexities and ambiguities of cinema's inability to reconcile its representations of

evil instead signal a collapse of the image into the chaos and disorder of the postmodern. In the convergence of image and reality, where each merely becomes the reflection of a false other, the possibility of finding a unified truth is negated in favour of a dystopic present that can not be represented. In this way, cinematic evil cannot reflect a conspiratorial, paranoid present without being masked by a Jamesonian nostalgia. The return to Cold War narratives, the rise of depthless spectacle, the intertextual narrative and aesthetic codes as delineated in Chapters Five and Six, and the protracted emphasis on aesthetic style and sensation may, in this sense, not disguise the inability of cinema to define contemporary evil but rather the complete impossibility of providing a representation of the world in which reality no longer exists.

Overall, these point to a postmodern collapse into chaos and disorganisation. As Boggs and Pollard argue:

The breakdown of cultural modernism and the simultaneous emergence of postmodern film discourse coincide with the appearance of a full-blown cinematic age where the restless search for new epistemological and aesthetic paradigms – a search often taking its architects in a direction of chaos and even apocalypse – has infused the spirit of much contemporary filmmaking.... Here the diffuse conditions of postmodernity involve nothing less than development (or refinement) of new ways of seeing the world, including a new cinematic “voyeurism” (to use Denzin’s reference)

appropriate to the society of the spectacle and hyper-consumerism.¹

As I have already described, these new ways of seeing the world have been manifested in three different ways. Firstly, the double movement of cinematic evil reveals that the discourses of evil in the social world act in opposition to the commodification of the visual spectacle of evil. Secondly, spectacle itself within commercial cinema creates a medium without a message, or at best a mere confirmation of what is already a platitude. In other words, the ordered aesthetic of Hollywood spectacle endlessly repeats the banal motifs of American ideology and classical cinema. For example, good triumphs, liberal democracy is the most reasonable political process, and the individual is worth more than the group. Thirdly, a morality of violence is unable to be reconciled in popular movies because the horrific nature of violence is countermanded by a cinema that emphasises its visual excessiveness in order to create a commodity that will succeed in the marketplace².

9.2: The Collapse into Chaos and Disorder

In their use of a linear narrative structure and classic Hollywood filmmaking style, most of the films in the sample cannot be specifically labelled 'postmodern'. Nevertheless, most can certainly lay claim to favour a spectacular image at the expense, in any given film, of content, substance and meaning, even if few revel exclusively in the playfulness of the image itself. Further, in the range of films taken as a whole, the most potent trend is towards chaos and discordant themes, where the identity of the villain is not inherent in any particular gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or religious belief, theories of postmodern cinema are applicable. Boggs' and Pollard's

note of postmodern cinema, 'some common narrative structures and social themes... recur throughout – a turn toward nostalgia and romantic pastiche, death of the hero, a disintegrating social milieu, images of tormented or tragic personal relationships, and dystopic (pessimistic, fearful, or mordant) visions of the future'³. Particularly in the 'disintegrating social milieu', chaos reigns such that no trend can be determined as to which groups are considered villainous as would be expected in a cinema that reflects the social world of which that cinema is an integral part. This cinema in the last years of the 20th, and the first years of the 21st, century, signified by the 'eroding distinctions between the real and the illusory, form and content, the mainstream and the alternative, and the historical and the present, is magnified by the familiar postmodern murkiness concerning narratives, plot structures, editing techniques, and the defining power of cinematic images.'⁴ That is to say that the real and the image have both separated and merged at the same time; not, on the one hand, reflecting social reality, but, on the other, creating a kind of social reality through which audiences equate concepts, ideas and images with cinematic spectacle.

The postmodern murkiness that Boggs and Pollard refer to directly effects the construction and meaning of cinematic evil. On the one hand, cinematic images retain their power to impart some way of understanding the world to the audiences that watch them. But, on the other, the profit-motive that underlies the production of the image places its emphasis on a spectacle that must appeal to a wide range of audiences. This effectively offers spectacle up as polysemic but also removes all depth and sub-text. Popular culture as postmodern artefact suggests that the chaotic disorder of its visual aesthetic breaks down any boundaries between narrative,

character and spectacle. In the conflation of narrative and spectacle, meaning is negated, or rendered as banal.

Commercial cinema maintains the propagation of dominant but banal ideological formats through the persistent repetition of the importance of the nuclear family unit, patriotic duty, and meritocratic individualism. Even without damaging the basic desirous impulse of the American Dream, the commercial film nevertheless questions the consumerist impulse of the many to aspire to the position of the elite. Erin Brockovich is a modern American fairytale, the story of a down-on-her-luck working class woman rising to fame and fortune. On the one hand, the film exposes the excesses of corporate greed that cannot be contained by the capitalist system. But on the other, it does so in the same capitalistic system (both as representation of judicial procedure and as film) and on the backs of the suffering of the anonymous many. In the reconciliation between the two extremes, it is not the capitalist system itself that is unethical but the excessively greedy individuals that work in that system. Reading against the grain, the capitalistic excess of corporate greed is transferred to the more benign greed of the individual such that the reward of hard work and championing the cause of the working class elevates the individual to the very status they fought against. The happy ending of Erin Brockovich was not so much that the dead and dying of the town of Hinkley were compensated by the corporation that caused their misery, but that Brockovich herself ‘earned’ a multi-million dollar payout. Ethics itself becomes, paradoxically, a commodified entity.

In this thesis, I have discussed in depth how evil has been constructed in a cinema emerging from a post-Cold War society in which it is not clear who the enemy is, and,

more importantly as Knight argues, a society that fears the shift from a fordist to a post-fordist global order. The postmodern cinema does not attempt to explain evil, but uses its recognisable forms as a kind of pastiche in order to create images that are intended to return a profit to investors. The paradigms of evil, discussed in Chapter Four, mixed together provide a banal but effective foundation on which to build narrative and spectacle, one that constantly engages with notions of evil in different forms but without interrogating what it means or how it arises. These paradigms are concretised in the image through the use of the narrative and visual codes of cinematic evil, outlined in Chapters Five and Six. The Manichean oppositions of light and dark, the Kantian rationality, the Nietzschean superman, the Arendtian banality of evil, all inform the constructions of cinematic evil in a visual melange that ultimately does not state anything other than the contention that evil is present and ultimately recognisable in the excessive spectacle of violence.

Discussions on the morality of violence are opened up but left unanswered. It is certainly true that anti-violence films did exist prior to 1989, and that commercial cinema in the same period did produce images of violence for the purposes of profit. What is now prevalent, however, is that the two extremes are becoming confused. Saving Private Ryan and Black Hawk Down are as much anti-war films as they are exemplary spectacles of violence and promotion of the use of violence to end tyrannies of evil. The Patriot is more ambiguous, effectively and simultaneously stating that the use of violence is reprehensible, and that, in Fanon's sense, violent revolution, or the rise of the oppressed, gives birth to great nations. Producer of the film, Dean Devlin, stated this most succinctly when he commented that, 'the lesson is war is a horrible, horrible thing, to be avoided at all costs, and sometimes it's

necessary’⁵. This is a sentiment echoed by the tagline on the teaser trailer, ‘Some things are worth fighting for’. Devlin acknowledges that the film is ambivalent on the concept of war, acknowledging that war as an experience (the ride effect, perhaps?) is horrific – based on the foot soldier on the front lines – but that war cannot be avoided if ‘right’ is to prevail. In other words, the fight between good and evil can be literal, but ‘truth’, referring again to Fanon’s argument, can be lost in the struggle.

Taken to the postmodern extreme, Pulp Fiction mixes together traditional paradigms and standardised visual codes of evil with an ambivalence towards violence, all located in a nostalgic cinema that produces an intense but superficial examination of contemporary society. The film utilises a non-linear narrative, a pastiche of 1950s style and architecture, various intertextual references, and extreme violence as markers of the postmodern. Importantly, in its depiction of a discordant present, the film contains a strong ambiguity between good and evil, striking a convergence between Judeo-Christian paradigms of evil and liberal politics. The audience is expected to empathise with some of the characters, in spite of the fact that none of them retains any goodness in them; Jules and Vincent are thugs and murderers, Marcellus Wallace is a gangland boss, and his wife, Mia, is a failed actress and self-centred drug addict. Butch is a crooked boxer who kills his opponent in the ring, while Pumpkin and Honeybunch, seen in the prologue robbing a diner, are small-time crooks. While they are all bad to varying degrees, it is in fact a moot point whether any of them are actually evil.

But evil does lurk beneath the surface, primarily in the story of Jules and Vincent. In surviving a point-blank shooting attempt, Jules has a religious experience, believing

that it was only divine intervention that saved him; ‘God came down from heaven and stopped these motherfucking bullets’. After this, he vowed to walk the earth, like Caine in the 1970s television series Kung Fu (1972-1975). What becomes confusing in this defining of good and evil in a biblical context, is that at the climax, when confronted by Pumpkin and Honeybunch in the diner, Jules states that he has finally realised what the Bible passage means that he always quotes before he kills; ‘I am the tyranny of evil men... But I’m trying real hard to be the shepherd’. If he is the tyranny of evil men, does this suggest that he is not evil himself? On the one hand he is a remorseless assassin (thus is evil by the rules developed in Chapter Five). But, on the other, perhaps because he only murders those who have lied, cheated and killed, Jules is in fact like some avenging angel. The mysterious briefcase provides a clue to his character (and the film’s construction of evil). It requires the number 666 to open its lock (thus alluding directly to the great beast of the apocalypse), and the contents are only ever hinted at by the golden glow of whatever is inside it⁶. One possible reading of this is that the briefcase is a test of faith. Jules had been an agent of Satan and, having had his epiphany and understood its meaning, once he relinquished possession of the briefcase he also severed his ties to the Devil. His partner, Vincent Vega, does not have the same epiphany so failing the test, is ultimately killed by Butch. In other words, Vega remains tempted by evil so must be destroyed. This suggestion of the Devil’s work becomes more pertinent when looking back to the sequence in which we first see their boss, Marcellus Wallace. He is in his night club, visible only by a close-up of the back of his bald head (See Fig. 9.1). The club is bathed in a deep red glow, and his ears take on the form of horns, thus the connection once again is made to a biblical hell, a connection that the film relates but in a formless kind of way. There is no attempt to balance these visions of the devil or hell with utopian visions of heaven

(despite the glowing suitcase⁷). The conclusion of the film maintains a postmodern ambivalence, with good and evil never defined or conquered.



Fig. 9.1: Marcellus talks to Butch in his club (*Pulp Fiction*). Note the band-aid on Marcellus' neck. A kind of urban legend arose at the time of the film's release that this had some occult meaning. One theory held that the devil had sucked out his soul by some metaphysical lumbar puncture, and the plaster covered the resulting wound. Another, as reported by *Empire* magazine, concluded, 'The Devil, who celebrated "tyranny of evil men" as per Jules recitation, is recognised to have [the digits 666]... written on his head, perhaps in the very spot that Marsellus Wallace bears a sticking plaster'. When asked about these theories, Quentin Tarantino is reported to have replied, 'It's a good theory, hahaha'⁸.

9.3: The Collapse of the 'Real'

Important to consider here in terms of postmodern cinema is the rupture between sign and signified. If indeed contemporary commercial cinema is a communication without a message, it is because postmodern cinema is a cultural artefact that reflects the collapsing distinction between the meaning of a film and its social referent. The construction of evil in a postmodern cinema is founded upon a visual aesthetic – or spectacle – that has only an ambiguous correlation to understandings of evil in the social world. As a stark example, the World Trade Center attack becomes an act of evil because it approximates this visual spectacle; as was often heard in news coverage, 'it was just like a movie'.

In postmodern culture, the pleasure derived from the visual aesthetic of evil masks the possibility that cinematic evil is vapid, neither expressing cosmic principles of satanic temptation, nor the choice to turn away from God and humanity. In the cinematic spectacle, evil is merely evil. The image-as-commodity, especially as combined with the image-as-spectacle, severs the connections with image-as-truth, as the rational ideal of photography held. Dominic Strinati argues that:

We... increasingly consume *images* and *signs* for their own sake.

This is evident in popular culture itself, where it is said that surface and style, what things look like, the playfulness and the jokes-for-jokes'-sake character of much TV and many films and records, are beginning to predominate at the expense of content, substance and meaning, such that qualities like intrinsic and artistic merit, seriousness, realism, intellectual depth and strong narratives tend to be undermined.⁹

Strinati incorrectly denies the 'intrinsic and artistic merits' of the postmodern cultural artefact, as if the postmodern condition cannot produce works of art. Nevertheless, he is correct when he suggests realism is undermined by the commodification of the spectacular image, and if the relation to reality is questioned then so must the 'truth' behind other dualistic oppositions. Borrowing Jean Baudrillard's 'cyberblitz', Douglas Kellner explains that 'postmodern society is the site of an implosion of all boundaries, regions, and distinctions between high and low culture, appearance and reality, and just about every other binary opposition maintained by traditional

philosophy and social theory.’¹⁰ While Baudrillard overstates his argument towards the undermining of reality itself, the key point here is that the boundaries between the cultural artefact and social reality are no longer firm. As Baudrillard writes, ‘In the realm of the postmodern, the distinction between simulation and the ‘real’ continually implodes; the real and the imaginary continually collapse into each other. The result is hyperrealism: the real and the simulated are experienced as without difference.’¹¹ Or, as Guy Debord argued, ‘All that once was directly lived has become mere representation’¹².

It must be noted here that Baudrillard and Debord operate on different agendas. Debord, in his work on the Society of the Spectacle, classifies the divisions between the empowered and the disempowered, whereas Baudrillard asserts that all divisions have collapsed and the rise of the hyperreal is instead rooted in the realm of commerce, and in particular in a media spectacle that has usurped the real in favour of the spectacular image. Despite these fundamental differences, Baudrillard and Debord both suggest that not only can perception no longer distinguish between the real and the image, but the act of perception is no longer distinguishable from the production of an objective world. The constructed spectacular image is no longer merely false, but is instead ‘more than real’ or ‘hyperreal’. Life itself is mediated, processed, and understood so that the distinction between image and direct lived experience is no longer tenable. Through the bombardment of images that have been shorn of their foundations in reality, not only in the cinematic image but through television advertising, the internet and so on, life experience is understood not by recourse to objective scientific or historical records but through simulations of reality, copies that have no original. The rollercoaster ride of the movie is indistinguishable from the

rollercoaster ride of life. While audiences remain aware that the Hollywood blockbuster is 'false' and that television news is 'real' (in a simplistic sense), the reactions by the witness to the two sets of images remain similar and the intellectual, emotional and visceral responses become transposed. The destruction of Manhattan in, say, Deep Impact, is horrifying in its allusion to massive death and destruction, but awesome in its terrible beauty and balletic style, and directly leads to the same reactions as witnesses had to the World Trade Center attack. Whether reality itself has been reduced to the level of a Hollywood cinematic event or the blockbuster movie has been elevated to the status of the real (or at least the pseudo-real, to paraphrase Daniel J. Boorstin¹³) is a moot point as there is no longer any distinction; when the movie becomes news, the news becomes a movie, especially in terms of the emotional and visceral responses to the event experienced.

As I discussed in the last chapter, Jameson's nostalgic paradigm offers clues of how contemporary cinema defines the world as unrepresentable. Instead of masking a chaotic fragmentation in social discourse by comparing the 'now' with the 'then', cinematic depictions of the present call upon imagined constructions of the past to paper over the cracks of a present that is no longer 'real'. Jean Baudrillard explains the ways in which modernity has exhausted the 'real', and the consequent problems faced in the postmodern world:

We may pretend to carry on in the same direction, accelerating, but in reality we are accelerating in a void, because all the goals of liberation are already behind us.... This is the state of simulation, a state in which we are obliged to replay all scenarios precisely

because they have all taken place already, whether actually or potentially. The state of utopia realized, of all utopias realized, wherein paradoxically we must continue to live as though they had not been. But since they have, and since we can no longer, therefore, nourish the hope of realizing them, we can only 'hyper-realize' them through interminable simulation. We live amid the interminable reproduction of ideals, phantasies, images and dreams which are now behind us, yet which we must continue to reproduce in a sort of inescapable indifference.¹⁴

Baudrillard looks back to the events of May 1968 as a time of utopian liberation – 'political liberation, sexual liberation, liberation of the forces of production, liberation of the forces of destruction, women's liberation, children's liberation, liberation of unconscious drives, liberation of art'¹⁵ – but a liberation that ultimately failed; 'The days of that revolutionary movement are gone. The glorious march of modernity has not led to the transformation of all values, as we once dreamed it would, but instead to a dispersal and involution of value whose upshot for us is total confusion'¹⁶. But in placing side-by-side the 'now' and the 'then', Baudrillard highlights the sense of idealism that existed in the late 1960s and how it has eroded away until nothing, including reality itself, is left. We continuously revisit the past, says Baudrillard, because there is no present in which to live. In overestimating the power of the past, Baudrillard refers primarily to an imagined 'then', not to one that actually existed. The past has been elevated by Baudrillard himself into a mythical golden age that we nostalgically look back on when it seemed reality was at the point of being realised, when in fact that reality itself is imagined. Historicity, to use Jameson's term to

distinguish these imagined pasts from history, is a way of masking the fear that the 'real' as we understood it is not and has never been; 'it is a 'realism' which is meant to derive from the shock of... slowly becoming aware of a new and original historical situation in which we are condemned to seek history by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach.'¹⁷

Applying this to cinema, the contemporary commercial feature draws upon the past for several, almost contradictory, reasons. As stated, this look at the past can be seen as a way of masking the instability, or perhaps the unreality, of the present, but it is also a way of bringing the past into the present in order to re-package it and on-sell it as new. That is, the desire to return to some imagined idealised past suggests that that past can be commodified in its own right and offered back as both entertainment and as a means of perpetually living in that past. Breaking down the fragmentary and chaotic order of the present by means of rerunning the past also provides further ways in which cinematic villains can be drawn simply. By drawing upon distinctive historical locations of evil, audiences have further means (additional to and beyond those visual cues described in Chapter Five) for instant access to constructions of evil without the need for exposition or explanation. By maintaining, for example, the Russian as villain, the viewer is located intertextually with past representations of villains (both cinematic and political) and instant recognition is made of a time when villainy was more discernible.

Running concurrently with, and contributing to, these postmodern trends are the shift across the 1990s into the post-high concept era of Hollywood production. 'High concept' was a term used to describe a movie that could be explained in a single

sentence. Justin Wyatt describes its use in the 1970s and 1980s to ‘encapsulize... the establishment, animation, intensification, and resolution of the plot structure, as well as the star, the style, and genre of the film.’¹⁸ In other words, the high concept film was a product in which economics and aesthetics merged to produce a market-driven movie defined by simple narrative structures, generic forms, commodification of stars, and reliance on an excessive visual style, all of which combined to create an easily marketable product. The post high-concept era is defined by the intensification of these individual elements and their merging together into a more unified whole, and is signified primarily by the rise in importance of the foreign box office, conglomeration and computer generated images (CGI), all of which merged in the continued development of the blockbuster movie¹⁹.

In the context of the postmodern film, conglomeration refers to both the convergence and divergence of film as object and as commodity. As object it stands alone, an artefact designed to be read, or perhaps more appropriately experienced, and accessible specifically to cinema goers and later to purchasers of DVDs and videotapes. As commodity it forms a small but strategic proportion of a product line that does not necessarily centre on the film itself, and includes such consumable items as, typically, soundtracks, books, posters, electronic games, and, increasingly, other films, documentaries and television programmes²⁰. Eileen R. Meehan suggests that this diversification of one film into a line of different products for consumption is a vital area of analysis for any study of American popular culture:

[E]conomics must be considered if we are fully to understand the texts and intertexts of American mass culture. Most cultural

production in the United States is done by private, for-profit corporations. These corporations comprise the entertainment/information sector of the American economy and encompass the industries of publishing, television, film, music, cable, and radio. Significantly, American capitalism organizes the creation of cultural artefacts as a process of mass production carried out by profit-driven businesses operating in an industrial context. Profit, not culture, drives show business: no business means no show.²¹

While this approach downplays the role of the audience and of the socio-historic forces that contribute to decisions on which cultural products are manufactured and which may ultimately succeed in the marketplace, nevertheless Meehan's points, that conglomeration of the entertainment industry leads to diversification of media outlets, and that it is the potential profitability of media products that drives what gets made, are relevant. As Boggs and Pollard understand, 'the development of postmodern cinema must be situated in a framework of corporate mergers, economic restructuring, and product diversification – structural processes that force novel production and marketing strategies that demand technological innovation, thematic difference, and thematic diversity in a greatly competitive international market.'²² In this framework, popular culture is not simply the site of agency and resistance, and cinematic evil becomes as much an attraction as something to be feared and despised.

Jane M. Gaines is one of many (Stuart Hall, John Storey, and John Fiske, among others²³) who has written at length on the function of popular culture as site of agency and resistance. She points out that:

The problem with the dream factory products is that the fantasies they contain are always compromised, and this question of exactly how it is that they are constrained is perhaps the most important question to have engaged film scholars since the 1970s. It is on this particular question of the degree and quality of the constraint that cultural studies has made its most important contribution to film studies. Let me state this as the question of the extent to which popular forms can be said to be 'ideological'.²⁴

The interrogation of the ideological functions of popular culture is simultaneously exaggerated and abandoned in popular culture itself. This becomes acute in a cinema of paranoia which firstly exaggerates the ideological critique of film-cultural studies to the point of absurdity, and, secondly, in a cinema of spectacle which overrides the possibility of there existing any true representations. That is, spectacle denies that there is any alternative to ideology. At the same time, ideology itself has changed, no longer capable of unity, coherence or commonality. Society, or rather popular culture, has become discordant, murky, and apolitical. As Boggs and Pollard write:

In this cultural milieu, the character of social life appears more and more destabilized, purposeless, dominated by images of chaos, and thus quite at odds with the requirements of rational ideological

discourse and political organization. This is one reason why the work of many postmodern filmmakers is so elusive politically, so difficult to locate along the ideological spectrum; it can be simultaneously “conservative” and “radical” or “liberal”, critical of the status quo (and film industry) yet impotent to identify any constituent elements of collective action or social change, any visionary alternative to the present corruptions and nightmares.²⁵

In a world where originality (or as Baudrillard suggests, reality itself) no longer exists, postmodern film is fragmented, never quite offering any real answers, relying instead on depthless spectacle based on a combination of pastiche, technological wizardry and commodified entertainment. In this sense, evil emerges not necessarily from any ideological or moral landscape constructed/reflected by film-as-popular-culture but from the depthlessness of its aesthetically compelling images. Evil is not so much constructed by ideological references as by the destruction (or potential destruction) wrought upon the world by evil, reflected by the explosions, the car chases, the inter- and intra-body conflicts, prosthetic make-up effects, and the merest glancing of the eye of the villain. In the postmodern world, evil emerges from the conflation of popular culture, political economy, postmodern theory, spectacle, entertainment, and philosophical and theological debates on evil itself, but without necessarily offering any means of engagement with any of them. This then also explains why Hollywood cannot offer a unified definition of what evil may be, merely mixing and matching several of these elements to create a depthless form of evil that is unable to be transposed to other films’ constructions of evil.



Fig. 9.2: Visions of Dickensian London, Diagon Alley in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.



Figs. 9.3: The first view of Hogwarts School for Wizards, in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.

The Harry Potter films, for example, draw upon all of these discourses in their construction of a certain kind of evil. In their stories of wizards and witches, they hark back to a pagan sense of good and evil rather than Judeo-Christian precepts. Good and evil here exist separately to the spiritual, but at the same time the film calls upon natural forces beyond the rational in which to situate them. Christian tenets of right and wrong are irrelevant to the Potter films while nonetheless giving substance to a world beyond the known by alluding to mystery and magic. They do so by creating a timeless aesthetic that, although ostensibly set in the present day, places the film in a melding of post-World War Two Britain and a Dickensian London. Diagon Alley,

where Harry collects his wand before heading to Hogwarts school, is a vision of an imaginary Victorian London, with its narrow lanes and cluttered shops, while Hogwarts itself is a conflation of eighteenth century mansion architecture with 1950s boarding school imagery (See Figs. 9.2 and 9.3).

In the first film, Voldemort, the villain of the series, is constructed as evil through spectacle, his appearance melded with the body of Professor Quirrel. Evil is absolute in Voldemort, and therefore needs no explanation²⁶. The timeless quality of the image – a function of its pastiche of older popular genres and of the culture of nostalgia – combines with the conflation of magic and contemporary digital filmmaking technologies, and with the economics of a highly popular novel adapted using high production values and recognisable stars to create a spectacle that does not question good and evil but makes each a simulacrum to be consumed rather than interrogated.

9.4: The Cinema of Malaise

The collapse of the real is associated in postmodern thought with the fragmentation of social structures. In postmodern cinema, where the identity of the villain is not inherently any particular gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or religious identity, the trend is towards chaos and discordant themes. Because cinematic evil is not specifically reflective of any concept of evil in the social world, it creates instead a kind of general malaise. In other words, postmodern cinema, by drawing on nostalgia and paranoia as part of a framework for the construction of evil that highlights the chaotic and discordant, fails to equate evil with any specific source, whether ideological, religious, social, political or cultural. Instead it inscribes upon the world a melancholy in which good and evil are rendered both as absolute and as ephemeral.



Fig. 9.4: Mob boss, John Rooney, awaits his fate in Road to Perdition.

In Road to Perdition, this ambiguity, the merging of nostalgia and paranoia to create a melancholy, is visually realised through exemplary cinematography. One of the most glorious visual sequences of death depicted in any film in the sample occurs when Michael Sullivan (Tom Hanks) guns down mob boss John Rooney (Paul Newman) in a night time downpour (See Fig. 9.4). Rooney stands motionless at the door of his car while his bodyguards are mown down around him, but slightly out of focus. The sound is muted to the extent that all we hear is the music soundtrack and the sound of the rain. This is the glorious spectacle of excessive violence as non-spectacle, a sequence of brutal murder in which little of the killing is actually seen. In this sequence the chaotic nature of good and evil is brought into the foreground. The villain, John Rooney, is a family man (both to his son and to his men), the hero, Michael Sullivan, is a killer (and also a family man although this is not fully realised until his own death later in the film), the rain is both the outpouring of grief and the cleansing of old wounds, and the film itself an inverted form of the mafia narrative. And, of course, the film is also about moral probity set in a nostalgically mythologised and genre-pastiche past. In other words, the film investigates issues of

right and wrong but in a visual aesthetic that is reflective of an idealised version of 1930s America as befitting the film's source; a graphic novel.

In a kind of contradictory symbiosis, the postmodern construction of cinematic evil requires a return to the types of evil discussed in Chapter Four, defined by Augustine, Kant and Arendt, and refined cinematically by the codes analysed in Chapters Five and Six. In the contemporary chaotic social landscape, in which absolutes no longer exist, cinema must construct an absolute version of evil in order to provide the spectacle upon which the post high concept film must feed. Its source may be banal and superficial, or it may be badness on an unforeseen scale, but evil tends to be unquestionable. In films as diverse as Star Wars, The Lord of the Rings, Seven and Traffic evil exists without explanation. No film tries to define evil or engage with what makes it what it is. These films make the assumption that in a chaotic and disordered world, evil simply exists and can arise at any time and any place. The paranoid fantasies, described in the last chapter, point to the ways in which the communal basis for government and social life has collapsed and no-one can be trusted any longer. Evil becomes a generalised malaise reflected in a postmodern cinema that in turn questions the ideological role of film as popular culture.

The expositional features of evil, the why, are reduced (but not lost) in order to maximise the aesthetic. The asteroid of Armageddon, Samara Morgan in The Ring, Jonathan Doe in Seven, Gustav Graves in Die Another Day, were not so much evil because of any specifically defined cause, but because the attractive qualities of the image made them so. The codes of evil, as I have defined them in Chapter Five, may point to narrative considerations but more importantly they provide pre-defined

boundaries inside which spectacle can emerge to display specific types of evil. If these boundaries are crossed, then the cinematic taxonomy of evil is blurred. Combine this with the cinema of nostalgia and the paranoid style and it becomes clear that evil as commodity engages both with the commercial necessity to provide entertainment as theme-park attraction but also the nominal sense that film should speak of current concerns and phobias (but without, of course, actually doing so). The continued use of Soviets, and, symbolically, Nazis, as villains, as well as the continual 'sampling' of past generic styles in contemporary cinema is not so much contrary to this necessity but reflects the shift and the concerns that these raise, to paraphrase and expand on Peter Knight, away from the secure to the insecure. Without a specifically defined villain, American self-identity, national and individual, might be interrogated. Commercial cinema affirms American nationhood by constantly representing it as worth fighting for, but at the same time emphasises that the source of the threat, the evil that must be defended against, is not locatable. What price the faith placed on the family if the threat to the family is unseen until it is too late? Or indeed when the source of evil is found in the family itself (as in the Boromir/Faramir/Denethor strand in The Lord of the Rings, the switching of patriarchal identities in Face/Off and the evil sister in The Bodyguard [Mick Jackson, 1992])?

Boggs and Pollard write:

The media and popular culture images of the postmodern environment reflect and help replace... [the] chaotic universe where civic violence, corruption, rampant white-collar crime,

poverty, and urban deterioration are the order of the day. The psychological consequences involve a sense of displacement, dread, and paranoia that, sooner or later, find their way into the contemporary narratives, styles, and spectacles of American film.²⁷

In their analysis of postmodern cinema, Boggs and Pollard suggest that these pleasures, whose production in audience members is not yet fully understood, come out of some attachment that the individual forms with the screen image; ‘Jacques Lacan’s famous “mirror stage” of personal development – according to which children learn to differentiate character development by viewing the self as if reflected through a mirror, with the self in effect contemplating the “self” – is suggestive here.’²⁸ Boggs and Pollard propose that some kind of identificatory practice is occurring between the viewer and the screen, in which some form of psychic connection takes place as the film unfolds before the individual – not necessarily because the character on screen is like us but because they may act in ways that we may want if only we had the chance. As director Ridley Scott said of the character Hannibal Lecter, ‘Rooting for the serial killer is a true guilty pleasure.’²⁹

While I disagree with the psychoanalytic approach taken by Boggs and Pollard – which ascribes to cinema a certain depth of meaning that it no longer deserves – it is important to note the sense of loss of self-identity in a postmodern cinema. Of relevance is that identification by the viewer may no longer be restricted to a single protagonist (such as any of the nine-strong Fellowship of the Ring), nor necessarily with their most admirable qualities, but moves between characters, even in scenes. In the final ride in the police car in Seven, for example, each of the three characters

offers a differing and not necessarily wrong interpretation of evil that in turn astutely engages with and usurps audience identification. Consider the following exchange:

David Mills: Wait, I thought all you did was kill innocent people.

John Doe: Innocent? Is that supposed to be funny? An obese man... a disgusting man who could barely stand up. A man who, if you saw him on the street, you'd point him out to your friends so that they could join you in mocking him. A man who, if you saw him while eating, you wouldn't be able to finish your meal. After him, I picked the lawyer and I know you both must have been secretly thanking me for that one. This is a man who dedicated his life to making money by lying with every breath that he could muster to keep murderers and rapists on the streets.

David Mills: Murderers?

John Doe: A woman...

David Mills: Murderers, John. Like yourself?

John Doe (ignoring Mills): A woman so ugly on the inside she couldn't bear to go on living if she couldn't be beautiful on the outside. A drug dealer. A drug dealing pederast actually. And let's not forget the disease-spreading whore. Only in a world this shitty could you even try to say that these were innocent people and keep a straight face. But that's the point. We see a deadly sin on every street corner, in every home, and we tolerate it. We tolerate it because it's common. It's trivial. We tolerate it morning, noon and

night. Well, not any more. I'm setting the example. What I've done is going to be puzzled over and studied and followed. Forever.

In the first instance, Doe engages with a conservative backlash against a liberal America that is mirrored in the tabloid press. He says little that a considerable proportion of America's population would disagree with, and, indeed, his goals match theirs; the eradication of all that is morally corrupt. In the second instance, Mills stands in for the everyman, who may at a deeper level agree with these concerns but also defends the right of the individual to choose. In doing so, he also struggles for answers to questions of what is right and wrong, and believes that everything must have a cause. Meanwhile William Somerset is here a passive but educated observer trying to negotiate the two points of view.



Fig. 9.5: Maximus (centre) and his fellow gladiators first enter the Roman Coliseum (*Gladiator*).

Beyond this, audiences of spectacular effects sequences may not identify with human characters at all but instead with the screen as the site of spectacle. That is, our bodies become the screen on which the spectacle is played out, and the visceral response is

not connected with human figures on screen but with the image itself. The etymology of identification is no longer relevant; we go not to identify with human characters but to lose identity altogether.

As I have suggested earlier, the loss of self-identity is a strong underlying theme of both narrative and spectacular cinema. Narratives often focus on characters that are in danger of being consumed by forces greater than themselves, while spectacle exemplarises this, placing characters in events that are both awe-inspiring and overwhelming. Ridley Scott captured this succinctly as Maximus and the other slaves enter the Roman Coliseum for the first time in Gladiator. The camera remains low and circles the characters, capturing both their amazement and the audience's (see Fig. 9.5). This is clearly a space that threatens to consume all fighters who enter it. As well, by moralising about the decadence of the historical spectators at the gladiatorial games, the sequence also invites its audience of the year 2000 to revel in exactly the same morbid pleasures in watching death by combat.

As an extension of this, cinematic evil in contemporary cinema can be defined in many films as the force that threatens to overwhelm, or consume, the individual in some way. X-Men, like most movies based on comic-book superheroes including Batman and Spider-Man, plays directly on this interrogation of the identity of the self, with the internal conflicts of Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) and Rogue (Anna Paquin) mirrored by the external conflict between the good, represented by Professor X (Patrick Stewart) and evil, by Magneto (Ian McKellen). Magneto may function as an allegory of Jewish (and by inference gay) persecution, but in Wolverine and Rogue the conflict is intrapersonal, the one a result of paranoid conspiracy, the other of

random mutation, of luck, which in Rogue's case is both good and bad. They are attempting to find their own place in a world that fears difference. The postmodern turn surfaces here not only in the nostalgic as discussed in the previous chapter but also in the engagement with self-identity which is never quite resolved (see X-Men 2 [Bryan Singer, 2003] for Wolverine's further efforts to delve into his forgotten past).

I mentioned in Chapter Two Marina Warner's assertion that this engagement with self-identity, or more specifically with the loss of self-identity manifested in cultural texts in the metaphor of being consumed or eaten. This metaphor has taken many forms during the period under analysis. I am not suggesting that these forms are in any way new, but they have evolved (using, for instance, the modes of nostalgia I described in the previous chapter) to engage with the chaotic and disordered world following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the rise of a 'New World Order', the concurrent rise of a predominant commercial aesthetic, the collapse of the cultural inability to locate and represent villains, as well as the growing fears of the effects of new diseases (AIDS and Bird Flu, to name just two), technologies based on genetic manipulation (such as cloning and the interference in iconically 'natural' processes like farming, especially the rearing of genetically modified animals and plants), mediated images of famine, hunger and poverty, increasingly unpredictable weather patterns that may or may not be influenced by humankind's lack of an environmental conscience, increasing health scares that predominantly originate from postmodern living, including the fear that drugs that are supposed to save may in fact kill, and the rise of globalisation where the world will no longer be run by democratically elected governments but by faceless corporations driven by the profit motive.

The loss of the physical presence of the body is significant in contemporary cinema with its metaphorical link to the loss of identity. The Bourne Identity, Enemy of the State, Interview with the Vampire, the Hannibal Lecter films and Face/Off are all concerned with the loss of identity through some external force that seeks to overwhelm it. Face/Off in a very literal sense engages with the notion of the 'loss of face', with Sean Archer needing to assume the identity of his enemy, Castor Troy, by having Troy's face surgically attached to his skull. Archer's loss of his own self is made more explicit when Troy awakens from his coma, has Archer's face implanted to his own skull and assumes Archer's identity in every way, as policeman and boss, and as provider and lover to his wife. Archer, discovering this, descends into a kind of madness based on trying to be someone he is not while having lost almost everything of what he is. (Mission: Impossible 2, also directed by John Woo, continues this theme of loss of identity through the changing of faces. Here, both protagonist Ethan Hunt and antagonist Sean Ambrose use masks to assume the identities of other people, and while not so explicit here, hints of the madness caused by these lost identities remain apparent.)

The loss of self-identity also engages with the previous chapter's discussions of paranoia and nostalgia as primary signifiers of the postmodern malaise in contemporary cinema. As Stauth and Turner argue³⁰, nostalgia draws on the growing disillusionment with the stifling of individuality by the growing enormity of geo-political structures that must also include the increasing size of geo-corporate structures. This runs concurrently with, not instead of, the collapse of the Soviet Union as a recognisable political and ideological villain. With the fragmentation of the previous political and industrial order and its at least partial replacement by

globalised corporate structures, in a general sense the nostalgia film draws upon times when the world order appeared to be simpler. The desire for home prefigured the concurrent desire for a known and recognisable villain.

9.5: The Falsity of Cinematic Evil

In the breakdown of oppositions in postmodern cinema, the basic dichotomy of good and evil that is apparent in contemporary cinema becomes a contradiction. Depicted as simultaneously absolute but foundationless, evil becomes the already knowingly fictional result of genre pastiche. Cinematic evil becomes a pastiche of itself, a purely stylistic exercise, and ultimately a simulacrum, a representation without an original. Movies engage with this in order, not to interrogate evil, but to create the kinds of spectacle that are required to foster and sustain the cinematic experience. Thus evil can become as attractive as it is repulsive because it is at one and the same time meaningless and present in the form of a strong visual aesthetic that makes it meaningful. This becomes apparent in comedies that deliberately attempt to satirise standardised representations of screen evil, including The Addams Family, George of the Jungle (Sam Weisman, 1997), The Grinch (Ron Howard, 2000), Shrek and Austin Powers. In each case the image of the villain is manipulated so that roles may be reversed and villain becomes hero, the physical appearance of the villain is redefined, or the villain becomes a caricature of evil rather than evil per se. In these cases, evil becomes a stylistic device upon which to hang both narrative and spectacle, contributing in an overall sense to the roller-coaster ride offered by the movie.

In The Addams Family, we face a conundrum of evil. The family itself should be evil as they are constantly depicted following most of the codes of evil defined in Chapter

Five. They regularly kill and maim (in back story at least), with at one point note made of how patriarch Gomez is ‘so good to children’; ‘They never proved anything’, he replies (implying that ultimate of evil acts, violence against children). Regarding his brother Fester, ‘Some called him inhumanly evil’. ‘Only his parents’, was the rejoinder. Later, the comment is made that, ‘the human spirit is hard to kill’; ‘Even with a chainsaw’. Interestingly, the Addams family is constructed as cultured whereas the rest of the world is not (a characteristic shared with other embodiments of evil, such as Hannibal Lecter and Dressler [The Sum of All Fears]). They have a certain class and style about them, with Gomez fluent in Italian and his wife Morticia in French. Their parties are attended by full orchestras, and their children recite Shakespeare in their school productions. In the dark humour of the film, the codes of evil are parodied to assist in the production of laughs.

The primary villain of George of the Jungle is Lyle Vandergroot, the fiancé of Ursula Stanhope (the love interest for George). In this take on the Tarzan mythology, Lyle appears not to love Ursula, treats his African guides with disdain, is cowardly in the face of a lion attack on Ursula, has no affinity with nature, and is, according to the narrator, a ‘big doofus’ and ‘venal’. But like most comedy villains, he has no real power, so is simply a catalyst for the real action, the romance between George and Ursula. Once again, the aesthetic of evil is used but undermined by the need for the correct form of spectacle, in this case, as a barrier to romance rather than the defeat of evil per se.

The Grinch is thematically ambivalent about its messages of difference, revenge and materialism, all of which it hangs its evil on. The Grinch is ostensibly the evil villain,

even telling young CindyLou at one point that she is looking into ‘the face of pure evil’, but he never actually acts in an evil manner. He certainly carries out acts that can be construed as horrible, but nothing he does is intentionally malicious. In its themes, the film is contradictory. It examines the tolerance of difference with flashbacks to Grinch’s childhood explaining why he dropped out of society; the schoolyard taunts due to his appearance as green, hairy and ugly were too much for him to bear. But this theme is dropped in favour of the second theme; revenge and forgiveness. After being ostracised from Whoville, he seeks revenge on the townsfolk, which amounts to little more than making prank phone calls and mixing up mail bags. It is only when he is ostracised once again that he raises the stakes of this revenge, his theft of Christmas. In the climax, however, the Grinch redeems himself and returns all the presents, setting up a conundrum that the film does not explain; the townsfolk act in antisocial ways to the Grinch but the film has him forgiving them for being mean and grumpy. The film also engages with Christmas being hijacked by commercialism. But while the townsfolk learn to value the true meaning of Christmas, they can only enjoy it when they have all their presents back. In this film, evil becomes ambiguous with the evil figure also the character the filmmakers most want the audience to empathise with, but without allowing the reasons for his persecution to be interrogated.

Shrek is clearer in its construction of good and evil, but it also inverts the roles of its characters in updating the fairy-tale aesthetic. By fairy-tale conventions, Shrek, the monstrous ogre, should be the figure of evil but here he is the hero. While he has fun with the conventions of his monstrous role, scaring the local townsfolk, he is a sad, lonely and ultimately romantic figure. The villain, Lord Farquaad, is the prince of

short stature who tortures the Gingerbread Man and conspires to marry the fair Princess Fiona. Yet Farquaad is not evil but a figure of ridicule. He does not strike fear into those around him, and in this fashion he cannot be described as a parody of evil in the same way that Dr. Evil is in the Austin Powers movies. Evil is here subverted in the guise of creating comedy, playing on the conventions of the fairy-tale in order to both examine the nature of evil and negate it.

Dr. Evil is a caricature of evil, most specifically of the Bond villain. Despite his name and intent, Evil is not actually evil, instead being a comedic foil to the hero. Primarily, the play on the Bondian villain occurs in the physical appearance and mannerisms of the character; the austere costume, the maniacal laugh (accompanied by the pinky-to-the-mouth gesture), the bald head, and the scar down the side of his face. There are also the evil plots, none of which actually work; the plan to destroy every major American city by use of a laserbeam (labelled the 'Alan Parsons Project') positioned on the moon (the 'Deathstar'). Also to be considered are the Bondian lairs, here the hollowed out interior of a volcano and a base on the moon (which is manned by the codenamed Moon Unit Zappa). The aesthetic of the evil Bondian villain is used and manipulated, again to create comedy.

In the postmodern sense, evil in this group of films is caricatured displaying overtly the ways that cinematic evil is constructed but also undermining any causal connection between the villain's intentions and the effectiveness of the evil act s/he plans. Evil is broken down so that it absolutely exists but is powerless. Constantly undermined by the lack of a unifying truth, we could argue evil is false. This can be shown through three primary arguments. Firstly, the metaphysical argument that the

universe is a cosmic battleground of the forces of good and evil is not believed by all, despite the number of films that suggest exactly this. Secondly, there is a lack of shared normative legal, ethical and moral values, on which all peoples in a society base their behaviour; from speeding to tax evasion: most people break the law on a regular basis, and no agreement can be reached on such issues as genetic modification, abortion, and immigration. Thirdly, there is no expectation that people may express their inner experiences authentically and sincerely in ways some third party may understand; we expect people to lie, deceive and mask their inner emotions at various times. Together, these suggest that evil cannot be definitively defined in cinema because there is no unified definition of evil in the social world. Commercial cinema can engage with common paradigms of evil, or undermine its visual construction as the comedies mentioned above do, but they can only do so as markers based on pastiche, or as iconic symbols bereft of meaning.

9.6: Conclusion

In the postmodern shift of the last years of the 20th century, the oppositions of good and evil have broken down to the extent that cinematic evil is a caricature constructed in order to create the kinds of spectacle required of commercial cinema. Many of the films cannot individually be described as postmodern, but the definition and display of evil as linked to the chaos and disorder of the postmodern world, in which the real has collapsed into the illusory, becomes a factor in the creation of a visual aesthetic that, in favouring sensation over meaning, can usefully be described as postmodern. This is not to undermine the narrative intent of these films. The loss of self-identity is primary in the creation of a postmodern construct of evil, and regaining it is a typical resolution to the narrative arc. Narrative, however, becomes hollow when conjoined

with spectacle. Evil becomes defined by its visual aesthetic, in the same way that it is subverted by its own conventions in order to create comedy. Evil remains absolute in contemporary cinema but it has lost its truth.

¹ Boggs, Carl, and Tom Pollard (2003), A World in Chaos: Social Crisis and the Rise of Postmodern Cinema, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, p. 9.

² While many films use images of violence in attempts to be financially successful, this is of course not true of all films, as those in my sample that do not contain evil attest. The postmodern argument still applies, however, as Sleepless in Seattle and Notting Hill are pastiches of earlier romantic comedies, American Beauty is a successful arthouse picture, and the fantasies (Liar Liar, The Princess Diaries) tend to be banal meditations on the family structure. 8 Mile is an attempt at post-punk neo-realism but is undermined by the presence of its rich star.

³ Boggs and Pollard, p. 16.

⁴ Boggs and Pollard, p. 17.

⁵ The Art of War, 2000, (no director credit), Columbia TriStar, United States, 10 mins.

⁶ Speculating on the object in the briefcase, actor Tim Roth (Pumpkin) said it best. When asked what he thought it was, he answered that it was a light-bulb.

⁷ The glowing suitcase is a pastiche of Robert Aldrich's Kiss Me Deadly (1955) in which the contents are again never seen but emit a bright light. Unlike Pulp Fiction, these contents are revealed to be some radioactive material which kills anyone who sees it and destroys the beach-house where the climax takes place.

⁸ Dawson, Jeff (1997), 'True Lies: No. 1 – Pulp Fiction', Empire, No. 93, p. 92.

⁹ Strinati, Dominic (1994), 'Postmodernism and Popular Culture', in Storey, John (ed.) (1994) Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, p. 429.

¹⁰ Douglas Kellner (1989), 'Baudrillard: A New McLuhan?', Illuminations, 1989, <http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell26.htm>, (accessed 4 May 2003).

¹¹ Baudrillard, Jean (1994), 'The Precession of Simulacra' in Storey, John (ed.) (1994), Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, p. 358.

¹² Guy Debord (1995), The Society of the Spectacle, New York, Zone, p. 12.

¹³ First published in 1961, Boorstin's influential book The Image introduced the concept of the 'pseudo-event' to describe media events, primarily news, that are constructed to create the world rather than to reflect it. Boorstin, Daniel J. (1987), The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, New York, Vintage.

¹⁴ Baudrillard, Jean (2002), The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena, Verso, London, p. 3-4.

¹⁵ Baudrillard (2002), p. 3.

¹⁶ Baudrillard (2002), p. 10.

¹⁷ Jameson, Frederic (1984), 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', in Durham, Meenakshi Gigi, and Douglas, Kellner (eds.) (2001) Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks, Blackwell, Malden, p. 567.

¹⁸ Wyatt, Justin (1994), High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood, University of Texas Press, Austin, p. 16.

¹⁹ See Miller, Toby, Nitrin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell, and Ting Wang (2005), Global Hollywood 2, British Film Institute, London.

²⁰ Increasingly, feature film narratives are becoming augmented by additional programming that acts as prelude or as concurrent action to that which is contained in the film itself. The Matrix Reloaded (Larry and Andy Wachowski, 2003) and Van Helsing (Stephen Sommers, 2004) are two recent releases that were preceded by animated 'prequels' that act simultaneously to offer further back story for eager fans and to market the feature film itself. The danger of this is that when the narrative 'escapes' the confines of the feature film format those who do not seek out the earlier short films may find their experience of the film lessened which may then impact on its financial success.

²¹ Meehan, Eileen R. (1991), "'Holy Commodity Fetish, Batman!': The Political Economy of a Commercial Intertext', in Hollows, Joanne, Peter Hutchings, Mark Jancovich (eds.) (2000), The Film Studies Reader, Arnold, London, p. 24.

²² Boggs and Pollard, p. 8-9.

²³ See for example, Hall, Stuart (1990), 'Encoding/Decoding', in During, Simon (ed.) (1993), The Cultural Studies Reader, Routledge, London, pp. 90-103, Storey, John (2001), Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction, Prentice Hall, Harlow, and Fiske, John (1989), Understanding Popular Culture, Unwin Hyman, London.

²⁴ Gaines, Jane M. (2000), 'Dream/factory', in Gledhill, Christine and Linda Williams (eds.), Reinventing Film Studies, Arnold, London, p. 106.

²⁵ Boggs and Pollard, p. 240.

²⁶ In the fourth film in the series, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (Mike Newell, 2005), Voldemort is finally rendered physically whole. His encapsulation of evil is complete and he is constructed as pure evil and without ambiguity.

²⁷ Boggs and Pollard, p. 13.

²⁸ Boggs and Pollard, p. 31.

²⁹ Keck, William (2001), 'Facing up to a killer reputation', The Los Angeles Times, 4 February, <http://www.calendarlive.com/top/1,1419,L-LATimes-Print-X!ArticleDetail-19929,00.html?>, (accessed 5 February 2001).

³⁰ Stauth, Georg, and Bryan S. Turner (1988), 'Nostalgia, Postmodernism and the Critique of Mass Culture', Theory, Culture and Society, Vol. 5, pp. 509-526.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion – Cinematic Evil in a Post 9/11

World

10.1: Introduction

In my analysis of the construction of cinematic evil, I have concentrated on the decisions made by filmmakers at the time of production, and how these contribute to a postmodern cinema of malaise. In concluding, I will touch upon the ambiguous connections between evil in commercial cinema and evil in the social world, connections, I suggest, show that the construction of cinematic evil is always evolving. To repeat Lance Morrow, quoted in Chapter Four, 'The perception of evil always has something to do with the optics of the moment.'¹ Because of the World Trade Center attacks in 2001, perceptions of evil have changed again. The continuing evolution of evil as spectacle and as part of a deepening cinema of malaise has further destabilised binary oppositions between good and evil.

It is not coincidental that the period under consideration in this thesis, 1989-2002, roughly aligns with two significant events in American, and world, history; the fall of the Berlin Wall, emblematic of the collapse of Soviet communism, and the 9/11 attacks. My task has not been to describe the changing face of social evil in the world in the last years of the 20th century: the period between these two events can be seen as relatively calm in terms of the presence of evil. The 'Evil Empire', Ronald Reagan's term for the Soviet Union, collapsed and, until the 2001 attacks, no other player on the world stage offered any similar ideological, political or military opposition to the United States.

Across the 1990s, with the fall of communist Russia and the rise of computer generated imagery and splash weekend releases, popular cinema became dependent on images that highlighted and isolated the visual aesthetic from any hidden depth of meaning. Evil emerged, and took its concrete form, from the image-as-attraction rather than from any underlying ideological foundation. One conclusion that may be reached, in comparing the World Trade Center attacks to movies, is that evil in cinema becomes a product of the discourses of 'attraction', in Tom Gunning's sense of the word. By 'attraction' I am also referring to a mutual interweaving of spectacle with narrative, and the ways these locate evil, circumscribe its extent and establish its capacity. In both cinema and the 9/11 attacks, spectacle dominated but narrative retained a residual explanatory role which rarely extended to defining the origins, location or specificity of evil. An act of cinematic evil exists because it is *seen* to be so. Similarly, the attack on the World Trade Center was an act of evil because, again, it was seen to be so.

In this regard, I take note of Roy F. Baumeister's argument that, 'Evil exists primarily in the eye of the beholder, especially in the eye of the victim. If there were no victims, there would be no evil'². According to Baumeister, therefore, it is not only that the evil-doer causes or inflicts pain and suffering on other living beings, but that they are *seen* to be causing pain and suffering. It is in the visualisation of the act of evil, evil as attraction, that the cinematic and the 'real' versions of evil both converge and diverge. In the grand majestic flourishes of its spectacle, evil finds its true location in the postmodern world. The visual aesthetic of evil denotes an act whose experience as 'lived phenomenon' remains indescribable and unrepresentable. The act and even documentary records of the act cannot be verbalised because they exceed human logic

by their scale and suddenness. These indescribable spectacles register viscerally in the form of space debris wreaking havoc on the Manhattan skyline in Armageddon, Gustav Graves unleashing his Icarus ray on the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea in Die Another Day, the Joker attacking Gotham City's celebrations in Batman, or the unseen forces of evil raining fire on a 1930s Cairo in The Mummy. But it is in the concreteness of the spectacle that separates cinema and reality in their ability to confine and recognise evil. Despite audiences' very real ability to recognise evil in the spectacle, in the social world discourses of evil remain distinctly hazy. We know it when we see it, but at the same time we remain unable to define it precisely. Certainly, we can look back at specific moments in history and recognise true forms of evil – Hitler and the Holocaust, for example – but in the western world at least, evil can be simultaneously a religious tenet, as waged on a metaphysical stage, and a rational choice, for example to put personal gain ahead of moral norms. In other words, evil can exist in the Augustinian sense, as something that acts beyond the human world, but it can also, as per Arendt, arise from the banal, as part of a system of rational thought. As I explained in Chapter Nine, evil cannot be connected exclusively to either God's spiritual antagonist or to individual choice of evil over good. Commercial cinema does not, and cannot, make such a choice.

Cinematic evil thus cannot distinguish religious from secular evil. Religious and spiritual discourses of evil may have been undermined by secular filmmaking processes, but their foundations remain nevertheless. Cinematic evil constantly engages with Judeo-Christian traditions of evil (such as the use of hell as visual metaphor) and other metaphysical traditions' accounts of the good/evil battle played out on both spiritual and personal levels; Ghostbusters II, with its 'river of slime'

flowing under New York City affecting and controlling moods evokes beliefs in the presence of demonic agency in the world, and Men in Black (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1997), with its final shot suggesting that planet Earth is a mere plaything of higher beings, exemplifies an almost Homeric belief in Olympian gods. Star Wars' two sides of the force is an obvious example of folkloric Manicheanism (the introduction of 'midichlorians' in Episode I, tiny life forms in the bloodstream that appear to reduce the spiritual to the biological, simply shifts the mystery to a different scale). In Lethal Weapon 3 (Richard Donner, 1992), The Pelican Brief (Alan J. Pakula, 1993) and Ransom, evil is described as a matter of individual choice. In such films, the Manichean battles of the polar opposites give way to Kantian or Arendtian notions of evil. Causes of the shift towards evil may be indistinct (although revenge remains pertinent), but it is clear in these cases that characters sway towards or succumb to some dark side of the psyche, rather than being led by some outside force.

10.2: Social Fears, Cinematic Metaphors

Whether psychological or spiritual (and in the many cases where the boundary is indistinct), evil tends to exist in its own right, without recourse to specific individuated causes based on such markers as gender, ethnicity and political or ideological belief. The anti-Japanese and anti-Russian rhetoric of 1940s and 1950s film has been replaced by a general malaise. This malaise, and the ways in which it affects the construction of evil in contemporary cinema, has as much, or as little, connection to the contemporary cultural zeitgeist as it does to a film industry that wishes to protect its commercial interests by avoiding protest from representatives of marginalised societal groups. In the first instance, as I described in Chapter Eight, the American political and cultural system is based on a 'paranoid style', in the phrase

coined by Hofstadter, that sees an almost constant culture of fear used to create and promote specific agendas; the red threat, AIDS, terrorism, for example. The paranoid state spills over into conspiracy theories that implicate governmental institutions and corporations in plots that undermine personal freedoms and actively damage the democratic process. These paranoias inevitably filter through to film, with the various fears of the times tackled either directly or metaphorically by cinema. In a sidebar to a piece on horror movies in the trade newspaper Variety, Timothy M. Gray lists the fears that marked or influenced commercial cinema;

	<u>Fear</u>	<u>Key Films</u>
1950s	Suspicion of science, nuclear power, suburban conformity, Commies.	<u>The Thing</u> , <u>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</u> , <u>Them!</u> , <u>Attack of the 50 Foot Woman</u>
1960s	Paranoia about political cover-ups, assassinations, Vietnam.	<u>Psycho</u> , <u>Rosemary's Baby</u> , <u>Night of the Living Dead</u> , <u>The Parallax View</u>
1970s	Fears about eco-imbalance, chemical warfare, cancer, a permissive society.	<u>The Exorcist</u> , <u>The Texas Chain Saw Massacre</u> , <u>Jaws</u> , <u>The Hills Have Eyes</u> , <u>Alien</u>
1980s	Worries about AIDS, random killings, alienation.	<u>Halloween</u> , <u>Nightmare on Elm Street</u> , <u>Friday the 13th</u> , <u>The Thing (remake)</u>
1990s	Feelings of powerlessness, cynicism, amorality.	<u>The Silence of the Lambs</u> , <u>Scream</u> , <u>The Blair Witch Project</u>

Table 10.1: Societal fears and the films that reflected these.

Source: Gray, Timothy M. (2002), 'Scary Allegories', Variety, 4-10 November, p. 90.

Extending Gray's taxonomy beyond the horror genre, the 1990s 'feeling of powerlessness' emerges primarily from political or corporate agendas, supported by the individual's suspicion that they are no longer in control of their own bodies or minds, let alone their ability to participate actively in everyday life. In Clear and Present Danger, Mission: Impossible, Enemy of the State, and The Bourne Identity, a

single person, the protagonist, becomes the focus of a governmental witch-hunt that threatens to overwhelm him fatally. In Erin Brockovich, Eraser, The Fugitive (Andrew Davis, 1993) and Monsters, Inc. (Peter Docter, Lee Unkrich, 2001) corporate power and its ability to affect public behaviour and health by illegal and fatally damaging means are questioned. Minority Report challenges corporate power in other ways by suggesting that future forms of advertising will be able to target individuals by means of retinal scans. While the film itself does not directly debate this concept, using it only as diegetic background detail, it at the least extrapolates this from the increasing pervasiveness and personalisation of commodity and brand culture. (The big fear in Minority Report, as it is in Enemy of the State, is not individually targeted surveillance systems [and marketing] but the possibility that these can go wrong. However, in both cases, this fear is assuaged by the realisation that the system has been manipulated by a single evil individual towards his own ends.)

In all, the contemporary commercial feature film may appear to reflect and recognise common cultural concerns and fears, but in a postmodern cinema this reflection is false. A cinema of malaise, and by extension a postmodern cinema, is not concerned with social realities, deriving its paranoias not from what could happen but on immaterial anxieties and unreal fantasms. In its clinical definition, the state of paranoia is driven by conspiracies that do not exist. Commercial cinema maintains this perception while at the same time elevating the conspiracies to the status of virtual truths. The 'What-if?' scenarios painted by Hollywood studios make such possibilities spectacular and, by doing so, plant a seed of doubt that perpetuates the myth of those very scenarios.

In 1998, two films were released that premised the destruction of the Earth by meteor or asteroid; Deep Impact and Armageddon. While one developed into a psychological drama based on how the human race would cope and the other became a thrilling action-based adventure, both provided believable pseudo-scientific frameworks on which to hang the spectacle. Armageddon did so with a prologue that depicted the meteor strike in the Gulf of Mexico that annihilated the entire dinosaur population of the planet, with the proviso that if it happened once, it could happen again. Deep Impact stakes its scientific credibility on E.L.E, a White House document which one news reporter learns is the acronym for an ‘Extinction Level Event’. The reporter, Jenny Lerner, goes on-line and eventually reaches the website for the University of California at Berkeley, Department of Paleontology. Under ‘Extinction Studies’, Lerner discovers the truth of E.L.E:

An incidence of mass extinction of multiple species is referred to as an Extinction Level Event. Events of this magnitude fall into two main categories; catastrophic climactic shifts and celestial forces acting on the Earth (asteroids, comets, cosmic radiation).³

The website then describes the extinction of the dinosaurs, and so, like Armageddon, refers back to this specific past event. However, here, the scientific basis is backed up with reference to a specific academic source⁴. In both films, an unlikely event is made credible through use of historic and academic discourse.

Daniel Boorstin referred to such images as ‘pseudo-events’; events that are specifically created or enhanced by media that stand in for actual reportable events. Boorstin wrote of pseudo-events as occurring in news media⁵, but they become relevant here through the use of the relationship between commodity and scientific discourse that attempts to provide credibility to fictional narratives. The ‘What-if?’ of a meteor strike is made tangible, visually and audibly, in a postmodern cinema, turning a remote possibility that would previously have seemed delusional into an imminent threat.

Postmodern cinema attempts to reflect contemporary concerns and fears but undermines them by making them spectacle. These concerns were built upon and elaborated until, to paraphrase Boorstin, they became pseudo-fears. AIDS, alienation, terrorism, and domestic intruders, for instance, were common anxieties across the 1990s but in their formalisation in such films as Planet of the Apes (Tim Burton, 2001), The General’s Daughter, Enemy of the State and What Lies Beneath (Robert Zemeckis, 2000) localised concerns were generalised to the extent that anyone was under threat at any time from disease, terrorists, and burglars. The cultural zeitgeist did not reflect actual local concerns, but exaggerated and generalised ones, firstly contributing to the cinema of malaise, and, secondly, losing the truth of those concerns in the visual aesthetic of contemporary commercial filmmaking.

This cultural zeitgeist can be mapped out across the thirteen years of this analysis. The last vestiges of corporate hedonism, centred on Gordon Gekko’s seminal mantra ‘Greed is good’ in Wall Street, remained evident in the likes of Ghost, Pretty Woman (Garry Marshall, 1990) and Total Recall. This evolved, in a small way at least,

towards the distrust of lawyers (while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the principles of law and justice). Jurassic Park, The Firm (Sydney Pollack, 1993), and The Pelican Brief, all released in 1993, contained lawyers as characters more intent on increasing personal wealth than espousing systems of justice. By 1997 and Liar Liar (Tom Shadyac, 1997), lawyers were simply dishonest while in 2000, despite Erin Brockovich, Traffic hinted that this dishonesty had evolved into illegal intent in the character of Arnie Metzger (Dennis Quaid) who desires a proportion of his jailed drug-boss client's business⁶.

This manifestation of the distrust of lawyers constructed in commercial cinema serves to, firstly, diminish further failing trust in the judicial system: and, secondly, to remove the normative function of law in order to produce the individualistic ethical justification for vigilante action as seen in the likes of the Lethal Weapon and Rush Hour films. Importantly, even though Martin Riggs (Lethal Weapon) and James Carter (Rush Hour) are individualists who take matters into their own hands, they remain embedded within the judicial system they seem to dislike. As Dirty Harry said in Magnum Force (Ted Post, 1973) when asked to join a group of rogue cops, 'I hate the damn system, but until someone comes along with changes that make sense, I'll stick with it'. Hollywood may develop conspiracy theories of the System, but like Dirty Harry it distrusts any organised alternative, sticking with its profound individualism despite the growing anxiety that the individual can change nothing.

In the mid 1990s, the outerspace threat was paramount, with Independence Day, Men in Black, Armageddon, Deep Impact and Dinosaur (Eric Leighton, Ralph Zondag, 2000) featuring strongly in box office lists. By the 2000s the corporate villain had

returned, only now the hedonism of the 1980s had been replaced by something more sinister. Tomorrow Never Dies, Eraser, Erin Brockovich and Mission: Impossible 2 featured corporate entities demanding political and commercial power at the expense of both democratic ideals and human life itself.

But as stated, the zeitgeist reflects not real concerns but exaggerated fears. Films may be affected by what occurs in the social arena, but the relationship is undermined by the complexity of a world which no longer seems understandable, as well as the length of a film's production time (the time from initial studio approval to release – by which stage the film may no longer be relevant), the fickleness of the audience, and the rise of the commodified spectacle.

10.3: The Visual Aesthetic of Evil

In short, films reflect not so much the world itself as how the world is unrepresentable. As Boggs and Pollard conclude:

postmodern filmmaking, like postmodern theory and culture in general, is shaped by elements of discontinuity with the recent past, when larger narratives, discourses, and ideologies furnished a guiding enlightenment (human reason, universal truths, social progress, and modernity) held sway throughout the advanced industrial world. The result is a collapse of sweeping intellectual claims linked to all-encompassing or totalistic belief systems at a time of rapid change, social fragmentation, depoliticization, and

exhaustion of old ideologies, all entering into the aesthetics and social matrix of postmodern cinema.⁷

In this chaotic milieu, cinematic evil no longer presents itself as specific ideologically-based threat but as a symptom of a wider social malaise. With the collapse of enlightenment ideals, evil cannot be located or defined, and is blurred by the interrogation of the real and the imaginary by the image. This has been enhanced in the films covered here through the lack of a singular overarching moral schema through which evil is defined and recognised. Cinematic evil, constructed for each film through a mix-and-match approach from the full range of pagan, theological, philosophical and postmodern ideas of evil, is never allowed to be defined across a range of films beyond its existence in the spectacle. As in the quotation from Jane Gaines in the opening pages of this dissertation, the boundaries between media and reality are collapsing, and with them the distinctions between actual and cinematic evil. What social evil loses in actuality, cinematic evil gains in virtuality.

In commercial cinema, the real and the simulation collide in the ‘ride-effect’, or more specifically, the spectacle. Thomas Schatz noted of ‘New Hollywood’ films, and the blockbuster in particular, that spectacle in these films is

purposefully incoherent.... the vertical integration of classical Hollywood, which ensured a closed industrial system and coherent narrative, has given way to “horizontal integration” of the New Hollywood’s tightly diversified media conglomerates, which favors texts strategically “open” to multiple readings and multimedia reiteration⁸.

Geoff King is correct to question whether this suggests that films of the classical system were somehow coherent⁹. Nevertheless, in the contemporary era in which digital technologies have problematised the previously-believed dichotomous structure of spectacle and narrative, spectacle itself is now ambivalent in its effects on ‘meaning’. Dominant meanings may be apparent but they are subverted by the multiplicity of responses that spectacle offers in its primary purpose: to provide an experience. Black Hawk Down is a case in point, with CNN reporting that a pirated copy of the film was shown in Mogadishu, where the events depicted in the film took place. Allegedly, Somalians cheered each time a U.S. soldier was killed and an American helicopter was shot down¹⁰. This is an obvious example, but the contradictions of spectacle are rife; Tomorrow Never Dies as critical of media structures but at the same time a product of those same media structures. The Lord of the Rings is anti-technology, anti-machine, but uses the sophisticated machinery of contemporary filmmaking practices to construct its images. Californian liberalism is unquestioned in the placement of a female vice-president in Air Force One and an African-American president in Deep Impact, though a conservative heartland America remains unready for either.

The lack of specificity about the narrative source of evil in the contemporary feature is as much a reflection of the disordered geo-political world as it is of the desire for, and the technological ability to produce, images of photo-realistic spectacle. In this conflation of spectacular image and abstract concept, evil emerges from the visual spectacle of the act itself, prominently in the excessiveness of the violence displayed. It is not the existence of evil that is important – its existence is, after all, taken for granted – but that it is *seen* to exist. Evil is refined by the extremities of the spectacle.

A mere look, an evil stare, or a deformed body are not in themselves enough. They must be accompanied by the act (or in some cases the threat of the act) that vividly displays what level of evil exists in any particular film, which is where the excessiveness of violence becomes crucial. The artful posing of murder victims in Seven, the crashing of a fully-laden passenger jet in Die Hard 2, the disappearance in mysterious circumstances of three student filmmakers in The Blair Witch Project, Calitri's scrapyard-hell in Gone in 60 Seconds, the swastika, that connotes genocide, in Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, the killing of first-born sons (and its fine rendering on screen using animated hieroglyphics) in The Prince of Egypt, and Shredder corrupting young minds in Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Steve Barron, 1990), all project the contemporary meaning of evil. Each describe it visually, without recourse to exposition or back story.

In this way, the complexity of cinematic evil is simplified and brought to the surface, concretised in the spectacular image but still hazily defined. Evil is clear, obvious and apparent in the notion that we know it when we see it, but the implication is that evil can only be defined by its being visual. A cinema of spectacle fails to answer questions of what constitutes evil, such as: what separates evil from the merely bad? Is evil causally connected to discourses of right and wrong? Can evil even exist beyond cinematic depictions, and in a highly complex and unrepresentable world?

Certainly as an absolute, cinematic evil is clearly defined, and absolutely evil characters are defined absolutely, as I showed by codifying evil in Chapters Five and Six. But in the ambiguity created by positive and negative poles, evil becomes problematic, to the extent that evil cannot be symbolised by its relationship to right

and wrong. Few films directly question this relationship but, among those that do, the answers seem oddly unsatisfying. A Time to Kill (Joel Schumacher, 1996), for example, offers narrative and spectacle that could interrogate notions of right and wrong, and good and evil, but fudges the issue for the sake of a satisfactory, or happy, conclusion. In this film, African-American Carl Lee Hailey's (Samuel L. Jackson) daughter is raped and left for dead by two redneck white men. The men are charged but are released on a technicality. Taking the matter into his own hands, Hailey murders the two men as they emerge from the courtroom that has freed them. The conundrum presented revolves around the issue of whether murderers can be exonerated in specific circumstances. The rednecks are freed even though they clearly performed an evil act, but Hailey faces the ultimate penalty offered by the judicial system although his act was based on moral duty. The polarisation of the characters allows little leeway in the development of this argument. The rednecks do not, the film states, deserve to live. They are racist misogynists with ties to the Ku Klux Klan and having no discernible working or family life. In other words, they show none of the usual attributes of a citizen of a decent, tolerant community. Hailey, on the other hand, is an upright hard-working family man who lives for nothing more than the welfare of his children. That he is acquitted of the charges of murder is the only response that the film can make¹¹.

Most commercial films do not examine the defining components of evil as thoroughly as A Time to Kill but, in many, the hero must confront the connections between evil and the structures of right and wrong. I have described previously how Saving Private Ryan and The Patriot are inconclusive on war as evil, offering the contention that war is horrific but that to protect or defend the right, war may be necessary. Films

constantly pose this riddle although rarely as explicitly. In the characters of John McClane (the Die Hard series), James Bond, Jack Traven (Speed), Spider-Man/Peter Parker and many more, evil acts must be committed in order to protect the good. What is evil, then, if evil is as much a tool of the right as it is the promotion of the wrong? Motive, it is argued, makes the difference between good and evil: motives, such as the protection of the family and the defence of freedom and democracy. The question still remains: what specifically is evil, despite idealistic intentions? As I explained while discussing Enemy of the State, villains can still be evil while believing themselves to be patriots, while patriots can still be good by enacting evil. If evil is absolute wrong, can it be argued that evil in any form can be justified for the purposes of protecting the good?

Or perhaps the question, in cinematic terms, is irrelevant? Within the spectacular image, these protagonists who protect the good by the use of evil means do so without recourse to such idealistic heights. In Die Hard 2, John McClane's motives boil down to the rescue of his wife on a plane trapped in the sky above Washington D.C.'s Dulles airport, unable to land. But by Die Hard with a Vengeance, his marriage is (mostly) over and he is, by his own admission, a borderline drunk and burn-out. Speaking to the antagonist, Simon Gruber, on the phone, Inspector Cobb, McClane's boss, wonders what his fascination is with McClane:

Cobb: Simon, I can appreciate your feelings for McClane. But believe me, the jerk isn't worth it. He's stepped on so many toes in this department, by next month he's gonna be a security guard. His

own wife wants nothing to do with him, and he's about two steps to becoming a full-blown alcoholic.

McClane (listening to conversation, whispering): One step, one step.

The threat that Simon poses, including a bomb in an elementary school pales into insignificance compared with the threat to the family. While many of New York's police are committed to protecting the children of the school, McClane himself is not, more set on finding Simon Gruber. McClane's motivations are hazy, reduced merely to some inherent sense of good that sits uneasily alongside his alcoholic, disrespectful and violent nature.

In James Bond, the working out of the good/evil dichotomy is even vaguer. As described in Chapter Five, Bond is like a necessary evil force that is unleashed upon the world in order to protect it, and further he gains some perverse pleasure in doing so. In The World is Not Enough, Bond orders Electra King to end her evil schemes. Electra looks at Bond, wondering if he has the fortitude to stop her:

King: You wouldn't kill me. You'd miss me.

(King starts to tell her men by radio to continue their plan, but

Bond without hesitation shoots her.)

Bond: I never miss...

The hedonist desire for violence is not as distinct as it was in the Sean Connery version of the character, when he unnecessarily tortured and killed defenceless villains, such as Professor Dent in Dr. No (Terence Young, 1962), but Bond's ability

to kill without remorse questions the meaning of evil, and what evil is if it must be used to enforce the good.

10.4: September 11, 2001 and Its Effect on Cinematic Evil

The spectacle of evil problematised the definition of evil itself to the extent that evil was made simultaneously attractive and repulsive as aesthetic, and as commodity. In the geo-political disorder of the 1990s evil was no longer fixed and the combination of a New World Order and the rise of postmodernism, the increased importance of the global box office and the requirement of the commercial film industry not to cause offence, all contributed to a cinema that was unable to place the blame, as it were, on any particular societal group. Evil was symbolised as an absolute by cinema's constant push towards the nostalgic, that invoked not only villains and generic styles of the past, but also a time when the moral landscape remained comprehensible in its (imagined) simplicity. Despite the blurred edges of the spectacle, contemporary cinema, in its use of positive and negative poles, maintained this uncluttered morality, only now the destruction of a way of life, of ideology even, had been replaced by material destruction and apocalypse. As Geoff King notes¹², ideology may still play a distinctive role in contemporary cinema, but it is made irrelevant by the lack of an opposing ideological villain. Cinema instead consistently brings up ideological problems that can only be answered and remedied by that same ideology. Or more specifically, cinema acknowledges that problems exist in capitalist economies and democratic systems of government, but assumes that capitalism and democracy are sufficient to solve them. The American Dream is still alive in American cinema, the dream that the individual may rise to the surface and achieve success despite their background.

What these movies suggest however is that the American Dream is constantly under threat. The paranoid fantasies of corrupt governments and Cold War rhetoric remained and were exaggerated by the loss of any specifically identified villain. In the shift from a secure to an insecure paranoia, the threat was no longer specifically locatable. The real and the imagined combined to produce a veritable roll-call of potential villains, based on global hot-spots – Kosovo, Rwanda, the Middle East, for example – and on other threats, real and imagined, such as disease, outer space, a collapsing ecology, and so on. Nevertheless, at least within their own borders, Americans were relatively safe. No military action or insurgent campaign had occurred on American soil since the Civil War (or Pearl Harbor if counting territories) and Americans were complacent within their own technologically superior fortress, fostered by the spiralling industrial-scientific-military complex that had convinced them that nothing could touch them, and that they were the dominant nation on the planet. Cinema constantly reinforced this notion, cloying perhaps to the outsider, but supremely patriotic in its national fervour. While I consider Independence Day to be a parody of American supremacy, on face value President Whitmore's speech stirring the survivors of alien attacks into action for one last battle is telling in its portrayal of the belief that a global problem is an American problem, and the American solution is a global solution:

In less than an hour, aircraft from here will join others from around the world. And you will be launching the largest aerial battle in the history of mankind. 'Mankind'. That should have new meaning for all of us today. We can't be consumed by our petty differences

anymore. We will be united in our common interests. Perhaps it's fate that today is the fourth of July and you will once again be fighting for our freedom. Not from tyranny, oppression or persecution, but from annihilation. We are fighting for our right to live, to exist. And should we win the day, the Fourth of July will no longer be known as an American holiday, but as the day the world declared in one voice, we will not go quietly into the night. We will not vanish without a fight. We're going to live on. We're going to survive. Today, we celebrate our Independence Day.

In the superficiality of the spectacle, global problems were reduced to the petty, and the solutions elevated to the American. Despite the inability of American cinema to locate evil in any specific place, these good-versus-evil tracts were offered naïvely and complacently as the solution to absolute evil that love and family overcomes all and that evil, existing absolutely without reason or cause, can be, if not destroyed then constantly held at bay by the forces of good.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Americans were awoken from their complacency. Global problems were not petty, and the military-industrial complex (largely to blame for the construction of America as a military target) had been correct in its assessment of the foreign usurper attacking American targets on American soil. What this also signifies is that the construction of cinematic evil has effectively been overturned by the very complexities of evil that 9/11 brought to the surface. In other words, the construction of evil as described and analysed in this thesis belongs to a

specific period in American history. World events have conspired to render much of what is described here as valid only for that period.

Hollywood was greatly affected by September 11, with some films about to go into production immediately cancelled, and others in various stages of production placed into a kind of hibernation. These films, including Bad Company (Joel Schumacher, 2002), Big Trouble (Barry Sonnenfeld, 2002), and Collateral Damage, were delayed until it was considered that time had lessened the wounds, so that these stories of bombs on planes and terrorist activities could be released even if only to recoup some of the costs of production¹³. Other films, like Men in Black II (Barry Sonnenfeld, 2002), The Time Machine (Simon Wells, 2002), and The Bourne Identity were reshot or re-edited to remove explicit references to terrorist activity, the destruction of New York, or to the World Trade Center itself. Producer of The Bourne Identity, Frank Marshall, noted in an interview his consternation at having a film which was possibly unrelease-able¹⁴. Believing that the explosion no longer had any place in commercial cinema, cast and crew regathered to shoot a new ending to replace the existing one, an ending that fitted seamlessly into the film to the extent that no joins showed and it became a success.

10.5: Cinematic Evil after 9/11

Where to now for cinematic evil? As this thesis was being prepared it was still too early to develop and analyse any specific trends. The length of time required to produce the average commercial feature, from original idea to release, is such that three years after the event these films are only starting to emerge. Nevertheless, several films have been released in 2004 and 2005 that offers hints of the shifts in the

construction of evil in American popular cinema since 2001. Casting a brief eye over Spider-Man 2 (Sam Raimi, 2004), Collateral (Michael Mann, 2004) and I Robot (Alex Proyas, 2004), I offer indications about the possible trends ahead.

Less than a month after the World Trade Center attacks, Rick Lyman wrote in The New York Times of the implications for Hollywood of the future construction of the cinematic villain¹⁵. Lyman wrote:

After more than a decade of fumbling about in search of a workable bad guy upon which to hang its crowd-pleasing action blockbusters, Hollywood has been handed the gift of actual national villains in the form of Islamic terrorists.

Lyman asks, are Hollywood filmmakers going to take up this opportunity in the same ways that 1940s Hollywood ‘enthusiastically embraced stereotypes of Japanese evil’, or will they continue to opt for restraint, ‘to avoid accusations of bias and the danger of offending audience sensibilities in an increasingly multi-racial America’? Lyman suggests, correctly as it happens, that racial and cultural defamation will be avoided; ‘the nation... has lost its taste for such xenophobic stereotyping’. Lyman adds:

Part of the struggle to concoct acceptable movie villains for the past 15 years has been the nation’s growing self-awareness on this subject. Too many of the potential choices were socially unacceptable because they tended to brand an entire ethnic or racial group.

Citing Jeanine Basinger, professor of film studies at Wesleyan University, Lyman argues that, instead, Hollywood would search for new metaphors:

“Americans like to see themselves as underdogs,” Ms. Basinger said. “We always go for the Alamo story. This is an American attitude. We’ve been hurt, we’re the underdogs, you’ve made us mad, so we’re coming back at you”.

Most likely, she and others said, Americans will respond to this need for new villains – and for a revised national narrative – by similarly updating archetypal stories rather than reaching for some kind of documentary-like historical accuracy.

Lyman is, therefore, suggesting that the identity of the villain is less important than capturing the national mood, a mood that encompasses the patriotic fervour that was seen in the days and weeks following the 9/11 tragedy, alongside the trajectory of an American fightback in the name of defending the nation against all enemies. The underdog story, as Basinger described it, or ‘tales of noble sacrifice’ as they could also be labelled, already forms a strong component of popular American films and their representations of how America has faced up to upheavals of absolute evil. This trend has continued, as Lyman predicted. Each of the three films noted here feature protagonists caught up in events that are overwhelming in their capacity to create a kind of human apocalypse. Somehow they triumph against these enormous odds. But what Lyman did not foresee is that the absolutes of good and evil would be de-

emphasised in favour of a kind of ambivalence towards both hero and villain worship. Films now acknowledge that the world has changed and the more simplistic binary oppositions that commercial cinema attempted to create are no longer relevant. The hero is flawed, the nation is uncertain of itself, and evil is no longer absolute.

Of the three films considered here, Collateral is closest to matching Lyman's predictions. Essentially a 'two-hander', the film tells the story of taxi-driver Max (Jamie Foxx), hired to drive businessman Vincent (Tom Cruise) around Los Angeles over the course of a single night. Discovering early that Vincent is actually a contract killer, Max has to find a way to extricate himself from the situation and to save at least one of the potential victims. Vincent is unambiguously villainous, and indeed evil, and Max is unambiguously good. In fact, Max is insipidly good; a good worker, a good taxi driver, fastidious about keeping his taxi clean, and harbouring dreams of setting up his own limousine service. But he is stirred from his complacency by Vincent, essentially awakened into action in the face of adversity by the requirement to defend himself and his dreams.

In many respects, Vincent maintains the form of classical evil as described in this thesis. He is charismatic, physically attractive, self-assured and remorseless. He is a force of evil in the same way as Cyrus 'the virus' Grissom (Con Air), Martin Burney (Sleeping with the Enemy) and Wah Sing Ku (Lethal Weapon 4). That is, he is composed of many of the elements of the Nietzschean 'Superman', only here Vincent is not beyond good and evil but stands aside from it. Vincent's self-belief stems not from positioning himself above the rest of the world but as indifferent to it, as revealed in this exchange:

Vincent: Max, six billion people on the planet. You're getting bent out of shape 'cause of one fat guy.

Max: Well, who was he?

Vincent: What do you care? Have you ever heard of Rwanda?

Max: Yes, I know Rwanda.

Vincent: Well, tens of thousands killed before sundown. Nobody's killed people that fast since Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Did you bat an eye, Max?

Max: What?

Vincent: Did you join Amnesty International, Oxfam, Save the Whales, Greenpeace, or something? No. I off one fat Angelino and you throw a hissy fit.

Max: Man, I don't know any Rwandans.

Vincent: You don't know the guy in the trunk either.

In this conversation, there is also a hint of Arendt's banality of evil; Vincent commits monstrous acts but is not constructed as monstrous. By locating himself in comparison with a specific socio-political discourse – the Rwandan massacres – he legitimises his own position as killer. Together with another conversation when Vincent jokes to Max about murdering his own father when he was a boy, the film implicitly negates my earlier rule of evil characters having a lack of history of good. Vincent was a normal child, if possibly troubled, but out of this childhood grew a man who murders for money. Where the film largely differs from commercial features of the previous decade is in the construction of the protagonist. Max is a reluctant hero,

which, in itself, is relatively common in cinema. Harry Stamper (Armageddon), John McClane (Die Hard), Benjamin Martin (The Patriot), and Harry Potter are a few examples of the reluctant hero that appear in the movies analysed here. But in each case the character accepts relatively early within the narrative their position, their destiny perhaps, and they actively pursue the good by consciously defending their home and family. One of the few antecedents for Max is Tom Mullens (Ransom), forced into action by the kidnapping of his son. But even here, Mullens maintains a certain level of control and at roughly the mid-point of the movie, he turns the tables on the kidnappers, turning them into the pursued (and in the casting of Mel Gibson in the role, audience expectations are high that the action hero persona will eventually emerge, an expectation that the film does not fail to present). But in Max, there is no sense of destiny, no sense that Max will rise to become the action star. There is little palpable threat to home and family, despite Vincent's visit to Max's mother in hospital, so all Max has left to protect is his dream of owning a limousine service. But even this dream is hazy, when Vincent discovers that it is years old and Max is hardly closer to realising it than he was when first starting to drive taxis. The film follows Max's descent to the point where he understands that there is no way out. He is complicit in the string of killings carried out by Vincent, he has been unable to act in any way that could extricate him from the situation, and he knows that as soon as Vincent kills the last person on his list, then he too will die. His last possible action is not one of heroism but of despair, in a similar fashion to those who jumped to their deaths from the top of the World Trade Center before its collapse. If only to maintain some semblance of control over the manner of his own death, Max crashes the cab with Vincent still in the back seat. Both survive the crash, but knowing who the last victim is to be, Max attempts to stop the murder. But even here, Max's heroism is

muted. He does not attempt to stop Vincent but to remove the potential victim, Annie, from the scene. The final showdown is purposefully anti-climactic. It ends on the Los Angeles Metro, shots ringing out indiscriminately. It is only when Vincent slowly sits down and Max remains standing that the audience knows that the nightmare is over. Unbefitting the spectacular demise of evil, but supporting the Arendtian discourse of its banality, Vincent simply falls asleep. His last words are a repeat of a story he had told Max earlier, 'Guy gets on the M.T.A. here in L.A. and dies. Think anyone will notice?'

This last line is crucial as an expression of the cultural and social paradigm shifts in America. The world, and specifically America, can no longer be divided into absolutes of good and evil, and black and white. Vincent is evil, but a kind of banal evil, as Arendt wrote of Adolph Eichmann. He is simply doing his job. Max, on the other hand, is no paragon of good. His motivation was not to do good and protect the innocent but to regain some semblance of control over his own life, a motivation that is arguably more prevalent in American society. An updating of the paranoid malaise I described in Chapter Eight, Max's is a malaise that surfaces no longer so much from shadowy government agencies and corporate agendas (although these still exist) but from a sense that the individual is ultimately powerless in this disordered and chaotic world. The world is now too complex to comprehend simply, and a parable of the struggle between good and evil, Max and Vincent, at the level of the individual will have little effect. 'Think anyone will notice?', Vincent asks. He knows his death will not make the world any better or any worse.

This expression of a disordered and chaotic America emerges less from the narrative, which largely follows a standard cat-and-mouse chase structure, more from the film's aesthetic form. Largely shot on digital video, the film illustrates a version of Los Angeles that both confirms and reappraises its cultural depiction. It is an ephemeral city of light and movement, of glowing skyscrapers and freeways. The two primary characters, and many of the secondary characters, are essentially homeless, not rooted to any specific place. Max is a taxi-driver. Vincent travels the world as a contract killer. Both always on the move, but both are essentially going nowhere. Los Angeles is a city of roads, freeways, alleys and railway tracks, and constantly in the skies are airplanes shifting people to other places. Los Angeles is a place of transit. And in the smog-filled haze, Los Angeles is also vague. Mike Davis wrote of the city:

Los Angeles... is... a stand-in for capitalism in general. The ultimate world-historical significance – and oddity – of Los Angeles is that it has come to play the double role of utopia *and* dystopia for advanced capitalism. The same place, as Brecht noted, symbolized both heaven and hell. Correspondingly, it is the essential destination on the itinerary of any late twentieth-century intellectual, who must eventually come to take a peep and render some opinion on whether ‘Los Angeles Brings It All Together’ (official slogan), or is, rather, the nightmare at the terminus of American history (as depicted in *noir*).¹⁶

The almost malevolent vagueness found in Collateral is therefore not new, except that this film renders indistinct the very difference between utopia and dystopia, as

between good and evil. The Los Angeles of Collateral sits somewhere between the Los Angeles of Seven in its unremitting sense of evil, the place of dreams fulfilled in Erin Brockovich, and the violent playground of the Lethal Weapon movies. Ultimately, Collateral suggests that individual struggles between good and evil are too minor to make any difference. Evil may be defeated but ‘Think anyone will notice?’

By chance, the three films considered here are split between Los Angeles, New York and Chicago, and between their cultural representations as, respectively, vague, cynical and somewhere, both physically and emotionally, between the two. Collateral describes Los Angeles as a place of hedonistic pleasure, located in the ephemeral experiences of bright lights, night clubs and hazy skies. Its transparency barely contains an impermanence produced by this metaphor of movement, both through time and space. The New York of Spider-Man 2, with its buildings of stone and brick is permanent, its cynicism born from a sense of being rooted in a history that is multicultural, multifarious and immovable. Perhaps more than any other city, New York is constantly being destroyed, by meteorites, tidal waves, giant lizards, terrorist attacks and unsupervised children¹⁷. Yet each time, the city survives amidst a kind of stoic relief rather than an optimistic triumph (which also surfaces in The Day After Tomorrow, with the last shots depicting the survivors of a devastating ice storm emerging onto Manhattan roofs). I Robot describes Chicago as permanence and impermanence, its stone facades disguised, but not hidden, by chrome and neon, with movement here the metaphor for the transition from past to future. Here, the future is bright, but the past is truth, and the clash is literally embodied in the traffic accident. The car chase occupying the middle section of the film symbolises this temporal clash, with Del Spooner (Will Smith) unable to escape the past, symbolised by the

2004 model Converse shoes he wears throughout the movie, attacked by the multitude of NS-5 robots as symbols of the future. As one robot smashes through the windscreen of Spooner's car, it matter-of-factly states, 'You are experiencing a car accident', at once offering the conflation of human emotionality and machine-speak.

Evil in Collateral is ambivalent in ways that it is not in I Robot and Spider-Man 2. The dialectic relationship between good and evil in these films is problematic within both narrative and spectacle. Spectacle dictates that the identity of evil is unimportant, only that it forms some tangible threat to the construction of good. Family and domesticity, films have argued, are primary and must be defended, whether the threat is weather (Twister, The Perfect Storm), animals (Jurassic Park, Godzilla), serial killers (Seven, The Silence of the Lambs), government agencies (Enemy of the State, Clear and Present Danger), terrorists (The Sum of All Fears, Lethal Weapon 3), aliens (Signs, Independence Day) or even a collapsing sky (Armageddon, Deep Impact). But in the resolution to these paranoiac fantasies, the message has been that the individual *can* make a difference (with a few exceptions, like Seven and Unforgiven which now appear prescient). The determination of the individual in their allegiance to the good can bring down corrupt governments, destroy foreign enemies, find cures, and form and reform complete family units. Cinematic resolutions may contradict notions of utopia (as per Richard Dyer) – the world is not necessarily a better place – but at least the space of the individual is largely improved. Or at the least the ride-effect getting there has been exemplary. In other words, following the model of the rollercoaster ride (or ghost train, freak show or other attraction), films provided the visceral and emotional experience necessary for the contemporary commercial feature. The son of the villain in Face/Off is assimilated into the hero's family thus completing the re-

integration of the family formerly ruptured by the death of the biological son as shown in the prologue to the film. The world of Independence Day is decimated but the promise exists to rebuild it into something better and brighter than it was before. And Lara Croft, destroying the machine that can alter time at the end of Tomb Raider, saves the world when it was unaware that it was perilously close to destruction. In each case, the individual *could* make a difference in the fight against evil.

But first indications suggest that in the post 9/11 film, the world has become bigger than one person's ability to control or manage it. In the paradigm of chaos and disorder, the issues have ultimately become bigger than any one individual and any differences one makes are ultimately minimal. Del Spooner (I Robot) and Peter Parker (Spider-Man 2) each have their individual triumphs but the evil that they are victorious over is ambiguous and it is arguable whether the world has been improved in any way. Spooner defeats VIKI, the positronic brain at the centre of a vast computer network that has extrapolated from Isaac Asimov's three laws of robotics a new principle: that a robot may not harm humanity or through inaction allow humanity to be harmed. Watching humanity descend into a morass of greed and self-destruction, VIKI must, according to its principles, take action to prevent this from continuing. Thus ultimately VIKI operates under its own sense of good. Likewise, Otto Octavius, in Spider-Man 2, only wishes the best for humanity, offering a cheap, unlimited and sustainable source of power. That the experiment fails and in the process fuses the four tentacles required to carry out the experiment directly to Otto's spine does not detract from this aim. Like VIKI, Otto knows that for the ultimate good, some 'bad' must occur. Or rather, his tentacles, imbued with intelligence of their own and unhindered by the destroyed inhibition chip designed to stop them from

influencing Otto's behaviour, take over and convince him that the experiment must be re-enacted in the memory of his dead wife. While the tentacles follow the markers of evil, as described in Chapter Six, there is in fact and in this way no actual evil intent. That the banks must be robbed to provide funding and people may die defending against this ultimate experiment and that it may destroy New York, rather than save it, is less important than the possibility that humanity may be 'saved' from its dependence on fossil fuels and other ecologically damaging power sources. It is appropriate that Octavius does not die the spectacular death of evil but the noble sacrifice of the hero.

In each case, the spectacle becomes 'incoherent', as Schatz noted of the attraction¹⁸, but now increasingly so, with boundaries between hero and villain rendered fluid by the ambiguous motives of each side. Moreover, a bond between hero and antagonist, flagged as early as The Silence of the Lambs, is increasingly significant. At its most obvious, a 'truth' that exists beyond the filmic diegesis, the identity of hero and villain is apparent. Spider-Man is a comic-book icon of the heroic (notwithstanding the revenge motif of the first film), while the actor Will Smith has firmly established himself as wise-cracking action hero in the likes of Independence Day, and the Men in Black movies. Within the diegesis of each film, each may act apart from and even unknown to the society in which they operate, but to audiences they are simply heroic. By this standard, the robots of I Robot and Otto Octavius are, simply, villainous, and little occurs to contradict this notion. The fight on the runaway L-Train between 'Doc Ock' and Spider-Man occurs because Otto must capture Spider-Man in exchange for the fuel he needs to carry out his experiments. The train's passengers, innocent bystanders, are mere tools to be used in completing this task, and Otto remorselessly

tosses them from the train in an effort to win the battle. In a similarly well-produced sequence, the robots attack Spooner in his car as it passes through a tunnel. Here, the sheer numbers of robots, all expendable, stand against Spooner's chances of survival. Again their sheer remorselessness marks them as villainous and it is with a sense of near-relief that Spooner survives the chase.

On the other hand the true motives of the villains are to improve humanity. That, in each case, this 'improvement' is more likely to conclude with massive death and destruction, or loss of freedom, is less important than the idealist intentions of the villains. This is not the self-serving action of the evil villain seen previously, nor is it the single-minded belief in the patriotic love of the nation as seen in the conspiracy theory movie. This is heroism and villainy upended akin (almost) to allowing General Cornwallis in The Patriot to triumph over the American militia and maintain British control in the name of the good, or Robert Ritter of Clear and Present Danger, succeeding in his less than moral attempts to decrease the illicit drug trade between Colombia and the US. In each case, then, the defeat of the villain is matched with both the saving of life and the death of dreams. This virtual cancellation suggests that the world is, at best, little different than it was before, and, at worst, creating a vacuum which another version of evil must fill (the probability of Spider-Man 3 makes this literal in this case).

10.6: A Proviso: Can Popular Culture Engage with Evil in Any Meaningful Way?

An examination of American popular culture since September 11, 2001 and the ways it examines moral precepts of good and evil emphasises the widening gap between

commercial cinema and other media formats. The theatrical feature, the subject of this thesis, is unwilling or unable to engage with evil in any meaningful way but this is not to suggest that no media text offers up narrative and spectacle that directly analyses the moral and social implications of the existence of evil. Independent films and documentary features often, if sometimes obliquely, debate the existence of evil in contemporary society, with Werner Herzog's documentary Grizzly Man a primary example. It explains the actions of the bear that ultimately killed Timothy Treadwell, the subject of the documentary, as being out of the ordinary, as if the bear was somehow inherently and differently malevolent. The film does not go so far as to label the bear as evil but this is certainly implied.

It is in American drama television, however, that the existence of good and evil is debated frequently and openly. By concentrating on character and motive, such weekly shows as Law and Order (and its sister shows, Special Victims Unit and Criminal Intent), The Sopranos, Deadwood, C.S.I., Third Watch and a range of others constantly asks why people (whether inherently evil or not) still carry out evil acts against others. Sometimes, as in the movies, the answers are not forthcoming but at least these shows are more willing to directly ask the questions (in the same way as they have been more open in directly engaging with the implications of the 9/11 attacks).

10.7: Conclusion: The New Trends of Evil

In the period under consideration in this thesis, the construction of evil in film has been problematised by the lack of an easily defined villain, the collapse of 'traditional' values based on patriarchal order, domesticity and white middle-class

heterosexuality, and the increased sophistication of special effects technology that allows filmmakers to construct filmic events and experiences to increased levels of photo-realism. The collapse of the Soviet Union as an ideological opposite to America has coincided with the rise of a postmodernist sentiment, even if some narrative and iconographic elements of classical Hollywood persist among the sample films. In a disordered and chaotic world, evil arises from anywhere. Thus society must be vigilant of threats to its borders and from within. Borders are no longer simply geographical. The frontier of the Western (transposed into many science-fiction films and television programmes like Star Trek since the 1950s) has been replaced in both a physical and metaphorical sense by skin. That is, the prime fear is two-fold; bodily and mental penetration by way of consumption, and how this consumption serves to undermine and overwhelm the physical and the psychological. The loss of identity is now, at the least, as big a fear as annihilation or apocalypse. The questions of ‘who am I?’ and ‘who are we?’, primary in cinemas of nostalgia and paranoia, thus become central in the depiction of the evil that threatens nation and citizen. Interestingly, this loss of identity as a consequence of the action of evil often surfaces in the seemingly pre-destined fate of the hero. Frodo, Harry Potter, Darth Vader, Harry Stamper, Peter Parker/Spider-Man and Captain John Miller are characters who denote a neo-predestination, some predetermined path towards an ultimate fate that is both beyond their own control and questions the identity they thought they had. Max, the taxi driver from Collateral is the apogee of this trend, not raised up on some pedestal as hero, but simply resigned to whatever the world brings.

One of the prime threats of evil in cinema, then, is to hinder the concept of ‘making a difference’ (which, as a small aside, is perhaps the contemporary form of the

American Dream). Erin Brockovich battles the evil corporation in the film of the same name, the fishermen of the Andrea Gail (The Perfect Storm) highlight the dangers in providing foodstuffs for the dinner tables of the nation (as well as the long-term ecological collapse of fish stocks caused by the intensive expansion of the market for fish), Benjamin Martin (The Patriot) and Captain Miller (Saving Private Ryan) sacrifice their families, their homes or their very lives to protect nationhood from tyranny, while Spider-Man, Batman, Robert Dean (Enemy of the State), and Harry Potter all fight back against enemies that attempt to overwhelm them. By fighting back and winning the day (until the sequel, that is), they reveal themselves to be, in some way, leaders, setting the examples that others may follow and contributing to the stability of nationhood.

I started this thesis stating of evil, ‘we know it when we see it’, and in a kind of circular motion this is where I end. Each film determines its own form of evil, mixing and matching the theological, philosophical and postmodern formations of evil developed in Chapter Four (sometimes contradictorily) and using the visual and narrative codes defined in Chapters Five and Six to create a visual depiction of evil that is created to entice audiences into theatres rather than offering any means to interrogate and understand what evil may be. The spectacle of evil, largely drawn by visions of excessive violence (or the threat of excessive violence), is paramount, signifying commercial cinema’s abandonment of the task of providing moral and ideological guidance. This is not to suggest that the image has been stripped of ideological meaning, but it does suggest that cinematic evil exists as a simulacrum, a depthless copy without an original, or as a pastiche of evil, a depiction bereft of any underlying meaning.

Commercial cinema does not attempt to define evil, but states simply that 'evil is as evil does'. In the importance placed on the spectacle of violence, cinema shows that it has embraced the postmodern, providing a discordant and chaotic depiction of a present that is unrepresentable. It constantly borrows from a nostalgically enhanced past in order to make sense of a world too complex to be made sense of. That is, it constantly revisits a past in which the world appeared to be much simpler to comprehend. By doing so it brings to the surface an increasing paranoia of the state of the world where evil may arise at any time, in any place and in any form, a paranoia exacerbated by the constant threats to self-identity emphasised by an increasing global corporatisation that threatens to undermine democratic principles and the boundaries of the nation-state. This is especially acute in the rising forms of terrorism that spread across geographical borders and are seemingly undetectable until the moment of excessive and spectacular violence, the mediated forms of which we watch on our screens and exclaim, 'it's just like a movie'.

Evil, however, constantly changes. In the period under consideration here, the definition of evil in cinema repeated from classical Hollywood cinema the traditions of Judeo-Christian doctrines, even if these were anachronistic to American society as it existed in the 1990s and into the first two years of the 2000s. But times change and these Biblical representations of evil have been found wanting. Even the Hollywood film industry itself, and perhaps its depictions of evil, face a crisis of sorts. The 2005 calendar year saw a drastic downturn in the number of cinema tickets sold, and the biggest losses occurred in the action genre. Stealth and The Island were specifically noted as financial failures, hinting perhaps that the era of the overtly masculine hero is

over (albeit possibly temporarily) in favour of the Max-like figure who acts more from despair than by any notion of heroism (also seen, for example, in War of the Worlds), or by relocating the hero to different sub-groups of characters (such as children in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire [whose box office takings surpassed that of the previous two in the series], The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, and Lemony Snicket's Series of Unfortunate Events, and even perhaps the wimp-oriented hero as exemplified by the writer in King Kong [who must become the action hero in order to save the girl]). Certainly, the films that were popular in 2005 signified a lack of fit between the Iraq War and contemporary cinema, or even maybe the collapse of the blockbuster after the collapse of the blockbuster war.

It remains to be seen how evil will be depicted in the media in the coming years, and much remains to be identified and categorised. I have already hinted in this thesis that American television drama is significantly different in its depictions of evil, primarily in the lack of positive and negative poles and the greater emphasis on story and character over spectacle, but we can also look at other mediated forms such as popular music and video games to examine their treatments of evil. As well, mass entertainment cinemas as found in Hong Kong and India may offer variations of the depictions of evil that again may confirm or contradict my hypothesis. In a few more years, this research should be developed in order to confirm whether these early suggestions of the new forms of cinematic evil have proved to be correct or whether evil has been redefined once more.

¹ Morrow, Lance (2003), Evil: An Investigation, Basic Books, New York, p. 77.

² Baumeister, Roy F. (1997), Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty, W.H. Freeman & Co., New York, p. 1.

³ Quote taken off screen at 20:40mins, Deep Impact, 1998, Mimi Leder, DreamWorks SKG/Paramount Pictures/Zanuck-Brown Productions, United States, 120 mins,

⁴ Note how this academic source multiplies the paranoia, essentially stating that if bodies from space do not destroy us then 'catastrophic climactic shifts' will. Global warming has since become another basis for concern, represented in fictional form in The Day after Tomorrow.

⁵ Boorstin, Daniel J. (1992), The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, Vintage Books, New York. On pages 11-12, Boorstin outlines the characteristics of the pseudo-event, while on pages 39-40, he lists the 'characteristics of pseudo-events which make them overshadow spontaneous events'.

⁶ Blade II (Guillermo de Toro, 2002) summed up public attitudes towards lawyers, with the sequence depicting the hero, Blade, breaking into a Vampire lair and discovering a well dressed man;

Blade: You're human?

Man: Barely. I'm a lawyer.

⁷ Boggs, Carl, and Tom Pollard (2003), A World in Chaos: Social Crisis and the Rise of Postmodern Cinema, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, p. 246.

⁸ Schatz, Thomas (1993), 'The New Hollywood', in Collins, Jim, Hilary Radner, Ava Preacher Collins (eds.) (1993), Film Theory Goes to the Movies, Routledge, New York, p. 34. Schatz argues the New Hollywood appeared after World War 2 when the studio system collapsed and films were produced and sold on a film-by-film basis. The blockbuster film emerged in the 1950s but arrived at its true potential in the mid-1970s (after Jaws [1975] and Star Wars [1977]) with 'studios' eventual coming-to-terms with an increasingly fragmented entertainment industry' (p. 9). As I have argued earlier in this thesis, the blockbuster has continued to evolve since Schatz' article through the increasing importance of global revenue streams, digital technologies and diversification of media product.

⁹ King, Geoff (2000a), 'Ride-Films and Films as Rides in the Contemporary Hollywood Cinema of Attractions', CineAction, No. 51, p. 8.

¹⁰ This increases the validity of Boorstin's pseudo-event, illustrating the indistinctness of the 'real' and the 'true', even in the news genre where audiences once placed their faith. Because American agencies have pursued a kind of propaganda war against various enemies, tarring them with the label of evil whether or not evidence of wrongdoing exists, news stories like this perpetuate various myths and thus become virtual.

¹¹ Here, again, the disparity between commercial cinema and commercial television can be noted. Law and Order, for example, continuously questions the possibilities that the complexity of law raises. Cinema, in its one chance at a satisfying conclusion, tends toward the 'pat' ending.

¹² King (2000a), p. 8.

¹³ All three of these films failed at the box office;

Bad Company	Production cost: \$US 70 mil.	Total gross: \$US 30.2 mil.
Big Trouble	Production cost: \$US 40 mil.	Total gross: \$US 7.3 mil.
Collateral Damage	Production cost: \$US 85 mil.	Total gross: \$US 40.1 mil.

Interestingly, in 2006, two films were released that directly depicted in some form the 9/11 attacks, Paul Greengrass's United 93 based on the story of the one plane that failed to reach its intended target, and Oliver Stone's World Trade Center, about two firefighters who were the last survivors to be pulled from the wreckage of the Towers. America still appears to be unready to face such images, with news reports suggesting that cinemas have had to remove trailers to these films from their programmes because of highly negative responses by audiences.

¹⁴ Interview included on the 'Explosive Extended Edition' DVD of the movie.

¹⁵ Lyman, Rick (2001), 'Hollywood struggles to create villains for a new climate', The New York Times, 3 October, p. E.1.

¹⁶ Davis, Mike (1992), City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles, Vintage Books, New York, pp. 18-20.

¹⁷ Examples include, respectively, Armageddon, Deep Impact, Godzilla, Die Hard with a Vengeance and Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (Chris Columbus, 1992).

¹⁸ Schatz, p. 23.

Bibliography

Films

Note: Film production details are taken from the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com).

The running times of theatrical releases are noted, rather than 'special editions' or 'director's cuts'. If the title of a film differs between its American and New Zealand release, the New Zealand title is shown.

A.I.: Artificial Intelligence, 2001, Steven Spielberg, Warner Bros./DreamWorks SKG/Amblin Entertainment/Stamley Kubrick Productions, United States, 146 mins.

Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls, 1995, Steve Oedekerk, Morgan Creek Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 90 mins.

The Addams Family, 1991, Barry Sonnenfeld, Orion Pictures Corporation/Paramount Pictures, United States, 102 mins.

Affliction, 1997, Paul Schrader, JVC Entertainment Inc/Kingsgate Productions/Largo Entertainment, United States, 114 mins.

Air Force One, 1997, Wolfgang Petersen, Beacon Communications LLC/Columbia Pictures Corporation/Radiant Productions, United States/Germany, 124 mins.

Aladdin, 1992, Ron Clements/John Musker, Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 90 mins.

Alexander, 2004, Oliver Stone, Warner Bros./Intermedia Film/Pacifica Films/Egmond Film & Television/France 3 Cinéma/IMF Internationale Medien und Film GmbH & Co. 3. Produktions KG/Pathé Renn Productions, United States/United Kingdom/Germany/Netherlands, 175 mins.

Alien, 1979, Ridley Scott, 20th Century Fox/Brandywine Productions Ltd, United Kingdom, 117 mins.

American Beauty, 1999, Sam Mendes, DreamWorks SKG/Jinks-Cohen Company, United States, 122 mins.

American Pie, 1999, Chris Weitz/Paul Weitz, Newmarket Capital Group LLC/Summit Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 95 mins.

American Pie 2, 2001, James B. Rogers, LivePlanet/Universal Pictures/Zide-Perry Productions, United States, 108 mins.

Analyze This, 1999, Harold Ramis, Baltimore Pictures/Face Productions/NPV Entertainment/Spring Creek Productions/Tribeca Productions/Village Roadshow Pictures, United States, 103 mins.

Apollo 13, 1995, Ron Howard, Imagine Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 140 mins.

Armageddon, 1998, Michael Bay, Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Touchstone Pictures/Valhalla Motion Pictures, United States, 144 mins.

Around the World in 80 Days, 2004, Frank Coraci, 80 Days Productions Ltd./Babelsberg Film GmbH/Balloon Productions LLC/Fitzwilliam Productions/Mostow-Lieberman Productions/Spunknyce Films/Studio Babelsberg/Walden Media/Walt Disney Pictures, Germany/Ireland/United Kingdom, 120 mins.

The Art of War, 2000, (no director credit), Columbia TriStar, United States, 10 mins. (Note: This short documentary is to be found on the DVD for Saving Private Ryan.)

As Good As It Gets, 1997, James L. Brooks, TriStar Pictures/Gracie Films, United States, 139 mins.

Attack of the 50-Foot Woman, 1958, Nathan Juran, Allied Artists Picture Corporation/Woolner, United States, 65 mins.

Austin Powers in Goldmember, 2002, Jay Roach, New Line Cinema/Gratitude International/Team Todd/Moving Pictures, United States, 94 mins.

Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery, 1997, Jay Roach, Capella International/Eric's Boy/Juno Pix/KC Medien KG/Moving Pictures/New Line Cinema, United States/Germany, 94 mins.

Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me, 1999, Jay Roach, Eric's Boy/Moving Pictures/Team Todd, United States, 95 mins.

Back to the Future Part II, 1989, Robert Zemeckis, Amblin Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 108 mins.

Bad Boys, 1995, Michael Bay, Don Simpson-Jerry Bruckheimer Films, United States, 118 mins.

Bad Boys II, 2003, Michael Bay, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Don Simpson-Jerry Bruckheimer Films, United States, 147 mins.

Bad Company, 2002, Joel Schumacher, Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Stillking Films/Touchstone Pictures, United States/Czech Republic, 116 mins.

Basic Instinct, 1992, Paul Verhoeven, Carolco Pictures Inc./Le Studio Canal+/TriStar Pictures, United States/France, 123 mins.

Batman, 1989, Tim Burton, Guber-Peters Company/Polygram Filmed Entertainment/Warner Bros, United States/United Kingdom, 126 mins.

Batman and Robin, 1997, Joel Schumacher, Warner Bros., United States, 125 mins.

Batman Forever, 1995, Joel Schumacher, Polygram Filmed Entertainment/Warner Bros., United States, 122 mins.

Batman Returns, 1992, Tim Burton, Polygram Pictures/Warner Bros., United States/United Kingdom, 126 mins.

The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms, 1953, Eugène Lourié, Mutual Pictures of California, United States, 80 mins.

A Beautiful Mind, 2001, Ron Howard, Imagine Entertainment, United States, 135 mins.

Beauty and the Beast, 1991, Gary Trousdale/Kirk Wise, Silver Screen Partners IV/Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 84 mins.

Big Daddy, 1999, Dennis Dugan, Jack Giarraputo Productions/Out of the Blue... Entertainment, United States, 93 mins.

Big Momma's House, 2000, Raja Gosnell, 20th Century Fox/Friendly Productions/New Regency Pictures/Runteldat Entertainment/Taurus Film, United States/Germany, 98 mins.

Big Trouble, 2002, Barry Sonnenfeld, Jacobson Company/Sonnenfeld Josephson Worldwide Entertainment/Sundale Productions Inc./Touchstone Pictures, United States, 85 mins.

The Birdcage, 1996, Mike Nichols, Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer/Nichols/United Artists, United States, 117 mins.

Black Hawk Down, 2001, Ridley Scott, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Revolution Studios/Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Scott Free Productions, United States, 144 mins.

Blade Runner, 1982, Ridley Scott, Blade Runner Partnership/The Ladd Company, United States, 117 mins.

Blade II, 2002, Guillermo del Toro, Amen Ra Films/Imaginary Forces/Justin Pictures/Linovo Productions GmbH & Co. KG/Milk & Honey/New Line Cinema/Pacific Title & Art Studio, United States/Germany, 117 mins.

The Blair Witch Project, 1999, Daniel Myrick/Eduardo Sánchez, Haxan Films, United States, 86 mins.

Blue Thunder, 1983, John Badham, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Rastar Pictures, United States, 108 mins.

Body Heat, 1981, Lawrence Kasdan, The Ladd Company, United States, 113 mins.

The Bodyguard, 1992, Mick Jackson, Kasdan Pictures/Tig Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 130 mins.

The Boston Strangler, 1968, Richard Fleischer, 20th Century Fox, United States, 116 mins.

The Bourne Identity, 2002, Doug Liman, Hypnotic/Kalima Productions GmbH & Co. KG/Stillking Films/The Kennedy-Marshall Company, United States/Germany, 119 mins.

The Bourne Supremacy, 2004, Paul Greengrass, Hypnotic/Ludlum Entertainment/Motion Picture THETA Produktionengesellschaft mbH & Co. KG/The Kennedy-Marshall Company/Universal Pictures, United States/Germany, 108 mins.

Braveheart, 1995, Mel Gibson, 20th Century Fox/B. H. Finance C. V./Icon Entertainment International/Paramount Pictures/The Ladd Company, United States, 177 mins.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 1997-2003, 20th Century Fox Television/Mutant Enemy Inc./Kuzui Productions/Sandollar Television, United States, first telecast (United States) 10 March 1997.

A Bug's Life, 1998, John Lasseter/Andrew Stanton, Pixar Animation Studios/Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 96 mins.

C. S. I.: Crime Scene Investigation, 2000-, Alliance Atlantis Communications/Arc Entertainment/CBS Productions/Jerry Bruckheimer Television/Jerry Bruckheimer Films, United States/Canada, first telecast (United States) 6 October 2000.

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C. S. I.: New York, 2004-, Clayton Entertainment/Alliance Atlantic Communications/CBS Productions/Jerry Bruckheimer Television, United States/Canada, first telecast (United States) 22 September 2004.

Casper, 1995, Brad Silberling, Amblin Entertainment/The Harvey Entertainment Company/Universal Pictures, United States, 100 mins.

Cast Away, 2000, Robert Zemeckis, 20th Century Fox/DreamWorks SKG/ImageMovers/Playtone, United States, 143 mins.

Catch Me If You Can, 2002, Steven Spielberg, DreamWorks SKG/Amblin Entertainment/Kemp Company/Splendid Pictures/Parkes-MacDonald Productions, United States, 141 mins.

Charlie's Angels, 2000, McG, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Flower Films/Global Entertainment Productions GmbH & Company Medien KG/Tall Trees Productions, United States/Germany, 98 mins.

Chicken Run, 2000, Peter Lord/Nick Park, Aardman Animations/Allied Filmmakers/DreamWorks SKG/Pathé Pictures Ltd., United Kingdom, 84 mins.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, 2005, Andrew Adamson, Walt Disney Pictures/Walden Media/Lamp-Pat Productions/JamesWorks Entertainment LLC/Stillking Films, United States, 140 mins.

City Slickers, 1991, Ron Underwood, Castle Rock Entertainment/Columbia Pictures Corporation/Face/Nelson Entertainment/Sultan Entertainment, United States, 112 mins.

Clear and Present Danger, 1994, Philip Noyce, Paramount Pictures, United States, 141 mins.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind, 1977, Steven Spielberg, Columbia Pictures Corporation/EMI Films Ltd, United States, 135 mins.

Collateral, 2004, Michael Mann, DreamWorks SKG/Paramount Pictures/Parkes-MacDonald Productions, United States, 119 mins.

Collateral Damage, 2002, Andrew Davis, Bel Air Entertainment/Hacienda Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 108 mins.

Commando, 1985, Mark L. Lester, 20th Century Fox/Silver Pictures, United States, 90 mins.

Con Air, 1997, Simon West, Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Kouf-Bigelow Productions/Runway Pictures Inc./Touchstone Pictures, United States, 115 mins.

Contact, 1997, Robert Zemeckis, South Side Amusement Company/Warner Bros., United States, 153 mins.

The Conversation, 1974, Francis Ford Coppola, American Zoetrope/Paramount Pictures/The Coppola Company/The Directors Company, United States, 113 mins.

Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, 2000, Ang Lee, Asia Union Film & Entertainment Ltd/China Film Co-Production Corporation/Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia/EDKO Film Ltd./Good Machine/Sony Pictures Classics/United China Vision/Zoom Hunt International Productions Company Ltd, Taiwan/Hong Kong/United States/China, 120 mins.

Dances with Wolves, 1990, Kevin Costner, Tig Productions/Majestic Films International, United States, 180 mins.

The Day after Tomorrow, 2004, Roland Emmerich, 20th Century Fox/Centropolis Entertainment/Mark Gordon Productions, United States, 124 mins.

Dead Man Walking, 1995, Tim Robbins, Havoc/PolyGram Filmed Entertainment/Working Title Films, United Kingdom/United States, 122 mins.

Deep Impact, 1998, Mimi Leder, DreamWorks SKG/Paramount Pictures/Zanuck-Brown Productions, United States, 120 mins.

Diamonds are Forever, 1971, Guy Hamilton, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd., United Kingdom, 125 mins.

Dick Tracy, 1990, Warren Beatty, Mulholland Productions/Silver Screen Partners IV/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 103 mins.

Die Another Day, 2002, Lee Tamahori, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd./Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/United Artists, United Kingdom/United States, 133 mins.

Die Hard, 1988, John McTiernan, 20th Century Fox/Gordon Company/Silver Pictures, United States, 131 mins.

Die Hard 2, 1990, Renny Harlin, 20th Century Fox/Gordon Company/Silver Pictures, United States, 124 mins.

Die Hard with a Vengeance, 1995, John McTiernan, 20th Century Fox/Cinergi Pictures Entertainment Inc., United States, 131 mins.

Dinosaur, 2000, Eric Leighton/Ralph Zondag, Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 82 mins.

Dirty Harry, 1971, Don Seigel, The Malpaso Company/Warner Bros., United States, 102 mins.

Dr. Dolittle, 1998, Betty Thomas, 20th Century Fox/Davis Entertainment/Joseph M. Singer Entertainment, United States, 85 mins.

Dr. Dolittle 2, 2001, Steve Carr, 20th Century Fox/Davis Entertainment/Joseph M. Singer Entertainment, United States, 87 mins.

Doctor No, 1962, Terence Young, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd., United Kingdom/United States, 110 mins.

Double Jeopardy, 1999, Bruce Beresford, British Columbia Production Tax Credit/MFP Munich Film Partners GmbH & Company I. Produktions KG/Paramount Pictures, Germany/Canada/United States, 105 mins.

Driving Miss Daisy, 1989, Bruce Beresford, Majestic Films International/The Zanuck Company/Warner Bros., United States, 99 mins.

Dumb and Dumber, 1994, Peter Farrelly/Bobby Farrelly, Motion Picture Corporation of America/New Line Cinema, United States, 101 mins.

E.R., 1994-, Constant c Productions/John Wells Productions/Amblin Entertainment/Warner Bros. Television/Amblin Television, United States, first telecast (United States) 19 September, 1994.

Earthquake, 1974, Mark Robson, The Filmmakers Group/Universal Pictures, United States, 123 mins.

Ed TV, 1999, Ron Howard, Imagine Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 122 mins.

8 Mile, 2002, Curtis Hanson, Imagine Entertainment/Mikona Productions GmbH & Co. KG, United States/Germany, 110 mins.

Enemy at the Gates, 2001, Jean-Jacques Annaud, DOS/KC Medien AC/Little Bird Ltd./MP Film Management UNLS Produktion GmbH & Co. KG/Mandalay Pictures/Paramount Pictures/Reperage/Swanford Films, United States/Germany/United Kingdom/Ireland, 131 mins.

Enemy of the State, 1998, Tony Scott, Don Simpson-Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Scott Free Productions/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 131 mins.

Eraser, 1996, Chuck Russell, Warner Bros., United States, 115 mins.

Erin Brockovich, 2000, Steven Soderbergh, Jersey Films, United States, 130 mins.

Executive Decision, 1996, Stuart Baird, Silver Pictures/Warner Bros., United States, 134 mins.

The Exorcist, 1973, William Friedkin, Hoya Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 122 mins.

Face/Off, 1997, John Woo, Douglas-Reuther Productions/Paramount Pictures/Touchstone Pictures/WCG Entertainment Productions, United States, 138 mins.

The Fast and the Furious, 2001, Rob Cohen, Mediastream Film GmbH & Co. Productions KG/Neal H. Moritz Productions/Original Film/Universal Pictures, United States, 106 mins.

Fearless, 1993, Peter Weir, Spring Creek Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 122 mins.

A Few Good Men, 1992, Rob Reiner, Castle Rock Entertainment/Columbia Pictures Corporation/New Line Cinema, United States, 138 mins.

Fight Club, 1999, David Fincher, Art Linson Productions/Fox 2000 Pictures/Regency Enterprises/Taurus Film, Germany/United States, 139 mins.

Final Analysis, 1992, Phil Joanou, Warner Bros., United States, 124 mins.

The Firm, 1993, Sydney Pollack, Paramount Pictures, United States, 154 mins.

First Blood, 1982, Ted Kotcheff, Anabosis N. V./Carolco Pictures Inc., United States, 97 mins.

The First Wives Club, 1996, Hugh Wilson, Paramount Pictures, United States, 102 mins.

The Flintstones, 1994, Brian Levant, Amblin Entertainment/Hanna-Barbera Productions/Universal Pictures, United States, 91 mins.

Forrest Gump, 1994, Robert Zemeckis, Paramount Pictures, United States, 142 mins.

The French Connection, 1971, William Friedkin, 20th Century Fox/D'Antoni Productions/Schine-Moore Productions, United States, 104 mins.

Friday the 13th, 1980, Sean S. Cunningham, Georgetown Productions Inc./Paramount Pictures/Sean S. Cunningham Films, United States, 95 mins.

From Russia with Love, 1963, Terence Young, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd., United Kingdom, 115 mins.

The Fugitive, 1993, Andrew Davis, Warner Bros., United States, 130 mins.

The General's Daughter, 1999, Simon West, MFP Munich Film Partners GmbH & Company I. Produktions KG/Neufeld Rehme Productions/Paramount Pictures, Germany/United States, 116 mins.

George of the Jungle, 1997, Sam Weisman, Avnet-Kerner Productions/Banana Pictures Inc./Mandeville Films/Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 92 mins.

Ghost, 1990, Jerry Zucker, Paramount Pictures, United States, 128 mins.

Ghostbusters II, 1989, Ivan Reitman, Columbia Pictures Corporation, United States, 102 mins.

Gladiator, 2000, Ridley Scott, DreamWorks SKG/Scott Free Productions/Universal Pictures, United Kingdom/United States, 155 mins.

The Godfather, 1972, Francis Ford Coppola, Paramount Pictures, United States, 175 mins.

Godzilla, 1998, Roland Emmerich, Centropolis Productions/Fried Films/Independent Pictures/TriStar Pictures, United States, 140 mins.

GoldenEye, 1995, Martin Campbell, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd./Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer/United Artists, United Kingdom/United States, 130 mins.

Gone in 60 Seconds, 2000, Dominic Sena, Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 117 mins.

Gone with the Wind, 1939, Victor Fleming, Selznick International Pictures, United States, 222 mins.

Good Will Hunting, 1997, Gus Van Sant, Be Gentleman Limited Partnership/Lawrence Bender Productions/Miramax Films, United States, 126 mins.

GoodFellas, 1990, Martin Scorsese, Warner Bros., United States, 145 mins.

The Green Mile, 1999, Frank Darabont, Castle Rock Entertainment/Darkwoods Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 188 mins.

The Grinch, 2000, Ron Howard, Imagine Entertainment/LUNI Productions GmbH & Company KG, United States, 104 mins.

Grizzly Man, 2005, Werner Herzog, Discovery Docs, United States, 103 mins.

Halloween, 1978, John Carpenter, Compass International Pictures/Falcon Films, United States, 91 mins.

The Hand that Rocks the Cradle, 1992, Curtis Hansen, Hollywood Pictures/Interscope Communications/Nomura Babcock & Brown, United States, 110 mins.

Hannibal, 2001, Ridley Scott, Dino De Laurentiis Productions/Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/Scott Free Productions/Universal Pictures, United Kingdom/United States, 131 mins.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, 2002, Chris Columbus, 1492 Pictures/Heyday Films/MIRACLE Productions GmbH & Co. KG/Warner Bros., United States, 161 mins.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, 2005, Mike Newell, Warner Bros. Pictures/Heyday Films/Patalex IV Productions Ltd, United Kingdom/United States, 157 mins.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, 2001, Chris Columbus, 1492 Pictures/Heyday Films/Warner Bros., United States, 152 mins.

Heat, 1995, Michael Mann, Warner Bros./Regency Enterprises/Forward Pass/Monarchy Enterprises B.V., United States, 171 mins.

The Hills Have Eyes, 1977, Wes Craven, Blood Relations Co., United States, 89 mins.

Home Alone, 1990, Chris Columbus, 20th Century Fox, United States, 103 mins.

Home Alone 2: Lost in New York, 1992, Chris Columbus, 20th Century Fox, United States, 120 mins.

Honey, I Shrunk the Kids, 1989, Joe Johnston, Doric Productions/Silver Screen Partners III/Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 101 mins.

Hook, 1991, Steven Spielberg, Amblin Entertainment/TriStar Pictures, United States, 144 mins.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame, 1996, Gary Trousdale/Kirk Wise, Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 91 mins.

The Hunt for Red October, 1990, John McTiernan, Paramount Pictures, United States, 134 mins.

I Robot, 2004, Alex Proyas, 20th Century Fox/Davis Entertainment/Laurence Mark Productions/Canlaws Productions/Mediastream Vierte Film GmbH & Co. Vermarktungs KG/Mediastream Vierte Productions GmbH/Overbrook Entertainment, United States, 115 mins.

Ice Age, 2002, Chris Wedge/Carlos Saldanha, Blue Sky Studios/Fox Animation Studios, United States, 81 mins.

In the Line of Fire, 1993, Wolfgang Petersen, Castle Rock Entertainment/Columbia Pictures Corporation, United States, 128 mins.

The Incredible Shrinking Man, 1957, Jack Arnold, United International Pictures, United States, 81 mins.

Indecent Proposal, 1993, Adrian Lyne, Paramount Pictures, United States, 117 mins.

Independence Day, 1996, Roland Emmerich, 20th Century Fox/Centropolis Entertainment, United States, 145 mins.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, 1989, Steven Spielberg, Lucasfilm Ltd./Paramount Pictures, United States, 127 mins.

Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles, 1994, Neil Jordan, Geffen Pictures, United States, 123 mins.

Into the Breach: Saving Private Ryan, 1998, (no director credit), Triage Inc./DreamWorks SKG, United States, 25 mins.

Invaders from Mars, 1953, William Cameron Menzies, National Pictures Corp., United States, 78 mins.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers, 1956, Don Siegel, Allied Artists Pictures Corporation/Walter Wanger Productions Inc., United States, 80 mins.

The Island, 2005, Michael Bay, DreamWorks SKG/Warner Bros./Parkes-McDonald Productions, United States, 136 mins.

It Came from Outer Space, 1953, Jack Arnold, Universal International Pictures, United States, 81 mins.

The Italian Job, 2003, F. Gary Grey, Paramount Pictures/De Line Pictures, United States/France/United Kingdom, 111 mins.

Jaws, 1975, Steven Spielberg, Universal Pictures/Zanuck-Brown Productions, United States, 124 mins.

The Jazz Singer, 1927, Alan Crosland, Warner Bros., United States, 88 mins.

Jerry Maguire, 1996, Cameron Crowe, Gracie Films/TriStar Pictures, United States, 138 mins.

JFK, 1991, Oliver Stone, Alcor Films/Camelot/Ixtlan Corporation/Le Studio Canal+/Regency Enterprises/Warner Bros., United States/France, 189 mins.

John Q, 2002, Nick Cassavetes, Burg-Koules Productions/Evolution Entertainment, United States, 116 mins.

Jumanji, 1995, Joe Johnston, Interscope Communications/Teitler Film, United States, 104 mins.

Jurassic Park, 1993, Steven Spielberg, Universal Pictures/Amblin Entertainment, United States, 127 mins.

Jurassic Park III, 2001, Joe Johnston, Amblin Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 92 mins.

King Arthur, 2004, Antoine Fuqua, Touchstone Pictures/Jerry Bruckheimer Films/World 2000 Entertainment, United States/Ireland, 126 mins.

King Kong, 2005, Peter Jackson, Big Primate Pictures/Universal Pictures/WingNut Films, New Zealand/United States, 187 mins.

Kingdom of Heaven, 2005, Ridley Scott, 20th Century Fox/Scott Free/ Kanzaman SA, United States/Spain/United Kingdom/Germany, 145 mins.

Kiss Me Deadly, 1955, Robert Aldrich, Parklane Pictures Inc. United States, 106 mins.

Kung Fu, 1972-1975, Warner Brothers Television, United States, first telecast (United States) 14 October, 1972.

Lara Croft: Tomb Raider, 2001, Simon West, British Broadcasting Corporation/Eidos Interactive Ltd./KFP Produktions GmbH & Co. KG/Lawrence Gordon Productions/Marubeni Corporation/Mutual Film Company/Paramount Pictures/Tele-München (TMG)/Toho-Towa, United Kingdom/Germany/United States/Japan, 100 mins.

Law & Order, 1990-2004, Wolf Films/Studios USA Television/NBC Universal Television/Universal Network Television/Universal TV, United States, first telecast (United States) 13 September, 1990.

A League of Their Own, 1992, Penny Marshall, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Parkways Productions, United States, 128 mins.

Legend, 1985, Ridley Scott, 20th Century Fox/Embassy International Pictures/Legend Production Company Ltd./Universal Pictures, United Kingdom, 94 mins.

Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events, 2004, Brad Silberling, Paramount Pictures/DreamWorks SKG/Nickelodeon Movies/Scott Rudin Productions/Kumar Mobiliengeellschaft mbH & Co. Projekt NR & KG, United States/Germany, 108 mins.

Lethal Weapon 2, 1989, Richard Donner, Silver Pictures/Warner Bros., United States, 113 mins.

Lethal Weapon 3, 1992, Richard Donner, Silver Pictures/Warner Bros., United States, 118 mins.

Lethal Weapon 4, 1998, Richard Donner, Donner-Shuler-Donner Productions/Silver Pictures/Warner Bros., United States, 127 mins.

Liar Liar, 1997, Tom Shadyac, Imagine Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 86 mins.

Licence to Kill, 1989, John Glen, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd., United Kingdom/United States, 133 mins.

Lilo & Stitch, 2002, Dean DeBlois/Chris Sanders, Walt Disney Feature Animation/Walt Disney Films, United States, 85 mins.

The Lion King, 1994, Roger Allers/Rob Minkoff, Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 89 mins.

The Long Kiss Goodnight, 1996, Renny Harlin, Forge/New Line Cinema, United States, 120 mins.

Look Who's Talking, 1989, Amy Heckerling, MCEG Productions/TriStar Pictures, United States, 93 mins.

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, 2001, Peter Jackson, New Line Cinema/WingNut Films/The Saul Zaentz Company, New Zealand/United States, 178 mins.

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, 2003, Peter Jackson, New Line Cinema/WingNut Films/Lord Zweite Productions Deutschland Filmproduktion GmbH & Co. KG/The Saul Zaentz Company, United States/New Zealand/Germany, 201 mins.

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, 2002, Peter Jackson, New Line Cinema/WingNut Films/Lord Zweite Productions Deutschland Filmproduktion GmbH & Co. KG/The Saul Zaentz Company, United States/New Zealand, 179 mins.

The Lost World: Jurassic Park, 1997, Steven Spielberg, Amblin Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 129 mins.

Magnum Force, 1973, Ted Post, The Malpaso Company/Warner Bros., United States, 124 mins.

Manhunter, 1986, Michael Mann, De Laurentiis Entertainment Group (DEG)/Red Dragon Productions S. A., United States, 119 mins.

Mars Attacks!, 1996, Tim Burton, Warner Bros., United States, 106 mins.

- The Mask, 1994, Chuck Russell, Dark Horse Entertainment/New Line Cinema, United States, 97 mins.
- The Matrix, 1999, Andy Wachowski/Larry Wachowski, Groucho II Film Partnership/Silver Pictures/Village Roadshow Pictures, United States, 136 mins.
- The Matrix Reloaded, 2003, Andy Wachowski/Larry Wachowski, Warner Bros./Village Roadshow Pictures/Silver Pictures/NPV Entertainment, United States, 138 mins.
- Maverick, 1994, Richard Donner, Donner-Shuler-Donner Productions/Icon Entertainment International/Warner Bros., United States, 127 mins.
- Meet the Parents, 2000, Jay Roach, Universal Pictures/Tribeca Productions/Nancy Tenenbaum Productions/DreamWorks SKG, United States, 108 mins.
- Men in Black, 1997, Barry Sonnenfeld, Amblin Entertainment/Columbia Pictures Corporation/MacDonald-Parkes Productions, United States, 98 mins.
- Men in Black II, 2002, Barry Sonnenfeld, Amblin Entertainment/Columbia Pictures Corporation/MacDonald-Parkes Productions, United States, 1988.
- Minority Report, 2002, Steven Spielberg, Cruise-Wagner Productions/Blue Tulip/DreamWorks SKG/Ronald Shussett-Gary Goldman/Amblin Entertainment, United States, 145 mins.
- Miss Congeniality, 2000, Donald Petrie, Castle Rock Entertainment/Fortis Films/NPV Entertainment/Village Roadshow Pictures, United States, 109 mins.
- Mission: Impossible, 1996, Brian De Palma, Cruise-Wagner Productions/Paramount Pictures, United States, 110 mins.
- Mission: Impossible 2, 2000, John Woo, Cruise-Wagner Productions/MFP Munich Film Partners GmbH & Company I. Produktions KG/Paramount Pictures, United States/Germany, 123 mins.
- Mrs. Doubtfire, 1993, Chris Columbus, 20th Century Fox/Blue Wolf, United States, 125 mins.
- Mr Deeds, 2002, Steven Brill, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Happy Madison Productions/New Line Cinema/Out of the Blue... Entertainment, United States, 96 mins.
- Mr Deeds Goes to Town, 1936, Frank Capra, Frank Capra Productions Ltd./Columbia Pictures Corporation, United States, 115 mins.
- Monsters, Inc., 2001, Peter Docter/Lee Unkrich, Pixar Animation Studios/Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 92 mins.
- Moulin Rouge!, 2001, Baz Luhrmann, Bazmark Films, Australia/United States, 127 mins.
- Mulan, 1998, Tony Bancroft/Barry Cook, Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 88 mins.
- The Mummy, 1999, Stephen Sommers, Alphaville Films/Universal Pictures, United States, 124 mins.
- The Mummy Returns, 2001, Stephen Sommers, Alphaville Films/Imhotep Productions, United States, 130 mins.
- My Best Friend's Wedding, 1997, P.J. Hogan, Predawn Productions/TriStar Pictures/Zucker Brothers Productions, United States, 105 mins.
- My Big Fat Greek Wedding, 2002, Joel Zwick, Big Wedding LLC/Gold Circle Films/Home Box Office/MPH Entertainment Productions/Ontario Film Development Corporation/Playtone, United States/Canada, 95 mins.

The Myth, 2005, Stanley Tong, China Film Group Corporation/JCE Entertainment Ltd/Media Asia Films Ltd/Wonder World Corporation, China/Hong Kong, 122 mins.

Natural Born Killers, 1994, Oliver Stone, Alcor Films/Ixtlan Productions/J D Productions/New Regency Pictures/Regency Enterprises/Warner Bros., United States, 118 mins.

Network, 1976, Sidney Lumet, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/United Artists, United States, 121 mins.

New Police Story, 2004, Benny Chan, China Film Group Corporation/JCE Entertainment Ltd, Hong Kong/China, 123 mins.

Night of the Living Dead, 1968, George A. Romero, Image Ten/Laurel Group/Market Square Productions/Off Color Films, United States, 96 mins.

Nightmare on Elm Street, 1984, Wes Craven, Media Home Entertainment/New Line Cinema/Smart Egg Productions, United States, 91 mins.

Nosferatu, 1922, F. W. Murnau, Jata-Atelier Berlin Johannisthal/Prana-Film GmbH, Germany, 94 mins.

Notting Hill, 1999, Roger Michell, Bookshop Productions/Notting Hill Pictures/PolyGram Filmed Entertainment/Working Title Films, United Kingdom/United States, 125 mins.

The Nutty Professor, 1996, Tom Shadyac, Imagine Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 95 mins.

Nutty Professor II: The Klumps, 2000, Peter Segal, Imagine Entertainment, United States, 106 mins.

Ocean's Eleven, 2001, Steven Soderbergh, Jerry Weintraub Productions/NPV Entertainment/Section Eight Ltd./Village Roadshow Pictures, United States, 116 mins.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, 1975, Milos Forman, Fantasy Films/N.V. Zvaluw, United States, 133 mins.

101 Dalmatians, 1996, Stephen Herek, Great Oaks Entertainment/Walt Disney Pictures/Wizzer Productions Inc., United States, 103 mins.

Panic Room, 2002, David Fincher, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Hofflund-Polone/Indelible Pictures, United States, 112 mins.

The Paper, 1994, Ron Howard, Imagine Entertainment/Universal Pictures, United States, 112 mins.

The Parallax View, 1974, Alan J. Pakula, Doubleday Productions/Gus/Harbor Productions/Paramount Productions, United States, 102 mins.

Patch Adams, 1998, Tom Shadyac, Blue Wolf/Bungalow Productions/Farrell-Minoff, United States, 115 mins.

The Patriot, 2000, Roland Emmerich, Centropolis Entertainment/Global Entertainment Productions GmbH & Company Medien KG/Mutual Film Company, Germany/United States, 164 mins.

The Peacemaker, 1997, Mimi Leder, DreamWorks SKG, United States, 124 mins.

Pearl Harbor, 2001, Michael Bay, Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 183 mins.

The Pelican Brief, 1993, Alan J. Pakula, Warner Bros., United States, 141 mins.

The Perfect Storm, 2000, Wolfgang Petersen, Baltimore Spring Creek Productions/Radiant Productions/Warner Bros, United States/Germany, 129 mins.

Phenomenon, 1996, Jon Turteltaub, Touchstone Pictures, United States, 123 mins.

The Piano, 1993, Jane Campion, Australian Film Commission/CiBy 2000/New South Wales Film & Television Office, Australia/New Zealand/France, 121 mins.

Planet of the Apes, 2001, Tim Burton, 20th Century Fox/The Zanuck Company, United States, 119 mins.

Platoon, 1986, Oliver Stone, Cinema 86/Hemdale Film Corporation, United States, 120 mins.

Pleasantville, 1998, Gary Ross, Larger Than Life Productions/New Line Cinema, United States, 124 mins.

Pocahontas, 1995, Mike Gabriel/Eric Goldberg, Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 81 mins.

Poison Ivy, 1992, Katt Shea, MG Entertainment Inc./New Line Cinema, United States, 88 mins.

Poltergeist, 1982, Tobe Hooper, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/SLM Entertainment Ltd, United States, 114 mins.

The Poseidon Adventure, 1972, Ronald Neame, Kent Productions, United States, 117 mins.

Predator, 1987, John McTiernan, 20th Century Fox/Amercent Films/American Entertainment Partners L. P., United States, 107 mins.

Pretty Woman, 1990, Garry Marshall, Silver Screen Partners IV/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 119 mins.

The Prince of Egypt, 1998, Brenda Chapman/Steve Hickner/Simon Wells, DreamWorks SKG, United States, 99 mins.

The Princess Diaries, 2001, Garry Marshall, Bottom of the Ninth Productions Inc./BrownHouse Productions/Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 114 mins.

Psycho, 1960, Alfred Hitchcock, Shamley Productions, United States, 109 mins.

Pulp Fiction, 1994, Quentin Tarantino, A Band Apart/Jersey Films/Miramax Films, United States, 154 mins.

Rambo: First Blood Part II, 1985, George P. Cosmatos, Anabasis N. V./Carolco Entertainment, United States, 94 mins.

Ransom, 1996, Ron Howard, Imagine Entertainment/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 121 mins.

Raw Deal, 1986, John Irvin, De Laurentiis Entertainment Group (DEG)/Famous Films N. V./International Film Corporation, United States, 97 mins.

Remember the Titans, 2000, Boaz Yakin, Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Run It Up Productions Inc./Technical Black/Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 113 mins.

The Ring, 2002, Gore Verbinski, DreamWorks SKG/MacDonald-Parkes Productions/Bender-Spink Inc., United States/Japan, 115 mins.

Road to Perdition, 2002, Sam Mendes, 20th Century Fox/DreamWorks SKG/The Zanuck Company, United States, 117 mins.

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, 1991, Kevin Reynolds, Morgan Creek Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 143 mins.

The Rock, 1996, Michael Bay, Don Simpson-Jerry Bruckheimer Films/Hollywood Pictures, United States, 136 mins.

Rosemary's Baby, 1968, Roman Polanski, Paramount Pictures, United States, 136 mins.

The Rugrats Movie, 1998, Igor Kovalyov/Norton Virgien, Klasky-Csupo/Nickelodeon Movies/Paramount Pictures, United States, 79 mins.

The Runaway Bride, 1999, Garry Marshall, Interscope Communications/Lakeshore Entertainment/Paramount Pictures/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 116 mins.

Rush Hour, 1998, Brett Ratner, New Line Cinema/Roger Birnbaum Productions, United States, 97 mins.

Rush Hour 2, 2001, Brett Ratner, New Line Cinema, United States, 90 mins.

The Santa Clause, 1994, John Pasquin, Hollywood Pictures/Outlaw Productions/Walt Disney Productions, United States, 97 mins.

The Santa Clause 2, 2002, Michael Lembeck, Boxing Cat Films/Outlaw Productions/Walt Disney Films, United States, 105 mins.

Saving Private Ryan, 1998, Steven Spielberg, Amblin Entertainment/DreamWorks SKG/Mark Gordon Productions/Mutual Film Company/Paramount Pictures, United States, 170 mins.

Scary Movie, 2000, Keenen Ivory Wayans, Brillstein-Grey Entertainment/Dimension Films/Gold-Miller Productions/Wayans Bros. Entertainment, United States, 88 mins.

Scooby-Doo, 2002, Raja Gosnell, Atlas Entertainment/Hanna-Barbera Productions/Mosaic Media Group, United States/Australia, 86 mins.

Scream, 1996, Wes Craven, Dimension Films/Woods Entertainment, United States, 111 mins.

Scream 2, 1997, Wes Craven, Craven-Maddalena Films/Dimension Films/Konrad Pictures/Maven Entertainment Inc./Miramax Films, United States, 120 mins.

Scream 3, 2000, Wes Craven, Craven-Maddalena Films/Dimension Films/Konrad Pictures, United States, 116 mins.

Seven, 1995, David Fincher, New Line Cinema, United States, 127 mins.

Shakespeare in Love, 1998, John Madden, Bedford Falls Productions/Miramax Films/Universal Pictures, United States/United Kingdom, 122 mins.

Shanghai Knights, 2003, David Dobkin, All Knight Productions LLC/Birnbaum-Barber/Epsilon Motion Pictures/Jackie Chan Films Limited/Roger Birnbaum Productions/Spyglass Entertainment/Stillking Films/Touchstone Pictures, United States/United Kingdom/Czech Republic, 114 mins.

The Shawshank Redemption, 1994, Frank Darabont, Castle Rock Entertainment/Columbia Pictures Corporation, United States, 142 mins.

Shrek, 2001, Andrew Adamson/Vicky Jensen, DreamWorks SKG/Pacific Data Images, United States, 90 mins.

The Siege, 1998, Edward Zwick, 20th Century Fox/Bedford Falls Productions, United States, 116 mins.

Signs, 2002, M. Night Shyamalan, Blinding Edge Pictures/The Kennedy-Marshall Company/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 106 mins.

The Silence of the Lambs, 1991, Jonathan Demme, Orion Pictures Corporation, United States, 118 mins.

Sister Act, 1992, Emile Ardolino, Touchstone Pictures, United States, 100 mins.

Six Feet Under, 2001-2005, The Greenblatt-Janollari Studio/Actual Size Films/Actual Size Productions/Home Box Office, United States, first telecast (United States) 3 June 2001.

The Sixth Sense, 1999, M. Night Shyamalan, Hollywood Pictures/Spyglass Entertainment/The Kennedy-Marshall Company, United States, 107 mins.

Sleeping with the Enemy, 1991, Joseph Ruben, 20th Century Fox, United States, 99 mins.

Sleepless in Seattle, 1993, Nora Ephron, TriStar Pictures, United States, 105 mins.

Sleepy Hollow, 1999, Tim Burton, Paramount Pictures/Mandalay Pictures/American Zoetrope, Germany/United States, 105 mins.

The Sopranos, 1999-2004, Brad Grey Television/Home Box Office/Chase Films, United States, first telecast (United States) 10 January 1999.

Speed, 1994, Jan de Bont, 20th Century Fox, United States, 116 mins.

Spider-Man, 2002, Sam Raimi, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Marvel Enterprises/Laura Ziskin Productions, United States, 121 mins.

Spider-Man 2, 2004, Sam Raimi, Marvel Enterprises/Laura Ziskin Productions/Columbia Pictures Corporation/Sony Pictures Entertainment, United States, 127 mins.

Spy Kids, 2001, Robert Rodriguez, Dimension Films/Troublemaker Studios, United States, 88 mins.

Star Trek V: The Final Frontier, 1989, William Shatner, Paramount Pictures, United States, 107 mins.

Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country, 1991, Nicholas Meyer, Paramount Pictures, United States, 113 mins.

Star Trek: First Contact, 1996, Jonathan Frakes, Paramount Pictures, United States, 106 mins.

Star Trek: Generations, 1994, David Carson, Paramount Pictures, United States, 118 mins.

Star Trek: Insurrection, 1998, Jonathan Frakes, Paramount Pictures, United States, 103 mins.

Star Trek: Nemesis, 2002, Stuart Baird, Paramount Pictures, United States, 116 mins.

Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace, 1999, George Lucas, 20th Century Fox/Lucasfilm Ltd, United States, 133 mins.

Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones, 2002, George Lucas, Lucasfilm Ltd, United States, 143 mins.

Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope, 1977, George Lucas, Lucasfilm Ltd., United States, 121 mins.

Star Wars: Episode VI – The Return of the Jedi, 1983, Richard Marquand, Lucasfilm Ltd, United States, 134 mins.

Stealth, 2005, Rob Cohen, Columbia Pictures Corp./Original Film/Phoenix Pictures/Laura Ziskin Productions/AFG Talons Productions, United States, 121 mins.

Stuart Little, 1999, Rob Minkoff, Columbia Pictures Corporation/Franklin-Waterman Productions/Global Medien KG, Germany/United States, 84 mins.

The Sum of All Fears, 2002, Phil Alden Robinson, Paramount Pictures/Mace Neufeld Productions/MFP Munich Film Partners GmbH & Company I. Produktions KG, United States/Germany, 124 mins.

Sunset Boulevard, 1950, Billy Wilder, Paramount Pictures, United States, 110 mins.

Sweet Home Alabama, 2002, Andy Tennant, D & D Films/Original Film/Pigeon Creek Films/Touchstone Pictures, United States, 108 mins.

Tarzan, 1999, Chris Buck/Kevin Lima, Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc./Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 88 mins.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, 1990, Steve Barron, 888 Productions/Golden Harvest Company Ltd./Limelight Entertainment/Mirage Productions/New Line Cinema/Northshore Investments Ltd., United States/Hong Kong, 93 mins.

Terminator 2: Judgment Day, 1991, James Cameron, Carolco Pictures Inc./Le Studio Canal+/Lightstorm Entertainment/Pacific Western, France/United States, 137 mins.

The Texas Chain Saw Massacre, 1974, Tobe Hooper, Vortex, United States, 83 mins.

Thelma & Louise, 1991, Ridley Scott, Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer/Pathé Entertainment, United States, 129 mins.

Them!, 1954, Gordon Douglas, Warner Bros., United States, 94 mins.

There's Something about Mary, 1998, Peter Farrelly/Bobby Farrelly, 20th Century Fox, United States, 119 mins.

The Thing, 1951, Christian Nyby, RKO Radio Pictures Inc./Winchester Pictures Corp., United States, 87 mins.

The Thing, 1982, John Carpenter, Turman-Foster Company/Universal Pictures, United States, 109 mins.

The Third Man, 1949, Carol Reed, British Lion Film Corporation/London Film Productions, United Kingdom, 104 mins.

Three Kings, 1999, David O. Russell, Warner Bros./Village Roadshow Pictures/Village-A.M. Partnership/Coast Ridge/Atlas Entertainment/Junger Witt Productions, United States, 114 mins.

Thunderball, 1965, Terence Young, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd/Underwater Productions, Ltd., United Kingdom, 130 mins.

Time Bandits, 1981, Terry Gilliam, Handmade Films Ltd., United Kingdom, 116 mins.

The Time Machine, 2002, Simon Wells, Arnold Leibovit Entertainment/DreamWorks SKG/Parkes-MacDonald Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 96 mins.

A Time to Kill, 1996, Joel Schumacher, Regency Enterprises/Warner Bros., United States, 149 mins.

Titanic, 1997, James Cameron, 20th Century Fox/Paramount Pictures/Lightstorm Entertainment, United States, 194 mins.

Tomorrow Never Dies, 1997, Roger Spottiswoode, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd./United Artists, United Kingdom/United States, 119 mins.

Total Recall, 1990, Paul Verhoeven, Carolco International N.V./Carolco Pictures Inc./TriStar Pictures, United States, 113 mins.

The Towering Inferno, 1974, John Guillermin/Irwin Allen, 20th Century Fox/Warner Bros., United States, 165 mins.

Toy Story, 1995, John Lasseter, Walt Disney Pictures/Pixar Animation Studios, United States, 81 mins.

Toy Story 2, 1999, John Lasseter/Lee Unkrich, Pixar Animation Studios/Walt Disney Pictures, United States, 92 mins.

Traffic, 2000, Steven Soderbergh, Bedford Falls Productions/Compulsion Inc./Initial Entertainment Group/Splendid Medien AG/USA Films, Germany/United States, 147 mins.

Troy, 2004, Wolfgang Petersen, Warner Bros./Radiant Productions/Plan B Entertainment, United States/Malta/United Kingdom, 163 mins.

True Lies, 1994, James Cameron, 20th Century Fox/Lightstorm Entertainment, United States, 144 mins.

The Truman Show, 1998, Peter Weir, Paramount Pictures/Scott Rudin Productions, United States, 103 mins.

24, 2001-2006, Imagine Entertainment/20th Century Fox Television/Imagine Television/Real Time Productions, United States, first telecast (United States) 6 November 2001.

Twister, 1996, Jan de Bont, Amblin Entertainment/Constant c Productions/Universal Pictures/Warner Bros., United States, 113 mins.

2001: A Space Odyssey, 1968, Stanley Kubrick, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/Polaris, United Kingdom/United States, 141 mins.

Unbreakable, 2000, M. Night Shyamalan, Touchstone Pictures/Blinding Edge Pictures/Limited Edition Productions Ltd., United States, 106 mins.

Unforgiven, 1992, Clint Eastwood, Malpas Productions/Warner Bros., United States, 131 mins.

United 93, 2006, Paul Greengrass, Sidney Kimmel Entertainment/Studio Canal/Universal Pictures/Working Title Pictures, United Kingdom/United States, 111 mins.

Van Helsing, 2004, Stephen Sommers, Carpathian Pictures/Universal Pictures/Stillking Films/The Sommers Company, United States/Czech Republic, 132 mins.

Vanilla Sky, 2001, Cameron Crowe, Artisan Entertainment/Cruise-Wagner Productions/Sociedad General de Cine S.A./Summit Entertainment/Vinyl Films, United States, 136 mins.

Videodrome, 1983, David Cronenberg, Canadian Film Development Corporation/Famous Players/Filmplan/Guardian Trust Company/Universal Pictures/Victor Solnicki Productions, Canada/United States, 87 mins.

Wall Street, 1987, Oliver Stone, 20th Century Fox/Amercent Films/American Entertainment Partners L.P., United States, 125 mins.

The War of the Worlds, 1953, Byron Haskin, Paramount Pictures, United States, 85 mins.

War of the Worlds, 2005, Steven Spielberg, Paramount Pictures/DreamWorks SKG/Amblin Entertainment/Cruise-Wagner Productions, United States, 116 mins.

The Waterboy, 1998, Frank Coraci, Touchstone Pictures/Waterboy Productions, United States, 90 mins.

Wayne's World, 1992, Penelope Spheeris, Paramount Pictures, United States, 95 mins.

We Were Soldiers, 2002, Randall Wallace, Icon Entertainment International/Motion Picture Production GmbH & Co. Erste KG/Wheelhouse Entertainment, United States/Germany, 138 mins.

Westside Story, 1961, Jerome Robbins/Robert Wise, The Mirisch Corporation/Beta Productions/Seven Arts Productions, United States, 152 mins.

What Lies Beneath, 2000, Robert Zemeckis, 20th Century Fox/DreamWorks SKG/ImageMovers, United States, 130 mins.

What Women Want, 2000, Nancy Myers, Centropolis Entertainment/Icon Entertainment International/Paramount Pictures/Wind Dancer Productions, United States, 127 mins.

When Worlds Collide, 1951, Rudolph Maté, Paramount Pictures, United States, 83 mins.

Wild Wild West, 1999, Barry Sonnenfeld, Peters Entertainment/Sonnenfeld Josephson Worldwide Entertainment/Warner Bros., United States, 107 mins.

The Wizard of Oz, 1939, Victor Fleming, Loew's Inc./Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer (MGM), United States, 101 mins.

The World is Not Enough, 1999, Michael Apted, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd./Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/United Artists, United Kingdom/United States, 128 mins.

World Trade Center, 2006, Oliver Stone, Paramount Pictures/Double Feature Films/Intermedia Films, United States, 129 mins..

The X-Files, 1993-2002, 20th Century Fox Television/Ten Thirteen Productions, United States, first telecast (United States) 10 September, 1993.

X-Men, 2000, Bryan Singer, 20th Century Fox/Bad Hat Harry Productions/Donner-Shuler-Donner Productions/Genetics Productions/Marvel Enterprises/Springwood Productions, United States, 104 mins.

X-Men 2, 2003, Bryan Singer, 20th Century Fox/Marvel Enterprises/The Donner Company/Bad Hat Harry Productions, United States, 133 mins.

xXx, 2002, Rob Cohen, Original Film/Revolution Studios, United States, 124 mins.

xXx 2: The Next Level, 2005, Lee Tamahori, Columbia Pictures Corp./Revolution Studios/Original Film, United States, 101 mins.

You've Got Mail, 1998, Nora Ephron, Warner Bros., United States, 119 mins.

You Only Live Twice, 1967, Lewis Gilbert, Danjaq Productions/Eon Productions Ltd., United Kingdom, 117 mins.

Zoolander, 2001, Ben Stiller, AZL Productions/MFP Munich Film Partners GmbH & Company I. Produktions KG/NPV Entertainment/Paramount Pictures/Red Hour Productions/Scott Rudin Productions/Tenth Planet Productions/VH1 Television/Village Roadshow Pictures, United States/Australia/Germany, 89 mins.

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Appendix A: The Films and the Presence of Evil

This table is a checklist of those films that contain evil and those in the sample which do not.

<u>THE FILMS</u>	<u>THE PRESENCE OF EVIL</u>
Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls (1995)	
The Addams Family (1991)	Yes
Air Force One (1997)	Yes
Aladdin (1992)	Yes
American Beauty (1999)	
American Pie (1999)	
American Pie 2 (2001)	
Analyse This (1999)	See Note 1.
Apollo 13 (1995)	Yes
Armageddon (1998)	Yes
As Good As It Gets (1997)	
Austin Powers in Goldmember (2002)	Yes
Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me (1999)	Yes
Back to the Future: Part 2 (1989)	Yes
Basic Instinct (1992)	Yes
Batman (1989)	Yes
Batman and Robin (1997)	Yes
Batman Forever (1995)	Yes
Batman Returns (1992)	Yes
A Beautiful Mind (2001)	Yes
Beauty and the Beast (1991)	
Big Daddy (1999)	
Big Momma's House (2000)	Yes
The Birdcage (1996)	
Black Hawk Down (2001)	Yes
The Blair Witch Project (1999)	Yes
The Bodyguard (1992)	Yes
The Bourne Identity (2002)	Yes
A Bug's Life (1998)	Yes
Casper (1995)	Yes
Cast Away (2000)	
Catch Me If You Can (2002)	
Charlie's Angels (2000)	Yes
Chicken Run (2000)	Yes
City Slickers (1991)	
Clear and Present Danger (1994)	Yes
Con Air (1997)	Yes
Contact (1997)	Yes
Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon (2000)	Yes
Dances with Wolves (1990)	Yes

Deep Impact (1998)	See Note 2.
Dick Tracy (1990)	Yes
Die Another Day (2002)	Yes
Die Hard 2 (1990)	Yes
Die Hard with a Vengeance (1995)	Yes
Dinosaur (2000)	
Dr. Dolittle (1998)	
Dr. Dolittle 2 (2001)	
Double Jeopardy (1999)	Yes
Driving Miss Daisy (1989)	
Dumb and Dumber (1994)	
8 Mile (2002)	
Enemy of the State (1998)	Yes
Eraser (1996)	Yes
Erin Brockovich (2000)	Yes
Face/Off (1997)	Yes
The Fast and the Furious (2001)	
A Few Good Men (1992)	
The Firm (1993)	Yes
The First Wives Club (1996)	
The Flintstones (1994)	Yes
Forrest Gump (1994)	
The Fugitive (1993)	Yes
The General's Daughter (1999)	Yes
George of the Jungle (1997)	
Ghost (1990)	Yes
Ghostbusters II (1989)	Yes
Gladiator (2000)	Yes
Godzilla (1998)	Yes
GoldenEye (1995)	Yes
Gone in 60 Seconds (2000)	Yes
Good Will Hunting (1997)	See Note 3.
The Green Mile (1999)	Yes
The Grinch (2000)	
Hannibal (2001)	Yes
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002)	Yes
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001)	Yes
Home Alone (1990)	
Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (1992)	
Honey, I Shrunk the Kids (1989)	
Hook (1991)	Yes
The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996)	Yes
The Hunt for Red October (1990)	Yes
Ice Age (2002)	Yes
In the Line of Fire (1993)	Yes
Indecent Proposal (1993)	
Independence Day (1996)	Yes
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989)	Yes
Interview With the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles (1994)	Yes

Jerry Maguire (1996)	
Jumanji (1995)	Yes
Jurassic Park (1993)	Yes
Jurassic Park III (2001)	Yes
Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001)	Yes
A League of Their Own (1992)	
Lethal Weapon 2 (1989)	Yes
Lethal Weapon 3 (1992)	Yes
Lethal Weapon 4 (1998)	Yes
Liar Liar (1997)	
Lilo & Stitch (2002)	
The Lion King (1994)	Yes
Look Who's Talking (1989)	
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)	Yes
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002)	Yes
The Lost World: Jurassic Park (1997)	Yes
The Mask (1994)	Yes
The Matrix (1999)	Yes
Maverick (1994)	
Meet the Parents (2000)	
Men in Black (1997)	Yes
Men in Black II (2002)	Yes
Minority Report (2002)	Yes
Miss Congeniality (2000)	Yes
Mission: Impossible (1996)	Yes
Mission: Impossible 2 (2000)	Yes
Mrs. Doubtfire (1993)	
Mr. Deeds (2002)	See Note 4.
Monsters, Inc. (2001)	Yes
Mulan (1998)	Yes
The Mummy (1999)	Yes
The Mummy Returns (2001)	Yes
My Best Friend's Wedding (1997)	
My Big Fat Greek Wedding (2002)	
Notting Hill (1999)	See Note 5.
The Nutty Professor (1996)	
Nutty Professor II: The Klumps (2000)	
Ocean's Eleven (2001)	Yes
101 Dalmatians (1996)	Yes
Patch Adams (1998)	
The Patriot (2000)	Yes
Pearl Harbor (2001)	See Note 6.
The Pelican Brief (1993)	Yes
The Perfect Storm (2000)	Yes
Phenomenon (1996)	See Note 3.
Planet of the Apes (2001)	Yes
Pocahontas (1995)	Yes
Pretty Woman (1990)	
The Prince of Egypt (1998)	Yes

The Princess Diaries (2001)	
Pulp Fiction (1994)	Yes
Ransom (1996)	Yes
Remember the Titans (2000)	
The Ring (2002)	Yes
Road to Perdition (2002)	Yes
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves (1991)	Yes
The Rock (1996)	Yes
The Rugrats Movie (1998)	
The Runaway Bride (1999)	
Rush Hour (1998)	Yes
Rush Hour 2 (2001)	Yes
The Santa Clause (1994)	
The Santa Clause 2 (2002)	Yes
Saving Private Ryan (1998)	Yes
Scary Movie (2000)	See Note 1.
Scooby-Doo (2002)	Yes
Scream (1996)	Yes
Scream 2 (1997)	Yes
Seven (1995)	Yes
Shakespeare in Love (1998)	See Note 7.
Shrek (2001)	Yes
Signs (2002)	Yes
The Silence of the Lambs (1991)	Yes
Sister Act (1992)	Yes
The Sixth Sense (1999)	Yes
Sleeping with the Enemy (1991)	Yes
Sleepless in Seattle (1993)	
Sleepy Hollow (1999)	Yes
Speed (1994)	Yes
Spider-Man (2002)	Yes
Spy Kids (2001)	Yes
Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace (1999)	Yes
Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones (2002)	Yes
Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope (1977)	Yes
Stuart Little (1999)	
The Sum of All Fears (2002)	Yes
Sweet Home Alabama (2002)	
Tarzan (1999)	Yes
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (1990)	Yes
Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991)	Yes
There's Something About Mary (1998)	
A Time to Kill (1996)	Yes
Titanic (1997)	See Note 8.
Tomorrow Never Dies (1997)	Yes
Total Recall (1990)	Yes
Toy Story (1995)	
Toy Story 2 (1999)	

Traffic (2000)	Yes
True Lies (1994)	Yes
The Truman Show (1998)	See Note 9.
Twister (1996)	Yes
Unforgiven (1992)	Yes
Vanilla Sky (2001)	
The Waterboy (1998)	
Wayne's World (1992)	
What Lies Beneath (2000)	Yes
What Women Want (2000)	
Wild Wild West (1999)	Yes
The World is Not Enough (1999)	Yes
X-Men (2000)	Yes
xXx (2002)	Yes
You've Got Mail (1998)	

(Source for Films: Box Office Mojo, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com>)

Note 1: Analyse This (Harold Ramis, 1999) does contain rival mafia groups, and indeed the narrative includes moments of tension and violence. However, as comedy, these characters are caricatures of the gangster stereotype (even to the extent of casting Robert De Niro and Joe Viterelli in key roles, essentially playing caricatures of roles they made famous in other films), hence evil is negated. Similarly, the parody of evil in Scary Movie uses the semiotic conventions for the construction of evil to comic effect.

Note 2: Deep Impact and Armageddon have the same villain, an asteroid that threatens to destroy Earth. But I have noted that while in the latter this asteroid is evil, in Deep Impact it is not. I explain this fully in Chapters Six and Seven, but in summary, the asteroid of the latter film is devoid of all traits of evil, while the asteroid of Armageddon, given a personality of sorts, is constructed as evil.

Note 3: In Good Will Hunting (Gus Van Sant, 1997) and Phenomenon (Jon Turteltaub, 1996), the failure to recognise one's own destiny is the enemy, as it is in redemption narratives, but this does not in itself signal the presence of evil.

Note 4: In the original, Mr Deeds Goes to Town (Frank Capra, 1936), it is clear that money is the root of all evil. This subtext has been removed from the contemporary version in favour of the good of interpersonal relationships.

Note 5: Typically, romantic comedies use geography (see also Sleepless in Seattle [Nora Ephron, 1993]), time and misunderstandings as the 'enemy' of the romance. Clearly this is not representative of evil but such factors do provide a narrotological hindrance to the hero's victory.

Note 6: Pearl Harbor is an interesting film in that, as produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, it maintains much of the Bruckheimer aesthetic – machismo, heroism, patriotism, and an abundance of violent spectacle – but also self-consciously refuses to attach the label of 'evil' to the Japanese protagonists.

Note 7: Shakespeare in Love provides references that are more symbolic of good rather than evil. The enemy here is Puritanism, or the effect of societal values stifling love and individualism – although this is contradicted by Shakespeare writing his best work in the face of tragedy and loss.

Note 8: As I explained above for Deep Impact and Armageddon, whether natural phenomena is ascribed with evil traits is specific to each film, primarily based on the phenomena being given human abilities of rational thought and action. The tornadoes of Twister (Jan De Bont, 1996) can be codified as evil, the cyclone of The Perfect Storm is rendered ambiguously, while the iceberg in Titanic is not codified specifically as evil. See Chapters Six and Seven for more details.

Note 9: In The Truman Show, the television corporation, represented by producer Christof, is constructed as villain, which also responds to Žižek's arguments on illusion and freedom (See Chapter 2.6). But the corporation is here not constructed as evil.

Appendix B: Coding Inefficiencies

Note: These are indicative lists only and not exhaustive.

Part One: Characteristic Traits of Cinematic Evil

1. Gender

<u>Male</u> (101/76.5%) (1)	The Addams Family	<u>Female</u> (25/19%) (1)	Armageddon (2)
	Air Force One		Basic Instinct
	Aladdin		Batman and Robin
	Austin Powers in Goldmember		Batman Returns
	Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me		The Blair Witch Project
	Back to the Future: Part 2		Casper
	Batman		Chicken Run
	Batman and Robin		Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon
	Batman Forever		Die Hard with a Vengeance (3)
	Batman Returns		Charlie's Angels (3)
	Big Momma's House		Dick Tracy (3)
	Black Hawk Down		Die Another Day (3)
	The Bodyguard		Men in Black II
	The Bourne Identity		Miss Congeniality
	A Bug's Life		Mission: Impossible (3)
	Charlie's Angels		The Mummy Returns (3)
	Clear and Present Danger		101 Dalmatians
	Con Air		The Ring
	Dances with Wolves		Rush Hour 2 (3)
	Dick Tracy		Scream 2
	Die Another Day		Sleepy Hollow
	Die Hard 2		Total Recall (3)
	Die Hard with a Vengeance		True Lies (3)
	Double Jeopardy		The World is Not Enough
	Enemy of the State		X-Men (3)
	Eraser		
	Face/Off		
	The Firm		
	The Fugitive		

	The General's Daughter		
	Ghost		
	Ghostbusters II		
	Gladiator		
	GoldenEye		
	Gone in 60 Seconds		
	Hannibal		
	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets		
	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone		
	Hook		
	The Hunchback of Notre Dame		
	Ice Age		
	In the Line of Fire		
	Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade		
	Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles		
	Lara Croft: Tomb Raider		
	Lethal Weapon 2		
	Lethal Weapon 3		
	Lethal Weapon 4		
	The Lion King		
	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring		
	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers		
	The Mask		
	Men in Black		
	Minority Report		
	Mission: Impossible		
	Mission: Impossible 2		
	Monsters' Inc.		
	Mulan		
	The Mummy		
	The Mummy Returns		
	Ocean's Eleven		
	The Patriot		
	The Pelican Brief		
	Planet of the Apes		
	Pocahontas		

	Ransom	
	Road to Perdition	
	Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	
	Rush Hour	
	Rush Hour 2	
	The Santa Clause 2	
	Scream	
	Seven	
	Shrek	
	The Silence of the Lambs	
	Sister Act	
	Sleeping with the Enemy	
	Sleepy Hollow	
	Speed	
	Spider-Man	
	Spy Kids	
	Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace	
	Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones	
	The Sum of All Fears	
	Tarzan	
	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	
	Terminator 2: Judgment Day	
	A Time to Kill	
	Tomorrow Never Dies	
	Total Recall	
	True Lies	
	Unforgiven	
	What Lies Beneath	
	Wild Wild West	
	The World is Not Enough	
	X-Men	
	xXx	

Notes: 1 – Percentage figure pertains to gendered evil in all films that contain evil (that is, 132 films).

2 – I have for the most part omitted from this list animals, aliens, and inanimate objects whose gender remains indistinct within the narrative structures of their respective films. In Armageddon, however, the asteroid is specifically coded as female hence its inclusion here.

3 – Each of these films contains a primary female villain, but who is nevertheless subordinate to a master male villain. Arguably the only film in which the reverse

occurs, where the mastermind is female and has a primary male henchman, is The World is Not Enough. Here Electra King (Sophie Marceau) is the primary villain with Renard (Robert Carlyle) as secondary.

2. Race/Ethnicity of Villain

African (1/0.8%)	Black Hawk Down
African/American (1/0.8%)	The Rock
American Indian (1/0.8%)	Dances With Wolves
British (31/23.5%)	Chicken Run
	Die Another Day
	Gladiator (1)
	GoldenEye
	Gone in 60 Seconds
	Hannibal (2)
	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets
	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
	Hook (2)
	The Hunchback of Notre Dame
	The Lion King (1)
	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (1)
	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (1)
	Mission: Impossible 2
	The Mummy (1)
	The Mummy Returns (1)
	101 Dalmatians
	The Patriot
	Pocahontas
	The Prince of Egypt
	Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves
	Rush Hour
	Shrek (1)
	The Silence of the Lambs (2)
	Sleepy Hollow (1)
	Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace (1)
	Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones (1)
	Tarzan
	Tomorrow Never Dies
	The World is Not Enough
	X-Men
Eastern European (4/3.0%)	Ghostbusters II
	Tomorrow Never Dies

	The World is Not Enough
	xXx
European/American (58/43.9%)	The Addams Family
	Austin Powers in Goldmember
	Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me
	Back to the Future: Part 2
	Basic Instinct
	Batman
	Batman and Robin
	Batman Forever
	Batman Returns
	Big Momma's House
	The Bodyguard
	The Bourne Identity
	Casper
	Charlie's Angels
	Clear and Present Danger
	Con Air
	Dances with Wolves
	Die Hard 2
	Double Jeopardy
	Enemy of the State
	Eraser
	Face/Off
	The Firm
	The Flintstones
	The Fugitive
	The General's Daughter
	Ghost
	Hannibal (2)
	Hook (2)
	In the Line of Fire
	Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles
	Lethal Weapon 3
	Men in Black
	Men in Black II
	Minority Report
	Miss Congeniality
	Mission: Impossible
	Monster's Inc
	The Pelican Brief
	Ransom

	The Ring
	Road to Perdition
	The Rock
	Scream
	Scream 2
	Seven
	The Silence of the Lambs (2)
	Sleeping with the Enemy
	Sleepy Hollow (1)
	Speed
	Spider-Man
	Spy Kids
	Terminator 2: Judgment Day
	A Time to Kill
	Total Recall
	Unforgiven
	What Lies Beneath
	Wild Wild West
French (1/0.8%)	The Hunchback of Notre Dame
Italian/American (2/1.6%)	Dick Tracy
	Sister Act
Middle Eastern (4/3.0%)	Aladdin
	The Mummy
	The Mummy Returns
	True Lies
Nazi Germany (5/3.8%)	Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade
	Lethal Weapon 2 (3)
	The Lion King (4)
	The Sum of All Fears
	Wild Wild West (4)
South African (3/2.3%)	Lethal Weapon 2
	Mission: Impossible 2
	The Sum of All Fears
South/Central American (Latin American) (6/4.5%)	Clear and Present Danger
	Die Hard 2
	Ghost
	The Mask
	Ocean's Eleven
	Traffic
South-East Asian (6/4.5%)	Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon
	Die Another Day
	Lethal Weapon 4
	Mulan

	Rush Hour 2
	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Soviet Union or Ex-Soviet States (4/3.0%)	Air Force One
	GoldenEye
	The Hunt for Red October
	xXx
Western European (3/2.3%)	Die Hard with a Vengeance (Germany)
	Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles (Spain)
	Lara Croft: Tomb Raider
Other (20/15.2%)	Armageddon (Asteroid)
	A Bug's Life (Insect)
	Godzilla (Reptile)
	Ice Age (Sabre-Tooth Tiger)
	Independence Day (Alien)
	Jumanji (board game)
	Jurassic Park (Particularly the Velociraptors)
	Jurassic Park III (the Velociraptors)
	The Lion King (Lion)
	The Lost World: Jurassic Park (Velociraptors)
	The Matrix (Machines/Computers)
	Men in Black (Alien)
	Monster's Inc (Monster)
	The Perfect Storm (Weather)
	Planet of the Apes (Humanised Gorillas)
	The Santa Clause 2 (Mechanical Clone)
	Scooby-Doo (Small Dog)
	Signs (Alien)
	Terminator 2: Judgment Day (Humanoid Robot)
	Twister (Weather)

Notes: 1 – Villain placed here on account of English accents given to the villainous characters.

2 – Hannibal Lecter placed here (as well as in European/American category) due to Anthony Hopkins as recognisably English, and his use of English accent. Hook is placed here for the opposite reason; a recognisably American actor (Dustin Hoffman) playing a British role.

3 – As I explain in Chapter 8, although the villains are South African in Lethal Weapon 2, they are coded as Nazis.

4 – The use of certain imagery in these films – the fascist march in The Lion King and the spider symbol/swastika in Wild Wild West connects these in some way to Nazi Germany.

3. Sexuality (based on attributes displayed. If they display no preference, then these are not listed)

Bi-sexual (3/2.3%)	Basic Instinct
	Hannibal
	Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles
Heterosexual (31/23.5%)	The Addams Family
	Air Force One
	Aladdin
	Austin Powers in Goldmember
	Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me
	Back to the Future: Part 2
	Batman
	Batman and Robin
	Big Momma's House
	The Bodyguard
	Charlie's Angels
	Dick Tracy
	Die Hard with a Vengeance
	Double Jeopardy
	Face/Off
	The Firm
	The General's Daughter
	The Hunchback of Notre Dame
	Mission: Impossible 2
	The Mummy
	The Mummy Returns
	Ocean's Eleven
	Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves
	Shrek
	Sister Act
	Sleeping with the Enemy
	A Time to Kill
	Unforgiven
	What Lies Beneath
	The World is Not Enough
	xXx
Homosexual (1/0.8%)	Gladiator

4. Occupation

Administrative/Legal/Governmental	The Addams Family
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(19/14.4%)	Aladdin
	Batman Forever
	The Bourne Identity
	Casper
	Clear and Present Danger
	The Firm
	Gladiator
	Jurassic Park
	Lethal Weapon 2
	The Pelican Brief
	Pocahontas
	Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves
	Rush Hour
	Shrek
	Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace
	Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones
	Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope
	Total Recall
Agriculture (2/1.6%)	Chicken Run
	Men in Black
Business* (22/16.7%)	Austin Powers in Goldmember
	Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me
	Back to the Future: Part 2
	Batman Returns
	Charlie's Angels
	Die Another Day
	Double Jeopardy
	Erin Brockovich
	The Flintstones
	The Fugitive
	Ghost
	Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade
	Jurassic Park
	The Lost World: Jurassic Park
	Mission: Impossible 2
	Monster's Inc.
	Ocean's Eleven
	Sleeping with the Enemy
	Spider-Man
	The Sum of All Fears
	Tomorrow Never Dies
	The World is Not Enough

Creative Industries (6/4.5%)	Basic Instinct (writer)
	Men in Black II (fashion model)
	Miss Congeniality (beauty pageantry)
	101 Dalmatians (fashion)
	Spy Kids (childrens' television presenter)
	Tomorrow Never Dies (global media empire)
Crime (14/10.6%)	Batman
	Big Momma's House
	Clear and Present Danger
	Con Air
	Dick Tracy
	Die Hard 2
	Face/Off
	Gone in 60 Seconds
	Lethal Weapon 2
	Lethal Weapon 4
	The Mask
	Road to Perdition
	Sister Act
	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Dark Arts (10/7.6%)	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets
	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
	Lara Croft: Tomb Raider
	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring
	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers
	The Mummy
	The Mummy Returns
	Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace
	Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones
	Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope
Law Enforcement (10/7.6%)	Enemy of the State
	Eraser
	Lethal Weapon 3
	Minority Report
	Mission: Impossible
	Mission: Impossible 2
	Ransom
	Rush Hour 2
	Speed
	Unforgiven
Manual Labour (2/1.6%)	Back to the Future: Part 2

	Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon
Military/Mercenary (11/8.3%)	Dances with Wolves
	Die Hard 2
	The General's Daughter
	GoldenEye
	The Hunt for Red October
	In the Line of Fire
	Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade
	The Patriot
	Planet of the Apes
	The Rock
	True Lies
Religion (1/0.8%)	The Hunchback of Notre Dame
Science (9/6.8%)	Batman and Robin
	Batman Forever
	Godzilla
	Hannibal
	Jurassic Park
	Jurassic Park III
	The Silence of the Lambs
	Spider-Man
	What Lies Beneath

Note: Business refers to legitimate ventures, as opposed to, say, organised crime (separated out here), even if the CEO may be corrupt or corrupted.

5. Socio-Economic Background

Working Class (14/10.6%)	Back to the Future: Part 2
	Big Momma's House
	Con Air
	Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon
	Dick Tracy
	Gone in 60 Seconds
	The Mask
	Men in Black
	Ransom
	Road to Perdition
	Sister Act
	Speed
	A Time to Kill
	X-Men

Middle-Class (12/9.0%)	The Addams Family
	The Bodyguard
	Casper
	Double Jeopardy
	Ghost
	Hannibal
	In the Line of Fire
	Miss Congeniality
	Mission: Impossible 2
	The Patriot
	Scream
	Scream 2
Elite (30/22.7%)	Aladdin
	Basic Instinct
	Clear and Present Danger
	Die Another Day
	The Firm
	Ghostbusters II
	Gladiator
	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets
	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
	The Hunchback of Notre Dame
	Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles
	Lara Croft: Tomb Raider
	The Lion King
	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring
	The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers
	Men in Black II
	The Mummy
	The Mummy Returns
	101 Dalmatians
	Planet of the Apes
	Pocahontas
	Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves
	Shrek
	Sleeping with the Enemy
	Spider-Man
	Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace
	Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones
	Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope
	What Lies Beneath
	The World is Not Enough

Part Two: Factors Not Accountable in Above Traits of Evil

Constructions of the hero	Gender
	Ethnicity
	Geographic Origin
	Age/Maturity
	Sexuality
Constructions of the Victim	As per hero
Setting/Filming Location	Hero as insider/outsider?
	Enclosed space
	Outdoors
	Ecological Narratives
	Villain's habitat
Technical Devices	Framing
	Production/Costume Design
	Camera Position/Movement
	Diegetic/Non-Diegetic Sound
	Casting, including nationality of actor
	Others
Characteristic Traits	Love/Lust
	Greed
	Revenge
	Etc
Non-Characteristic Traits	Outside Influences of Evil, e.g. Spiritual Planes
	Non-Human/Non-Animal Villains

Part Three: Problems in Content Analysis of Characteristic Traits of Evil

As can be seen here, specific identificatory traits of the villain can be determined and codified, but ultimately these are meaningless in their ability to provide any real clues of the sources of cinematic evil. In the first part of this appendix, I give a basic indication of the characteristic traits of the villain as found in films in my sample base. However, these engage primarily with economic concerns rather than matching any perceived source of evil in the social world. That is, the identity of the villain is more an element of what the filmmakers consider would 'sell' to contemporary

audiences. In fact, this, in some respects, tends to negate my own argument that evil can arise from any source; Middle Eastern and North Korean villains, for example, are conspicuously absent apart from the isolated films noted, despite their role as villain in the global order of the 1990s and 2000s. However, I consider this to be symptomatic of the postmodern collapse in that the identity of the villain is constructed as formless, rather than being specifically located in any geo-political region.

The fact that white European (both American and British) males of the upper classes make up a majority of villains (and that they can be lawyers, businessmen or scientists) speaks more to the perceived target market of the films produced rather than these villains reflecting any social paradigm. To connect with the widest global audience possible, filmmakers allow heroes to largely assume the guise of the everyman or woman and then make distinct the villain as being anything other than this. These distinctions are, however, rendered hazy by the characteristics of the heroes that attempt to stand in for the audience, with Batman as part of the elite, Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill) in Jurassic Park as a scientist, and Jake Brigance (Matthew McConaughey) as lawyer in A Time to Kill. The distinctions between hero and villain, as differentiated by ‘everyperson’ and Other, becomes extremely complex.

This must also be tempered by the ways in which filmmakers also balance the representations of villainy with representations of the hero. I have mentioned above how scientists, lawyers and the upper class can be heroes as well as villains. The same also occurs with gender, ethnic and other groupings. Jackie Chan as hero in Rush Hour 2 (in a film which, incidentally, features few European characters as either

heroes or villains) is balanced by Asian Ricky Tan (John Lone) as villain, while the leather clad 'Miss Vivian' (Kelly Lynch) is as bad as Charlie's Angels are good.

I have also listed above other considerations that may cloud perceptions of the villain as evil rather than being merely bad. I have already mentioned elsewhere how the Japanese attackers in Pearl Harbor have not been constructed as evil, and this is largely delineated by motive as well as by various technical devices, including a lack of visual references to light and dark, and framing which largely excludes the typical monstrous shots of the villain. Black Hawk Down also negates the villainy of the Somalian people, except for the mysterious figure of Mohammed Farah Aidid who remains unseen throughout the film..

In other words, whether a character is evil or not is more dependant upon a complex network of various codes and commercial decisions, rather than on specific traits that relate to gender, ethnicity, sexual preference and so on. As I state in the body of this thesis, it is how the evil is represented that becomes more important than who the villain is.