Fantasy Films of the 1980s

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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Fantasy films have been a part of cinema since the very beginnings of the medium. Although fantasy films can be found in every decade of the last century, the genre only became persistently successful from the late 1970s onwards. Perhaps the relatively recent prominence of fantasy goes some way to explain why the genre lacks the academic discourse that other film genres have encouraged. Another reason why fantasy has evaded considerable discussion as a genre could be because of the difficulty in defining it. Fantasy can encompass numerous types of films, and features an array of different thematic and visual styles. Previous studies examining fantasy either fail to consider the mode as a genre, or only consider a limited array of films.

Using Tzvetan Todorov's assessment of The Fantastic as a framework, this thesis examines fantasy films from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. I reassert fantasy's position as a genre rather than a mode or impulse. Analysing a wide range of films from this period, this thesis outlines the preoccupations of the genre and identifies the various cycles and sub-genres encompassed by the term 'fantasy'. These categories include those that concern the style of film and those that concern the intended audience. Deconstructing the fantasy genre in these sub-genres makes it more manageable to appraise the genre as a whole. Consistent patterns emerge in the examination of these films, ranging from archetypal characters to a fixation with subversion. The 1980s was a critical time for fantasy cinema as it was the first sustained period of frequent successful films. Fantasy was the most commercially successful genre of the decade; Hollywood's output in this period still reverberates in today's industry. Thus, the fantasy genre is most worthy of the critical discussion afforded to other genres.

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Contents

Introduction

Fantasy cinema was not a phenomenon that first arose in the 1980s. Since the earliest days of the moving image, the fantasy genre has had a role to play in narrative cinema. The works of Georges Méliès and others testify to this.[i] In the decades that followed, fantasy became a significant film genre, although one that appeared perhaps less frequently than others. Moreover, fantasy was more prominent in horror and science-fiction than in other guises in the classical Hollywood era. Nevertheless, films such as *King Kong* (1933) and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) were made in the 1930s, *Pinocchio* (1940) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) in the 1940s, with *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), and *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1957) in the 1950s. It was not until the late 1970s, however, that a defined cycle of successful fantasy films began to emerge in the modern era. This thesis will examine this cycle and the fantasy genre as a whole from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Within this period, fantasy became not only a prevalent genre, but a commercially successful one as well. Despite this fact, comparatively little has been written about the genre, and even less about the films in this period.

There are a number of reasons why the fantasy genre is worthy of academic study. One is that it was one of the most successful 1980s genres, as Graham Thompson has observed.[ii] Since the late 1970s, fantasy has been a prevalent genre in Hollywood, with its films frequently topping box office charts. As Chapter 2 reveals, the term is often coupled with other genre forms such as adventure, romance, comedy and science-fiction in reviews of the genre's films. This is suggestive of the fact that it is not always considered a genre in its own right. However, whilst fantasy became particularly popular at this time, it is in fact as old as any other film genre, and while considerable

attention has been paid to forms that are no longer as popular as they once were, fantasy still seems to lack concrete definition, let alone comprehensive and detailed study. This thesis aims, at least in part, to fill this gap in genre criticism by offering a thorough account of fantasy in the 1980s.

Prior to the late 1970s, fantasy appeared in various cinematic guises. Disney animated features from the 1930s onwards depicted fairytales aimed at a family audience. The Universal horror film series of the 1930s and 1940s appealed to an audience looking for thrills. Hammer Films repeated the cycle in the 1950s and 1960s. Cold War preoccupations generated a successful series of science-fiction films in the 1950s.[iii] Supernatural films appeared throughout the decades. An important example of this was the supernatural comedy, with films such as *The Ghost Goes West* (1935). In the 1960s, films such as *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) depicted the legends of Greek mythology using the special effects techniques pioneered by Ray Harryhausen. In the late 1960s and 1970s, filmmaker George A Romero directed a series of zombie horror films. Science-fiction in the 1970s meanwhile exhibited dystopian visions through films such as *THX 1138* (1971) and *Logan's Run* (1976).

It would be hard to underestimate the importance of *Star Wars* (1977) in ushering in a new age of fantasy cinema. However, it would also be remiss to suggest that this film alone was responsible for all that followed. There were several films released in the late 1970s that had a considerable influence on what followed in the 1980s and beyond. Firstly, the big-budget remake *King Kong* (1976) had a significant impact on later films. The film was a success, earning $80 million worldwide. It was, however, perceived as a flop at the time, due to the precedent set by *Jaws* (1975) the previous year, and the fact that it took less than *A Star is Born* (1976) and *Rocky* (1976),

both of which were produced on a smaller budget.[iv] Nevertheless, the film heralded an age of fantasy blockbusters, which was amplified by the success of *Star Wars* the following year. Furthermore, coupled with *Jaws*' success in 1975, *King Kong* established the distribution strategy of opening blockbusters on a saturation basis, a template that was followed throughout the 1980s and one that continues to be implemented in Hollywood today. In the same year, the bodyswap comedy *Freaky Friday* (1976) was released. Whilst the film was only a modest hit, taking $11.5 million in North American rentals,[v] it paved the way for a number of bodyswap films in the 1980s. Released two years later, *Superman* (1978) had a substantial impact on the fantasy films that followed. Richard Donner's film proved that comic adaptations were a lucrative market; *Superman* was followed by a plethora of superhero films in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Its success also demonstrated audience receptiveness towards spectacle films that relied on special effects. Finally, *Alien*, released in 1979, set the benchmark for science-fiction–horror hybrids. The film was immensely successful, taking $40 million in rentals on its initial release.[vi] As well as spawning a number of sequels, *Alien* proved the mass appeal of science-fiction and horror films for an adult audience. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that a number of films released in the latter half of the 1970s shaped mainstream cinematic output for the next decade.

As well as the aforementioned commercially successful films, the failure of the extremely expensive *Heaven's Gate* (1980) was another factor. Described as the single largest financial disaster to ever hit a major studio,[vii] the film was pulled from cinemas shortly after its release. Critically mauled, *Heaven's Gate* ran at over three hours and thirty minutes. Its box office failure was responsible for the demise of United Artists, one of the major studios at the time of the film's release.[viii] Some see the consequence of the film's failure as shaping productions for the rest of the decade. As Steven Prince

notes, despite *Heaven's Gate*'s commercial catastrophe, the Hollywood studios did not curtail their budget.[ix] Although serious dramas such as *Ragtime* (1981) or *Gandhi* (1982) were reasonably successful, there was a move away from adult oriented blockbuster and a move toward teen- or family-friendly ones.[x] Many of these can be categorised as fantasy films.

A key factor here was the takeover of major studios by conglomerates. As Steven Prince points out, the major film studios "had already achieved a significant degree of entertainment market integration" by early 1980s.[xi] Moreover, with takeovers such as Coca-Cola's acquisition of Columbia, conglomerates became increasingly powerful as the decade progressed. In spite of the ultimate failure of Coca-Cola's policy, most of the new partnerships benefited from the strategy of corporate synergy. As Prince notes: "The best synergies are those obtained by controlling film productions, its distribution and consumption venues, and those markets and products that may be tied in to film products (e.g. music, books, and magazines)."[xii] Hollywood was responding to the ancillary markets made available by new technology (notably home video and cable television). In addition, whilst product placement was not a new practice in the 1980s, the level of cross-media promotion and merchandising tie-ins increased substantially in this decade.[xiii] It is not unreasonable to suggest, then, that studios were looking for cross-promotional opportunities in the films they were producing. After all, as films such as *Batman* (1989) exemplify, box-office success is only one element of profitability, with revenues pouring in from licensing and merchandising.[xiv] Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that there was an abundance of franchises and sequels in the decade, given the revenues that could be achieved from an established product. Furthermore, as the case of *Star Wars* suggests, the income that could be garnered from related merchandise often came from children and teenagers.[xv]

Therefore, it is not wholly surprising that many of the big-budget films to emerge from Hollywood in this period were aimed at a family audience. That many of these pictures can be classified as fantasy films is also unsurprising. Whilst not all fantasy is aimed at children (horror, for example, is situated at the adult end of the fantasy spectrum), the genre's most successful films of the decade were all suitable for family viewing.

A further element that influenced film production in the late 1970s and the 1980s was the advent of new techniques in the special effects field. With the propensity for space adventures, magic, and supernatural occurrences, fantasy was the ideal genre in which to showcase these new effects. Most recognised of the visual effects developed in the 1980s was the use of Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI). Nowadays a staple in a whole host of films, CGI first featured in 1982's *Tron* and 1984's *The Last Starfighter* (Though neither of the these films were commercial successes.) Over forty minutes of *Tron* was computer animated. Nevertheless, the promise of this new technology did not entice viewers, as the film took $15.2 million in rentals, less than its estimated budget of $17 million.[xvi] The potential of CGI was only fully realised at the end of the decade with effects used in *The Abyss* (1989). The ILM-designed effects of the water-like alien indicated that CGI "came of age".[xvii] Although CGI is one of the better-known techniques, it was not the only development in special effects in the period. *Star Wars* was one of the first films to promote itself partially on the quality of its special effects. In the late 1970s, special effects were taking centre-stage, pivotal in creating the spectacle of many blockbuster films. As Richard Rickitt observes:

> "For the first time, the movie-going public became familiar with the concept of matte paintings and blue-screens. Rather than destroying the magic, as the old moguls had predicted, people wanted to know about the technology behind what they saw".[xviii]

Some of the new techniques pioneered in the period included Zoptics, morphing and extensive rotoscoping. In order to create the illusion of the Man of Steel flying towards the camera in *Superman*, the technique of Zoptics (where both the camera and a projector are set up with matching zoom lenses) was used.[xix] The morphing technique was first used by ILM in the George Lucas-produced *Willow* (1988). To create the illusion of one creature mutating into another, shots of real creatures and performing models were filmed separately, then scanned into specifically designed software which rendered the morphing effect.[xx] Finally, in the groundbreaking *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), extensive rotoscoping was used "to produce hand-drawn travelling mattes so that Toons, humans and real-life props could be composited together as if actually interacting".[xxi] Thus, special effects proved a significant factor in both the production of fantasy films, and also in the promotion of such techniques as spectacle cinema.

A variety of fantasy films will be examined in this thesis. Each chapter will look at a different area or group of films pivotal to understanding the success of the genre. Chapter 1 will offer an analysis of how fantasy film has been discussed in the past. There have only been a handful of studies of fantasy films. But studies of fantasy in literature are more extensive, and these will be discussed in chapter 1 as well.

More attention has been paid to science-fiction and horror. Criticism and theory relating to these fields will also be considered. Recently, David Butler has written in some depth about fantasy film. Rather than view it as a singular genre, Butler sees fantasy as an impulse that can be found in a whole host of different genres. He writes; "Instead of a genre or a mode, I agree with Kathryn Hume that we should see fantasy as

an impulse (…) That impulse is not just the province of children's tales – rather than being contained to one genre and demographic, it runs in and out of registers, genres and age ranges".[xxii] I would concur with the view that fantasy appears in many guises. Nevertheless, I would also maintain that fantasy is a film genre, albeit a more encompassing and unwieldy one than other genres seem to be. If fantasy is taken to be an impulse rather than a genre with which to classify films, it could equally be said that action, comedy and drama are impulses rather than genres. For these three forms materialise in a wide variety of different films and include numerous different aspects or sub-genres, just as fantasy does. To appraise fantasy as a film genre is challenging but entirely possible, as this thesis will demonstrate. I will also investigate how the term 'fantasy' has been defined. The definition of fantasy used in this thesis pertains to any film that features any type of supernatural, magical or otherworldly incident, setting or character. This is not just a matter of `realism`. Musicals in which characters spontaneously burst into song may not be realistic, but neither are they fantasy (unless of course they also include magic spells, for example). Rosemary Jackson comments that 'fantasy' has been used to describe any text that does not give priority to realism. Among these, she cites: "myths, legends, folk and fairy tales, utopian allegories, dream visions, surrealist texts, science fiction, horror stories".[xxiii] It is precisely these, and others, that I would define as belonging to the fantasy genre.

Chapter 2 will look at reviews of various fantasy films from the period. Due to the considerable quantity of fantasy films released in the 1980s it would be unfeasible to look at every film in this chapter. Therefore a selection of films will be examined, with preference given to some of the most commercially successful films of the period. Reviews from several different U.S. and British publications will be included in this chapter. These include industry papers like *Variety*, cinema journals including *Monthly*

Film Bulletin and *Film Review*, as well as popular film magazines such as *Empire* and *Total Film*. The purpose of examining these reviews is two fold. Firstly, the aim is to discover how these films were received on their initial release. Secondly, I will investigate how the films were categorised by critics, and the type of audience they predicted these movies would target.

Chapter 3 looks at fairytale films of the 1980s. The films discussed here are ones that best fit the category of the more traditional type of fantasy. Whilst these films inevitably feature aspects of other genres, there is a high dependency on elements that are typically ascribed to fairytales. These include enchanted or cursed objects and characters, otherworldly realms, and the battle between good and evil. Described by John Clute as "full fantasy", works of this nature tend to be positive, and have been referred to in literary terms as "the fiction of the heart's desire".[xxiv] Amongst the films discussed in here are *Return to Oz* (1985), *Labyrinth* (1986) and *Legend* (1985). The aim of this chapter is to identify this cycle of films, and how it appeared throughout the decade. I will examine a number of these films to identify recurring preoccupations of the sub-genre, particularly in regards to themes, narrative devices and archetypal characters present in these films.

Following on from this, Chapter 4 will discuss the sword and sorcery sub-genre. Sword and sorcery films were undoubtedly one of the most identifiable cycles in the fantasy oeuvre in the 1980s. Unlike a number of other fantasy forms discussed in this thesis, there was a clear cycle of sword and sorcery films from the early to the mid 1980s. Taking elements from the epic and the historical genres and influences from mythology as well as pulp fiction, the sub-genre used an easily identifiable set of conventions. I will examine a number of sword and sorcery films, including *Excalibur*

(1981), *Krull* (1983) and *Ladyhawke* (1985). Although these films were set in different periods and environments, they all feature many of the same characteristics. As well as the returning conventions in terms of plots, character archetypes and magical abilities, these films had fairly rigid ideas about gender representation. They also depict a fixation on religion and ecclesiastical power. Sword and sorcery films appeared to promote a return to more pagan beliefs and spirituality.

Chapter 5 discusses animation and the children's film. Whilst these were frequently one and the same, both categories of film were significant. After a brief look at Disney productions prior to the 1980s, a more detailed discussion of *The Little Mermaid* (1989) will be offered. The most successful Disney animated feature of the decade, this film paved the way for a hugely successful cycle of Disney films, including *The Lion King* (1994). Chapter 5 will also look at other animated films in the decade. As well as features aimed to rival Disney; the chapter will offer a lengthier examination of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, a film important for its use of live action and animation. Finally, I will also look at a number of animated features derived from children's television shows. During the decade, a number of successful children's cartoons had their big screen debut. Whilst they may not feature amongst the most commercially successful of the period, they are nonetheless important in originating a trend that continued beyond the 1990s. Both Disney features and the other animated films discussed in this chapter show a reliance on mythology and fairytale for facets of their narratives and archetype characters.

Chapter 6 will discuss fantasy films for all age groups. Although there appeared to be many fantasy films aimed at a young audience, there were also a significant number of films within the genre targeted at different demographics. Starting with an

appraisal of the breadth of family-orientated fantasy in the decade the chapter will then concentrate on two of the decade's most successful films, *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial* (1982) and *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. Fantasy films aimed at teenagers will be discussed. Finally, I will look at fantasy films aimed at an adult audience. These included a wide range of films, some of which were more science-fiction tinged. What these films had in common was the clear intention that they should be viewed by adults, either due to their serious themes or because of their graphic nature.

Chapter 7 will concentrate on supernatural comedy. With the proliferation of fantasy films in the 1980s, unsurprisingly there were crossovers with several other genres. One of the more dominant of these hybrids was the combination of fantasy and comedy. Whilst many fantasy films contained elements of humour, what differentiated this sub-genre was the balance between the two forms. Often, humour would be derived from the supernatural activity or the fantastical situations present in these films. Much of the humour of *Beetlejuice* (1988), for example, is derived from the actions and attitude of the fantastic title character. I will offer a brief history of the form and will discuss *Ghost Busters* (1984), *Gremlins* (1984) and *Beetlejuice* in more detail. Analysis of these films exposes an underlying trait of subverting widely accepted attitudes and beliefs, which is prevalent in the sub-genre. This takes a number of forms, from the uncharacteristically lax authority figures to the depictions of the supernatural characters. This subversion is key to much of the humour represented in these supernatural comedy films.

Chapter 8 will consider the major franchise films of the period. These were some of the biggest grossing films not only of the decade, but also of all time. Each of the films examined in the chapter spawned more than one sequel. Starting with *Star*

Wars, I will discuss a series of fantasy films that were successful enough to generate multiple sequels. Whilst all these films belong to the fantasy genre, they vary in terms of style and content. Some originated from well-known sources, for example *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1977) from the popular television series of the same name. Others were original films, albeit ones that used preceding fantastic elements to great effect. These include *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *Back to the Future* (1985), both of which combined fantasy with action adventure. In addition to these films, the two most popular superhero franchises of the period will also be investigated. What all these films have in common is their use of time and/or space as a site for fantasy. Their settings, whether future or alternative world, were instrumental in allowing fantastic occurrences to take place.

Finally, Chapter 9 will look at the two best-known forms of fantasy, science-fiction and horror. Often considered genres in their own right, these two categories have been afforded much more theoretical discussion than fantasy itself. Nonetheless, with their otherworldly elements, both fit under the umbrella of fantasy. I will examine both these forms in the period. Given that science-fiction and horror are such far ranging categories in their own right, considerably more space could have been dedicated to them within this thesis. However, owing to the lack of critical discussion of fantasy film itself, a chapter for both these extensively critiqued fields felt more appropriate. Thus, the final chapter will briefly look at both these categories, as well as the films that crossover between the two. For science-fiction, horror, and sci-fi horror, a small number of films will be examined in more detail. A plethora of films of this sort were released in the period, so this chapter aims to offer merely a brief account of the types of films produced and the changes that took place within sci-fi and horror. Not all horror can be considered fantasy, as some films depict terror without any supernatural cause or

reasoning, such *Se7en* (1995). The horror movies discussed in chapter 9 will be of the fantasy variety, some of which were immensely popular in the 1980s.

Fantasy is a film genre as worthy of critical discussion as any other film genre. It is because fantasy is hybridised and multi-faceted that the genre needs to be evaluated in an extensive manner. This thesis offers a comprehensive and original survey of the fantasy film genre in the 1980s. By framing some of the key trends of this period by ideas of the fantastic and the marvellous, it because clear just how significant and prevalent fantasy was. Considering fantasy as a genre rather than a mode or an impulse reinforces its position as the most successful film genre of the 1980s. No encompassing academic study has looked as fantasy as a genre. By evaluating these films under the scope of fantasy, I am able to afford several hugely successful films academic discussion which hitherto has evaded them. Furthermore, by considering films as belonging to this genre, I am able to identify key conventions and preoccupations, which may have been otherwise missed. The fantasy film genre of the 1980s was responsible for showcasing groundbreaking special effects. It was also responsible for some of the decade's best examples of vertical integration and marketing. Fantasy films were marketed to universal audiences as well as specific demographics. One of this thesis' strengths is the identification and analysis of the different sub-genres that made up fantasy. By considering fantasy films in terms of the audience they were intended for, this thesis highlights how these films aimed for specific age groups. As Chapter 6 shows, certain characteristics reoccur. These may not have been identified if these films had not been grouped this way.

Fantasy was consistently successful from the late 1970s onwards. By highlighted the box office returns of films in this thesis, I illustrate which sub-genres

were more successful than others. The commercial success of films in this period was significant, as it still informs production practices in contemporary Hollywood. This thesis also exhibits originality in its use of film reviews. In Chapter 2, as well as throughout the thesis, I refer to the way in which critics discussed and classified the films. Part of the reason for including reviews is because so little has been written about these films in an academic context. More significantly than this, however, is the way in which critics defined fantasy films. I use this material, as well as box office statistics, to analyse a popular genre in a populist context. This thesis provides a comprehensive evaluation of the most popular genre of the 1980s, identifying fantasy's sub-genres, successes, innovations and its key characteristics.

[i] For a history and examination of Méliès' work see David Robinson, *Georges Méliès: Father of Film Fantasy*, BFI, London, 1993.
[ii] Graham Thompson, *American Culture in the 1980s*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2007, p. 98
[iii] Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 220
[iv] Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale, *Epics, Spectacles and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History*, Wayne State University Press, Michigan, 2010, pp. 213-14
[v] Box Office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1977', *Variety*, 4 January 1978, p. 21
[vi] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1979', *Variety*, 9 January 1980, p. 21
[vii] David A. Cook, p. 944
[viii] For more on Heaven's Gate and United Artists, see Steven Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000, pp. 33-39
[ix] Prince, p. 38
[x] Cook, p. 944
[xi] Prince, p. 5
[xii] Prince, p. 89
[xiii] Janet Wasko, *Hollywood in the Information Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 206
[xiv] Thomas Schatz, 'The Return of the Hollywood Studio System', in P. Aufderheide, E. Barnouw, R. Cohen, T. Frank, T. Gitlin, D. Lieberman, M. Miller, G. Roberts, and T. Schatz, *Conglomerates and the Media*, New Press, New York, 1997, pp. 93-94
[xv] For a illuminating report into children's changing relationship to film-related merchandise see Dade Hayes, 'Invasion of the Techie Tots', *Variety*, 19 February 2007, p. 1, 61
[xvi] Box Office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1982', *Variety*, 12 January 1983, p. 13
[xvii] Prince, p. 291
[xviii] Richard Rickitt, *Special Effects: The History and Technique*, Virgin, London, 2000, p. 33
[xix] Rickitt, pp. 70-71
[xx] Rickitt, p. 86
[xxi] Rickitt, p. 142
[xxii] David Butler, *Fantasy Cinema: Impossible Worlds on Screen*, Wallflower Press, London, 2009, pp. 41-42
[xxiii] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Routledge, London, 1981, pp. 13-14
[xxiv] Quoted in David Pringle (ed.), *The Definitive Illustrated Guide to Fantasy: From the Legend of King Arthur to the Magic of Harry Potter*, Carlton Books, London, 2003, p. 8

Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter will consider two aspects of criticism of the fantasy genre; exploring the way in which theorists have defined the term, and evaluating what has been written about the genre thus far. Compared to other genres such as gangster films, relatively little has been written about fantasy. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, fantasy is a rather broad category with porous borders and a lack of stable conventions. Whilst *The Wizard of Oz* and *RoboCop* (1987) can both be considered fantasy films, there is very little linking the two films in terms of visual, thematic or narrative conventions. Critics and theorists tend to concentrate on genres that are less amorphous. Writers who have discussed fantasy often comment on the fact that the term is difficult to define. David Butler, for example, writes that: "The term 'fantasy film' has been applied inconsistently by academics, critics and the industry. It is the source of such a diverse range of films… that the desire to explore the fantastic through film is clearly far more than an exercise in a series of semantic and syntactic dots".[xxv] Perhaps as a result, much more attention has been paid to horror and science-fiction. These genres have been discussed in a variety of ways, both as separate entities and as part of a larger genre. Stuart Kaminsky, for example, acknowledges the link between the two genres as well as their relation to fantasy. He writes that: "The fantasy film contains elements of both horror and science fiction, but is usually presented as a personal, dreamlike childhood exploration of our less-than-conscious thoughts".[xxvi] Both science-fiction and horror are considered to be part of the fantastic; that is to say, they both contain elements that are supernatural or magical. Thus, for some, fantasy is a broader term that covers the spectrum of horror and sci-fi, as well as other films that appear fantastic. This chapter will consider how theorists have defined the term fantasy, as well as examining commentary on the fantasy genre. Firstly, current genre theory will be examined to

assess the ways in which the term has been defined. Following this, I will look at the horror and science-fiction genres. Finally, theories of fantasy itself will be considered.

Genre theory has been an important element in Film Studies since the 1940s.[xxvii] Traditional genre theory has placed considerable emphasis on the industrial nature of film production. Dudley Andrew, for example, alludes to film production as an automated rather than an artistic, individual process. He writes that: "Genres are specific networks of formulas that deliver a certified product to the waiting customer… In fact, genre constructs the proper spectator for their own consumption".[xxviii] The stress is then put on the producers rather than the consumers of film. Genres construct a format for the spectator "which permits the transformation of sights and sounds into pictures and stories matching the desires those subjects have come to depend [on]".[xxix] Thus for Andrew, genre is a form of communication between producer and audience, although the latter is subordinate in the relationship. Andrew also expresses another idea that has continually been used in genre criticism, that of linking genres to their socio-cultural backgrounds. He argues that: "the issue of genre lets us lodge the value of the work within the culture itself or within the tradition of films from which it comes… The genre critic can likewise see a range of related works as variations on a theme or problem, be it cultural or formal".[xxx]

Stuart Kaminsky, in a later study of American film genres, takes a slightly different approach. For him, popular Hollywood films should be taken as seriously as art films, arguing that: "On one level, the more popular a film (the more people who see it), the more attention it deserves as a genre manifestation".[xxxi] Thus, in contrast to Andrew, he attempts to validate popular films generally (and fantasy films in particular)

by laying emphasis on believability rather than realism. While realism is concerned with events or incidents maintaining an accuracy that could occur in everyday life, believability suggests a sense of verisimilitude in the fictional world of the film. That is to say, events are accepted because they take place within the confines of the film. Kaminsky questions the importance given to realism in the cinema by Bazin and others, and likens the mode to a genre rather than an ethereal concept. "Realism is not an objective truth in narrative fiction or documentary film; it is a series of conventions that can be used, analyzed, and discussed", he writes.[xxxii] Aiming to offer a balanced account of popular film genres, Kaminsky employs a number of different approaches in his study. As well as considering genres through historical, social and psychological perspectives, he also considers individual films and directors' contributions to genre. Nonetheless, this approach renders the title a little misleading; rather than a thorough overview, *American Film Genres* is more of a pick-and-mix collection of somewhat uneven essays. In his introduction, Kaminsky writes; "Although I have not dealt with the fantasy film, for example, almost any of the approaches indicated in the chapters in this book could be applied to an analysis and understanding of that genre".[xxxiii] However, he does not pursue this point any further.

More recent genre theory has questioned traditional notions of genre. Rick Altman's *Film/Genre* raises a number of interesting issues about cinematic genres. Altman calls for a more audience-orientated approach to the study of genre. Rather than concentrate on industry uses of genre, he stresses the importance of audiences in the equation, particularly as he sees spectators as 'multi-tiered'. Altman's "syntactic/semantic/pragmatic" approach calls for a greater understanding of the uses of genre for different audience groups.[xxxiv] He writes that "either a relatively stable set of semantic givens is developed through syntactic experimentation into a coherent and

durable syntax, or an already existing syntax adopts a new set of semantic elements".[xxxv] The pragmatic approach, meanwhile, considers the different uses and understanding that users of a text will have. In addition to this, Altman identifies a "generic community" that spectators belong to even though they may view a film alone. He states: "The generic contract involves adherence to particular codes, and through that adherence, identification with others who so adhere".[xxxvi] Although this affirmation does not appear particularly controversial, he neglects to provide substantive evidence to support this stance. This aside, Altman does make a number of significant arguments in his study. Along with the importance of audience uses of genre, he also questions whether classical Hollywood identified films with a single generic category. He dismisses the conventional theory that generic hybridity is a facet of New Hollywood by exhibiting how films of the 1930s were marketed as being hybrids of various genres. Given the evidence provided by him and later Steve Neale, he has a valid point. Drawing on a number of film posters of the era, Altman asserts that: "Hollywood has no interest… in explicitly identifying a film with a single genre. On the contrary, the industry's publicity purposes are much better served by implying that a film offers 'Everything the Screen can give you'".[xxxvii] Given the way in which films were advertised as featuring different generic ingredients (adventure, romance, action for example), this is a fair assertion. Nevertheless, there are limits to this; combining too many would mean that there would be no distinct genres to combine. Moreover, Altman does not elaborate in any detail about the dominance of particular genres above others in the studio era.

Published a year after Altman's book, Steve Neale's *Genre and Hollywood* is another significant study of genre. Like Altman, Neale also questions some of the more traditional ideas of genre theory and criticism while endorsing others. He calls for a more inclusive and expansive view of genre, suggesting that some of the previous genre

studies have been too narrow in the choice of films considered and have focussed upon socio-cultural aspects without paying as much attention to the film industry itself. Neale rejects the widely held belief that classical Hollywood focussed on producing generically pure films. He states that: "The strategies of the industry and its companies have always been plural and mixed, marked by an array of categories, formulas and combinations that overlap with, but often exceed, the categories that genre critics and theorists have tended to acknowledge hitherto".[xxxviii] Neale also identifies the importance of "inter-textual relay" (the relationship between film production, promotion and reception) as being a crucial consideration of any genre study.[xxxix] He examines eight major genres. These include action-adventure, westerns, and horror and science-fiction as a single entry. These are followed by in-depth assessments of film noir and melodrama. Throughout the study, Neale refers to a wealth of evidence to support his suppositions; numerous reviews, films and other studies are referred to in order to exemplify the arguments. *Genre and Hollywood* is for the most part an excellent account of Hollywood's main genres, stressing the importance of a more flexible approach to genre theory. There is one problem however. In the introduction Neale suggests that a problem with previous genre studies is that "canons of critical preference, rather than those of empirical or historical enquiry, have often resulted in uneven degrees of attention, discussion and research".[xl] Despite acknowledging this fact, Neale follows on by assessing some of the genres that have already received a significant amount of attention (such as westerns, musicals and gangster films, while others such as fantasy are barely referred to.

As previously noted, horror and science-fiction are the genres of fantasy that have received the most critical attention. Over the past three decades, there has been significant interest in these categories. Horror is multi-faceted and encompasses a

number of prolific sub-genres, such as the vampire film and slasher movies. Due to its multifarious nature, a concrete definition of horror is hard to come by. Paul Wells comments that: "The horror genre is predominantly concerned with the fear of death, the multiple ways it can occur and the untimely nature of its occurrence".[xli] Barry Keith Grant, on the other hand, concentrates on identifying the difference between science-fiction and horror. He states that: "Perhaps… the fundamental difference between the two genres is one of attitude: a closed response in horror, an open one in science fiction. Horror seeks to elicit terror and fear of something unknown or unacknowledged".[xlii] For the purposes of this thesis, I will define horror as a genre that fundamentally focuses on terrifying the viewer, noting that it encompasses both supernatural and non-supernatural films.

Andrew Tudor draws a distinction between horror films made before and after 1960. He argues that there are two main categories of horror: secure and paranoid, and that `while the pre-1960 horror-movie is dominated by science and, to a slightly lesser degree, by supernatural threats, the years after 1960 witness the rise of the psychotic and the development of a more overt sexual dimension".[xliii] Tudor highlights peaks of production, as well as the difference in theme and category in these distinct eras. The most diverse change between periods is the shift from more external sources of horror from the 1930s to the 1950s to internal ones thereafter. He links this shift to the socio-cultural periods that produced the films. Commenting on the science-fiction/horror hybrids of the 1950s, Tudor aligns these films with the "nuclear-conscious cold war culture of the period".[xliv] Whilst parallels can be drawn, in this case in particular, between horror films and contemporary influences, this does not diminish the filmmakers' intent to produce popular entertainment, culturally resonant or not. Whilst some argue that the fantasy genre, even more specifically than other genres, has the

propensity to project socio-cultural ideas and attitudes,[xlv] it would perhaps be short sighted to forget that these productions are after all moneymaking endeavours striving for commercial success.

Whilst Neale praises Tudor's study for its "historical, empirical and multi-dimensional approach",[xlvi] not all are as convinced. Peter Hutchings views the 'slasher' films of the 1970s and 1980s as having links to earlier Gothic horror films. He asserts that: "In one sense, all such monsters, regardless of their 'secure' or 'paranoid' status, are serial-killers, if only because they all appear in a series of films".[xlvii] While this may be true of Dracula, the same cannot be said of a number of horror movie characters, including Dr Morris (George Zucco) from *The Mad Ghoul* (1943). Hutchings sees the slasher-killer as being derived from the earlier classical horror monsters, such as Dracula, the Wolfman and the like. It should be noted here that for Tudor, slasher films are not supernatural, and therefore do not belong to the Gothic oeuvre. Hutchings suggests that many of these films indicate a tradition of the gothic that is more associated with earlier monster films. He states:

> Whilst theses modern horrors might lack the more obvious Gothic trappings of the period horror film, their presentation of the past as a barbaric force which interrupts and threatens a mundane, everyday world is a scenario which, in broad terms at least, they share with such diverse but undoubtedly Gothic works as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1960).[xlviii]

It could be argued, however, that it is these Gothic trappings that differentiate the earlier films from the later ones. Hutchings argues that various aspects of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series (1984-91, notably the later films) indicate an adherence to Tudor's secure category.[xlix] Thus Hutchings at least finds Tudor's theories unsatisfactory, stating that: "The horror genre does not develop in any simple unilinear fashion; at any point in its history it is characterised by a mixture of different formats and styles".[l] For example, science-fiction horror such as *Frankenstein* (1931) developed alongside more traditional supernatural horror like *Dracula* (1931), although Mary Shelley's novel was published in 1818, seventy-nine years before Stoker's *Dracula*.

As Hutchings suggests, the Gothic is a style that has been prevalent throughout the history of the genre. The literary form originated in eighteenth-century literature, with a proliferation of supernatural texts that featured exotic settings and acts of transgression. Many critics and theorists see Freud's analysis of the Uncanny as definitive of the Gothic.[li] Although much has been written about the tradition, particularly in literature, many of the same conclusions have been drawn regarding the themes and nature of the Gothic. Fred Botting signals that the key preoccupations of the form are excess and transgression.[lii] However, he notes other themes specifically related to Gothic film such as "the doubleness of identity, the threat and thrill of scientific experimentation, and the violence that threatens from within and without".[liii] Notable characteristics of the genre include exotic locales (geographical, historical or both), the presence of dark supernatural activity (the Occult, demons, vampires etc), and an obsession with death. For Botting, however, the Gothic dies with *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), as he sees the love story between Mina and Dracula in the film as

dispelling the otherness of the vampire. This for Botting signals the end of the Gothic, as he feels the film lacks all the inherent qualities associated with the form.[liv] Whilst Coppola's film does seem deficient in many of the features associated with the tradition, perhaps Botting's conclusion was slightly premature considering that films such as *Se7en* and *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), both with unmistakably Gothic characteristics, have subsequently appeared.[lv] *Sleepy Hollow*, for example, transports viewers to a sleepy village in late eighteenth-century upstate New York, and focuses upon the demonic creature of a headless horseman. *Se7en*, on the other hand, takes place in a contemporary New York that, through lighting, cinematography and production design, is transformed into an urban Gothic space where the most gruesome of murders take place.

Unlike the previously cited works, others have been less groundbreaking in their discussion of horror. In *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*, Barry Langford offers a revisionist account of horror theories, remarking upon the works of Tudor, Barbara Creed and others. Langford himself does not appear to hold the genre in high esteem, suggesting that "horror's most lasting contribution to contemporary Hollywood may have been as a paradigm for marketing and promotion in the post-classical era".[lvi] This view appears at odds with his admission that the goriness and sensationalism of the genre "discourage 'serious' critical attention".[lvii] Despite noting a lack of critical attention towards the genre, it appears that Langford himself does not wish to rectify this. Kaminsky, on the other hand, offers a traditional appraisal of the horror genre. He views the form from a psychoanalytical perspective, which is perhaps unsurprising considering that this is the approach numerous theorists have taken. It is a little disappointing however that Kaminsky chooses this method to look at horror, especially after the aforementioned claim that his approaches can be employed to consider any

genre. Nonetheless, Kaminsky asserts that: "Horror films are overwhelmingly concerned with the fear of death and the loss of identity in modern society".[lviii] While these contentions seem acceptable when considering numerous horror films, I do not see them as defining generic characteristics. While death is a recurring preoccupation of the horror genre, this seems to stretch sometimes to a curiosity about mortality rather than simply fear. Furthermore, loss of identity is not a theme that features in an overwhelming majority of the genre's films. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), it can be argued, is more concerned with the idea of dissolving the boundaries between the conscious and the unconscious, rather than focusing on identity issues. Kaminsky suggests that many of these anxieties felt by the audience are played out on screen. He also observes that the struggle between good and evil in the individual is a recurrent motif in the genre, pointing to cinematic adaptations of Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as evidence.[lix] Although his assertion seems reasonable, it is perhaps relevant to note that this is not the only genre that features this theme: crime films are often marked by this motif. Kaminsky follows on by claiming that recent horror films have become pessimistic in their conclusions, with evil triumphing more frequently.[lx] Although this concern seems warranted considering films such as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973), perhaps it is not such a new phenomena considering how frequently Dracula and company returned in the 1930s and 1940s.

Kaminsky claims that: "In one sense, the horror film is a cathartic nightmare and the science fiction film, an uneasy dream of prophecy".[lxi] He is not alone in viewing science-fiction films as visions of the future. He suggests that: "Fear of the future is at the core of many science-fiction films".[lxii] Inherent in this fear is the anxiety that mankind will destroy itself through over-population, atomic catastrophe or losing control to machines. Notwithstanding, Kaminsky recognises that science-fiction has

become more hopeful in recent years (citing *E.T.* as an example of this), though despair still remains in films such as *Blade Runner* (1982).[lxiii] Whilst Kaminsky's emphasis on sci-fi's apparent preoccupation with prophetic fear is acceptable when considering many of the science-fiction films of the 1950s, his assertion seems less secure when considering a space-adventure such as *Star Wars*. Kaminsky follows on to recognise a further category, that of the Science-Fiction-Horror film. Categorising *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *Forbidden Planet* (1956) as such, he suggests the origins of the genre lie in anxiety from the creation of the atomic bomb and the first expeditions to space.[lxiv] Although most would not argue that films such as *Alien* are hybrids, Kaminsky does not define or elucidate on this form in any detail.

Vivian Sobchack is the theorist perhaps most associated with the science-fiction genre. She views horror and science-fiction as two ends of a spectrum rather than distinct forms. Sobchack states that: "What is important to recognise is that both genres involve *interaction* between magic, science and religion – and the only thing which really separates them is the dominant emphasis given to either the sacred or the profane" (emphasis in original).[lxv] It is the triad of science, magic and religion that Sobchack sees as a pivotal component of the genre. In defining the form, she states that: "The SF film is a film genre which emphasizes actual, extrapolative, or speculative science and the empirical method, interacting in a social context with the lesser emphasized, but still present, transcendentalism of magic and religion, in an attempt to reconcile man with the unknown".[lxvi]This composite of science, magic and religion as critical to the science-fiction genre seems reasonable when considering a film such as *E.T.*, with its science element of the testing of the extraterrestrial, its magic of a friendly visiting alien, and the quasi-Godlike position he takes in the film. The argument is less persuasive with the example of *Brazil* (1985) however, as although it may fulfil the

science and even the religious aspects, it is difficult to see where the magic comes into play.

Sobchack asserts that the science-fiction genre lacks a recognisable iconography, however she states that there is a "look" and a "feel" to the visual surfaces.[lxvii] She admits that whilst specific images may not reoccur within the genre, it is types of images "which function in the same way from film to film to create an imaginatively realised world which is always removed from the world we know or know of".[lxviii] Although one may concur with Sobchack in considering *Star Wars* or *Blade Runner*, the statement appears less concrete when thinking about the realistic setting and visuals of *RoboCop*. Furthermore, Sobchack asserts that later sci-fi films were markedly different to their predecessors as they proposed a more hopeful outlook. She writes that: "the urgent or hopeless temporality of the earlier films has given way to a new and erotic leisureliness – even in 'action-packed' films. Time has decelerated, but is not represented as static".[lxix] Again, as Neale points out,[lxx] this assertion is rendered disputable if a wider range of science-fiction films is considered.

J. P. Telotte is another theorist who writes extensively about the science-fiction form. Like Sobchack, Telotte identifies a triad of fundamental themes within the form, although he identifies these as reason, science and technology.[lxxi] Telotte's main concepts revolve around a preoccupation with borders; he suggests that it is a genre's boundaries which indicate its place within a cultural nexus. Referring to the connections between horror and science-fiction, he claims that "the genres we so readily identify and think of as discrete forms may well draw on much larger structures whose markings are

not so easy to discern".[lxxii] In the study, Telotte employs Todorov's approach to the fantastic as a model for his own ideas. He states that:

> "By considering those encounters with alien forces/beings as a type of *marvellous* narrative, the concern with futuristic societies in the context of Todorov's *fantastic* category, and alterations of the self as *uncanny*, we might not only begin to satisfy an element of that common desire for pattern, for organisation, for rational delineation from which most genre thinking seems invariably to spring, but also better conceptualize the kinship or overlap among a number of genres – especially horror and the musical – that might at various times be drawn in under that broad heading of fantasy" (emphasis in original).[lxxiii]

Whilst this approach appears an efficient way to divide various science-fiction narratives, Telotte does not discuss fantasy in further detail. He states that fantasy does not function according to any particular structure and that it features the "film types" of science-fiction, horror and the musical.[lxxiv] However, Telotte does not elucidate on fantasy as a genre. For him it is a term that encompasses the aforementioned categories. (Thus this may pose a problem when attempting to classify a film such as *Willow* which cannot be classified as horror or science-fiction, yet he identifies no generic label.) Telotte's aim is to analyse the science-fiction film, and he does so by examining key films for each of the distinctions as well as ones that crosses generic boundaries. The narrative categories he creates seem reasonable. It is clear that many science-fiction films could be classified in this way. Nevertheless, these narrative categories play down the importance of visual style and setting in science-fiction. Although not universally

applicable, many films can instantly be identified as belonging to the genre by their appearance and the inclusion of elements such as a space setting or advanced technology. In conclusion, Telotte further reflects upon a significant aspect of science-fiction in the cinema, in stating "these films, more than any others, reflect the technology that makes them possible".[lxxv] Thus for Telotte, the genre is not only relevant in its representations of themes and ideas, but also because it depicts the technology at the heart of cinema.

Barry Langford recognises that science-fiction is a "dominant presence in contemporary Hollywood",[lxxvi] indicating perhaps why he offers a more favourable consideration of science-fiction than he does of horror. Like other theorists, Langford indicates that sci-fi is more suited to evaluating technological changes than some other genres. He also suggests a number of key aspects of the science-fiction genre. Langford notes that the generic boundaries are "exceptionally porous", and traces the genre back to the Gothic films of the 1930s such as *The Invisible Ray* (1936).[lxxvii] He suggests that the genre exhibits various "trans-personal" themes,[lxxviii] and that generally the form displays a technophobic attitude.[lxxix] For Langford, sci-fi in the early 1980s was regressive (he cites *E.T.* as an example of this), but also dystopian (in films such as *Blade Runner*).[lxxx] More recent science-fiction has taken on new concerns; Langford points to *Gattaca* (1997) which deals with genetic engineering as an example of this.[lxxxi] Whilst Langford's assertions hold up well as generalisations, his arguments do not appear as credible when considering the wide range of science-fiction films that could appear in any one era. To use films starring Will Smith as an example, although *I, Robot* (2004) is undoubtedly technophobic in its outlook, it is technology that is indispensable in the defeat of aliens in both *Independence Day* (1996) and *Men in Black* (1997). Thus

perhaps it would have been worthwhile for Langford to include a wider range of films in his study.

Some of the most significant genre theorists and critics have had little to say on the fantasy genre. Neale discusses both horror and science-fiction in *Genre and Hollywood*, but there is barely a mention of fantasy. Likewise, Langford also discusses these two genres, but not the genre of fantasy itself. Kaminsky offers barely a full page on the genre, commenting that he will not explore the genre in any detail. He does however argue that most fantasy films are framed in a dream context. He states that: "Fantasy films almost always take on the form, or appearance, of a self-contained dream".[lxxxii] Whilst this may appear acceptable in the case of *The Wizard of Oz*, it seems dogmatic to suggest this is true of the majority of the films. Among the numerous films to which it does not apply are *The Dark Crystal* (1982), *Freaky Friday* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. Kaminsky also suggests that "the fantasy theme is one of reinforcement of the world outside the fantasy, an acceptance of the real world as a less interesting but safer place to be".[lxxxiii] Again, although this may be true of films like *Labyrinth*, it not so true of *Star Wars*.

In one of the few accounts of the fantasy genre, Wade Jennings seeks to identify the genre's principle plots, characters and themes. Recognising the problem of defining the term, Jennings states that: "Perhaps the only indispensable element in a fantasy is a central situation that defies rational or even pseudo-scientific explanation".[lxxxiv] This is a definition that seems entirely workable when considering most fantasy films. It does not, however, take into account films that play upon the hesitation between fantasy and reality. *Return to Oz*, for example, features a fantasy world, as well as the real world in

which Dorothy is undergoing psychiatric treatment. Often the audience, as well as the characters, may question the reality of what they are presented with. Although most fantasy films exhibit elements that defy rational or pseudo-scientific explanations, Jennings' definition discounts the element of doubt that feature in some of the genre's films. He suggests that the difficulty in defining fantasy is further compounded by the fact that not all films that work within his definition are best described as fantasies. Because of this, Jennings claims that many films which feature some elements of fantasy are treated as separate genres: animation and musicals are two of the examples he refers to for this.[lxxxv] Jennings notes that although there appears to be a wider variety of plots in the genre, most fantasy films involve a quest.[lxxxvi] The protagonists are often on a journey which leads to self-knowledge. Jennings cites *The Wizard of Oz* amongst other films to exemplify this.[lxxxvii] He also underlines the importance of three key ingredients or themes: the questioning of what constitutes home, the discovery of joy, and the discovery of freedom (which unites all three).[lxxxviii] However he omits to mention a theme fundamental to fantasy: the mythical struggle between good and evil which lies at the heart of the majority of fantasy films. Although this theme is central to numerous other kinds of films as well, it is particularly intrinsic to the sword and sorcery and fairytale sub-genres, which will be discussed later in this thesis. While it can be argued that this theme is not exclusive to the fantasy genre, its importance is clear.

Jennings also notes three key character types of the genre: the superman (including both those with supernatural strength as well as witches etc); the child hero (perhaps best illustrated by the character of Elliot in *E.T.*); and the supernaturally wise mentor to the hero (the angel Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life* for example).[lxxxix] Jennings divides the history of the genre into four main eras, although he does note that

some of the more memorable films have come from outside them. He argues that the first period of fantasy encompassed the films of Georges Méliès and others, and later silent films such as *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924).[xc] Later, in the 1930s, the 1940s and early 1950s, fantasy came in a number of forms including the romantic fantasies such as *Death Takes a Holiday* (1934) and fantasy comedies such as The *Ghost Goes West*.[xci] Following a period of less successful productions between 1952 and 1977, *Star Wars* revived the genre, which has grown in popularity ever since.[xcii] Whilst Jennings' article certainly deserves commendation for giving a rare overview of the genre, he mentions nothing of the iconography, settings or other visual conventions of the genre. Although I concur that fantasy is easier to classify in terms of narrative types, spatial and temporal settings are critical in categorising certain films as fantasy (*Flash Gordon* [1980] being one).

In *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan…and Beyond*, Robin Wood devotes a chapter to the fantasy genre, most specifically the films of Lucas and Spielberg. Wood offers a reading of *Star Wars* and *E.T.* that illuminates what he sees as their reaffirmation of core social and cultural ideologies of American patriarchal and bourgeois society. Although a definition of fantasy is not proffered, the chapter is pivotal in identifying what Wood considers preoccupations of the genre during the Reagan era. He discusses six aspects of *Star Wars* that, he argues, provide reassurance for audiences.[xciii] Perhaps most significant of these is what he sees as the wish of adults to revert to childishness. Thus he states that: "The success of the films is only comprehensible when one assumes a widespread desire for regression to infantilism, a populace who wants to be constructed as mock children".[xciv] Wood does make a number of relevant points, particularly about the role of women and the family in *E.T.*[xcv] However, this is offset by a number of contentious proclamations such as using CP-30

in *Star Wars* to exemplify the subservient roles given to homosexuals in these films (though Wood may speculate on its sexuality, it is far from being confirmed).[xcvi] Wood's book is certainly of significance. He rightly acknowledges the power of these fantasy films in reaching a wide audience, as well as indicating the overwhelming supremacy of the happy ending in the 1980s fantasy film.[xcvii] But he does tend to over generalise.

More recently, two book-length studies have been published on the subject of fantasy films. Joshua David Bellin's *Framing Monsters: Fantasy Film and Social Alienation* aims to connect fantasy films to their perceived social contexts. Bellin suggests that the genre represents particular social groups as a danger to the dominant society. He claims that as fantasy is often dismissed as pure and innocent, or read through mythological themes rather than through their socio-historical contexts, their power to perform "injurious social work" is often overlooked.[xcviii] Bellin considers a number of different films, among them 1933's *King Kong*. He argues that `Kong is the exemplar, if not the prototype, of a long-standing (and ongoing) tradition in fantasy film that identifies marginalized social groups as monstrous threats to the dominant social order". He thus contends that the film exudes a racially-charged overtone, with Kong being a metaphor for black people in America. He claims that although there may be other meanings, this is the dominant one because of the culture that constructed it.[xcix] Bellin's ideas seem problematic. Firstly, although he suggests that a racist ideology would be dominant, he does not provide any real evidence to back up this claim. Whilst it is naïve to think that racism did not thrive in the America of the 1930s, Bellin provides no evidence to suggest it was the dominant ideology.

Bellin states that his aim is to "reconnect fantasy films to their social contexts, to read them in light of their specific historical-cultural ideologies, and thereby to demonstrate the ways these films validate specific discourses and policies of exclusion, inequality and victimisation".[c] He claims that it is the fact that fantasy detaches itself from reality that gives it the ability to foster malignant social attitudes. However, the argument for polysemy could be levelled against Bellin's contention. Firstly, as the fantasy genre is apparently so removed from realism, surely that makes it easier to read a wider scope of meanings into many of the films, no matter how far-fetched? Secondly, in reading a negative undercurrent of hostility into these films as the dominant meaning, Bellin overlooks others. In addition to this, he suggests that rather than just applying to a small number of films, the "processes of alienation are characteristic of the fantasy film genre as a whole".[ci] However, Bellin tends to concentrate on films (such as the *Sinbad* trilogy) which are more open to this interpretation than others. His study does not account for the array or the range of fantasy films that have been produced, and while his focus on a small group of films is understandable, it would have been interesting to see what meanings he might have attributed to *Mannequin* (1987) or *Ghost Busters*. In perhaps what is an attempt to redeem the fantasy genre from the negative image he has fostered upon it, Bellin suggests that maybe we identify ourselves with the monster or other in the films.[cii] In a sense, this counteracts his principle argument, which suggests the malignant social attitudes are in fact dominant views. Perhaps the most significant aspect that can be taken from Bellin's study is that, although noting that definitions of fantasy are varied, he chose what could be classed as an "overly inclusive" one.[ciii]

Although Alec Worley's book is entitled *Empires of the Imagination: A Critical Survey of Fantasy Cinema form George Méliès to The Lord of the Rings*, it is a more

descriptive assessment of the genre than an analytical one. Worley considers the fantasy genre throughout cinema history, categorising films according to theme. Placing films on a scale from expressionism at one end and realism on the other, he identifies the following categories: Surrealism, Fairy Tale, Earthbound Fantasy, Heroic Fantasy and Epic Fantasy.[civ] These categories are useful, although there is certainly some overlap between them. Worley concedes that the fantasy genre has not received much critical attention, something he aims to readdress. His definition of fantasy revolves around the presence of magic: "Magic fuels fantasy, manifesting as miracles, mysterious forces or inexplicable events, none of which can be ascribed to the laws of rationality, nature or science. Magic in fantasy films is ultimately unexplainable."[cv] He includes science-fiction and horror as cousin genres, but distinguishes them from fantasy itself. He states that supernatural horror is distinct from fantasy as its intention is to scare, whilst "rationality is the key difference between sci-fi and fantasy", as scientific explanation of magic renders it as science-fiction.[cvi] This seems like a reasonable distinction. However films set in dystopian universes, such as *Escape From New York* (1981), do not attempt to rationalise fantasy elements – they are simply there. Whilst Worley's distinctions seem straightforward enough, a number of issues arise from the way he decides to categorise the films. Firstly, he classifies films such as *Batman* and *Ghost Busters* as Science Fantasy.[cvii] However, later on in his study, *Ghost Busters* is classified in the Ghost Stories section of the Earthbound Fantasy chapter, thus as part of the fantasy genre.[cviii] Perhaps this indicates not just a failing on Worley's part, but a problem in categorising fantasy in general: many fantasy films can also be classified as belonging to different genres which makes pigeonholing them a precarious task. Furthermore, despite his definition of fantasy in relation to its neighbouring genres, Worley also cites *RoboCop* as an Earthbound Fantasy.[cix] However, he does not include films such as *Child's Play* (1988) in his section Artefact Movies, which begs the question as to why

some sci-fi and horror films are included while others are not. In categorising fantasy as he has, Worley does not really allow for generic hybridity; some films are applicable to more than one of his categories, and films that cross generic boundaries (the *Indiana Jones* trilogy (1981-89) for example) are not really focussed on in detail. *Willow* is described as an Epic Fantasy due to its quest narrative,[cx] yet *Legend* is classified as a Fairy Tale, despite similarities between the two narratives. Both films feature a quest by the protagonist, the presence of fairies and magical creatures, and an evil and all-powerful villain. Thus Worley's distinctions are certainly open to question, as is his apparent preference for some films over others. The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-03) is clearly a favourite of Worley's (as evidenced through the amount of space he devotes to the films and the flattering way he writes about them),[cxi] yet it is debatable as to whether its place in his hierarchy of personal preference should be a factor in a rigorous academic survey. Finally, Worley concludes by stating that "Fantasy is the eternal optimist".[cxii] This statement, again, seems open to question, as *Brazil* and *Blade Runner* amongst others, are not perhaps the most positive of films. However, considering how contentious Worley's categories have proven, perhaps he would not choose to include these as fantasy.

The main impediment to the theory and criticism of fantasy as a genre is the lack of a clear definition of the term itself. William Coyle notes that fantasy can encompass several different genres. "It should be stressed", he writes, "that fantasy is not a genre; its literary expression includes science fiction, utopias and dystopias, lampoon and parody, fairy tales, folk legend, allegory, myth, fable, nonsense verse, dream literature absurdist drama and numerous other forms… Fantasy is not a genre but a mode, a way of perceiving human experience".[cxiii] Although I would agree with Coyle in terms of the inclusive nature of fantasy, it seems less plausible to suggest that all fantasy is a way of

perceiving human experience. While *THX 1138* may comment on the human condition, it is difficult to see how *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990) does.

Like Coyle, Rosemary Jackson also considers fantasy a mode rather than a genre. She suggests that: "Perhaps it is more helpful to define the fantastic as a literary *mode* rather than a genre, and to place it between the opposite modes of the marvellous and the mimetic" (emphasis in original).[cxiv] Jackson uses Todorov's approach to the fantastic to elucidate her theories. Like Todorov, Jackson divides fantasy literature into three main categories: the marvellous, the fantastic and the mimetic. For Jackson, "The marvellous is characterized by a minimal functional narrative, whose narrator is omniscient and has absolute authority".[cxv] The mimetic category includes: "Narratives which claim to imitate an external reality, which are mimetic (imitating), also distance experience by shaping it into meaningful patterns and sequences".[cxvi] Finally, fantastic narratives "assert that what they are telling is real – relying upon all conventions of realistic fiction to do so – and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing what – within those terms – is manifestly unreal".[cxvii]

The marvellous is perhaps the most applicable of these categories in identifying fantasy as a genre in the cinema. She writes that: "The world of fairy story, romance, magic, supernaturalism is one belonging to the marvellous narrative".[cxviii] However, she does not devote much space to marvellous texts as the majority of her study concerns the fantastic. Jackson defines the fantastic as an inversion of dominant ideologies. She states that: "The modern fantastic, the form of literary fantasy within the secularised culture produced by capitalism, is subversive literature".[cxix] To explain her view of fantasy, she compares the realm to a 'paraxis', as it distorts and deforms

reality much the same way a paraxial region does in optics.[cxx] Jackson relies heavily upon psychoanalysis to characterise her notion that fantasy depicts and represents the other. However the vast majority of the examples she uses are texts from the horror genre.[cxxi] Possibly what is most relevant to fantasy film is her pinpointing of four main themes: invisibility, transformation, dualism and good versus evil.[cxxii] Jackson's study perhaps works best when applied to the horror genre, particularly to gothic horror. Her psychoanalytical perspective is offered in more detail here than in her reading of the works of Lewis Carroll, for example.[cxxiii] In her brief appraisal of *Alice in Wonderland*, Jackson suggests that the novel can be interpreted as the nightmare of losing control. Jackson writes of the protagonist: "She fears losing herself by becoming another… Her human body becomes a 'thing', an object which shrinks, extends, transforms from one shape to another".[cxxiv] While Jackson discusses symbolism, she does not pay as much attention to how the narrative structure fits in with this interpretation.

Perhaps the most renowned work on fantasy is another from a literary perspective. Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structuralist Approach to a Literary Genre* is possibly the most oft-quoted study in literature and film concerning fantasy, horror and science-fiction. Todorov identifies and defines a strand of popular literature, as well as recognising its neighbouring genres, suggesting that the 'fantastic' is a temporary state in a given text which occupies the hesitation between the uncanny and the marvellous.[cxxv] He designates the state as transient because he believes that the text will ultimately conclude in either of the neighbouring states of the uncanny or the marvellous. Todorov writes that: "The fantastic… lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion".[cxxvi] Much like Freud's definition, the uncanny occurs when events, though seemingly

supernatural, have an acceptable, normal explanation. In the marvellous, on the other hand, strange or unusual events are accounted for by supernatural or mystical causes alone. Again, it is the marvellous category that is most applicable to fantasy film.

For Todorov, the marvellous is a condition in which the reader does not question supernatural events. He claims that the marvellous in its pure state has "no distinct frontiers",[cxxvii] a claim that could be extended to the fantasy film genre. He asserts that: "In the case of the marvellous, supernatural elements provoke no particular reaction either in the characters or in the implicit reader. It is not an attitude toward the events described which characterizes the marvellous, but the nature of these events".[cxxviii] Thus for Todorov it is the type of event that designates a text as marvellous, rather than the narrative voice. For a text to be considered marvellous, there would need to be an incident or object that is indisputably supernatural. Thus, the marvellous applies to films set in alternate worlds such as *The Dark Crystal*, as well as films such as *Labyrinth* or *Ghost Busters*, where any hesitation over the existence of the supernatural is fleeting. Todorov identifies four categories within the marvellous form. First of these is the hyperbolic marvellous, in which events or phenomena are only supernatural because of their dimensions.[cxxix] The category would include a film such as *King Kong*, where the only aspect of supernatural is in the enormous size of the beast. The exotic marvellous reports supernatural events as normal because they take place in supposedly faraway regions alien to the reader.[cxxx] An example of this would be *Star Wars*, where everything supernatural appears normal within the realm of the world featured. The instrumental marvellous features gadgets and technology with unrealised potential in the period described, but whose uses are quite possible.[cxxxi] An example of this is the shrinking device featured in *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. Finally, the scientific marvellous is another term for science-fiction, in which supernatural events are explained rationally

through a scientific law not yet acknowledged.[cxxxii] *The Terminator* (1984) would fall into this category, although there is a definite overlap between the instrumental marvellous and the scientific marvellous. Further to this, Todorov divides the marvellous into what he calls themes of the self and themes of the other. The former concerns supernatural events, such as metamorphoses, which occur but whose perception is ambiguous. Todorov claims that the narration or views of the character may be skewed by drug use, infantilism or madness.[cxxxiii] Themes of the other feature unconscious desires and transgressions.[cxxxiv] There is recourse to Freud here, but despite the fact that he identifies parallels between psychoanalysis and the themes of the fantastic, Todorov concentrates principally on the literary and social functions of the terminology he uses.[cxxxv]

I will use Todorov's marvellous categories as a basis to categorise the films discussed in this thesis. Nevertheless, given the encompassing nature of fantasy, not all texts can be encompassed by Todorov's terms. The films discussed will be grouped in two main ways. Some chapters will concentrate on a sub-genre, supernatural comedy or sword and sorcery, for example. Within the confines of this classification, films will be examined according to Todorov's approach. Other chapters will be concerned with the intended audience of fantasy films. Therefore, films aimed at children will be examined together, as well as those aimed at other age groups. There will be an overlap between films belonging to a sub-genre and those aimed at an audience group, as a film may be a children's film as well as a supernatural comedy. However, I feel this is the best way to approach such a sprawling genre effectively. It will also illustrate the ways in which aspects of fantasy films appealed to varying age groups. Like Todorov, and to a certain extent Jackson, I will consider anything supernatural or not otherwise belonging to the normal world as fantasy. Although this will encompass a wide variety of films, I would

argue that this is the only way to give a fair assessment of the genre. I will look at English-language, predominantly mainstream American films, although significant films from Britain will also be included. The period that this thesis will cover is from the late 1970s to the end of the 1980s. I will not consider films that lack a perceptible narrative, so surrealist and art-house films will not be included. Musicals likewise will not be considered unless they contain specifically supernatural occurrences rather than just singing and dancing. The musical has its own theoretical and critical history, therefore to consider these films as well would limit the space devoted to more traditional fantasy. I consider fantasy to be a genre rather than an impulse or a mode. Nevertheless, it is a broad one, featuring as it does such sub-genres of horror, science-fiction and animation. The conventions of these and other sub-genres will be examined, considering narrative types, themes and visual style. The films will also be looked at in terms of their production, distribution and reception, as well as in terms of their cultural-historical contexts. By considering all possible aspects, I intend to offer a well-rounded account of 1980s fantasy films.

[xxv] David Butler, *Fantasy Cinema: Impossible Worlds on Screen*, Wallflower, London, 2009, p. 16
[xxvi] Stuart M. Kaminsky, *American Film Genres*, 2nd edn, Nelson-Hall, Chicago, 1985, p. 114
[xxvii] Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984, p. 108
[xxviii] Andrew, p. 110
[xxix] Andrew, p. 114
[xxx] Andrew, p. 109
[xxxi] Kaminsky, p. 3
[xxxii] Kaminsky, p. 16
[xxxiii] Kaminsky, p. 4
[xxxiv] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre*, British Film Institute, London, 1999, pp. 208-210
[xxxv] Altman, pp. 221-22
[xxxvi] Altman, p. 158
[xxxvii] Altman, p. 57
[xxxviii] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 5
[xxxix] Neale, pp. 40-42
[xl] Neale, p. 3
[xli] Paul Wells, *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*, Wallflower, London, 2000, p. 10
[xlii] Barry Keith Grant, ‘‘Sensuous Elaboration’: Reason and the Visible in the Science Fiction Film’, in S. Redmond (ed.) *Liquid Metal: The Science Fiction Film Reader*, Wallflower Press, London, 2004, p. 17
[xliii] Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 27
[xliv] Tudor, p. 220
[xlv] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Routledge, London, 1981, p. 3
[xlvi] Neale, p. 98
[xlvii] Peter Hutchings, ‘Tearing your soul apart: Horror’s New Monsters’ in V. Sage and A. Lloyd-Smith (eds.), *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, p. 92
[xlviii] Hutchings, p. 94
[xlix] Hutchings, pp. 95-99
[l] Hutchings, pp. 102-03
[li] See William Patrick Day, *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1985 and Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995
[lii] Fred Botting, *Gothic*, Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 1-13
[liii] Botting, p. 167
[liv] Botting, pp. 177-80
[lv] For more on Botting’s conclusions and the Gothic film in general see Tara Ghai, ‘“And Terror the Soul of the Plot”? Or, Count Dracula and the Gothic Film in British and American Cinema, c.1958-c.1996’, Unpublished Masters dissertation, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2006
[lvi] Barry Langford, *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2005, p. 160
[lvii] Langford, p. 160
[lviii] Kaminsky, p. 120
[lix] Kaminsky, pp. 122-23
[lx] Kaminsky, p. 126
[lxi] Kaminsky, p. 119

[lxii] Kaminsky, p. 130
[lxiii] Kaminsky, p. 131
[lxiv] Kaminsky, p. 131
[lxv] Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, Ungar, New York, 1987, p. 56
[lxvi] Sobchack, p. 63
[lxvii] Sobchack, p. 87
[lxviii] Sobchack, p. 87
[lxix] Sobchack, pp. 227-28
[lxx] Neale, p. 104
[lxxi] J.P. Telotte, *Science Fiction Film*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 19
[lxxii] Telotte, p. 198
[lxxiii] Telotte, p. 14
[lxxiv] Telotte, p. 31
[lxxv] Telotte, p. 25
[lxxvi] Langford, p. 182
[lxxvii] Langford, p. 185
[lxxviii] Langford, p. 184
[lxxix] Langford, p. 199
[lxxx] Langford, pp. 191-95
[lxxxi] Langford, p. 199
[lxxxii] Kaminsky, p. 132
[lxxxiii] Kaminsky, p. 132
[lxxxiv] Wade Jennings, 'Fantasy', in W. D. Gehring (ed.), *Handbook of American Film Genres*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1988, p. 249
[lxxxv] Jennings, p. 250
[lxxxvi]Jennings, p. 250
[lxxxvii] Jennings, p. 251
[lxxxviii] Jennings, pp. 251-52
[lxxxix] Jennings, pp. 252-53
[xc] Jennings, pp. 253-54
[xci] Jennings, pp.254-56
[xcii] Jennings, pp. 256-58
[xciii] Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan…and Beyond*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, pp. 147-55
[xciv] Wood, p. 147
[xcv] Wood, pp. 156-60
[xcvi] Wood, p. 155
[xcvii] Wood, pp. 166-67
[xcviii] Joshua David Bellin, *Framing Monsters: Fantasy Film and Social Alienation*, South Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 2005, p. 6
[xcix] Bellin, pp. 11-12
[c] Bellin, p. 13
[ci] Bellin, p. 19
[cii] Bellin, pp. 199-200
[ciii] Bellin, p. 17
[civ] Alec Worley, *Empires of the Imagination: A Critical Survey of Fantasy Cinema from Georges Méliès to The Lord of the Rings*, McFarland, North Carolina, 2005, p. 14
[cv] Worley, p.10
[cvi] Worley, p. 11-12
[cvii] Worley, p. 11
[cviii] Worley, p. 126
[cix] Worley, p. 102
[cx] Worley, p. 265
[cxi] Worley, pp. 232-70
[cxii] Worley, p. 270

[cxiii] William Coyle, 'Introduction: The Nature of Fantasy', in W. Coyle (ed.) *Aspects of Fantasy: Selected Essays from the Second International Conference on the Fantastic in Literature and Film* (Greenwood Press, Westport, 1986), p. 2
[cxiv] Jackson, p. 32
[cxv] Jackson, p. 33
[cxvi] Jackson, pp. 33-34
[cxvii] Jackson, p. 34
[cxviii] Jackson, p. 33
[cxix] Jackson, p 180
[cxx] Jackson, p. 19
[cxxi] Jackson, pp. 61-91
[cxxii] Jackson, p. 49
[cxxiii] Jackson, pp. 141-45
[cxxiv] Jackson, p. 143
[cxxv] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, New York, 1975, p. 33
[cxxvi] Todorov, p. 41
[cxxvii] Todorov, p. 53
[cxxviii] Todorov, p. 54
[cxxix] Todorov, pp. 54-55
[cxxx] Todorov, pp. 55-56
[cxxxi] Todorov, p. 56
[cxxxii] Todorov, pp.56-57
[cxxxiii] Todorov, pp.107-23
[cxxxiv] Todorov, pp. 124-39
[cxxxv] Todorov, pp. 162-75

Chapter 2: Review of Reviews

This chapter will provide a detailed account of how a variety of 1980s fantasy films were appraised by critics on their release. In doing so, a number of issues will become apparent. Firstly, the way in which critics classify films differs, and, as a result, 'fantasy' is not always the most common generic term used. Secondly, critical opinion about the films sometimes varies greatly. Some publications seem to offer more favourable reviews, but there is often a considerable difference in opinion between the contemporary reviews of a number of films and reviews and articles written some years later. Lastly, it appears that those films that are more readily classifiable as science-fiction or horror tend to receive more favourable reviews than those classified as fantasy (a finding that clearly dovetails with the greater attention paid to science-fiction and horror among the academic community). This chapter summarises critical responses to a wide array of the films discussed in this thesis. As there are so many films, they are not all looked it in detail in this chapter.

Star Wars received mostly favourable reviews when initially released. *Variety* described the film as "outstanding" and "brilliant",[cxxxvi] while Peter Haigh commented that the film is "enormous fun".[cxxxvii] Many reviewers drew attention to the film's visual effects, with Ron Pennigton suggesting that *Star Wars* features "some of the most spectacular visual special effects ever to illuminate a motion picture screen".[cxxxviii] Not all critics were as impressed by the film, however. David Castell wrote that: "It remains as distant and uninvolving as a firework display".[cxxxix] The general consensus among critics was the 1980 sequel, *The Empire Strikes Back*, did not quite match the level of its predecessor. *Variety* described the film as a "worthy sequel" that suffers only "from the

familiarity with the effects generated in the original and imitated too much by others".[cxl] Arthur Knight also considered the film a "worthy successor", but suggested that it did not measure up to *Star Wars* in "the freshness and originality of its script".[cxli] The final film in the initial trilogy, *The Return of the Jedi* (1983) received the least favourable reviews. A number of critics observed that the film lacked originality. John Sladek remarked that: "there is nothing of the new and plenty of the old".[cxlii] Fiona Ferguson described the film as "a major disappointment".[cxliii] But not all were as critical. Richard Gertner called the action "virtually non-stop", and suggested that Lucas and his colleagues has "brought spectacle cinema to its highest zenith".[cxliv]

A number of generic terms were applied to *Star Wars*. Jane Morgan commented that the film combined "fairytale with science fiction, medieval hocus-pocus with modern gadgetry". She also suggested that George Lucas borrowed elements from a number of genres, including "serials, swashbucklers, scifi, westerns, hotrod and war movies".[cxlv] Richard Combs noted that *Star Wars* alluded to a number of cinematic sources, among them *Flash Gordon*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Searchers*, and a number of Disney films.[cxlvi] George Lucas described the film as a "space fantasy",[cxlvii] but reviewers were more varied in their terminology. Scott William Schumack described it as "a great adventure film and a modern fairy tale";[cxlviii] while for J.G Ballard it was undoubtedly a science-fiction film.[cxlix] *Variety*, meanwhile, described the film as "adventure-fantasy" that had "all-age appeal". However, *Variety* suggested that it was "by no means a `children's film`", with all the derogatory overtones that go with that description".[cl] Clearly, the multi-faceted nature of *Star Wars* made it difficult to categorize succinctly, and the same is true of many other fantasy films of the late 1970s and 1980s.

E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial opened to excellent reviews. Released in the United States on 11th June 1982, Richard Gertner commented that the "rave reviews" *E.T.* received were "the best this year for any film, by far".[cli] Critics acclaimed various aspects of the production, including the storyline, the special effects and the score. *Variety* commented that the technical effects were "state-of the-art superb" and that John Williams' score "stands as a model of film composing".[clii] More is made of the style of the film, with one critic observing that "it does not give one a bad taste of being cynically manipulated… it has buoyancy, momentum, humour, and indeed many different moods."[cliii] By the time *E.T.* was released in the UK (on 9th December 1982), news of its success had spread across the Atlantic. In his review of the film, Chris Auty commented that: "despite all the sensation, 'E.T.', remains a delight, a story of innocence lost and found, of suburban dreams and lonely childhood".[cliv] In both the US and the UK, *E.T.* was a critical and financial success.[clv] However, although critics were almost unanimous in their praise,[clvi] differences can be found in the way in which they classified the film. *Motion Picture Product Digest* described *E.T.* as a "space age adventure film";[clvii] while *Time Out* asserted that it was "essentially a comedy with an enormous emotional punch rather than a serious science-fiction movie".[clviii] Science-fiction is also mentioned by David J. Hogan, who suggested, nevertheless, the film is "not simply science-fiction".[clix] Joss Marsh commented that: "In E.T., as in Superman, an alien is stranded on Earth, bringing with him not the horror of sci-fi movies of the past, but the blessing of homely morality as much as superior abilities".[clx] This comment is indicative of the way some critics viewed genres; it is the humanity of both the creature and the film that is praised first and foremost, rather than the elements that would align it to the science-fiction.

Both at the time of its release and in later DVD reviews and articles, *E.T.* was likened to Disney pictures. *Variety* suggested that "'E.T., The Extra-Terrestrial' may be the best Disney film Disney never made",[clxi] whilst it is described as a "Disney-esque kids' flick" in *Empire*.[clxii] This is suggestive of two preconceptions: firstly that there is a certain type of film that Disney makes, and secondly that Disney is so associated with this type of film that others are inevitably measured against it. It *is* described a "fantasy" in a number of reviews, though this term seems to function as a device rather than a genre itself: `fantasy` is used to describe either the narrative or style of the film, rather than its genre. Martin Kent asserted that *E.T.* is a "simple fantasy",[clxiii] and *MFB* viewed the film as the manifestation of "Spielberg's talent for fantasy".[clxiv] Kent also describes the film as a "beguiling fairy tale",[clxv] a category used in a number of the other reviews.[clxvi] Again, the term 'fairy tale' appears more as a description of the type of narrative rather than a genre to which the film has been designated. Rather, as previously mentioned, the film is usually categorised as science fiction or as comedy. Even so, *E.T.* is classified in the "space and adventure" genre by the reviewer in *Stills*,[clxvii] and is also included in a "family movie" genre in a 2006 edition of *Empire*,[clxviii] all of which indicates that there is no general consensus about the film's principal generic characteristics.

The Dark Crystal was released in the same year as *E.T.*, though it did not match the latter's critical and commercial success. In an interview with *Films in Review* director Jim Henson acknowledged the enormous success of Spielberg's film, commenting about his own film that "God knows it would be nice if [audiences] liked it as much as E.T., or even a part of that, and do notice it is a different film".[clxix] Costing $30 million,[clxx] *Dark Crystal* went on to take $23,750,000 in rentals at the US box-office,[clxxi] a moderate success, but hardly in the *E.T.* vein. Critically, the film's fortunes

were mixed, as it received both outstanding and mediocre reviews. Most critics saw the narrative and themes as weaknesses in the film. Although *Variety* commented that "there is plenty of humour" in *Dark Crystal*,[clxxii] others were less enamoured. Arthur Knight, for *The Hollywood Reporter*, called the production a "very simple story", and likened its mood to a "humourless allegory".[clxxiii] He also suggested that a synopsis of the film's story would have been more suitable for an "Atari video game"[clxxiv] rather than an entire film. *Motion Picture Product Digest* concurred with the general dissatisfaction, calling the film a "banal fairy tale".[clxxv]

Other reviews were far more favourable, however, praising the production on many levels. In particular, the production design and special effects were elements singled out for praise. Sheila Johnston claimed that the "star attraction" of the film were its "artwork, intricate in detail and designs, and, most especially, the puppet characters".[clxxvi] Allen Malmquist also praised the "stunningly beautiful world" of the film, stating that: "Disney was the pioneer when it came to the possibilities of drama without actors, but Henson has created the means for, and proved that audiences will believe in and follow, the dramatic adventures of thee-dimensional animated characters".[clxxvii] In a *Time Out* article on Jim Henson, Steve Grant suggested that the film would be a success in the UK, citing the reasons for this as the "healthy business" it was doing in America and the fact that the film "works well both as a visual slice of opium for all ages and as a fable".[clxxviii] Overall, despite qualms about its narrative aspects (plot, dialogue, characterisation and mood), most critics found much to commend in the visual elements of the film.

Unlike the reviewers of *E.T.*, the reviewers of *Dark Crystal* were far more unambiguous in their classification of the film. Henson's film was categorised as 'fantasy' by all those who offered a generic classification. The term `fairy tale` was used by the film's Conceptual Designer Brian Froud.[clxxix] Charlene Krista stated that: "The Dark Crystal is a tale of myth, mystery, and adventure",[clxxx] and Sheila Johnston suggested that the film is "a magical mystery tour through some vague medieval past".[clxxxi] The "standard quest saga"[clxxxii] plot is another generic convention noted by critics, with Knight pronouncing that: "Once again, we're in a fantasy land and a faraway time where the forces of good are pitted against the forces of evil".[clxxxiii] Knight's tone suggests that he finds the plot unoriginal; for him it is a narrative that has been repeated a many times. Many critics and writers referred to *The Muppets* when discussing *Dark Crystal*, though this seems only natural when considering that both products were made by the same group of people. *Variety* described the film as "the Muppets go serious, successfully",[clxxxiv] whilst Grant described as "the Muppets meet 'The Lord of the Rings'".[clxxxv] J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy is mentioned by a number of critics who noted the similarities in its story line. Alan Jones commented that *Dark Crystal* is "in the Tolkien tradition",[clxxxvi] whilst Johnston despaired at the "pompous, sub-Tolkienesque theosopics".[clxxxvii] Later articles and DVD reviews of *Dark Crystal* exhibit a greater appreciation for the film than was shown on its initial release. Neil Jeffries comments that "Jim Henson's fantasy masterpiece looks no less splendid after 18 years", in his 2000 DVD review,[clxxxviii] whilst, in a retrospective, Jeff Bond claims that *Dark Crystal* was "one of the most ambitious films of that year, if not the decade".[clxxxix] Bond also suggests that the film "combined elements of classic fantasy and science fiction", the latter being a genre not referred to in any previous review. This highlights the way in which genre perceptions (and genre terms) are capable of change, an important consideration when considering fantasy films in the 1980s.

Labyrinth was the second feature to be released from the Jim Henson stable in the 1980s (*The Muppets Take Manhattan* was produced by Henson in 1984, but directed by Frank Oz). Unlike *Dark Crystal*, *Labyrinth* featured human actors as well as puppets, most notably David Bowie as the Goblin King. On its initial release, practically all of the reviews of *Labyrinth* were negative. A short preview in *American Film* claimed the film possessed all the ingredients of a "summer fantasy flick with blockbuster potential",[cxc] though from the way the writer discusses the cast and crew as assets (rather than mentioning actual thematic or visual elements), it seems unlikely that he or she had actually seen the film. As with *Dark Crystal*, critics tended to praise the visual style and criticise the film's themes and storyline. Dennis Fischer for the *Hollywood Reporter* described the film as "visually rich", but suggested that the one-dimensional personality of the puppet characters "causes their charm to pall".[cxci] Likewise, *Variety* commented that the "characters created by Henson and his team are terminally cute with no real charm or texture to capture the imagination".[cxcii] *Films and Filming*'s review was even more scathing, with George Robert Kimball declaring the film to be: "Tedious, threadbare, seen-it-all-before".[cxciii]

The Monthly Film Bulletin (*MFB*) offered a kinder assessment of the film, though reviewer Philip Strick observed that there were flaws in the narrative, he concluded that: "In general, Labyrinth works at the mildly self-mocking level selected by Bowie for his own performance".[cxciv] Strick, as well as a number of other reviewers, noted a number of other books and stories that appear to have influenced *Labyrinth*. Most cited of these is *Wizard of Oz*, by *MFB*, *Variety* and *City Limits*. Critics observed a parallel between Dorothy and Sarah in *Labyrinth*, with *Variety* commenting that:

"From the start, story seems to be shooting for a "Wizard of Oz" and "Alice in Wonderland" feeling, but soon loses its way and never comes close to archetypal myths and fears of great fairy tales".[cxcv] The term 'fairy tale' is used in a number of the other reviews, with Anne Billson noting the link between this form and the penchant for replication. "Fairy tales tend to recycle themselves quite naturally," she writes, "and there can be few entertainments for teenies which do not filch from classics".[cxcvi] In addition to the 'fairy tale' tag, *Labyrinth* is also described as a "coming of age saga",[cxcvii] a "rites-of-passage fairytale",[cxcviii] and a "getting-of-wisdom adventure",[cxcix] all of which is indicative of how quick critics were to spot oft-used storylines.

Many reviewers called *Labyrinth* a `fantasy`. Fischer suggested that the slightness of *Labyrinth*'s story "will cause any but the most fervent of fantasy fan to consider wending their way through some other film instead".[cc] In his article about the cinematography in *Labyrinth* and *Legend*, Ron Magid observed the emergence of new fantasy-film cycle: "Like a sleeping dragon, the fantasy genre has lain dormant for over a year, as if under a strange enchantment after the poor reception afforded such films as The NeverEnding Story and Return to Oz", he wrote. Though little was made in reviews of the fact that George Lucas produced *Labyrinth*, Kimball claimed that Steven Spielberg was to blame for the "spate of pint-sized glorps and dinkies we've been subjected to over the last several years". He suggested that, with *Labyrinth*, "Hollywood has decided that we are all suffering from terminal nostalgia for the lost wonder of childhood".[cci] Thus it seems that critics were well aware of the emergence of a cycle. As well as the fantasy categorisation, *Labyrinth* was also considered "family fare",[ccii] and in the "Kids" grouping in a later DVD review.[cciii] The DVD reviews of *Labyrinth* offer far more favourable opinions of the film. Ian Freer observes that the film was "much maligned on its original release, yet from this vantage point, looks energetic fun and

endlessly imaginative".[cciv] This is the most overt suggestion yet of a latter appreciation of 1980s fantasy films. Mark Dinning concurs with this view, stating that the film is "Episodic but rousing, wholesome fun all the same".[ccv] The four stars he awards the film are in stark contrast to the lowly one offered by George Robert Kimball fourteen years earlier.

Legend was originally set for release in the United States in the summer before *Labyrinth*. However, following "extensive revisions",[ccvi] the film was eventually released in the UK for Christmas 1985 and in the following Spring in North America. Like *Labyrinth*, *Legend* was perceived to be strong on effects, but weak in storyline. As Kim Newman put it: "the film suffers so much from an over-emphasis on details at the expense of the actual story that it becomes a plodding bore".[ccvii] Most critics remarked on the lightweight nature of the premise, which was variously described as "alarmingly thin",[ccviii] "paper-thin",[ccix] and "weak".[ccx] Most critics, however, praised Tim Curry's performance as the Lord of Darkness. (*Variety* wrote that he was "a spectacularly satisfying Satan",[ccxi] *City Limits* that he was suggested that he was "the best thing on show".[ccxii]) In addition, there was considerable *Legend*'s visual style, with Alan Jones asserting that the film offered a "rich spectacular depiction of everyone's dream of what the perfect fairy-tale should look like".[ccxiii] Dennis Fischer continued the plaudits, stating that "The look of the production is one of the most handsome ever bestowed on a fantasy film and deserves high praise for the crew that worked on it".[ccxiv]

Legend was classified as a fantasy film or a fairy-tale by most of its reviewers. Other generic terms such as "magical fable" were also used.[ccxv] A number of the reviewers remarked on the fact the film appeared to be aimed at children. Matheson, for

example, commented that "This is a kids film, of course, but that doesn't mean they'll enjoy it very much".[ccxvi] Several critics cited a number of possible influences, among them *Beowolf* to *Star Wars*.[ccxvii] Ridley Scott himself admitted that he took the "Disney route" when making the film, as it was intended for children: "Having visual references to Snow White, Fantasia and especially Pinocchio were clear cut decisions by me. This visual interest was necessary to carry the basic simplistic story."[ccxviii] Thus it is perhaps not surprising that critics were so ready to comment upon the rudimentary premise, when the director himself revealed that this was intentional. Despite the apparent imperfections in the narrative, however, *Legend* was considered by some to occupy a significant position within the genre of the mid-1980s. Alan Jones suggested that: "Redefining the fantasy genres may be Ridley Scott's only true forte. Legend… has the feel, texture and sensibility of fairy tales far beyond other recent offerings like Ladyhawke and Dragonslayer. Despite the film's many flaws, for that we should be grateful".[ccxix] Indeed, an *Empire* DVD review of the film did not seem to be as dismissive as earlier reviews, describing the film as "beguiling, if flawed".[ccxx] Along with *Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth*, *Legend* was perceived as marking the emergence of a cycle of fantasy or fairy tale films aimed at a young audience, often acclaimed for their visual attributes, though often also criticised for a lack of narrative substance.

Willow was received with similar disdain. Much was made of the fact that George Lucas wrote the story for the film (less was said about Ron Howard's direction). *Variety* observed that "Ron Howard directed, but only Lucasness shows up on the screen, particularly towards the end when the special effects start to come on at full bore".[ccxxi] In addition, Kim Newman criticised the "terrible dialogue",[ccxxii] and Harry McCracken lamented that: "For a story that is said to have ripened in George Lucas' mind for more than a decade, `Willow` is an unaccountably shallow and derivative fairy

tale".[ccxxiii] Duane Byrge, meanwhile, found the film "relentlessly flat".[ccxxiv] Once more, critics saw the film as appealing to a young (or younger) audience. Alan Jones remarked that: "I'm sure the under tens will lap up Lucas' worn-out premise with frightened and expected glee", [ccxxv] though Brian Baxter saw the film as appealing specifically to fans of fantasy genre: "If you enjoy fantasy, fairly spectacular adventure and a series of uninvolving chases and fights then Willow may be just for you".[ccxxvi] Here Baxter seemed to be insinuating that this particular brand of fantasy lacked mass appeal. However, while most reviews were negative, there was praise, once again, for the film's technical aspects. Byrge, for example, drew attention to what he called its "distinguished" production design.[ccxxvii] However, only one of the reviewers was really positive: Mark Sanderson asserted that *Willow* "may be just 'Star Wars' in furs but it's still a great Christmas movie".[ccxxviii]

Other critics referred not only to *Star Wars*, but to a number other films and books. Allen Malmquist observed that: "It's a shame really that the Star Wars/Willow parallels are so glaring, since the fantasy realm – even this subset of the epic struggle between good and evil – can be conjured in a wide variety of forms".[ccxxix] McCracken viewed the *Star Wars* influence in far more stinging terms, commenting that: "With Willow, Lucas ventures into a genre pioneered by Steven Spielberg with movies like Gremlins and Batteries Not Included: the mediocre self-imitation".[ccxxx] *Variety* mentioned other influences, among them *The Hobbit*, *Wizard of Oz* and even the Moses story,[ccxxxi] whilst Julian Petley argued that: "With its magpie borrowings from mythologies old and new, ` Willow` is a fantasy for the post-modern age".[ccxxxii] The film was categorised as fantasy or fairytale by many of the reviews, with Frederick S. Clarke showing disdain for the "overt fantasy motifs" such as the flying pixies.[ccxxxiii] *Willow* appeared to fit into the "slight of story, aimed-at-kids, fairytale fantasy of

Labyrinth and co", and was thus critically mauled on release, and it is worth noting that a lot of the blame for its flaws seems to be aimed squarely at Lucas rather than Howard. McCracken's comments about Spielberg's productions suggest that for some at least, both Spielberg and Lucas were by no means always held in high regard.

The reviews of *Return to Oz*, the long awaited follow-up to *The Wizard of Oz*, tended to focus on the differences between the two films.[ccxxxiv] Most critics noted the difference in tone. Duane Byrge, for example, commented that: "Walter Murch has set the film's tone several shades darker than the original "Oz"".[ccxxxv] Anne Billson saw the differences between the two as a failing for *Return*, arguing that: "Without musical numbers, the narrative seems a perilously thin journey-with-no-particular-purpose, and there are no characters with the appeal of the Scarecrow, Tin Man or Cowardly Lion".[ccxxxvi] Nevertheless, most reviewers were positive. Kim Newman declared that the film is "almost an unalloyed delight",[ccxxxvii] whilst Tom Milne concluded that *Return to Oz* was: "On the whole, a perhaps surprisingly worthy successor to The Wizard of Oz".[ccxxxviii] Moreover, Vanessa Miles praised the film's story, which she suggested "works surprisingly well".[ccxxxix] There was additional praise for the special effects, in particular the revolutionary 'Claymation' techniques, which were described as "a wonderful touch".[ccxl] *Return to Oz* received its fair share of criticism, however, with Harry McCracken describing it as "unsatisfying",[ccxli] and Byrge lamenting that: "there is little sparkle or zest".[ccxlii]

Critics were divided on the subject of Dorothy's sidekicks. Whilst Billson found them unappealing, others saw them as bringing the narrative up to date. Miles observed that "although some new characters have been introduced to suit the more sophisticated

audiences of the Eighties, they still manage to retain that certain quaintness and charm of the original".[ccxliii] Milne believed that some of Dorothy's companions lead "the film into less welcome echoes of Star Wars", [ccxliv] whereas Byrge, contradictorily states; "In this "Star Wars" age, these sidekicks are a surprisingly pedestrian crew".[ccxlv] Most critics described *Return to Oz* as a 'fantasy'. However unlike the films previously discussed, there is some uncertainty as to who the film was aimed at. Newman claimed that "there is more than enough magic, monstrosity, and humour to keep children and adults entered",[ccxlvi] but Byrge thought that: "Young viewers may be frightened and soured by the film's generally grim tone".[ccxlvii] *Variety* noted that "it's difficult to pinpoint the audience for which this rendition was made", [ccxlviii] but Jones seems more certain, suggesting that: "The Disney hope is to grab all possible markets".[ccxlix] Not much was made of the fact that *Return to Oz* was a Disney film. However, when Disney's involvement was noted, reviewers were usually somewhat scornful. Milne, for example, remarked that the film "mercifully" avoided the "Disney stock-in-trade of whimsy".[ccl]

The Princess Bride (1987) opened to almost unanimous critical acclaim on its release in the Autumn of 1987 in the US and the following Spring in Britain. Critics praised various aspects of the production, including the acting, photography and the action sequences. Unusually, its themes, dialogue, story-line and tone were often praised as well. Thus Vanessa Miles wrote that: "The Princess Bride manages to make fun of every cliché in the book while at the same time telling a compelling story".[ccli] Duane Byrge concurred, remarking that the film "is graced with a kingdom full of witty and breezy lines".[cclii] *Variety* was the only publication to offer a detrimental review of the film, labelling it an "Unsuccessful fairy-tale sendup" [ccliii] and "a tedious tale almost totally lacking in momentum and magic".[ccliv] Nevertheless, along with *E.T.*, *The*

Princess Bride received some of the most enthusiastic reviews of those films considered thus far, though this may well be because it spoofed a genre which many critics were unenthusiastic about: the fantasy film. A number of critics praised the film for its *lack* of special effects. Miles, for example, wrote that: "One sometimes has the impression that movie-makers feel duty bound to put in as many 'tricks' as possible just in case anyone notices what a lousy story it is".[cclv] Clearly a dig at previous 1980s fantasy films, Anne Billson went one further by naming names. As well as praising *Princess Bride* for utilising minimal special effects, "unlike other recent fantasies such as Legend", she asserted that the down to earth way in which fantastic elements were treated is "unusual in these days of determinedly awe-inspiring phenomena from the Steven Spielberg stable".[cclvi] Critics used various different terms with which to classify *Princess Bride*, among them "fairy tale-cum-swashbuckler",[cclvii] "fairytale pastiche",[cclviii] "spoof",[cclix] and "grown-up, tongue-in-cheek fantasy adventure".[cclx] Byrge acknowledged the difficulty in categorising the film, observing that "it defies pigeonholing… "Princess Bride" will be a challenge for 20th Century-Fox's marketing department – it's an adults' film in children's garb".[cclxi] Not only does this comment reveal something about the film itself, it also indicates how at least some critics in the mid-1980s felt about the Hollywood and what they perceived to be its principal target audience.

Although the film was not a commercial success, the critical acclaim it received continued in subsequent reviews and articles. In a DVD review, Danny Leigh asserts that the film "still represents one of the high points of US comedy in the 1980s".[cclxii] The fact that he calls the film a comedy rather than a fantasy or a hybrid is telling: `comedy` is perhaps more worthy of respect (or less restrictive) than `fantasy`, while its appeal to adults as well as children is noted in an Andrew Collins article in *Radio*

Times. "The idea", he writes, "was that the magical adventure would entertain the kids, while adults would revel in the Pythonesque archness".[cclxiii] Thus it seems there are a number of elements that contributed to *Princess Bride*'s critical success. Whilst it is clear that its mass-appeal, robust script and action sequences all had their part to play, critics really seemed to relish the fact that it was an effective spoof of a much maligned genre. Hence the following comments in *Variety*'s review: "it's a post-modern fairy tale that challenges and affirms the conventions of a genre that may not be flexible enough to support such horseplay".[cclxiv]

Masters of the Universe (1987) opened in the Summer of 1987 in the US and around Christmas in the UK. The film was criticised by almost every reviewer, for a number of reasons. Firstly the acting was considered poor by most of the reviewers, with Newman, for example, calling Lundgren's performance "lifeless".[cclxv] The storyline and script were also aspects disliked by critics: Jeffrey Ressner called them "ludicrous"[cclxvi] Unlike some of the films discussed above, even the effects used in *Masters of the Universe* were criticised. Mark Sanderson, for example, wrote that "the effects are neither special nor camp enough to be vaguely amusing".[cclxvii] In fact Alan Jones' preview was the only one that had positive comments to make about the film. He observed that whilst there are flaws in the production, there was "never a dull moment",[cclxviii] though this was in stark contrast to *Variety*'s description of the film as "a colossal bore".[cclxix] However, perhaps the most prominent criticism evident in most of the reviews was the film's derivative nature: unlike the reviews of some of the previous films, *Masters of the Universe* was seen largely as a poor imitation of previously successful fantasy and science-fiction films.

Among the films that reviewers claimed were copied were *Star Wars*, *Superman*, *Conan the Barbarian* (1982) and even *Back to the Future*. Newman commented that "When you've got fed-up playing spot-the-rip-off… there's not much to hold your interest".[cclxx] Ressner noted the influence of *Star Wars*, suggesting that *Masters* borrowed "the theme music and galactic goofiness" from George Lucas' film.[cclxxi] Vanessa Miles disagreed, proposing rather that "the music sounds uncannily like the theme from Superman".[cclxxii] Jones also concurs with the various cinematic influences on *Masters of the Universe*, claiming it features "culture clash humour in the Back to the Future vein".[cclxxiii] The critics fluctuate slightly in the way they classify the film, *Variety* calls it a "fantasy epic",[cclxxiv] whereas Newman describes it as "an epic space fantasy adventure".[cclxxv] Jones suggests it contains "plenty of inspired fantasy touches to satisfy all but the hardened sci-fi lovers",[cclxxvi] while a later DVD review labels the film "a juvenile Sci-Fi romp".[cclxxvii] Thus there seems to be a marked difference between sci-fi and fantasy; presumably the space setting of the film entails that it could be categorised as science fiction.

A number of the reviewers mention the fact that the film was based on an original toy line by Mattel and the subsequent spin-off cartoon. Noting that the target audience for the film is therefore young children, many of the reviewers comment on this fact. *Variety* suggests "the tedium will be lost on 5-9 year old "Masters" fans"[cclxxviii] and Ressner remarks that the film "will likely bore adults but have the kiddies clamouring for more".[cclxxix] Miles concurs with this, limiting the appeal to very young children: "Gary Goddard's film will undoubtedly appeal to younger children but those brought up on a richer diet of Star Wars and The Empire Strikes Back might find it slightly lacking".[cclxxx] In Miles' opinion at least, the film is no match for earlier efforts in the genre. It appears that the stick which is used to beat *Masters of the Universe* the

most is not the ineffective elements of the film; rather it is the fact that its influences are so obvious to the critics, that they cannot seem to help but compare it to its more successful predecessors.

Like *Masters of the Universe*, *Santa Claus* (US promotional title, *Santa Clause: The Movie*), also opened to negative reviews on its release at Christmas 1985. Most critics struggled to find positives things to say about the film; one deemed it "almost sheer unexpurgated torture".[cclxxxi] Sally Hibbin was slightly kinder, suggesting "the film never quite plumbs the depths of slushy sentimentality that it easily could", though she does admit that "it is too predictable to be a real success".[cclxxxii] Reviewers found fault with various elements of the production, though once again, it was the narrative aspects that were slated first and foremost. Duane Byrge, for example, wrote that "It's simply clumsy storytelling, and not enlivened by David Newman's flat and unmagical script".[cclxxxiii] Other critics, however, found other aspects of the film to praise. *Variety*, for example, suggested that the film was let down by its length, but praised its opening scenes for their "charming attitude, lovely special effects and a magical feeling that the audience may indeed be settling down for a warm winter's eve",[cclxxxiv] though the film was a critical failure. A particular bone of contention was the film's use of product placement. Several reviewers found this too obvious, to the point of being a distraction. Nigel Matheson complained about the "blatant plugs for Coke and McDonalds",[cclxxxv] whilst Byrge suggested that "`Santa Claus: The Movie` shall surely warm the hearts of all those around the world for whom the spirit of Christmas is product placement".[cclxxxvi]

Speaking about the film, director Jeannot Szwarc revealed that "All my life I've wanted to make a pure classical fairytale".[cclxxxvii] Critics, however, seemed reluctant to

classify the film as either a fantasy or a fairytale, and Byrge compared it unfavourably to *It's a Wonderful Life*: "No Capra-like glow warms the ending to this targeted-for-the-world production".[cclxxxviii] This is indicative that the film was seen less as a straightforward fantasy, and more as a film with contained fantasy elements. Newman, meanwhile, compared the film with those made by more renowned filmmakers, claiming that *Santa Claus* was "pathetically outdated". "The Habitat-style toys on view here", he wrote "can hardly be expected to have much appeal in an age of `Star Wars`, video games and the Care Bears, nor will the grandfatherly benevolence of the title character cut much ice with children whose cinematic tastes have been shaped by Lucas and Spielberg".[cclxxxix] Thus it seems that although critics readily pan the productions of Spielberg and Lucas, they are as quick to acknowledge their impact on modern culture. Unsurprisingly, reviewers saw children as *Santa Clause*'s target audience. Although none of them used 'Children's film' as a category, they all noted that the film was aimed mainly at children or families,[ccxc] though Hibbin suggested that the film was not sufficiently sophisticated to appeal to contemporary children: "I suspect that even toddlers are more sophisticated in their film expectations nowdays", she wrote.[ccxci] *Time Out* was even more cutting with regards to this aspect, declaring that: "After the Christmas hostilities when you are finally sick to death of the little beasts, get your revenge. Pack them off to this".[ccxcii] A later DVD review regards *Santa Claus* as having some appealing features for children; "For kids, there's still much to enjoy, but it looks incredibly dated, the flying effects old hat even in the mid '80s".[ccxciii] Thus it seems that not all fantasy or fantasy-related films were considered in a more positive light by later reviewers.

Scrooged (1988) was another eighties Christmas film, this time a modern update of the Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*. It opened to more favourable reviews than

Santa Claus, though not all were impressed by the film. *Variety* was unconvinced, declaring that: "`Scrooged` is an appallingly unfunny comedy".[ccxciv] Less harsh but still unenthusiastic was Alan Jones, who described the film as a "disposable novelty item" and who claimed that the screenplay is not "half as funny as Murray thinks it is".[ccxcv] Others were more taken with the film. John Pym asserted that "`Scrooged` is unlikely to disappoint: the plot, of course, is fireproof and the film-makers' tone spot on",[ccxcvi] though some had mixed opinions: Brian Case described it as "Rowdy stuff for the light in head",[ccxcvii] and Amanda Lipman wrote that "although it starts brilliantly with an assortment of ludicrously over the top TV trailer satires... by the end it's turned into precisely the sentimental singalong shebang it was originally making fun of".[ccxcviii] Dan Scapperotti concurred: "The opening scenes are hilarious. The closing scenes are embarrassing", he wrote.[ccxcix] Nevertheless, compared to some of the films previously discussed, *Scrooged* faired quite well in its critical assessment.

Later reviews of the DVD were similarly mixed. Danny Leigh suggested that *Scrooged* "holds up well visually… even if its recasting of `A Christmas Carol` to contemporary corporate America seems flabby and dated".[ccc] But Nikki Baughan rated the film as the eighth-best Christmas movie in her 2005 poll of festive films. She writes that of all the many versions of the Dickens' classic, *Scrooged* "is perhaps the most inspired, striking a chord particularly for modern audiences… It's become an absolute Christmas must see in its own right". Although films such as *Labyrinth* have been considered more generously in recent times, this is perhaps the clearest instance of positive reconsideration of an unsuccessful 1980s fantasy film. (Though whether it can be classified as `fantasy` is perhaps a debatable matter: most reviewers described the film as a comedy; there was very little reference to its supernatural elements, though,

like the novel, the film is essentially a ghost story and thus could considered to inhabit the realms of the fantastic).

On its release, *Ghost Busters* received mixed reviews, though by and large they were far more positive than nearly all those discussed so far. Some underestimated the box-office potential of the movie, which went on to become the biggest grossing comedy at the time.[ccci] *Variety*, for example, described the film as "only intermittently impressive", and believed the film would have "good but not smash b.o." returns.[cccii] Richard Gertner, likewise, was not overly impressed, claiming that that special effects drowned out the humour, and that: "The actors are upstaged every time".[ccciii] Others, however, were more impressed. Mike Bygrave called the effects "truly outstanding",[ccciv] while Philip Strick called it lamented "a great, goofy, gorgeous treat that deserves to be savoured for a long, long time".[cccv] It appears that Strick got his wish, as the film has enjoyed enduring success. Later DVD reviews and articles have been almost wholly positive, although it is conceivable that subsequent critics have been influenced by the film's enormous success with audiences. It ranked at number 56 in a 2006 *Empire* greatest films poll,[cccvi] and *Starburst* placed the film at number three in their list of "Top Ten Comedy Horrors".[cccvii] A 2000 *Empire* DVD review described the film as "the top blockbusting action-comedy of the '80s",[cccviii] whilst numerous other reviews gave the film top ratings. However, although *Ghost Busters* seems secure in its meeting of critical approval, the film's generic classification appears less clear cut.

Ghost Busters was predominantly described as a comedy film on its release. *Variety* called the film a "comedy lampoon of supernatural horror films";[cccix] whilst *Film Comment* noted that it marked the first time special effects were used "solely for

comedic purposes".[cccx] Most critics categorised the film as a comedy first and foremost.[cccxi] Others, however, did emphasise the film's more fantastic elements, with Arthur Knight branding it "a ghost story that combines action adventure with comedy and high-tech special effects". Kim Newman, indeed, speculated that the reason that *Ghost Busters* worked so well was because of its "successful mixture" of comedy, special effects and the supernatural.[cccxii] This opinion seems to be bolstered by the fact that even actor and co-writer Dan Aykroyd described film as a generic hybrid, calling it a "paranormal adventure fantasy comedy".[cccxiii] Nevertheless, it is understandable that most critics at the time plumped for the comedic classification, if only because the film's press kit declared that: "First and foremost, [Ghost Busters] must succeed as a comedy".[cccxiv] Later critics even described the film as a fantasy, perhaps signalling a greater acceptance of the genre as a legitimised form. *Ghost Busters* was described as a "comedy-fantasy blockbuster" by *Sight and Sound*,[cccxv] as well as a "timeless fantasy" in a *Starburst* DVD review.[cccxvi]

The film's sequel, however, was neither as financially nor as critically successful as the original. *Ghostbusters II* (1989) did receive some promising reviews, with Alan Jones describing it as enjoyable, despite the "negligible story".[cccxvii] But most critics found it lacklustre by comparison with the original: Jeremy Clarke, for example, called it a "tired retread of a former good idea".[cccxviii] Nevertheless, despite their antipathy, critics seemed to think that it would be a money-spinner. Kirk Honeycutt claimed that "this long-anticipated sequel will undoubtedly resurrect the huge boxoffice returns of the original ghostly comedy",[cccxix] whilst *Premiere* asserted that a big opening for the film "seems assured".[cccxx] In this way, contemporary reviewers acknowledged the appeal of sequels and the regularity with which they were made. Patrick Goldstein wrote that: "Almost all Hollywood moguls are sequel crazy these days… With their

brand-name titles, familiar faces and easily recognisable storylines, sequels are box office studs".[cccxxi]

Reviewers of *Ghostbusters II* made fewer attempts to define it generically. However, they were more prepared to write about its target audience (an aspect that was not really touched on in the reviews of the original). *Variety*, for example, suggested that film would appeal to both adults and children, stating that the film was "baby-boomer silliness as opposed to the juvenile silliness of the original".[cccxxii] Nonetheless, some argued whether *Ghostbusters II* was successful in obtaining its target audience. In a latter article, Tony Crawley questions this, claiming that the film "was turned down by the tiny-tots it appeared to be made for".[cccxxiii] In spite of the film not being as commercially or critically successful as *Ghost Busters*, the film was a big hit, a testament perhaps to the power of the 1980s sequel. Although critics did not cite as many influences as some of the previously discussed films, *Ghost Busters* was compared to *Gremlins*,[cccxxiv] and described as being "as slick" as Spielberg's productions.[cccxxv] Thus, whilst a number of critics were all to ready to pan Steven Spielberg, most did see his productions as a benchmark to which others in the same genre could be measured against.

The *Back to the Future* films were Spielberg productions, although they were all directed by Robert Zemeckis. *Back to the Future* itself was the biggest-grossing film of 1985 and received universally positive reviews. George Robert Kimball's review summed up the general consensus. "`Back to the Future`", he wrote, "is as exciting, as entertaining, and in some respects at least as thoughtful a film of its kind as you could ever ask for".[cccxxvi] Critics were not as impressed by the 1989: *Back to the Future Part*

II received very mixed reviews. Many found the plot confusing, with *Variety* describing it as: "Too clever and intricate for its own good".[cccxxvii] Alan Jones bucked the trend by praising the storyline, arguing that: "The intelligent demands it makes on its audience is a very welcome change indeed".[cccxxviii] But the trend was negative: Tim Pulleine wrote that: "The 'open' ending… feels more like a cheat, compounded by the tagging of what amounts to a trailer for the forthcoming (if now none too eagerly awaited) third instalment".[cccxxix] *Back to the Future Part III* (1990), however, received more positive reviews. *Variety* described it as "an alloyed delight",[cccxxx] whilst the *MFB* declared that "this is an accomplished conclusion to an eventful and imaginative series".[cccxxxi] Many critics found *Part II* lacking in emotional feeling, but this was not case with *Part III.* Kim Newman wrote that "Part III, which is slightly less fleet of foot, restores the heart interest of the first film, and has a satisfyingly complete storyline".[cccxxxii] Despite a certain level of antipathy towards *Part II*, the trilogy was held in great regard in later reviews and articles. It ranked at number twenty-four on a *Starburst* countdown of the best science fiction films,[cccxxxiii] as well as garnering top ratings in a number of DVD reviews.[cccxxxiv] Even the much-maligned *Part II* won later recognition: *Starburst* ranked the film at number eight in its list of the best genre sequels.[cccxxxv]

Rather than one dominant classification, critics tended to describe the *Back to the Future* films as belonging to a number of genres. Some reviewers refer to the film's narrative as a category rather than a more traditional genre; *Variety*, for example, calls it a "time-travel odyssey".[cccxxxvi] A later *Starburst* issue, which features a whole section on time-travel films, states; "The movie's attitudes may reek of the '80s but it remains for many the quintessential time travel movie based on an original source".[cccxxxvii] Thus it seems critics were comfortable using non-traditional generic terminology in describing the films; a number of reviews did not classify the films as belonging to a genre at all.

Others describe the films as generic hybrids rather than deciding solely on one classification. Amongst the descriptions of the films are "comic adventure",[cccxxxviii] "time travel adventure",[cccxxxix] and "SF fantasies".[cccxl] But perhaps these amalgamations are hardly surprising considering the director himself refers to so many genres when describing the films. ""Back to the Future is a comedy-adventure-science-speculation-coming-of-age-rock-and-roll-time-travel-period film" laughs Zemeckis, "about combination of every film genre"".[cccxli] Additionally, many reviewers refer to *Part III* as a parody of the western genre. *Variety* states the film has "fun with the conventions of the genre", [cccxlii] although Zemeckis himself states; "Back to the Future III isn't a western. It's a film about time travel".[cccxliii] Reviewers for all three films felt less inclined to compare them to previous movies, with the exception of Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*.[cccxliv]

In the various reviews and articles about the *Back to the Future* trilogy, much is made of the fact that Steven Spielberg acted as executive producer. Rather than focus on Zemeckis, many critics highlighted the film as being in the recognisable Spielberg mould. Ian Freer wrote that: "In many ways, `Back to the Future` is the archetypal Steven Spielberg movie: a feel-good suburban fable laced with high adventure and low comedy, all wrapped up in an enchanting fantasy of parental reconciliation".[cccxlv] Added to this is the use of the term 'Spielbergian', which was not used in articles about *E.T.* or *Back to the Future*, but which had come into effect by the time *Part II* was released. Geoff Andrew stated that *Part II* "never degenerates into Spielbergian sentimentality";[cccxlvi] whilst Jonathon Romney suggested that "product awareness is what the self-referential Spielbergian mode is all about".[cccxlvii] By the late 1980s, it therefore seems that there was a set of identifiable conventions attributed to the films directed and produced by Spielberg. As previously noted, many of the reviews and

articles about the fantasy films discussed here were marked by negative opinions about the work of Spielberg and Lucas. The reasons are unclear, but it seems to be because their films were seen as formulaic in their productions.

A number of other conclusions can be drawn from the critical reception of the 1980s fantasy films. Many of the films received poor reviews. Although they may not have been big financial successes either, some high profile films, such as *Willow*, were almost unanimously panned. It was also noticeable that a number of films were given much more favourable reviews in articles written later: *Labyrinth* and *Scrooged*, for instance, seemed to be greeted with an appreciation that was not evident originally. Additionally, some publications appeared by and large to be much harsher than others. *Variety* consistently offered negative reviews of fantasy films, while *Starburst* was far more generous. On the whole, hybrid films were viewed more sympathetically than fantasy films per se. *Back to the Future* and *Ghost Busters* received many more positive reviews than *Legend* and *Dark Crystal*. In the reviews of hybrid films, critics tended to focus upon more traditionally acceptable generic aspects rather than the fantastic elements. *E.T.* was an adventure film, *Princess Bride* a spoof and *Ghost Busters* a comedy. All these films could equally be classified as fantasy, but critics seemed to prefer classing them in more established, and thus perhaps more respectable, genres. It was also interesting to note that many critics recognised certain films as belonging to a cycle. In the case of sequels this is self-explanatory, but reviewers also grouped films such as *Labyrinth*, *Willow* and *Legend* together by referring to them in their respective review. Whilst it easy to note similarities in retrospect, critics at the time did pick up on current trends, revealing that the fantasy cycle was evident at the time. Finally, a small number of films made before the 1980s were cited as influences on several of the films discussed. *Wizard of Oz*, *Star Wars* and *It's a Wonderful Life* were all mentioned

frequently by reviewers. This is perhaps revealing of the fact that there were not many successful fantasy films in the period prior to the 1980s. Critics referred back to these particular films because they were felt to be particularly influential. As this chapter has revealed, reviewers and critics readily discussed fantasy films, despite a reluctance to categorise these films as belonging to the fantasy genre. Whilst the term ‘fantasy’ was used in reviews, critics did not make a connection between films at the ends of the fantasy spectrum. Films with science-fiction elements were not considered in the same scope of fairytale films, for example. Nevertheless, critical classifications of fantasy films are significant, owing to the lack of academic discourse in this area.

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[cxxxviii] Ron Pennington, 'Movie Reviews: Star Wars', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 246, 33, 20 May 1977, p. 3, 27
[cxxxix] David Castell, 'Review: Star Wars', *Films Illustrated*, 7, 77, January 1978, p. 69
[cxl] Anonymous, 'Review: The Empire Strikes Back', *Variety*, 14 May 1980, p. 14
[cxli] Arthur Knight, 'Movie Review: The Empire Strikes Back', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 261, 36, 12 May 1980, p. 8
[cxlii] John Sladek, 'Return of the Teddies', *Time Out*, 667, 3 June 1983, p. 17
[cxliii] Fiona Ferguson, 'New Releases: Return of the Jedi', *City Limits*, 87, 3 June 1983, p. 24
[cxliv] Richard Gertner, 'Review: Return of the Jedi' *Motion Picture Product Digest*, 10, 25, 1 June 1983), p. 97
[cxlv] Jane Morgan, 'Film Reviews: Star Wars', *Films in Review*, 28, 7, August/September 1977, p. 437
[cxlvi] Richard Combs, 'Review: Star Wars', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 44, 526, November 1977, p. 243
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[cxlviii] Scott William Schumack, 'Reviews: Star Wars', *Cinefantastique*, 6, 2, Autumn 1977, p. 22
[cxlix] J.G. Ballard, 'Hobbits in Space?', *Time Out*, 402, 16 December 1977, p. 14
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[cliii] R.D. Laing, 'E.T. on the Couch', *Time Out*, 643, 17 December 1982, p. 33
[cliv] Chris Auty, 'Cinema: New Releases – E.T. – The Extra-Terrestrial', *City Limits*, 62, 10 December 1982, p. 26
[clv] E.T. was the highest earning film of 1982, taking $187 million in rentals at the US box office. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1982', *Variety*, 12 January 1983, p. 13
[clvi] Whilst *Monthly Film Bulletin* commented that Spielberg had obliterated the film with "the ethic of Disney", another journalist wrote a short piece stating why he was not a fan of the film, citing its sentimentality as the major discredit. Richard Combs, 'Review: E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 49, 587, December 1982, p. 282, Tim Lucas, 'Why I Don't Love E.T.', *Cinefantastique*, 13, 2, November 1982, p. 16
[clvii] Gertner, ibid. p. 6
[clviii] Joan Goodman and David Pirie, 'Steven Spielberg: Suburban Spaceman', *Time Out*, 627, 27 August 1982, p. 11
[clix] David J. Hogan, 'Review: E.T.', *Cinefantastique*, 13, 1, September 1982, p. 52
[clx] Joss Marsh, 'Babes in the Woods', *Stills*, 1, 5, 1982, p. 80
[clxi] *Variety*, 'Review: E.T., The Extra-Terrestrial', ibid. p. 14
[clxii] Ian Freer, 'RWD: E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial Special Edition', *Empire*, 162, December 2002, p. 168
[clxiii] Martin Kent, 'Movie Review: E.T., The Extra-Terrestrial', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 272, 1, 25 May 1982, p. 3
[clxiv] Combs, ibid. p. 283
[clxv] Kent, ibid. p. 3
[clxvi] For example it appears in Combs, ibid p. 283 and in Richard T. Jameson, 'The 1982 Movie Revue: 1 – E.T.', *Film Comment*, 19, 1, January 1983, p. 11
[clxvii] Marsh, ibid. p. 80

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[clxx] Alan Jones, 'The Making of The Dark Crystal', *Starburst*, 55, 1983, p. 27
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[clxxiii] Arthur Knight, 'Film Review: The Dark Crystal', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 274, 43, 17 December 1982, p. 3
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[clxxvii] Allen Malmquist, 'Review: The Dark Crystal', *Cinefantastique*, 13, 4, April 1983, p. 59
[clxxviii] Steve Grant, 'Lord of the Strings', *Time Out*, 650, 4 February 1983, p. 19
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[clxxxii] Jones, 'The Making of The Dark Crystal', ibid. p. 23
[clxxxiii] Knight, ibid. p. 3
[clxxxiv] Variety, ibid. p. 16
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[ccvi] Walter Burns, 'Off Screen', *Time Out*, 789, 3 October 1985, p. 43
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[cccxlii] *Variety*, 'Part III', p. 33
[cccxliii] Quoted in Anonymous, 'Back to the Future Part III', *Starburst*, 143, July 1990, p. 23
[cccxliv] Frederick C. Clarke, 'Back to the Future 2', *Cinefantastique*, 20, 3, January 1990, p. 10
[cccxlv] Ian Freer, 'The Making of Back to the Future', *Empire*, 163, January 2003, p. 184
[cccxlvi] Geoff Andrew, 'Geoff Andrew on Back to the Future Part II', *Time Out*, 1005, 22 November 1989, p. 47

[cccxlvii] Jonathan Romney, 'New Movies: Back to the Future Part II', *City Limits*, 425, 23 November 1989, p. 36

Chapter 3: "Fantasia has no boundaries": The 1980s Fairytale Film

Of the numerous films examined in this thesis, this chapter will look at films best described as fantasy above all other generic categories. Many of the films here are hybrids; however fantasy is definitely the predominant genre. Whilst a film such as *Ghost Busters* can be (and has been) seen to have comedic as well as fantasy characteristics, the films discussed here are primarily fantasy films. As the Review of Reviews chapter illustrated, films such as *Labyrinth* and *Willow* were labelled as fantasy above all else. In the articles and reviews of the films examined in this chapter, writers made connections between them. Thus *Labyrinth* and *Legend* are discussed together in *American Cinematographer*.[cccxlviii] Likewise, in reviews of *Willow*, *Labyrinth* and *Princess Bride* are referred to precisely because of their generic similarities.[cccxlix]

Films such as *Legend* and *The NeverEnding Story* (1984) can be categorised as fairytale films for various reasons. They feature a host of magical elements, such as spells and enchanted creatures and objects. They are set in imagined realms, some in an imagined past such as *The Princess Bride*, others in imagined planets such as *The Dark Crystal*. Finally, the films have endings which see good triumph over evil, giving the hero or heroine a 'happily ever after' ending. Psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim regarded fairytales as being an important part of childhood. He considered fairytales to be enriching when read by young children, and suggested that this type of literature helped the young to understand and solve difficulties. Bettelheim asserted that fairytales "offer new dimensions to the child's imagination which would be impossible for him to discover truly on his own".[cccl] However, he considered this to be true only of fairytales in their original form: "versions such as those on films and TV shows, where fairy tales

are turned into empty-minded entertainment"[cccli] did not have the same effect. Although Bettelheim would not have wanted his ideas applied to cinematic fairytales, there are two main points that can be taken from his study. Firstly, he suggested that fairytales simplify elements such as good and evil, offering clear-cut depictions of both. He wrote that "since polarization dominates the child's mind, it also dominates fairy tales".[ccclii] While the subordinate clause may be debated, Bettelheim does appear to have a point when considering how polarised the hero and the villain are in a film such as *Legend*. Secondly, he noted that fairytales tended to be optimistic. Contrasting fairytales with myths (which he saw as being pessimistic), Bettelheim suggested that events that occur in a fairytale could happen to anyone, despite their improbability. Bettelheim writes that "although the events which occur in fairy tales are unusual and most improbable, they are always presented as ordinary, something that could happen to you or me or the person next door when out on a walk in the woods".[cccliii] Applying this idea to the fairytale films appears less convincing. Characters such as Sarah (Jennifer Connelly) in *Labyrinth* and Willow (Warwick Davis) in the film of the same title can be identified with as ordinary people. Nonetheless, the quests that they each embark on are very personal to their characters. Sarah is pulled into the world of the Goblin King because of her love of fantasy, while Willow is sent on his quest because of his unrealised potential for wizardry. Thus, while these characters appear average at the outset, the incidences that occur to them seem tailored to their individual traits.

Jack Zipes suggests that fairytales should be considered in a socio-historical context, rather than simply as children's stories. Zipes proposes that fairytales were written with the purpose of socialising children. With this in mind, "the individual act of writing the literary fairy tale expressed a certain level of social consciousness and conscience which were related to the standard mode of socialization at that time".[cccliv]

Whilst this does appear an interesting way to examine fairytales (and specifically the meaning of their symbolism), Zipes risks repudiating the oral roots of such tales by focusing on a single version of a tale which may appear in numerous other forms in other cultures. The most useful analysis of fairytales is perhaps Vladimir Propp's. In his examination of the fairytale, Propp identifies thirty-one functions of such stories and seven character types.[cccl v] He asserts that folktales can be categorised by this method. His study has wider implications than simply Russian folktales, as many fantasy films (as well as films in general) also conform to this system. All the films discussed in this chapter conform to Propp's system. Indeed, most films share many of the same functions. The functions that Propp identifies refer to the type of incident that takes place in the narrative and the order of events. By deconstructing stories in this way, texts can be reduced to a simple equation, where each letter, number and symbol refers to an incident, the introduction of a character or a shift in the narrative. Propp uses the example of "The Swan-Geese" to illustrate his method.[cccl vi] In reducing an entire tale to its narrative functions, he demonstrates how similar the basic structure of folktales and fairytales are.

The films discussed in this chapter share many of the same characteristics. Employing Propp's system to examine the films, it is clear their narrative structures are very similar. As this chapter shall reveal, some of the films share the exact same functions. For example, the A1 function refers to the villain abducting someone. Propp offers the cases of a dragon kidnapping a tsar's or a peasant's daughter, a witch kidnapping a boy, or older brothers kidnapping the bride of a younger brother as examples of this function.[cccl vii] In the 1980s fairytale film kidnap can come in the form of a Goblin King kidnapping a baby or three villains kidnapping a bride-to-be. Although all the films are different in terms of settings, visual style and script, they appear

remarkably similar when reduced to narrative functions. Propp's system can be applied beyond this sub-genre to many of the films discussed in this thesis. In addition to adhering to the same or similar functions as identified by Propp, these films are grouped together because of other characteristics. It can be argued that 1987's *Mannequin* is as much a fairytale as *The Dark Crystal*. *Mannequin*'s plot, after all, revolves around an inanimate object coming to life, not unlike the one of the most seminal of fairytales, *Pinocchio*. What separates these fairytale films from other fantasy films (and what links this group of films together) is their otherworldly settings, their polarisation of good and evil in the characters, and their 'happily ever after' endings. Finally, these 1980s fairytale films depict belief in the whimsical as an entirely positive attribute; having a capacity for imagination is a fundamental aspect of this cycle of films.

Philip Strick observes in his review of *Labyrinth* that rather than discarding her childhood in favour of her newly found maturity, Sarah still clings to the objects of her youth.[ccclviii] He notes that "while sensibly telling her winsome companions that they'll still be necessary to her, Sarah plunges into an orgy of celebration with them in the same unchangingly toy-infested bedroom".[ccclix] I would argue that *Labyrinth* offers the message that in order to mature, whimsical aspects of the childhood do not necessarily need to be left behind. Similarly, the grandson character in *The Princess Bride* has a new appreciation for fairytales by the end of the film. At the very beginning of the film Peter Falk's character goes to visit his sick grandson (Fred Savage), to read him the story of the Princess Bride. The grandson however, is far more interested in playing video games, as he considers fairytales to be old-fashioned and uninteresting. By the end of the story, however, it is clear that he has enjoyed it immensely, asking: "Grandpa, maybe you could come over and read it again to me tomorrow". Thus, these films seem to tell the audience that indulging in the whimsy that the stories provide is

perfectly acceptable. This message is most conspicuous in *The NeverEnding Story*. At the beginning of the film, Bastian (Barret Oliver) is told by his father (Gerald McRaney) that he needs to stop daydreaming and to pay more attention to the real world. Despite this, Bastian is entranced by a book he has borrowed from the bookstore. At the end of *The NeverEnding Story*, it is revealed that it is Bastian's imagination that has saved the world of Fantasia, and that as long as he keeps wishing and believing Fantasia will live on. These films appear to reinforce the need for fantasy in the lives of their protagonists, and in turn their audiences.

Central to fairytale films is the quest narrative that recurs time and time again. Although this type of narrative features frequently in the fantasy genre in general (in addition to other genres) as other writers have noted[ccclx], quests within the fairytale film are so noticeable because they are often referred to overtly. For Propp, it is this function that introduces the hero in the tale, setting in motion the journey that will occupy the majority of the story. In all the films discussed in this chapter, the introduction of the quest appears in one of two ways. In spite of the differences between these films, they all conform to either number eight or number nine of Propp's functions.[ccclxi] Propp's eighth function is in the sphere of the villain, and dictates that the villain causes harm to a member of the family. In the case both of *Labyrinth* and *The Princess Bride*, this takes the form of kidnap, designated as A1 in Propp's categorisation.[ccclxii] After Sarah unwittingly evokes Jarrod the Goblin King (David Bowie) in *Labyrinth*, he kidnaps her baby brother. Similarly, Wesley (Cary Elwes) only enters the action of *The Princess Bride* after Buttercup (Robin Wright) has been kidnapped. The remaining films employ the ninth function: misfortune is made known and the hero is approached with a request or command.[ccclxiii] In *The NeverEnding Story*, for example, this comes in the form of a request from Cairon to Artreyu (known as a great warrior) to embark on a quest to find

a cure for the ailing Childlike Empress (Tami Stronach). *The NeverEnding Story*, as well as *Willow* and *The Dark Crystal*, conform to function B2, which prescribes that the hero is dispatched with a command or request. In *Return to Oz* and *Legend*, the hero in each case responds to news of misfortune without being requested to do so; B4 of Propp's functions.[cclxiv] In *Return to Oz*, Dorothy (Fairuza Balk) must rescue her friend the Scarecrow (Justin Case) from the Gnome King (Nicol Williamson), and restore Oz to its rightful owner. Following a mistake by Lili (Mia Sara) in the film *Legend*, hero Jack (Tom Cruise) takes it upon himself to rescue the maiden and stop the Lord of Darkness (Tim Curry) killing the remaining unicorn.

The quests featured in the fairytale film usually take on an additional significance from the actual task at hand. As the heroes and heroines face obstacles and overcome difficulties, they also learn about themselves. As an offshoot of her quest to save her brother in *Labyrinth*, Sarah also appears to be on a journey to maturity. Throughout the film, she learns that she needs to grow up and understand the importance of responsibility. *Willow* tells the story of the title character's journey to return the baby his children found in the river. Willow's quest, like Sarah's, is clearly a dual mission. Whilst his most obvious task is to protect baby Elora from Queen Bavmorda (Jean Marsh), Willow is also on a more metaphorical quest to become a true sorcerer. At the beginning of the film, he enters a competition in his village to become an apprentice to The High Aldwin (Billy Barty). His hesitancy causes him to fail, a motif that is continued throughout the film with his unsuccessful attempts to return Fin Raziel (Patricia Hayes) to her human form. It is only at the climax of the film that he gains the confidence to use his magical powers effectively, helping to defeat Queen Bavmorda. Thus Willow's quest is both material, in protecting baby Elora, and the

spiritual, in finding the confidence to use his wizardry. Akin to Sarah's journey in *Labyrinth*, Willow's is also a "getting-of-wisdom adventure".[cccl xv]

Like Willow Ufgood, *Dark Crystal*'s Jen also has a mission to accomplish. As the last surviving Gelfling, the responsibility is on Jen's shoulders to find the missing crystal shard in order to restore his planet. And like Willow too, Jen at times doubts his strength and attempts to shy away from his vital quest. This is most apparent in the scene after Jen, Kira and the Podlings are attacked by the Garthim. Frustrated by the attack, and blaming himself for the capture of some of the Podlings, Jen suffers a crisis in confidence and discards the crystal shard. Despite Kira's attempts to console Jen, it is clear he feels responsible for the attack, even though it was not his fault. It is this insecurity that Jen must overcome; this is the spiritual element to his quest. At the climax of the film, Jen rises to the occasion by unifying the shard in the crystal, thus healing the world. In *The NeverEnding Story*, there is a quest function for both Artreyu (Noah Hathaway) in Fantasia and Bastian in the real world. Artreyu is very much portrayed as a fantasy version of Bastian. The boys are of a similar age, and Artreyu often uses the term "we" instead of "I", suggesting that he represents Bastian as well. Living through the character of Artreyu, Bastian is on a metaphorical journey to be at peace with his burgeoning imagination, defying his father to do so. It is clear, therefore, that although the purpose of the quest is to stop some dreadful act, it is also symbolic of the hero's journey to self-confidence or maturity.

A pertinent feature of the quest narrative that is included in most of these films is the race against time. Described as 'the deadline' by David Bordwell,[cccl xvi] this factor propels the narrative by giving it a sense of urgency. As previously mentioned in the

case of *Dark Crystal*, there appears to be a weight of responsibility on often unsuspecting and unprepared heroes and heroines. In some cases the urgency of the mission is overtly stated. *Labyrinth*, for example, depicts Jarrod giving Sarah an explicit warning that unless she completes the Labyrinth in the thirteen hours he gives her, baby Toby will be turned into a goblin. The sense of time is later emphasised when Jarrod moves the clock forward, giving Sarah less time after she comments that solving the Labyrinth is "a piece of cake". In *The Princess Bride*, Wesley and his cohorts Inigo (Mandy Patinkin) and Fezzik (Andre the Giant) must break into the castle and stop Buttercup's wedding to Prince Humperdinck (Chris Sarandon). *Legend*'s Jack is also under pressure: he must reach Princess Lili before she succumbs to the Lord of Darkness and kills the unicorn. Whilst endowing quests with a sense of urgency to the quests is not unique to these kinds of movies, the device is frequently used in these kinds of films.

The other principal theme that connects these films is the battle between good and evil. Although central to many films in a variety of genres, there seems to be clear lines between the two in this kind of film. In all of the fairytale films, good always overcomes evil by the end of the narrative and there are generally few grey areas when it comes to distinguishing between the heroes and the villains. These archetypes conform to those identified by Propp in his study. Aside from the villains, most of the character types are "naturally motivated by the course of the action".[ccclxvii] This appears particularly true of the heroes, who at times are propelled into situations beyond their control. Predominantly, the heroic protagonist is clearly distinguished from the outset. From the first few scenes of *Willow*, it is clear that Willow Ufgood, unlikely though he may look as a hero, will be an advocate of a noble and righteous cause. When the audience is first introduced to the character, it is evident from his initial actions that he

will definitely fall into the hero category. Willow is depicted as a caring, family man with a strong moral code. Despite knowing that it is unwise to hide away the baby his children found in the river, as a father Willow realises he must care for this child. Later, Willow agrees to return the child to her people, despite not being as strong or skilled as some of the other villagers. And when his companions want to leave baby Elora with Madmartigan (Val Kilmer), it is Willow who questions the wisdom of this idea. Despite the fact that he seems to be an unlikely hero, Willow does indeed earn this status by the moral choices he makes. It is perhaps this, rather than any physical actions, which serves to identify Willow as the hero.

The films' villains are portrayed with similar clarity. There seems to be little question of the intentions of any of the antagonists in these films. They are often motivated by a desire for power. Prince Humperdinck wishes to marry Buttercup in order to use her as a tool in his pursuit for more land. His intention is to murder her and frame the neighbouring country of Guilder for her death, enabling him to start a war. Villains in fairytale films are almost always unambiguous in their villainy. There is no misapprehension that the Skeksis are the villains of *Dark Crystal*, or that the Gnome King is the manifestation of evil in *Return to Oz*. Nevertheless, probably the most obvious depiction of evil comes in the form of *Legend*'s Lord of Darkness. Representing a devil figure in all but name, there is absolutely no question of the character's motives from the very beginning. His attempted seduction of Lili in order for her to kill the unicorn is juxtaposed in stark contrast to Jack's virtuous nature. Although a clear distinction between heroes and villains is made in all of these films, it is perhaps *Legend* which accentuates this point the most.

The frequency of the "good versus evil" paradigm is perhaps unsurprising considering the target audience for these pictures. All of the films discussed are intended for family viewing, so the conclusions of the stories seem reflective of this. As previously mentioned, Bettelheim saw the polarity of fairytales as mirroring a child's mind. There appears to be a simple moral to each tale: good conquers all. In each of the films, the heroes, however much adversity they face, always prosper. This category of films conveys a clear message to children that no gain comes from wickedness. A further explanation for the prominence of this plotline is garnered from looking at the genre itself. Whilst the struggle between the two poles is perhaps the most common theme in cinema generally it appears most transparent in the realms of fantasy; the nature of the genre allows the battle to be played out in such an unabashed fashion. Whereas a serious drama may have a more difficult time in creating a believable human antagonist who is truly evil, the same does not apply to fantasy due to the fact that it is not confined to the restrictions of the normal world.

The presence of magic is another vital convention of the fairytale film. Where fairytale films differ from other fantasy sub-genres is in their attitude towards the supernatural. In many of the earthbound fantasy movies, any hint of the supernatural is, naturally, met with suspicion by the characters. In these films however, any initial scepticism is either quickly dispelled (in the case of *Labyrinth*), or indeed magic is accepted as standard straight from the outset. In particular, spells are heavily utilised in these pictures. These come in a variety of forms, from enchantments to curses. In *Willow*, for example, the use of magic is almost part and parcel of everyday life. Although magic has some significant consequences, it is also used to a lesser extent. A love spell is placed on Madmartigan, for example, that makes him fall for Sorsha (Joanne Whalley). Whilst this is relevant to the plot (Sorsha and Madmartigan end up

falling in love genuinely later in the film), it is used more as a comical interlude than a display of wonder or power. Willow's use of magic, however, is central to the narrative, and as previously mentioned, is an integral aspect of his quest. His ability to use magic effectively by the end of the film is symbolic of his completion of the quest.

Among the various spells found in the fantasy category, a number stand out as recurring motifs. Firstly, transformation spells and curses seem to be frequently used. These come in the form of transforming humans into animals, and turning creatures into inanimate objects. The former can be seen in *Willow*. The audience is introduced to Fin Raziel as a talking possum, which is surprising for both viewers and the characters in *Willow*. She informs Willow and his companions that Queen Bavmorda turned her into an animal. Later, Willow's attempts to transform her back to her human form fail, and instead she becomes a crow and then a goat. When Willow finally succeeds in changing Fin Raziel back, she transforms into a series of animals before becoming human. As well as human-animal transformations, there are also spells that convert characters into inanimate objects. This use of magic is most clearly expressed in *Return to Oz*, where the Gnome King has transformed many of the inhabitants of Oz into ornaments. When Dorothy first arrives back in Oz, Tik-Tok, the mechanical creature, informs her that most of the population were turned to stone. Later in the film, the Gnome King challenges Dorothy and her friends to find the Scarecrow, who he has turned into an emerald coloured jewel. There could be various reasons for this popularity of these types of transformations in the fairytale sub-genre. Firstly, just in budgetary terms and the limitations of special effects, these kinds of transformations were possibly cheaper and easier to film than more elaborate stunts. *Willow*, for example, featured a set piece with a two-headed dragon. However this sophisticated effect was saved for the climax of the film, unlike the human-animal transformations which where featured earlier.

Secondly, with consideration for the target family audience, changing a human into an animal is perhaps less frightening and more acceptable for young children than turning a character into some kind of monstrous creature. Lastly, in thematic and stylistic terms magic is considered very much a natural entity rather than treated with unease, in a film like *Willow*. Therefore, perhaps the choice of animals rather than any other forms is a means of connecting magic with the natural world; nature in this case being symbolised by animals.

In addition to the animal transformations, a further frequently occurring supernatural element is the inclusion of talking animals in many of the films. These creatures are often featured, predominantly fulfilling the 'helper' archetype indentified by Propp.[cccclxviii] In *Return to Oz*, Dorothy's constant companion is Bilina the hen. Bilina is featured in the real-world sequences in Kansas; however she is just a regular animal at the farm. In Oz, Bilina can talk, and she proves to be a significant aid in Dorothy's quest. It is Bilina who after all destroys the Gnome King; her egg proves fatal to him. Like Toto in *The Wizard of Oz* then, Bilina proves a worthy companion to Dorothy. Unlike the small dog, however, Bilina has the ability to communicate with the girl, thus enhancing her role as a valuable aide. Bilina stays in Oz after Dorothy returns to Kansas; however Dorothy is able to see her in her bedroom mirror. *Labyrinth* features an array of weird and wonderful creatures, including Sir Didymus. A talking fox dressed in historical naval attire, Sir Didymus meets Sarah as he is guarding a bridge she needs to cross. He is portrayed as quite absent-minded (in not realising the reason why he cannot let Sarah cross), and brave, though slightly hasty (in charging at Jarrod's goblins despite is small stature). A comical figure, Sir Didymus rides a dog, Ambrocious, and appears to be included more for his humorous effect than for his helpfulness to Sarah. The peculiar creatures and talking animals seem to at first perplex

Sarah; she stares in disbelief as a tiny blue worm greets her on entering the labyrinth. However, as is the way with this brand of fantasy, she quickly becomes used to the abnormal.

In addition to the spells and talking creatures, there is also a grander form of magic evident in these films. Rather than affecting a single character, this type of enchantment affects the entire world of the film. In *Legend*, for example, the goblin who removes the unicorn's horn sets off a series of events. When Jack surfaces from the pond he sees that his surroundings have been plunged into a dark winter. There is a snowstorm that freezes over the pond and appears to envelop the whole land. This magic is evidently much more powerful than a transformation spell, by its magnitude alone. As the audience find out later, if all the unicorns are killed, the world that *Legend* is set in will be thrust into eternal darkness. In addition to this more encompassing magic, a further powerful form of the supernatural can be found in prophecies. A number of these films feature prophetic circumstances, which generally act as the reason for the protagonist's quest. It is only after Willow is informed of Elora's destiny that he understands the importance of his quest to keep her safe and deliver her to the kingdom of Tir Asleen. He is told by the sorceress Cherlindrea (Maria Holvoë) that Elora must be kept safe, as it is she who will end the rule of Queen Bavmorda. Despite Bavmorda's best attempts to quash the prophecy by murdering the child, her attempts plainly do not succeed and the foretelling becomes reality. *Dark Crystal* also features a prophecy, which is explained to Jen by the Mystic who raised him. According to the prophecy, it will be a Gelfling who heals the crystal and ends the Skeksis' rule. Again, the prophecy comes true, and it is Jen who causes the destruction of the Skeksis' power. The divination in *Dark Crystal* is not so dissimilar from Luke Skywalker's mission in *Star Wars*. Like Luke, Jen is informed of his importance, only at the pivotal point in his

life; he is previously unaware what a crucial role he will play in the history of his planet. These prophecies act as the reason the quests in the first place. Additionally, they seem to specify why it is the protagonist in particular who must shoulder the responsibility. To begin with, many of the characters may seem like reluctant heroes; the prophetic device gives both meaning and weight to why an ordinary character must carry out an extraordinary task.

There are a number of character archetypes which crop up frequently in this set of fantasy films. Perhaps most notable of these is the character who throughout the course of the film switches from the evil to the good side. This archetype comes in varying guises, but is nonetheless a recurrent figure. In two of its more obvious depictions, this figure is evident as Hoggle in *Labyrinth* and as Sorsha in *Willow*. In the case of the former, despite appearing to help Sarah solve the labyrinth, Hoggle has been ordered to delay the girl by Jarrod. However, even from the offset, it is clear that Hoggle feels uncomfortable doing this and is acting under duress. In a short scene part way through the film, Jarrod gives Hoggle a poisoned fruit to give to Sarah. When Hoggle tries to protest against this, it is again Jarrod's threats which make him go ahead with the task. It is Sarah who unwittingly turns Hoggle to her side by calling him "her friend". It seems to be this act that changes his mind about who he should be aiding and supporting. Hoggle still goes onto to give Sarah the poisoned fruit, but it is clear he immediately is racked with guilt about this. It is only towards the climax of the film that Hoggle has the courage to stand up to Jarrod and help Sarah in her quest. It seems evident that what has aligned him to Sarah is her offer of friendship; the only way Jarrod can get Hoggle on side is by instilling a sense of fear into him.

Sorsha, like Hoggle, is portrayed as a character who acts under duress. Unlike Hoggle however, the motivation for her siding with evil is ignorance rather than fear. Sorsha is the daughter of Queen Bavmorda and leads her army. She is initially sent to track down the baby, although doubts over her loyalty are expressed by General Kael (Pat Roach) early in the film. The turning point for Sorsha seems to come when Madmartigan captures her. It is Madmartigan who opens her eyes to the wickedness of her mother, and it seems clear that he has given her pause for thought. It is not until later in the film that Sorsha actually switches sides. During a fight between Madmartigan and Kael's men, Sorsha changes loyalties, opting to help Madmartigan fight her mother's army. Sorsha's transformation is two-fold; on the one hand, she has realised that her mother is a wicked ruler who she must fight against, and on the other she falls in love with Madmartigan through the course of the narrative. Sorsha and Hoggle also adhere to the role of the helper, even though they initially obstruct the hero's quest. They function as an inversion of Propp's false hero archetype.[ccclxix] Unlike the character who appears to be the hero initially, both Sorsha and Hoggle appear to be villains, but later decide to side with the hero.

Another archetype frequently used in these films is the young, usually beautiful, female protagonist. This commonly occurring character conforms either to the role of the princess (identified as one of the seven archetype characters by Propp[ccclxx]) or to that of the hero. The young female protagonist is always on the side of good, and often plays a vital role in securing victory over the villains. In some of the films this character is the main protagonist, Dorothy in *Return to Oz* for example, whilst in others she is one of a group of heroes, such as Buttercup in *Princess Bride*. Despite her somewhat negative attitude in the first few scenes of the film, Sarah becomes the heroine of *Labyrinth*. And although she receives help from friends in her journey, it is clear that it is she who must

rescue baby Toby. The solitary nature of her quest is cemented by the fact that it is she alone who enters Jarrod's castle to retrieve Toby; her friends, fighting the goblins, remain outside. Initially Sarah struggles with her quest, using her catchphrase "It's not fair!". However as the course of the story progresses, she appears to accept the responsibility of her predicament, and is more resolute in her mission. When she falls asleep under the spell of the apple, Jarrod attempts to beguile Sarah at the costume ball. It is apparent that in her dream state at least, Sarah feels an attraction to him. However Sarah's good character wins through as she realises that she is being distracted from her quest. Despite being a slender, feminine figure, Sarah manages to overcome Jarrod by completing her mission and rescuing Toby.

Buttercup appears to take a secondary position among the leads in *The Princess Bride*. Whilst at times appearing to be the "damsel-in-distress", her role is nonetheless pivotal to the narrative. Although she is not involved in as much of the action as Wesley, she is indeed strong willed, and refuses to be pushed around. At times in the film Buttercup does also get drawn into the action, helping Wesley to fight the "Rodents of Unusual Size" being one example of this. At the climax of the film it is Buttercup who comes to the rescue when Wesley is temporarily paralysed, tying up Prince Humperdink and allowing the party to flee. Thus, despite the fact that the plot of the film revolves around Wesley rescuing Buttercup, her role as an antagonist of evil should not be downplayed. Holding a similar position is *Legend*'s Princess Lili. It is her error in touching the unicorn which sets off the chain of events, culminating in the land being plunged into winter. Nonetheless, Lili plays a critical role in events, despite her earlier mistake. Whilst she remains uninvolved in any physical action, it is Lili who sets the captured unicorn free after tricking the Lord of Darkness into thinking she would kill it. Whilst Jack goes on to fight him, it is Lili's will power and strength that resist the

charms of the Lord of Darkness, leading to his inevitable defeat. Lily, like *Labyrinth*'s Sarah, is depicted as being strong willed, and regardless of earlier mistakes, is able to fight on the side of good at the critical moment.

Dorothy in *Return to Oz* is a younger character than those previously mentioned, and indeed younger than her predecessor played by Judy Garland in the *Wizard of Oz*. It is on her young shoulders, however, to restore the kingdom of Oz by defeating the Gnome King and reclaiming her ruby slippers. Although it is actually Bilina's egg that destroys the Gnome King, it is Dorothy's wisdom and strength that saves Oz. It is she, after all, who figures out his game, thus allowing all the ornaments to be restored to their normal forms. When the palace begins to collapse it is Dorothy in using the ruby slippers who saves herself and all her friends. It is evident that Dorothy is the heroine of the film, despite not having to engage in physical combat. Although the young female protagonist does not feature in every movie classified in this brand of fantasy, she does appear relatively often. Even though she sometimes is not identified as the lead in the fight against the villainous characters, she nonetheless plays a vital role in the quest. A consistent theme with regards to this archetype is that rather than using physical strength to defeat the enemy, she uses her wisdom and will in order to overcome the obstacles.

The morally ambivalent male is another archetype featured in several of the films. With this type of character, the audience is not immediately sure where his loyalties lie. Generally, it is not until part way through the film that the intentions of this individual are made clear. A prime example of this archetype is Madmartigan in *Willow*. Viewers are first introduced to him when he is imprisoned in a cage by the side of an

isolated road. Next to him are similar cages containing skeletal remains. Madmartigan immediately appears quite rough; he is unshaven with long dark hair, and seems rather feral in his actions. He refers to Willow as "Peck" throughout, as a kind of derogatory nickname. Although he offers to look after Elora from Willow, it is uncertain whether he should be trusted. Willow's hesitancy is proved right when he sees Elora being carried away by an eagle. When Willow and Madmartigan's paths cross again, although Madmartigan helps Willow to escape with the baby, the audience is unclear whether he is a true ally of the protagonist. It is not until later in the film, when he helps Willow escape from Kael's men, that Madmartigan's loyalties are made clear. Despite his roguish nature, it is evident that Madmartigan is really a noble man. He also fulfils the role of the helper to Willow's hero.

The morally ambivalent male can also appear in a different variant. For Buttercup, at least, in *The Princess Bride* there is some uncertainty over the hero's standing. When the "man in black" first appears fighting Vizzini and his crew, it is clear to the audience that he is in fact Wesley the farm boy. When he first meets Buttercup in this guise she does not recognise him. Thus, for her at least there is some ambivalence over whether or not he should be trusted. Despite the fact that he rescues her from her kidnappers, Wesley (in his disguise) goes onto to mock Buttercup for agreeing to marry Prince Humperdink. It is only when he utters his immortal line "as you wish" that she realises who he is. Therefore it appears that this archetype is featured in varying guises; being both ambivalent for audiences and other characters alike. What is consistent however is that the uncertainty is a temporary phase; with all these characters it is made clear where their loyalties lie well before the climax of the films. A character that seems ambivalent for the duration of the film is not a feature of this category of fantasy perhaps for the same reason that the "good versus evil" paradigm is recycled. That is to

say, the films appear to favour simplified plots and characters over more complex proposals.

References to other fantasy stories are prevalent throughout this cycle of films. As noted in Kim Newman's review of *Legend*,[cccclxxi] many elements of earlier tales are raised in many of the films. Some are more explicit references, whilst others are more entwined in the story of the films. Whilst some reviewers complain that certain films merely copy earlier ones, the very fact that filmmakers made overt comparisons is suggestive of homage rather than copying. *Labyrinth*, for example is compared to the *Wizard of Oz* by reviewer Saskia Baron.[cccclxxii] However, whether by way of in-joke or overtly acknowledging the homage, L. Frank Baum's story in one of a number of fantasy texts that is clearly shown in Sarah's bedroom. The assertion that *Labyrinth* borrows some aspects from *Wizard of Oz* seems fair when considering both tell the story of a young girl transported to a magical land. However, it does appear curious that the 1986 filmmakers would make such an overt reference to a story if they felt they were heavily borrowing from it. In the case of *Legend*, it does seem undeniable that other sources were used as inspiration. The Lord of Darkness, for example, does appear to be representative of the devil rather than just a villainous character. This is made apparent through his appearance in the first instance. The Lord of Darkness is a looming red figure, with large dark horns, reminiscent of dominant depictions of the biblical character. Adding to this is the fact that he aims to cloak the world in darkness, similar to the intentions of the devil, according to the Book of Revelations. Finally, his attempted seduction of Lili is not unlike the devil's temptation of Eve.

Legend is not however the only film with biblical overtones. The prophecy of *Willow* is instantly recognisable as being comparable to the story of Moses, right down to the fact the baby is floated down the river. Thus it does seem that this brand of fantasy is not averse to recycling earlier tales. However, rather than questioning whether these stories are somewhat lacking in originality, perhaps it should not be surprising that these narratives lack originality. To put this into context, these films were produced in the 1980s, a decade famed for the production of the sequel. Adding to this is the wealth of fantastic literature that until the 1980s and beyond had not realised its full cinematic potential. Although there was an animated version of the *Lord of the Rings* made in 1978, it was not until 2001, when *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* was released, that money-making potential of fantasy adaptations was fully appreciated. Thus perhaps it is unsurprising that filmmakers in the 1980s accessed earlier texts in their narratives, some of which was relatively untapped material. Another consideration in this respect is the universal "good versus evil" theme which use was widespread in the fairytale sub-genre. By drawing on such a fundamental concept, perhaps it is unsurprising that bible reference and inspiration materialised, after all, what is more familiar and accessible than colourful biblical tales? Therefore, whilst I would not argue that these films should be celebrated for their originality, I would suggest that they could be forgiven for their use of borrowed material. *Legend* director Ridley Scott himself admitted he had been influenced by other stories when making the film. He says that he went down the "Disney route", stating: "Having visual references to Snow White, Fantasia and especially Pinocchio were clear cut decisions by me".[cccclxxiii] Thus, at least the filmmakers at the time were willing to own up to recycling earlier material.

Considering the settings of this group of fantasy movies produces more recurring motifs. Generally the films seem to fall in one of two categories; they are

either set in a completely detached fantasy world, or the fantasy world is temporary state book-ended by a real-world frame. With the exception of *Return to Oz*, these two categories correlate with Propp's eighth and ninth functions, as discussed earlier. *Labyrinth* and *The Princess Bride*, which feature the real-world frame, both revolve around the function where a villain causes harm to a family member. But whilst it is this that propels Sarah into the fantasy world, the same cannot be said of *The Princess Bride*, where the real world is used as a storytelling device. The second group adheres to the ninth function and the films (including *Willow*, *Dark Crystal* and *Legend*) are set in a detached fantasy world. *Dark Crystal* is set on a planet called Thra, which has a rustic look to it. The landscape is sparse, and the structures are primitive, suggesting a medieval background. This is compounded by the lack of anything resembling the technology of the last few centuries. *Willow* likewise seems to follow this tradition of medieval style setting. The world of *Willow* is much like Earth, with the exception that its widespread use of magic is taken as the norm. The film has been described as Tolkienesque,[ccclxxiv] an assertion that seems acceptable when considering the various kingdoms and villages that feature in Ron Howard's film. The film has an organic feel to it; most of the action takes place on open landscapes, depicting lush natural scenery. The castles and structures featured could have been taken straight from a medieval romance, as there seems to be little that is fantastical about these.

Legend appears markedly different from the previous two films, as its setting cannot be so easily placed in terms of history. Alan Jones describes it as "the rich spectacular depiction of everyone's dream of what the perfect fairy-tale should look like".[ccclxxv] Presumably for Jones this entails lush forests and the dark lair of the villain. The design of *Legend* appears historically unspecific; set mostly in outdoor landscapes it is difficult to date the locale in terms of historical period. The small cottage, with its

rustic, peasant look, is really the only indicator given that the film could be set in the medieval era. *Labyrinth*, *Return to Oz* and *The Princess Bride* and *The NeverEnding Story* all feature the aforementioned real-world framing device. *Labyrinth* first depicts Sarah in her contemporary American town, before plunging her into the world of the Goblin King. Sarah is at first in disbelief at some of the supernatural things she witnesses, but quickly adapts to her new surroundings. It would be difficult to date the fantasy land, as much of the set design appears to have surrealist trappings. With devices such as talking doorknobs and set design inspired by Escher's *Relativity*.[cccclxxvi] *Return to Oz* is similarly difficult to attempt to place historically as Oz seems so removed from the real world and a stark contrast to Dorothy's Kansas. What helps both *Labyrinth* and *Return to Oz* achieve such creative fantastical worlds, seems is the lack of human habitats. With Sarah and Dorothy as some of the few humans in their respective worlds, there seems to be a freedom afforded to the films in terms of set design and location. A perfect example of this creativity is 'The Bog of Eternal Stench', as featured in *Labyrinth*. *The NeverEnding Story* allows fantasy to permeate the real world more than any of the other films examined here. At the beginning of the film, Bastian's reading of the book seems to perform a straightforward framing device akin to that used in *The Princess Bride*. Later in the film, however, it becomes clear that Bastian is to play a more integral role. Once Bastian says the name of the Childlike Empress, she crosses the boundary from Fantasia into the real world. The dissolution of this boundary is further accentuated when the luck-dragon Falkor grants the wish of Bastian. Bullied by a group of boys at the beginning of *The NeverEnding Story*, Bastian takes his revenge by having Falkor chase them down an alley. The encroaching of fantasy elements in the everyday world in both this film and *Labyrinth* (Sarah's friends appear in her mirror at the end of the film) further emphasise the power of imagination and whimsy for these characters, even in their normal lives.

A number of elements in the visual style of fairytale films help to group them together. Most noticeable of these are the recurring creatures that tend to feature in the films. Practically all of the films feature mythical beings, such as goblins (*Labyrinth*) and fairies (*Willow*). Additionally, the use of special effects is prevalent in the sub-genre. Although this can be said for the fantasy genre as a whole, a number of these films in particular use puppetry, and prosthetics (*Legend* first springs to mind in this case). Indeed, *Dark Crystal* was hailed for being the first live-action film not to feature human characters.[cccLxxvii] The use of stark contrasting in colour and lighting is another persistent theme of these films. This is most evident in *Legend*, where the good is connected with bright, natural colours, particularly the startling white of the unicorns, and the Lord of Darkness' lair is unsurprisingly cloaked in black. This use of symbolism can be found elsewhere, including *Willow*, where Queen Bavmorda is constantly dressed in dark, opulent robes. *Labyrinth* takes the contrast notion one step further, offering a highly stylised image of the Fiery Heads in a musical sequence. The bright reds and oranges of the puppet creatures are in such stark contrast to the pitch-black background that they almost appear to be animated rather than real.

This chapter has illustrated that there are a number of aspects present in fairytale films. Firstly, the key motifs that recur in this category are the duality of the protagonist's quest, the polarisation between good and evil, and promoting the positive effects of a creative imagination. Furthermore, the presence of magic is an indispensible element of all the films. What seems is particularly prominent are spells involving animals. These take the form of human-animal transformations and talking animals. A number of character archetypes regularly feature in the category, including the young

female protagonist, and the ambivalent male character. In addition to these, is the character who turns from evil to the hero's side during the course of the film. This character is commonly portrayed as someone who is either ignorant of all the facts or coerced into acting against the protagonist. A key motif of this brand of fantasy is the referencing of other texts and earlier fantasy stories. In particular these include biblical tales, from which narrative elements and archetype characters are borrowed. The settings of the films appear as either the completely detached fantasy world or the temporary worlds that are book-ended by a real-world frame. It is these fantasy worlds that mark the films as exotic marvellous. The worlds created by the fairytale film are totally alien to the normal world. In most of these films, as is the case with the exotic marvellous, the presence of magic is an ordinary function. Finally, the visual style includes the use of special effects, and recurrent mythical creatures, including goblins and fairies. The stark contrasts in lighting and colour that are common in this category appear to symbolise the distinction between good and evil (this is most obvious in *Legend*). Whilst these preoccupations are in no way unique solely to the fairytale film, I would argue that their constant recurrence in this fantasy sub-genre is what classifies the group, and distinguishes them from fantasy in the decade generally.

[cccxlviii] Ron Magid, 'Labyrinth and Legend, Big Screen Fairy Tales', *American Cinematographer*, 67, 8, August 1986, pp. 71-81
[cccxlix] *Labyrinth* is referred to in Harry McCracken, 'Review: Willow', *Cinefantastique*, 19, 1, January 1989, p. 109, and *The Princess Bride* is referred to in Kim Newman, 'New Movies: Willow', *City Limits*, 375, 8 December 1988, p. 31
[cccl] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, Penguin, London, 1976, p. 7
[cccli] Bettelheim, p. 24
[ccclii] Bettelheim, p. 9
[ccliii] Bettelheim, p. 37
[ccliv] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Heineman, London, 1983, p. 9
[ccclv] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, translated by Laurence Scott, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1968
[ccclvi] Propp. pp. 96-99
[ccclvii] Propp p. 31
[ccclviii] Philip Strick, 'Film Review: Labyrinth', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 53, 624/635, 1986, pp. 374-76
[ccclix] Strick, p. 375
[ccclx] See Chapter 2, particularly the discussion on the works of Alec Worley and Wade Jennings.
[ccclxi] Propp, pp. 30-37
[ccclxii] Propp, p. 31
[ccclxiii] Propp, pp. 36-37
[ccclxiv] Propp, p. 37
[ccclxv] Strick, p. 375
[ccclxvi] David Bordwell, 'Time in the Classical Film', in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, Routledge, London, 1985, pp. 45-46
[ccclxvii] Propp, p. 75
[ccclxviii] Propp, p. 79
[ccclxix] Propp, p. 80
[ccclxx] Propp, pp. 79-80
[ccclxxi] Newman cites a number of sources that he sees *Legend* as mimicking, including *Beowolf* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Kim Newman, 'Review: Legend', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 52, 623, December 1985, p. 380
[ccclxxii] Saskia Baron, 'New Movies: Labyrinth', *City Limits*, 269, 27 November 1986, p. 26
[ccclxxiii] Quoted in Alan Jones, 'Legend', *Starburst*, 87, November 1985, p. 12
[ccclxxiv] 'Film Review: Willow', *Variety*, 18 May 1988, p.17
[ccclxxv] Alan Jones, 'Legend', *Cinefantastique*, 5, 4, October 1985, p. 9
[ccclxxvi] Ron Magid, 'Goblin World Created for Labyrinth', *American Cinematographer*, 67, 8, August 1986, p. 79
[ccclxxvii] Charlene Krista, 'Jim Henson: Muppet Master Breaking New Ground with Dark Crystal', *Films In Review*, 34, 1, January 1983, p. 41

Chapter 4: "A Magical, Mystical Adventure": Sword and Sorcery Films

The cycle sword and sorcery films of the late 1970s and early-mid 1980s is one the most easily identifiable fantasy trends. Fantasy as a genre contains such a wide array of films that even its sub-genres seem vast in their scope. Sword and sorcery films, however, are fewer in number and easier to categorise, perhaps because of their relatively limited set of conventions. During the course of this chapter, I will examine these conventions and this cycle and look in detail at a number of the films, focussing in particular on their prototypical characters and their use of mythology. I will consider the extent to which they are marked by gender stereotypes. Firstly though, I will look briefly at sword and sorcery's history.

Sword and sorcery emerged as a genre in the fields of literature and comic books. Particularly popular were the works of Robert E. Howard, who created the Conan character in 1934.[cccclxxviii] (The character later appeared in his own comic book series, published by Marvel Comics in the 1970s). Howard's stories were first published in *Weird Tales*, which began publication in 1923.[cccclxxix] *Weird Tales* featured a variety of fantastic stories, among them the horror tales by H.P. Lovecraft, and the first examples of sword and sorcery. The sword and sorcery stories drew on various sources, among them ancient mythology, biblical fables and swashbuckling tales. As its name suggests, the two indispensable elements of sword and sorcery are action or fight sequences and magic or supernatural activity. The stories and films are almost always set in a fantastic realm, be it in an imagined past or somewhere otherworldly. Their settings often appear medieval: the buildings, costumes and technology frequently allude to this period. But this is not always the case. Some appear to hark back to earlier periods, others to settings that are much more indeterminate. Like many other fantasy

stories, sword and sorcery habitually features a quest at the centre of its narratives. Although they share many of the same characteristics in terms of narrative functions and magical elements, sword and sorcery stories can be distinguished from fairytales, with the principal difference being the level of action and fighting. Sword and sorcery can also be seen as an offshoot of the epic, most obviously in the extent to which it features large-scale battles. In addition, the hero must overcome a number of obstacles before he can complete his quest (Galen, a young wizard's apprentice takes it upon himself to try and defeat a dragon in *Dragonslayer*, for example). Finally, the use of mythology and an imagined past work together to generate an exotic settings. However, where the sword and sorcery film is different from the epic is in the recurrent presence of magic: sword and sorcery stories always include supernatural occurrences that appear in various guises. These include enchanted objects, spells and prophecies, human/animal transformation or communication, otherworldly monsters, and sorcerers. There are, of course, other traits as well and these will be discussed throughout this chapter.

In her 1993 book *Hard Bodies*, Susan Jeffords discusses the representation of the male form in films made under the Reagan and Bush administrations. Jeffords links the changes in the representations of 'hard bodies' to the social and political shifts of the Reagan administration. She writes: "The heroes of the hard-body films of the 1980s can be more appropriately identified as "populist" heroes than the vigilantes that typified action heroes of the 1970s".[ccclxxx] For Jeffords, the hard bodies of these films reinforced the Reaganite agenda. In turn, the president often alluded to the iconic characters of these films. Jeffords asserts: "The depiction of the indefatigable, muscular, and invincible masculine body became the linchpin of the Reagan imaginary; this hardened male form became the emblem not only for the Reagan presidency but for its ideologies

and economies as well".[ccclxxxi] However, while the sword and sorcery films reinforce some of Jeffords' ideas about gender representation, they often also subvert them. Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan in *Conan the Barbarian* and *Conan the Destroyer* (1984) would certainly feed into this image of the hard-bodied, invincible white male. However, other heroes in sword and sorcery are more ambiguous; reluctant heroes like the adolescent thief Philippe (Matthew Broderick) in *Ladyhawke* can also be found. Women in sword and sorcery are often characters that need to be rescued or protected by the male protagonist. There are exceptions, like Red Sonja (Bridgette Nielsen) in the film of the same title. However, even she ultimately relies upon a man, as will be illustrated later in this chapter.

One of the most prominent texts associated with the sword and sorcery sub-genre is J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. In 1978, the story was adapted into an animated film, directed by Ralph Bakshi. Though not a commercial success, the film depicted a quintessential sword and sorcery story, one that appears to have had a significant influence on many later films. The cycle of live-action sword and sorcery films did not begin until the 1980s, although Lawrence Cohn first identified the trend in *Variety* in October 1980. Cohn suggested that film companies were buoyed by the success of low-budget horror films in the late 1970s, suggesting sword and sorcery films hoped to replicate this success.[ccclxxxii] In another article published the same year, Cohn links the emerging sword and sorcery trend to the success of science-fiction films such as *The Empire Strikes Back*.[ccclxxxiii] There are several parallels between successful fantasy films of the late-1970s and early 1980s and the sword and sorcery films that followed. The settings and narrative of *Star Wars* can be seen in some sword and sorcery films, while the strong-man title character in *Superman* is archetypical of the

kind of hero that features in the these films. Therefore, it seems likely that the cycle of sword and sorcery films was partly prompted by the success of these films.

Unlike the majority of films discussed in this thesis, many of the films from the 1980s sword and sorcery cycle were either British or joint international productions. However, most of them received a US release. *Hawk the Slayer* (1980) was an early entry in the sword and sorcery sub-genre. However this British production, which features protagonist Hawk (John Terry) on a quest to avenge the murder of loved ones and overthrow his brother's evil reign, was not a commercial success and was not released in the US. 1981 witnessed the release of a number of much more successful films, among them *Excalibur* (US/GB), which took $17 million in rentals at the US box office,[cccclxxxiv] and *Dragonslayer* (US). The following year saw a continuation of the trend, with *Conan The Barbarian*, *The Beastmaster* (US/GER) and *The Sword and the Sorcerer* (US). Comprising a cast of unknowns, *The Sword and the Sorcerer* went on to take $11 million in rentals at the American box office.[cccclxxxv] 1983 saw the release of *Krull* (GB), the animated feature *Fire and Ice* (US) and the low-budget *Deathstalker* (US/ARG). The following year, *Conan The Destroyer*, the sequel to *Conan The Barbarian*, and *The Warrior and The Sorceress* (US/ARG) were all released, along with *Sword of the Valiant* (GB). 1985 saw the release of two more sword and sorcery films, *Ladyhawke* and the Conan spin-off *Red Sonja* (US/Netherlands). After a lull in 1986, the straight-to-video sequel *Deathstalker II* (US/ARG), and *Masters of the Universe*, a spin-off from the children's animated television series and Mattel toy line, were both released in 1987. The cycle of sword and sorcery films appeared to have died out during the course of 1988, possibly due in part to the failure of George Lucas' big-budget production, *Willow*, which only earned modest rentals of $27.8 million in the US.[cccclxxxvi]

(1988 also saw the release of *Gor* (US), which featured a professor being transported to another planet).

In addition to these films, *Clash of the Titans* (1981, US) should perhaps also be considered as part of the cycle. Based on the Greek myth of Perseus, the film featured nearly all the hallmarks of the form: enchanted objects, prophecies, the quest narrative as well as deities. Thus *Clash of the Titans* exhibits many of the elements to be found in some of the less successful sword and sorcery titles. Furthermore, its established mythology would not discount it from the sub-genre, as other films are based on mythologies of this kind, most notably *Excalibur*. Based as it was on the story of King Arthur, many would have been familiar with the narrative and the characters. The film tells the story of Arthur from conception to death. Although it features more than one quest, the numerous trials and tribulations of the protagonist throughout his life is the ultimate journey. Rather than a gallant and virtuous hero, Arthur (Nigel Terry) is portrayed as a flawed character, one who makes mistakes and shows his human side in spite of the power he wields. Unlike the bravura action hero that Jeffords sees as typical of the Reagan era, Arthur's inadequacies are laid bare. Although there are numerous fantastic elements, the film concentrates on Arthur as a human character, and not on the power of the supernatural forces. The protagonist has a great deal of responsibility, and over the course of the film he is sometimes depicted as not using his power properly. A notable example of this is when he duals with Lancelot (Nicholas Clay), following their initial meeting. As Lancelot looks to defeat him, Arthur allows pride to get the better of him and uses the magic of the Excalibur sword to cut Lancelot's spear and defeat him. It is only after further hardship and soul-searching that Arthur becomes a revered figure. Towards the end of the film, it is in fact Arthur's relationship with Lancelot that best depicts his transformation from flawed individual to worthy king. Despite Lancelot's

affair with Arthur's wife Guinevere (Cherie Lunghi), when the former knight returns to help Arthur in battle, the two are reconciled. As Lancelot lies dying after being fatally wounded, Arthur tells him he was the greatest of the Knights of the Round Table. The fact that Arthur can give Lancelot this vindication, in spite of the knight's betrayal, shows just how much the king has grown from the pair's first meeting.

Excalibur is very much the story of King Arthur. Nonetheless, this does not mean other characters do not have significant parts to play. The figure of Merlin (Nicol Williamson), for example, has had a huge impact on sword and sorcery. Firstly, there is his age and his appearance. In *Excalibur*, he is depicted as a middle-aged character, older than the king he schools. He dresses in unusual attire, a black cloak and silver skullcap that differentiate him from the other characters. The wizards depicted elsewhere in the cycle often follow this pattern of an older wiser man, who is markedly different from the other main characters (Father Imperius (Leo McKern) from *Ladyhawke* and *Krull*'s Seer (John Welsh) for example). Unlike the hard-bodied hero of action films who work alone, Arthur in *Excalibur* is not an all-powerful hero. Merlin, however, is depicted as having significant supernatural power, as well as a commanding influence on the hero. The type of magic that Merlin uses is a significant aspect of the film. Unlike some of the fantastic forces at play, Merlin's magical powers are linked to nature and the environment. This is most apparent when Arthur acts out in anger. Upon finding Lancelot and Guinevere in the forest, Arthur thrusts Excalibur into the ground, between the couple. Merlin's connection to nature means that he is literally impaled by the sword. Furthermore, it is through the schooling from Merlin that Arthur realises that he is also at one with nature. His destiny is exhibited in two encounters with the Lady of the Lake: on the first occasion when Arthur tosses Excalibur away she hands it back to him, and following the dying Arthur's command, Percival (Paul Geoffrey) throws the

sword into the lake, to be caught by the Lady's hand. Arthur's connection with nature is cemented when he appears as a vision earlier in the film to Percival. Through his quest to find the Holy Grail, Percival realises that Arthur and the land are one. Thus, when Arthur is struck by lightening, the whole land is struck by famine. The magic in *Excalibur* is grounded in the environment rather than external forces. Whilst this may make the film less supernatural than other sword and sorcery pictures, the film's setting places it in a strictly fantastic setting. Although the King Arthur myth is set in Britain, the film does not mention this as a location for the narrative. Moreover, a period is not actually specified: while the buildings and costumes have a medieval look, the armour suggests a later age. This, however, seems intentional on the part of director John Boorman. He says of *Excalibur*: "I think of the story, the history, as myth. The film has to do with mythical truth, not historical truth".[ccclxxxvii]

Merlin and Arthur are not the only characters to exhibit a prowess with magic in *Excalibur*. One of the few significant female characters in the film is Morgana, Arthur's half sister (Helen Mirren). She is initially schooled by Merlin in her ambition to become a powerful sorceress. However, the wise magician senses her resentment at the power of her sibling. Unlike Merlin, Morgana's power is rooted in evil: it is personal gain that drives the character. Her demise reflects the destructive nature of her magic. Firstly, she uses a spell to transform herself into the image of Guinevere, and tricks Arthur into sleeping with her. Secondly, hoping her son Mordred (Robert Addie) will become king, she puts a spell on him to ensure no man-made weapon can kill him. This spell, however, is no match for the magic of Excalibur, as the ethereal object eventually leads to Mordred's death. Before this, following the breaking of her spell by Merlin, Morgana's true self is revealed to her horrified son: her visage of youth disappears leaving a haggard old woman. So disgusted is her son that he strangles his mother. In

Excalibur, women have less of a significant role to play than their male counterparts. However, as illustrated here, Morgana is the real villain of *Excalibur*; it is her thirst for power and obsession with youth that cause great problems for both Camelot and eventually herself. Guinevere, however, is also depicted as a flawed woman. As well as Lancelot, it is the Queen who betrays her husband Arthur, a betrayal that leads to misery for the whole of the land. Whilst Lancelot has the chance to redeem himself, less emphasis is put on Guinevere's redemption, although she does reveal that she has been guarding the sword for Arthur once they reconcile.

Disney's *Dragonslayer*, although less successful than Boorman's film, exhibits a number of similarities to *Excalibur*. *Dragonslayer* took a modest $6 million in rentals at the box office,[cccxxxviii] significantly less than *Excalibur*. Furthermore, the Disney film received less favourable reviews. Thus while *Variety* asserted that ""Excalibur" is exquisite, a near-perfect blend of action, romance, fantasy and philosophy",[cccxxxix] it suggested that ""Dragonslayer" falls somewhat short on continuously intriguing adventure".[cccxc] *Dragonslayer* tells the story of a young wizard called Galen (Peter MacNicol) who attempts to defeat a dragon that plagues the land. Again, this is a narrative of a young man with parallel ambitions. On the one hand, he is engaged in a quest to defeat the dragon, while on the other the trials he faces result in his maturity from a boy to a man. The first impression given of Galen is that of an inexperienced young man, working as an apprentice to a great wizard, Ulrich (Ralph Richardson). Responsibility falls on Galen's shoulders when Ulrich, the last of the sorcerers, is killed leaving no one to help those on the expedition who hope to defeat the dragon. Initially, although he offers assistance, Galen is depicted as unconfident and lacking in magical skills. The king sees through the young wizard's inept tricks and imprisons him. Galen is the antithesis to Jeffords' hard-bodied hero. He is inexperienced and lacks the

physicality of the typical 1980s action hero. *Dragonslayer* is very much the story of Galen's quest to kill the dragon, as well as his quest for maturity and his development as a conjurer. Heroes in sword and sorcery films often lack the physical strength and confidence of heroes like Rambo in *First Blood* (1982). Instead, reluctant heroes like Galen populate the sub-genre, offering a hero that develops his strength throughout the film, and whose power is more metaphorical than physical.

Dragonslayer is very much a tale rooted in magic. The film revolves around how a wizard defeats a mythical monster. Mortal power has no effect on such a creature, and it is left to the realm of magic to strike the decisive blow. There are various enchanted objects utilised in the film, including the amulet carried by Galen, the shield made from dragon hide, and Dragonslayer, the magic spear created by Galen to defeat the beast. It is with the help of his deceased teacher that Galen eventually defeats the dragon; following the command Galen resurrects Ulrich from his ashes, and the wizard goes on to slay the dragon. Thus, despite the fact the film focuses on Galen, it is the old wizard who ultimately overcomes the beast. In this respect, Ulrich has a more powerful role than that grandmaster of wizards, Merlin. In addition to the proliferation of magic in the film, the relationship between these powers of old and religion is explicitly underlined in *Dragonslayer*. In the latter part of the film, the villagers are shown to be following Christianity, depicted as a new religion for them. Even Simon the blacksmith (Emrys James), an aide to Galen, becomes a believer, after he admits that he thinks the time for magic is over. Following Ulrich and Galen's defeat of the dragon, the villagers believe it is the work of God that has destroyed the dragon, not the magic of wizards. Thus the film depicts a change in belief and ritual. Although not a factually historical piece, *Dragonslayer* harks back to an era when organised religion overtook the formerly popular pagan beliefs. Despite the fact that the film does not

seem to comment one way or another on this shift in history, it nevertheless lets magic appear dominant. As Galen and Valerian (Caitlin Clarke) prepare to leave the village, Galen wishes for a horse just as one appears to them. Despite the presence of the new religion then, the film seems to suggest that the magic of the wizards is still both powerful and present.

Unlike *Excalibur*, the principal female characters in *Dragonslayer* appear to have more of a honourable role to play. Valerian is the main female character in the film, and the love interest for Galen. At first she deceives everyone; her father makes her act and dress as a boy to avoid her being placed in the lottery for dragon sacrifice. However, rather than being depicted as a coward or deceiver, she is shown to be brave and strong-willed. She is also depicted as a worthy partner to Galen. Unlike some of the female characters portrayed in later sword and sorcery pictures, Valerian has an active role in the quest; she does her best to help Galen rather than being a damsel in distress. At the end of the film, with her father's blessing, the pair ride off together. There appears to be an equality in the power and worth of both the male and female protagonists that is missing in some of the other films in the sub-genre. The other main female role is that of Elspeth (Chloe Salaman), daughter of the king. Although a more marginalised role, the princess shows admirable qualities, particularly in contrast to her father. She sacrifices her life in repatriation for the king's deceit. Elspeth is shown to have strong conviction also; although Galen attempts to rescue the princess, she chooses to sacrifice herself to the dragon rather than flee. Therefore, both Valerian and Elspeth are portrayed as strong female characters who are as brave and courageous as their male counterparts. The fact that the princess does not get rescued, choosing instead to forfeit her life, is an unusual aspect of the film. More often than not, in sword and sorcery, it is the princess in this situation who waits passively for her inevitable rescue by the hero.

Released a year after *Dragonslayer*, *The Beastmaster* featured a narrative facet that appears frequently in sword and sorcery films. It opens with the kidnapping of a prince and heir to the throne from his mother's womb. Dar (Marc Singer), like several other protagonists in the cycle, is robbed of his birthright by someone who wishes to take his power for personal gain. This narrative convention also appears, albeit in slightly different forms, in *Excalibur*, *Conan The Barbarian*, and *Willow*, as well as in films such as *Star Wars*. Like Dar, the protagonists in these films are initially unaware of their destiny, as they either have been kidnapped as a baby by an evil force or are taken into the care of others. This plot premise seems to be almost directly lifted from the story of Moses in the book of Exodus. The concealment of a baby born with a special destiny, the maturity of this character until they are ready to take on their rightful role, and finally his transformation into a leader of the people, are all narrative elements of the sword and sorcery format that seem to be borrowed from the Bible. *Beastmaster* distinguishes itself from other films with the same narrative arc by shifting elements in a unique way. Rather than being taken from his mother as a baby, Dar is stolen from her womb and placed in a cow. Thus, his role as a controller of animals is established early on. It is a powerful priest and his witch followers that perform this act, hoping to murder the baby. Before the witch can kill Dar, however, a passing villager saves him. It is this prenatal link that apparently gives Dar the power to communicate with animals by telepathy, although this supernatural skill is never fully explained. Dar is raised by the peasant who saves him, unaware of his birthright as heir to the throne. The protagonist only begins his quest after his adopted father and the other villagers are murdered by barbarians. Seeking revenge, Dar begins his quest with the aide of his animal companions. It is the initial killing of his adopted family that drives him; his true identity is only revealed to him later in the film.

Dar is more of a Conan-type of hero than a Galen or Arthur. Dar's physical prowess is identified early in *Beastmaster*, when he fights back against those destroying his village. His attire reveals his muscular form: he spends most of the film in shorts and revealing animal furs. As he embarks on his quest, he is depicted wielding his sword on top of an isolated boulder. The lack of others in these shots not only emphasise Dar's physicality but also his isolation from others. This does not last however, as the next scene undermines Dar's position as the all-powerful lone warrior. Like *Excalibur*, Dar's power appears rooted in nature. Unlike the unnatural witchcraft of the priest Maax (Rip Torn) and his witches, Dar's enchanted powers are embedded in the creatures he surrounds himself with, rather than a supernatural force. Dar's magical connection with animals is highlighted when he first meets the two ferrets that accompany him on the quest. The small creatures steal Dar's holster, so the hero gives chase through the forest. The point-of-view shots reveal the ferrets gaining distance from the hero; the small creatures look to escape as Dar stumbles. Despite Dar's display of physical strength only moments before, it seems as though he will be out-witted by the ferrets. As he scrambles to catch them, he falls into a pit of quicksand. Unable to free himself, he asks "How about a little help?". Thus the image of the strong able superman is shattered minutes after his display of physical prowess. Dar is not a Rambo or Robocop; he must rely on the help of small animals to get out of his predicament. As he starts to slip further down, he begins communicating telepathically with the ferrets. This is not expressed through special effects; it is the camera work and sound that convey the understanding between human and animal. As Dar stares intently at the ferrets, the camera slowly starts to zoom in, first on Dar's expression then on the ferrets. At the same time, gentle-sounding music begins, reminiscent of the sound of wind chimes. The ferrets are then shown to break the branch so that Dar can grab on to it.

Dar's connection to animals had already been depicted earlier in the film, but this scene exemplifies how important they are in helping him complete his quest. *Beastmaster* appears to propagate a theme of the natural circle of life and death. The king is killed by Maax, just as he finds out that his son, long thought dead, is alive and in front of him. Towards the end of the film, the ferret Kodo is killed, after intervening to save Dar from death. At the end of *Beastmaster*, however, it is revealed that his companion Podo has given birth to babies. Thus, there is a sense of life continuing, despite the loss of life exhibited in the film.

The main female character in *Beastmaster* is Kiri (Tanya Roberts), who fulfils the role of love interest for Dar. Although she does aid in the fight to overthrow Maax, Kiri is more of a subordinate character, needing rescuing by Dar and the others. She is first introduced as a slave girl, although it is later revealed that she is the cousin of Tal (Josh Milrad), and therefore Dar. Thus the film appears to exhibit a *Star Wars*-inspired twist to the narrative. Nonetheless, as cousins rather than siblings, there is not the same taboo in the couple pursuing a romantic relationship. Kiri is first introduced to both Dar and the viewer when she is bathing in the forest. This immediately cements the female as a secondary character; seemingly present more for the pleasure of Dar and the voyeurism of the viewer. This is compounded by the fact that Dar's ferrets steal her clothes, leaving it to the hero to rescue the helpless maiden. Although Kiri belongs to an ancient sect of warriors, she is bracketed as being inferior to Dar in terms of strength and effectiveness. Whilst the portrayal of Kiri is not an entirely negative one, it would be difficult to contend that she is depicted as an equal to Dar in *Beastmaster*.

1983's *Krull* features many hallmarks of the sword and sorcery format. Early on in the film, a prophecy is revealed: Princess Lyssa (Lysette Anthony) will bear a child

who will rule the world of Krull. Unlike some of the other films in the sub-genre, it is before this child is even conceived that the main part of the narrative takes place. *Krull* tells the story, then, of the kidnap and subsequent rescue of the princess, in order for the prophecy to be fulfilled. The setting also appears in keeping with other sword and sorcery tales; exotic and medieval in elements, it cannot be placed in any earthly time period. However, what distinguishes *Krull* from most of the films discussed here is the fact that it is intended to be set in a different world, rather than just a different time. This is compounded by the fact that it is an alien force that invades the kingdom, not, as in the case of other sword and sorcery films, just outsiders from the same world. This setting also places *Krull* in the science-fiction genre. *Variety* noted the various influences on the film, calling it ""Excalibur" meets "Star Wars"".[cccxci] Along with the inclusion of aliens, the weaponry used in the film suggests a different space rather than a period-set film. The most prominent of these is the glaive that protagonist Colwyn (Ken Marshall) must find and use. An ancient and magical object, it nonetheless has the appearance of a technologically advanced weapon.

In many ways, Colwyn is a typical sword and sorcery protagonist; he is brave and courageous, risking his life for the one he loves, as well as the greater good. He does possess strength, but this is never the invincible super power of Conan. Like other films in the sub-genre, Colwyn does not complete his quest alone. He is joined by an assorted group of individuals, not unlike the fellowship in *The Lord of the Rings* saga. Amongst these companions are the common characters that reappear time after time in the form. The wise sage role is filled by the Emerald Seer, an elderly blind prophet. There are several others who help Colwyn on his quest, including Rell (Bernard Bresslaw). Rell is a Cyclops, seemingly lifted from the pages of Homer's *The Odyssey*. Rell is a quiet character, made all the more mysterious to the others in the band by the

fact that he will foresee his own death. The two main female roles in *Krull* are rather minor in terms of screen time at least. The Widow of the Web (Francesca Annis) has a very small part to play in the progression of the narrative. It is revealed that the Widow, a witch, was in love with Ynyr (Freddie Jones), one of Colwyn's companions, many years ago. Having been exiled to live in the lair of a giant spider, the Widow provides Ynyr with the information he requires, but the undertaking leads to his death just after he tells Colwyn and the others. Contrasted with this negative female depiction is that of Princess Lyssa. Lyssa is the archetype fantasy princess, beautiful and fair, but in need of a hero to rescue her. Despite being at the very centre of the plot, she plays a very passive role, waiting for her husband to come and rescue her. It is only at the very end of *Krull*, when she realises that Colwyn can use the flame she passed him at their wedding ceremony to kill the beast, that she takes on a more active role. Nonetheless, she still does not get physically involved in the action.

Krull exhibits an array of mythical and magical settings and aspects, most of which align the film firmly in the sword and sorcery fold. The film appears to have been heavily influenced by *Star Wars*, with its combination of fantasy and science-fiction elements. For example, the Beast, the villain of the story, is an unnatural looking creature, very much at home in the sword and sorcery sub-genre. However, the lair where Lyssa is being held, the Black Fortress, owes more to science-fiction. Although ominous in its presence and as foreboding as any evil wizard's lair, the fact that it can teleport to any location on the planet posits the place in a more futuristic land. As *Variety* comments, *Krull* has an "unhistorical setting which is neither past nor future".[cccxcii] It is the presence of these science-fiction elements that distinguishes the film from others in the field, although there are enough sword and sorcery conventions at play in *Krull* to classify it in the sub-genre.

Ladyhawke has a far more distinct setting than *Krull*, and as a result appears more traditional. It is set in the twelfth century in Aquila, presumably intended to be the same place as the real Italian location. This naturalistic setting places the film immediately in a more plausible realm than some of the other films previously mentioned. *Variety* described the film as a "medieval romance-adventure",[cccxciii] which seems to play down the fantastic elements of the film. Whilst it is completely justifiable to describe *Ladyhawke* in these terms, the presence of the fantastic should not be underestimated either. The main crux of the film is based on the curse that is cast upon the two leads, Captain Navarre (Rutger Hauer) and Isabeau (Michelle Pfeiffer). By day, Navarre takes on human form and Isabeau is transformed into a hawk. And by night, their fortunes are reversed, with Isabeau reverting to her human form whilst Navarre becomes a wolf. Thus the couple can never be together as humans, "Always together, forever apart". The narrative of *Ladyhawke* follows the quest of the two lovers to break the curse and finally be together. The catalyst for this comes in the form of Philippe, a young thief who escapes the dungeons of Aquila, and his impeding execution. Navarre saves Philippe from recapture, hoping that the young thief's knowledge of the city will help the couple return and break the curse.

Whilst *Ladyhawke* does not feature the same mythological creatures and elements as some of the other sword and sorcery films, the fantastic element is still prominent. The Bishop (John Wood) puts the curse on the couple, jealous of the beautiful Isabeau's love for Navarre. He makes a demonic pact in order to place the curse, which can only be broken by the couple standing together before him in human form, as is later revealed. The fact that it is the Bishop of Aquila who is the villain of the film is a notable aspect. As *Beastmaster*, *Conan the Barbarian* and *Ladyhawke*

reveal, there seems to be a preoccupation in sword and sorcery films to depict its villains as religious or quasi-religious chiefs or leaders. As previously mentioned, Maax in *Beastmaster* is a priest, and *Ladyhawke*'s villain is a bishop. In *Conan*, Thulsa Doom (James Earl Jones), responsible for the murder of Conan's parents, is revealed to be the leader of a cult that hypnotises its followers to the extent that they willingly commit suicide. From these depictions, two outcomes may be ascertained. Firstly, aligning Judeo-Christian preachers with evil perhaps suggests a disdain for this type of religion by the filmmakers. Of course, it could just be highlighting that fact that evil takes on various guises and that these characters masquerade as upstanding community leaders in order to hide the true selves. Secondly, this negative portrayal of religious leaders and rituals could imply mourning at the arrival of new religions. Given the time period many of the films are set, Christianity was gaining power and dominance and old pagan beliefs were diminishing. Thus the supremacy of magic and superstitious beliefs over an organised new religion, particularly in *Beastmaster*, may indicate nostalgia for past values and ideas. This certainly seems plausible in the case of *Ladyhawke*, when the monk Imperius finds the way to break the curse is through a solar eclipse. Thus, rather than by way of any Christian ritual, it is from the older art of astronomy that a cure is found.

Navarre is in some ways a typical hero, driven both by his love for Isabeau and by his desire to destroy the evil Bishop. Unlike some of the other heroes, Navarre does not need to gain maturity on his mission in order to become an effective leader. Given the nature of the curse, Navarre is not a stand-alone, hard-bodied action hero. Instead, he must rely on the help of Philippe, who appears to fill the role of the young hero whose quest leads to personal growth. Isabeau is in some ways the archetype princess. Strikingly beautiful, she is the catalyst at the core of the narrative. It is, after all, his

obsessive desire for Isabeau that drives the Bishop to curse the couple. Like many other female protagonists, she does not get involved in combat. Nevertheless, there appears to be more equality between her and Navarre. This impression is given by the fact that both are hindered equally by the curse. Furthermore, it is Isabeau who stands side by side with Navarre at the climax to break the curse, indicating that her presence is as strong as his.

The exception to the male dominance in sword and sorcery films is *Red Sonja*, a spin-off from the *Conan* stories and comics. The film centres on the character of Sonja, who seeks revenge following the slaughter of her parents and brother. The female dominance is reinforced by the fact that the villain is also female. The narrative of the film seems to revolve around the fact that Sonja is a woman. The reason for the murder of her family is due to Sonja rejecting the sexual advances of the evil Queen Gedren (Sandahl Bergman). Rather than being just beaten by Gedren's men, she is brutally raped by the troops. Later in the film, perhaps because of her earlier trauma, she appears to have a mistrust of men. Despite his various attempts to help her, Kalidor (Arnold Schwarzenegger), the main male protagonist, has to persevere on several occasions to make Sonja accept his help. Even though he clearly has feelings for her, Sonja refuses to acquiesce and return Kalidor's affection. She tells him that she will never lie with a man unless he can beat her in a swordfight. Thus the character of Sonja is revealed. In a male-dominated world, she wishes a partner to equal or better her in strength and skill. In the climax of the film, it is Sonja who defeats Queen Gredren alone in the final battle. Yvonne Tasker has noted the importance of the protagonist's femininity in *Red Sonja*. She states; "the film follows Sonja's journey to a "normal" sexual identity, or at least the rejection of lesbian desire. After the initial "threat" of lesbianism, Sonja becomes a masculinised swordswoman who refuses Kalidor until he can beat her in a "fair

fight"".[cccxciv] Whilst at first glance, *Red Sonja* may seem a positively feminist film; on closer inspection this does not seem necessarily to be the case. Sonja would be unable to complete her mission without the help of her male companions, and on more than one occasion she would have been killed or seriously debilitated without the help of Kalidor. Furthermore, at the end of the film it is Sonja who fights the female villain while her male companions fight Gedren's male lieutenant and soldiers. Although Sonja does defeat men earlier in the film, there seems to be a suggestion that female strength and aggression is acceptable as long as it is directed at other females.

Red Sonja was not a commercial success, taking less than $1 million in rentals at the US box office.[cccxcv] By 1985, the year in which it was released, the cycle of successful sword and sorcery films was petering out. Reasons for the proliferation of sword and sorcery films in the early and mid-1980s, and the subsequent decline, can be attributed to a number of factors. The first of these is the enormous success of *Star Wars*. In a 1981 article, Karen Stabiner suggests; "The medieval market is still fairly open – and several filmmakers, including Lucas cronies Matthew Robbins, Hal Barwood, and John Milius, are rushing into the breach with sword-and-sorcery movies, hoping to reap from fantasy, past, some portion of what Lucas has garnered from fantasy, future".[cccxcvi] Moreover, the fantasy films that were becoming more commercially successful in the mid-1980s were those that concentrated on appealing to a wide audience with more science-fiction elements. *The Terminator* and *Back to the Future* are two examples of quite disparate films that share this preoccupation with modern ideas of time travel and immense box office success.

The sword and sorcery cycle has been easier to define than some of the types, trends and cycles considered in this thesis. The films in this category are pure fantasy,

fitting easily into Todorov's 'marvellous' classification.[cccxcvii] With few exceptions, sword and sorcery films appear to subvert the preoccupation with the hard-bodied hero. More often than not, the heroes of sword and sorcery rely upon companions in order to complete their quests. These films focus on the importance of groups in defeating evil, rather than the stand-alone warrior. For every He-Man, there was a Galen. The heroes were everyman rather than the superman, using the experience they had gained on their quests in order to overcome evil. In terms of gender, women had various roles to play, but almost all of these were secondary to the male hero. Of course this is not true of all 1980s films. Nevertheless, this recurring trend can be identified in some of the biggest films of the decade (*Batman*, *Back to the Future* and *Ghost Busters*, to name a few). Finally, organised religion was often depicted in a negative light. In *Excalibur* and others, it is old and natural magic that wins out, not the ritualistic new religions, which were depicted as corrupt (*Ladyhawke* a prominent example of this). The parallels here between the ritualistic, brainwashing cults in 1980s sword and sorcery films and the Reaganite view of Communism in Russia and the East are clear.

[cccclxxviii] Carlos Clarens, 'Barbarians Now', *Film Comment*, 18, 3, 1982, p. 26
[cccclxxix] Weird Tales website. Accessed on 18 January 2010 from: http://weirdtales.net/wordpress/about/history/
[cccclxxx] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1993, p. 20
[cccclxxxi] Jeffords, p. 25
[cccclxxxii] Lawrence Cohn, 'Cost Limit Sci-Fi, Horror Pix Unabated', *Variety*, 29 October 1980, p. 7
[cccclxxxiii] Lawrence Cohn, 'Horror, Sci-Fi Pix Earn 37% of Rentals' *Variety*, 19 November 1980, p. 5, 32
[cccclxxxiv] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1981', *Variety*, 13 January 1982, p. 15
[cccclxxxv] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1982', *Variety*, 12 January 1983, p. 13
[cccclxxxvi] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1988', *Variety*, 11 January1989, p. 16
[cccclxxxvii] Quoted in Harlan Kennedy, 'The World of King Arthur According to John Boorman', *American Film*, 6, 5, 1981, p. 31
[cccclxxxviii] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1981', *Variety*, 13 January 1982, p. 15
[cccclxxxix] Anonymous, 'Review: Excalibur', *Variety*, 8 April 1981, p. 16
[cccxc] Anonymous, 'Review: Dragonslayer', *Variety*, 24 June 1981, p. 23
[cccxci] Anonymous, 'Review: Krull', *Variety*, 27 June 1983, p. 21
[cccxcii] Ibid. p. 21
[cccxciii] Anonymous, 'Review: Ladyhawke', *Variety*, 3 April 1985, p. 14
[cccxciv] Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*, Routledge, London, 1993, p.30
[cccxcv] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1985', *Variety*, 8 January 1986, p. 22
[cccxcvi] Karen Stabiner, 'Mining the Medieval', *American Film*, 6, 5, 1981, p. 32
[cccxcvii] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by R. Howard, Cornell University Press, New York, 1975, p. 56

Chapter 5: Of Masters and Mermaids: Animation and the Children's Film

Animation and the children's film are different to many of the sub-genres discussed in this thesis. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, animation refers to the medium of film rather than to categories based on content. Similarly, the children's film is a category based on its target audience. Secondly, both these sub-genres do not belong exclusively to the fantasy genre. Not all animation can be classified as fantasy, in the same way that not all children's films contain supernatural or magical elements. Nevertheless, many of the titles that fall under these categories are fantasy films and the films discussed here will only include those that can also be classified as fantasy. There is significant overlap between animation and the children's film; indeed many children's films are animated features. Animation in the 1980s displayed some of the technological advances of the time while also inaugurating the trend toward frequent and successful animated features that would continue into the 1990s and beyond. Through close inspection of a handful of films, I will try and identify why animated features and children's films were so successful at the time. I will also consider the impact of these films on later production. Firstly, however, it is important to clarify what is meant by the terms 'animation' and 'children's film', to identify the films involved, and to note their antecedents. In doing so, particular attention will be paid to the fortunes of the Disney company, and how events in the 1980s determined its success.

Very little has been written about the children's film as a genre or a form. While it is commonplace to see the category of children's film at a DVD retailer or on film sites such as the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), the form remains largely untouched by genre theory. More had been written about issues of censorship and the suitability of

films for children. According to Sarah J. Smith, it was from the 1930s onwards that the importance of the child audience was recognised. The cinema clubs for children in this period tried to differentiate films for children from mainstream offerings and to provide "approved films within a controlled environment".[cccxcviii] Although it is almost universally accepted that Disney produces films specifically for younger audiences (or at least films that have a mass appeal in this demographic),[cccxcix] not everyone agreed on this in the late 1930s. Writing for *Sight and Sound*, Elizabeth Cross questioned the appropriateness of cartoons for children's club screenings. Despite approval of said films, she argued that "there is also much evidence to prove that the present cartoons, Mickey Mouse, etc., are not all quite suitable. Some are very popular, particularly when animals are amusing or when furniture is animated… but many young children dislike the very prolonged chasing when hideous spiders or bats take part".[cd]

Paul Wells has argued that it is more useful to think of animation as a form rather than a genre. Wells points to the various film genres that appear within the animation category as a reason for this.[cdi] This seems a sensible option, given that animation refers to the mode of filmmaking rather than the style of film. That is not to say that the term 'animation' does not invoke the same kind of codes and imagery that the western or science-fiction genre would. Nonetheless, the fact that these very genres, and numerous others, can be identified as types of animated films suggests that animation is not as straightforwardly categorical as many other film genres appear to be. A cursory glance at the Internet Movie Database index for the animation genre shows a variety of genres within the animation context. Whilst their list of top-rated animated films contains family-orientated fare such as *Ratatouille* (2007), it also features films such as *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988) – a film about two young siblings attempting to survive during World War II.[cdii]

It appears rather elementary to suggest that animation is easily defined. Animation could be considered to be any type of film that is not live-action. Naturally, there are various subsets within the animation field (stop-motion or computer generated, for example); nonetheless it does not seem reductive to define the form as images that are drawn or artificially created as opposed to those filmed live. However, this chapter will not examine all the types and forms of animation produced in the decade. It will concentrate on fantasy films that have strong veins of magic or the supernatural. Whilst some may consider all animation as fantasy due to the very nature of the form, it is important to reiterate the aforementioned differences in genre within animation. Therefore, films that include strong fantastic elements will be included – *Transformers: The Movie* (1986), for example – whilst those not fitting this requirement (*Grave of the Fireflies*, as well as various others) will not.

Similar principles are at stake in distinguishing between different kinds of children's films. It is important to elaborate further on what is meant by the 'children's film'. Writing in 1957, Robert W. Wagner argued that the major studios in Hollywood had never produced films specifically for children because it was not economically viable for them to aim at a narrow demographic. Instead, he argues that The National Children's Film Library does not distinguish between the perception of a child and that of an adult.[cdiii] Citing *The Mickey Mouse Club* television show, he suggests that targeting children according to their age levels may benefit both film producers and their young audience.[cdiv] It would seem that Wagner's advice has been heeded, given the examples discussed later in this chapter. A distinction must be made between films that are suitable for children and films that specifically target the child demographic. All the films discussed in the chapter on fairytale films could be considered 'children's

films'. After all, they were all given a Parental Guidance rating (if not a Universal one), and many promote elements that would appeal to a young audience (the talking animals in *Labyrinth*, for example). However, it is also fair to say that a number of these films would aspire to a wider audience – *Willow* would claim a more diverse appeal than just children. With this in mind, a distinction must also be drawn between the children's film and the family film. Whilst the children's film has specific appeal to youngsters, the family film should attract audiences from all ages, at the same time as being suitable for all. Hence *Transformers* is a children's film as it is difficult to see the appeal to an older audience, whilst *Honey I Shrunk the Kids* (1989) could be classed as a family film due to elements such as the humour and range of characters having a broader appeal. These films address adults as well as children, while the children's film features elements geared to appeal almost exclusively to a young audience. Some children's films do contain elements designed to appeal to parents (only those with an awareness of Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) would understand the parody in the 2003 Disney film *Finding Nemo*, for example), but the emphasis lies in entertaining younger viewers.

Therefore, simply put, the children's film is category of films that appeal to a young demographic. There is an onus on these films being made specifically for children – it is hard to find an example of a children's film that appears to have been originally aimed at a wider audience but has been designated as such by popular opinion. It is important to consider the ways in which the distinction between family films and the children's film applies to Disney productions. As Janet Wasko has highlighted, Disney has attempted to produce films and products with mass appeal, rather than solely for the children's market. She writes that: "Despite the oft-cited emphasis on children, Disney's products cut across age groups in various ways and thus may have multiple meanings… targeting families means an attempt to appeal to

different age groups, not just children".[cdv] Therefore, whilst Disney's animated features may at first glance be aimed at children, elements of the films are often designed for broader appeal (as has already been noted) and these will be discussed later on in this chapter.

There are two particularly interesting features of animation and children's films. Firstly, there is the prominence of mythological characters and imagery. While the same can be said of the fantasy genre as a whole, both the children's film and the fairytale sub-genres (several of which can themselves be categorised as children's films) are particularly adept at exhibiting mythological imagery. Possibly due to the very nature of the form (that is to say, fairytales with their folklore beginnings, and children's films with the propensity for the bizarre, surreal or unbelievable), there is a noticeably higher frequency of mythological characters featuring in these films. Whilst myths are heavily drawn on in the sword and sorcery sub-genre, archetypes from classical mythology are also found in the children's film. Fairytales, meanwhile, are an even bigger influence on children's films, particularly Disney productions. Furthermore, within the animation sub-genre there is the freedom to create characters, settings and scenarios that may be restricted in live-action format.

Secondly, there appears to be more emphasis on the effect of children's films on their intended audience. This is understandable, given that children are seen as particularly vulnerable to ideological manipulation. Jack Zipes has commented on the way in which Disney had altered original fairytales, and the messages that these new versions promote to children. He states; "it would not be an exaggeration to maintain that Disney was a radical filmmaker who changed our way of viewing fairy tales, and that its revolutionary technical means capitalized on American innocence and

utopianism to reinforce the social and political status quo."[cdvi] Henry A. Giroux has suggested that the depictions of females and ethnic minorities in Disney animated features sends a questionable message to young children. He writes that the "roles assigned to women and people of color [sic], along with a rigid view of family values, history, and national identity, need to be challenged and transformed".[cdvii] However, not all writers believed that such films send an educational or moral message to children. Writing in 1945, Michael Gareth Llewellyn argued that: "We are all children (or all grown-ups, if you like) when we are preached at either blatantly or subtlety. If the purpose of the entertainment film or book is the moral lesson, like murder it will always out".[cdviii]

Before examining these films, it is important to provide some historical context to their production. Disney had a well-established background in producing successful animated features. However the output of these features was sporadic. The company released just five animated features in the 1950s, compared to ten the previous decade. In the 1970s, it released just three, *The Aristocats* (1970), *Robin Hood* (1973), and *The Rescuers* (1977). These were all box office successes, but they did not hit the peaks of the earlier features.[cdix] During the course of the early 1980s, Disney's share of the box office dropped to less than 4%. Moreover, the company had turned down proposals for *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *ET*, both of which became huge box office successes.[cdx] It was only with the appointment of Michael Eisner as CEO and the rest of the so-called "Team Disney" executives in 1984 that the fortunes of the company began to change. Wasko has highlighted four ways in which Disney boosted its profits: through corporate partnerships, limiting exposure, diversified expansion, and corporate synergy. As a result, between 1983 and 1987, profits quadrupled, and the value of Disney's stock increased from $2 billion to $10 billion.[cdxi] When Eisner left Disney in 2005, the

achievements he and his name had made were all too apparent. Richard Nanula, former chief financial officer of the company lamented; "He ensured that Disney provided 10 times the level of entertainment available for children prior to him getting there – high-quality, clean, fun entertainment".[cdxii]

Prior to *The Little Mermaid* in 1989, Disney had released a number of other animated features. *The Fox and the Hound* was released in 1981, a moderate success, but again not rivalling Disney's earlier animated films.[cdxiii] It was followed by *The Black Cauldron* in 1985, *The Great Mouse Detective* in 1986, *The Brave Little Toaster* in 1987, and *Oliver & Company* in 1988. Although these films were not as successful as *The Little Mermaid* or several of the animated features that followed, they included a number of elements that aided the success of these later films. *The Great Mouse Detective* and *Oliver & Company* featured high profile stars providing voices for the characters (Vincent Price in the former, and Billy Joel in the latter), a trait which continued in the 1990s (Robin Williams' turn as the Genie in *Aladdin* (1992) and Mel Gibson voicing John Smith in *Pocahontas* (1995) for example). (The use of well-known actors providing voices for animated films has become even more prolific in recent years, with Reese Witherspoon, Seth Rogen, Hugh Laurie and Renee Zellweger amongst the stars voicing characters in 2009's *Monsters vs. Aliens*). In addition, Disney's 1980s films (with the exception of *The Brave Little Toaster*, which was made in conjunction with a number of other production companies) hark back to well-known stories. *Oliver & Company* is a take on Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, whilst *The Great Mouse Detective* is based on Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* and *The Black Cauldron*, meanwhile, recalls J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* with its one object of ultimate power (although in this case it is the cauldron rather than a ring). Finally the decade commenced the triumph of Disney over its competitors. *Oliver & Company* was

released in November 1988 in the United States, the same month as *The Land Before Time* (produced by Amblin Entertainment and Sullivan Bluth Studios). The following year, *The Little Mermaid* would have to compete with Bluth's *All Dogs Go to Heaven*. In both of these cases Disney proved the stronger of the two, dominating Bluth's films at the box office.[cdxiv] It was the start of Disney's near-monopoly in animated features during the course of the early 1990s. *The Little Mermaid* will be discussed in more detail for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was a huge financial success, overshadowing Disney's animated features earlier in the decade. Secondly, it inaugurated a number of important trends. Finally, the film's source material and use of fantasy bear all the hallmarks of the classic Disney animated film.

The Little Mermaid centres on Ariel, a beautiful young mermaid who longs to live amongst humans rather than under the sea. After an encounter with Prince Eric, Ariel is so intent on becoming human that, despite warnings from her father and friends, she makes a pact with Ursula the sea witch, in which she exchanges her beautiful voice for a human form. Ursula, however, also converts herself into human form and casts a spell on the Prince, which almost results in a marriage. In the climax of the film, after Triton has sacrificed himself for his daughter Ariel, Prince Eric destroys Ursula, and following Triton granting Ariel's wish to become human, she and the Prince wed. The story is an adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen fairytale. Writers and critics were quick to highlight that Disney had made a number of changes to the original story. *Variety*'s review notes that: "The source material is a Hans Christian Andersen tale that's been tailored to the conventions of the animated feature, which may rob the original story of some of its emotional wallop but nonetheless provides a fertile seabed for the wild imagination of the animators".[cdxv] Two of the key differences in the narrative are the inclusion of the talking sea creatures such as Sebastian and Flounder, and the ending of

the film. Whilst the Andersen's story features the death of the mermaid, and the marriage between the Prince and his human Princess, the Disney version provides a much happier ending for the protagonist. Whilst Disney versions of fairytales had always included some alteration, *The Little Mermaid* strayed further than the likes of *Pinocchio* or *Cinderella*. However, it was not unusual for Disney to alter these tales. As Elizabeth Brevitz remarked: "something had to be done about the plot".[cdxvi] Thus Ariel got her "happily ever after".

Some critics were unequivocal in their aversion to the changes Disney had made to the *Little Mermaid* story. In her feminist reading of the film and story, Roberta Trites accused the adaptation of eliminating "the values that affirm femininity in the original story".[cdxvii] Arguing that the film suppresses the independence of Ariel, Trites comments:

> "If Disney must insert a good versus evil conflict into every feature-length fairytale, why – since the studio rewrites the whole story anyway – can't the maid kill the witch herself? The answer: because nice girls are not supposed to have that much power."[cdxviii]

Other writers have noted the coming of age theme in the feature. Julian Stringer suggests that "Ariel's desire to experience human love is simply another variation on the themes of growth and sexual awakenings that make up the core of Disney's output".[cdxix] Laura Sells concurs with this view, citing the song "Part of Your World" as the strongest indicator of the coming of age theme.[cdxx] Mark I. Pinsky sees the film as an allegory for interfaith marriages, with Ariel "converting" to human form in order to marry the Prince.[cdxxi] In her review of the film, Colette Maude suggests there is "racial

stereotyping" through the character of Sebastian, a crab with a Jamaican accent.[cdxxii] Sells picks up on this as well, suggesting that the sea creatures "have the facial features of people of color [sic]".[cdxxiii] She also offers a feminist reading of *The Little Mermaid*, although unlike Trites, she identifies some positive aspects of Disney's alterations. Whilst Sells notes that "Ariel wrestles with the double-binding cultural expectations of choosing between either voice or access, but never both",[cdxxiv] she also concedes the fact that in the end Ariel does achieve the human form with her voice intact. Thus there are some positives to Disney's representation of femininity in the film.

Perhaps more interesting than perceived representation in *The Little Mermaid* is the way the film employs fantasy elements. The film itself can be categorised as exotic marvellous: fantasy characters, occurrences and magic are all accepted within the confines of the supernatural setting. It also features elements that could be considered hyperbolic marvellous. Sebastian the crab, for example, is only fantastic in his ability to speak. Other than this, he appears much like an ordinary crab. Given its origins, it is unsurprising that *The Little Mermaid* features mythological characters. Chiefly, the mermaids appear similar in appearance to others depicted in film and literature. One only has to go back as far as *Splash* (1984) to see the physical similarities between Madison (Daryl Hannah) and Ariel. Moreover, Ariel's father Triton appears plainly to be based on the Greek god of the same name. In Greek mythology, Triton was the son of Poseidon and is frequently depicted as a merman. It seems fairly typical of Disney to borrow from myths and fairytales when creating stories of its own. In addition to these fantasy elements, there is the wish fulfilment angle that is a ubiquitous preoccupation of Disney animated films. Ariel wishes to be human, collecting artefacts such as cutlery for her homage to those that live on land. By the end of the film, Ariel's wish comes true, but not without losing part of her previous life. At the very end of *The Little*

Mermaid, Ariel marries Eric aboard his ship, so both humans and sea creatures may attend. However, with Ariel now human, in is inevitable that she must leave her former friends behind. Ariel's transformation from mermaid to human appears symbolic of the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Ariel obtains her heart's desire, but not without leaving her childhood friends (Sebastian, Flounder et al) behind.

The Little Mermaid was a huge commercial success. It was the all-time top grossing animated film in its initial domestic release, and took $5.3 million in its first 18 days in the UK.[cdxxv] It went on to take a total of $30 million in rentals at the US box office,[cdxxvi] a phenomenal amount for an animated feature at the time. Following its success at the domestic box office, Buena Vista International President Bill Mechanic claimed that *The Little Mermaid* was poised to become "without doubt, the most successful animated film ever, from any studio".[cdxxvii] It was nominated for three Academy Awards in 1990, taking home Oscars for Best Original Score and Best Song for "Under the Sea".[cdxxviii] The critical success of the score was to be repeated a number of times in the 1990s cycle of Disney animated features. *The Little Mermaid* was also to cement a number of other trends in 1990s cycle. Approximately 70-85% of the film employed some effect, including airbrushing and superimposition.[cdxxix] The next Disney animated feature, *Beauty and the Beast* took this a step further by incorporating a ballroom scene, which employed strong use of computer generated imagery (CGI). Additionally, the prominence of Ariel's small sea creature friends (though talking animals were by no means a new feature of Disney films) provided Disney with numerous merchandising opportunities. Although Disney had been capitalising on ancillary markets such as merchandising since the early days of the company, *The Little Mermaid* was one of the first features to be released after the opening of the first Disney Store in 1987.[cdxxx] The box office success of the film provided a demand for these

character-related products. Since the 1980s, Disney has also had a partnership with McDonalds, licensing the toys that are given away with the fast food chain's 'Happy Meals'.[cdxxxi] Finally, *The Little Mermaid* and its successors have provided success in another ancillary market in the 1990s and 2000s: the stage musical. The *Beauty and the Beast* musical was a huge success, running on Broadway between 1994 and 2007. *The Lion King* musical, debuting in 1997, has also proved immensely success on Broadway and in London's West End. The success of these tow productions paved the way for *The Little Mermaid* musical to debut on Broadway at the beginning of 2008.

In both live-action and animated films technology was a significant factor, particularly in the fantasy genre. Perhaps the most visible development in technical effects was the proliferation of the use of CGI. Computer animation was developed in the United States during the 1970s. [cdxxxii] Disney's *Tron* (1982) was the first feature film to use it for an extended sequence. The film contained about five minutes of high resolutions digital imagery.[cdxxxiii] This was followed two years later by *The Last Starfighter* (1984), which featured approximately twenty-seven minutes of CGI. *The Last Starfighter* was the first film in history to simulate all of its special effects, costing over one-third of its $14 million budget.[cdxxxiv] However, it was the use of digital effects in 1989's *The Abyss* that heralded the integration of live action and CGI. Following on from *The Abyss*' technical success,[cdxxxv] the use of digital effects became a common facet of feature films, particularly within the fantasy and disaster genres.

Prior to the proliferation of CGI in the 1990s, a different use of animation was to cause a stir. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* combined live action in animation. Many reviewers at the time commented that this element was a key selling point of the film. Reviewer Alan Jones called the film "a staggering landmark achievement",[cdxxxvi] whilst

Adam Eisenberg described it as "unquestionably one of the most ambitious and innovative fantasy films in years".[cdxxxvii] However the combination of live action and animated formats were not new; there had been cases of this hybridity in the studio era, as Steve Neale has noted.[cdxxxviii] The inclusion of animated sequences in live action films have featured in films as distinct as *Mary Poppins* (1964) and *Vertigo* (1958). Perhaps what distinguished *Roger Rabbit* from earlier forays such as *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971) was that Robert Zemeckis' film features interaction between the animation and the live action throughout the duration, instead of just individual sequences. The plot centres on Roger, a cartoon rabbit who has been framed for the murder of Marvin Acme, owner of Toontown. It is up to human private investigator Eddie Valiant to investigate, with the help of Jessica Rabbit, the iconic cartoon wife of Roger. The film is an amalgamation of a number of genres. George Turner described it as "a comedy-murder mystery-chase thriller".[cdxxxix] Several reviewers picked up on its late 1940s setting and murder mystery plot, with Anne Billson asserting that *Roger Rabbit* "toys with film noir conventions".[cdxl]

The style of humour in *Roger Rabbit* caused critics to deliberate about exactly who the film was aimed at. Billson described it as "fun for all the family",[cdxli] whilst Alan Jones suggested that the character of Roger was "endearing to the point of merchandising ecstasy".[cdxlii] Others saw the *Roger Rabbit* as aiming for an older demographic. Steven Walters commented; "it could be a children's film. However, the film's nostalgic references and social values seem clearly aimed at adults".[cdxliii] Johnathan Rosenbaum concurred with this view in his review, suggesting that children would not understand some of the humour. He writes; "Perhaps the biggest commercial risk taken by Roger Rabbit is its near-exclusive address to those who are familiar with Hollywood cartoons, which may make some other spectators feel as segregated and as

discriminated against as the Toons in the movie".[cdxliv] Robert Zemeckis addressed this issue in an interview with *Time Out*:

> "You always hope you'll hit a wide audience, both adults and kids, but if you actually go out to appeal to both there's a danger that the film becomes so vague that it becomes homogeneous and bland and it doesn't work on any level. Certainly we never intended it as purely for kids, those guys at Warners never did that, and nor did we".[cdxlv]

It is the humour of *Roger Rabbit* that situates that it in a 'family film' category. Whilst the slapstick elements may appeal to younger audiences, the references to the Hollywood film industry would be lost on all but the most astute of cinema-going children. Either way, the film was one of the biggest box office successes of 1988. The film took an astonishing $15 million in its first five days, a record at the time.[cdxlvi] *Roger Rabbit* went on to take $78 million in rentals at the US box office.[cdxlvii] There are some elements of the film that hallmark it as a Disney production, and others that distinguish it from stable of Disney features. Whilst it is a PG-rated film, Disney perceived that it did not meet the stringent criteria it sets for its family films. The title of the film was originally 'Who Shot Roger Rabbit' but was renamed to its current incarnation as Disney felt it was more suitable for a family audience.[cdxlviii] Furthermore, the film was distributed under the Touchstone Pictures banner, rather than having the Walt Disney tag attached to it. This suggests that Disney did not wish to be overly associated with the film; most of the company's animated features have the Disney logo clearly emblazoned on promotional material. Nevertheless, the film was merchandised and promoted in much the same way as Disney's animated features. Limited merchandising deals were set up with Coca-Cola and McDonald's, with both companies spending over

$10 million on campaigns associated with the film.[cdxlix] Disney licensed over five hundred official products relating to *Roger Rabbit*. Whilst appealing to a broad demographic, Disney clearly understood where the money lay in the ancillary markets. Although *Roger Rabbit* in the strictest sense is not really a children's film, there are definite parallels between this film and others discussed in this chapter. Along with the weight of Disney's promotional push, are the very marketable characters that inhabit the film. And although *Roger Rabbit* does not appear to feature the mythological creatures that are present in the other films discussed, perhaps, in the realm of Toontown, it is the classic cartoon characters that take on a mythical status.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit is best categorised as exotic marvellous. The film is set in a fantasy world where cartoon characters are real and they interact with human beings. The cartoon characters function much like human actors; they perform in cartoons solely as an occupation. The film is set in 1947, allowing it to borrow from and parody noir conventions. *Roger Rabbit*'s humour is frequently ascribed to playing on these conventions, or the fact that many of the characters are cartoons. In one of the film's most memorable lines, Jessica Rabbit laments: "I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way". Zemeckis' film calls for a healthy suspension of disbelief. As well as the human/cartoon interaction, there is some disparity among the cartoon characters. Many, like Roger, are animals that wear clothes and speak. Furthermore, Roger is married to Jessica, a cartoon with a distinctly human appearance. The fantasy world of *Roger Rabbit* offers a freedom to contort generally held perceptions of reality. This is very evident at the film's climax, when villain Judge Doom (Christopher Lloyd) is revealed to be a cartoon, despite his human appearance up to this point. Thus, the exotic marvellous allows for situations or occurrences that would be less acceptable in other types of fantasy film.

Despite the company's success towards the end of the decade, Disney did not monopolise the 1980s in the animation and children's film stakes. Several other feature length cartoons were produced in the period. Perhaps Disney's strongest competition came from the films of Don Bluth, a former animator for Disney. *An American Tail* (1986) boasted Steven Spielberg as an Executive Producer, and featured an Oscar-nominated score by James Horner. It was followed by a sequel in 1991, *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West*, and a short-running television series *Fievel's American Tails* (1992). Two years after *An American Tail*, Bluth directed another high-profile animated feature, *The Land Before Time*. The film, about a group of young orphaned dinosaurs, spawned no fewer than twelve direct-to-video sequels, released between 1994 and 2007. Bluth's third animated feature, *All Dogs Go to Heaven*, was a profitable release, but was eclipsed by *The Little Mermaid*'s runaway success. Don Bluth directed a number of animated features in the 1990s, including *Thumbelina* (1994), however none of these were able to match the might of the Disney machine. A number of other less successful animated features were released in the 1980s. These included two Pinocchio films; *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1984) and *Pinocchio and the Emperor of the Night* (1987). These titles adhered to the themes prevalent in Disney films, namely the reliance on fairytales as source material, and the inclusion of talking animals as main characters.

In addition to the animated features produced by Disney and Bluth, there was another significant vein within the animation and children's film category. The 1980s produced a plethora of children's television cartoon series, a number of which originally sprung from other sources, including greeting cards and toy lines. Some of these series lead on to feature films, with varying degrees of success. The Care Bears began as designs of cards by the company American Greetings at the beginning of the 1980s. The

line was developed, and a range of soft toys were produced. The Care Bears each had a different symbol on their tummies, and came in an array of rainbow colours. Following the success of the merchandising lines, a television series was commissioned, along with a feature film in 1985. *The Care Bears Movie* was preceded by two television specials. The film focused on a number of the Care Bear characters, and took place both on Earth and in the fictional Care-a-Lot kingdom. The film can be classified as exotic marvellous, as the Care Bears are readily accepted, despite their fantasy qualities (that is to say, they are colourful talking bears with magical powers). Two sequels with theatrical releases followed: *The Care Bears Movie II: A New Generation* (1986) and *The Care Bears Adventures in Wonderland* (1987). The *Care Bears* cartoon series ran between 1985 and 1988. The merchandise line was resurrected in the 2000s, and four direct-to-video features have been produced between 2004 and 2007. The My Little Pony Hasbro toy line also spawned productions. However, in this case the cartoon series followed a feature film. Like the Care Bears, My Little Pony was first a successful toy line for young girls in the early 1980s. Two feature-length television specials aired before an animated film received a theatrical release in 1986. *My Little Pony: The Movie* featured the voices of Danny De Vito and Cloris Leachman. Like *The Care Bears Movie*, *My Little Pony* takes place in a fictional realm, in this case Dreamcastle. The film can also be categorised as exotic marvellous, given the fantasy location that the action occurs in. Although the film was not a box office success, it was followed by a television series, *My Little Pony and Friends*, which ran for two seasons from 1986.

Both My Little Pony and Care Bears generated something of a pop cultural phenomenon in the 1980s. In the United States and across the world, both were recognisable brands thanks to the assortment of merchandise and its television and

feature film progeny. Whilst the key demographic for My Little Pony and Care Bears were young girls, the Transformers provided a similar function for young boys. Like My Little Pony, Transformers started life as a Hasbro toy line. The back-story to the products was that they were robot aliens split into two factions: the Autobots and villains the Decepticons. The toys could be transformed from a robot to a car or other type of vehicle, hence the name. The success of the toy line produced a television cartoon series that ran for four seasons, beginning in 1984. *Transformers* worked in the same way as My Little Pony for Hasbro: the toys were successful enough to generate the television show, which in turn promoted the merchandise. It was a veritable goldmine for Hasbro; new characters could be introduced in the series, which then could be manufactured as toys. The success of the cartoon series meant a feature film was not far behind. *The Transformers: The Movie* was released in 1986. It featured the same style animation as the television series. This was just one of the reasons it was almost universally panned by critics. *Variety* called the animation "flat and cluttered",[cdl] whilst Bill Desowitz for *The Hollywood Reporter* asserted; "the animation is not much better than your typical Saturday morning television series".[cdli] Some perceived a difficulty in following the plot of *Transformers*; with Saskia Baron suggested the film was "a 'Star Wars' rip-off"", and that the audience would have "difficulties in keeping up with the ever-transforming characters".[cdlii]

The film is set in 2005 (likely to have felt a long time away in 1986), and revolves around the Autobots, led by Optimus Prime, battling against the Decepticons. The film combines the scientific marvellous with the exotic marvellous. The Transformers themselves are machines, and very recognisable in their transport form. However, they are from other planets that feature heavily in the film, thus adhering to exotic marvellous conventions. The tagline for the film, used on posters, was "Beyond

Good. Beyond Evil. Beyond Your Wildest Imagination". Rather than a Nietzschean reference, more likely the tagline refers to the seemingly epic battle between the two sides. Whilst the story can be simplified to the classic 'good versus evil' narrative of so many fantasies, there are two interesting aspects that differentiate the film from its cartoon ilk of the same period. Firstly, during the course of the film, a number of the characters die, including members of the heroic Autobots. Although this does not seem a wildly surprising circumstance in feature films, taking into consideration the television series background of *Transformers*, deaths of characters were practically non-existent. Thus, for young fans of the series, the deaths of some of their favourite characters must have been shocking. In fact, Hasbro was planning a new product line, so their deaths was just a way of removing the characters to make way for new ones in the next cartoon series.[cdliii] Secondly, the animated film included the voices of several well-known actors. Judd Nelson, Leonard Nimoy and Eric Idle all voiced characters in *Transformers: The Movie*. The film also features the voice of Orson Welles, in his last performance. He voices Unicron, a planet that devours other planets. Like several other children's films, it is with this character that *Transformers* depicts fantasy archetypes. For example, Unicron takes on a deity-like role, not only with his ability to destroy writ large, but also with his ability to resurrect (he transforms the dying Megatron into Galvatron).

One of the biggest popular culture crazes of the 1980s, for young children at least, was the Masters of the Universe toy line by Mattel. Like Transformers, a cartoon series was commissioned, which in turn helped to sell more of the toys. *He-man and the Masters of the Universe* was first broadcast in 1983, and ran until 1985. The series was popular with children, and infiltrated pop culture so much so that 1989's *Ghostbusters II* featured a scene where the lead characters sang the infamous *Ghost Busters* theme to

a kindergarten class, only for their "Who you gonna call?" to be answered with a unanimous cry of "He-Man!". The popularity of the series ensued a feature film was made. *The Secret of the Sword* (1985) received a theatrical release in 1985. A tagline for the film tapped into the popularity of the brand at the time: "One of the world's most popular personalities in a brand new animated feature film". The film had the dual purpose of both paying heed to the popularity of the He-Man brand, and introducing the new character and world of She-ra, twin sister of He-Man, who would be the subject of a spin-off series. With the heavy presence of magic and fantastic locations, it is difficult to classify the film as anything but exotic marvellous. Moreover, the same aspect of wish fulfilment in *The Little Mermaid* is present here as well. Both He-Man and She-Ra have the ability to transform themselves from ordinary people to superheroes, not unlike the characters in *Transformers*. Whilst Ariel wishes to dispense with her fantasy form and conform to normality, the characters here do the opposite, only to keen to use their superhuman strength and abilities.

Secret of the Sword was panned on its release, with critics citing everything from quality of animation to pace as reasons for their dislike of the film. Richard Combs commented that the film had a "curiously stuttering, episodic storyline, which allows for the introduction of as many of these characters as possible".[cdliv] Perhaps the episodic nature of the film is not so surprising when considering the fact that the film was later broken down into the first five episodes of the *She-ra: Princess of Power* television series (1985-1987). A number of critics highlighted the aspects of classic mythology present in the film. Combs suggested the good versus evil plotline would equate to "the standard boiling down of 'classic' mythology to produce another 'Star Wars-type saga".[cdlv] Mark Sanderson was one of the few reviewers with positive remarks to make about *Secret of the Sword*, stating; "The amalgam of fairy tale, sci-fi and Greek

mythology is exciting".[cdlvi] Certain elements of the film to hark back to classical mythology: the quest for the missing sibling, Adora's rejection of her evil upbringing to fulfil her destiny, for example. Furthermore, many of the characters featured clearly derive from mythological texts. He-Man plays a Herculean strongman role, able to defy physics with his power. After her transformation, She-ra's steed also transforms into a winged, flying horse, very much like any classic image of a unicorn.

Such was the popularity of the He-Man brand that a live-action film was made a few years later. *Masters of the Universe* was released in the autumn of 1987 in the United States. Executive Producer Edward R. Pressman had secured the film rights in 1982, but had spent four years trying to convince film companies to make the movie.[cdlvii] Like its animated counterpart, *Secret of the Sword*, *Masters of the Universe* was received poorly by critics. Many reviewers highlighted the fact that the film was based on the toy line as a negative connotation. *Variety* commented: "All elements are of epic proportions in this "Conan"-"Star Wars" hybrid rip-off, based on the best-selling line of children's toys… the result is a colossal bore". However, they did concede that the five to nine-year-old fans would "flock to see this anyway".[cdlviii] Despite the perceived pre-sold audience, *Masters* was not a commercial success. It took a total of $7.5 million in rentals at the US box office.[cdlix]

Several changes were made between the cartoon series and the film version of *Masters of the Universe*. A probable reason for this could be the lack of involvement from both Mattel and Filmation, who made the television series.[cdlx] Mattel, however, did still produce the accompanying toy line to the film. Perhaps the principle difference is the fact that much of the action in the film takes place on Earth. The television series, on the other hand, took place in the fictional world of Eternia, and Earth only appeared

to be referred to in the Christmas special. Whilst *Secret of the Sword*'s fantasy is solidly exotic marvellous, *Masters of the Universe* combines elements of scientific marvellous and hyperbolic marvellous with this category. Some of the technology owes more to science-fiction than magic, and the central character is hyperbolic in his strength to topple pillars, for example. One of the key themes of *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* was the fact that He-Man was the secret identity of Prince Adam. This whole aspect of the original series is erased in the film; He-Man (Dolph Lundgren) does not have an alias, and his royal family background is non-existent. The perceived striving of Goddard and his crew to make the film more akin to *Star Wars* and its progeny has left *Masters* with a deficit compared to the television series. The use of laser guns and villain Skeletor's vast army of stormtrooper-looking soldiers diminishes the requirement and use of magic. The cartoon series was dominated by the use of magic by He-Man and his comrades as well as villain Skeletor (Frank Langella). However, rather than using a combination of cunning and magic to attempt to defeat He-Man, Skeletor uses sheer force. The only real semblance of supernatural power employed by his henchmen, comes through the shape shifting of Evil-Lyn (Meg Foster), one of the few characters to make the transition from television series to live-action film. Notwithstanding, despite the shift in style of combat, there are still elements of the film that depict mythological imagery. This is most visible through the character of Skeletor. Unlike the cartoon or the action figure, Skeletor is depicted as decaying, and wears a shrouding black cloak. It is this cloak, combined with his skeletal appearance, which likens him to popular images of the grim reaper. Furthermore, when Skeletor uses the power in He-Man's sword to re-energise himself, he is encapsulated in a gold outfit. This equation of gold with power has a resonance with the teachings of alchemy. Thus, whilst *Masters* may be more reliant on technical gadgetry than its televised predecessor, it does not shy away completely from employing mythological imagery.

Pertinent ingredients in the children's film include the values they convey to youngsters. Whilst writers have been keen to identify what they perceive as conservative values in Disney films, much less has been said about the values demonstrated by other children's films in the period. Perhaps this is understandable when considering the success of the Disney films, in contrast to others discussed in this chapter. Writers such as Zipes are eager to propose that Disney propagated social and political values through their animated features. Yet, as has been discussed, Disney's principal purpose is to generate as much income as possible, rather than indoctrinate young children in anything other than buying into the Disney brand. To counter this, Zipes would argue: "The diversion of the Disney fairy tale is geared toward non reflective viewing".[cdlxi] Delving beneath the surface, many of Zipes' claims have merit. There is an onus on finding love and marrying as the answer to a young woman's uncertainties; Ariel and Belle are two of the more obvious examples of this. However, perhaps Disney would regard this as wish fulfilment, rather than as propagating conservative values. Most of their animated films deal to some extent with the protagonist obtaining their heart's desire. Nevertheless, this can only be achieved after the hero or heroine has overcome obstacles and faced dilemmas. Therefore, the films also seem to be endorsing the importance of persevering and maintaining positivity to achieve goals.

A further preoccupation of these films is a reliance on classical mythology in the imagery of the film as well as on their narratives. The animated form is certainly more able to present some of these ideas; it would take a certain special effects budget to depict a flying unicorn in a live-action film, for example. A motivation for the overabundance of this type of imagery in the children's film category could be due to

the simplicity of the ideas. Most of the films feature a simple good versus evil narrative; therefore it seems almost appropriate that they would hark back to classical stories. Coupled with this is the fact that some of the children's films were originally based on product lines. Thus, it is unsurprising that films with this background may not exhibit the most original of storylines or ideas. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* appears an exception to this. However, as has previously been discussed, the film fits more succinctly into the family, or even adult, rather than the children's category. The film does not feature classical mythological characters. However, it almost reveres well-known cartoon characters as classical themselves, with characters such as Donald Duck and Daffy Duck being propelled to iconic status by the film.

It is clear that animation and the children's film were significant trends in the 1980s. The technological advances in animation in the decade paved the way for the success of the computer-generated animated features of the 1990s and 2000s. Furthermore, the children's film appears more transparent than some of the other sub-genres in its ambition to generate profits. By creating films and television shows from toy lines and other forms of merchandising opportunities, the desire to sell a brand as well films is all too clear. These big-screen adventures of children's television favourites paved the way for later films like *The Rugrats Movie* (1998) and *The Lizzie McGuire Movie* (2003). Additionally, despite the failure of the film, the popularity of the *Transformers* television series was sufficient enough for a live-action film to be green lit. *Transformers* (2007) was one of the top-grossing films of 2007.[cdlxii] It has subsequently spawned two sequels, proving there is profit to be made from developing pictures from products.

[cccxcviii] Sarah J. Smith, *Children, Cinema & Censorship*, I.B. Tauris, London and New York, 2005, p. 173
[cccxcix] See Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 2
[cd] Elizabeth Cross, 'Film Criticism for Children', *Sight and Sound*, 8, 32, Winter 1939/40, p. 141
[cdi] Paul Wells, *Animation: Genre and Authorship*, Wallflower, London, 2002, pp. 41-42
[cdii] 'Top 50 Animation Movies by Average Vote' IMDb website. Accessed 21 March 2009 from: http://www.imdb.com/Sections/Genres/Animation/average-vote
[cdiii] Robert W. Wagner, 'The Case for Children's Films', *Audio Visual Communication Review*, 5, 2, Spring 1957, pp. 477-79
[cdiv] Wagner, ibid. pp. 479-82
[cdv] Wasko, ibid., p. 185
[cdvi] Jack Zipes, 'Breaking the Disney Spell', in Bell, E., L. Harris and L. Sells (eds.) *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1995, pp. 21-22
[cdvii] Henry A. Giroux, 'Are Disney Movies Good for Your Kids?', in S.R Steinberg and J.L. Kinchloe (eds.) *Kinderculture: The Corporate Construction of Childhood*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 2004, pp. 176-77
[cdviii] Michael Gareth Llewellyn, 'The Kind of Film for Children', *Sight and Sound*, 14, 55, October 1945, p. 77
[cdix] Although *The Rescuers* did get a re-issue in the early 1980s, the successes of the animated films during the decade did not match previous box office receipts. See Wasko, ibid., p. 30
[cdx] Ibid., p. 31
[cdxi] Ibid., pp. 33-36
[cdxii] Quoted in Laura M. Holson, 'A Quiet Departure for Eisner at Disney', *New York Times*, 26 September 2005. Accessed on 10 April 2009 from http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/26/business/media/26eisner.html
[cdxiii] Wasko, ibid., p. 30
[cdxiv] Kyle Counts, 'The Little Mermaid', *Cinefantastique*, 20, 3, January 1990, p. 30
[cdxv] Anonymous, 'Review: The Little Mermaid', *Variety*, 8 November 1989, p. 32
[cdxvi] Elizabeth Brevitz, 'A Little Attitude', *Premiere*, 3, 4, December 1989, p. 135
[cdxvii] Roberta Trites, 'Disney's Sub/Version of Andersen's The Little Mermaid', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 18, 4, Winter 1991, p. 145
[cdxviii] Ibid., p. 150
[cdxix] Julian Stringer, 'Film Review: The Little Mermaid' *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 57, 681, October 1990, p. 299
[cdxx] Laura Sells, '"Where Do the Mermaids Stand?" Voice and Body in The Little Mermaid', in Bell, E., L. Harris and L. Sells (eds.) *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1995, p. 179
[cdxxi] Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to Disney*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville and London, 2004, p. 142
[cdxxii] Colette Maude, 'Preview: The Little Mermaid', *Time Out*, 1052, 17 October 1990, p. 47
[cdxxiii] Sells, p. 178
[cdxxiv] Ibid., p. 179
[cdxxv] Scott Dugan, ''Little Mermaid' makes big splash', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 314, 49, 6 November 1990, p. I-3
[cdxxvi] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1989', Variety (24 January 1990), p. 24
[cdxxvii] Quoted in Dugan, p. I-3
[cdxxviii] The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences website. Accessed 10 April 2009 from: http://awardsdatabase.oscars.org/ampas_awards/DisplayMain.jsp;jsessionid=32FDD428AE3A91DBEE971AC8CE97BD5F.squash?curTime=1239404396705
[cdxxix] Counts, p. 31
[cdxxx] Wasko, ibid, p. 53
[cdxxxi] Wasko, ibid., p. 35

[cdxxxii] Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994, p. 441
[cdxxxiii] David A. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, 3rd edn, W.W. Norton & Co, New York and London, 1996, p. 955
[cdxxxiv] Cook, p. 927
[cdxxxv] *The Abyss* won the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects in 1990
[cdxxxvi] Alan Jones, 'Review: Who Framed Roger Rabbit', *Starburst*, 124, December 1988, p. 21
[cdxxxvii] Adam Eisenberg, 'Romancing the Rabbit', *Cinefex*, 35, August 1988, p. 7
[cdxxxviii] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 250
[cdxxxix] George Turner, 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit?', *American Cinematographer*, 69, 7, July 1988, p. 45
[cdxl] Anne Billson, 'New Movies: Who Framed Roger Rabbit?', *City Limits*, 374, 1 December 1988, p. 29
[cdxli] Billson, p. 29
[cdxlii] Alan Jones, p. 21
[cdxliii] Steven Walters, 'Review: Who Framed Roger Rabbit', *Metro*, 78, Summer 1988/89, p. 52
[cdxliv] Johnathan Rosenbaum, 'Reviews: Who Framed Roger Rabbit?', *Film Quarterly*, 42, 1, Autumn 1988, p. 35
[cdxlv] Quoted in Geoff Andrew, 'Have Brain', *Time Out*, 953, 23 November 1988, p. 19
[cdxlvi] John Russell Taylor, 'Editorial: Defying Gravity', *Films and Filming*, 407, August 1988, p. 2
[cdxlvii] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1988', Variety (11 January 1989), p. 16
[cdxlviii] Patrick Hobby, 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit?', *Cinefantastique*, 18, 4, May 1988, p. 4
[cdxlix] Janet Wasko, *Hollywood in the Information Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 200
[cdl] Anonymous, 'Review: The Transformers', *Variety*, 13 August 1986, p. 11
[cdli] Bill Desowitz, 'Film Review: The Transformers', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 293, 12, 8 August 1986, p. 35
[cdlii] Saskia Baron, 'On Release: Transformers – The Movie', *City Limits*, 272, 18 December 1986, p. 42
[cdliii] John Swansburg, 'When Orson Welles Was a Transformer', *Slate*, 2 July 2007. Accessed on 11 April 2009 from: http://www.slate.com/id/2169619
[cdliv] Richard Combs, 'Review: Secret of the Sword', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 53, 628, May 1986, p. 154
[cdlv] Combs, p. 154
[cdlvi] Mark Sanderson, 'Film: The Secret of the Sword', *Time Out*, 814, 26 March 1986, p. 62
[cdlvii] Ron Magid, 'Masters of the Universe', *Cinefex*, 31, August 1987, p. 47
[cdlviii] Anonymous, 'Review: Masters of the Universe', *Variety*, 12 August 1987, p. 12
[cdlix] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1987', *Variety*, 20 January 1988, p. 19
[cdlx] Alan Jones, 'He-Man, Dolph Lundgren, Masters of the Universe', *Starburst*, 112, December 1987, p. 10
[cdlxi] Zipes, p. 40
[cdlxii] Box office statistics from 'Domestic Top 250 of 2007', *Variety*, 7 January 2008, p. 14

Chapter 6: Shrunken Kids, Lost Boys and Barbarians: Fantasy For All Ages

As we have seen, many fantasy films in the 1980s were aimed at younger audiences. Others sought to appeal to a wider demographic: the family audience. *Ghost Busters*, for example, features elements designed to attract a younger audience (the special effects and supernatural incidents) as well as appealing to older viewers (the humour and the more threatening elements of the plot). However, attempts to appeal to everyone risked alienating various sectors of the audience, with the result that some films were perceived as not working on any level.[cdlxiii] Along with the ever-present family film, this chapter will also discuss teen fantasy films and fantasy films aimed at adult audiences. For the most part, the latter can be easily identified by their certificate. (An 18-rated film is clearly aimed at adults). However, this one-dimensional categorisation cannot be applied to some of these films. Though not necessarily sexually or violently explicit or unsuitable for children, some 1980s fantasy was made for an older audience, featuring mature themes, issues and topics that would not appeal or perhaps be understood by youngsters. Looking at a number of films from each of these categories, this chapter will investigate the ways in which their fantastic elements are configured for different age groups and the ways in which these elements interact with other generic ingredients. It is important to group fantasy films into age-specific sub-genres, as well as those that concentrate of conventions. Looking at fantasy films in regards to the audience they are aimed at will identify characteristics that filmmakers used to appeal to specific demographics.

By their very nature, terms such as ‘family film’ and ‘teenpics’ are generic. Thus, along with fantasy, the films discussed here will tend to draw on an array of

generic conventions. Family film could broadly be described as any movie suitable for all ages. However, in reality the term generally refers to films that would have an appeal to a wide age range. Before the Hays Code was abandoned in 1966, all films were considered suitable for all and were not given ratings. However, there seems a marked difference between films that are suitable for all, and films specifically aimed at a family audience. For example, once the ratings system had been introduced, Billy Wilder's 1944 film *Double Indemnity* was given a PG rating on a later re-release. However, the very nature of the film (themes of corruption, violence and adultery) suggests that it is aimed at an older audience; younger viewers may have struggled with the complexity of the plot. *Double Indemnity* and other 1940s thrillers depicted a dark and seedier side to society and the human psyche. In contrast, a film such as *Cheaper By The Dozen* (1950) is a comedy film about family that is aimed at a family audience. The humour in the film has universal appeal and there is a point of identification (age-wise) for each member of a family audience. The introduction of the film ratings made it easier to distinguish the intended audience for films. However it is not always as simple as this. For example, not all adult fantasy is only suitable for adults. Whilst a film such as *Conan The Barbarian* is clearly intended for an older audience (its violent depictions garnered the film a Restricted rating in the US and a 15 in Britain), films given a more universal certificate under the ratings system are also aimed at more mature viewers. Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) received PG certification in both the US and the UK. The themes present in Allen's film suggest it is aimed at an older audience, rather than general family viewing. The protagonists, for example, are adults well past their twenties, and the film concerns itself with mature relationship themes, including an abusive marriage. Finally, films made about teenagers may not necessarily be films that are aimed at teenagers. The inclusion of a teen protagonist would indicate that said film is intended for this age group, but this is by no

means always the case. *Risky Business* (1983), for example, received an 18 certificate in Britain, and R rating in the United States despite being set at a high school and featuring teenagers as its main characters. Undoubtedly the reason for this adult certification by the BBFC was the depictions of prostitution and explicit sexual scenes. Thomas Doherty suggests that both Brickman's film and 1982's *Fast Times At Ridgemont High* are examples of teen films that have a "consciousness [that] is emphatically adult".[cdlxiv]

Family fantasy in the 1980s encompassed a wide array of films. Indeed, many of the most successful pictures of the decade can be considered family films, among them *Empire Strikes Back* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. As the aforementioned movies would suggest, family fantasy could encompass a range of themes, settings, characters and plots. Between 1984 and 1990, the 12-39 age group accounted for between 76 and 86% of the American cinema-going public.[cdlxv] This suggests that the majority of cinemagoers were teens and young adults, or old enough to have children of their own. The Christmas film *Scrooged* provides an excellent example of a fantasy film that appeals to a wide age group. Based on the Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol*, the film features protagonist Frank Cross (Bill Murray) as a mean-spirited television executive producing a version of the Dickens tale when he himself is visited by the three ghosts. *Scrooged* can be considered a family film for a number of significant reasons. Firstly, the film's rating suggests a wide intended audience. *Scrooged* was given a PG-13 rating in the US, which indicates that some aspects may not be suitable for the youngest audience members, but overall the majority of the popular would be able to view and enjoy the film. The themes that *Scrooged* incorporates suggest a universal appeal. Dickens' classic highlights the importance of family and generosity of spirit. These themes are understandable and applicable to all ages, and the transfer of the setting to 1980s New York City does not greatly alter these motivations. Furthermore, the range

of characters featured in the movie can be said to reflect its intended audience. Although primarily adults, the inclusion of the family of Grace Cooley (actress Alfre Woodard plays the secretary of Cross, in the Bob Cratchett role) adds an important dimension of youth, and cements the importance of the family unit within the film. The idea of family is indeed central to the narrative. As the film progresses, we learn of Frank's love of his mother and the disdain of his father, as well as his distant relationship with his well-meaning brother. In contrast, the Cooley family are depicted as a warm and loving family unit, despite their financial difficulties. Furthermore, the speech that Cross delivers at the end of the movie, after being shown the error of his ways, emphasises the importance of Christmas as a time to act a little kinder and spend time with family. The use of comedy also implies that *Scrooged* is aimed at a family audience. The humour in the film operates on two levels. The whole audience can comprehend certain elements, whilst other jokes may only be enjoyed by the older members of the audience. Bill Murray's slapstick, for example, can reach all demographics; his initial disbelief and subsequent shocked reaction on meeting the Ghost Of Christmas Yet To Come are likely to have been amusing to adults as well as young children. In another scene, however, Cross thinks he sees a waiter on fire so throws water over him, only to realise it was just his imagination. Faced with a surprised-looking waiter, Cross expounds; "I'm sorry, I thought you were Richard Pryor". Whilst there is nothing mature about this joke, it would probably only be understood by those old enough to remember (or to have heard of) Pryor's 1980 accident. Thus in the case of *Scrooged* at least, the family film functions not only as a picture suitable for all, but as text that works on different levels.

Amongst the variety of 1980s fantasy made for a family audience were films that could fit into multiple categories. These include *Edward Scissorhands* (1990),

which features a *Beauty and the Beast*-style narrative. Like many of Tim Burton's films, the film centred on an outsider character, in this case that of Edward (Johnny Depp), built lovingly by an inventor who died before he could be completed. *Edward Scissorhands* functions as a family film, not only in its suitability for all ages, but also through the variety of characters it features and the levels that it works on thematically. There is a point of identification for almost all ages in the film, whether that is the teenage protagonist Kim (Winona Ryder), her middle-aged parents, or younger brother Kevin (Robert Oliveri). *Edward Scissorhands* works on a number of different levels. Firstly, the film can be described as a fairytale. This aspect of the film is explored in the scene where Peg (Dianne Wiest) first encounters Edward. On an unsuccessful round as an Avon lady, Peg decides to drive up to the property at the end of the street. Instantly, there is a dramatic difference between this area and the rest of the street. While the houses in the suburban street are pastel-coloured, the gateway and drive are unmistakably gothic and the entrance is dark and dishevelled. As Peg drives through and enters the gardens, the viewer is invited to share in her amazement at what lies behind. At the same point, Danny Elfman's score changes from foreboding to enchanting, matching the on-screen images. The camera pans around the garden to reveal immaculately–kept grounds with wonderful hedge sculptures. In the centre is a large sculpture of a hand, which suggests Edward's desire for normality. Peg's wonderment is later replicated by her family and neighbours as Edward creates fantastic hedge sculptures and unusual hairstyles for pets and humans. The distinctive visual style is responsible for many of the fantasy elements of the film. The setting, for example, is recognisable in its depiction of suburbia, but also unusual with the pastel-coloured housing.

Moreover, *Edward Scissorhands* also works as a satire on American suburbia, with its nosy neighbours and potent gossip. The film combines comedy with romance and drama. Working on these different planes, *Edward Scissorhands* has the ability to resonate with a wide spectrum of viewers. Many of Tim Burton's other films can be classified as fantasy family films. Although on the surface *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* (1985) may appear a children's film (particularly as it was based on a character from a popular children's television show), on closer inspection it seems to fit more comfortably into the family film category. On the film's release, a number of critics pointed to the wide appeal of the movie, for both children and adults.[cdlxvi] Whilst the protagonist does exude an infantilism that would primarily appeal to youngsters, other elements, such as the nod to *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), indicates an attraction to a wider viewership. The successful 1980s family fantasy picture *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, as previously mentioned, was originally intended for an older audience before several elements were changed to ensure a wider appeal.[cdlxvii] Most of the body swap comedies of the decade can also be classified as family films. Most successful of these was 1988's *Big*. It surpassed other body swap films of the period in terms of commercial and critical success,[cdlxviii] which suggests that Penny Marshall's film resonated with a wide audience.

Other family fantasy films featured science-fiction elements, such as 1986's *Short Circuit* and the Steven Spielberg-produced **Batteries Not Included* (1987). Finally, two of Terry Gilliam's eighties films fit into the fantasy family film category. The first of these, *Time Bandits* (1981) features a young male protagonist who ventures to far-flung lands and eras, meeting a plethora of famous characters along the way. The later film, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) centred on an aging protagonist, recounting his journeys and adventures in the seventeenth century. Like

Edward Scissorhands, the film operates on different levels, providing the magic of a fairytale as well as wry wit for older viewers. Critic Richard Corliss asserted that Gilliam's film was for "bright children of all ages".[cdlxix] These are just a handful of the family fantasies that were produced in the decade. Two of the most enduring ones, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* and *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* will now be discussed in more detail.

E.T. perhaps was one of the most commercially successful films of the decade precisely as it appealed to such a wide audience. Like a number of previously mentioned films, the protagonist of the film is a young boy, Elliott (Henry Thomas). However, the family unit plays as a pivotal role in *E.T.*'s narrative, as Sarah Harwood has illustrated. Firstly, there is the story of Elliott's family and the absence of his father. Secondly, there is the role that E.T. plays in Elliott's family. And finally, there is the fact that E.T. wanting to return home to his own family. Harwood sees the depiction of Elliott's family as crucial to the film. She writes that: "At one level, this is the story of Elliott's family – a human family inscribing its development and dynamic into the narrative".[cdlxx] Certainly, the absence of Elliott's father is a factor that recurs in the film. It is revealed that the father has abandoned his wife Mary (Dee Wallace) and three children in order to be with his girlfriend. The family dinner sequence effectively illustrates the affect that the father's departure has had on the family. As the family sit around the dinner table, Elliott becomes increasingly frustrated that his mother and older brother Michael do not believe his account of a strange creature. As Elliott laments "Dad would believe me", there is a perceptible shift in mood. When Elliott reveals that his father is away in Mexico with girlfriend Sally, the camera captures the reaction of each member of the family. Mary attempts to maintain her composure, while Michael (Robert MacNaughton) seethes quietly at Elliott for upsetting their mother. In

her innocence, Gertie (Drew Barrymore) asks where Mexico is, causing Mary to leave the table upset. This scene succinctly reveals the dynamics at play in the family. Elliott is clearly missing his father, while Michael, being the oldest sibling, attempts to hold the family together. Mary tries to hide her upset over her husband's departure from her children, while Gerty is too young to fully comprehend what is going on. While Mary is portrayed as a loving mother, the absence of the father impacts Elliott the most. In an earlier scene, Elliott longs to play with Michael and his friends, indicating the loneliness of the young boy.

Some critics have commented on the autobiographical nature of *E.T.*, especially as Steven Spielberg has acknowledged that it is his most personal film.[cdlxxi] The theme of familial belonging and indeed not belonging appears in some of the director's other films, including *Empire of the Sun* (1987) and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001). Writers such as Marina Heung have suggested that E.T. fills the role of the absent father in Elliott's family. Heung points to the more physical ways in which E.T. inhabits the role of the father, highlighting the scene in which E.T., wearing a man's dressing gown, drinks beer from the fridge whilst watching television. She asserts that the preoccupation of the film is not with the absence of the father, but with the maturation of the child. Heung writes that: "The lesson that E.T. teaches Elliott is that to grow up, one learns to relinquish what he loves – more specifically, one learns to accept the loss of one's father."[cdlxxii] There is a distinct development of Elliott's family throughout the film. At first portrayed as a broken unit, the way in which the members bond over the discovery and subsequent aiding of E.T. suggests that the family are a much more coherent group by the end of the film. Furthermore, after the departure of E.T., the film hints at a new family member in the form of the scientist Keyes, who is shown with his arm around Mary at the end of the film. Thus the implication of Spielberg's film seems

to be that it is not necessary for the father to return to complete the family. However, there does seem to be a desire for a father-type figure, first fulfilled by E.T., and later perhaps by Keyes.

As well as inhabiting the role of the father, E.T. could also be considered to be occupying the role of the child. As an alien, Elliott's world is foreign to E.T.. The creature seems enthralled by the things around him, such as the children's toys and television. Like a juvenile, E.T. unwittingly gets drunk after drinking cans of beer. Furthermore, the development in his ability to communicate with Elliott and his siblings is comparable to a young child learning to speak. The stature of E.T. equally suggests his childlike qualities. Being a small creature, shots filmed from his point of view equate to a child's eye view. As either child or father figure, E.T. seems readily accepted by Elliott and his siblings; especially youngster Gertie, who hides the alien from their mother amongst her numerous stuffed toys. This emphasis on children may classify *E.T.* as a children's film rather than as a family film. Robin Wood highlights *E.T.* as indicative of the 1980s fantasy film's obsession with regression. With the young boy protagonist and emphasis on childlike friendships and bonds, there seems to be some merit in Wood's argument. In the widespread identification with Elliott, Wood sees the audience as "a populace who wants to be constructed as mock children".[cdlxxiii] However, one might argue that it is just this wide appeal that situates *E.T.* as a family film rather than a children's film. Despite the young protagonists, viewers of all ages appear to find a connection to the material. As Stephen Prince notes, despite the dismay of some critics at the perceived sentimentality of the film, *E.T.* "touched viewers in a powerful manner that few filmmakers ever achieve in their work".[cdlxxiv]

E.T. functions both as fantasy fairytale and as a science-fiction film. Spielberg's film does not fit succinctly into any of Todorov's categories. The presence of the NASA scientists suggest the scientific marvellous is at play, although events in the film are not really explained rationally. Instead, E.T. is accepted by the protagonists, indicating an exotic marvellous world where fantasy is approached in a different manner to the everyday world. However, despite its roots in the science-fiction form, *E.T.* nonetheless functions as a more straightforward fantasy as it eschews the emphasis of scientific explanation, choosing to concentrate on the magic of an alien entering the life of a young boy. In its portrayal of a burgeoning friendship between two disparate characters, the film concentrates on their relationship and the aid they offer each other. Furthermore, the quest that these characters engage in (getting E.T. safely home) further aligns the film with the fantasy category. Nonetheless, the film also encompasses other genres. As previously mentioned, the emphasis on trials of Elliott's family can align the narrative with family drama. The escapades of Elliott and E.T. could also designate the film in the adventure genre. Specifically, the chase scene in which famously Elliott's bike starts to fly would not be out of place in this genre. Finally, the conclusion of the film, with the tearful farewell, emphasises the film's indulging of drama.

Honey, I Shrunk the Kids was released in the summer of 1989, and faced stiff competition from a host of blockbusters, including *Batman*, *Ghostbusters II* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Despite the overcrowded market, director Joe Johnston's film became the fourth most successful film of the year, taking $71 million in rentals in the US alone.[cdlxxv] Like *E.T.*, *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* is based around the family unit. However, *Honey* features two families that are central to the narrative. The film, like *E.T.*, is set in suburban America. The issues that each family face could in many ways be seen as typical problems for a suburban family. Wayne and Diane Szalinski's

marriage is under strain, due in part to Wayne's career as an inventor. Neighbour Russ Thompson (Matt Frewer) comes across as a domineering patriarch, pressuring his resisting son to play football. Indeed there seems to be a divide between the two families; when Wayne (Rick Moranis) and Diane (Marcia Strassman) decide to tell Mae (Kristine Sutherland) and Russ what has happened to their children, the threatening behaviour of Russ towards Wayne is clear. The distinction between these two characters is palpable. Wayne with his crazy inventions plays the role of the geek, whilst Russ's preoccupation with football places him in the high school jock role. Indeed, it is the children who seem to have more rounded characters, and appear more open-minded. Despite their initial distrust of one another, through the adventures and perils they face in the backyard, each set of siblings develops friendships. By the end of the film, Amy (Amy O'Neill) and Russ Jr. (Thomas Brown) are dating, whilst Nick (Robert Oliveri) and Ron (Jared Rushton) have become good friends. The closing scenes of the film show the two families enjoying Thanksgiving together, thus making it clear that their differences have been put aside and the families are now close. The implication seems clear: despite the differences of the families and their initial dislike of one another, through the unusual experience they share, the families discover that they have a lot in common. In the film's suburban setting, there appears to be a promotion not only of family values, but also of community spirit.

Honey, I Shrunk the Kids is an amalgamation of various genres. Reviews at the time were quick to point out Disney's involvement with the project. Kirk Honeycutt of *The Hollywood Reporter* comments; ""Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" marks a return to the glory days of that studio's live-action science-fiction comedies… Here is an effects picture that utilizes effects to enhance character and story values".[cdlxxvi] The association with Disney is significant when considering the image that the company often conjures.

The brand is well known as being family-friendly, making products with the family in mind. *Honey* is a quintessential family film from the Disney stable. It appeals to audiences on different levels, with each age group given their fair share of screen time. Unlike some films aimed at a young audience, the parents in Johnston's film are not secondary to the children. There is enough of a focus on each set of parents to make the characters appear rounded and three-dimensional. Likewise, there is equal duration given to both the younger kids in the backyard and the two teenagers. Each child is shown to have their own set of strengths and weaknesses, thus creating a sense of equilibrium between all the main characters in the film. *Honey* offers a point of identification for kids, teens and parents alike. Moreover, the film adheres to what Janet Wasko describes as "Classic Disney" conventions.[cdlxxvii] Among these are the stereotypical representations of gender that Disney often promotes.[cdlxxviii] Wayne is an excellent example of this. Although his geeky demeanour is not typical of a Disney hero, Wayne is transformed into one by the end of *Honey*. At the beginning of the film it is clear that Wayne is not fulfilling the traditional provider role that is expected of him; there is a lot lying on his invention becoming a success. By the end of the film, it is Wayne who saves the day by transforming the children back to their original size. Furthermore, the fact that his invention is a success suggests financial security for the family, and reaffirms Wayne's place as head of the household. Although the setting, characters and narrative of *Honey* are quite different to Disney fairytales, parallels can be found in the traditional values that the company appears to promote.

Honey's use of special effects was responsible for many of the film's fantasy aspects. *Variety* noted the influence from 1950s science-fiction pictures such as *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) and *Them* (1954).[cdlxxix] What the film depicted was quite normal and everyday, but because of the size of the children everything appeared

more exciting, frightening or unusual. For example, the scorpion that threatens the kids literally puts them in a life-or-death situation; it is only their earlier befriending of an ant that saves them. Similarly, a Lego brick is transformed from a small toy into refuge for the night, once the children realise that they will not make it back home. Despite the fear of the children, there is no major menace to their well-being. As Honeycutt observes in his review, "the oversized jungle is real enough without being so realistic as to scare younger children".[cdlxxx] Again, the type of fantasy depicted in the film is `wholesome`. The children befriend an ant and feast on oversized snacks; their behaviour is never permissive despite the freedom given to them by their situation. By negating the level of threat and promoting good behaviour, *Honey* is a film that is suitable for all ages also in terms of the values it endorses.

Johnston's film is a perfect fit for Todorov's instrumental marvellous category. Although the film features the adventure element so prevalent in fantasy films, the nature of the fantasy lies firmly in the science-fiction mould. As Todorov emphasises, the instrumental marvellous is very close to the scientific marvellous category.[cdlxxxi] He writes that: "the supernatural is explained in a rational manner, but according to laws contemporary science does not acknowledge".[cdlxxxii] Although *Honey* features a scientific rationale behind the marvellous event, the nature of Wayne's invention indicates the unrealised potential of the instrumental marvellous. The fantasy in Johnston's film is triggered by a baseball that is accidently hit into Wayne Szalinski's invention. Wayne has invented a shrinking ray, but he presumes that it is broken. The baseball appears to kick-start the machine, and the four kids are shrunk when they go up to retrieve the ball. The fantasy is thus explained scientifically rather than seen as a consequence of a supernatural or magical occurrence. Though a machine that can shrink objects whilst maintaining their consistency seems implausible, it is not altogether

outlandish. Following on from this incident, nothing that takes place in the backyard, however surprising or unusual, is actually fantastic. It is only at the end of the film, when the children are returned to their regular size, that the instrumental marvellous comes into play again. The science behind the shrinking machine is never explained in any great detail. Nonetheless this is unsurprising considering the film is a light sci-fi fantasy for a family audience, and not a serious and plausible science-fiction film.

Fantasy also appeared in films aimed at teenagers during the 1980s. Teenpics were first fully established in the 1950s. Along with more traditional teen film fare such as *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), Neale notes the attempt of film companies to appeal to teenagers through the science-fiction and horror genres. He writes; "weirdies in particular sought to capitalize on the popularity of horror and science fiction with teenage spectators".[cdlxxxiii] The 1970s saw a number of teen-orientated box office hits such as *Grease* (1978) and *Carrie* (1976). In the 1980s, however, the presence of the teenpic was far more prevalent and palpable. Perhaps the best-known director of 1980s teen films was the late producer-director John Hughes, whose films included *Sixteen Candles* (1982), *The Breakfast Club* (1985), and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986). Some of these films, including *Weird Science* (1985), took advantage of the PG-13 rating introduced in 1984. This allowed films to feature more risqué language, depictions and themes without the alienating effect of the Restricted rating. The PG-13 certificate quickly gained in popularity with 72 films given the rating in 1985, rising to 103 in 1989.[cdlxxxiv] As well as the teen comedies, other films were made with a teen audience in mind. Perhaps most prominent of these was the slasher cycle of horror films, which frequently featured teen protagonists and were often set in high schools. These included *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, which is discussed in Chapter 9. Another horror teenpic, *The Lost Boys* (1987) will be explored in more detail. A number of other fantasy teen

films were produced in the decade, their appearance seeming to run alongside that of the traditional teenpic. Most successful of these was 1985's *Back to the Future*. Other films that appeared in the cycle, with varying degrees of success were *Superman*-spinoff *Supergirl*, science-fiction comedy *Earth Girls Are Easy* (1988), and *Teen Wolf*, a remake of the 1957 fantasy teenpic *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*.

John Hughes' *Weird Science* can be considered the quintessential eighties teenpic insofar as it balances the preoccupations of a typical Hughes teen film with the style of fantasy present throughout the decade, particularly in the cycle of supernatural comedy. The film's two protagonists are comparable in terms of backgrounds and personalities to almost any others in a Hughes film, or in eighties teenpics more generally. The best friends are students at an everyday, suburban American high school. They are, however, unpopular with their classmates. In an early scene Wyatt (Ilan Mitchell-Smith) and Gary (Anthony Michael Hall) bemoan their social status, wishing that they would get invited to parties. Their main preoccupation, however, is their inability to get girlfriends. As they stare longingly at two of the popular high school girls in the gym, Ian (Robert Downey Jr.) and Max (Robert Rusler), two typical high school popular bullies, pull down their shorts, causing a great deal of embarrassment to the protagonists. The scene encapsulates the social standing of Gary and Wyatt; it is difficult not to sympathise with the pair over such public embarrassment. As the film progresses, it is only with the help and encouragement of Lisa (the `ideal woman` they create) that Gary and Wyatt are able to develop their social skills, leaving them at the end of the film far more confident individuals. The narrative of the film is reminiscent of other Hughes films such as *Pretty in Pink* (1986). Wyatt and Gary lust after two of the most popular girls in school, who are blissfully unaware and dating Ian and Max respectively. Like Andie (Molly Ringwald) and Blane (Andrew McCarthy) in *Pretty in*

Pink, Gary and Wyatt and the two girls Deb (Suzanne Snyder) and Hilly (Judie Aronson) come from different cliques in school. Whilst the boys are geeky and unpopular, Deb and Hilly are members of the social elite, undoubtedly due in part to their attractive looks. However, like all of the Hughes teen films, *Weird Science* has the obligatory happy ending, where the underdogs get the girls of their dreams. Debs and Hilly are not portrayed as bad characters throughout the film, it is clear they are more altruistic than this when they scold their boyfriends for again humiliating Wyatt and Gary. There seems to be genuine affection between the girls and the protagonists at the end of the film, when Wyatt and Gary get together with their respective partners. The trials and tribulations that the boys face throughout the film, and the obstacles they overcome to become confident adolescents cool enough to get girlfriends are not dissimilar to any other teenpic of the decade. Alongside this familiar narrative pattern is the presence of a memorable rock soundtrack, another hallmark of the Hughes eighties teen film.

Like *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*, the fantasy element in *Weird Science* is more science-based than magical. The boys create Lisa (Kelly LeBrock), their ideal woman, in order to cure their girlfriend woes. There is a distinct lack of explanation of the events that occur. The initial creation of Lisa would fall into Todorov's scientific marvellous category, as science is used rather than supernatural power.[cdlxxxv] However there are certain elements that have more of a magical feel; the way the house appears to suffer a tornado, and the mysterious red lighting when Lisa first emerges, for example. Furthermore, as the film progresses it is clear that she is in possession of magical powers. She is able to change number plates on cars and place Wyatt's grandparents into a catatonic state. On the whole then, initial creation aside, *Weird Science* best fits into Todorov's instrumental marvellous classification; in this class the

instrument of the fantastic being Lisa herself. The method that the boys use to create her lacks rationality. They manage to obtain power from the grid seemingly through a phone line, and feed print images of their ideal woman into the machine. Thus there is a healthy disregard for the laws of science in their method of creation. Both the idea of creating life, and the way they attempt to do so, owes much to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. This influence is directly addressed, as the film shows Gary and Wyatt watching James Whale's *Frankenstein* as Gary comes up with the idea. Later on, in the actual process of creating Lisa, a lighting bolt hits the house – another nod to the Frankenstein myth. Unlike Mary Shelley's story however, the emphasis in *Weird Science* is firmly on the comedic. The teenpic is best described as a mixture of fantasy, science-fiction, romance and comedy.

The Lost Boys amalgamates a number of different genres, not least the teenpic. The film focuses on a family's move to the town of Santa Carla, and the mysterious disappearances that take place in this location. The main protagonists are the older teen Michael (Jason Patric) and his younger brother Sam (Corey Haim). Their mother Lucy (Dianne Wiest), however, does play a pivotal role in proceedings, and the boys' grandfather (Bernard Hughes) has a small but crucial part; driving into the home with wooden stakes in the climax. Emphasis in the film seems quite evenly split between Michael and the gang of young vampires he gets involved with, and Sam and the two vampire-hunting brothers who befriend him. The gang of vampires, headed up by David (Keifer Sutherland), are in some ways acting as rebellious teenagers. They dress like punks and bikers, and intimidate Michael into a motorbike race, which almost kills him. It is initially unclear as to whether there is anything supernatural about them; it is only later when Michael returns with them to their lair that their lifestyle is exposed as vampiric rather than simply alternative. *The Lost Boys*, supernatural activity aside,

features themes that could be present in any teen drama. Firstly, there is the isolation in moving to a new town, at an age when friendship is so important. Secondly, there is the issue of the disappearing teens. Although the film explains this by way of vampirism, those who have vanished are at an age where they would be described as teenage runaways. The film transforms this real and serious issue into a source of fantasy. The narrative of Michael falling in with the wrong crowd is another teen-orientated concern. Although in most teen films these gangs do not reveal themselves as vampires, it is a common premise of dramas involving young people (films that feature this type of narrative include *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Boyz n the Hood* [1991]). Finally, there is the love story between Michael and Star (Jami Gertz). It is Star who first leads Michael to the gang, but despite this, she is the one who warns him against drinking the blood. Vampirism aside, the two are from different backgrounds, but like many teenpics, they end up making their relationship work. In contrast, there is the relationship between Lucy and Max (Edward Herrmann), who turns out to be the head of the vampires. Sam has a mistrust of Max, which could be seen as Sam not wanting Max to replace his father. Sam and the Frog brothers' suspicions turn out to be founded, as Max tries to turn Lucy into a vampire at the film's climax. Thus, many of the issues that the story generates are common teenage preoccupations. *The Lost Boys* invert these issues, providing supernatural causes for them, rather than the mundane reality.

The Lost Boys was given a Restricted rating in the US and a '15' certificate on its release in the UK. While some of the vampire deaths were certainly gory and while there are moments of tension particularly at the climax, the inclusion of comedy makes it difficult to categorise Schumacher's film as a straightforward horror. The film belongs to the horror sub-genre of the vampire film, given its preoccupation with this type of supernatural creature. *The Lost Boys* creates its own vampire mythology, taking

on board some of the folklore, whilst disregarding other rules. For example, when the Frog brothers and Sam try to discover whether Max is a vampire they use several tests common in vampire mythology. They check his aversion to garlic and whether his image is reflected in mirrors. These tests use the mythology first cemented in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Although Max turns out to be the head vampire, he is unaffected by these tests. At the climax of the film, it is explained that Max's vampirism had gone undetected because Michael had freely invited him into the home (according to *The Lost Boys* mythology, the invitation overrides other vampire traits). Thus *Lost Boys* works within the framework of common vampire lore, whilst modifying it to suit the narrative. Furthermore, the film utilises the concept of "half vampires". Perhaps again in order to bring the narrative to a happy conclusion, Michael and Star are not fully turned into vampires. According to *The Lost Boys* lore, this only occurs once a vampire has made their first kill. Therefore, despite their dabbling in vampirism, Michael and Star revert to their human form as the head vampire is killed. *The Lost Boys* allows the redemption of these characters in order to restore the family unit and provide the happy ending that always seemed inevitable. As well as the fantasy element of vampirism and teenpic themes, the film displays a level of comedy that ensures that the more sinister aspects of the film are never too frightening. The humour for the most part is generated from the younger protagonists: the haphazard way in which the Frog brothers and Sam attempt to uncover vampires puts them at a stark contrast to the measured and educated demeanour of *Dracula*'s Van Helsing. The last laugh nevertheless goes to the grandfather, the oldest character in the film. After driving through the house and impaling Max, he pronounces: "One thing about living in Santa Carla I never could stomach... all the damn vampires". Thus, it is clear that he knew of the vampires all along, and makes a mockery of the so-called secret life of vampirism. Thus, it is the combination of fantasy and humour (especially about said fantasy) that defines the position of *The Lost Boys*.

With the teen protagonists and teen-centered issues, the film is clearly aimed at a teenage audience.

As previously mentioned, adult-orientated fantasy emerged in a variety of guises during the 1980s. Much of the adult fantasy produced in the period belonged to the horror or science-fiction genres, with films such as *Predator* (1987). However, there were also several films released that belonged to the more central fantasy form. Steven Spielberg's *Always* (1989), for example, tells the story of a deceased pilot (Richard Dreyfuss) who returns as a ghost to give advice to his successor. The film features a strong romantic angle, as the successor finds himself falling in love with Dorinda (Holly Hunter), the late Pete's partner. *Always* was given a PG rating in both the US and the UK. Despite this, it is best described as an adult-orientated fantasy given the age of the protagonist and the mature theme of grief. Similarly, it is the drama and romance of *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986) that marks it as an adult-orientated fantasy rather than a family film. Although set significantly at high school (Peggy (Kathleen Turner), a middle-aged woman, wakes up back in high school with the chance to alter the course of her life), the focus on her marital problems and subsequent depression suggests that the film is dealing with more mature issues than most teenpics or family films. Finally, other 1980s fantasy films can be deemed adult-orientated not through the amalgamation with typically more adult genres, but because of the representation of fantastic elements. *Highlander* (1986) tells the story of a centuries-old immortal who must battle other immortals in order to claim the prize of the power to rule the world. Whilst the film offers fantasy mythology akin to more family-friendly fare, it is the graphic depictions (including scenes of decapitation) that deem it suitable only for an adult audience. Adult-oriented fantasy came in a variety of guises during the period. This chapter will

look at two adult-orientated fantasy films produced in the 1980s, each quite distinct from the other in terms of style and thematic preoccupation.

Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* was released in 1985. The film offers a dystopian view of a futuristic Britain in which the government has overwhelming control over its citizens. In this Orwellian vision, there is an overreliance on machines to perform administrative and others tasks for the authorities. These machines, however, are not always faultless, and are shown to malfunction in the case of Harry Tuttle (Robert De Niro). The totalitarian regime has indentified a totally innocent man as a terrorist (a case of mistaken identity), and such is the power of the authorities that he is executed without proper trial. Sam (Jonathan Pryce), a government employee, is tasked with putting right the error. The authorities will not publicly admit to this failure, as they must be seen as infallible. When Sam tries to uncover the truth, it is he who is put in danger and seen as a threat to the establishment. *Brazil* offers a pessimistic vision of the future, a vision for the most part which has a basis in reality. Although the use of computers in the film may seem a little far-fetched at times (in the over-reliance on these machine, for example), bureaucratic errors due to technical faults are not exclusive to the realm of fantasy. The negative depictions offered by *Brazil* mark it as material for viewers mature enough to understand the narrative. Its satirising of bureaucracy requires a knowledge of such systems in order to be fully appreciated.

Brazil plays on the relationship between fantasy and reality. Protagonist Sam is a daydreamer; his boring job allows his mind to wonder. He has recurrent dreams of the same beautiful woman, a world away from his mundane reality. When he finds her in reality to be the neighbour of Harry Tuttle, Sam questions the reality of what he sees. The audience is left wondering how this character has come to exist in this world; the

reliability of Sam's outlook therefore is questioned. This play between fantasy and actuality takes centre stage at the climax of the film. The audience are shown scenes in which the real Harry Tuttle rescues Sam and blows up the Ministry, allowing Sam to run away with Jill (Kim Greist). However, at the very end of the film it is made clear that this is all in Sam's head; in reality he is strapped to the chair and in a catatonic state. Thus, the film offers a bleak ending at odds with family-orientated fantasy. Although many aspects of the film can be ascribed to science-fiction rather than fantasy, there are still some elements that belong to the latter. Sam's mother (Katherine Helmond), for example, is a particularly fantastic character. She has an addiction to plastic surgery, and acts perhaps worryingly as a precursor to recent celebrities and their predilection for cosmetic procedures. In Sam's fantasy at the end of the film, his mother has had so much plastic surgery that she now looks like Jill, and has a flock of admirers. It is elements like this that situate *Brazil* in the fantasy genre. Sam's mother has become a caricature, going beyond reasonable modification to become an entirely different person. Despite the elements of dystopia that are plausible (arguably some of which has come true), other aspects of the film, such as the different endings, can only to be described as fantasy.

Conan the Barbarian, released in 1982, was loosely based on the stories by Robert E. Howard. The film is a sword-and-sorcery epic, and as such features the hallmarks of this genre, with character archetypes such as wizards, and magical elements including curses. In the traditional fantasy vein, the protagonist Conan (Arnold Schwarzenegger) has a quest to fulfil. From the offset, Conan has many obstacles to overcome. As a child he is sold into slavery, after watching his mother and father brutally murdered. As testament to his strength, Conan is the only survivor of the aptly named 'Wheel of Pain', an outdoor grain mill that the slaves are forced to operate.

Conan's mission is one of revenge, but perhaps to justify this there is also a more honourable aim. He must rescue the king's daughter (Valerie Quennessen) from the cult that murdered his parents and destroyed his village. *Conan the Barbarian* is situated firmly in the exotic marvellous category. Events take place in a fictional setting, an imagined past that does not relate to a specific historical period.

In the scale of the production and the style of Conan's journey, John Milius' film owes much to the biblical epics of the 1950s and 1960s. What differentiates *Conan* from these earlier epics is the mythology employed in the 1982 film. Like other sword-and-sorcery pictures, the film creates its own mythology, which affects the reigning powers, beliefs and religious predilections in the story. For example, Conan worships Crom, a fictional deity. Furthermore, the cult has its own set of beliefs, affirming that flesh is stronger than steel. Millius' film offers a negative depiction of organised religion, although the cult that is portrayed is not really comparable to any world religions. Like some of the film discussed in Chapter 4, there is a tension between the magic and beliefs of old and the more organised religious sect. What designates *Conan the Barbarian* as an adult-orientated fantasy, unlike a lot of sword-and-sorcery movies, is the level of explicit violence and nudity present in the film. *Conan* was given a Restricted rating in the United States. It is the violence that is most prevalent, with graphic fight scenes. There is also an explicit sex scene, which would not have been permissible in a PG-rated movie. Furthermore, the cult is seen to dine on human body parts, and a member of the cult (presumably brainwashed) willingly jumps to her death to show her devotion. Despite these aspects, many of the narrative elements of *Conan the Barbarian* are similar to the family-friendly end of the sub-genre's scale. Indeed, the sequel *Conan the Destroyer* (1984) was aimed at a family audience; the lack of graphic imagery of its predecessor garnered the film a PG rating in the United States.

Although much of the fantasy output in the 1980s was aimed at a family audience, as this chapter as discussed, there were fantasy films made for all demographics. Fantasy family films tended to feature a family at the heart of the narrative, whether this was nuclear or not. Although children were often pivotal to the narrative, adults were also frequently indispensible. Habitually, after equilibrium had been restored (usually by everything returning to normal after the fantastic element had been expelled), the family unit is stronger and more resilient. Fantasy family films put family values at the core of the narrative; squabbling siblings work together when facing danger, and children develop a newfound respect for the parents. Fantasy teenpics likewise put teenage issues at the very centre of narrative. *Weird Science* featured many of the teen issues of other Hughes teen comedies. Indeed, the fantastic element was almost superfluous to the central plot of Gary and Wyatt becoming confident and popular enough to get girlfriends. On the other hand, whilst the teen issues were important in *The Lost Boys*, the vampire theme was driving force. Like many of the other films discussed in this thesis, fantasy combined with a host of other genres to produce films intended to appeal to different age groups. As this chapter has illustrated, fantasy films featured a number of the same traits as non-fantasy films aimed at the same audience. Notwithstanding, magical or fantastic elements were integral to the plot of these films.

[cdlxiii] For example, in his review of *Ghostbusters II*, Tony Crawley comments that the film is not effective in entertaining either the child or adult audience. Tony Crawley, 'The Film That Nearly Never Was Ghostbusters II', *Starburst*, 137, January 1990, p. 19
[cdlxiv] Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950*, Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1988, p. 236
[cdlxv] Statistics from *Motion Picture Almanac*, Quigley, New York, 1986-1992
[cdlxvi] For example, *Variety* stated the film "should please all ages", whilst Marc Issue of *City Limits* commented that the television show was attracted a "massive" audience of adults. Anonymous, 'Review: Pee-Wee's Big Adventure', *Variety*, 31 July 1985, p. 14. Marc Issue, 'Geeks and Fruitgums', *City Limits*, 306,13 August 1987, p. 20
[cdlxvii] See Of Master and Mermaids Chapter, pp. ***
[cdlxviii] *Big* took $115 million in rentals in the US. It was also nominated for a number of Academy Awards. David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006, p. 224
[cdlxix] Richard Corliss, 'Cinema: Lying with A Straight Face', *Time Magazine*, 13 March 1989. Accessed on 10 March 2011 from:
http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,957217,00.html
[cdlxx] Sarah Harwood, *Family Fictions: Representations of the Family in 1980s Hollywood Cinema*, Macmillan Press, Basingstoke and London, 1997, p. 153
[cdlxxi] Chris Auty, 'The Complete Spielberg?', *Sight and Sound*, 51, 4, 1982, p. 279
[cdlxxii] Marina Heung, 'Why ET Must Go Home: The New Family in American Cinema', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 11, 2, Summer 1983, p. 84
[cdlxxiii] Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan…and Beyond*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, p. 147
[cdlxxiv] Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood under the Electric Rainbow, 1980-89*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000, p. 202
[cdlxxv] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1989', *Variety*, 24 January 1990, p. 24
[cdlxxvi] Kirk Honeycutt, 'Film Review: Honey, I Shrunk the Kids', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 308, 5, 21 June 1989, p. 4
[cdlxxvii] Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 110-19
[cdlxxviii] Wasko, ibid. p. 114
[cdlxxix] Anonymous, 'Review: Honey, I Shrunk The Kids', *Variety*, 28 June 1989, p. 16
[cdlxxx] Honneycutt, ibid. p. 14
[cdlxxxi] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, New York, 1975, p. 56
[cdlxxxii] Todorov, p. 56
[cdlxxxiii] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 121
[cdlxxxiv] Statistics from *Motion Picture Almanac* (Quigley, New York, 1986-1992)
[cdlxxxv] Todorov, ibid. p. 56

Chapter 7: "I Ain't 'Fraid of No Ghost": Ghost Busters, Gremlins, Beetlejuice and the 1980s Supernatural Comedy

Supernatural comedy was a successful and prevalent sub-genre of fantasy in the 1980s. This chapter is dedicated to identifying and defining this sub-genre, and will discuss its conventions and its wider historical significance. It is important first of all to determine what is meant by `supernatural comedy`. Whilst the term often evokes images of ghosts and apparitions, it is used to describe anything that is not of the normal or natural everyday world.[cdlxxxvi] Thus it refers to otherworldly creatures and `body swaps` as well as ghosts. This chapter will focus on films that best fit the supernatural comedy category. Therefore *Ghost Busters* is identified as belonging to this sub-genre but *Mannequin* is not. Although the latter film has a strong comedic vein running through it, the dominating presence of the love story suggests that the film is a fantasy hybrid (combining fantasy, romance, comedy and drama) rather than a supernatural comedy.

The films examined in this chapter have been tagged with a variety of terms by film reviewers and journalists, and whilst the term 'supernatural comedy' has been used to describe some of the films discussed in this chapter, it is not the default category for all the films. Many of the reviews of *Ghost Busters* recognise the film as a hybrid. *The Hollywood Reporter*, for example, describes *Ghost Busters* as "a ghost story that combines action adventure with comedy and high-tech special effects".[cdlxxxvii] Others saw the film as spoof of science-fiction and horror films (Kim Newman likened it to a 'National Lampoon's Call of the Cthulhu', referring to the comedy film series that began with 1978's *Animal House*).[cdlxxxviii] Some critics also considered *Ghost Busters* a comedy.[cdlxxxix] The press pack for the film stated that "first and foremost, [Ghost

Busters] must succeed as a comedy",[cdxc] yet writer and star Dan Aykroyd has described the film as a "paranormal adventure fantasy comedy".[cdxci] Thus it is clear that critics and writers were unable to establish a clear-cut generic label for the film. The same is true of *Gremlins*. Critics tended to focus on the scarier elements of *Gremlins* in their reviews of the film. Arthur Knight lamented that some scenes were "straight out of the horror genre",[cdxcii] whilst *Film Comment* called the film "almost subversive".[cdxciii] Robert T. Eberwein probably summed up critical opinion best when stating that "Gremlins appears to be working within two basic generic frameworks: the populist American small town comedy/drama and the science fiction film."[cdxciv] The term "supernatural comedy" was used in a review of *Beetlejuice* in 1988.[cdxcv] However, it also received a host of other labels, among them "comedy-horror",[cdxcvi] "ghost story",[cdxcvii] and a "comic version of *The Exorcist* – from the dead person's point of view".[cdxcviii] It is evident that whilst critics and writers were happy to label *Ghost Busters* and *Beetlejuice* with the terms "ghostly" or "supernatural", the same did not apply to *Gremlins*. Thus, there appears to be a divide in the minds of reviewers between comedies featuring ghosts and the afterlife, and comedies with other fantastic elements.

An expression prevalent in describing fantastic films with a strong humorous vein is "Comedy Horror". This term, as well as various minor variations on it, has been used to categorise the three aforementioned films and a host of other movies. In 2004, science-fiction and fantasy film magazine *Starburst* dedicated a whole issue to this hybrid genre. The issue included a list of what the magazine deemed to be the top ten films in the category.[cdxcix] Whilst the list included *Ghost Busters*, *Beetlejuice* and *Gremlins*, it also included films that I would designate as belonging to a separate category. Although all three films contain elements that are also found in horror films (ghosts, creatures and violence, for example), the frightening moments appear less

intense than in horror films. It is this that differentiates these films from others on the list such as *Evil Dead II* (1987) or *Shaun of the Dead* (2004). Both these films are humorous. However they also contain elements that align them to the horror genre, namely the conventions of tension, violence and gore. These ingredients are as evident in *Evil Dead II* and *Shaun of the Dead* as in more traditional horror fare – *Psycho* (1960) or *Halloween* (1978) for example. I believe that it is this that separates supernatural comedy from comedy horror. While *Beetlejuice* may contain some moderate violence (which is more fantastical than graphic), *Evil Dead II* frightens its audience as well as making it laugh. This point is reinforced by the films' ratings. *Evil Dead II* received a Restricted certificate on release whilst *Beetlejuice* was PG-rated in the United States.[d] While it is fair to suggest that the films deemed supernatural comedy do have moments of tension and apprehension, overall the emphasis is more on the fantastic than the frightening, as will be demonstrated later on in this chapter.

Little has been written on supernatural comedy as a genre. Most theorists tend to classify films in this field as belonging to a sub-genre, or as being a hybrid genre. Some give emphasis to the supernatural nature of the films by aligning them to the fantasy or science-fiction genres, while others see it as a form of comedy, not unlike the screwball or slapstick sub-genres. Neale has observed that comedy as a genre is "able to combine with or to parody virtually every other genre or form".[di] Thus supernatural comedy can be considered as just fantasy-flavoured comedy. More has been said on comedy horror. Rick Altman questions whether what he calls "comic horror" is destined to be a genre in its own right.[dii] Stephen Prince views the films as "horror-comedy". He does however differentiate between these films and those such as *Evil Dead II*, claiming *Beetlejuice* et. al. were "without the ultraviolence".[diii] William Paul has written at length on horror and comedy in his book *Laughing Screaming*. Although it might initially seem to be

focussed on horror comedies, it focuses in fact on horror and "grossout" comedy.[div] Thus while *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Animal House* are discussed, *Ghost Busters* and others are not.

Supernatural comedy was not new in the late 1970s and 1980s. In 1924 the British film *Alf's Button* was released. The film can be seen as a precursor to supernatural comedy's more contemporary counterparts. The comedy featured title character Alf discovering that one of his uniform buttons is made from the brass of Aladdin's lamp. Comedic incidences occur through the folly of the Genie and are similar in tone and humour to the 1980s films. *Alf's Button* was followed by a talkie remake in 1930, and its sequel *Alf's Button Afloat* (1938). In addition, *The Ghost Goes West*, a film about a Scottish ghost who is transported to America when the castle he haunts is relocated there, shares the same combination of humour and the supernatural as *Beetlejuice* and *High Spirits* (1988). *Vice Versa* (1910) marked the first adaptation of F. Anstey's 1882 novel of the same name. The story has spawned numerous remakes in various guises over the decades (such as the 1948 British version starring Roger Livesey), as well as a whole cycle of "bodyswap" comedies in the 1980s. 1967's *Bedazzled*, starring Dudley Moore and Peter Cook, is one of a number of supernatural comedies based themselves on the story of Faust. It was remade in 2000 with Liz Hurley playing the devil. Whilst there are more examples of supernatural comedies released before the late 1970s, there does not appear to be any discernable cycles of successful films from the sub-genre. From the 1970s, in particular with Disney's hit bodyswap comedy *Freaky Friday*, supernatural comedy became a successful and familiar sub-genre of the period.

Supernatural comedy can claim the most successful film of 1984, as well as entries in the top ten box office lists throughout the decade.[dv] *Ghost Busters* and *Gremlins* were among the most successful films of 1984. Both were followed by belated but ultimately profitable sequels. *Ghostbusters II* (1989) was one of the biggest box office hits of 1989,[dvi] and *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990) took $20 million in rentals.[dvii] In 1988, *Beetlejuice* was a surprise hit for Warner Bros, taking $33.2 million in rentals,[dviii] despite its modest budget of $14 million.[dix] *Beetlejuice* was accompanied that year by another supernatural comedy in the same vein – *High Spirits* (1988). Featuring a similar theme of humorous hauntings, *High Spirits* ultimately could not match the former film's critical or substantial commercial success.[dx]

Critics observed the similarities between *Gremlins* and the *Critters* film series of the decade.[dxi] *Critters* (1986) had its most obvious parallels with Joe Dante's film in the small malevolent creatures that attack a small mid-western town. *Critters* was followed by three sequels, released between 1988 and 1992. There were numerous other films released in the 1980s that could be considered supernatural comedies, however most of these have strong inclinations towards other genres. *Teen Wolf* is perhaps at first glance a fairly typical supernatural comedy, however it also exemplifies the teen movie genre that was so prevalent in the decade. Likewise, **Batteries Not Included* would be included in the sub-genre were it not for the strong emotional streak that runs through the film. Matthew Robbins' film does contain moments of humour, but is dominated by emotional sentiment. The robots in the film appear to display emotion, and the humans have heartfelt interactions with them.

The most abundant cycle of supernatural comedy in the period was the bodyswap film. Although it appeared in various guises, the main premise of the form was the exchange of physical identities between two distinct personalities. As mentioned previously, this was not a new: the bodyswap theme had been around for almost one hundred years. The more recent cycle really took off with Disney's *Freaky Friday* in 1976. This was followed by *Heaven Can Wait* (1978), *All of Me* (1984), *Like Father Like Son* (1987), *18 Again!* (1988), *Vice Versa* (1988), *Big*, *Dream a Little Dream* (1989), *Switch* (1991), and *Prelude to a Kiss* (1992). Despite the bodyswap theme, not all of these are best categorised as supernatural comedies. *Prelude to a Kiss* was more a romantic drama with a fantastic twist, and the most successful film of the cycle, *Big*,[dxii] contained dramatic, as well as comic, scenes. The bodyswap cycle came to an end in the early 1990s, but has recently been revived with *Freaky Friday* (2003), *13 Going on 30* (2004), *It's a Boy Girl Thing* (2006) and *17 Again* (2009).

At first glance, the conventions of supernatural comedy may appear no different to that of the fantasy genre as a whole. Like many fantasies, supernatural comedy tends to be earthbound, taking place in everyday locales. It also features benign ghosts and other fantastical creatures. (A key example of this is the presence of Slimer in *Ghost Busters*;[dxiii] a ghost that at first seems malevolent but is later revealed to be little more than mischievous). The same can be said of fantasy in general – *Labyrinth*'s Sir Didymus is another example of the presence of a benevolent magical creature. Consequently, perhaps where supernatural comedy really distinguishes itself from the other types of fantasy is in its attitude. That is to say, the way in which the sub-genre approaches the fantastic diverges from the fantasy genre as a whole. For example, within supernatural comedy, the elements of horror are never really threatening. Whereas in a more traditional horror film such as *Hellraiser* (1987) there is genuine

menace, any threat in supernatural comedy is dealt with lightly, and the atmosphere is never really ominous. Often the climax of a supernatural comedy will take on a more serious tone, however these scenes are never really without their humorous moments. The bodyswap films are marked by other preoccupations as well. They commonly begin with an exposition on regular life. *Vice Versa* (1988), for example, depicts a typical day in the life of the father and son. Prior to the swap, the film details interactions between the characters, highlighting the fractured nature of their relationship. Once the transition has occurred, humour is created both by the initial unlikeliness of the situation, and by the characters` acceptance of circumstances. For example, Charlie (Fred Savage) makes the most of being in his father's body (played by Judge Reinhold) by taking the opportunity to play a guitar solo at the department store. Nonetheless, at a certain point within these films, the characters realise that order must be restored, and despite the fun, one or both of the leads set about trying to find a solution. This last element can be found in most supernatural comedies; there is sometimes a significant occurrence that causes one or more of the main characters to realise things have gotten out of hand. Supernatural comedy, like fantasy and narrative film in general, ends with the restoration of order. However, in supernatural comedy, the restoration of order does not mean that things revert to the way they are at the beginning of the film. Often situations may have changed for good by the end of the film, and to go back to the set-up at the beginning would be inappropriate. Thus, whilst Marshall and Charlie revert back into their respective roles by the end of *Vice Versa*, it is with a new sense of empathy towards each other, and a better relationship between the two because of it. Lastly, but most importantly, the key convention of the supernatural comedy sub-genre is that humour is generated through the fantastical events and circumstances. In effect this is what creates the form; an absence of humour at the fantastic would deem the films as just fantasy, whilst humour without the magic would make them simply comedy films.

Ghost Busters opens, credit-less, on a panning shot of New York Public Library. The accompanying music, instrumental sound seemingly garnered from wind chimes, creates an air of trepidation. The camera follows a middle-aged female librarian down to the basement stacks, tracking her as she looks for the correct shelf. As she looks, books float across from shelf to shelf, unbeknown to her. From the outset of the film, then, it is made clear that this is a fantasy. To use Todorov's terminology, the film is therefore situated immediately in the marvellous; there is no hesitation over the event that would lend itself to the fantastic category.[dxiv] Furthermore, this act of exposure, that is to say making it clear from the start that the forces at play are supernatural, rules out the anxiety that is key to so many horror films. Central to horror films such as *Jeepers Creepers* (2001) is the trepidation accentuated by the unknown. The reason why Victor Salva's film was so successful in building tension, one could argue, is that the creature that had been terrorising the two protagonists was not revealed until relatively late in the narrative. Thus the longer the film remains in the realm of the fantastic, the more successful it is in building fear. Despite the eerie goings on in the opening sequence of *Ghost Busters* then, it is obvious that it is not going to be a horror film, for the humorous tone is revealed within the opening two or so minutes. There is no ambiguity over the fact there is a haunting; within seconds the notion that someone (of human form) could be following the librarian is dispelled. The style of film is further cemented by having the bright, cartoonish film logo superimposed over the face of the screaming librarian. Furthermore, as the logo hones in on the librarian, the memorable theme tune begins. The Oscar-nominated song, by Ray Parker Jr., is up-tempo and catchy number, which dovetails with the jovial nature of the film.

The film also rather quickly exhibits what is perhaps the main preoccupation of the supernatural comedy sub-genre: subversion. Whether intentional or not, most supernatural comedy appears to subvert generally held beliefs and ideologies. Rosemary Jackson claims that fantasy as a genre fixates on the notion of subversion.[dxv] However, while this may be true in general, I would argue that it is at its most apparent and consistent in supernatural comedy. Due to the humorous way that magic and fantasy are dealt with in these films, the same light touch can be employed to manipulate accepted ideas and generalisations. As the fantastic is so readily accepted in these narratives, it does not seem out of place that generally held ideas are subverted. Moreover, among the norms that are subverted are those that govern the depictions that commonly occur in mainstream cinema. This appears to be the case particularly in *Beetlejuice*, as will be discussed in due course. *Ghost Busters*, however, can also claim its fair share of subversion. Peter Venkman, the character played by Bill Murray, is revealed to be a university academic working in the field of Paranormal Studies. Following the opening sequence, the film cuts to number of exterior shots of a university campus. This is followed by a close up of an office door showing the subject area as well as the names of the three main protagonists. On the door the words 'Venkman burn in hell' have been graffitied in bold red letters. This appears unusual both because of the place in which it has been sighted and because for a person to have been bold, or angry, enough to display such a sentiment on his office door suggests that he is a controversial character. And here lies the subversion. Venkman is an academic doctor carrying out scientific experiments at a university, yet his manner and demeanour suggest none of the professionalism that would generally be associated with this position of authority. Venkman's lack of professionalism and juvenile attitude to his work is reinforced by the way in which he treats the two students participating in his extrasensory perception experiment. Whilst he is dismissive of the male student, giving him electric shocks even

when he gives the correct answer, he flirts with the attractive female student, telling her she has given the correct answers, thereby nullifying the accuracy of his study. In a further exposition of his unprofessionalism, he asks the female student out on a date; not the expected behaviour of a serious college academic. Nevertheless, it is this attitude that generates so much of the comedy.

Venkman's dry humour and witty retorts are a main source of humour in the film. In particular, the way in which he reacts to the supernatural produces much of the amusement. When Venkman, Ray Stanz (Dan Aykroyd) and Egon Spengler (Harold Ramis) go to investigate the incident at the library, it is clear that Venkman is more sceptical than the others. It is clear up to this point that he does not believe in the supernatural, despite being an expert in paranormal studies. His sabotaging of the experiment in the earlier scene proves that he is not serious about investigating the paranormal. As the three men peruse the basement, both Spengler and Stanz are serious about their examination; Stanz carries a camcorder to document findings whilst Spengler has scientific gadgets. When they come across the tall pile of books Spengler is in particular excited, proclaiming its significance to his colleagues. To this Venkman retorts in his characteristically sarcastic fashion that: "You're right, no… human being would stack books like this". The other characters ignore his quip, which adds to its humour; these comments appear solely for the amusement of the audience, rather than for the continuation of dialogue or exposition of some fact. This scene also exhibits Murray's flair for slapstick. When collecting a sample of the mucus for Spengler, Venkman struggles to remove the residue from his hands, resulting in him wiping it onto his face before deciding to wipe it on the books. When the three characters are confronted by the supernatural, their varying reactions are also a cause for amusement. On seeing the translucent spectre in front of them, both Spengler and Stanz react with

an understandable shock; despite their years of research into the field, they have never actually seen paranormal activity. Whilst Venkman also looks surprised at what is in front of him, his reaction is typically droll; as the camera cuts between a close up of Spengler and Stanz and a close up of Venkman's face he simply asks "so what do we do?". It is this reaction that typifies *Ghost Busters* as a supernatural comedy, and indeed reinforces an attribute that is seen time and time again in the sub-genre. Venkman's immediate acceptance of the fantastic is key to the supernatural comedy. Unlike general fantasy where magic is often questioned or treated with a level of disbelief by characters, the protagonists in supernatural comedy are quickly (or in this case instantaneously) accepting of their circumstances.

The climax of *Ghost Busters* reveals another trait of supernatural comedy: even in facing a grave threat, humour can be found. The climactic scene takes place atop a skyscraper in Manhattan. It is apocalypse time and the only hope the city has rests in the fortunes of the four Ghost Busters. On facing the supernatural being Gozer (now in human form, played by Slavitza Jovan), Stanz attempts to deal with the situation in a pacifistic manner. His well-meaning request that Gozer should cease activity is amusing for two reasons. Firstly, the way in which he makes his request (as a "representative of New York City" he states) appears ridiculous because he is talking to a supernatural being who has no care for the jurisdiction and laws of the city. Secondly, the fact that he attempts to make this request in the first place is a cause for humour. Though this is indeed a supernatural comedy, it is unlikely that Gozer will relent so easily. Gozer then relays to the four men that they will choose the way in which the city will be destroyed. This circumstance provides one of the film's most memorable scenes.[dxvi] Although the four men knew that they must clear their minds to avoid conjuring an image that would be used by Gozer, it proved an impossible task for one. Stanz, who played the well

meaning but slightly bumbling buffoon to Spengler's straight-laced seriousness and Venkman's comedian, is unable to blank out a certain image. When the three other Ghost Busters realise that Stanz has thought of something, they hone in on him asking what he imagined. With a look of bewilderment, Stanz admits, "I couldn't help it… it just popped in there". Before they can find out what Stanz has imagined, their attention is diverted by an ominous presence from behind the skyline of skyscrapers. An enormous white head with a sailors hat atop is shown, before cutting back to a close up of Stanz as he finally admits: "It's the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man". The ridiculousness of this moment perhaps defines the supernatural comedy best; of all the things that could have been sent to destroy New York City, a gigantic creature made out of marshmallow and with an innocent smiley face is the enemy the Ghost Busters must defeat.

Gremlins was released in same year as *Ghost Buster*s. The original story was apparently more grisly than the end result; it was Steven Spielberg's idea to keep in Gizmo after the original story called for the character to be killed off after he had spawned the gremlins.[dxvii] *Gremlins* would have certainly been a different film had the little creature not survived. As it is, Gizmo's playful presence feels imperative in lessening the sometimes surprisingly violent elements, which push the film more towards horror than fantasy. Whilst the other gremlins terrorise the small town, reeking havoc wherever they go, Gizmo's good nature indicates that not all these creatures are bad. Furthermore, without this strong juxtaposing of Gizmo against the gremlins, the film may have come across as simply another invasion movie, echoing the small town setting and alien intruders – a *War of the Worlds* for the 1980s perhaps. Gizmo, then, fulfils a dual function in *Gremlins*. The mere presence of such a character immediately distances *Gremlins* from the straight, invasion-style movie it could have become.

Additionally, the traits that Gizmo exhibits are set in such stark contrast to that of the gremlins that it emphasises the callousness of the latter, and therefore generates more humour.

Gremlins is set at Christmas and begins with protagonist Billy Peltzer's father Randall (Hoyt Axton) purchasing an unusual present for his son from a Chinatown shop. When Randall brings the gift back to the family home, he tells Billy (Zach Galligan) to open it immediately. Billy's mother (Frances Lee McCain) and father gather around, along with dog Barney, as Billy carefully unwraps the package. Gently pushing back the lid, both Billy and his mother are startled when Gizmo's head pops out of the box. Billy asks his father what is in the box, to which Randall replies; "It's your new pet". The camera cuts back to a close up of the open box, as Gizmo very slowly peeks out of the top. The shot is accompanied by soft instrumental music, an almost lullaby-sounding tune with a somewhat unnatural edge. Despite the fact that Gizmo does not actually look like any known animal, especially not a household pet, there is no alarm at his presence; Billy instantly takes to the creature, holding him in his arms like a baby. Gizmo fulfils the role of the benign creature, so much so that he really is the archetype of the sub-genre: a creature that, despite his fantastic nature, is immediately cherished by those around him. This scene also highlights how readily accepted the fantastic is in the supernatural comedy sub-genre. Whilst there is some surprise at his presence, Gizmo is immediately accepted by the other characters. There is no real questioning of his origins, or indeed what he actually is. He is simply taken into the Peltzer home like any other ordinary pet. The ease with which the family accept him is exemplified by Billy's mother Lynn's comment: "I hope he's house-broken".

Much of the humour in *Gremlins* derives from the actions and treatment of the gremlins. Whilst much of *Ghost Busters*' humour was based around the supernatural, not all of the comedy related to this. Venkman's wisecracks, for example, were an important element of the comedy. In *Gremlins*, however, the fantastic, that is to say the gremlins themselves, are instrumental in creating the humour. The scene in which Lynn Peltzer fights the gremlins in her house possibly best highlights the black humour of the film. Lynn is a homely, motherly lady – a good mother to Billy and a good wife to Randall. Up until this point, she fills a typical middle–aged female role: a passive carer playing a role of minor significance. In the scene itself, Lynn is depicted baking gingerbread cookies; a somewhat stereotypical mother's Christmas-time activity. After she goes to investigate the noise upstairs, Lynn is confronted by the sight of numerous oozing hatchlings in the attic. Looking scared, she nervously grips her kitchen knife as she returns downstairs. As she peers around the kitchen door, she is greeted by the site of a gremlin sitting on the counter, biting the head off one of her gingerbread cookies. Perhaps it is a rage in hearing the gremlin mumble "yum yum" as he devours the cookies, or just survival instinct, but Lynn is suddenly motivated into fighting back against the gremlins. She picks her moment, waiting until the gremlin is licking the mixing bowl before suddenly switching the electric mixer on. The result produces a perverse hilarity; the gremlins legs twirl in the air in until its thick green blood splatters the walls. This victory appears to spur her on, as she gradually approaches the next gremlin, hiding behind a fold up chair as the gremlin throws plates at her. As Lynn approaches the creature there is a perceptible increase in her rage; she shouts: "Get off my kitchen" at it as she closes in with her knife. The following shots clearly evoke the shower scene of *Psycho*. As the music works to a high-pitched climax, a high angle close up displays the anxiety in Lynn's face as she repeatedly brings up the knife to stab

the gremlin. Finally, Lynn manages to microwave another gremlin before leaving the kitchen.

There are a number of elements that create the humour in this scene. Firstly is the unlikely hero in the motherly figure of Lynn, destroying the gremlins in the most creatively gruesome of ways. Additionally, the fact that Lynn appears so straight-faced and anxious in doing so is an amusement in itself; realistically the situation is ludicrous but she faces it with such seriousness that even this becomes amusing. Lastly the sheer outrageousness of the gremlins, with their devil-may-care attitude, is a constant source of humour throughout the film.

There is a level of perversity in the actions of the gremlins, which creates a more base, juvenile sense of comedy. The subversion in *Gremlins* is found mostly in the actions of the creatures. Their torture of Gizmo (they tie him up to the dartboard whilst throwing darts around him) is both difficult to watch and perversely amusing because it is ridiculous. In addition, when Billy enters his lounge after hearing the screaming from his mother, he is greeted by the sight of a gremlin attempting to strangle her with the fairy lights from the Christmas tree. It is here that *Gremlins* is at its most subversive; a film set at Christmas that so wilfully sets out to destroy traditional seasonal imagery. As Ann Lloyd observes, *Gremlins* demolishes "every institution that is supposed to exemplify for children 'all things bright and beautiful'".[dxviii] Despite this, order is restored by the end of the film. Christmas is saved (the echoes here between the film's Kingston Falls and *It's a Wonderful Life*'s Bedford Falls are most apparent), and the authority of the humans is reinstated. Gizmo aids in the defeat of the gremlins by exposing them to bright light. In a typically gruesome finale, the fine detail of the final

gremlin decomposing is exhibited in all its glory. However, in true supernatural comedy form, things are not quite the same as they were at the beginning. The grandfather, who sold Gizmo to Randall at the very beginning of the film, returns to collect him, telling the family that they obviously did not act responsibly enough. Though sad to see him leave, it is clear that they agree this is the safest option for Gizmo. Perhaps what is most changed by the outcome of the film is the protagonist Billy. In the exposition at the beginning he is depicted as rather down on his luck, treated dismissively by people at the bank where he works. By the climax however, he has shown strength in destroying the gremlins and restoring order in the town. He is also shown to have reached a level of maturity by getting the girl, in the form of Kate, who partnered with him in defeating the creatures. *Gremlins* ends with a voiceover that is typical of the approach of the whole movie. The audience is warned, in a light-hearted manner, before calling a repair man when an appliance breaks down, to check their home as "There just might be a gremlin in your house".

Beetlejuice was the second feature from director Tim Burton, after the surprise success of *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*.[dxix] The film concerns a bio-exorcist who is hired by a ghost couple who find their residence inhabited by a living family. Critics were quick to pick up on the apparent lack of firm storyline. Kyle Counts, in his review of the film, calls *Beetlejuice* a "thoroughly original visual bonanza, which is sure to baffle moviegoers who favour films with a conventional narrative".[dxx] The lack of emphasis on the narrative is something that has been observed by Burton himself. He states; "Beetlejuice… had no real story, it didn't make any sense, it as more like a stream of consciousness".[dxxi] Nonetheless, most critics were positive in their appraisals of the film, citing its originality as a key factor in appealing to a wide audience.[dxxii] Reviewers were also more willing to label the film as supernatural comedy than *Ghost Busters* or

Gremlins. Kim Newman, for instance, commented that: "'Beetlejuice' is an ingenious reversal of the '*Topper*'/'*The Ghost and Mrs Muir*' brand of supernatural comedy".[dxxiii] Despite its modest budget and relatively unknown director, *Beetlejuice* went on to become the tenth biggest film of 1988.[dxxiv]

It is not immediately obvious either to the viewer or to the characters themselves that the Maitland couple have died in the car accident and become ghosts. The couple return to their home after the accident still dripping wet (their car had plunged into a lake). As they sit by the fire to warm themselves, a flame momentarily engulfs Barbara's hand. Startled by this, she moves back from the fire. It is only Adam (Alec Baldwin) who notices there is still fire; he holds up her hand to reveal to small flames from the top of her fingertips. The couple look at one another in disbelief; it is clear something is amiss. It is only when Adam tries to leave the porch that both the Maitlands and the audience are truly plunged into the supernatural. On stepping off the last step of the porch, Adam descends into a surrealist desert with a giant snake–shaped creature coming towards him until Barbara (Geena Davis) pulls him back. The Maitlands deal with the fact that they are ghosts in a calm, placid manner, despite the gravity of the situation. Yet again, the willingness of the protagonists to accept the fantastic is a central generic ingredient. As Adam tinkers with his model town set in the attic, Barbara seems as pre-occupied with the mundane. As she sighs, exasperated, Adam asks "Cabin fever, honey?". Barbara replies: "No I can't clean anything properly. The vacuum cleaner is out in the garage and we can't leave the house". This exchange exemplifies the nature of the couple; despite their astounding situation, the Maitlands seem content to get on with everyday life. Furthermore it takes the supernatural comedy convention of accepting the fantastic one step beyond; in this scene at least, the supernatural is almost ignored.

Although there is a cutaway to Beetlejuice (Michael Keaton) thumbing through a newspaper earlier in the film, he is more formally introduced in a television advertisement watched by the Maitlands. By this point the Deets family have moved into the Maitlands home, and their daughter Lydia (Winona Ryder) is beginning to suspect that the property is haunted. Beetlejuice appears in the advert dressed in western attire, seemingly on a range in the middle of a graveyard. Beetlejuice is there to promote his services as a bio-exorcist; that is to say, his purpose is to exorcise the living from the homes of the dead. In numerous ways the character of Beetlejuice is the personification of subversion. Firstly, his very profession goes against the grain: *Beetlejuice* undermines the general premise that ghosts are the ones who don't belong in this world and thus need to be exorcised. Secondly, in the advert, Beetlejuice describes himself as "The afterlife's leading bio-exorcist". The very fact that there is more than one provides an interesting insight into *Beetlejuice*'s afterlife. Certainly it is a place where afterlife professionals compete for business. Thirdly, the way in which he advertises for business challenges generally held views on the afterlife. Particularly in mainstream cinema, but in depictions as a whole, there is a view that the afterlife has some mystic, ancient quality. Undoubtedly this is tied to the unknown aspect of life after death. One only needs to look at a film such as *The Exorcist*, for a depiction of a spirit world that is linked to ancient, mystifying powers. In *Beetlejuice*, however, the title character sells exorcism as a commodity, offering a free demon possession with every bio-exorcism, according the advertisement. This infomercial-like way of promoting his services exhibits that instead of a necessary requirement for exceptional circumstances, in the world of *Beetlejuice* exorcism is a product to be sold. Finally, the very manner of Beetlejuice is at odds with common cinematic portrayals of the exorcist or mystical shaman. *The Exorcist*'s Father Merrin (Max von Sydow) is a serious, theological man

who takes his role seriously. Indeed, his vocation leads to his downfall. Beetlejuice, on the other hand, challenges the seriousness of his profession by being brash, rude and vulgar. When Adam and Barbara first meet him, Beetlejuice makes rude gestures behind their backs, spits into his jacket, and attempts to lift up Barbara's dress. It is fair to say he is the antithesis of Father Merrin's solemn, man-of-God portrayal of an exorcist.

Beetlejuice's preoccupation with subversion is explored further in the scene where the Maitlands go and visit their afterlife caseworker. The waiting room they enter seems at odds with familiar cinematic depictions of the underworld. Rather than generalising heaven or hell imagery, the Maitlands are made to wait in a room filled with other clients. In a sense, this could be a waiting room for a doctor, accountant or any other similar service. The other clients, however, are anything but ordinary. The Maitlands are surrounded by strange looking creatures, macabre images of humans with a difference. Confused by their surroundings they wonder if what they see is what happens after death. To this, the receptionist informs them that each of the people in the waiting room look the way they do as that is how they died, and comments; "It's all very personal". Thus, the couple are surrounded by a magician's assistant who is sawn in half (presumably a magic trick gone wrong), a smoker who is charcoal-like, a man with a shrunken head, and various others. The humour here is a gentler kind than the brashness of the title character. Nonetheless, it is still related to the supernatural. The receptionist, a beauty queen for Argentina in life, holds up her slit wrists whilst exclaiming: "If I knew then what I know now, I wouldn't have had my little accident". With all the mystery of life after death and the unknown, *Beetlejuice* provides the ultimate irony; a beauty queen commits suicide only to be forced into a life as a receptionist in the underworld. As the *Variety* review observed, the film "to some extent

succeeds at poking fun at serious horror pictures".[dxxv] Help for the Maitlands comes in the form of Juno (Sylvia Sidney), their afterlife caseworker. Despite the weird and wonderful creatures in the waiting room, Juno takes regular human form. Nonetheless, she takes on the role of the benign creature for the Maitlands. Juno is actually supernatural in the fact she inhabits the underworld, and the advice she offers the couple is intended to help them. This isn't to say that she portrays the role as the wise elderly helper in the same way as more traditional fantasy films, Fin Raziel in *Willow* for example. Rather she is portrayed as a chain-smoking cynic, almost like an overworked council employee. When Barbara comments that she is very unhappy, Juno retorts with: "What did you expect? You're dead!". Thus, humour in *Beetlejuice* is generated not only from the fantastic, but also from the subversion of the fantastic.

By the end, Beetlejuice has been destroyed, but with the humour that has embodied the entire film. Before this however, in typically subversive form, Beetlejuice attempts to trap the teenage Lydia into marrying him so he can escape the afterlife. The character typifies his behaviour by stating: "I don't have any rules". The same could be said for the film itself. With its subversion of traditional views of the afterlife and skewered humour, *Beetlejuice* does not seem to play by the same rules of mainstream Hollywood film. Barbara and Adam attempt to stop Beetlejuice from forcing Lydia to marry him. After sending Barbara to the surrealist desert outside the house, to stop her saying his name three times, she comes crashing through the ceiling riding a giant snake that swallows up Beetlejuice. As this does not definitely signal the end of the title character, there is an epilogue where Beetlejuice has his head shrunken whilst sitting in the waiting room. This ending fits in with the light heartedness of the film; much of the action and violence is cartoonish rather than realistic, plus many of the special effects were made using stop-motion rather than more state of the art forms. Order is restored

by the end of the film, but again in typical supernatural comedy fashion, things are not quite the same as they were previously. The penultimate scene depicts Lydia returning from school to the Maitlands, discussing how she did on her test, and it is clear both families are living together. It is a rather appeasing ending as Lydia has great affection for the Maitlands, and she is the daughter they never got the chance to have themselves.

These three films all share a number of traits. They all take place in earthbound locations. Whether it is the small town of *Beetlejuice* or the Manhattan of *Ghost Busters*, these locales are instantly recognisable in their ordinariness. All three films feature benign fantastical creatures, whether this takes the form of the irrepressibly cute Gizmo or the cynical Juno. These characters are instantly accepted by the protagonists, despite their fantastical nature. More importantly, much of the humour of supernatural comedy is derived from the fantastical elements of the film. It is Beetlejuice who steals the show, despite his lack of screen time for a title character. It is the gremlins that cause most of the humour, twisted and violent as they might be. Likewise, even at the climax of the film, humour is generated through the most perilous of situations. Supernatural comedy dictates that New York City is on the verge of being destroyed by a giant marshmallow man. Finally, supernatural comedy is fixated on the idea of subversion. Whether subverting archetype characters such as Lynn Peltzer in *Gremlins*, subverting reactions to the supernatural by way of Venkman in *Ghost Busters*, or subverting traditional ideas about the afterlife as *Beetlejuice* does, the sub-genre is preoccupied by challenging and undermining commonly held ideals. Supernatural comedy was a commercially successful sub-genre in the 1980s. *Ghost Busters* was the first film that used special effects solely for comedic purposes.[dxxvi] It was the biggest film of 1984. Both *Gremlins* and *Beetlejuice* were major box office hits too. *Gremlins* and *Ghost Busters* spawned successful sequels, whilst *Beetlejuice* had a spin-off

children's cartoon series. Furthermore, the sub-genre has sustained success since the 1980s to this day. The bodyswap film in particular has seen renewed attention in recent years, and it is unlikely that spoofs such as the *Scary Movie* series (2000-2008) would have been produced without the earlier success of *Ghost Busters*. Indeed, the success of these 1980s films lives on in contemporary Hollywood. The comedy *Be Kind Rewind* (2008) features a scene where the characters attempt to remake *Ghost Busters*. And, in a final testament to the extended success of supernatural comedy, *Variety* reported in September 2008 that Columbia Pictures were due to make a third instalment of *Ghost Busters*.[dxxvii]

[cdlxxxvi] The Oxford Dictionary defines supernatural as "due to or manifesting some agency above the forces of nature; outside the ordinary operation of cause and effect". J.B. Sykes (ed.), *The Oxford Concise Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985, p. 1071

[cdlxxxvii] Arthur Knight, 'Film Review: 'Ghostbusters' sure to scare up boxoffice loot', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 282, 14, 6 June 1984, p. 4
[cdlxxxviii] Kim Newman, 'New Releases: Ghostbusters', *City Limits*, 166, 7 December 1984, p. 22
[cdlxxxix] Anonymous, 'Review: Ghost Busters', *Variety*, 6 June 1984, p. 20
[cdxc] Anonymous, *Ghost Busters Press Book*, 1984
[cdxci] Quoted in Jason Matloff, 'Of Marshmallow and Men', *Premiere*, 17, 9, June 2004, p. 83
[cdxcii] Arthur Knight, 'Spielberg's scary 'Gremlins' starts cute, then turns grim', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 282, 3, 21 May 1984, p. 16
[cdxciii] David Chute, 'Dante's Inferno', *Film Comment*, 20, 3, May/June 1984, p. 23
[cdxciv] Robert T. Eberwein, 'Genre and the Writerly Text', *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 13, 2, Summer 1985, pp. 64-5
[cdxcv] Kim Newman, 'New Movies: Beetlejuice', *City Limits*, 359, 18 August 1988, p. 25
[cdxcvi] Simon Garfield, 'Beetle Mania', *Time Out*, 937, 3 August 1988, p. 17
[cdxcvii] Steve Grant, 'Film: Beetlejuice', *Time Out*, 939, 17 August 1988, p. 38
[cdxcviii] Wendy Bristow, 'Deadly', *Empire*, 1, June/July 1989, p. 95
[cdxcix] Simon J. Gerard, 'Screams of Laughter', *Starburst*, Special 66, Autumn 2004, pp. 82-8
[d] Interestingly, despite the PG rating in America, *Beetlejuice* was given a 15 rating in the UK on its release. Whilst certifications are sometimes altered over time, the latest DVD release of *Beetlejuice* is remains a 15-rated item.
[di] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 66
[dii] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre*, British Film Institute, London, 1999, p. 140
[diii] Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electric Rainbow, 1980-89*, University of California Press, Berkley, 2000, p. 303
[div] William Paul, *Laughing Screaming*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994
[dv] *Ghost Busters* took $127 million in rentals in the US. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1984', *Variety*, 16 January 1985, p. 16
[dvi] *Ghostbusters II* was the seventh biggest film of 1989 at the US box office, talking $61.6 million in rentals. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1989', *Variety*, 24 January 1990, p. 24
[dvii] Box office statistics for 1990 from *Variety*, accessed 25 June 2011 from: http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=BoxOfficeFilms&id=397875
[dviii] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1988', *Variety*, 11 January 1989, p. 16
[dix] Garfield, ibid. p. 17
[dx] The film only managed $3.5 million in rentals at the US box office. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1988', *Variety*, 11 January 1989, p. 16
[dxi] For example, see Steve Jenkins, 'Review: Critters', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 53, 624, 1986, p. 366
[dxii] *Big* was the fifth biggest film of 1988, taking $50.8 million in rentals at the US box office. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1988', *Variety*, 11 January 1989, p. 16
[dxiii] The ghost does not actually have a name in the original film; it was later named Slimer in the *Real Ghostbusters* cartoon series that followed on from the success of the 1984 film.
[dxiv] Todorov's ideas about the fantastic have been outlined in Chapter 2. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, New York, 1975, p. 33
[dxv] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Routledge, London, 1981, pp. 171-80
[dxvi] *Empire* magazine featured the scene in its 'classic scene' section in 2003. Anonymous, 'Classic Scene: Ghostbusters Stay Puft Marshmallow Man', *Empire*, 174, December 2003, p. 202
[dxvii] Chute, ibid. p. 27
[dxviii] Ann Lloyd, 'Review: Gremlins', *Films and Filming*, 363, December 1984, p. 38
[dxix] Mark Salisbury (ed.), *Burton on Burton*, (revised edn), Faber and Faber, London, 2006, p. 50
[dxx] Kyle Counts, 'Film Review: Beetlejuice', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 301, 37, 28 March 1988, p. 10
[dxxi] Quoted in Salisbury, ibid. p. 55

[dxxii] Stephen Bealing, for example, commented that "Beetlejuice should easily bring in teen audiences bored with Friday The 13th and feckless Freddy from Elm Street". Stephen Bealing, 'Review: Beetlejuice', *Films and Filming*, 407, August 1988, p. 29
[dxxiii] Kim Newman, 'Review: Beetlejuice', p. 25
[dxxiv] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1988', *Variety*, 11 January 1989, p. 16
[dxxv] Anonymous, 'Review: Beetlejuice', *Variety*, 30 March 1988, p. 12
[dxxvi] Joanna Lipari, 'Busters Behind the Ghosts', *Film Comment*, 20, 4, July/August 1984, p. 53
[dxxvii] Michael Fleming, 'Columbia calls up new 'Ghostbusters', *Variety*, 4 September 2008. Accessed on 27 November 2008 from: http://www.variety.com/VR1117991624

Chapter 8: Time, Space, and Capes: Franchises and Comic Book Adaptations from Star Wars to Batman Returns

Many of the most commercially successful films of the late 1970s and 1980s were fantasy franchises. The productions of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas appear to dominate the period, but other franchises should not be overlooked. In particular, the comic book adaptations of the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s were prominent features of top box office rankings, with *Superman* becoming the second highest grossing film of 1978, and *Batman* the highest grossing film of 1989.[dxxviii] This chapter will consider these two facets of 1980s fantasy: the franchise film and the comic book adaptation. Beginning with *Star Wars*, these films have had an enormous impact on film production, marketing, and reception over the last three decades. For some, *Star Wars* epitomises the very core of the New Hollywood.[dxxix] Others draw parallels between these blockbuster films and blockbusters from the studio era.[dxxx] Either way, many of the 1980s fantasy franchises were among the most lucrative productions of the decade, and the cycles that emerged have been replicated in the last few years. This chapter will look at some of the key franchises of the late 1970s and 1980, focussing primarily on *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Back to the Future*, and the *Indiana Jones* films. It will then discuss the *Superman* franchise, and the *Batman* films in more detail.

Perhaps what is most striking about these film franchises is that despite the perception that they were new and groundbreaking,[dxxxi] they all seem to draw on at least some element of cinematic history. Whether this entails the recycling of other, older genres, or pre-sold properties, there is a preoccupation with the past. This can be divided into two areas: the cinematic past and an imagined or historical past. Whilst some films were clearly new versions of previous movies or television series, others

were influenced by earlier, unrelated films. Furthermore, the mythical or historical elements in these films appear as both actual settings, and as subtle themes or points of reference. Some films focus on a real historical past (or as accurate a depiction of one as they permit), whilst others portray an imagined past. The second major ingredient in the fantasy franchise group is the dominance of time or space, or sometimes both. Many of the fantasy ingredients in these films are rooted in aspects of space and/or time. On the surface of some of the films, it may seem that space operates merely as a setting, however it is often vital to the narrative, and the fantasy element is often derived from this.

The term franchise refers to a group of films that are linked by common characters and/or settings. These often take the form of sequels, but not exclusively so. Franchises often extend to other media, including television spin-offs, comics and merchandising. Whilst franchises may appear to be a phenomenon associated with New Hollywood, they existed in the studio era as well, as is particularly evident in merchandising practices of Disney. From the 1970s onwards, sequels have been prominent in Hollywood. This is not to say that they did not exist in some form in classical Hollywood however. In early cinema, serials played a similar role to contemporary film franchises. Usually screened before a matinee performance, these short films were episodic stories, continuing one week to the next. In fact, some of the films that will be discussed later on started their cinematic life as serials in the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, the 1930s saw a wave of Universal horror films featuring archetypal gothic characters such as Dracula and Frankenstein. Although the breadth of films and numerous characters created a cycle rather than a franchise (a cycle being a group of films linked by common themes, genre and style, while in a franchise films are explicitly connected by having the same characters and usually the same setting), the

cycle did contain sequels such as *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935). This set of horror films, with its numerous sequels, was recycled in the 1950s and 1960s, when Britain's Hammer Film Productions required the rights to the characters. The 1950s also saw the commencement of that popular Japanese monster film series, with first film *Godzilla* released in 1954. The 1960s saw the introduction of James Bond in his first cinematic adventure, *Dr No* (1962). Ian Fleming's most infamous character has featured a number of times in every decade since, making James Bond one of the most enduring, as well as successful, film series. The 1970s saw a rise in film sequels and trilogies. Perhaps most notable of these is the *Godfather* trilogy, which began in 1972, based on the novels of Mario Puzo. The first two parts, released in 1972 and 1974 respectively, were both critical and commercial successes.[dxxxii] The final film, *Godfather Part III* (1990) was released sixteen years later. The 1970s saw a number of other sequels, such as *Beyond the Poseidon Adventure* (1979) which, despite being produced seven years after the original, begins where the first film ends. Prior to this, however, 1977 saw the release of a film that would change the way sequels and franchises were appraised.

Star Wars opens with yellow text ascending over a space backdrop. Perhaps what is most striking is that the title of the film is suffixed with the numeral 'IV'. From the outset it is clear to the audience that they are entering the story part way through, rather than at the beginning. Furthermore, it is suggested that there are three earlier segments, which could be released as sequels (which, in fact, did happen with the first three films of the series being produced and released towards the end of the 1990s and in the 2000s). Following the title, the audience is informed of what has happened before this segment commences. In this way most evidently, *Star Wars* evokes and is comparable to serials from the 1930s and 1940s. George Lucas makes it clear that this film is by no means the end of the story; it is not even the beginning. Much like the

earlier serials, the *Star Wars* saga is episodic, although each segment takes place through a feature film rather than a short. In addition, the written prologue to the film is reminiscent of a serial. As if we may have missed an episode, we are filled in at the outset as to what stage the story has reached. The opening sequence also clues the audience in to what to expect from the film. If the title didn't give it away, *Star Wars* is immediately revealed as a fantasy film.

Set "A long time ago in a galaxy far away", *Star Wars* is seen to immediately employ both space and time to locate the fantastic. In this sense, space is literally outer space. The various locales depicted throughout the film are suggestive of exotic and otherworldly planets. Rather than basing the film in recognisable, earth-like surroundings, Lucas has chosen to create worlds as fantastic as possible. For example, as well as having human and other creatures co-existing, languages that the other beings speak have also been created. The most famous of these is probably Shyriiwook, the language of the race of Wookiees (including Chewbacca). Moreover, despite the fact that the film is set "A long time ago", there is no real resonance with any actual past. Whilst Luke's nomadic existence indicates a more medieval lifestyle, the presence of technology throughout the film suggests a different period. Much of the technology is fantastic, that is to say rather than conceivable advances, some of the elements depicted appear more magical. The light sabres that the main characters fight with somewhat bridges the gap between fantasy and technology. Whilst they are grounded in plausible advances (the laser beam of the sabre does not appear so removed from current technology), the mythic attachment roots it somewhat in the realm of magic.

Much has been written about the use of myth and myths in the *Star Wars* saga. Theorists and critics have been quick to highlight the parallels between the series'

narrative and ancient or religious mythology. Robin Wood argues that the film is preoccupied with the 'Return of the Father'.[dxxxiii] He suggests that the film plays "continually on the necessity for Luke to confirm his allegiance to the "good father" (Obi One) and repudiate the "bad father" (Darth Vader), even if the latter proves to be his *real* father".[dxxxiv] Wood sees this as a metaphor for the father in both a literal sense (the restoration of the father in the family) as well as in an allegorical sense (the restoration in the authority of patriarchal dominance). Steve Neale also identifies the importance of the father relationship in the film. He suggests that a group of films that include *Star Wars*, *Superman* and *Star Trek* can be recognised by "the insistence within the stories they tell of classical Oedipal structures and themes".[dxxxv] There is much that appears to align the narrative of *Star Wars* with the myth of Oedipus. Firstly, there is the device of Luke (Mark Hamill) being adopted as a baby. Although he lives with his uncle and aunt, at the beginning of *Star Wars* Luke does not know the true identity of his birth parents. Like Oedipus, Luke has been sent away to safety. In this way, the narrative is also comparable to the story of Moses: it is prophecy that dictates the infant should be expelled. Like Oedipus, Luke is sent to battle, unknown to him, his real father. Unlike Oedipus however, Luke does not kill Darth Vader (David Prowse). Instead in Lucas' tale the father is restored by switching back allegiances at the eleventh hour. Like the classical myth, *Star Wars* features the idea of incest, albeit as an undercurrent rather than an actual theme. Whilst Oedipus unwittingly marries his mother, Luke is shown to have a romantic interest in Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher), before they are revealed to be siblings. Rather than suggesting too much about the taboo subject, Luke and Leia's sibling relationship appears to function more as a device to free Leia to pursue her relationship with Han Solo (Harrison Ford). Parallels can also be drawn between Lucas' films and the *Beowolf* story. *Star Wars* is in many ways the coming of age story of Luke Skywalker. From the naïve character first introduced in

Episode IV to the triumph victory in *Return of the Jedi*, Luke's various obstacles are evocative of both Beowolf and Odysseus in Homer's tale.

In addition to the mythical aspects of *Star Wars*, the series contains palpable religious allegory. This is most apparent in the inclusion of the Jedi and the Sith. These organisations function as religious orders, with the Jedi on the side of the good whilst the Sith allies itself with evil. As explained by Obi Wan Kenobi (Alec Guinness) in the first film, the Jedi harness the power of something called "the Force". The Jedi insist on an understanding of this power in order to effectively employ its capabilities. Like the Biblical story, it is prophesised that a "chosen one" will alter the Force forever. Darth Vader, who was originally a Jedi knight, fulfils the prophecy. The Force has a very mystic association to it. It is a power that can be harnessed by both the Jedi and the Sith. It is both dark and light, with the Sith concentrating on the darker side of it. It is described by Obi Wan Kanobi as an energy field that permeates all living things in the galaxy. In this respect, *Star Wars* departs from Judeo-Christian ideology. Within the realm of *Star Wars*, this metaphysical force of power can be harnessed by individuals, albeit by those schooled in the way. In some senses, the idea of the force becomes more akin to the Buddhist idea of Enlightenment. Obi Wan must school Luke in the ways of the Force; although he has the capacity to manifest its power, he must have the understanding to use it effectively. Yoda, who appears in *Empire Strikes Back*, cements the 'Force as Enlightenment' theory somewhat. Yoda (Frank Oz) is depicted as a wise, Buddha-like figure, exhibiting both amazing skill and wisdom to Luke.

Another franchise of the period also featured a wise and skilled character secondary to the protagonist. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* arrived on the big screen over a decade after the television series had begun. The popular fantasy series was first

broadcast in 1966. It ran for three seasons before being cancelled in 1969. All the main cast of the show were reunited for the feature film almost a decade later, following the success of the series in syndication. Set in the twenty-third century, fantasy is derived from both time and space in *Star Trek*. Like *Star Wars*, the film series depicts far-flung planets with supernatural settings and characters. Moreover, members of the Enterprise crew show a definite degree of diversity. This is explored in two ways: the racial and national range of characters, and the amalgamation of both human and alien life. The crew features a black, female member in the form of Uhura (Nichelle Nichols), a Chinese-American (Sulu played by George Takei), and a Russian (Chekov played by Walter Koenig). This first strand of diversity was perhaps more pertinent in the late 1960s, given this decade's preoccupation with the civil rights movement. However these characters still exhibited a contrast to the all-American hero, Captain James T. Kirk (William Shatner). The character of Spock (Leonard Nimoy) can most readily demonstrate the second strand. The character is half human, half Vulcan. The combination of human and alien was perhaps intended as analogous of mixed-race people. Whatever the intention, the diversity of crew members working harmoniously (most of the time), projects an image of an idealised future.[dxxxvi]

Star Trek focussed its narrative on both space and time travel. The narrative of the film is concerned primarily with saving Earth from a destructive force called 'V'ger'. However, there is also a curiosity behind the action about what V'ger actually is. Unlike a perhaps more straightforward action blockbuster such as *Armageddon* (1998), there is more of a depth to the quest. The crew of Enterprise seem to be concerned with understanding their enemy. V'ger is an alien cloud which has at its heart a space probe that was launched from Earth centuries before. It is through Spock's inquiry and realisation that V'ger can be stopped. Much like the television series, it is

not brute force or technical skill that wins the day; it is the reasoning and intellectual prowess of the team. Furthermore, like *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* contains religious and mythical elements. The presence of V'ger precludes questions over the nature of creation, and the birth of new life forms. Although originally a machine, V'ger was able to achieve its own consciousness through the acquirement of a tremendous amount of knowledge. Despite the fact that this knowledge causes destruction, it does not seem that filmmakers were trying to equate the acquisition of knowledge with destructiveness. After all, through Spock's communication with the vessel, it is revealed that V'ger lacks a focus; besides the original mission there is no purpose for it. Moreover, there is a level of omnipotence associated with V'ger. It is a living machine, powerful enough to cause the destruction of whole planets. It is only through the sacrifice of Decker (Stephen Collins) that the Enterprise's mission is complete. In that respect the film is not without Christ-like illusions.

Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan followed *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* in 1982. The sequel was not as successful as its predecessor, although generally it received more favourable reviews. Janet Maslin for the *New York Times* lamented: "The second Star Trek movie is swift, droll and adventurous, not to mention appealingly gadget-happy. It's everything the first one should have been and wasn't."[dxxxvii] *The Wrath of Khan* took $40 million in rentals at the US box office, compared to the $56 million taken by its predecessor.[dxxxviii] Like other fantasy franchises of the late 1970s and the 1980s, the *Star Trek* films somewhat recall a Hollywood past. In this instance, however, the past is televisual rather than cinematic. As mentioned previously, the films were based on the earlier television series, even including the same cast. Further to this is the episodic nature of the films. They function almost as feature-length episodes of the show rather than discreet pictures in their own right. Strains of the storyline continue

from one film to the next. Perhaps this is most evident in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* (1984), which follows on from the death of Spock at the end of the previous film.

The *Indiana Jones* trilogy brought together two powerhouses of New Hollywood: George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. The first film in the series, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* was an immediate success, becoming the highest grossing film of 1981.[dxxxix] The film centres on archaeologist Dr Indiana Jones, played by Harrison Ford, who came to prominence in the earlier Lucas film *Star Wars*. It would not be contentious to say that *Raiders* somewhat trades off the star factor of Ford. The enormous success of both *Star Wars* and *Empire Strikes Back* had transformed Harrison Ford into a bona fide action hero. There are in fact several similarities between the characters of Han Solo and Indiana Jones. Both are pioneering adventurers, willing to put themselves in danger, and ready to save the damsel in distress. Moreover, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and the *Indiana Jones* trilogy as a whole, seems to epitomise popular conceptions of both the Spielberg and the Lucas film. Both filmmakers have a penchant for special effects, often using state of the art technology.[dxl] Perhaps most significantly, both Spielberg and Lucas work successfully, and most frequently, within the fantasy genre. And both are perceived to make films aimed at a young (or youthfully regressive) audience.[dxli] Robin Wood suggests that the success of Lucas and Spielberg's films was due to the audience's desire to regress to an infantile state. For Wood, this was spurred by the urge to evade responsibility, and for him the deployment of fantasy ingredients is a mark of this.[dxlii]

This is not to say, however, that the *Indiana Jones* films purely fit in the fantasy genre. They are of course fantasy films, as they contain themes or elements of magic and the supernatural (the Ark of the Covenant featured in *Raiders*, for example).

However they also draw on a number of other genres. Most certainly they could be considered adventure films. Each of the three films features a quest narrative, which sets Indiana Jones on a mission to find, and usually protect, a sacred object. His quest takes him to far-flung, exotic locations. As expected, to complete his mission, Jones and his companions are put in life-or-death situations, sometimes facing peril at every turn. The franchise also features enough stunts, chases and explosions to be considered an action series. At best, it seems agreeable to describe the film series as a hybrid of all of these genres. As Steve Neale commented on *Raiders*; "With its knowing references to the adventure films and serials of the 1930's, it's a formulaic, generic movie lacking any base either in contemporary production routines or, indeed, in any *contemporary* genre".[dxliii] Thus, again, this 1980s franchise harks back to a cinematic history. Like *Star Wars*, the *Indiana Jones* series seems also to have this recycling of conventions from 1930s serials. The nature of the film, with its high-paced action sequences, and seemingly constant peril, is comparable to serials such as *Flash Gordon* (1936), which was remade as a big-budget feature in 1980. In his review of the film, John Brosnan comments; "Raiders isn't simply a 1981 remake of a 1930s movie but an exhilarating celebration of the entire action/adventure genre, incorporating the pulps, old movie serials and comic books".[dxliv] Like the serials, further episodes were in mind at the conception stage. Even before the release of the first film, the press release declared that *Raiders* was intended to kick start a series of films featuring the Indiana Jones character.[dxlv] Each of the films depicts an unrelated adventure, much like many of the James Bond films. The connection between the films, as well as most obviously the main character, is the use of spectacle.

Like the serials of the 1930s, and the adventure films of various decades of cinema, *Raiders*, *Star Wars* and these other franchises provided the aspect of spectacle

which was not as present in other films or other genres in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Reviews of the film were mostly positive, with critics praising the atmosphere of the film rather than narrative or aesthetic elements. *Variety* laments: "Spielberg has deftly veiled the entire proceedings in a pervading sense of mystical wonder that makes it all the more easy for viewers to willingly suspend disbelief and settle back for the fun".[dxlvi] Thus, it suggests that it was more the atmosphere of the film than its narrative facets that created an enjoyable experience for the viewer. It is not difficult to see how *Variety*, as well as several other critics, came to this conclusion. With set pieces such as the opening boulder sequence, *Raiders* seems to combine an appropriate mixture of action, suspense and humour. Furthermore, perhaps with the old serials and films in mind, whilst there is peril, there is never any real danger that the hero will actually meet an untimely end. Although both films contain explicit violence (especially in the Nazis' demise at the end of *Raiders*), their box office success suggests an appeal to a wide demographic.[dxlvii]

The reliance on mythology is more pivotal in the *Indiana Jones* trilogy than in any other franchise discussed here. Unlike *Star Wars*, the appearance of mythology is so overt that it becomes an integral part of both Indiana's mission and his raison d'être. Jones is an archaeologist. His "day job" (being a university professor) is concerned with ancient relics and the fables that surround them. This aspect is driven home further with the introduction of Indiana's father in the third instalment, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989). We discover that Dr Henry Jones (Sean Connery) is an expert on the Holy Grail. Both father and son, it seems, are involved with identifying myth from reality. Added to this, of course, is the presence of such relics themselves. Unlike *Star Wars*, there is some grounding to the myths in the *Indiana Jones* series. The artefacts and/or ideology behind them are actual myths, rather than fabricated fables. The Holy

Grail, in particular, is a well-known mythical object, and one that holds a strong general interest in its authenticity. Moreover, the Ark of the Covenant (that features in *Raiders*) is described in the Bible. Whilst *Temple of Doom*'s artefacts have less familiar ideology behind them, there is still a real-life basis for the myths. The Gods that are mentioned in the film are actual Hindu deities. For example, Kali, who is worshipped by the cult in the film, is the Hindu Goddess of death and destruction. Thus, part of the magic of the *Indiana Jones* films has resonance with the real interest in centuries-old religious fables. In one sense, this makes the series the least fantastic of all these franchises. After all, though period-set, the films take place in real environments and the characters are human. However, it is the exploration of these myths, specifically that the sacred objects both exist and have supernatural powers, which roots the series firmly in the supernatural realm. Moreover, the combination of the 1930s setting and the exotic locations separate the *Indiana Jones* films from more earthbound fare, as well as exhibiting a nod to its cinematic past. Given the nature of their settings, these franchises belong to the exotic marvellous category.

The *Back to the Future* trilogy was another Spielberg production, although this time he served as an executive producer of the project. The series was immensely successful, and made a star of lead Michael J Fox, who at the time was best known for his role in the sitcom *Family Ties*. The fantasy in the series is motivated by a scientific angle, in comparison to the supernatural magic featured in the *Indiana Jones* films, or the otherworldliness of *Star Wars*. It centres on Dr Emmett Brown (affectionately referred to as "Doc Brown", played by Christopher Lloyd) and his time machine. In keeping with the comedy of the film, the invention is not some insanely complicated computer-like machine, but a DeLorean sports car. *Back to the Future* is infused with humour throughout, so it appears typical of writers Bob Gale and Robert Zemeckis to

chose an unsuccessful car manufacturer's model for the time machine, rather than a sleeker or more highly-regarded make of car, such as Porsche or Mercedes. The narrative is peppered with this kind of knowing humour, particularly in the 1950s scenes.

Part of the appeal of *Back to the Future* is the nostalgia for all things 1950s. On an aesthetic level, this includes the fashion, music and popular culture of the decade. Added to the retro appeal is the fact that the baby boomer generation of the 1950s were the ones with families in the 1980s, and *Back to the Future* aimed to appeal to a wide demographic. More than this though, writers have pointed to the nostalgic evocation of the 1950s and its values. As Stephen Prince notes, the film "epitomized the collective yearning for a pristine past that the Reagan years had defined as a core national aspiration".[dxlviii] At the beginning of the film, Marty's family are depicted as having a host of domestic problems. Father George (Crispin Glover) is downtrodden, working for the former school bully Biff Tannen (Thomas F. Wilson). Mother Lorraine (Lea Thompson) is unhappy in her marriage, and as a result has turned to drink. Marty's sister Linda (Wendie Jo Sperber) is not very attractive, and does not have much luck with dating boys. It is only through Marty's meddling with the past (travelling back to 1955, when his parents met), that the family's lives improve. When he returns to the future, Marty finds that his father is now the boss of Biff and has had his story published, Lorraine is much happier and healthier, and Linda is more attractive and is dating a number of boys. Thus, there appears to be a promotion of the family values of the 1950s; it is only after Marty visits the period that his family are much happier than they previously were. The film frequently plays with the decade-swapping function, creating humorous incidents through Marty's knowledge of the present whilst in the past. A memorable example of this is when Marty takes to the stage at the prom to

perform Chuck Berry's 'Johnny B. Goode', which was originally released in 1958. One of the band members, Marvin Berry (Harry Waters Jr.), calls his cousin Chuck to tell him about the new sound. Ergo, not only does Marty take credit for the song, the film depicts him as inspiring Berry to later release it. In a nod to his 1985 lifestyle and tastes, Marty tells his confused audience after his guitar solo; "I guess you guys aren't ready for that, yet. But your kids are gonna love it".

Kristin Thompson claims that *Back to the Future* exhibits complexities in its narrative that make the mainstream film comparable to a prestigious art film.[dxlix] She points to the subtle exposition in the opening sequences as proof of the attention to detail that permeates the film. Thompson writes: "Undoubtedly part of the sense of unity and complexity of the film conveys results from its many motifs".[dl] Many of the images of the opening scenes reveal a significant amount about the plot and themes of the film. Thompson highlights the images depicted in Doc Brown's house as indicators of what will later occur in the film.[dli] Particularly interesting are the pictures of scientists in the Doc's bedroom. Each one of their inventions has an impact on the time machine that Doc Brown has invented; Thomas Edison and electricity, Benjamin Franklin and lightening, and Albert Einstein and relative time. It is also revealed that the Doc's dog is named Einstein, in homage to the scientist. *Back to the Future* works within the context of the fantastic, however as an earthbound fantasy film it aims for verisimilitude. The time machine that the film revolves around is of course a work of fiction, nonetheless writers Bob Gale and Zemeckis have tried to instil as much realistic science as possible. Thus, instead of some form of magic or spell, the machine works because of scientific principles, albeit a little stretched. It is the combination of plutonium (stolen from Libyan terrorists, in a move that betrays the films 1980s roots) powering the DeLorean, travelling at exactly the right speed (88 miles per hour), and

conducting lightening through an appropriate source (the clock tower at the centre of town).

This theme of science permeates the whole narrative. Significantly, Doc Brown warns Marty not to interfere with the past, lest he alters the entire fabric of the future. Despite this warning however, it is both Marty and the Doc who tamper with events, albeit sometimes unintentionally. Furthermore, through Marty befriending his father in 1955 we learn that George is an avid science-fiction fan. Playing on his father's interest, Marty visits George whilst he sleeps to try and convince him to ask Lorraine to the dance. Highlighting the successful fantasy/science-fiction franchises post-1950s, Marty claims to be the alien Darth Vader from "the planet Vulcan". As well as another example of the knowing humour, it also illustrates the success and familiarity with the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* brands in the mid-1980s. Within the fantasy context, there appears to be three main strands to the film. These three also take the form of genres. Firstly there is the aforementioned time travel, which fulfils the fantasy and science-fiction aspects. Marty has to ensure his parents get together in 1955, whilst also getting himself back to 1985 on time. This elements satisfies the quest element of both fantasy and adventure films. Finally, there is the romantic theme of Marty's parents meeting and falling in love. This aspect also includes the Oedipal scenario of Lorraine having a crush on Marty, which is played for laughs and avoids any serious development into incest. Like many a number of 1980s teen films, the climax takes place at the prom (in this case the Enchantment Under the Sea dance). The film gives its teen protagonist significant power and responsibility. Marty is able to transform his universe in accordance with his wishes. There is a definite similarity between the power Marty wields in *Back to the Future* and that of the eponymous protagonist in *Ferris Bueller* (1986). The genres that *Back to the Future* serve up increases throughout the series.

Back to the Future Part II (1989) features similar strands to its predecessor, utilises these same strands, but also adds the dimension of family drama that is touched upon in the original. *Back to the Future Part III* (1990) ups the ante somewhat by having the main characters travel back to 1885. This frontier land setting allows for parodying of the western genre. The final instalment uses the same style of humour that saturates the previous two films, with Marty calling himself 'Clint Eastwood' when asked his name, referencing that stalwart of the western genre. Therefore, it seems very much that the success of this franchise was due to the amalgamation of different themes; the mixing of the popular genres of fantasy, science-fiction, adventure, romance and comedy ensured the films would appeal to a wide demographic.

Comic book adaptations have been in circulation since the 1930s. *Flash Gordon*, a comic strip first published in 1934, was made into a matinee serial in 1936. Made of thirteen episodes, *Flash Gordon* depicts the adventures of hero Flash against Ming the Merciless. Two more serials followed it: *Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars* in 1938, and *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* in 1940. In 1954 a television series was produced based on the popular character. The show ran for thirty-nine episodes between 1954 and 1955. It wasn't until 1980 that a feature based on the comic was released. Buoyed by the success of both the *Superman* film two years previously, and the *Batman* television series in the late 1960s, *Flash Gordon* was released in 1980. Centred on the lead character and his abduction to the planet Mongo. The film has a campier, tongue-in-cheek feel, a notable departure from the preceding *Superman*. *Flash Gordon* was not a commercial success;[dlii] nonetheless it maintained much of the feel of the original serials, with Flash as the quintessential all-American hero. Furthermore, the film adopted a cartoon-like aesthetic, using larger than life characters and elaborately styled costumes

and backdrops. Thus, despite its rich screen history *Flash Gordon* did not become a successful franchise of the 1980s.

Superman, on the other hand, was an instant hit. The 1978 film was based on the comic book first published in 1938 by Action Comics (now DC Comics, a subsidiary of Time Warner). The popularity of the character ensued that several productions were made in the 1940s, in various media. These included seventeen animated short films, a radio serial, a newspaper comic strip, and a live action serial, *Superman*, which ran for fifteen episodes in 1948. Following a second serial in 1950, a television series was commissioned, *Adventures of Superman*, starring George Reeves as the title character, which ran for six series, between 1952 and 1958. An animated television series was produced in the 1960s, with episodes of *The New Adventures of Superman* being screened between 1966 and 1970. Thus, Superman had been rarely out of the media since the character was launched in the late 1930s. The comic strip was one of the first to popularise a superhero as the basis for a comic. It also helped to establish the superhero genre in comics, as well as on television and cinema screens. Part of the appeal of the character could be ascribed to his patriotism and incorruptibility. Coming at a time when Nazism threatened freedom, Superman stood for "truth, justice, and the American way". In the various media he inhabits, Superman acts as a role model for children, standing for moral values and being courageous in the face of adversity and danger. Such is the impact of the character that Superman appears to have transcended from comic book character into cultural icon. The 'S' logo emblazoned on his chest has become a recognised symbol worldwide.

With this in mind, the producers of the film *Superman* had a pre-sold audience awaiting the 1978 release. Whilst this guaranteed an audience, it also risked the scrutiny

of “super fans”. The fantasy element in *Superman* can be ascribed directly to the title character (Christopher Reeve). He is an alien who was sent to Earth after his father (played by Marlon Brando) believed the planet Krypton would be destroyed imminently. As an alien, Superman, or Clark Kent as he is named by the couple that find him and take him in, has supernatural powers though he looks just like a human. Clark only discovers his true history after he travels to the Fortress of Solitude in the Arctic Circle. Although he is on Earth, this is a fantastical place, made up of thousands of crystals. It is here he is greeted by a vision of his father, who tells him of his powers and his responsibilities. Superman is just that, in every sense of the meaning. He has superhuman strength, and the ability to fly. All his senses appear heightened, and far more powerful than the average human. The film can be classified as hyperbolic marvellous, due to the supernatural strengths and abilities of the title character. In the first of four films the mythology is created. The audience are informed of Superman’s amazing powers, but also of his one weakness – kryptonite. The film spends quite a significant duration on the Man of Steel’s history and upbringing, with the Lex Luthor (Gene Hackman) plotline not being introduced until later in the film. The fantasy is firmly rooted in the main character; it is not until the sequels that we are introduced to other extraterrestrials, in the form of Superman’s adversaries. The use of the past, then, is evident in two forms. Firstly there is the actual past of the Superman character in comic book and on screen that has shaped the production. Secondly, it is the past of Superman himself, his history and his origins, that director Donner feels is so pivotal to the story, judging by the amount of screen time that is dedicated to it.

Like the other franchises discussed in this chapter, the *Superman* series concerns itself with space and time. This film is mostly set in the fictional city of Metropolis. Whilst it appears just like New York, the fact that it is a fictional place perhaps allows

for greater suspension of disbelief when it comes to fantastic elements of the film. Furthermore, as mentioned above, some of the scenes take place in fantastical places. Firstly at the very beginning on planet Krypton, and later at the Fortress of Solitude, which has been created on Earth. These spaces give credence to the Superman myth, and root the narrative firmly in the fantastic realm. Although the film is contemporary set, elements of time also have an important part to play. As with many films, the final section is a race against time for Superman to stop the second missile launched by Lex. As he prevents the first one, Superman is too late to stop the second, and must deal with the impact of the earthquake. Lois Lane (Margot Kidder) gets trapped in the carnage, and dies as a result. Despite the warning from his father not to alter human history, Superman decides to travel back in time to save Lois. To do this, Superman is literally flying back around the planet at such a rate that he is able to go back in time. The scene also functions to highlight the duality of the character. Torn between his duty and his love for Lois, this is a battle between Superman's alien and human characteristics. This is emphasised when Superman begins flying; hearing both his biological father's warning about altering human history, and his adoptive father's words of encouragement, telling him "You are here for a reason". As the all-American hero, Superman listens to his heart and saves Lois. Therefore, notwithstanding his alien background, Superman demonstrates he has the same level of human feeling and characteristic as the people he saves. Whilst also betraying his human side, the scene also demonstrates the immense power the character has. Despite how fantastical this is, Superman stays on the right track, and never abuses his strength for self-serving purposes.

Superman was followed by three sequels in the 1980s. *Superman II*, released in 1980, follows on from the narrative of its predecessor. To save Paris, Superman throws

the missile into space, but unbeknownst to him, this frees three criminals who were banished from Krypton prior to its destruction. The sequel delves further into the psyche of Superman, as we are shown him making the decision to give up his powers in order to live as Clark with Lois Lane. The main thematic strand is Superman making personal sacrifices for the good of humanity. By the end of the film Superman realises his individual desires must come second to protecting the planet, so he uses his telepathic abilities to wipe the knowledge of his true identity from Lois' mind. At the end of *Superman II*, Superman the patriot is depicted in all his glory. After restoring the American flag to the top of the White House, Superman assures the President that he will never again abandon his duty to serve his country. Despite being an extraterrestrial, Superman thus exemplifies American patriotism by sacrificing personal happiness to protect America. *Superman III* (1983) was released three years after its predecessor. It had more of a comedic feel than the previous two films, thanks predominantly to the casting of Richard Pryor as Gus Gorman. The film also depicted the "bad" Superman; who is created after by being exposed to some tainted Kryptonite. In this form, Superman is the antithesis of everything he stands for. That is to say, Superman drinks, upsets young children, and even blows out the Olympic Torch. Nonetheless, he inevitably overcomes this in order to once again save the day. The film was followed by another sequel in 1987, and a spin-off in 1984. *Supergirl* was based on the Superman's younger cousin Kara (Helen Slater). The film, mostly set at a girl's school, had a more teen movie quality, thanks to the age of the title character. It was not a commercial or critical success,[dliii] and did not give rise to any sequels of its own. The final Superman film, *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace* (1987) also paled in comparison to its predecessors commercially speaking,[dliv] thus marking the end of the franchise. The *Superman* films retain many elements from both the comics and the 1940s serial. The films feature many of the characters from the comics and serial, and preserve the

background of both Superman and his alter ego. While the main villain of the serial was Spider Lady, the *Superman* films stay true to their comic book roots by heavily featuring nemesis Lex Luthor. Given the big-budgets and advances in technology, it is unsurprising that the effects in the films are far more believable than the serial, particularly the flying sequences. The Superman franchise was very successful, but one that was initially sold on spectacle, with the tag line "You'll believe a man can fly" being used heavily in the first film's advertising. Thus, by the time the fourth film was released in 1987, the franchise offered little in terms of awe, and the script lacked the originality and charm of the earlier efforts.

Batman was also a popular comic book character before he made his big screen debut. In many ways he is Superman's successor, first featuring in Detective Comics (DC) the year after the Man of Steel. Bob Kane's creation distinguishes itself immediately from most other comic book superheroes by the fact that Batman does not have any superpowers. Unlike the most popular superheroes, Superman, Spiderman, Hulk et al, Batman is human and without benefit of enhanced senses, power, or the ability to fly. If anything, Batman's superpower is his wealth. His alter ego is Bruce Wayne, billionaire playboy and philanthropist. Thus, whilst he may not be able to rely on enhanced strengths, Batman can buy the best gadgets and equipment possible. Moreover, Batman marks a stark contrast from Superman. This is predominantly depicted in terms of darkness. In a literal sense, Batman wears a darker costume than Superman, and like his namesake only ventures out at night. In more allegorical terms, Bruce Wayne was orphaned at a young age when his parents were murdered in front of him. Coupled with this tragic past, is the fact that many of the villains featured in the comic and subsequent film and television adaptations have much darker back-stories than that say of Lex Luthor. Despite these shadowed undertones, Batman proved

successful enough to have a matinee serial produced in 1943. Comprising fifteen episodes, *Batman* (1943) centred on the Caped Crusader's battle with a Japanese espionage group, apt given the serial's World War II release. It was followed in 1949 by a second serial, *Batman and Robin*, featuring Batman's trusty sidekick. The serials were low budget, but retained many of the narrative elements from the comic. The major change was that Batman was a secret government agent, rather than a lone vigilante. Before the 1989 film, however, Batman's most famous screen appearance came in the form of the 1960s television show and accompanying feature *Batman* (1966). The television series, which ran for three series between 1966 and 1968, had a very camp, tongue-in-cheek atmosphere. The film continued this same campy feel, with the characters remaining deadpan whist delivering amusing dialogue.

Knowing that this was the public's most memorable cinematic image of Batman, director Tim Burton decided to go in a different direction when making *Batman* in the late 1980s. Testifying to the filmmakers' faithfulness to the original material, Bob Kane was hired as a consultant on the production. *Batman* is distinctively darker than the 1960s television series and the 1940s serial, both in terms of theme and visual style. Throughout the narrative it is revealed that Bruce Wayne (Michael Keaton) is haunted by the murder of his parents. The fact that Jack Napier (the Joker, played by Jack Nicholson) turns out to be said killer compounds this. It is clear that Batman's driving force is his role as an avenger. In the climactic scene, he tells the Joker: "You made me". Thus it is evident that Batman's raison d'être is his endeavour to bring criminals to justice. Furthermore, the darkness of the film is evident in the nature of Batman's adversary, the Joker. Despite his flamboyant attire and constant wisecracking, it is obvious that he is no clown. This becomes apparent both through his psychopathic behaviour (disfiguring his girlfriend Alicia (Jerry Hall) for "art"), and intentions for the

citizens of Gotham (attempting to poison them en masse through the guise of a parade). Whilst the *Batman* television series, and indeed the *Superman* franchise that preceded the 1989 film, are seemingly aimed at a family audience, with elements such as these, *Batman* seems to have been made for an older audience. Notwithstanding the appeal of the character to a younger audience, the film was given a '12' rating on its UK release, due to the violence it depicts.

The dark visual style of the film allows for the elements of fantasy. At first glance, it is arguable that *Batman* is not a fantasy film. The Joker's accident at the chemical plant, far-fetched as the outcome might have been, is not completely unbelievable. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the title character does not have any superpowers. What then makes the film a fantasy is its use of time and space. The film is set in the fictional city of Gotham, again like Metropolis, based on New York City. However, Gotham deviates from Metropolis in its visual style and current state. Gotham is a dystopian vision of New York. The highly stylised production design of the late Anton Furst exhibits such centrepieces as the Cathedral, where the climax takes place. Gothic in architecture, it seems never-ending as Batman climbs to the top. The idea of space as fantasy is further underpinned by the design of the bat cave. Dark and foreboding, it is an enormous space supposedly below Wayne Manor. Coupled with the imposing entrance, it seems a location of pure fantasy. As well as the look of the city, Gotham is further fashioned into a dystopian setting by what is exposed about the city. Like Manhattan's high crime rate of the 1980s, Gotham is also plagued by crime. Nonetheless, as well as the low level crime riddling Gotham, there is also organised crime which appears to control the city. After his transformation, the Joker kills mob boss Carl Grissom (Jack Palance) and takes control. The organised crime is clearly a major concern for the mayor and district attorney Harvey Dent (Billy Dee Williams), as

they discuss cancelling Gotham's anniversary event, aware they are unable to effectively police it. As well as space, the film's fantastic elements are also rooted in time. Although the technology featured suggest a contemporary setting, a number of aspects point to a 1940s/50s setting. This is predominantly evident in the costumes. Whilst Vicki Vale's (Kim Basinger) costumes seem appropriately late-1980s, some of the men, particularly at the press conference, seem to be of an earlier decade with their suits and hats. In the flashback scene of the Waynes' murder, it appears to take place in the 1950s, which would make Bruce's age questionable. Thus, this playing with periods infuses the film with a fantastic image. The ambiguous time, coupled with the dystopian space removes Gotham somewhat from reality.

The sequel *Batman Returns* followed in 1992. Like its predecessor, *Batman Returns* is much darker than the earlier television series and serial. It also plays on the idea of duality, in a way that is far more heightened than the original film. There was a tension both between Batman and the Joker as being opposite sides of the same coin, and within Batman himself. This strain is evident to a greater degree in the sequel, particularly between Batman and Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer). At the end of the film, Batman tries to persuade her away from her life of crime, claiming that they are so alike. The duality of the two characters is exemplified at a costume ball, where neither of them wears a mask. On finding out each other's identity, such is the fractured nature of their lives that Selina asks; "Does this mean we have to start fighting?". The idea of duality seems present in most of the film's main characters, with each of them wearing a guise to conceal their true selves. Max Schrek (Christopher Walken), for example, hides his criminal streak under the exterior of a well-loved businessman. Again, *Batman Returns* cannot really be described as a family film. Perhaps with this in mind, as well as the fact that the film did not match the commercial success of its predecessor, Warner

Brothers decided on a change of tact for the next sequel, with Joel Schumacher replacing Burton. Both *Batman Forever* (1995) and *Batman & Robin* (1997) have a lighter feel than their predecessors, both thematically and visually. Whilst fantasy appears more palpable in these films (specifically in terms of their villains' origins), this is far less subverted than in Burton's films. Both were box office smashes,[dlv] although they seem to radiate the same kind of campiness as the television series, which Burton tried so hard to steer away from.

As this chapter has discussed, part of the success of these franchises is due to their reliance on the past. Whether this is recalling bygone serials in the style of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, or relying on audience familiarity with the brand (*Superman*, for instance), these films all utilise a cinematic and popular cultural past. Although *Star Wars* was an original film, many of its influence can be traced back to earlier genres and films, as noted by Lucas himself.[dlvi] Thus, one of the defining characteristics of these franchises is not just the recycling of earlier films and cinematic styles, but also a reliance upon the audiences' enjoyment of them. Judging by the aforementioned critical response to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, it was the viewer's response to the film (that is to say, enjoyment in the suspension of disbelief and marvelling at the spectacle) that made it a success. These 1980s franchises functioned in a similar way to the serials of the 1930s and 1940s. As previously mentioned, before the release of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Indiana Jones* was always intended as a series of films. While most of the first films of a franchise discussed here did not end on a cliff-hanger, a number of the sequels did (*The Empire Strikes Back* and *Back to the Future Part II* for example). The most significant difference between the serials and their 1980s counterparts was of course their budget. Unlike the ready-made episodes of a serial, a franchise would most likely end after one less than profitable sequel, as the *Superman* franchise proved.

The other key factor in these franchises is the use of space and time. Perhaps more so than in other forms of fantasy, these two principals were imperative to ground the fantastical elements of the narrative. Whilst seemingly more important in some films than others, there appears to be a need for the fantasy to be present in at least one of these aspects. The exotic settings are clearly crucial in the *Indiana Jones* series. Similarly, *Star Wars*' various worlds (at times futuristic and at times medieval) provide a key basis for its fantasy elements. The spaces featured in the franchise not only created a detachment from reality, but also aided in generating *Star Wars*' own mythology. Time was as an equally key ingredient in some cases too. The *Back to the Future* series and the *Indiana Jones* series both depicted an imagined past; one that could be moulded according to a character's will, or to be exotic enough to feature supernatural entities. Time and space were also important to the comic book adaptations, inventing worlds where superheroes were accepted as part of everyday life. As *Batman* illustrates, the creation of a dystopian world, however similar to reality, seems a necessary dynamic in allowing for a suspension in disbelief.

This chapter does not claim that all 1980s fantasy franchises were successful. The Allan Quatermain films, which originated with *King Solomon's Mines* (1985), did not enjoy the same commercial success as the films discussed here.[dlvii] Although it had the same ingredients as these films (based on a novel with earlier cinematic adaptations, exotic space and time), perhaps it was its similarity to the immensely successful *Indiana Jones* series that hindered the success of the short-lived franchise. However another reason for the success of these films is that for the most part they were exceptionally well made. Such was their impact that their resonance can still be felt in contemporary blockbusters. Indeed some of the franchises have latterly boasted more sequels, *Indiana*

Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull (2008) being the most recent example of these.

[dxxviii] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006, pp. 213-25
[dxxix] Justin Wyatt sees *Star Wars*, along with *Jaws* and *Grease*, as "embody[ing] many of the traits which would become characteristic of high concept in the years following their release in mid- to late-'70s". Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*, University of Texas, Texas, 1994, pp. 188-89
[dxxx] Steve Neale comments that the most obvious link between studio era blockbusters and New Hollywood blockbusters is presence of spectacle. Steve Neale, 'Hollywood Blockbusters: Historical Dimensions', in Julian Stringer (ed.) *Movie Blockbusters*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 54
[dxxxi] See Tom Shone, *Blockbuster: How Hollywood Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Summer*, Simon and Schuster, London, 2004, p. 33
[dxxxii] Bordwell, ibid. p. 206-09
[dxxxiii] Robin Wood, *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan… And Beyond*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, pp. 152-55
[dxxxiv] Wood, ibid. p. 154
[dxxxv] Steve Neale, 'Hollywood Strikes Back: Special Effects in Recent American Cinema', *Screen*, 21, 3, 1980, p. 102
[dxxxvi] Particularly notable in this is the inclusion of a Russian character, specifically during the Cold War era of the late 1960s.
[dxxxvii] Janet Maslin, 'New 'Star Trek' Full of Gadgets and Fun', *New York Times*, 4 June 1982. Accessed 28 May 2009 from: http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9C0CEFDB103BF937A35755C0A964948260
[dxxxviii] Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films Of 1982', *Variety*, 12 January 1983, p. 13 and 'All Time Box Office Champs', *Variety*, 13 January 1982, p. 36
[dxxxix] Raiders of the Lost Ark took over $90 million in US rentals. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1982', *Variety*, 12 January 1983, p. 13
[dxl] George Lucas set up Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) to create the numerous special effects for *Star Wars*. Geoffrey M. Horn, *Movie Stunts and Special Effects*, Gareth Stevens Publishing, New York, 2007, p. 10
[dxli] For example, see Wood, ibid. pp. 144-47 and Peter Krämer, ''It's Aimed at Kids – The Kid in Everybody': George Lucas, Star Wars and children's entertainment', in Yvonne Tasker (ed.) *Action and Adventure Cinema*, Routledge, London, 2004, pp. 358-67
[dxlii] Wood, ibid. p. 147
[dxliii] Steve Neale, 'Raiders of the Lost Ark', *Framework*, 19, 1982, pp. 37-38
[dxliv] John Brosnan, 'Raiders of the Lost Ark', *Starburst*, 37, August 1981, p. 34
[dxlv] DDA Press Office, 'News Release: Raiders of the Lost Ark is released', 1981
[dxlvi] Anonymous, 'Review: Raiders of the Lost Ark', *Variety*, 10 June 1981, p. 18
[dxlvii] *Temple of Doom* took $109 million, and *Last Crusade* took $115.5 million. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1984', *Variety*, 16 January 1985, p.16 and 'Big Rental Films of 1989', *Variety*, 24 January 1990, p. 24
[dxlviii] Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000, p. 218
[dxlix] Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1999, pp. 77-78
[dl] Thompson, ibid. p. 77
[dli] Thompson, ibid pp. 78-81
[dlii] *Flash Gordon* took only $17 million in rentals in America. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1981', *Variety*, 13 January 1982, p. 15
[dliii] *Supergirl* took only $6 million in rentals at the American box office. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1984', *Variety*, 16 January 1985, p, 78
[dliv] *Superman IV* took $8.1 million in rentals at the US box office, compared to the $81 million taken by the original film. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1987', *Variety*, 20 January 1988, p. 19 and 'Big Rental Films of 1979', *Variety*, 9 January 1980, p. 21
[dlv] *Batman Forever* took $105.1 million in rentals at the US box office, whilst *Batman and Robin* took $58.4 million. Box office statistics from 'Rental Champs: Rate of Return', *Variety*,

15 December 1997. Accessed 25 June 2011 from: http://www.variety.com/article/VR1116680329

[dlvi] Stephen Farber, 'George Lucas: The Stinky Kid Hits the Big Time', *Film Quarterly*, 27, 3, Spring 1974, p. 9

[dlvii] *King Solomon's Mines* took just $6 million in rentals at the US box office. Box office statistics from 'Big Rental Films of 1985', *Variety*, 8 January 1986, p. 22

Chapter 9: "Welcome to prime time, bitch!": Horror and Science-Fiction in the 1980s

Horror and science-fiction were two of the most prominent genres in the late 1970s and 1980s. Though distinct genres in their own right, there is also overlap between the two forms in a number of films in this as well as other periods. Unlike fantasy, horror and science-fiction have been examined in some depth, and although they are distinct, all three also overlap. Thus while not all horror films can be described as fantasy (*The Silence of the Lambs* [1991] for example might be considered a horror rather than a fantasy realm), many of the genre's films could be considered as examples of the marvellous. Likewise, while some science-fiction films seem to be less whimsical than other fantasy films (contrast *Robocop* with *Willow*, for example), the majority of the films can be considered as examples of the marvellous as well. What then differentiates science-fiction from fantasy and horror from fantasy? For many writers and theorists, it is both the notions evident in the films and the response they seek to generate in their viewers. As Barry Keith Grant points out, some theorists see horror as essentially an emotional genre (that is to say, its power is in the response it incites from the audience), while science-fiction is more open, offering an array of possibilities.[dlviii] Although the former in particular was not as commercially successful as fantasy in the 1980s, both horror and science-fiction nevertheless held sufficient popular appeal to justify the repeated productions.[dlix]

Perhaps the predominant preoccupation in 1980s science-fiction and horror was a fixation with nightmares (both literally and figuratively) and dystopian visions. Often films of these genres will blur the lines between reality and fantasy, leaving both the protagonist and the audience unsure as to what is being depicted. Some of the films,

particularly in the science-fiction genre, overtly employ the fantasy/reality dynamic as central to the film's plot. *Total Recall* (1990), for example, is a futuristic tale that questions the balance between memory, reality and fantasy. Set in a future where memories are available for sale, the protagonist Douglas Quaid (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is as unsure as the audience as to whether he actually visits the planet Mars or whether he is experiencing artificial memories. A number of 1980s horror films exploited the device of the nightmare. Some depicted scenes or situations that were typically nightmarish (Annie [Robbi Morgan] being brutally murdered as she hitchhikes to camp in *Friday the 13th* [1980] for example), while others overtly used dreams to enhance the more frightening aspects of the narrative. The best example is *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, in which characters are attacked while having nightmares. Science-fiction, on the other hand, often depicted dystopian visions of the future. Although less frightening than their horror counterparts, these films frequently offered a negative view of the future, including post-apocalyptic depictions and out-of-control technology. Even so, not every horror film was concerned with nightmares and not all science-fiction focussed on a negative future. As this chapter will demonstrate, the late 1970s and 1980s produced a variety of films within and across these genres.

Theorists and critics have explored the horror film from a variety of different perspectives. Barry Keith Grant, for example, has noted a preoccupation with gender. In *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, he argues that "gender is central to the horror film, in large part because it inevitably involves other ideological issues as well".[dlx] Feminist readings of the horror genre are particularly prominent. Perhaps best known is Barbara Creed's appraisal of the horror genre and what she describes as the "Monstrous-Feminine".[dlxi] Creed suggests that the genre, inherently patriarchal, presents an abject image of the "monstrous-feminine". In her analysis of *Carrie*, for instance, she

argues that the maternal figure is depicted as abject,[dlxii] and she goes on to suggest that many horror films project an representation of the archaic mother as both a negative force and one associated with death. Drawing on the ideas of Kristeva and Freud, she argues that many elements in *Alien*, the shape and design of the space ship for example, indicate depictions both of the archaic and phallic mother.[dlxiii] She also argues that the Ripley character is an instance of secure and `acceptable` femininity (though perhaps more might have been made of the fact that it is a 'normal' female who defeats the "monstrous-feminine" alien). Creed also suggests that "the horror film stages and restages a constant repudiation of the maternal figure".[dlxiv] She suggests that this is revealing of male rather than female desire, as it takes place within a patriarchal discourse (the horror genre), though the same might be said of the genre's depictions of masculinity. Although Creed comments on the suggestion that Dracula acts the maternal phallus,[dlxv] she indicates that this is a male fetish. Either way, it could be said that the voyeuristic depictions in particular of Gary Oldman in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* act as a female rather than male fetish for the masculine as fragile and as object.

Some of the hallmarks of late 1970 and 1980s horror films can be found in earlier ones. The oft-cited *Psycho*, for instance, resembles the slasher films that followed two decades later in many ways. From the striking use of music to heighten tension, to the surprisingly early demise of the perceived main protagonist, Hitchcock's ideas were often recycled. There are a number of other earlier forbearers too, including *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), itself a variant on *Psycho*. However, developments and differences are important too. One of the most evident is the level of violence and gore. The replacement of the Hays Code with a system of ratings in 1968 allowed for more graphic depictions. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was given a 'R' certificate in the US, but later banned in the UK following the crackdown on "video

nasties" in the 1980s.[dlxvi] Controversy surrounded the release of the movie, due to its graphic violence.[dlxvii] The ways in which the characters are slaughtered in the film set a precedent for gory and original death scenes. Furthermore, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* also promoted the "unexplained" motive in the horror genre. Whilst it is clear who the killers are, their motives are never fully clarified, though the film does instigate what Andrew Tudor called `the psychotic motive`: the killers in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* are clearly deranged, even if the reason for their insanity is never revealed, an ingredient that marks *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and the highly influential and successful *Halloween*.

Halloween was released in 1978. The narrative revolves around Michael Myers (Tony Moran), an escaped mental patient who goes on a killing spree in the small town of Haddonfield. At the beginning of the film we are shown the 6-year-old Michael stabbing his teenage sister to death. The remainder of the film is concerned with Michael's killing spree, and his pursuit of younger sister Laurie (now a teenager, played by Jamie Lee Curtis). Michael is himself pursued by the local Sheriff of the town, as well as by his psychiatrist Dr Sam Loomis (Donald Pleasence). In the climactic scene, Loomis manages to stop Michael attacking Laurie by shooting him several times. However, in what became a dominant device in a number of later slasher films, on looking down from the window from which has fallen, his body is nowhere to be seen. *Halloween* featured a number of conventions that are now recognised as hallmarks of the slasher film. However, many owe their origins to *Black Christmas* (1974), which featured brutal slayings of young people in a sorority house by a mysterious killer. Like *Halloween*, *Black Christmas* takes place in a suburban rather than metropolitan environment and features a local police sergeant and his small team rather than a large

police department. Furthermore, parallels can be drawn from the way the killers operate in both films, isolating and violently murdering their victims, one by one.

The setting of *Halloween* has become common feature for the genre. Set in a small American town, two aspects become apparent. Firstly, there is the relative isolation that these settings create. With only the town sheriff and a doctor in pursuit, there is a real sense that should anyone fall victim to the killer, there will be no powerful force to come to the rescue – and no one to hear you scream. These small towns often feature bountiful unoccupied space and detached housing. This lessens the likelihood of the victim being heard and being reached quickly; without neighbours and an abundant police force close by, the killer has more time and space to hunt and kill his victims. Moreover, the small town setting has a particular resonance with American audiences. Haddonfield is non-descript; there is nothing really identifiable about it that makes it stand out from other small towns. Thus, the fact that this setting could be any small town heightens audience identification with the inhabitants (that is to say, the victims). For many of the audience members, this type of incident could as easily have taken place in their small town. Furthermore, the protagonists in the film will also be a point of identification for the intended audience. Horror films have had an appeal to teenage audiences since the 1950s and James Twitchell has suggested the horror genre is acutely representative of the anxieties of adolescence: "the primary concern of early adolescence", he writes "is the transition from individual and isolated sexuality to pairing and reproductive sexuality. It is a concern fraught with inarticulate anxiety and thus ripe for the experience of horror".[dlxviii]

A further convention employed by *Halloween* is evident in its choice of protagonist. The choice of a young female lead was nothing new in horror films. One

only has to consider films such as *Psycho* and *The Exorcist* to appreciate that young female characters often feature as the protagonist/potential victim in this genre. What Carpenter's film did, however, was to cement this trend. Many of the horror films that followed *Halloween*, particularly within the slasher sub-genre, centred on a young female lead. These films, ranging from *Candyman* (1992) to *Silence of the Lambs*, frequently leave the female protagonist as the heroine or sole survivor, a convention that is later parodied in *Scream* (1996) when female lead Sidney (Neve Campbell) voices her disdain for horror films because "they're all the same, some stupid killer stalking some big-breasted girl who can't act". In addition to its production of a number of stock characters, *Halloween* introduced a number of other traits as well. One of these is the narrative pacing. *Halloween* opens with an expositional sequence that doubles as a shocking glimpse of things to come. Through the eyes of a young Michael Myers, the audience is shown the savage murder of his older sister. As well as providing a background for the upcoming story, this scene functions to raise audience tension prior to a lull in pace. *Halloween* seems to shift between scenes of high tension and action and quieter (usually daytime) sequences. Another is the use of point of view shots, yet another the film's use of music and yet another still is its systematic alternation between daytime and nighttime scenes.

Despite its far-fetched tendencies, for the most part *Halloween* cannot be described as a fantasy. Michael Myers is after all human, albeit a human with wildly psychotic tendencies. It is not until the end that proceedings take a more supernatural turn. Despite being shot a number of times by Dr Loomis, Myers' body is nowhere to be seen. The suggestion that Michael is still alive moves *Halloween* into the fantasy realm; after all, no human being could reasonably take that many gunshots and be able to walk away. This is further reiterated by the closing shots of the film, which feature apparent

point-of-view shots of Laurie's house. The closing sequence functions on a number of levels. Firstly, it leaves the audience with a sense of unease. Secondly, it raises questions about the nature of Myers himself, most notably whether he is human or something else. The character of Michael Myers posits *Halloween* in the hyperbolic marvellous category. Though seemingly human, his ability to survive gunshot wounds suggests Myers is supernatural in strength. Furthermore, the uncertainty over the status of Myers leads to what would nowadays be considered the inevitable sequel. Leaving the ending open for Michael to return, *Halloween* spawned four sequels in the 1980s. A sixth film was released in 1995, before Jamie Lee Curtis returned for *Halloween H20* (1998), set twenty years after the first film took place. A further film, *Halloween: Resurrection* (2002), followed before the original was remade in 2007. A further sequel, from the "reboot", was released in 2009. Interestingly, not all the films actually featured Michael Myers. *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (1982) does not follow the Myers story at all, centring on a mask company owner who attempts to murder en masse all who wear his masks on Halloween. One presumes the title of the film was to capitalise on the success of the early two *Halloween* films, although audiences may have been disappointed if they had expected more of the same from this episode.

Wes Craven had already reached a level of notoriety with his aforementioned 1970s films by the time *A Nightmare on Elm Street* was released in 1984. Like Halloween, the film features teenagers being stalked by a crazed killer. Craven's film also features a young female protagonist as the heroine. However, the fundamental difference between the two films is that whilst *Halloween* exists in the everyday world, with *Nightmare on Elm Street* there is no question about the level of fantasy involved. On an obvious level, the fact that killer Freddy Krueger (played by Robert Englund) kills his victims through their dreams indicates a type of fantasy not evident in

Halloween. Indeed Craven's film plays on a tension between reality and fantasy, with protagonist Nancy (Heather Langenkamp) not sure whether or not she is dreaming on a number of occasions. The line between dreaming and waking is all but dissolved when Freddy comes out of dreams to kill his victims. This is further compounded by the initial denial of the existence of the real Freddy Krueger by Nancy's parents. Thus, the audience is unsure as to Nancy's mental state. It is unclear whether Freddy is a figment of her deranged imagination or something else. There is also the ambivalence of what is being depicted in the film. That is to say, whether the audience is being shown a dream sequence or whether the incidents are really happening. On one level we are unsure as to whether character will wake up from their nightmare. On another level the characters themselves are sometimes unsure whether they are dreaming or not. For example, when Nancy falls asleep in class and sees Freddy, it is not clear whether she is dreaming or awake. This is accentuated by the fact that she appears to be falling asleep, but suddenly wakes before anything unusual happens. The fact that she wakes in class with a burn mark on her arm suggests the dissolving barrier between dream and reality.

A Nightmare on Elm Street plays up to its title by featuring a variety of types of nightmare. This is most obvious in the figure of Freddy Krueger himself and the way in which he functions as an archetypal bogeyman. To begin with, he is a fantasy character who haunts the dreams of teenagers. However, it is revealed by Nancy's mother (Ronee Blakley) that Kruger was an actual person. A child killer who escaped prison on a legal technicality, Krueger was burnt alive in his boiler room by the child's vengeful parents. The film reveals that this incident happened ten years before the teens of Elm Street started having the nightmares. Thus it appears that by attacking these particular people, Krueger is working his way through the children he never managed to kill in life. In addition to Kruger, the nightmares that the teenagers have are particularly interesting.

For example, at the beginning of the film, Nancy's friend Tina (Amanda Wyss) dreams that Krueger is stalking her through a boiler room. The symbolism of the boiler room is significant, not least because that was where Krueger met his demise. In this instance, the boiler room, with its basement location and its heat can be seen as a metaphor for hell. Featuring the ultimate bogeyman – a child killer (and possibly paedophile, though this is never made clear) disfigured beyond recognition and with knives for fingers - Krueger's basement is a horrifying concept for people of any age. The heat of the boiler room (Tina is sweating as she makes her way through it) emphasises this metaphorical hell. In Tina's dream, it is shadowy and full of hiding spaces and thus perfect for a lurking stalker. In addition to this imagery, there is manner in which Krueger murders his victims. Tina is murdered in another of her dreams after Freddy catches up with her in the boiler room. At the time she is sleeping next to her boyfriend Rod (Nick Corri), who sees her being slashed repeatedly and dragged across the room by an invisible presence. Suspected of her murder, Rod is later arrested. Rod's death could be considered both a nightmare and a fantasy. Freddy kills Rod in the police cell, but makes it look as if the teen has committed suicide. Therefore this action provides both the nightmare of being murdered and being helpless to stop people thinking it was suicide, and the fantasy of the act of suicide itself.

Nightmare on Elm Street creates a number of other lurid situations too. Firstly, the way in which Glen (Nancy's boyfriend played by Johnny Depp) meets his demise is perhaps a comment on teenage lifestyle. As some theorists have noted,[dlxix] slasher films appear to punish youths for their transgressions. If this is the case with Craven's film, then Tina and Rod can be seen to have met their fate because of their sexual activity and because of Rod's lifestyle (he is known as a troublemaker). In Glen's case, he is murdered as falls asleep, after Nancy requests that he stays awake to help her catch

Krueger. Thus his inability to stay awake can be seen as the motive of his murder. In a wider context, it can be seen as punishment for the sin applicable to many teens: laziness and lethargy. Nancy's nightmares, however, are experienced both in her dreams and in her waking state. In her dreams, Krueger stalks her. Nancy differentiates herself from them by being able to fight back; at first being able to grab Freddy's hat and bring it into the real world. However, in the real world, Nancy seems plagued by a number of nightmares. Most significantly, she is ignored by her parents, fulfilling yet another teen nightmare. In Nancy's case, parental disregard has a near-devastating effect, as it puts her in mortal danger. Her mother takes her to a sleep clinic where Nancy suffers from another nightmare. More destructively, her father places bars on her window, which leads to her subsequent entrapment. Nancy pleads with her father to come back to her house to check on her. But dismissing her fears as teenage angst, he concentrates on trying to solve Glen's murder. Coupled with this is her mother's alcohol problem. Although she is depicted as caring, Marge's drinking causes her to blackout when Nancy needs her the most. Thus Craven's film exhibits a very primitive horror: the nightmare of parents failing to help their children when they need it the most. Finally, *Nightmare on Elm Street* conjures the fear of castration. For Freud, castration anxiety is the unconscious fear of penile loss that occurs in early childhood.[dlxx] Given a Freudian reading, Freddy's glove of blades can be considered a depiction of the nightmare of castration. The fact that this is his preferred method of attack is suggestive of not only his victims' fear of death, but also of their fear of being literally sliced up. The imagery is further heightened at the beginning of the film, when Tina wakes from her nightmare to find shred marks have ruined her nightgown.

Five sequels followed A Nightmare on Elm Street between 1985 and 1991. Some of these further explored both the nightmare dynamic and the fantasy aspect. The third

film, *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* (1987), in particular delved into both of these areas. Set in a psychiatric ward where Nancy is now working as a councillor, teens are admitted as attempted suicide cases. The film further reiterates the adults' dismissiveness of the teens, which inevitably leads to more deaths. Added to this is the physical act of sedation, which acts almost like a lethal injection for the teens involved. With Nancy's guidance, the teens realise they can be whoever they want in their dreams, and they use this power to defeat Krueger. With this aspect of the narrative the connection between dream and fantasy is heightened: the characters are not just experiencing the dream, they also have a sense of control. A wheelchair-bound teenager, for example, transforms himself into a wizard due to his love of dungeons and dragons-esque fantasy. Just as easily, however, does Krueger turn their neuroses against them, which leads to their demise. Krueger kills a former drug addict as he turns his fingers into dozens of syringes. A young female teen with dreams of being famous is killed by Freddy turning into the television set and shoving her head into the machine, thereby electrocuting her. The cruelty of Krueger is highlighted when he utters the immortal line: "Welcome to prime time, bitch!". Unlike the impersonal slayings of Michael Myers and of Jason Voorhies from the *Friday The 13th* series, Krueger knows his victims and their individuality, and he uses this knowledge to sadistic effect. Finally Craven took the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise one further in the mid-1990s. *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*, released in 1994, was self-referential piece of cinema. In the film, rather than having the characters, the audience is shown the actors (using their real names) in a reality where the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films are acknowledged as such, even by Robert Englund himself. Thus the film plays with realities: there is the fantasy/fabrication of the previous films, the reality of this "real life" action, and the fiction of this film masquerading as reality. The self-reflexivity of *New Nightmare* worked as a suitable prelude to Craven's next film *Scream*, where not only do the

characters exhibit a knowledge of previous horror films, but these movies are actively mocked throughout the course of the narrative.

The success of the *Halloween* and the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchises paved the way for a plethora of films (and series) in the same vein. *Friday The 13th* (1980) was the first of nine films about murders at Camp Crystal Lake. Jason Voorhies did not actually appear as the killer (along with the iconic image of the white mask and baseball bat) until the sequel. Instead it was Jason's mother (Betsy Palmer) who was responsible for the teenage slaying in the first movie. More so than in *Halloween* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*, teenagers are actively punished for their transgressions (including sex, drinking and drug-taking), as according to Mrs Voorhies, young Jason drowned because the camp councillors were not paying attention to their job. While Freddy is able to get inside the mind of his victims and Michael Myers is after revenge, the slayings in the *Friday The 13th* series appear to be more literal punishments for recently committed transgressions. In 2003 two horror stalwarts finally met in *Freddy vs. Jason*.

Hellraiser was the first of three films about Pinhead and his cohorts. Famed perhaps more for the iconic image of Pinhead (Doug Bradley) than the narrative, *Hellraiser* was also concerned with alternate realities, featuring a puzzle box that has the ability to open a portal to another dimension. Clive Barker's series explores the connection between pleasure and pain, with protagonist Frank (Sean Chapman) being shown as a violent man who lives life to the full. Numerous other slasher films were produced in the decade, including *Maniac Cop* (1988), a film about a deranged killer who dresses as a cop to exact revenge on the police force. However, not all horror films of the 1980s could be categorised as slasher films. Among the various other films

released was a cinematic adaptation of Stephen King's *The Shining* (1980). More concerned with psychological elements and less visceral than the other films discussed here, *The Shining* tells the story of Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson), who after taking the job of caretaker at an isolated hotel, discovers he has psychic abilities that drive him to attempt to kill his family. *The Hunger* (1983), a modern day vampire film, told the story of Miriam (Catherine Deneuve) and her lovers, who age rapidly a few centuries after she turns them, but never die. Less of an out-and-out horror film than most discussed here, *The Hunger* can be seen as a forbearer of films like *Interview With The Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles* (1994), with its exploration of vampire lore and the complexities of eternal life.

The science-fiction film of the late 1970s and the 1980s were just as varied as the horror ones. The early-mid 1970s saw dystopian visions of the future in the form of *THX 1138*, *Soylent Green* (1973), *Rollerball* (1975) and *Logan's Run*. Lucas' 1971 film depicted a future where people are suppressed of emotions, whilst in *Soylent Green* people became food in a world where natural food sources were extinct. *Rollerball* depicted a future where corporations rather than governments had a controlling stake, and *Logan's Run* featured a world where citizens are decommissioned at the age of thirty. Elements of these films (the negative depictions of corporations, for example) can be seen in a number of science-fiction films of the 1980s. However, not all 1970s science-fiction films purveyed such negative visions. Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) offered a more positive perspective than some of the aforementioned films. Spielberg's contemporary-set, earthbound fantasy is the story of UFO activity and how it affects a small number of characters. There is a negativity directed at authority in the film. It is made clear that the authorities are attempting to conceal the truth of the UFO encounters from the public. Even at the climax of the film,

the government have sealed off the area where the spaceship has landed, and are not allowing civilians anywhere near. This element of ambivalence to authority is mirrored in Spielberg's *ET*, in the treatment of Elliot and the extraterrestrial. Nevertheless, *Close Encounters* delivers a more positive message overall. Unlike the alien invasions of the 1950s movies, Spielberg's aliens have not come to Earth with ideas of taking command, or abduction. Rather, these extraterrestrials offer no harm to the human population. When they do emerge from their spacecraft, there is a real sense of awe and wonderment, depicted by the characters' reactions. Protagonist Roy (Richard Dreyfus) spends much of the film in a dazed obsessive state, removed in one way or another from most of the other characters. With the sight of these aliens, however, the astonishment of his reaction is plain to see.

In contrast, *Blade Runner* lacks the sense of awe and wonderment featured in *Close Encounters*. Ridley Scott's film, based on a novel by Philip K Dick, is set in a futuristic city that is populated by androids as well as by humans. The dystopian vision depicted in *Blade Runner* is generated by a number of elements. Firstly, and most importantly, there is the narrative of the job of a blade runner: to hunt down replicants and "decommission" them. The film depicts a totalitarian society of inequalities, where as androids, these replicants are being wiped out for fear of an uprising. Thus the job of the blade runner, deemed necessary by the authorities, can be compared to that of a hit man. Coupled with this is the character of Deckard (Harrison Ford), the protagonist of *Blade Runner*. Wary and ready for retirement, Deckard agrees to take on one last assignment. We find out that his marriage broke down as his wife found him cold. The nature of his job makes him detached from society. It is only through his relationship with a replicant, Rachael (Sean Young), that he appears to reengage with his emotions, highlighting the intended irony in Scott's vision. Furthermore, the visual aspects of the

film lend themselves to a negative view of the future. Set in Los Angeles, the city seems more comparable to Tokyo with its overabundance of neon signs. The rain-drenched streets of the metropolis generate a feeling of isolation and detachment in the city, mirroring the character of Deckard.

Science-fiction comes into play predominantly in the exploration of future technology in this futuristic city. The premise of the film asks the audience to accept that technology has become so advanced that robots can not only be mistaken for humans, but require testing to ensure they are indeed replicants. Moreover, a theme starts to emerge, that also appears in other science fiction films of the 1980s. *Blade Runner* appears to provide a negative commentary on capitalism. This is indicated at through the films portrayal of the Tyrell Corporation. The company is depicted as having enormous power, which is made apparent through their colossal headquarters. In showing Deckard their technology, it is clear that they have a lucid policy towards experimentation. Rachael, for example, is a new experiment, a replicant who believes she is human. Elsewhere, it is revealed that the Tyrell Corporation build these machines for combat, dangerous jobs, and even prostitution. Their slogan "More human than human" can be seen as both an aim for the company's products, and on a wider scale a comment on corporate culture. In their manufacturing, the company wishes to surpass even human standards, creating an artificial product that is not indistinguishable from humans, but better than them. Thus, it is in this territory that the Corporation wields a dangerous power. Their experimentation has got to the stage where replicants must be destroyed before they start to develop emotions. In their quest to create "More human than human", causing the necessity of Blade Runners like Deckard to hunt the out-of-control products. With *Blade Runner*, Ridley Scott certainly questions the sway given to corporations, as well as the power these organisations are given to experiment with

technology. The concern of the film is with both technology and humanity. As Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner argue, *Blade Runner* "deconstructs the oppositions – human/technology, reason/feeling, culture/nature – that underwrite the conservative fear of technology by refusing to privilege one pole of the dichotomy over another and by leaving their meaning undecideable".[dlxxi] This open-endedness is further exemplified by the fact that several versions of the film have been released, most specifically with the removal of the "happy ending" in a later director's cut.

The Terminator is an excellent example of the sci-fi-action hybrid. Other films in this category include *Escape From New York*, and some of the *Mad Max* (1979) sequels. (The first two *Mad Max* films were Australian, though both were also popular in the US). *The Terminator* combines the pace, set pieces and commotion of an action film, with a narrative as at home in the science fiction genre as any of the more traditional sci-fi films. Indeed, the science-fiction elements at work in the film are employed in two different ways. Firstly there is the depiction of technology and a dystopian future. Secondly, the film forays into time travel, and the consequences of altering the course of history. Not only does Kyle Reese (Michael Biehn) travel back in time to become a catalyst in changing the future of the world, but he is also sent back by the very man he fathers (though Reese does not know this at the time). Thus, to fail in his mission to protect (and impregnate) Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) has unknown consequences to his present (i.e. to the future, in terms of the film). *Terminator* leaves the viewer with questions such as this. It is unclear to what extent the future will be like if Reese is not successful or whether John Connor will be blotted out of history. Given the gravity of the role Connor is to play in the future of humankind, it on the one hand makes it unthinkable that Reese will not succeed and on the other opens the viewer's mind to all sorts of questions about the consequence of failure, and the rules of time

travel that operate in this story. *Terminator* functions as the antithesis of *Back to the Future* in its attitude towards time travelling. Whilst Marty is warned not to meddle with the past, Reese is actively changing the course of history. Whilst the action and effects of *Terminator* are more than commendable, it is clear then that the depth to the film is provided by the dynamics of time travel and the questions that are raised by the plot.

In one sense, the dystopian vision of *Terminator* is limited, as the film is predominantly contemporary-set. However, information can be garnered by the way characters, in particular Reese, speak of the future. The audience can ascertain that seismic changes have occurred between the present and the future. The main factor in this is the development of technology, and specifically the use and manufacture of robots. To both the audience and the contemporary characters like Sarah Connor, this seems a giant leap from current technology. However, according to the film, colossal changes have taken place in less than fifty years. Artificially intelligent machines have developed to a degree that they are independent thinkers who tire of being controlled. In the year 2029, post-apocalypse, these machines are attempted to exterminate the remaining members of the human race. The Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is a cyborg assassin whose sole purpose is to exterminate Sarah Connor, thus preventing the birth of the leader of resistance. The Terminator is portrayed as cold and unrelenting, focussing on its aim at any cost. Even after a bomb explodes destroying much of its outer structure, it still pursues Sarah Connor. It is only after she crushes it in a hydraulic press that it finally deactivates. The sequel, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), focuses more on the corporate responsibility involved in creating such machines. Sarah Connor, along with her now teenage son, attempts to prevent Judgement Day by stopping the creation of the technology that makes such artificial intelligence. Sarah

discovers that it is one of Skynet's engineers, Miles Dyson (Joe Morton), who is responsible for the creation of the microprocessor. However when Sarah tracks him down to his family home, she is unable to kill him in the presence of his wife and children, therefore distinguishing herself from the machines she fights so hard against. Whilst the terminator is unrelenting in his quest, Sarah realises she cannot take an innocent human life, whatever the consequence. Furthermore, whilst Sarah wages war on the evil corporation, it is the individual people who instigate the crucial developments, however unknowingly. Sarah chooses to differentiate herself from Skynet, by not assassinating an innocent. Thus the line is drawn between the individual on a mission to save mankind doing the right thing, and the machine programmed to be devoid of human emotion. Whilst Sarah does not succeed in her ultimate aim of preventing Judgment Day, the fact that she keeps her humanity intact in the face of such adversity seems to be the more important of her battles.

Corporate use of technological advances is also at the heart of *Robocop*. While *The Terminator* is best categorised as the scientific marvellous, Robocop can be considered instrumental marvellous as although the technological advances are beyond contemporary science it is quite possible that the future will allow for such developments. The film's narrative revolves around the technology used in law and order, and the control of that technology and area by corporations rather than government. Set in the not too distant future, *Robocop* also depicts a dystopian vision. The city of Detroit is a crime-ridden metropolis, with police struggling to turn the tide. After Officer Murphy (Peter Weller) is killed on duty, his body is used by Omni Consumer Products (OCP), who have privatised the police force, to create Robocop; a computerised law enforcement officer whose directive is to serve the public trust, protect the innocent, and uphold the law. OCP are portrayed in a negative light

throughout the film. First, there is the issue of the firm having the right to experiment with the bodies of dead officers. Secondly, in a boardroom scene, the ED-209 creation malfunctions, killing a senior executive. Thus, there is an air of experimentation gone too far. Certainly in the latter case, it is clear that the prototype had not been tested fully, and rather it is rushed for board approval. Finally, towards the end of the film Robocop's fourth directive is revealed; he is unable to apprehend any member of the OCP board. Thus, *Robocop* depicts the corrupt corporation in all its glory, corporate executives who control the law placing themselves above the law. *Robocop* exhibits both negative and positive sides to the development of technology. The fatal malfunctioning of ED-209, and the later use of it to guard the OCP building, is suggestive of the danger in using such machinery to interact with people. Robocop himself can be seen as more representative of the beneficial advances in technology. Nevertheless, Robocop's humanity is implied throughout the film. The fact that he is a hybrid between a deceased human body and a machine, the extent to which he is one or the other is a prominent concern. After all, in life Murphy was a regular member of society, with friends and a family. During the film it is revealed that Robocop has flashbacks of this former life and that he retains some of Murphy's mannerisms. However, the balance between man and machine is decided in the final scene of the film, when the company president (whom he has just saved, played by Dan O'Herlihy) asks for his name. Robocop responds with "Murphy", implying that despite the nature of his outer appearance, Murphy's humanity remains intact.

Thus far, science-fiction and horror have been discussed as separate genres. However the overlap between the two forms has been in existence since before the advent of the cinema. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is probably one of the most successful and well-known forays into this hybrid territory. Combining the scientific

exploration into the creation of life with the horrific outcome, Shelley provided the benchmark for crossovers of this form. The numerous cinematic adaptations of the novel are testament to the story's lasting appeal. James Whale's 1931 version is perhaps most famous of them all, despite numerous adaptations of Shelley's novel in the intervening years. The 1950s was home to a number of horror/science fiction film crossovers. These included the 1958 film *The Fly*. The film told the story of a scientist whose teleportation device experiment goes horrifically wrong when a fly is accidently mutated with him. David Cronenberg remade the film in 1986. Whilst much of the plot followed the original, Cronenberg's film used a variety of special effects to portray the transformation from human to fly-hybrid. *The Fly* combined the technological experiment and capacity for wonder of the science-fiction genre, with the horror of fallout of such experimentation gone wrong. In edition to the grotesque images of the human/fly hybrid connection to the horror genre is noticeable through the building in tension of Veronica's (Geena Davis) attempt escapes from Seth (Jeff Goldblum).

Perhaps the most well known of the late 1970s and 1980s science-fiction-horror films is Ridley Scott's *Alien*. Its significance can be felt not only in its sequels, but also in the numerous films it influenced, including *Event Horizon* (1997). *Alien* functions as both a science-fiction film and a horror film on a number of levels. Most obviously, *Alien* is set in space and, as its title suggests, it features aliens. Further to this, *Alien* also features that science fiction hallmark of the corrupt corporation, although this is not apparent from the outset. As Judith Newton notes: "The Company in Alien represents capitalism in its most systemized, computerized, and dehumanizing form, a fact ironically enforced by the name of the Company computer, 'Mother'".[dlxxii] Moreover, *Alien* also exploits the human/machine dynamic by revealing that Ash, a crewmember, is actually a robot rather than a human. Ash's motivations had been unclear. At times he

seems to be helping his fellow crew members while at other times he appears as at odds with Ripley. His stance is only made clear when he is revealed as machine, and when it is revealed that he is following the corporation's orders. At times Ripley herself is detached and lacking in emotion. It is her cool head, however, that ensures her survival. Thomas B. Myers asserts that both *Alien* and *Blade Runner* insist "on the dehumanization necessary for human survival in a world dominated by mega-corporations".[dlxxiii] As a horror film, *Alien* provides as many tense moments (and false scares) as any other more traditional horror movie and its setting is used to great effect. The eeriness is increased due to the desolate nature of the ship, especially after some of the crew have been killed off. The craft is large and filled with equipment and machinery. Furthermore, the dark spaces that Ripley must navigate towards the end of the film enhance the likelihood of the alien jumping out at her. Then there is the isolation that the setting provides; unlike the protagonist of a regular horror film, Ripley cannot hope to be rescued by a cop or a passerby. As the film's tagline suggests, "In space no one can hear you scream".

Like fantasy, science-fiction requires the suspension of disbelief. As Steve Neale observes; "one of the keys to understanding the attraction, the pleasure – the lure – of science fiction lies precisely in the intricate intercalculation of different forms, kinds and layers of knowledge, belief and judgement".[dlxxiv] Sometimes the disbelief at situations is shared by character and viewer alike. For example, when Seth reveals his teleportation device to Veronica in *The Fly*, viewers are invited to share in her initial disbelief at the creation, and later her awe in seeing it in action. Likewise, the viewer may sympathise with the detectives in *Terminator*, when Kyle Reese tells of his time travelling and mission to protect Sarah. Although what he tells them has proved to be true, to step back and observe the implausibility of his story, one can comprehend the

officers' disbelief. Horror equally requires the audience to suspend scepticism in order for enjoyment. However, rather than provide us with outrageous creations and futuristic possibilities, horror asks the viewer to entertain the supernatural. This includes the improbability of the seemingly immortal yet human serial killer. However, it also includes more traditionally supernatural fare, such as the bogeyman that can materialise from nightmares to kill in the real world. The nightmare is such a key element of the horror film. It is the cinematic manifestation of the worst scenarios imaginable, more often than not placing an identifiable protagonist at the centre of the nightmare. Some have commented that seeing such nightmares on screen can be cathartic for the viewer. Bruce F. Kawin asserts that: "The effect of the good horror film is to show us what we are not comfortable seeing but may need to look at anyway".[dlxxv] Science-fiction appears to have more grounded preoccupations. In their exploration of technological possibilities, sci-fi films push the boundaries of the plausible in a recognisable world. The genre considers the relationship between man and machine, often drawing a divide between the two organisms, as previously discussed. In the 1980s, there appears to be a fixation on dystopian visions and particularly the role of corporations in these future realms. This preoccupation seems specific to the late 1970s and 1980s as it reflected the conglomeration and globalisation occurring in the financial world at the same time. Like earlier science-fiction movies, many of the decade's films were also concerned with the negative uses of technology. There, however, seems to be a contradiction between this message and the use of technological advances in the making of these films. For late 1970s and 1980s science fiction warned of the dangers of new technology, but at the same time dazzled us with state-of-the-art effects. While the fairytale and the sword and sorcery categories tended to offer positive stories, horror and science-fiction overall depicted a darker, more subversive, style of fantasy.

[dlviii] Barry Keith Grant, ‘ ‘Sensuous Elaboration’: Reason and the Visible in the Science-Fiction Film’, in Sean Redmond (ed.) *Liquid Metal: The Science Fiction Film Reader*, Wallflower Press, London, 2004, p. 17
[dlix] Although *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Alien* were very successful in their respective years, horror in particular did not feature heavily at the top of box office lists; neither did films such as *Blade Runner*. David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006, pp. 212-25
[dlx] Barry Keith Grant, ‘Introduction’, in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1996, p. 11
[dlxi] See Barbara Creed, ‘Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection’, in Barry Keith Grant (ed.) *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1996, pp. 35-65
[dlxii] Creed, p. 44
[dlxiii] Creed, pp. 47-63
[dlxiv] Creed, p. 63
[dlxv] Creed, p. 60
[dlxvi] See Brigid Cherry, *Horror*, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 90
[dlxvii] For a brief summary of critical opinion towards the film, see Carol J. Clover, ‘Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film’, in Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1996, p. 67
[dlxviii] James B. Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987, p. 68
[dlxix] Peter Hutchings, ‘Tearing Your Soul Apart: Horror’s New Monsters’, in Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith (eds.), *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, p. 93.
[dlxx] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (1911)*, translated by A.A. Brill, Plain Label Books, United States of America, 2007, p. 231
[dlxxi] Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, ‘Technophobia’, in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Alien Zone*, Verso, London and New York, 1990, p. 63
[dlxxii] Judith Newton, ‘Feminism and Anxiety in Alien’, in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Alien Zone*, Verso, London and New York, 1990, p. 82
[dlxxiii] Thomas B. Myers, ‘Commodity Futures’, in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Alien Zone*, Verso, London and New York, 1990, p. 45
[dlxxiv] Steve Neale, ‘“You’ve Got To Be Fucking Kidding!’ Knowledge, Belief and Judgement in Science Fiction’, in Annette Kuhn (ed.), *Alien Zone*, Verso, London and New York, 1990, p. 161
[dlxxv] Bruce F. Kawin, ‘Children of the Light’ in Barry Keith Grant (ed.), *Film Genre Reader III*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1995, p. 338

Conclusion

Slavoj Zizek wrote that it was Tony Blair who institutionalised Thatcherism - prior to this Margaret Thatcher was simply herself and needed a successor to give form to and quantify the period of her administration.[dlxxvi] Using this principle, one can suggest that the period of fantasy films running approximately from the late 1970s to the early 1990s have been cemented by films made in the 1990s and beyond. That is to say, the success of the genre, as well as the various forms and cycles that appeared, can be measured in part by the films that followed in the next two decades. Prior to the late 1970s, fantasy appeared sporadically in Hollywood history. Unlike more distinct modes with prolific cycles (such as westerns in the 1950s), fantasy did not have a consistent run of films before the late 1970s. Since then, however, fantasy has been a persistent fixture in Hollywood's output. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s fantasy films have been amongst the highest grossing each year. Franchises that began in the 1980s continued into the 1990s; the most prominent of these being the *Batman* series of films. In the past twenty years, several new fantasy franchises have been created (such as the *Harry Potter* series), based on older stories and comic book characters, as well as original series of films.

Fairytale films continued well into the 1990s. 1998's *Ever After* offered a more realistic re-telling of the Cinderella story. Although nothing strictly fantastic happens, the narrative takes place in an exotic locale, as the film is set centuries ago in Medieval France. This setting functions much like those in the *Indiana Jones* films; in some respects *Ever After* can satisfy Todorov's exotic marvellous category, as it is the faraway setting that suggests a fantasy element. This is particularly acute when comparing it to a film such as *A Cinderella Story* (2004), a modern-day retelling set in

Los Angeles. A later edition to the sub-genre, Disney's *Enchanted* (2007) parodied some of the conventions of fairytales (specifically in Disney films themselves). The film mixed live action with animated sequences, with the fairytale realm being represented in animated form and the characters in live action once they crossover into modern-day New York.

Not all fantasy post-1989 fits into the traditional fairytale category however. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* was the biggest grossing film of 2000.[dlxxvii] Based on the short story by Dr Seuss, the film capitalised on both the Christmas market and the star power of lead Jim Carrey. Set in the fantasy land of Whoville, the fantastic element centres on the Grinch. The film fits the hyperbolic marvellous category in some ways as the strength of the character (in lifting the enormous sleigh, which is full of presents) is accepted in this fantasy realm. In the meantime other fantasy films continued to use the quest narrative. One of the most high profile of these was *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) the first in a series of films based on the stories by C.S. Lewis. In the first film, four siblings are transported to the fantasy land of Narnia through a mysterious wardrobe, which appears as normal to adults. A well-known fantasy classic, the film was the second highest grossing of 2005, taking over $291 million in the United States.[dlxxviii] Less successful was *The Golden Compass* (2007), which failed to make the huge profits expected of it and which effectively killed the franchise. Based on the first novel of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, the film was set in an alternative universe, focuses on orphan Lyra and her quest to find a group of missing children. Undoubtedly, the decision to produce cinematic adaptations of both Lewis' and Pullman's novels was at least partly due to the phenomenal success of another fantasy franchise, *The Lord of the Rings*. *The Lord of the Rings* films were not only some of the most commercially successful films of their

respective years, but also of all time. Based on the trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien, the films are best classified as belonging to the sword and sorcery sub-genre. The series takes on a quest narrative, with central character Frodo being tasked with protecting the mythical ring from the evil Sauron, before it can be destroyed for good. Much of Tolkien's imagery and character archetypes had been replicated in the fantasy film genre in the 1980s, most notably in *Willow*. Peter Jackson's early *Lord of the Rings* films were followed by other entries in the sub-genre. *Eragon* (2006), based on the novel by Christopher Paolini, also featured a young male protagonist tasked with a fraught journey. More recently, a cinematic version of Robert E. Howard's *Solomon Kane* was released in 2010. With its action sequences and supernatural activity, the film was very typical of the sword and sorcery category.

Children's films are as integral a part of the fantasy genre as they were in the 1980s. The 1990s began with the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* films, based on the popular children's cartoons. The first in a series of three films, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1990) was the most successful, becoming one of the top grossing films of the year.[dlxxix] In 1995, two significant children's fantasy films were released. *Babe* (1995), based on the children's novel by Dick King-Smith, combined effects with animal actors to create the illusion of talking animals. *Casper* (1995) was a live action film that used computer animation to create the ghosts. The film was based on the character from the children's book and subsequent cartoon series. Numerous other children's films have been released, many of which have capitalised on targeting this demographic with merchandising and spin-off films and television series. More recent additions to the sub-genre include the successful *Nanny McPhee* (2005), the sequel of which was released in 2010. However, the majority of children's films released in the 1990s and 2000s were animated features. Disney dominated this category in the period. The company had

successive hits with its animated films in a cycle started by *The Little Mermaid*. Some of these films were based on fairytales, such as *Beauty and the Beast*, whilst others were fictional stories based on actual events, *Pocahontas* (1995) for example. In the same year, Disney released *Toy Story* (1995), which was produced by their animation studio Pixar. *Toy Story* was the first film to be produced entirely with computer-generated imagery. The film was the highest grossing of 1995;[dlxxx] its success paved the way for a succession of CGI hits for the company. Other studios created profitable franchises from animated features, but it was Disney's Pixar that dominated the period. Recently, Disney returned to their roots, producing their first hand-drawn animated feature in five years. *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) saw Disney's return to the fairytale background; the film is based on the Brothers Grimm story *The Frog Prince*. Also notable in this period were stop-motion animated features, which required painstaking production in generating movement. Films include the popular *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) and more recently *Coraline* (2009).

In addition to the sub-genres already discussed, the policy of targeting fantasy at various demographics continued. Cemented as a lucrative market in the 1980s, the trend toward teen fantasy continued. Many of the bodyswap films were aimed at teens, with their young protagonists and high school settings. Others featured different forms of supernatural activity, such as 1996's *The Craft*. The film centred on a group of high school girls who experiment with witchcraft in order to better their lives. Whilst 1992's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* gave rise to a television series that eclipsed its predecessor, the undisputed king of teen fantasy in the late 2000s belongs to a different set of vampires. The *Twilight* franchise (2008-2012), based on the popular teen novel series, has quickly become a very profitable endeavour.[dlxxxi] Meanwhile, fantasy films aimed at the family audience have remained as popular as ever. As well as the franchises

mentioned above, films such as *Night at the Museum* (2006) have proved successful with a wide demographic. Set at the Museum of Natural History, the film features a curse that makes the exhibits (including animals) come to life. A sequel followed in 2009. Other family-orientated fantasy included *Big Fish* (2003). Burton's film combined fantasy with drama, as an ailing Ed Bloom recounts his life and fantastic adventures to his dubious son. Originally a project for Stanley Kubrick, *Artificial Intelligence: A.I* (2001) is a science-fiction adventure. A futuristic update of the Pinocchio fable, robot David (Haley Joel Osment) takes on a quest to become a real boy. Like the family-orientated fare, fantasy aimed at adults in the 1990s and 2000s were a diverse group of films. *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) has the basic narrative in common with 1986's *Labyrinth*, but little else, especially in terms of tone. The Spanish-language film, set during Franco's regime, features a young female protagonist who creates an imaginary world to escape from the harsh realities of the real one. The 1999 film *The Sixth Sense* also featured a young protagonist, in this case a young boy who can communicate with the dead. The film combines this supernatural element with a mystery, and a now infamous twist in the ending. Another adult-orientated fantasy that featured the supernatural was 1990's *Ghost*. The part fantasy part romance, the film centred on the spirit of murdered man, who is able to continue living on Earth because of the strong love he has for his partner. Less serious fantasy for adults included the 2000 hit *What Women Want*. After a bizarre accident, a male advertising executive is able to hear the inner thoughts of women. Meyers' film is very much a romantic comedy, albeit one with a fantastic element.

Supernatural comedy retained the success it attained in the 1980s, albeit in a variety of guises. An early success was *The Addams Family* (1991), based on the popular characters previously featured in cartoon strip and television form. The film

relied heavily on the subversive humour that is typical of the sub-genre. Other notable additions to the form include *Death Becomes Her* (1992) and *Muppet Christmas Carol* (1992). The latter features the puppet characters from the popular television show, combining a surprisingly faithful retelling of the Dickens' classic with humour and musical numbers. Other supernatural comedies, such as *Practical Magic* (1998) did not attain the level of success as the previously mentioned films.[dlxxxii] Following a decade or so in the wilderness, the bodyswap film enjoyed another cycle of successful features in the 2000s. These included the remake *Freaky Friday*, teen comedy *It's a Boy Girl Thing*, and most recently *17 Again* (2009), which centres on a middle-aged man who wakes up in his teenage body.

Franchises dominated the box office charts of the 1990s and 2000s, just as they did in the 1980s. Many of these were not original concepts; often film series were based on a pre-sold story or idea. For example, one of the most successful franchises of the period was the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films, which began with *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, released in 2003. The film was developed from the ride at Disneyland. Its success spawned three sequels, with more to come. The *Harry Potter* series of films (2001-2011) were also immensely popular.[dlxxxiii] Based on the series of books by J.K Rowling, the tales of witchcraft and the supernatural engaged with a wide audience. Aside from the aforementioned *Lord of the Rings* and other fantasy series, franchises were also monopolised were comic book adaptations. A plethora of films focussed on comic book heroes were released post-1980s, no doubt influenced by the success of the *Superman* series of films and 1989's *Batman*. Many were produced by with Marvel characters; indeed the *Spiderman* series of films (2002-2007) and the *X-Men* cycle (2000-2011, with more sequels planned) were among the most successful franchises of the period. Nonetheless, the past twenty years have been

really belong only to one superhero: Batman. Following the enormous success of the 1989 film, three more sequels were produced in the 1990s. After a hiatus, the franchise received a reboot in 2005 with director Christopher Nolan's origins story *Batman Begins*. Its sequel, *The Dark Knight* (2008) was a gigantic critical and commercial success; the buzz surrounding the film was reminiscent of *Batman*'s summer of 1989 dominance. The sub-genre shows no signs of slowing either, with numerous sequels and adaptations in the works.[dlxxxiv]

Just as in previous decades, science-fiction and horror remained frequent fixtures in Hollywood's output of the last twenty years. Science-fiction took on a variety of guises, including its numerous appearances in disaster films. Sci-fi has had a role to play in most of the disaster films of the 1990s and 2000s, including *Independence Day*. The big-budget feature, which depicts an alien invasion, was the top grossing film of 1996.[dlxxxv] Spielberg's colossus, *Jurassic Park* (1993) used advances in technology to explain the creation of dinosaurs on a private island. Other science-fiction mirrored earlier films in its use of dystopian futures. *Minority Report* (2002) depicted a future where crimes could be detected and prevented before they even took place, whilst *The Matrix* (1999) presented a world where an artificial existence is the norm; in reality humanity has been enslaved by machines. *Inception* (2010) features advanced technology that allows people to share dreams. The film combines the concept of planting an idea in someone else's subconscious, with state of the art effects, creating an action sci-fi blockbuster. Like most science-fiction movies, *Inception* falls into the category of scientific marvellous, although its attempts to promote verisimilitude with realistic gadgets perhaps lend the film to the instrumental marvellous group. The sci-fi horror hybrid genre has remained strong in the past two decades, with films such as *Event Horizon* (1997) owing much to *Alien*. Finally, horror has continued the pattern

cemented in the 1980s. Whilst a significant number of films are devoid of fantastic activity (1996's *Scream* for example), supernatural horror films have flourished. These include *Final Destination* (2000), in which death stalks a group of teens who were destined to be on a plane that crashed. *The Ring* (2002), a remake of a Japanese film, features a mysterious videotape that causes the death of anyone who watches it after seven days. As ever, horror has combined with numerous other genres to create hybrid films. *Zombieland* (2009) combines the horror of a zombie film with comedy, structured in the form of a road movie.

As this thesis has illustrated, fantasy is a film genre. It can be classified as a film genre as much as the western or comedy can be. Nevertheless, fantasy is extensive in its inclusion of films. Defining fantasy as films that include any magical or supernatural elements entails that a multitude of films fall under this description. *Fright Night* (1985) is as much as a fantasy film as *Return to Oz*, in spite of their divergent characteristics. Therefore, it has been vital to identify the sub-genres that account for the preponderance of 1980s fantasy. All fantasy films can be grouped in one of the categories identified by this thesis. This is in part due to the fact that I have identified and explored age-specific sub-genres as well as those that concentrate on more traditional conventions.

A number of preoccupations have emerged, both within individual sub-genres and the fantasy film genre as a whole. Certain character archetypes reappear throughout fantasy, particularly within the fairytale and the sword and sorcery sub-genres. Moreover, as Chapter 3 identified, many fairytale films follow very similar narrative patterns. The 'real world' framing device also reoccurs within this sub-genre. Sword and sorcery films frequently depicted religion or religious leaders as ambiguous or deceptive. This feeds into the subversive traits of the fantasy genre. Although most

evident in supernatural comedies, the subversion of commonly held beliefs or concepts permeates the fantasy genre. Many fantasy films displayed a reliance on mythology, particularly sword and sorcery and the children's film. In addition to subversion, some of the genre's films propagated more traditional ideals. Comic book adaptations offered fantasies of power, while animation (particularly Disney films) offered the happily ever after fantasy. A number of films belonging to the science-fiction sub-genre were focussed on dystopian visions and negative consequences of technology. Nightmares and the darker side of fantasy, meanwhile, dominated horror. A recurrent element of fantasy films was inclusion of magical objects and talking animals, which appeared in a number of different films. These demonstrated the importance of special effects to the genre. The advancement of, and developments in, special effects can be traced in parallel with the growing popularity and frequency of the fantasy genre. Time and space were also common conductors of fantasy elements, particular in the decade's successful franchises. Finally, fantasy provided some of the best examples of successful film merchandising and marketing in the 1980s.

This thesis shows originality in a number of forms. In recognising fantasy as a genre, and offering a firm definition, I have distinguished my work from previous academic discussion of fantasy. I have used Todorov's structural methodology of the fantastic and the marvellous as a framework to base my approach to the fantasy film genre. I have built on this, however, by identifying a number of different sub-genres that fall under the umbrella of fantasy. I have explored thematic and narrative conventions, as well as audience-specific sub-genres. Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted and discussed the different characteristics and preoccupations that make up fantasy. I have used reviews to build a picture of how fantasy and its films was discussed and classified by critics during the period. I have also referred to the films' box office success in

framing fantasy in its popular context. This thesis provides a thorough and encompassing account of the fantasy genre in the late 1970s and the 1980s. Fantasy has a higher level of hybridity than some other film genres. Nonetheless, a strong vein runs through these films, which is categorises them as belonging to the fantasy genre. Fantasy is a complex genre, but one that is rich in imagination, subversion, and spectacle. As has been highlighted, the legacy of fantasy films of the late 1970s and the 1980s is all too apparent in the prolificacy of the genre in contemporary Hollywood.

[dlxxvi] Slavoj Zizek, 'Resistance is Surrender', *London Review of Books*, 29, 22, 15 November 2007, p. 7
[dlxxvii] Box Office statistics from 'Top 250 of 2000', *Variety*, 8 January 2001, p. 20
[dlxxviii] Box Office statistics from 'Domestic Top 250 of 2005', *Variety*, 9 January 2006, p. 52
[dlxxix] The film grossed over $133 million at the US box office. Box Office statistics for 1990 from *Variety*, accessed 25 June 2011 from:
http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=BoxOfficeFilms&id=294105
[dlxxx] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006, p. 231
[dlxxxi] For details of the success of the *Twilight* franchise see Carl DiOrio, ''Eclipse' notches Wednesday boxoffice record', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 1 July 2010. Accessed 25 July 2010 from:
http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/news/e3id8721154d6b175bc25a0233d2cb5b376
[dlxxxii] *Practical Magic* grossed $46.4 million at the US box office. Box Office statistics from 'The Top 250 0f 1998, *Variety*, 11 January 1999, p. 33
[dlxxxiii] For details of the film franchise's box office success see Pamela McClintock and Dave McNary, ''Potter' breaking box office records', *Variety*, 12 July 2007. Accessed 25 June 2011 from: http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117968412
[dlxxxiv] For example, see Ben Fritz, 'DC Comics starts a new film era with Green Lantern, Geoff Johns and Diane Nelson', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 2010. Accessed 25 July 2010 from:
http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/herocomplex/2010/07/dc-comics-starts-a-new-film-era-with-green-lantern-geoff-johns-and-diane-nelson-.html
[dlxxxv] Box Office statistics from Leonard Klady, 'Year's Big B.O. Bang', *Variety*, 6 January 1997, p. 16

Appendix – List of Films

13 GOING ON 30 (Gary Winick, US, 2004)
17 AGAIN (Burr Steers, US, 2009)
18 AGAIN! (Paul Flaherty, US, 1988)
A.I. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (Steven Spielberg, US, 2001)
A CINDERELLA STORY (Mark Rosman, CA/US, 2004)
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (Wes Craven, US, 1984)
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2: FREDDY'S REVENGE (Jack Sholder, US, 1985)
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS (Chuck Russell, US, 1987)
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4: THE DREAM MASTER (Renny Harlin, US, 1988)
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET: THE DREAM CHILD (Stephen Hopkins, US, 1989)
A STAR IS BORN (Frank Pierson, US, 1976)
ALADDIN (Ron Clements, John Musker, US, 1992)
ALF'S BUTTON (Cecil M. Hepworth, GB, 1920)
ALF'S BUTTON (W.P. Kellino, GB, 1930)
ALF'S BUTTON AFLOAT (Marcel Varnel, GB, 1938)
ALICE IN WONDERLAND (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, US, 1951)
ALIEN (Ridley Scott, GB/US, 1979)
ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN (Don Bluth, GB/IE/US, 1989)
ALL OF ME (Carl Reiner, US, 1984)
ALWAYS (Steven Spielberg, US, 1989)
AN AMERICAN TAIL (Don Bluth, US, 1986)
AN AMERICAN TAIL: FIEVEL GOES WEST (Phil Nibbelink, Simon Wells, US, 1991)
ANIMAL HOUSE (John Landis, US, 1978)
BABE (Chris Noonan, AU/US, 1995)
BACK TO THE FUTURE (Robert Zemeckis, US, 1985)
BACK TO THE FUTURE PART II (Robert Zemeckis, US, 1989)
BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III (Robert Zemeckis, US, 1990)
BATMAN (Leslie H. Martinson, US, 1966)
BATMAN (Tim Burton, GB/US, 1989)
BATMAN & ROBIN (Joel Schumacher, GB/US, 1997)
BATMAN BEGINS (Christopher Nolan, GB/US, 2005)
BATMAN FOREVER (Joel Schumacher, GB/US, 1995)
BATMAN RETURNS (Tim Burton, GB/US, 1992)
BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED (Matthew Robbins, US, 1987)
BE KIND REWIND (Michael Gondry, GB/US, 2008)
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise, US, 1991)
BEDAZZLED (Stanley Donen, GB, 1967)
BEDAZZLED (Harold Ramis, DE/US, 2000)
BEDKNOBS AND BROOMSTICKS (Robert Stevenson, US, 1971)
BEETLEJUICE (Tim Burton, US, 1988)
BEYOND THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE (Irwin Allen, US, 1979)
BICYCLE THIEVES (Vittorio De Sica, IT, 1948)
BIG (Penny Marshall, US, 1988)
BIG FISH (Tim Burton, US, 2003)

BLACK CHRISTMAS (Bob Clark, CA, 1974)
BLADE RUNNER (Ridley Scott, HK/US, 1982)
BOYZ N THE HOOD (John Singleton, US, 1991)
BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA (Francis Ford Coppola, US, 1992)
BRAZIL (Terry Gilliam, GB, 1985)
BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (James Whale, US, 1935)
BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER (Fran Rubel Kuzui, US, 1992)
CANDYMAN (Bernard Rose, US, 1992)
CARE BEARS MOVIE II: A NEW GENERATION (Dale Schott, CA/US, 1986)
CARRIE (Brian De Palma, US, 1976)
CASPER (Brad Silberling, US, 1995)
CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN (Walter Lang, US, 1950)
CHILD'S PLAY (Tom Holland, US, 1988)
CINDERELLA (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, US, 1950)
CLASH OF THE TITANS (Desmond Davis, US, 1981)
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND (Steven Spielberg, US, 1977)
CONAN THE BARBARIAN (John Millius, US, 1982)
CONAN THE DESTROYER (Richard Fleischer, US, 1984)
CORALINE (Henry Selick, US, 2009)
CRITTERS (Stephen Herek, US, 1986)
CRITTERS 2 (Mick Garris, US, 1988)
CRITTERS 3 (Kristine Peterson, US, 1991)
CRITTERS 4 (Rupert Harvey, US, 1992)
DEATH BECOMES HER (Robert Zemeckis, US, 1992)
DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY (Mitchell Leisen, US, 1934)
DEATHSTALKER (James Sbardellati, AR/US, 1983)
DEATHSTALKER II (Jim Wynorski, AR/US, 1987)
DOUBLE INDEMNITY (Billy Wilder, US, 1944)
DR. NO (Terence Young, GB, 1962)
DRACULA (Tod Browning, US, 1931)
DRAGONSLAYER (Matthew Robbins, US, 1981)
DREAM A LITTLE DREAM (Marc Rocco, US, 1989)
E.T.: THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (Steven Spielberg, US, 1982)
EARTH GIRLS ARE EASY (Julien Temple, GB/US, 1988)
EDWARD SCISSORHANDS (Tim Burton, US, 1990)
EMPIRE OF THE SUN (Steven Spielberg, US, 1987)
ENCHANTED (Kevin Lima, US, 2007)
ERAGON (Stefan Fangmeier, GB/HU/US, 2006)
ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK (John Carpenter, GB/US, 1981)
EVENT HORIZON (Paul W.S. Anderson, GB/US, 1997)
EVERAFTER (Andy Tennant, US, 1998)
EVIL DEAD II (Sam Raimi, US, 1987)
EXCALIBUR (John Boorman, GB/US, 1981)
FANTASIA (James Algar, Samuel Armstrong, Ford Beebe, Norman Ferguson, Jim Handley, T. Hee, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, Bill Roberts, Paul Satterfield, Ben Sharpsteen, US, 1940)
FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH (Amy Heckerling, US, 1982)
FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF (John Hughes, US, 1986)
FINAL DESTINATION (James Wong, CA/US, 2000)
FINDING NEMO (Andrew Stanton, Lee Unkrich, AU/US, 2003)
FIRE AND ICE (Ralph Bakshi, US, 1983)
FIRST BLOOD (Ted Kotcheff, US, 1982)

FLASH GORDON (Mike Hodges, GB/US, 1980)
FORBIDDEN PLANET (Fred M. Wilcox, US, 1956)
FRANKENSTEIN (James Whale, US, 1931)
FREAKY FRIDAY (Gary Nelson, US, 1976)
FREAKY FRIDAY (Mark Waters, US, 2003)
FREDDY VS. JASON (Ronny Yu, CA/IT/US, 2003)
FRIDAY THE 13TH (Sean S. Cunningham, US, 1980)
FRIGHT NIGHT (Tom Holland, US, 1985)
GANDHI (Richard Attenborough, GB/IND, 1982)
GATTACA (Andrew Niccol, US, 1997)
GHOST (Jerry Zucker, US, 1990)
GHOST BUSTERS (Ivan Reitman, US, 1984)
GHOSTBUSTERS II (Ivan Reitman, US, 1989)
GODZILLA (Ishirô Honda, JP, 1954)
GOR (Fritz Kiersch, US, 1987)
GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES (Isao Takahata, JP, 1988)
GREASE (Randal Kleiser, US, 1978)
GREMLINS (Joe Dante, US, 1984)
GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH (Joe Dante, US, 1990)
HALLOWEEN (John Carpenter, US, 1978)
HALLOWEEN II (Rick Rosenthal, US, 1981)
HALLOWEEN III: THE SEASON OF THE WITCH (Tommy Lee Wallace, US, 1982)
HALLOWEEN 4: THE RETURN OF MICHAEL MYERS (Dwight H. Little, US, 1988)
HALLOWEEN 5 (Dominique Othenin-Girard, US, 1989)
HALLOWEEN: RESURRECTION (Rick Rosenthal, US, 2002)
HALLOWEEN H20: 20 YEARS LATER (Steve Miner, US, 1998)
HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE (Chris Columbus, GB/US, 2001)
HAWK THE SLAYER (Terry Marcel, GB, 1981)
HEAVEN CAN WAIT (Warren Beatty, Buck Henry, US, 1978)
HEAVEN'S GATE (Michael Cimino, US, 1980)
HELLRAISER (Clive Barker, GB, 1987)
HIGH SPIRITS (Neil Jordan, GB/US, 1988)
HIGHLANDER (Russell Mulcahy, GB/US, 1986)
HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS (Joe Johnston, US, 1989)
HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS (Ron Howard, DE/US, 2000)
I, ROBOT (Alex Proyas, DE/US, 2004)
I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF (Gene Fowler Jr., US, 1957)
INCEPTION (Christopher Nolan, GB/US, 2010)
INDEPENDENCE DAY (Roland Emmerich, US, 1996)
INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL (Steven Spielberg, US, 2008)
INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE (Steven Spielberg, US, 1989)
INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM (Steven Spielberg, US 1984)
INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE: THE VAMPIRE CHRONICLES (Neil Jordan, US, 1994)
INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (Don Siegel, US, 1956)
IT'S A BOY GIRL THING (Nick Hurran, CA/GB, 2006)
IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE (Frank Capra, US, 1946)
JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS (Don Chaffey, GB/US, 1963)
JAWS (Steven Spielberg, US, 1975)

JEEPERS CREEPERS (Victor Salva, DE/US, 2001)
JURASSIC PARK (Steven Spielberg, US, 1993)
KING KONG (Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack, US, 1933)
KING KONG (John Guillermin, US, 1976)
KING SOLOMON'S MINES (J. Lee Thompson, US, 1985)
KRULL (Peter Yates, GB/US, 1983)
LABYRINTH (Jim Henson, GB/US, 1986)
LADYHAWKE (Richard Donner, US, 1985)
LEGEND (Ridley Scott, GB/US, 1985)
LIKE FATHER LIKE SON (Rod Daniel, US, 1987)
LOGAN'S RUN (Michael Anderson, US, 1976)
MAD MAX (George Miller, Au, 1979)
MAD MAX 2: THE ROAD WARRIOR (George Miller, AU, 1981)
MAD MAX BEYOND THUNDERDOME (George Miller, George Ogilvie, AU/US, 1985)
MANIAC COP (William Lustig, US, 1988)
MANNEQUIN (Michael Gottlieb, US, 1987)
MARY POPPINS (Robert Stevenson, US, 1964)
MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE (Gary Goddard, US, 1987)
MEN IN BLACK (Barry Sonnenfeld, US, 1997)
MINORITY REPORT (Steven Spielberg, US, 2002)
MONSTERS VS ALIENS (Rob Letterman, Conrad Vernon, US, 2009)
MY LITTLE PONY: THE MOVIE (Mike Joens, US, 1986)
NANNY MCPHEE (Kirk Jones, FR/GB/US, 2005)
NANNY MCPHEE AND THE BIG BANG (Susanna White, FR/GB/US, 2010)
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM (Shawn Levy, GB/US, 2006)
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 2 (Shawn Levy, CA/US, 2009)
OLIVER & COMPANY (George Scribner, US, 1988)
PAN'S LABYRINTH (Guillermo del Toro, ES/MX, 2006)
PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE (Tim Burton, US, 1985)
PEGGY SUE GOR MARRIED (Francis Ford Coppola, US, 1986)
PINOCCHIO (Norman Ferguson, T. Hee, Wilfred Jackson, Jack Kinney, Hamilton Luske, Bill Roberts, Ben Sharpsteen, US, 1940)
PINOCCHIO AND THE EMPEROR OF THE NIGHT (Hal Sutherland, US, 1987)
PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL (Gore Verbinski, US, 2003)
POCAHONTAS (Mike Gabriel, Eric Goldberg, US, 1995)
PRACTICAL MAGIC (Griffin Dunne, AU/US, 1998)
PREDATOR (John McTiernan, US, 1987)
PRELUDE TO A KISS (Norman René, US, 1992)
PRETTY IN PINK (Howard Deutch, US, 1986)
PSYCHO (Alfred Hitchcock, US, 1960)
RAGTIME (Milos Forman, US, 1981)
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (Steven Spielberg, US, 1981)
RATATOUILLE (Brad Bird, Jan Pinkava, US, 2007)
REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE (Nicholas Ray, US, 1955)
RED SONJA (Richard Fleischer, NL/US, 1985)
RETURN TO OZ (Walter Murch, GB/US, 1985)
RISKY BUSINESS (Paul Brickman, US, 1983)
ROBIN HOOD (Wolfgang Reitherman, US, 1973)
ROBOCOP (Paul Verhoeven, US, 1987)
ROCKY (John G. Avildsen, US, 1976)

ROLLERBALL (Norman Jewison, GB, 1975)
ROSEMARY'S BABY (Roman Polanski, US, 1968)
SANTA CLAUS (Jeannot Szwarc, GB/US, 1985)
SCARY MOVIE (Keenan Ivory Wayans, US, 2000)
SCARY MOVIE 2 (Keenan Ivory Wayans, US/CA, 2001)
SCARY MOVIE 3 (David Zucker, US/CA, 2003)
SCREAM (Wes Craven, US, 1996)
SCROOGED (Richard Donner, US, 1988)
SE7EN (David Fincher, US, 1995)
SHAUN OF THE DEAD (Edgar Wright, GB/FR/US, 2004)
SHORT CIRCUIT (John Badham, US, 1986)
SIXTEEN CANDLES (John Hughes, US, 1984)
SLEEPY HOLLOW (Tim Burton, DE/US, 1999)
SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (William Cottrell, David Hand, Wilfred Jackson, Larry Morey, Perce Pearce, Ben Sharpsteen, US, 1937)
SOLOMON KANE (Michael J. Bassett, CZ/FR/GB, 2009)
SOYLENT GREEN (Richard Fleischer, US, 1973)
SPIDER-MAN (Sam Raimi, US, 2002)
SPLASH (Ron Howard, US, 1984)
STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE (Robert Wise, US, 1979)
STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN (Nicholas Meyer, US, 1982)
STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK (Leonard Nimoy, US, 1984)
STAR WARS (George Lucas, US, 1977)
STAR WARS EPISODE V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (Irvin Kershner, US, 1980)
STAR WARS EPISODE VI: RETURN OF THE JEDI (Richard Marquand, US, 1983)
SUPERGIRL (Jeannot Szwarc, GB, 1984)
SUPERMAN (Richard Donner, GB/US, 1978)
SUPERMAN II (Richard Lester, GB/US, 1980)
SUPERMAN III (Richard Lester, GB/US, 1983)
SUPERMAN IV: THE QUEST FOR PEACE (Sidney J. Furie, GB/US, 1987)
SWITCH (Blake Edwards, US, 1991)
SWORD OF THE VALIANT: THE LEGEND OF SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT (Stephen Weeks, GB, 1984)
TEEN WOLF (Rod Daniel, US, 1985)
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (Steve Barron, HK/US, 1990)
TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY (James Cameron, FR/US, 1991)
THE 7th VOYAGE OF SINBAD (Nathan Juran, US, 1958)
THE ABYSS (James Cameron, US, 1989)
THE ADDAMS FAMILY (Barry Sonnenfeld, US, 1991)
THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN (Terry Gilliam, IT/GB, 1988)
THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO (Ippei Kuri, Jim Terry, US, 1984)
THE ARISTOCATS (Wolfgang Reitherman, US, 1970)
THE BEASTMASTER (Don Coscarelli, DE/US, 1982)
THE BIRDS (Alfred Hitchcock, US, 1963)
THE BLACK CAULDRON (Ted Berman, Richard Rich, US, 1985)
THE BRAVE LITTLE TOASTER (Jerry Rees, JP/TW/US, 1987)
THE BREAKFAST CLUB (John Hughes, US, 1985)
THE CARE BEARS ADVENTURE IN WONDERLAND (Raymond Jafelice, CA, 1987)
THE CARE BEARS MOVIE (Arna Selznick, CA, 1985)

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE (Andrew Adamson, GB/US, 2005)
THE CRAFT (Andrew Fleming, US, 1996)
THE DARK CRYTAL (Jim Henson, Frank Oz, GB/US, 1982)
THE DARK KNIGHT (Christopher Nolan, GB/US, 2008)
THE EXORCIST (William Friedkin, US, 1973)
THE FLY (Kurt Neumann, US, 1958)
THE FLY (David Cronenberg, US, 1986)
THE FOX AND THE HOUND (Ted Berman, Richard Rich, Art Stevens, US 1981)
THE GHOST AND MRS MUIR (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, US, 1947)
THE GHOST GOES WEST (René Clair, GB, 1935)
THE GODFATHER (Francis Ford Coppola, US, 1972)
THE GODFATHER: PART II (Francis Ford Coppola, US, 1974)
THE GODFATHER: PART III (Francis Ford Coppola, US, 1990)
THE GOLDEN COMPASS (Chris Weitz, GB/US, 2007)
THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE (Ron Clements, Burny Mattinson, Dave Michener, John Musker, US, 1986)
THE HUNGER (Tony Scott, GB, 1983)
THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN (Jack Arnold, US, 1957)
THE INVISIBLE RAY (Lambert Hillyer, US, 1936)
THE LAND BEFORE TIME (Don Bluth, IE/US, 1988)
THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT (Wes Craven, US, 1972)
THE LAST STARFIGHTER (Nick Castle, US, 1984)
THE LION KING (Roger Allers, Rob Minkoff, US, 1994)
THE LITTLE MERMAID (Ron Clements, John Musker, US, 1989)
THE LIZZIE MCGUIRE MOVIE (Jim Fall, US, 2003)
THE LORD OF THE RINGS (Ralph Bakshi, US, 1978)
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING (Peter Jackson, NZ/US, 2001)
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING (Peter Jackson, NZ/US, 2003)
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS (Peter Jackson, NZ/US, 2002)
THE LOST BOYS (Joel Schumacher, US, 1987)
THE MAD GHOUL (James P. Hogan, US, 1943)
THE MATRIX (Andy Wachowski, Laurence Wachowski, AU/US, 1999)
THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL (Brian Henson, US, 1992)
THE MUPPETS TAKE MANHATTAN (Frank Oz, US, 1984)
THE NEVERENDING STORY (Wolfgang Petersen, DE/US, 1984)
THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG (Ron Clements, John Musker, US, 2009)
THE PRINCESS BRIDE (Rob Reiner, US, 1987)
THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO (Woody Allen, US, 1985)
THE RESCUERS (John Lounsbery, Wolfgang Reitherman, Art Stevens, US, 1977)
THE RING (Gore Verbinski, JP/US, 2002)
THE RUGRATS MOVIE (Igor Kovalyov, Norton Virgien, US, 1998)
THE SEARCHERS (John Ford, US, 1956)
THE SECRET OF THE SWORD (Ed Friedman, Lou Kachivas, Marsh Lamore, Bill Reed, Gwen Wetzler, US, 1985)
THE SHINING (Stanley Kubrick, US, 1980)
THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS (Jonathan Demme, US, 1991)
THE SIXTH SENSE (M. Night Shyamalan, US, 1999)
THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER (Albert Pyun, US, 1982)
THE TERMINATOR (James Cameron, GB/US, 1984)

THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE (Tobe Hooper, US, 1974)
THE THIEF OF BAGDAD (Raoul Walsh, US, 1924)
THE TRANSFORMERS: THE MOVIE (Nelson Shin, JP/US, 1986)
THE WAR OF THE WORLDS (Byron Haskin, US, 1953)
THE WARRIOR AND THE SORCERESS (John C. Broderick, AR/US, 1984)
THE WIZARD OF OZ (Victor Fleming, US, 1939)
THEM (Gordon Douglas, US, 1954)
THUMBELINA (Don Bluth, Gary Goldman, IE/US, 1994)
THX 1138 (George Lucas, US, 1971)
TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS (Henry Selick, US, 1993)
TIME BANDITS (Terry Gilliam, GB, 1981)
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