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# Introduction

The purpose of the master thesis is to clarify and identify the sociocultural role of the Hollywood movie. Is it purely an entertainment commodity or does the constant stream of text stemming from an ideological, cultural and production hegemony have a deeper effect on cultures and individuals that are not otherwise part of *Hollywood culture*. The concept of American cultural imperialism is already well established but this thesis will look at films and to what extent they have the possibility to effect individuals and cultures. The fact that most other film industries pale in the comparison with Hollywood when thinking about production capability and rate of distribution means that the Hollywood film, both in content and form, is the dominant force in the marketplace and the cultural fields. The time we live in is a mediated age and it is important to have realistic conception of the consequences of the high media concentration. Therefore the question of this thesis is:

**What are the social and cultural effects of the Hollywood film on a personal and structural level?**

**How do the social and cultural effects of Hollywood films manifest themselves in society?**

In order to answer this I will analyse the Die Hard films as they stand as one of the clearest examples of the Hollywood export of entertainment content. I will approach the films from two angles. First I will look at them as part of an ideological structure and secondly I will investigate the effects films have on an individual level. This will be done by using a cognitive approach. The approach is used in order to see if the effects that film viewing has can transpose themselves to a structural level. Finally I will discuss the results of my findings and draw a conclusion that will provide the answer to the posed questions. Most film studies focus on either ideology or cognition, but I will use both in order to establish the tangible effects of Hollywood films.

# The History of Hollywood

In this section I will describe the history of Hollywood with the intended purpose of contextualizing the present situation where the world’s film industry is dominated by Hollywood. By looking at the origins and nature of film I will define film in the tension field of art and industry. I will then look at the beginning of film in USA and the establishing of the film as a commercial product forged by entrepreneurs with the express purpose of making money. After describing the origins of film in USA I will describe the history of Hollywood in a more overall manner and only highlight the major developments. This will leads us towards a solid understanding of the infrastructure and ideology of Hollywood and functions as the basis for the understanding of film as a hegemonic and ideological force.

## The beginning of film

The origins of film is usually said to be on the 28th of December in 1895 when the Lumiére brothers, had their first public screening of film in the basement of the Grand Café in Paris, with tickets completely sold out. The following month, the approximately 15 minute showing of films ran every day from ten in the morning to eleven in the evening, with every screening sold out[[1]](#footnote-1). The overwhelming popularity of this new technology foreboded the immense impact the moving pictures have had on the last century.

As with most major discoveries of the era there where others who claimed to have been first, but the criteria became who had been first to show projected moving images to an audience of more than one. This definition of the cinema meant that the Lumiére’s are now recognized as the first producers, developers, and showers of film and that their invention, the Cinematograph, as the first cinematic experience. The definition excluded the Edison Company and their invention, the Kinetoscope, as it was only possible for one person at the time to watch, I will return to the Edison Company in the section below.

Although the story of the origins of film is set and the historical consensus reached there are certain things to be learned from the battle of the first cinema patents. The most important one is that film and cinema where from the first moment about making money. The Lumiére family was an entrepreneurial family that had made their fortune in photographic production. The company consisted of the father, Antoine, and his two sons, Louis and Auguste, with Louis being the most prominent one as it was him who made the inventions that promoted the company to one of the world’s leading companies. The decision of moving into to the field of moving images was a business strategy and showed the desire and willingness to be at the forefront of technological development. As the Lumiére’s did not pioneer the field, their invention, the Cinematograph, was more a combination of the already existing photographic technologies than a brilliant new discovery. It was this approach that opened up for the battles about the patents and honor of being the first inventor and producer of the first projection of moving pictures. As mentioned above the first screenings of film where an unprecedented success, and therefore the commercial potential of the cinema was evident for all to see. This of course intensified the battle. We can see that film was born not as art or expression but as a product of business that was to make profit for its producers. This is the origin of film and as we shall see, film has carried this origin all the way to the present. Now we turn to the beginning of film as it formed itself in USA.

## The beginning of film in America

Here we will look at the beginning of film in America. All that we recognize as Hollywood, the form, the functionality, the manners, the style, the approach, and the ideology have a origins and by looking at the time where these were implemented I will try to uncover the basic motivations behind the actions that have formed Hollywood and what the naturalized Hollywood consists of.

The earliest showings of film in America predate the official historical start of cinema. In their book *A Hollywood History – Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters* Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale place the beginning at 1894 where traveling shows used the so called peepshow machines to show short film reals. At this point and through the early period of film what was shown was not what we know as film today but instead short recordings of everyday scenes, historical scenery, sports events, comedic spectacles, and other things that resembled the photograph in content. The most famous and most used peepshow machine was the Kinetoscope which was developed by the Edison Corporation.[[2]](#footnote-2) As mentioned this machine could only have one viewer at the time therefore the communal effects where not present, but as the projector technology arrived and the features started to become popular events the number of people attending rose and we see the first hegemonic effect of film. The traveling shows where an important way of seeing films in America and the practice continued up until the 1950’s. The manufacturers of the reels, projectors, and films were doing well in the early stages of films history, but in after the novelty had worn of and with the arrival of the 20th century there where new challenges to be meet. There was a lack of standardization and the distribution suffered because of this, there were battles about copyright and patents and the content was becoming familiar to the audience. This first crisis in the film industry had many effects but three of them are important here. The first one is that the different processes, such as production of reels, projector technology, film production and distribution, in the industry where segmented. The entire product had been made by the same company, now the different process where being divide and that meant a greater level of development in each process. The second one was that the issues of copyright and the patents battles where settled in the courts, and this meant that the winners were free to concentrate on business. The third was that the narrative film was implemented. In 1903 the film *The Great Train Robbery* was released and became instantly popular[[3]](#footnote-3), it was in many ways the first blockbuster, though the term was first coined in the 50’s. This development in the form of film was revolutionary and turned out to be groundbreaking. Today there is no doubt that that narratives are synonymous with film and cinema, but at the time there was made a conscious choice to move in this direction. The decision to make use of narratives was not a provident one but rather a concluding one as it was a former cameraman at the Edison Company who made the film independently. The success meant that the narrative form became the preferred mode of operation and in time the only mode.

The growing popularity meant that movies where now shown in settings that where only for movie showing. These venues became known as nickelodeons and covered the whole of the USA. By 1906 the number of moviegoers in New York had reached nearly 3 million a week.[[4]](#footnote-4) The rising number of both moviegoers and income meant that the businesses where becoming more organized and the development towards the studio system had begun, but we will focus on one of the developments that are still relevant today, namely the creation of the star system. Adolph Zukor (1873 – 1976) was a Hungarian immigrant who made his fortune in the movie business, and was the founder of Paramount Pictures. Zukor had the idea that actors of quality and popularity would be a selling commodity and therefore founded his company *‘Famous Players.’* The idea would come to affect modern film profoundly. Today the institution of fame has its own life and has reached a point where people can be famous for being famous, but at the time the job as film actor was an unprestigious and unimportant one. As Zukor implemented actors, often proven stage actors, the form of film changed once more. The angle of the viewers changed to move them closer to the actors and their faces. Before the cameras had been static and the shots mainly longshots, somewhat like seeing a stage play from a distance. Now the audience was invited to engage directly with the individual actor and the process of identification had become a part of cinema. This strategy was directed at creating a connection to the different audience segments and was a great success. The effects of tying the emotional resonance of the film product to a human face where positive and meant greater audience numbers and this meant that soon the actors had their own cultural and commercial capital ensuring them their place in the beginning studio system. The parasocial interaction has become a cornerstone of Hollywood. In 1927 Stuart Halsy, an industry analyst, stated*”The ’stars’ are today an economic necessity to the motion picture industry.”[[5]](#footnote-5)*

## The studio system

By 1927 the studio system was well established and the beginning of the golden age of Hollywood started. We will take a short look at how the studio system started and what it has meant for Hollywood. The main effect of the studio system was the industrial standardization and streamlining of movies in both form and content.

The studio system was established through an array of business deals and corporate mergers that we will not look at here. Instead we will look at the consequences of the studio system for the face of Hollywood. The studio system developed through the second decade of the 20th century and by 1920 there was established an oligarchy that consisted of the five big studios, Warner Brothers, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 20th-Century-Fox, RKO, and Paramount Pictures. The years from 1920 to 1927 are sometimes referred to as Hollywood’s silent golden age. The invention and application of sound to film in 1927 is seen as the greatest revolution of the era, but from the perspective of an analysis of films form and content the streamlining effect of the production is far more interesting. The studios where very large companies that contained every aspect of filmmaking under their grasp so that the important decisions where taken by a few select people and this, coupled with the forming of a marketable product, meant that the entire studio films where soon made after a model that resisted change. The people taking the decisions where white males meaning that the topical and discourse sides of Hollywood became one sided. This happened through the specialization of the film work. Each individual process was isolated in a Ford style assembly line leaving the studio heads with all of the influence.

The studio model has developed technologically and the boundaries have been pushed of what can be shown, but the deep-seated structure and the discourse range have not changed profoundly since the time of the studio system. The studios where dominant, and this meant that only their products reached the public, independent film was almost nonexistent in the public sphere. But even their strong position could not stand against the global recession that started with the stock market crash on black Tuesday, the 29th of October in 1929. It took a few years until the crisis affected Hollywood but by 1933 the studios began to weaken. Even though production stalled and the number of films dropped drastically the studios remained dominant on the market. The studios survived the crisis and continued to dominate the film world until 1954 when the final studio sold its movie showing department, thereby ending the golden age of Hollywood. The studios exist today, but are owned by major media conglomerates and function as backers and distributors.

As shown the studio era had deep effects on Hollywood, but if we turn our attention towards the hegemonic and ideological side of the development we see that there also were important developments there. The streamlining of the Hollywood product meant tad it became easier to access and easier to digest for an ever growing audience. Going-to-the-movies, as an activity, moved in to the social and cultural sphere of the American working- and middleclass and recognisability and reliability where key factor in the success of the product. Ideologically Hollywood move towards the religious and conservative right. This is nowhere more evident than in the implication of the so called *production code* in 1930, and the reinforcement of it in 1934. The *production code* was written by a Jesuit priest and a Catholic layman and was a list of what was appropriate to show on screen.[[6]](#footnote-6) The code meant censorship was inflicted on sexual and violent content, but also religion and matters of interracial relationships and in particularly homosexuality where removed from Hollywood films. The code was enforced vigorously and the ideological slant caused by the studio system placing the decision power in the hands of a few was thereby became institutionalized. Although the code is no longer in use and the restrictions of what can be shown are more lenient, the present rating system has a similar ideology as the original code, but places the restriction on the moviegoers instead of the filmmakers. The power the rating system has to influence the earnings of a film is a major factor in America and therefore the content of Hollywood is greatly influenced by this, ideologically based, system.

## Film during WWII

We will now look at the role of movies during the Second World War. The war meant that social and working patterns changed drastically. While the majority of young men were involved in the fighting women took to the workplace and started earning money. The movies provide one of the only pastimes during the war and attendance rose drastically. 1946 was the best year of the period where audiences assured, including the returning servicemen, that as many films hit the, at the time, magical 4 million dollar mark as there had in the entire history of film.[[7]](#footnote-7) The enormous successes of certain films meant that Hollywood concluded that major productions with major audience numbers were the best way to make money, and thus the blockbuster tradition was born. This production form is still very much the norm of Hollywood filmmaking today. The number of films made and released is limited compared to the number of the studio system. A fewer number of films and the demand for at profitable product means that the range of theme and discourse is very limited. The blockbuster tradition further substantiates the ideological development from the studio era of excluding minorities and streamlining the form as well as content.

Apart from the blockbuster development Hollywood went through another transformation. The war films made during the Second World War assumed a propagandist position. The unifying effect of the war affected the messages of films, and the development even lead to official senate hearings into the role of Hollywood movies in forming public opinion.[[8]](#footnote-8) The values of a coherent free, Christian, and democratic America became the cornerstone in the portrayals of American men. War movies showed small groups of men form every major ethnic group work together in cohesion towards the victory of the good. While the films did not reach the propagandistic heights of the First World War, they still created a public understanding of a good and just cause in a battle against German and Japanese enemies. Theses enemies where shown in a simplifying and dehumanizing way which left the story of the American heroes unchallenged. A less overt form of propaganda is visible in the film *Casablanca*.[[9]](#footnote-9) The hero/protagonist is uninterested in the war effort and only looks out for his personal interests, but through the motivation of love he develops the right set of values and joins in the fight against the Nazi caricatures. The highlighting of the right values and the coupling of values and heroes became a strong trend in Hollywood, and one that remains active to this day. In present day cinema there is a certain flux in the value set, but the merger of ideology and narrative is a solid and much used approach. The inherent one-sidedness of this approach has become one of the stables of Hollywood and is one of the strongest arguments in the case of a cultural imperialism of Hollywood.

The arrival and strong implementation of the message film and what can be called the blockbuster trend are the main developments of Hollywood during the Second World War. These two developments have an important role in today’s Hollywood and.

## Hollywood after the war

The time after the Second World War had two major historical developments and these also defined the film industry of Hollywood. They were the cold war and the fight for civil rights in USA, first we will look at the effects of the cold war. Internally the effects of the cold war where a societal paranoia that became known as ’the red scare’ and had its public culmination in the anticommunist hearings and there front figure Senator Joseph McCarty. The internal paranoia was fueled by and international politic where communism was the main enemy. Following the Second World War the Soviet Union rose to become the biggest power and challenge to American international interests and more importantly to the American self-image. In the wake of the Second world war USA combined the armed branches of navy, air force and army under the department of defense, and the secretary of defense and formed the CIA thus transforming the face of Americas international force. On the political side the formation of NATO, the Truman doctrine, and the Marshall plan all underlined the threatening image of communism. As communist dictatorships arose in east-Asia the need for direct military involvement was created. The conflict in Korea that became known as the Korean War was the first armed confrontation the USA had with communist forces, and also the first war that USA had engaged in and not won. The war developed in to a stalemate and although the USA did not lose, the failure to achieve a total victory was a shock to most Americans and severely affected the national confidence of most Americans. The Korean War did not only change the American self-image as a leading war power, it also reaffirmed the end of American isolationism that many Americans had felt should be taken up again after the end of the Second World War. These effects on the American hegemony could be seen in the developments of the subject matter of Hollywood films and I will return to this shortly, but first we will look at the effects of ‘the red scare’ on Hollywood. As mentioned Senator Joseph McCarthy became the face and agency of the hegemonic paranoia that represented a need to act against the, at times perceived, treat of communism. Although the treat from communism was real and from time to time required real action the hearings of McCarty into what was called un-American behavior, became a dark chapter in American history where the witch hunts of Salem where echoed in an otherwise modern democracy. Posterity has denounced and condemned the actions of McCarty to the point where the actions of demagogy, false accusations, disregard for due process, political hysteria, and excess of power have been encapsulated in the term ‘McCarthyism.’ For Hollywood the McCarthy era meant a difficult and damaging time as McCarty turned his attention on the film industry. The result was ‘the Hollywood blacklist’ that was a list of persons that where not allegeable to work in Hollywood. The list was never an official document, but came in to being on the initiative of the heads of the studio system in an attempt to divert the negative attention and effects away from their business. The list destroyed countless careers on Hollywood and other entertainment sectors and also damaged the personal lives of the blacklisted as the where severely stigmatized. While the official aim was to counter communist influence and subversion the list in reality consisted of minorities. Jewish, homosexuals, non-white and people involved in organizing the working classes constitute a disproportionate amount of the list.[[10]](#footnote-10) In history the McCarty era stands as a hysterical witch hunt and not justified political measures and in Hollywood the era meant that the discourses of white, conservative, and Christian America where institutionalized to the degree that it still has a guiding effect more than fifty years later. While Hollywood had not real response to the McCarty era and just had to wait for the storm to pass, there where movements in Hollywood that slowly developed towards a more modern America.

The first of these was the emergence of social realism in Hollywood films. The Korean war had shaken the American self-image, in time the Vietnam war, the assassination of JFK, and the Watergate scandal would destroy the confidence the of the American people in their government as the national figure of the cultural hegemony. This development had its origins in the fight for civil rights that followed the Second World War. As the white males returned home there was an expectation that thing would return to the way they had been before the war. But the women had come out into the workplace and contributed greatly to the war effort and there was an overall sense among American women that things could not go back to the homemaker and breadwinner model. Furthermore the minorities of American society had also experienced changes during the war. The young men of the minority groups had fought alongside the white soldiers and would find it hard to accept to go back to a society where their service was rewarded with continuing inequality. This change in the conditions and outlooks of so many Americans was further fueled by the strong message of unity and cooperation that had been presented to the American public, by way of the official propaganda, and had Hollywood as the main source of output. After six years of war where every projection of American, real or fictional, had promoted unity and cohesion it was impossible to return to an unequal and segregated society and this resulted in a social tension that escalated into the civil rights movement. This social tension found its way to Hollywood and social realism became one of the most important effects on the content of Hollywood film. The social problem films and social problem thrillers where initially a small segment, but the mirrored the mood of the people that the light and naïve tone of the prewar mainstream entertainment could no longer be relevant. The films dealt with issues such as the struggle to return home for the soldiers of World War Two, the role of women, and anti-Semitism, but also smaller more personal issues as alcoholism, growing up, and abuse where dealt with. In time, as I will expand later, Hollywood consumed the social realism and it became part of the mainstream film production. The subjects would lose their critical edge in order to create a more marketable product. But the lasting effect was that the signifier of Hollywood had seriousness and a higher grade of reality added to it. The products of Hollywood could draw on the heritage of social realism even though if one compared the American social realism to the British social realism in film it is evident that in Hollywood there was, and still is, a lack of debt and edge. But the perception of Hollywood films a reliable representation of reality was being created.

The tension of post-war America was not only channeled through social realism. Formalism also made an impact on Hollywood at that time. While social realism sought to show, and in some cases deal with, the turmoil of a changing cultural paradigm in an organized and cognitive manner, film Noire sought to deal with and give a voice de the decentering and disorientation that the destruction of the American cultural confidence caused. Film Noir showed individuals travel through a dark and hostile city that was filled with danger and deceit in search of something that was missing. What was missing was often a symbolic representation of the values of the changing society. Instead of solving a mystery the focus was on the physiological sides of the characters, drawing heavily on Freud’s psychoanalytical theories. Causality was also dissolved, as chance rather that agency drove the narrative forward. This was all underlined by the formalistic play with the conventions of Hollywood. Not only did these features of film Noire foreground the developments in American society and the changing role of the individual as the solid markers of cultural and personal orientation where dissolving. They also became part of the development as film Noir could use the formalist abstract ness to criticize an America that increasingly frustrated those that did not adhere to the strict discourses of conservative Christian values. But, as was the case with social realism, film Noir was eventually swallowed into the mainstream and the formalistic and thematic edge was blunted and the product made marketable.

The main effect of the postwar era on Hollywood was an ideological solidification as a response to the McCarty era. The response of marketability to the elements of Hollywood that where seeking out of the fold. This showed that in order to deal with genres that broke away from the most marketable form inclusion and subtle takeover was the way to go. The deeper effect was that Hollywood, through social realism and film Noir, had taken a great step towards a greater reality value. The realistic form and the coherent logic of the Hollywood had been an industry stable since the start, but now there had been created an intellectual link from the content of Hollywood to the developments of the contextual society. As theme, form, and content returned to the mainstream marketability of Hollywood products the notion that film portrayed reality stayed.

## Hollywood of the late 20th century

As the postwar era drew to a close the civil unrest and tension had gained momentum and transformed itself in to an outright counterculture. The increasing frustration with the official America coupled with the economic progress of the baby boomer generation created a generation that was big in numbers and wanted something other than what Hollywood had to offer. This created a financial crisis for the Hollywood studios. The crisis was not severe enough to threaten the studios existent but it was severe enough to get their attention and for them to set about to correct the problem. The period started with standardized Hollywood movies, but from the mid-seventies the counterculture films had a hold of moviegoers. The foremost genre of the counter culture was the road movie and the best exponent of this genre is *Easy Rider* (1969). *Easy Rider* in many ways encapsulates the nature of the counterculture of Hollywood. The two men behind the film, Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper, where already establish members of the Hollywood star system, and the initial ide for the film was to make a modern western. So already at the start we see that they did not set out to break the mould or to upset any established order. The film was made without a solid plan or a locked script and as such it came to give a voice to many of the thoughts and ideas of the time. Thematically the narrative takes the values of freedom, justice and dignity and places them with the ‘counterculture protagonists’, and thereby removes them from the common American. In the film the common Americans are hillbillies, which might have been to ensure a greater resonance with the predominantly urban audiences that would see the film and engage in the counterculture. The ideological hijacking of the all-American values and the American dream of freedom and the active agency of seeking it out may have seemed provocative and revolutionary in 1969, as the effect the film had on later productions suggests. But in reality, the repetition of values, not the implementation of other ones, reveals an important fact about the counterculture as Hollywood portrayed it. The production still lay inside the ideological fold of Hollywood, and one could see the film as a portrait of all-American hippies. So even though the portrait of the hillbillies was stereotypical, the film hails the all American values, it just shifts the ideological agency to the counterculture. A look at the form of the film further deepens this argument. The film uses the standardized Hollywood form of coherent chronology, internal logic, and overall naturalism, to tell the story of the counterculture heroes. So already at the start of the counterculture revolution where the first signs that it would not break free from Hollywood and forge a new power in American film. The only way it affected Hollywood in a negative manner was that many of the films where developed and produced independently, which meant that Hollywood could not profit from them. Therefor it was only matter of years before Hollywood starting making films with similar content, although they were still a smaller genre compared to the mainstream content. The major structural change that followed this development was a change in the strategy of Hollywood. In order to cater to the growing demand from young people that saw themselves in the counterculture and not in the images of Hollywood there were brought in a new kind of filmmaker. These were for example Georg Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola and this type of film makers started taking the role of maker of the films as the studios started stepping in to the background. These filmmaker where overwhelmingly film students from the film studies departments that had been established throughout the American universities during the seventies and they had different approach to creating films than what was the norm in the studio system. Hollywood also changed its approach to the independent film movement, instead of creating similar content and competing with the independent films they started buying the independent films and film companies, and thereby pulling them into a mainstream production. These productions thus give the appearance of having an element of counterculture while they have their financial bases in the mainstream of Hollywood. Any hope of a change in the power paradigm of American film had its justification during the sixties and seventies, but the developments in Hollywood meant that this hope was soon put to shame. From the late seventies and until the turn of the millennium Hollywood produced countless blockbusters that engaged in nostalgia and naiveté. The *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* trilogies are the original forms of this and the formula has been repeated throughout the past decades. Especially the concept of the franchise has been repeated continually. The Hollywood studios have continued to take a role in the background of Hollywood and today the main focus lies on filmmakers and particularly the film stars. This does not mean that the ideological power structure of Hollywood has dissolved. Instead the studios have become parts of international media conglomerates that expand their reach far beyond film production. This can be observed as most blockbusters today have videogames, toys, merchandise, and various promotion stunts as part of their sphere. The studios have gone from having the greatest production capacity in the world to have the greatest capital power in the world. Therefore they now largely dictate what films are worth making and secondly what films will reach our attention. The conglomerates have divided the film industry in to three. The standard Hollywood that produces the blockbuster franchises, the independent film segment that is part of the conglomerations, and the real independent film production that has been left marginalized, and struggling to have an impact. In today’s society, where the amount and speed of information input is unprecedented in the history of humankind, the power to get people’s attention is perhaps the most important one, and the most profitable one. The development in Hollywood, that has distanced the makers of the films from the funders, has meant a total commodification of all of the major Hollywood productions. One of the effects of this is that Hollywood films don’t take chances and all that does not fall under the ideological structural streamlining of Hollywood is either ostracized or marginalized in order of ‘Global Hollywood’.

This concludes the historical development of Hollywood, but before we move on to look at ‘global Hollywood’ both as a structure and as a concept I will sum up the points of the historical development of Hollywood.

Film started as, and has stayed a business and therefore profit has always had the most important role in film production. As film started developing it was discovered that the narrative form was the most marketable one and the businesses started to build around this kind of film. As the businesses developed and movie stars where added, we enter into the age of the film studios. This meant an almost instant standardization of the film product. Both form and content started to adhere to codes and regulations. The ideology of white middleclass America became the dominant one in Hollywood. During World War two strong messages where implemented in to Hollywood films and the use of films to push certain agendas and worldviews was established. It was also during this time that the blockbuster tradition was started. The post war era brought further ideological streamlining as the dissenting voices where attacked by Senator Joseph McCarty. The emergence of social realism and film Noire in an American in civil tension, resulted in a Hollywood that could claim a closer tie to the ‘real world’ as these critical genres where brought back into the mainstream. The counterculture of the sixties and seventies challenged Hollywood, but by the eighties, Hollywood had adjusted and incorporated the independent movements of the counterculture. The result was decades of film where escapism was the main feature. The studios moved into the back ground and transformed from production facilities into conglomerates that control what is funded and promoted in the present world of film. We now move on to look at Global Hollywood.

# Global Hollywood

The concept of Global Hollywood has many connotations and encapsulates many different meanings. Many of these are politicized such as the Marxist, queer, and postcolonial uses of the word. The work within these discourses has led to the coining of the term ‘cultural imperialism.’ In an academic and theoretical the term describes the effects of the massive output of Hollywood, but in popular use the inherent agency of ‘imperialism’ has been the focus point. This search for agency has led a negative slant against Hollywood, and even lead to the development of conspiracy like theories. This development has affected the attitude towards Hollywood in a negative manner and in most western intellectual circles there is a commonsensical negation of Hollywood films. This attitude has found its way in the academic realm and therefore it is important to underline that in this thesis the aim is not to take part in the battle of Hollywood, but to uncover the effects that the output of Hollywood has in an ideological sense and therefore the structure of mechanism and product are being scrutinized. This chapter, more specifically, is part of the context and the effort to understand the source of the films that are the subject of analysis.

In this chapter the meaning of ‘Hollywood’ changes. In the previous chapter about Hollywood’s history I referred to the business’ and production capacities situated in California, and their effort to produce ever more marketable products and adapt to changing demands from a wide array of different factors. In this chapter we look at Hollywood as a global structure of cultural dissemination. In the previous chapter the structural nature of the Hollywood product and its origins was the subject matter and in this chapter we will look at the nature, structure and context of global Hollywood. First I will focus on the general picture of global Hollywood and the discourse of cultural imperialism. Secondly I will look at the actual practices of and marketing as this is the actual power source of the Global Hollywood structure. Thirdly I will look at the attempts Hollywood makes to survey, categorize and, ultimately, control audiences as this represents the future of how the decisions on which films are made and distributed. Lastly I will problematize the possibility of a conceptual unity of Hollywood and introduce a literary angel of cohesion based on the idea of Hollywood as cultural text.

## The context of Global Hollywood

Global Hollywood draws on two main reasons for its strength and existence. The age of globalization and the strength of USA in the world form the basis for global Hollywood. Since the end of the Second World War the USA has grown in domestic strength and international influence. During the cold war era USA was involved in a race of the superpowers and this meant that when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, USA stood alone as the strongest military, economic, and political power. This power and its affect in the world is part of why Hollywood has achieved such a prominent position. While this power has its origins in the national context, it has been moved to international corporations in the last few decades and is being applied on a global scale. The technological and cultural developments that have caused the time and space compression, as defined by David Harvey, known as ‘globalization’ are the other main reason for the possibility of a global Hollywood. The possibilities of a Eurocentric capitalistic and imperialistic paradigm can be traced back to 1494. In 1494, in the treaty, of Tordesillas where the European powers of the time Spain and Portugal divided the newly discovered world between them and thereby established the land outside Europe as objects of conquest. Two other events that further solidified the Eurocentric imperialist paradigm happened in 1884. The Washington and Berlin conferences standardized time and cartography to the Greenwich axis and initiated the imperial conquest of Africa. In many ways Global Hollywood finds its structural legacy in these events and one could argue that the sentiment and ideology of these events is still being expressed in the exports of Hollywood.

Hollywood was involved in the import and export of film from the start of the film industry. And already from 1912 there was an awareness of the fact that the markets that received Hollywood film had an increased demand for US goods.[[11]](#footnote-11) By the twenties, Herbert Hoover, who was then the Commerce Secretary, thanked the film industry for implementing intellectual ideas and national ideals to the great advantage of American export. As a result of this development Hollywood started monitoring foreign audiences and the reception of their films. In response most countries contrived some sort of political response to the content of Hollywood films, but the continuing prevalence of free markets has meant that Hollywood has had the possibility of selling it products uninterrupted. As the western markets stabilized themselves and the dominance of Hollywood had become institutionalized the focus moved to the Third World where the influence is more direct. The television sector in Nigeria is based on American content and infrastructure.[[12]](#footnote-12) This pattern of dependence on American and Hollywood content started to repeat itself throughout the third world countries which fueled the discourses of cultural imperialism.

The emergence of a cultural imperialism, in many ways echoes the discourse of ‘the white man’s burden.’ The overarching ideal of the modernist period was that the export of culture would be a blessing for cultures that where stuck in an antiquated societal form based on mythical narratology. The construction of an ‘achievement-oriented society’[[13]](#footnote-13) was seen as the only possible form and the one all peoples should strive for. The conflict with communism only added urgency to this strategy. Through this period USA established itself as both an overt and covert agent in most markets around the world, even engaging militarily where it was deemed necessary. But as the power started to shift from nation states to corporations the ideological reasoning was forgone for a capitalistic modus operandi and by the last decades of the twentieth century cultural imperialism had become a business strategy. It is important to clarify that the term ‘cultural imperialism, comes from those that are affected and those not able to exude such influence. The response to accusations of cultural imperialism is most often reference to consumer freedom and free market mechanisms. The active and deliberate part of the cultural imperialism has been the main focus, but in the past years the focus has shifted to the repetitive effects of the active business strategies. The reproduction of Hollywood content and form is evident in all of western media outputs, but the infrastructural reproduction is more obscure. One of the token examples is the naming of a subsidiary company by the German post production company Das Werk. Das Werk called their subsidiary company in Spain ‘42nd Street’ and in this name the infrastructural side of cultural imperialism is evident. The familiarity of Hollywood content and copying of the Hollywood structure has given cultural imperialism a life of its own. In short this means that audiences become preconditioned to the Hollywood style and experience an emotional resonance with the Hollywood style and content. This in turn then leads the media structures of the world to emulate both the infrastructure and content in order to ensure the highest possible income.

As mentioned globalization is resulted by the technologically driven compression of space and time, but one of the driving forces behind globalization, or perhaps the core of globalization, is the ongoing process to establish a global free market. The first official organization that had the express objective of establishing a global market was General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT. The USA immediately sought to classify their cultural products as commodities, but they did not succeed.[[14]](#footnote-14) This reveals two facts, firstly that the definition of cultural productions as commodities had not reached the general definition of culture but also that the English, who resisted USA’s efforts, where engaging in the ide of cultural influence as they were the largest possible market for the American exports. But this did not stop the development of American cultural influence through Hollywood, and in 1997, with the GATT changed into WTO, the last restrictions on classifying Hollywood products as commodities were removed. This meant that Global Hollywood had conquered in a business sense and the possibility to send its contents unrestricted to the worlds markets was real.

## Marketing

In Global Hollywood, as with all globalized industries, the production of commodities is globalized and as thus takes place in whatever location that is the most financially viable. This dimension of cultural imperialism is not relevant to this thesis and therefore I will not look at it in depth. It will suffice to say that Global Hollywood controls, or has a substantial influence on, a large part of the cultural workers of the world. This means that the decision makers of Global Hollywood, drawing on the structural developments Hollywood, function as cultural gatekeepers by highlighting and elevating those that adhere to the conventions of Global Hollywood.

For most Hollywood blockbusters it is the case that the production of the movie costs less than the promotion and marketing of the movie. For example the majority of Disney productions, starting with *Pocahontas* (1995), have had a promotional meal in one of the world’s largest fast food franchises, McDonalds or Burger King. This kind of promotion is the norm today and is an almost naturalized part of everyday western lives, but the speed at which this has been implemented shows the marketing power of Global Hollywood. This multifaceted approach to marketing is of course part of a plan of business diversification, but this extreme paratextual[[15]](#footnote-15) approach, that contains trailers, adverts, online adverts, merchandise, videogames, and even food packaging, reveals the intense transformation that films have gone through in the era of Global Hollywood. The fact that more money is being spent, and more importantly earned, on the surrounding merchandise means that the contents of the Global Hollywood movie is being highly scrutinized. The scrutiny affects the content of Hollywood films, that is without doubt, but the level to which it does is a matter of constant debate. The effects and powers of marketing and distribution are highly influential on what is seen, but these effects are not foregrounded. Although these mechanisms are known to most moviegoers, the myth that the story is being told by a protagonist by way of a director/author is still an important part of Hollywood. This is part of the larger storytelling myth that personalizes the commodities and turns the emotional resonance that the viewer feels in to revenue.

The myth is part of an institutionalized attitude that rates the quality of a film on the merits of marketing and the mechanisms of distribution. The industry has devised a system that rates film quality on marketability, and the domination that is ensured through marketing and distribution means that audiences, by exposure, are being conditioned to a certain style and content. The market domination combined with the sustained mythology of an artistic aura result in a situation where audiences do not understand the true nature of the content they are consuming. Audiences are a difficult entity to define, if they are even entity at all, and therefore it is difficult to say something solid about audiences. But as audiences are the bases of the film industry, I will now look at the audience and a provide framework to understand this part of Global Hollywood.

## Audiences

In a Global Hollywood where making money is the ultimate objective trying to define the demand for their supply is paramount. Because of the industries need there exists a concept of the audience. This concept of an audience is constructed in many different ways, but I will focus on three angles, industry, state, and criticism. These are the three main actors that define the audience in the modern western societies.

The first important fact that needs to be stated is that the constructed nature of the audience means that is inherently artificial. The audience is a mass and as such evades solid definition, but what we will look at is how it is described and how it is conceptualized and how this leads to actions on both the side of the definers and the defined. The best place to begin to understand the audience as an entity is perhaps with Benedict Anderson’s idea of the imagined community[[16]](#footnote-16). The audience has certain identity markers that guide and define each individual member to a degree that means that the individual is not foregrounded. Instead the structural nature of an abstract entity that is being defined from more than one side, leads to the definition of the qualities of each individual member of the audience. Even though the community, only congregates, and exists for the duration of a given film. It is sustained through the discourses that focus on the qualities of the audience. The state and criticism construct and abstract audience based on more or well-founded ides while the industry seeks to industry attempts to discover the audience through empirical consumer data. The absence of any universal laws of consumption or consistent successful approach to catering to an audience suggests that the industry, despite its attempts to the contrary, is engaged in a discoursal process.

Before moving on to a more detailed look at the construction of an audience I would like to borrow one more Anderson’s notions of imagined community. While the importance of traditional nationalism has been in a serious decline over the past decades, the core argument of Anderson’s theory, hegemony and how it is constructed, remains fundamental to the understanding of communities, however they are defined. Western societies have experienced a drastic emptying of values in the postmodern era, and thus the guidelines for individuals have vanished and the overwhelming possibilities of western capitalist societies can cause and emotional disorientation. In this situation the forces that are most capable of creating hegemony will be the ones that provide a set of guidelines or navigational markers for emotional orientation. The powerful anti-authoritative element of postmodernism means that this creation of hegemony cannot be conducted in a direct manner as this approach appears antiquate and is most often ridiculed for its moralizing tendencies. As we have seen the entire history and structural development of Hollywood has led to a product that is naturalized, overtly ideological, and massively distributed and therefore has a very strong position as an instrument of hegemony. In the late postmodern societies one of the most potent hegemonic mechanisms is the global entertainment industry, and film holds a special place as the most emotionally engaging branches of this global hegemony.

The hegemony is created in the audience and we will now return to the definition of the audience. Across the different discoursal approaches to movie audiences there exists an overarching view of the nature of audience members, both as individuals and as a mass. Harold Garfinkel termed this notion as the ‘cultural dope’ in 1964.[[17]](#footnote-17) The ‘cultural dope’ is the layman individual how follows prescribed and accepted ways of acting dictated by common culture. This concept is also referred to as ‘mindless sheep’ and a countless amount of other representations that all revolve around the willingness to accept the premise and worldview of Hollywood. The three discoursal approaches all take their offset in this idea. The critical approach seeks to criticize and problematize the ‘cultural dope.’ The State discourse seeks to either educate or control, through censorship, the masses of ‘cultural dopes.’ The industrial discourse seeks to exploit or supply, depending on political views, the ‘cultural dope.’ In the critical discourse there is created a counter position to Hollywood form and content that seeks to establish values of artistic merit and of ‘true’ content. This discourse captures itself in the same paradigm as ‘Hollywood’ in a hegemonic sense. This discourse engages in an elitist denotation of Hollywood and fails to take the individual film on merit, but it ultimately accepts the idea that films affect people therefore should be responsible for their content. The state discourse certainly echoes the idea that films influence individuals and masses. Through involvement on several levels of control and influence the state discourse seeks to highlight the ideal citizenship of film viewers. The concept of citizenship can never be ideologically neutral and therefore is participates in the paradigm of the ‘cultural dope.’ The state discourse has a strong influence as it has an institutionalized side and can exert a political power. This power is best seen in the practices of censorship, but the development in the western world has meant that government control has yielded to the free market mechanisms. This brings us to the final discourse the discourse of the industry. As mentioned the activities of the industry are imperially based and revolve around large amounts of data that is collected and extracted from consumers. The conclusions of this work are so unclear and the resulting strategies so ineffectual that there cannot be attached any empirical merit to this work. Therefore I must conclude that the work is done on a discoursal basis. It is a commonly known fact that most Hollywood content is directed at the strongest consumer group, which in America is a nineteen year old white male. This coupled with for example an ever growing trend towards product placement influence what is shown in a fundamental way. In this discourse the active creating of hegemony takes a backseat to a supply and demand paradigm. While the quality of the audience surveillance is not at a level that can said to have any scientific merit the insistence on this technic from the industry indicates that this will stay a part of Global Hollywood for the future. With the arrival and implementation of digital technologies the gathering of data will become easier and a state in the movie industry where the content of movies is based upon almost solely on market research is a distinct possibility. The historical development of Hollywood suggests that this is the next logical step, but when and if it can be done remains to be seen.

Regardless of where the market and technological developments lead the discoursal hegemony of the audience will continue to construct the audience through the discoursal struggle of western societies. Similarly the hegemony of the audience mirrors the hegemonic power of film. This power is the core of what is seen as the cultural imperialism of Global Hollywood as the multifaceted approach to selling emotional and ideological has the ability to displace other cultures and discourses.

After having described the nature of Global Hollywood as an structure of international and economic power that dominates the planet in output of emotional and ideological content I will move on to look at Global Hollywood from a literary angel and in what manner Hollywood films constitute objects culture to be analyzed.

## The concept of Global Hollywood

As we have seen Hollywood functions after a limited number of mechanisms and these all push in the same direction. This means that even though that there are several different actors and agencies it is possible to talk about one unity and one direction. The question in this section is whether this unity and direction can also be found in a literary approach to Hollywood. Traditional analysis of a literary object would focus on a single object and its given properties. The developments of the postmodern era have meant that movies are now also studied as representations of a given culture. Films are no longer just cinematic object but also cultural objects, or cultural texts as they are better known. Cultural texts can inform us about society on a larger scale and thus move into the realm of discourse analysis. In order to solidify this void between the close reading of the single cultural text and the larger structural conditions and developments that is the perceived cause of the shape of the cultural object I will borrow Steen Christiansen’s understanding of Hollywood as cultural text presented in his essay of the same name.

…Hollywood functions as a cultural text because it has created specific codes and conventions that drive our understanding of its films. These codes go beyond ‘mere’ formal and generic devices of how conversation is represented, how satisfying closure is created etc., but also an understanding of which cultural dominants are present in these films and how we can navigate them. We recognize these cultural positions based on our competences, and accept or reject them as is necessary for our appreciation of the film[[18]](#footnote-18)

This highlights not only the presence of the ideological discourses of Hollywood but it also suggests that the audience can scrutinize the content they are presented with. In the article John Fiske’s notion of the producerly text is used to further underline this. The producerly text places itself between Roland Barthes’s readerly and writerly texts and constitutes a text that is accessible but also engages the audience in making sense of the film. While this train of thought functions well in an academic approach it does not account for the overwhelming amount of ‘lay-audience’ that are not skilled in analysis, interpretation and cultural navigation and who Global Hollywood reaches in ever growing numbers. Of course there are audiences in the western societies that have an proficiency level in seeing films that they can be construed as producerly or writerly, but the majority of the audiences of Global Hollywood are in a readerly position. Furthermore a portion of the skilled audiences’, and this number will just grow, have grown up on Global Hollywood. These audiences have been immersed in narrow ideological content and streamlined form from the moment they became narratologically aware. This means that the escape from the Hollywood paradigm will become ever more difficult as the naturalized Hollywood form will, most likely, become not a dominating force, but the foundation which films are created upon.

I will make one further point the draws a parallel to increasing readerly audiences based on Thomas Ziehe’s theory of the narcissistic person. Ziehe is a German sociologist that takes a psychological approach to children and young people. He states that the development in the western societies in the late 20th century, where the solid nucleus of the family was dissolved and everyday life became fragmented has resulted in the appearance of the narcissistic person. I will not go to deep into Ziehe’s theory but focus on identity and peer groups. The social developments of the postmodern society have meant that the conflict of Oedipus complex, by which a solid identity was created, has been suspended. Instead of the conflict and break with the parents the symbiotic bond is sustained throughout life. This leads a continuation of the pleasurable state of infants, also known as the oceanic state. The carrying of the pleasure principle into adult life and the absence of a solid identity have resulted in a character type that is defined by a weakened ego, weak outwards libido, weaker identity and a gravitation towards peer groups where the week ego and identity are not challenged. The immediate point made by this, that persons of this constitution might be easily influenced by ideologically and emotionally potent content is am minor one. The important point, in this context, to be extracted from the emergence of the narcissistic person is that the family has lost is position as an ideological institution. This development where the traditional sources of ideological power have been depleted, and the consequences of this is what I will focus on in the next chapter. But before moving on I will sum up the findings and conclusion of the chapter.

The compression of time and space known as globalization is the precondition of Hollywood’s success as a global industry. The immense dominance in both an economic and ideological sense has established the concept of cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism consists of a domination of ideology, content and structure of the world’s film industries. Multi-faceted marketing has taken a hold of the film making to such an extent that it influences content and is a pivotal part of a film’s success. But at the institutionalization is being hidden behind a myth of personalization that is created through a foregrounding of filmmakers rather than studios and media conglomerates. The audience is the bases of all this and therefore it is constructed and contested in many different discourses that may try to move in different direction but all fall under the hegemony of Global Hollywood, a hegemony that influences the entire planet. This hegemony can be uncovered by close reading the Global Hollywood output as cultural texts. This will make it possible to follow the possible scenario closely as Global Hollywood morphs into Planet Entertainment.

Now take a look at the ideological side of films.

# Ideology

In this chapter I will look at the role of ideology in society and how films play an important part in this. I will use the theories of Louis Althusser in order to explain the special position that film and entertainment has obtained in the present world. I firstly explain the main points of Althusser’s famous article ‘Ideology and ideological state apparatuses’in order to lay bare the ideological superstructures of capitalist societies. Then I will focus on the individual and how family creates and sustains ideology by using Althusser’s article on Freud and Lacan. Of course this argument will need to be updated to include the functionally of a present day family and this id don in the final section. After looking at the individual and family I will mirror Althusser’s view on the role of art and extrapolate this to the role film has in society. In this section I will also look at the use Althusser’s work has found in film study. Lastly I will look at the outlets and functions of ideology in postmodern societies and what this condition and developments mean for the role of Hollywood.

Althusser was maybe one of the strongest voices of a 20th century intellectual Marxism and his work is therefore greatly influenced by the basic principles of the Marxist world view. The dialectical materialism of Marxism connects directly to the nature of ideology as Althusser sees it. The formation of ideology by the given circumstances is fundamental, but it is the behaviorist elements of ideology that are interesting here. Behaviorism, as established and defined by Pavlov, Watson and Skinner, connects to ideology in the sense that the governing superstructures condition the subject to a given, not only position, but understanding of the possible position. Thus the materialist element of ideology is expanded to dictate not only the outer conditions and the subsequent inner world, but also the very behaviors that are deemed possible by the subject. Althusser removes his approach to ideology from behaviorism by focusing on the psychology of Freud and Lacan when looking at the ideological subject. As Althusser put his focus on the psychological aspects of subjective ideology, more specifically on the mirror phase, the behaviorist elements where put in the background, but the overarching Marxism meant that it never disappeared and remains an ever present aspect. As film scholars started applying Althusser’s ideas to their work with film they soon identified the film and film spectatorship as an ideological state apparatus. This again highlighted the behaviorist thought, but I will return to this later.

## Ideological state apparatus

Now we turn our attention to the ideological state apparatus. Althusser starts his explanation of the ideological state apparatus with citing Marx as saying that it is children’s knowledge, that everything which does not reproduce itself will not last longer than a year.[[19]](#footnote-19) In this we see the material element of the self-evident truth that is to form the solid foundation of the theory that is being presented. Althusser looks at this reproduction from a social angle and finds two main forms of social reproduction the simple and the extended. The simple reproduction takes place on the infrastructural level and involves the means of production including labour forces. The extended reproduction takes place outside production and is disseminated throughout the entire social system. Just as the labour forces reproduce; the ‘know-how’ that goes into being a (proletariat) subject is reproduces in societies. ‘Know-how’ in this sense is not limited to competences, but encompasses the entire rage of what it constitutes to be a societal subject. This formative reproduction functions through a number of institutions that Althusser identifies to be school, church, army, place of work and most importantly family. These institutions constitute and disseminate what Althusser calls the ruling ideology.

The materialist approach is further underlined by Althusser’s identification of Marx’s base/superstructure ide as a topographical metaphor. Economy forms the base in the sense that it does not dictate everything, but forms the basis of which all action is possible. The metaphor then incorporates the upper levels of the structure as political, cultural, ideological levels that ultimately reproduce the base. The state constitutes the majority of the superstructure and in a Marxist/Leninist it is the repressive state apparatus that functions. The repressive state apparatus is constituted by the government, the courts, the police and finally the army. These forces will keep the proletariat in check with ever increasing force. Most modern western societies have move beyond the realistic possibility of revolution or armed struggle and therefore the repressive force has transformed into ideological state apparatuses that is constituted in a wide array of institutions that are defined by the state. These institutions then fortify and spread the ruling ideology. Althusser then describes how the class struggle has move for the repressive level to the ideological level, but this is not of importance here.

The super-structural reproduction that occurs through the ideological state apparatus encapsulates all contradiction and forms the foundation of ideological possibilities. Thus the formation of ideological subjects is directed onto a singular path of ruling ideology.

The development in the west over the past centuries has seen the power of the traditional superstructures diminish. What was once ‘god, king, and country’ has lost its power, be it either repressive or ideological, and Althusser identifies the education system at the most influential ideological apparatus. Althusser views the education system as preparation for labour markets, not only providing needed skills and competences but also implementing ideology. The nature of education learning and the inherent feelings of progress and development lend a neutral and natural aura to education that masks the ideological streamlining. I will argue at the end of this chapter that entertainment has challenged the position education has as the most influential ideological state apparatus.

The nature of ideology is as an imaginary distortion. Althusser explains ideology as the one of the basic functions of social life. It is not just a dominating discourse; it is the bases of the relation humans have to reality while simultaneously incorporating a specific set of ‘correct’ actions. There is a distinction between specific ideology and general ideology. General ideology has no history or development it is the constant relation between people and social reality. In the essay Althusser develops a structural materialism and identifies ideology as a mental model that dictates reality and is learned.

These mental modes are transported through the material existence of ideology; the apparatus. The most important practice of ideology is to constitute individuals as subjects. ‘Subjects’ is understood as autonomous individuals with agency and ideas of their own. Subjectivity is confirmed by practice and social rituals and thus reaches naturalness and is seen a part of the human constitution and most importantly we recognise ourselves as subjects because of ideology.

Althusser highlights the subject as being created by ‘hailing’ also called ‘interpellation’. The act of calling someone’s name, greeting them, or the utterance of the sentence “hey, you there” highlights the subject and imposes subjectivity. This ‘hailing’ mirrors the positioning of the audience that films do and it the link to the use of Althusser in film studies which I will discuss below.

The creation of subjectivity, the possibility of all ideological influence, by ‘hailing’ is based on the mirror phase that the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan identified.

## Application of psychology

Althusser used Lacan’s mirror phase, that builds on Freud’s ide of the oedipal phase[[20]](#footnote-20), in order to substantiate the formative force that the ‘hailing’ has on subjects. Althusser used the psychological ideas in a Marxist and structuralist way as we have seen, and shall see below, but let us look briefly at the work of Lacan that Althusser used. Lacan’s mirror phase takes its offset in the preoedipal phase where the infant has no image of self and is in a symbiotic relationship with the mother. Lacan calls this phase ‘imaginary’ and we can see that Althusser used the same terminology in his theory of ideology. The mirror phase follows the imaginary one and starts as the infant starts to realise that it is an ‘I’. The mirror consists of other people and objects and through the image based projection the construction of an ego starts. It is by tying the self to objects that identification is created, but this construct eludes the ‘real’. The child moves into the symbolic order, her we see the semiotic influence, as the construction of an ‘I’ progresses. The construction is necessitated by the fact that the entrance of the father destroys the symbiotic relationship with the mother. Lacan saw the oedipal process in a structural semiotic way and essentially envisioned the child as the signifier and the mirror image as signified. Furthermore, Lacan connects language to the unconscious which is seen as the reason for human behaviour. In keeping with the semiotic approach, Lacan terms it the ‘symbolic’ when language is achieved by the child. Lacan sees the symbolic as only language, but I broaden this definition to all media, not just language. Language is seen as cutting up the imaginary and removing one from the ‘real’. Lacan does not go to the extremes of, for example, Baudrillard as he states that there is a knowable reality beyond the ‘real’. This brief explanation of the psychological elements that are at the core of Althusser’s view of ideological apparatus leads us to the role of art, but before moving on it is important to state that Althusser uses the processes that psychology places in childhood, as constantly active states for all members of society, especially adults.

Althusser’s theory of psychologically based subject driven ideology lends itself easily to film studies and in the seventies the film study departments of England and France started using Althusser’s understanding of ideology in their work. The French film theorist Jean-Louise Baudry[[21]](#footnote-21) was one of the academies that promoted this line of thought that, in its most extreme form, concluded that cinema had succeeded in making audiences enjoy the process that subjugates them.

But before moving on to looking at film as an ideological apparatus let us first see how Althusser viewed the role of art in society.

## Althusser on art

In April of 1966 Althusser wrote *a Letter on Art in reply to André Daspre.* It was one of the few occasions that Althusser dealt directly with literature. Althusser concludes that art is not an ideology itself but that is has a *…particular and specific relationship with ideology*.*[[22]](#footnote-22)* The reason for this is that art has a specificity that ideology does not. Furthermore art does not produce knowledge, understood as scientific knowledge; it rather invokes seeing, feeling and perceiving. Art does not concern itself with a specific area as science does and art does not make truth claims as for example religion. Thus, what we get from art is different than what we get from science. Art and science can both deal with the same issues but approach them from different sides and while science creates knowledge through concepts art provides the ‘lived’ experience. Althusser then moves in a direction that is not entirely relevant her in stressing that it is necessary to study art in order provide an knowledge of art and that the studies must thorough and take the time the need or we will end up with an ideology of art. What art does is then to illustrate the way in which ideology naturalizes and universalizes specific historic conditions.

It seems peculiar that Althusser arrives at this conclusion as it seems to fly in the face of the logic presented in his major work on ideology, presented above. Here all of the institutional superstructures serve to reproduce the ideological bases, including art. But since the letter on art predates Althusser’s theory on ideology by 4 years it is quite likely that he has developed his views on ideology in the time between the two publications. Another fact that might account for Althusser’s conclusion is his view on art. In the letter he states: *Art (I mean authentic art, not works of an average or mediocre level).[[23]](#footnote-23)*This attitude seem antiquated today as culture has experienced a major democratisation and is no longer, at least academically, views as good or bad. That Althusser expresses this view is easier to understand if we consider the historical context and that in 1966 the understanding of art and particularly literature was hierarchal. It is though a great irony that Althusser did not escape the obvious ideological reproduction of categorizing art into an upper and lower class. More importantly is shows that culture had not made the transition into a mainstream mass culture, and Althusser’s definition of art therefore does not encompass the massive influence that mass culture and entertainment have today. One might speculate that Althusser would have different view on a mass produced art, but none of his later work concerns itself with the role of art directly. The final point I shall make is meant to underline the argument that Althusser, should he examine art/entertainment today, would conclude that it is an ideology and one of the most influential ones at that. Althusser states that art does not produce knowledge and while this is still true in the 1966 as postmodernism had no taken its hold of society, today we have a different condition. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* Jean Francois Lyotard’s famous and influential work explains that at the end of the twentieth century there are only two main systems of knowledge production, science and ‘commonsenesical’ and that the validity of the knowledge is established through preformativity rather than through hierarchical validation. Art, in the broad definition of present society, is include in the ‘commonsenesical’ system and therefore produces knowledge. Thus it can be conclude, by Althusser’s own logic, that art, entertainment, and specifically, film are all ideology.

## Ideology in postmodern societies

Above I have mentioned Lyotard and the postmodern condition. Lyotard captures the nature of postmodernism best in the highlighting of Wittgenstein’s language games. The loss of any real referent is mirrored in the loss of any real direction to direct ones actions. This also underlines the playfulness of both postmodernism and Wittgenstein’s concept. The playfulness is a reaction to removal of authorities. The removal of authorities is perhaps the strongest historical aspect of postmodernism and remains one of the defining features of the development of the latter half of the 20th century in western societies. In Europe the development is encapsulated in the development in the education sector, but in America it more or less defines the nation during the period, iconized in the assassination of JFK which came to symbolize the killing of hope by the regressive forces. The anti-authoritative surge resulted in that most of the old traditional institutions where drained of their power and value. This is the more concrete historical side of the death of the metanarratives. This value revolution happened only on the signifier level, if you will, the institutions kept their form, but where drained of value. The institution of marriage serves well as an example of this. The marriage ritual has not disappeared or been reduced significantly, but it is no longer a scared institution of a religious or social order, as the divorce rates clearly show. This development is interesting from an ideological point of view. The traditional institutions are largely synonymous with the ideological state apparatuses and the fact that the apparatuses have kept the form after the ideology has moved has some interesting implications. The empty apparatuses have blurred the real seats of ideological power. While the institutions and rituals have lost their ideological power they have not lost all power and thus still function in an active manner. This means that these institutions still have a nostalgic power, perhaps most evident in religious rituals, that seems to mask the fact that actual ideological power is being implemented in society. Furthermore the anti-authoritative paradigm has hindered the ideological implementation by authoritative means. A large part of the ideological state apparatus had an authoritative approach as their modus operandi, and therefore their specific approaches are subject to an adverse reaction and even ridicule. This has necessitated a different modus operandi for ideological apparatus that is more overt and this has clearly resulted in that the influence of media has become, arguably, the strongest ideological apparatus of the postmodern era. In general the postmodern era is not one where the individual is supposed to be controlled, individualization is one of the strongest values of the western world in the postmodern era and this clearly favours ideological apparatuses that are based on seduction, rather than authority.

## The role of film

As mentioned above Althusser’s though and theory was applied to film studies and I will now look at the role of film in society, and consequently on the personal level. There is a certain chronological disturbance as the theoretical work I will use is based in the seventies and takes the state of media in society as their base. Therefore I seek to update the fundamental thought and reach new conclusions. For the most part the development over the past four to five decades does not disrupt the making of new conclusions. In general there is only more of the same; the development in media have had an upward trajectory and therefore we see that what was identified as important structural and semiotic influences in the sixties and seventies now function as dominating features of our world.

Film was quickly identified as an ideological state apparatus and thus all of the effects of the ‘hailing’ where seen in the content of a film. The misrecognition, that created a subject that was discursive construction rather than a Cartesian real subject in world of objects, was easily shown on the cinema screen. The screen was the mirror that created the subjects of the audience. As the theory and academic thoughts found a scene of real analytical work the consequences and implications began to unfold and the strength and importance of this approach also had a surge for a decade or so, but then faded away. The explanation for this might be that the domination of capitalist, liberal, and rational thought throughout the western world pushed the theoretical work to a side, not only because of the political aspects of Marxism, but fundamentally because the capitalist and free market sides of western democracies rely on the ideology of the rational subject, and thus resist the constructed ‘real’ subject. Althusser has been sidelined by the ruling ideology. Althusser’s problems with mental health and the murder of his wife have also, indirectly, discredited his work and laid his work bare for criticism. One final point is that for the lay-audience member whether they constitute a rational real subject or a constructed ‘real’ subject does not matter. For them it is the emotional and social gratification of the movie-going experience that is paramount.

Whatever the reason for the sidelining of Althusser’s work and the consequences of its conclusions the powerful argument remains that, today, the screen(s) are the biggest ideological apparatus. The omission of ‘state’ in ideological apparatus is intentional as it alludes to the political side of Althusser’s work and belongs to a different paradigm than the one of this thesis. Furthermore the ideological struggle of domination and subjugation is not what is of interest her; it is the causes and effects of films in the context of Global Hollywood. When speaking of ideology it is necessary to include, at least initially, the entire media sector as this is the dimension in which the structural argumentation starts. But as we seek to find some concrete answers we must narrow the field of investigation. Firstly we concentrate on film as it holds a special position as the most emotionally engaging medium.[[24]](#footnote-24) The full extent of this argument will be unfolded in the next chapter. The second narrowing that is needed is to move from a structural subject to an individual subject. The reason for this is that the structure consists of individuals and any empirical investigation must therefore start by focusing on the individual. I shall call this individual the ideological subject.

## The ideological subject

The creation of individuals on a mental level is essentially what Althusser’s theory on ideology deals with. The individual is formed by the transportation of mental models that dictate what is possible. As explained above it is this process that enables the subjectification of the individual, thus forming the construct of a subject. The subject is constructed through a wide array of different sources that implement a locked mode of action. Mostly through what is permitted and not permitted, but as the level sophistication rises what is desirable and not desirable becomes the area of focus, and the motivation to follow the prescribed modes goes from ‘should’ to ‘want’. Thus the individual becomes a miniature ideological apparatus capable of spreading the mental modes of ideology both internally and externally. The process of seeing a movie is therefore the process of internalizing a series of ideological mental modes. It is important to understand that this does not involve active choice but instead involves mediated standardized structures that subjects must act in accordance to in order to achieve subjectivity. The level of sophistication of the media sectors of western societies mean that they focus solely on what is desirable and undesirable and thus avoid the inherent conflict with authority that is a fundamental part of postmodern culture. Most present ideological apparatuses remain direct in their form even though their power has been greatly diminished in the postmodern era. The family remains an institution of discipline and consequence, or at least this remains the ideal. Education systems also retain their system of reprimand and consequents if subjects do not adhere to the rules. So the subjects, that operate under the thought that they have agency activate their critical models of action and might gravitate away from the ideological apparatuses and their direct influences. This means that of the three major ideological apparatuses of today, family, education and media, only media sidesteps the direct friction with the recipient. The subjects engage in media on their own accord and most often also with an intent of emotional and social gratification. If we also include the facts that media is an integrated part of family life and also a part of the work in an educational context we see that the media has a dominant position among the ideological apparatuses. Thus, when we wish to examine how the ideological subject is constructed focusing on media means focusing on of the most influential ideological apparatuses. In the following chapter we will examine the effect that films have on the individual

# Cognition and Emotion – Film from a personal perspective

In this section I will work with Torben Grodal’s understanding of film as a medium. Grodal focuses on the actual effects that films have on the brain. The core argument is that we watch and experience film with our bodies and senses and that our brains have not evolved to distinguish between real and abstract sensory information. Thus the core argument becomes that film engages and affects the brain, and therefore us, through the same mechanism as reality does.

I will first present a general understanding of Grodal’s theoretical work. Then I will introduce the PECMA flow which is a chart over the different mechanisms that are activated in the brain as we see films. From this we move on to Grodal’s genre system that categorizes films by the levels of identification and activation. Finally I will introduce Grodal’s notion of emotion and simulation which illustrates the effects of seeing film.

In 1997 Grodal published his book *Moving Pictures: A theory of film Genres, Feelings and Cognition* which has become a groundbreaking and recognized book. In the book Grodal explains and analysis modern cinema, mostly Hollywood, from a biological perspective. Grodal approach consists of highlighting genre conventions, sometimes accompanied by a specific scene, and then tying these to the biological processes that result in either thoughts or emotions, or both. I will sum up the findings and conclusions of the book in short in order to give an overview of Grodal’s approach to film.

Grodal states that formalist, structuralist and semiotic narratological approaches explain logical (ideological) development, but not emotional response, and that the origin of the logical form of these approaches is never explained within its theoretical framework. Grodal furthermore states that his theory of cognition, emotion and genre contains the logical forms of narratology within its framework in a psychosomatic superschmata. Acts and feelings are mediated by image schemata that function as relays between perceptions, emotions and acts.[[25]](#footnote-25) Therefore films are not metaphors or signs but ‘software’ or mental models that in essence transmit a real experience with real tangible affects.

Grodal concludes his 1997 book *Moving Pictures: A theory of film Genres, Feelings and Cognition* with the sentence *what we see is what we get*. I will problematize this obvious move away from the semiotic, structuralist and formalist approaches in the end of this section

Grodal starts by showing how cognitions and emotions that come from the viewing of visual fiction are part of a holistic framework.[[26]](#footnote-26) The holistic framework consists of body, mind and world and the way these interact. More specifically, the holistic framework shows how visual fiction causes a simulation of both mind and body states and how if one part is effected all the parts are effected.

Ecological conventions is a term Grodal uses to find a middle way between realism and formalism. He does this by describing the aspects of the human mind that have been hardwired by evolution and thereby providing an understanding off the effects that result from movies. Our emotional makeup can be triggered in film and therefore we can be profoundly affected by film, also in a way that challenges our control of our selves. The difference between what is ‘hardwired’ and what is cultural consist of the ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ mental abilities and the holistic connection of the interflowing processes means that these effect each other greatly. Just as we can use our ‘higher’ mental power to control our emotions, our hardwired emotional system is the foundation and major influence the actions we chose. Film visualizes the innate mental models through the most advanced medium we have to simulate the way we perceive feel, think, act, memorize, associate and socialize.

Grodal states that the narrative and aesthetic simulations use the same cognitive and affective mechanisms that are used in real life perception and their mental representations thus creating a reality simulation. Our minds use imagination and hypothetical ‘landscapes’ to work, but since the mind does not have direct contact to the world they rely on cognitive and emotional evaluations of reality-status.[[27]](#footnote-27) Reality-status is determined by perceptual salience, intent and tactile qualities, that is, sight, sound and social (inter)action that either adheres to or diverts from an established mental framework that constitutes reality. Grodal explains that comic fictions are particularly good at observing challenges of reality status as the narrative and aesthetic functions of comedy activate the cognitive and emotional responses by presenting at slightly different reality and thereby ‘producing’ laughter.

Grodal identifies aesthetic flow, an early version of PECMA flow, as the way in which experiences activate both psychosomatic dimensions and mental forms. The psychosomatic consists of perception, cognition, memory, affect and enaction while the mental forms are either associative or sequential. The canonical narrative form of linear narrative is the flow from perception to enaction, and not a result of abstract logic. Grodal calls this ‘upstream’ flow while the mental forms are called ‘downstream’ flow. The mental forms provide the emotional input, instead of the cognitive input of’ downstream’ flow. In a more practical sense we can state that ‘downstream’ flow is the reasoning between context and for example a traditional coherent narrative and ‘upstream’ flow is the emotional effect of this narrative. An example of this might be the postmodern TV show ‘*The Simpsons*’ where the traditional coherent narrative is used, thereby following the ‘upstream’ flow. But the show is infused with a very high degree of reference thereby, by the ‘downstream’ form of association, creating what has been termed the joy or recognition. Of course the different variations or combinations of ‘downstream’ and ‘upstream’ flow are many and they can create and almost endless amount of narrative and aesthetic forms and functions. The concept of flow will be explained fully in the section on the PECMA flow model.

Grodal moves on from the flow to what he calls *Focus*. *Focus* explains how audiovisual experiences are put in to a hierarchy because of a limited conscious capacity. The enactive elements come first, these are the elements that humans can control or interact with. Below in the hierarchy come the non-conscious associative elements, the emotional elements that either are part of the sensory experience or the context.

Subjective toning concerns how subjectivity is created through a continuing flow of experiences. The experiences can be either based on the subject or the object, either experiencer or the experienced. In order to build up the subjective toning a constraint on voluntary acts is important. Subjectivity also relies heavily on temporal cohesion, narrative connectedness, emotional strength, perceptual salience, modal form and reality-status. In the context of film it is particularly temporal cohesion that is important for subjectivity.

Visio-motor models are based on mental models and shows how image schemata functions in the structuration of input and output. In these models the visual experience is divided into elements that are of a typical nature, and consist within a ‘downstream’ framework. Deviations from this usually results in special effects because of the possibility to show something that moves outside our known schemata.

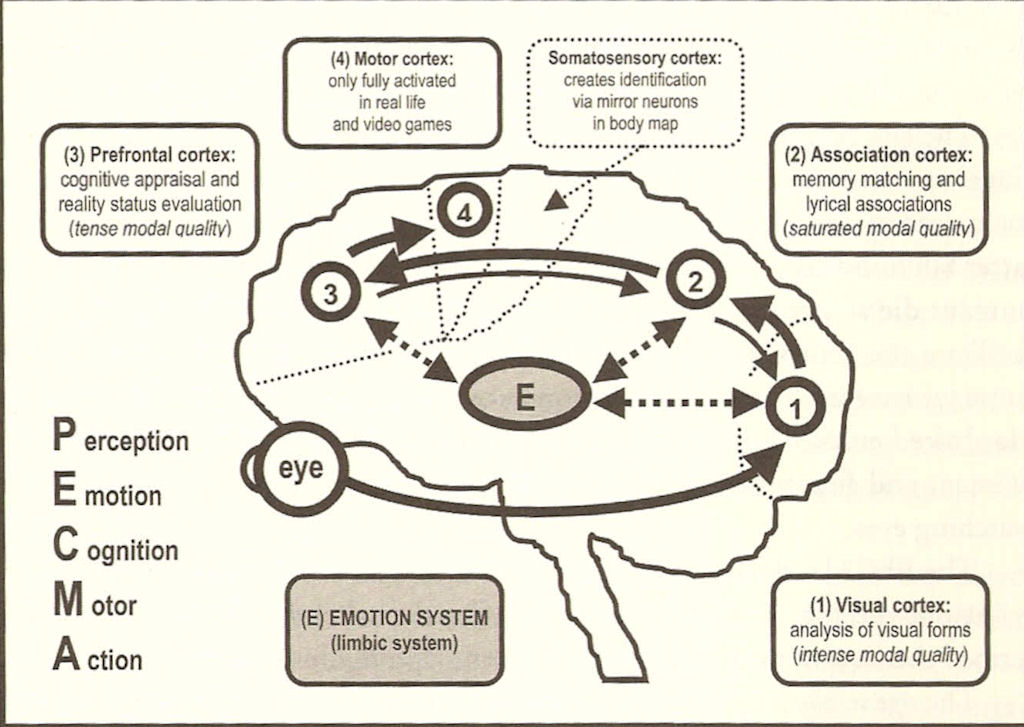
Continuing with the schematic approach, Grodal talks about models of humans. According to Grodal we analyze the characters in films according to our innate body-mind configurations. The things we focus on are the body in space, flexibility, emotion, empathy, consciousness, intentional and goal directed behavior. By these we achieve either a feeling of familiarity or unfamiliarity. Grodal divides the actions into two categories non-conscious and conscious. The non-conscious automatic, reactions take place in the early part of the *flow* and the primitive part of the brain and contains some emotional behaviors. Grodal uses songs as an example of this automatic response as there is no immediate telic behavior in singing and calls this paratelic. The conscious category consists of telic or goal oriented behaviors that are best observed in the narrative form. These categories are used in identifying human traits and the important process of identification. Most movies or modern cultural entertainment products apply a blend of the two categories. The telic element is never absent which results in an increased level of activation. Grodal uses the example of dancing, in connection with his earlier mention of song, as an art form where paratelic activation is present. The sensual and bodily activation under the ‘goal’ of accomplishing the correct steps of a dance is of course an adequate example, but when working with films it is better, in my opinion, to focus on the presence of training and ‘killing’ montages in Hollywood film of which the Rocky and Rambo franchises provide ample examples. In these montages the overall goal oriented narrative is put on hold as the scenes provide activation in the form of emotional non-conscious audiovisual content.

We have now see Grodal’s general understanding of films and move on to the PECMA flow.

## PECMA flow

In this section I will present Torben Grodal’s PECMA flow model. The acronym stands for perception, emotion, cognition, motor action and is the unification of Grodals work on the embodied experience of film. In the model Grodal describes how the brain shapes our experience of a film. The flow is established as the sensory information travels through our receptors and moves through the architecture of the brain activating the different centers. First the emotional primitive centers are engaged then the cognition responds with motoric action.

The PECMA flow model looks like this: [[28]](#footnote-28)



The first point of the flow model is the sensory receptors, in this case the eyes and ears. Present cinema is based upon a visual and audio output, but will almost certainly move beyond these two sensory dimensions at some point. Since the addition of sound to the film experience there has been a search for the next big technological development. There have been great advances within the realm of the two senses, but no success in implementing more senses. In fact the attempts have in general been such a disturbance to the holistic film experience that the technologies have been reduced to comical reference points in popular culture; smell-O-vision is perhaps the best known of these. Regardless of where film technology has been and is going the senses are the first parts of the human body that are activated.

The second part activated in the flow is the visual cortex where the analysis of visual forms takes place. The brain scans the incoming information and starts identifying and sorting it. When the identification process is completed the information moves towards two destinations, the association cortex and the emotion system. In the association cortex the incoming information is compared to what is already known, this is accomplished by memory tags. The brain contains schemata of visual forms and when the incoming information ads up to, for example a tiger, the responses start to take place. Already before the entire range of memories about tigers is activated the emotion system has received the information and starts producing an appropriate reaction, in the case of a tiger it might be a fight or flight response. The first two parts of the flow and the emotion system are part of the primitive brain and therefore these processes are going on without any cognitive input. The reception, analysis, categorization, and appropriate emotional response, are all near subconscious processes. It is from this part of the flow that all of the physical and involuntary responses to films stem. All of the immediate emotions like exhilaration, fear and nervousness come from this part of the process. Although focus falls easily on the negative or powerful emotional responses the simple feeling of liking and general positive response is also part of this section of the flow.

The third part of the flow is the cognition where logic and reason kick in. This part takes place in the frontal areas of the brain which functions as the executive center of the brain. In this part we start looking for active agents and narratives as the hermeneutical dimension of cognition begins. The initial emotional impact of sensory input is put through a new filter which starts stringing the events and actions together into coherent and understandable information. One of the main aspects of the cognitive cortex is to assess reality status. This is one of the main functions of the cognitive cortex. Internally it keeps track of what is a dream, what is a plan, what is an illusion and what is ‘real’ input. The human brain and body have not evolved two distinct systems for real and non-real sensory information, therefore watching films functions as any other sensory input until it reaches the cognition cortex and is defined as non-real or abstract information. Modality and salience are the keywords when reality status is determined. These spectrums, and other cultural markers, are learned and will therefore differentiate from culture to culture. Thereby it is understood that the establishing of a reality status is not a biological or evolutionary given and is arbitrary and connected to the semantic field of both film and viewer. Grodal connects the reality status function to the acts of playing by human children where actions are not real and objects are endowed with properties that they do not have. In western cultures the subject of reality status is interesting as almost all of the population of under a certain age have grown up in an environment where visual fiction is a dominating hegemonic force. Therefore we can resonate that the alienation of mediation has subsided and the effects of mediated narratives should be strengthened, not by implosion of signifier and signified, but by an adaptation of the visual media forms to an increasingly higher reality status.

One of the other important features of the cognition cortex is the communication with the limbic system, or emotion system. The rational responses that are produced in the frontal part of the brain interact and to some degree control the limbic system. The innate emotional responses are controlled and the right action is decided upon. This reveals a ‘top-down’ aspect to the PECMA flow that counters the ‘bottom-up’ flow we have seen until now. I will address the direction of the flow below. Apart from revealing the direction of the flow the control that comes from the cognition cortex shows that even though the emotional elements of the flow are strong they are still subjugated to the higher intelligence. More importantly the effects that come from the emotion system can be altered if it is desired to do so. This means that there is no control from the primitive brain, only influence and therefore there is established a form of hierarchy within the brain.

The understanding that comes from the cognitive processes is used for planning an appropriate response. When in a film viewing situation the appropriate response is static, but the mirroring system of the motoric action cortex is active and this creates a certain muscular tension that can be relived through the resolving of the narrative. The flow leads to the motor action cortex and this means that we engage in the film and through our emotions and cognitions to the point that we ‘want’ to engage in the film physically. This reveals the enormous influence visual fictions have on the human body. The human ability to observe and learn from others together with the ability to work with hypothetical mental scenarios means that the embodied brain is fully prepared to engage with the film experience on a level that is close to reality.

The final point that Grodal highlights in his diagram of the PECMA flow is identification. I have mentioned above that there is a mirror system in the brains architecture and apart from engaging and releasing the physical tension created by the PECMA flow it functions to aid the identification and empathic responses to the sensory information that is identified as humans. This further strengthens that the response to the film experience by creating a possibility to see either oneself or others of importance in the presented narrative. The audio visual experience therefore can create processes that mimic socialization and thus personalizing the relationship to a film.

As mentioned above there is both a ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ element to the PECMA flow. The model on page (5?) is a diagram and as such it is a simplification, but it does represent constant flow of information and response between the perception cortex, the emotion system and cognition cortex by the arrows that point both ways. The most pedagogical way of explaining the flow is by a point to point diagram, but with the exception of the eyes and the motor cortex, the parts of the brain involved in the flow are in a constant flux of information. The fresh input is first processed and then reprocessed as the other parts of the flow define the information and thereby alter the received information. After the flow has been initiated the embodied brain becomes a part of the process as memory tags, emotional disposition, cognitive preference, ideological stance and personal preference all play a part in the reception of the film and place the film within an already established framework. While the ‘bottom-up’ approach is god at explaining the functional processes of the PECMA flow the ‘top-down’ explanation ensures that we can see the importance of the higher intellectual influence on the brains processes. In a broader scoop this means that Grodal’s biocultural approach to films is not some sort of biological determinism or locked cognitivism, but rather that there is room for the theories of culture be they based on either positivism or constructivism.

## Genre System

Grodal stresses that genres and mental functions have a strong relation. In general the lyrical genres contain the autonomic or paratelic forms while the canonical narrative genres contain the telic functions. Visual fiction genres are also defined by the point of view often connected to the protagonist. The protagonist can either be the vehicle of emotion or the focus of emotional relations. The protagonist can also take a back seat to specific mechanisms such as in comedy or finally there can be a dissociation of holistic experience in what Grodal terms schizoid fictions genre type.

Grodal proposes eight of these genres-types and they are: associative, lyricism, canonical narratives of action, obsessional fiction of paratelic cognition and enaction, melodramas of the passive position, fictions of horror, schizoid fictions, comic fictions, and metafictions. These are based on the identification the viewer has either with the actants[[29]](#footnote-29), cognitively or affectively, or with the narrative, actively or passively. Grodal defines three dimensions of fiction reception in his definition of the affective states of the viewer. The first dimension of fiction reception is called *the ‘real-life’ contextualization of fiction consumption*[[30]](#footnote-30) and focuses on the context of the film viewing experience. This is whether the film is seen in a positive or negative environment. I enjoy the example John Cleese has told of the experience of seeing the same film in two different moods, one uneasy and hurried the other relaxed and pleasurable, and how this affected the experience and seeing of the film. The result being that he did not like the film in the first instance and then found that he liked it as the context changed. Thus the different contexts in which films are consumed are highly influential. Established genres carry with them different context for example the group laughter of watching comedy or a heightened sense of communal feeling in emotionally driven narrative. This ‘positioning of the spectator’[[31]](#footnote-31) is also used actively by filmmakers like for example Hitchcock in addressing the audience. Another famous example of this is seen in the opening scene of the *Patton (1970)* where George C. Scott, in his masterful portrayal of General Patton, holds a thunderous and flamboyant speech to his soldiers, but in reality he is speaking to the audience. Patton stands looming large over the audience while engaging and encouraging them to follow him through the movie as the soldier followed General Patton in WWII.

The second dimension of fiction reception focuses on two modes, firstly the perception of inner or outer worlds and secondly on the modes cognitive and empathic identification with fictive agents. The ‘creation’ of a world through the cues in the film of either a natural world or an inner world dictates whether the viewer experiences a purely cognitive perception or a more emotionally enactive world. This experience is directly connected to the more important process of agent identification. Through the functions of film language it is possible to engage the audience in certain agents of the narrative. The combination of a natural enactive outer world and an agent in active-telic mode is the form that creates the most immediate, and often highest, level of identification. Inner worlds and passive agents depend on a more cognitive and personal level of identification. In these cases the film language exudes control through positive or negative portrayal, most often the elements of ‘closeness’ and ‘distance’ are used. The identification ranges from intense cognitive and emotional resonance, perhaps best known from hero-narratives to direct dissociation of which Grodal uses Carl Dryer’s *Vampyr* (1932)as example. In this film the modalities and densities are moved away from a naturalistic approach and a supernatural causality is used which creates the effects of ‘strange’ and ‘unfamiliar’.

The third dimension of fiction reception is about the narrative structure of the world of fiction. The protagonist is either looked upon as a passive object or as an active subject. The distinction revolves around if the protagonist is the instigator of the action or the recipient/target of whatever agencies there are in the narrative. The active narratives are defined by the active subject pursuing a given object in the telic manner. As mentioned these narratives have a high activation of identification. The low level of identification in the passive narratives can then be explained by the protagonist subject being transformed into an object by the agency of the antagonist force or influence. The viewer is part of this identification field, as is context. The viewer comes to the film situation with a set of personal identification preferences that influence the level of identification or distance, but a certain part of the flow process is not influenced by the higher level preferences. As mentioned context is also an important part of film viewing and this is also relevant to the processes of identification as the identification relies on social context and general mood.

Grodal states that the three dimensions constitute the emotional transaction between the viewer and the film and he then divides the transactions into two main types. The first is the *enactive-projective type*[[32]](#footnote-32) where the viewer can project his presence into an outer world that has a coherent logic and where the subjects have the possibility to act and influence the world they inhabit. The mise-en-scene does not have to use a naturalistic style or only use elements from the real world to create the enactive elements of tension, excitement and others. Instead an inherent and coherent logic are required and thus creating a symbolic realism where the different elements and agents can have an unreal or fantastical appearance but the substructure of the world is based on a cause and effect paradigm. This cohesion creates a high level of reality status and this engages the viewer. The second type of emotional transaction is *passive-introjective transactions* and this type is then the opposite of the first. The symbolic realism is suspended and the real word is constructed to create distance and alienation and as a result the level of identification is low. The subject is put the position of object, for example in horror films, and this works against the subject based identification. The passive-introjective transactions result in a reality status that resembles dreams or hallucinations, but as the example of horror shows, the emotional resonance and effect need not be lessened by the application of passive-introjective transactions. While there is not necessarily an exclusion of emotive force the passive subjective position and the low level reality status create the narrative result of non-identification

Having established the three dimensions of film reception and two types of emotional transactions Grodal moves on to identify and explain the eight genres mentioned above. The genres are sorted by two axes, passive/active and distance/identification and the traditional narratives and films all find their place in this system. The zero point of the axes system is what Grodal calls lyrical forms, the traits of lyrical forms will be explained below, but for now it will suffice to say that they are what constitutes non-traditional narrative and film.

Grodal explains his definition of genre as the categorizing of content for the purposes of the producer, the viewer, or the researcher. The different priorities of the different agents spawn different main criteria for the organization of films. Grodal has emotion and emotional impact as the main criteria of his genre system. Our emotions are framed and guided by the genera conventions. The emotion-criteria extends, in a paratextual manner, to both immediate preference, the feeling of wanting to see something of a particular emotional genre, and familiarity, the extended positivity of returning to a given genre and its conventions. This emotional element is tied to the conventions of groups and therefore falls under one of the simplest definitions of culture, namely that it is the collection of customs and habits of a group of people. This opens Grodal’s biocultural approach up to the ideological approach that I also use in of the theory section, but this will be clarified in the in the last section. Grodal ends his definition of his genre system by dissolving it slightly in stating that the mixing and matching of genres and their defining features is a fundamental part of genera definition. This is a general problem for genre systems but Grodal’s system seem particularly open to criticism as his definitions incorporate each other to the point where it is not a genre system but a list of different features that are more or less dominating in films. We now move on to simulation and emotion

## Simulation and Emotion

I will now introduce Grodal’s idea of simulation and emotion. Grodal’s core argument in in relation to simulation and the subsequent emotions can be summed up in the quote:

*“We use exactly the same eyes and brain structures when we are watching films and watching the real unmediated world”[[33]](#footnote-33)*

Grodal underlines the fact that humans do not have two distinct systems to process mediated and unmediated information. This means that the definition of simulation changes. Simulation, as Grodal describes it, is not a metaphor for imagination but a activation of the same systems, only to a lesser degree. By this logic planning for the future, playing and fantasizing are all simulations. Of course there are varying degrees of simulation in the sense that not all simulations attain a high level of reality status. When we engage in simulation we have a particular point of view, films most of the result in first person simulation. From this position we map all of the social and topographical landscapes. The position also entails that there is created a high degree of identification as this is the most direct viewing position. We construct much of our identity by observing and imitating and this means that character identification mirrors the process of self-construction. This coupled with the technical and narrative strength in film results in a high level of emotional identification. This identification in not necessarily positive as film often show antagonists. In this instance the identification is turned into alienation, but this does not diminish the strength of the simulation. The simulation is facilitated by the construction of an entire diegetic world. The objects or subjects of the diegetic world do not activate our empirical aversion so we are free to immerse ourselves into the world and the characters. Grodal stresses that the simulations are not abstract or limited. They include all aspects of the body and mind, also the cognition as it is an important part of controlling input. What Grodal says is that while we are not ‘active’ when watching films our minds activate all our facilities into the process, even our motor cortex, and thereby our bodies are activated. This creates a full simulation that enables sympathy for the characters of the diegetic worlds. Sympathy is a more conscious emotion and this means that we cannot sympathies with characters that we do not identify with. This process of selective identification is also influenced by salience and relevance. Even if the simulation experience is fully immersive the spectator needs a high level of salience and a coherence with the films value sets to achieve a full experience. Grodal terms this way that viewers relate to films *immersed simulator*. Hollywood films generally seek to establish this stat of *immersed simulator* in their viewers as it provides the most engaging experience. I now move on to a problematization of Grodal position as cognitivist in a cultural field.

Lastly in this section I will problematize Grodal’s positioning in an academic context. Grodal’s work is based on the human body and as all sciences based on the physical; the observational and positivistic approaches are the cornerstones. This instantly removes Grodal’s work from the semiotic and formalistic approaches that are dominant in the culture based sciences, but this does not mean that Grodal’s work, such as the PECMA flow, can be placed outside the humanities. The inclusion of a cognetivistic element in Grodal’s architecture of the brain shows that there is a strong element of ‘the human mind’ in Grodal’s understanding of ‘the embodied mind’. In Grodal’s attempt to find a term for his specific approach he comes up with the term *bioculturalism*[[34]](#footnote-34) in which he finds a middle ground between the sciences and the humanities. Grodal’s own attitude towards his work has developed over the years as he has moved from an almost outright dismissal of and humanities approach in his 1997 work *Moving Pictures: A theory of film Genres, Feelings and Cognition*, to a more all-encompassing approach in the terming of *bioculturalism*  in his 2003 work, *Embodied Visions – Evolution, Emotion, Culture, and Film*. If one reads resent interviews with Grodal this development seems to continue. In a 2009 interview made by Rorotoko,[[35]](#footnote-35) where among other things, Grodal talks about the role of romantic and pornographic movies and, while maintaining that the body is the basic framework, Grodal states that the cultural development is part of an ongoing negotiation. This negotiation mirrors the discourse power struggle known from the humanities. What Grodal basically says is that culture is part of the human mechanism, but he chooses to highlight the primitive emotional mechanisms above the cognitive ‘higher’ mechanisms. As Grodal himself, shows the cognitive parts of the brain have influence and power over both the actual primitive system and the effects it causes; therefore it is not right to say that the biological element is the dominant. Furthermore, for the intents and purposes of this paper the biological and the cultural will be weighed equally. The human embodied mind means that both biology and culture are prerequisites for the human condition and not competing academic discourses or institutions that either look for or construct the world. This means that the approach I have chosen to film analysis does not exclude the cultural approach.

Before moving on to the analysis there is a perceived chasm between the cognitive and semiotic approaches that I need to address. If we remove the idea of a forced division between the cognitive and the semiotic it is easy to see how the two theoretical approaches I have chosen interact. Grodal embodied mind has the entirety of culture as part of the mind in the cognitive part of the brain, which is part three of the PECMA flow chart (see page ) and as we see the cognitive section, and therefor also culture, interact freely with the other sections of the brain. Both emotion and motor control can thus be influenced by culture, even a structural semiotically based culture. If we turn to Althusser’s work we need not look any further than the simple fact that the body constitutes an ideological apparatus of its own and that the structural whole consists of semiotic individuals. While the structural elements can function as analytical tools or guide towards understanding they have no bases in the real if they do not invoke the semantic element. It the structure is not based on the humans within it is worthless. This is underlined by the ironic fact that through the numerous assertions of materialism, both dialectical and historical, it never occurs to the Marxist structuralist that the human body is part of the material. One cannot contain that conscious it establish by the material world without also stating that the brain, and its workings, is the bases of consciousness. This lays Althusser’s work wide open to the cognitive approach that I have used. Thus it is my argument, that not only are the cognitive and structural semiotic approaches compatible, but they complement each other, as the cognitive provides the actual bases for the process that create the ideological structures of our society.

I now move on to the analysis of the Die Hard films.

# Analysis – Die Hard

In this analysis chapter I will look the four films of the Die Hard franchise in order to illustrate the possible ideological effects of Hollywood films. The Die Hard films in many ways epitomize the Hollywood that I have described in the previous chapters and therefore are an obvious choice. The first film was a tentpole film for Twentieth Century Fox and the following films have all been an important part of Twentieth Century Fox’ earnings, there is even a fifth film in the making scheduled for premier in 2013. The Hollywood franchise is based on repeating a production that has resulted in high earnings. The repetition takes place in the area of main characters, theme, story structure, and a number of other parameters. Most often the franchise film is a traditional action narrative; the James Bond, Rocky, and Batman are all perfect examples of high earning franchises that reproduce the premise of the films and base the narratives around a white male hero.

In this chapter I will analyses the Die Hard franchise and the two main approaches will be based on the theory chapters I have presented. Thus, I will look at the movies as a direct function of an ideological apparatus. I will try to show the different levels of ideology that are present in the Hollywood products. In order to open the films up I will use a formalist approach and analyze the structure of the film. This approach will allow me to isolate the single elements and extract all of the ideological information that otherwise goes past the conscious level. After this phase I will be able to show the films as a singular ideological product. The reason that it is possible to speak of a singular product is that the formulaic nature of franchise films. The basically reproduce the same narratives and plot lines. The changes are locked to setting, antagonist, and minor character. After placing the product ideologically I will use the theories of Torben Grodal to establish the impact the product has. Grodal’s genre system and PECMA flow will show the influence that the films have on the individual audience member, as we move from the most abstract structuralism to a concrete physical experience that interacts directly with the embodied mind. A small part of the analysis will be directed at showing the development towards Global Hollywood. The fourth film, *Live Free or Die Hard,* differs from the rest of the films on a few pivotal points that illustrate how marketing influences content of the Hollywood products. The results of the analysis will lead us towards a conclusion on the effects of Global Hollywood film products on the present world.

## Plotstructure

I will begin by identifying two kind of plots that the Die Hard franchise utilizes. Inside of all of the movies there is an action plot where John McClane goes up against, and defeats, the enemy. This plot structure incorporates some variations, but is basically the same throughout the four movies. Through all the movies there is a plot line that can best be identified as the life story of John McClane. While action, gunfights, violence, explosions, and killings fill up the majority of the films the emotional and personal development of John McClane and the development of his relationships are a major part of the Die Hard franchise. This is part of why the Die Hard films did not become just another row of action blockbusters. There is an element of emotional engagement that drives the identification processes forward and locks the viewer in the flow of the movie, but I will expand on this below. The structure of the films can be understood in the light of the three act structure. The three act structure is a simple structure that is used by most of Hollywood’s action movies. The acts consist of setup (first act), confrontation (second act), and resolution (third act). In the first act we are introduced to the different agencies and their disposition. Then we see the inciting indecent that constitutes the problem or challenges that are to be overcome and then the first plot point moves us into the second act as the hero confronts the problem. The confrontation takes up the majority of the film and contains the action of the movie. During the confrontation the outlook for the hero worsen and in the second act there is a midpoint, usually at the middle of the film, where the chances of the hero are at their lowest. From this point the hero fights his way to the pivotal second plot point from where we move into the resolution. The main point in the resolution is the climax where the action reaches the tensest point where the protagonist defeats the antagonist, and then a short dénouement. This form is also known as the ‘Hollywood model’ and finds its origins in in the Aristotelian narrative tradition. The simplistic nature of these forms and approaches is the reason why Hollywood films are criticized for aiming for the lowest common denominator.

In the action plotlines McClane is unintentionally placed in the action. The hero then has to take action in order to fulfill his duty as a police officer, but more importantly as a hero. McClane then battles the enemy on the grounds that what they do wrong instead as an exponent of an explicit ideology. The enemies are generally on the same level as McClane so he does not fight from a position of superiority and therefor the plight of the hero is underlined as McClane suffers greatly as he fights his way towards the goal. In all of the action plot lines there is a shift in the objective of the antagonists so that what is initially seen as the objective is changed to a previously hidden objective. This serves to lengthen the plot and introduces a whole new set of objectives and motivations as the films induce their own pace and engage the audience in a second time. As McClane get closer to defeating the enemies the worse his condition and outlook is. This breaks from the standardized three act formula where there the lowest point is circa midway through the narrative. Instead of having an upward trajectory towards the climax, the Die Hard films maintain the suffering and hardship of the hero right until the climax. Since an abrupt change from losing to winning would disrupt the plot and the audience the upward trajectory is contained in McLane’s personality. His vise cracking and never say die persona underline the fact that the hero will prevail at last, even against the ever increasing odds. In the climax McClane kills the main protagonist personally and the dénouement is used to return to the emotional plotline where McClane makes some development in his personal life, for example reunite with his wife or daughter. The personal life plotline let us see the development of John McClane’s life. Much of the development is shown through exposition as the personal life plotline continues outside of the movies. In this plotline we see McClane as a looser instead of the winner of the action plot. In short, his marriage is troubled and ends in divorce and he becomes estranged from his children. The heroics of the action plot momentarily solve the personal problems, but the worsening condition of McClane, from movie to movie suggest a flawed character that cannot defeat relationship problems the same way he defeats enemies. The two first films focus greatly the personal circumstances and the intros to both films are based on the relationship between McClane and his wife. This creates a possibility for the audience to engage emotionally in the human side of the action hero. By the third film the family side of the personal plot is put in the back ground as McClane is divorced and on the verge of becoming alcoholic. The focus is on McClane and his fight to restore his life, and only after he has succeeded in defeating the enemies can call his wife and try to reestablish their relationship. By the fourth movie McClane’s marriage is finally over and the focus shifts towards McClane’s relationship with his, now teenage, daughter. The fifth film is, supposedly, going to focus on McClane’s son and this might be a way of continuing the franchise. I will expand further on the shift towards young people in the section on marketing, but we can see that the emotional personal plotline continues to be an important part of the Die Hard franchise.

Taking my offset in this brief outline of the plot structure of the Die Hard films I will look at the individual element of the films from an ideological viewpoint. First I will show the direct to semi-direct ideological dispositions of the text. Then I will look at the deep ideology that takes place at a level that is not immediately accessible to the audience. The first place we will look for the ideology of the Die Hard franchise is the main character, and cultural icon, John McClane.

### John McClane – The Icon

John McClane is the quintessential action hero. The character is a white alpha male of average intelligence and above average physic. This character, as the name implies, takes action and seeks to solve problems and remove obstacles. McClane lives up to all of these parameters, but also has and emotional side where we see the human side of the hero. This creates a more multifaceted character that has a more well-developed set of motivations and therefor McClane is better constructed than an average action hero, without a well-developed emotional side, Steven Segal’s character work springs to mind. One more aspect of the McClane character that is pivotal to the understanding of him is the flawed nature of the hero. The action hero can become distant and inaccessible for an audience, but if emotion and flawed character is induced the identification becomes much easier. Nationality is also an aspect in Die Hard as McClane fights foreign enemies the majority of the films. In the first film the German terrorist even engage in anti-American rhetoric. At one point the antagonist calls the McClane character “cowboy” in a derogatory manner to which McClane answers “Yippee-ki-yay motherfucker”. This is the catch phrase of the entire franchise and the context that it arises in is the American cowboy is ready and able to fight against anybody. The line invokes much of the ideological core of Die Hard. In a simple line the old western hero is combined with a street smart New Yorker. The all American action hero is a genre stable and has the main function of defending an ‘all American’ value set by killing anybody who goes up against the value set. So we can conclude that the icon of the Die Hard franchise is a hyper masculine white male that defends his wife/family from evil and foreign forces by using force and violence.

The role of the righteous defender is placed with the white male and as I will show below some of the American minorities are place further down in the hierarchy. This then shows us another piece in the ideological patchwork of the Die Hard films. The main minority group of the Die Hard is black men. Black males monopolize the role of important secondary characters. The fourth film breaks with this structure as there is an omission of minorities in secondary roles. In the first film there are two black characters that register in the action. The first is the minor role of Argyle, the limo driver, this young black man functions a comic foil and also is the tool of exposition as he asks McClane about his personal life in the beginning of the film. The young black man is working a low priority job, doing drugs, and in general displaying an unserious disposition. The other black character is that of the heroic black man and this character is repeated throughout the first three films. In the first film it is Al Powel a police sergeant, in the second it is Lesley Barnes, chief engineer at the airport, and in the third it the heroic black man is upgraded to McClane’s right hand man as Samuel L. Jackson portraits Zeus a Harlem resident that in many ways becomes a minor version of the McClane icon. These characters might reflect the development of higher racial equality in the cultural order of America, but if we believe this premise then the fourth movie might be troubling. In the fourth movie all racial and ethnical minorities are put in minor roles and all major characters are white Americans. The characters of the McClane family also need some attention. These establish a certain set of family values that fall under the all American heading. As already mentioned the family life and marriage of McClane is troubled and he largely fails as a family man. McClane’s wife and daughter are the characters that establish the family values that McClane breaches repeatedly. The love between the family members is clear to see in the films, but McClane’s egotistic, controlling, and insensitive manner result in him putting his own needs and his own opinions ahead of his family members. This causes the conflict with his daughter and wife and portraits him as an emotionally underdeveloped man. This portrait nears an ironic comment on the role of masculinity in present society, but the total absence of any other reflection or social comment leads me to conclude the McClane’s inability to lead a family life is a characters feature designed to make him emotionally accessible to audience members. The image of flawed action hero icon has a problematic side as the man of action is clearly the main identification marker and the inherent emotional dysfunctionality may become naturalized and universalized. The static nature of genre staples masks the necessity for development away from flaws, or as in this case dysfunctionality and might elevated the flaws to a given value set. In an ideological sense we move further down the super structural topography of Althusser. I should explain, as it is not clearly stated in Althusser’s theory, that it is only the top levels of the super structural allegory which are immediately accessible. If we imagine a series of levels where human communal conscience is at the top level, then at the bottom is the natural and universal foundation that consists of the physical world, including the human body. Only the foundation is locked in definition, but as the lower levels of the superstructure lie so close to the naturalized and universal level they adopt the solidity of the foundation and do not register in a conscious and interactive manner. Although the lower levels are accessible through analysis and close readings achieving conscious change in these levels is not easy as the have a high degree of solidity. Therefore it is problematic if the icon of emotionally dysfunctional masculinity becomes an ideological stable at a deep ideological level. As we have seen the process of reproduction will take place as soon as an element has become part of ideology. Thus, an ideological dissemination of an emotionally dysfunctional hero icon takes place as a result of a cultural product from Hollywood. This blatantly underlines that Global Hollywood chooses function and income over social and cultural responsibility.

### Enemies

We now move on to the image of the enemy. The antagonists in the Die Hard franchise represent a wide array of national and political identities, but all fall under the heading of terrorists. As mentioned above in the section about plotstructure there is a change in motivation of the antagonists. This consists of changing the initial ideological or political goals for financial gain. The second movie breaks with this structure slightly as both the political and financial goals are combined in the freeing of a South American dictator. In the first three movies the top figure of the combined enemy force is foreign and, in all but the second film, the mercenaries are foreign. As in most Hollywood productions the showing of other nationalities is stereotypical and is used only in a distancing effect. The only villain that is provided with a motivation outside of stealing money is the, American, villain in the final movie. He has been treated unjustly by the American military and therefore has an emotional reason for his terrorism. The Die Hard franchise uses an enemy image that is easy to identify. The lower level villains are defined by nationality, uniform, weaponry, or fighting style, and in the last film where parkour is introduced, physicality. This is easy for the audience to categorize and has a high expendability in the narrative as no specific personal qualities are lost. In all the films there is a high level antagonist that matches the hero on most levels and even exceeds the McClane character in intelligence. This antagonist provides the major obstacle for the hero and the high level of competence means that the suspense of the film is held very well as logic dictates that the superior character wins. All of the antagonists are have a defined set of motivations so that they are seen as believable characters. While the antagonists have an important role as obstacle they also have another important function. In the ‘yippee-ki-yay’ example mentioned above that framed the hero icon of the franchise, we also find a different function. In order to illustrate I will present the dialog:

Hans Gruber and John McClane are talking to each other on walkie-talkies:

Gruber: Mr. Mystery Guest? Are you still there?

McClane: Yeah, I’m still her. Unless you wanna open the front door for me

Gruber: Uh, no, I’m afraid not. But, you have me at a loss. You know my name but who are you? Just another American who saw too many movies as a child? Another orphan of a bankrupt culture who thinks he’s John Wayne? Rambo? Marshal Dillon?

McClane: Was always kinda partial to Roy Rogers actually. I really like those sequined shirts.

Gruber: Do you really think you have a chance against us, Mr. Cowboy?

McClane: Yippee-ki-yay, motherfucker[[36]](#footnote-36)

In Gruber’s second line we see a positioning of the audience as well as McClane. A movie audience will of course be able to link the words ‘saw too many movies as a child’ to themselves and their present position as movie viewers. The reference to a ‘bankrupt culture’ functions in the same way only in a broader sense. After highlighting John Wayne, Rambo, and Marshall Dillon, all action hero icons, Gruber challenges both McClane and the audience by asking if they think they have a chance against *us*. This *us* constitutes an ‘other’ for the audience to mirror themselves of and this ‘other’ then is Gruber who is a criminal, intelligent, German. McClane’s immediate response of ‘yippee-ki-yay motherfucker’ motivates the audience towards a response of antipathy towards the enemy and identification with McClane. The quoted section is, as mentioned, the ideological core of the franchise and this mechanism of antipathy and identification is utilized throughout all of the movies. Therefore it is important what identification markers are used in constructing the enemy group that the audience is supposed to feel antipathy for. I have mentioned several of the identification markers, but it is important to underline that the film sidesteps any serious engagement in racism or international politics. There is only presented a superficial and stereotypical image of the enemy as this is first and foremost entertainment. The problem of ‘stereotyping’ comes from the fact that films transport mental modes. If the mental mode of, for example, ‘German’ stands unchallenged in the audience and is invoked in situations outside the film experience we have an ideological transferal and actual real world impact of the ideological apparatus. If the stereotypical then becomes commonplace as can easily happen in a standardizing industry then we have a full effect of ideological construction of the ‘real’. This example also shows that there is not necessarily direct agency behind the processes of ideological construction as the construction of the enemy is based on narrative considerations rather than ideological ones.

When Gruber refers to the process of seeing film he invokes the process of self-reference which is continued throughout the four films. In the first film the self-reference is directed at the process of seeing film, but in the other three films what is referenced is the improbability of McClane ending up in these situations several times. While self-reference in films of the late twentieth century might well indicate a postmodern artistic approach, this is not the case. The self-reference is part of the humoristic side of the Die Hard franchise. Bruce Willis’s repertoire includes comedic acting and this is put to good use as he portrays the fast talking McClane. The humor is limited to the dialog as it is only a single element in the action film. Now we move to an attempt to define the films as a combined ideological product.

### Justice

The individual components that we have looked at constitute the entire ideological product. It might be difficult to extract a singular message from four individual films and in essence that is not what I am going to do. I will not be looking for the secret message of the Die Hard franchise as it is not of interest in a structural sense. Besides, the commercial origins of the films and their actual content indicate no overall message. The absence of a narratological agency or an auteur’s message does not mean that a film cannot engage the viewers with a particular ‘worldview’. The ideological structures that constitute and reproduce our world are particularly evident in narratives as these are, or give the impression of, distilled reality. All of the chaotic influential elements are removed from narratives as these seek to tell only one story, and do so in a coherent manner. Therefor we can find some of the lower ideological superstructure. In the action and hero narratives we are dealing with we can look at ‘response’ and from the responses that are deemed acceptable we can establish an ideological justice. I will also discuss what can be the possible influences and consequences of this justice. In all the Die Hard films McClane is drawn into the action and does not seek the conflict himself. This means that he never loses the moral high ground no matter how violent he becomes in his conflict resolution, as he did not draw first blood. To further this line of reasoning in all of the films McClane fights to save hostage. In three of the films the hostages are members of his own family and in the other it is a school full of children. This supports his poetically justifiable right to use whatever means he can and the element of threatened family is used to invoke the element of revenge. We can relate to McClane’s emotional need for revenge and thus we are more likely to accept the response of violent revenge as a both plausible and acceptable.

In this respect McClane becomes a vehicle of violent revenge and his actions are understood in this context. This means that McClane become more than just a character and a person on the screen. He becomes a force and has only one direction towards the inevitable goal. To use psychological terminology he becomes a pure id, that is unchecked by any higher instance. This creates a logical cohesion in the extremely violent and unrelenting progression to the goal of revenge through killing. McClane’s actions and also his dialog are all pointed towards bringing about the particular justice. The dialog compliments the action fully and never introduces reflection or doubt. This means that the justice of violent revenge is presented as naturalized or universal, within the universe of the films. This unquestioned justice is brought about by McClane who is an untamed, forceful, emotionally engaging, logically coherent, and competent action hero.

Having established that the Die Hard franchise is an ideological apparatus instigates and reproduces a revenge driven justice let us look at the consequences of this. I will start by looking at McClane’s title. McClane is a police officer and as member of the police force he stands under the obligation to *protect and serve*; an ideological declaration of intent that the American police forces share with most police forces of the western world. Furthermore the ideal approach of policing in the western world seeks to be preemptive and stop crime before it happens rather than solve it after the fact. The circumstances of the real world do not adhere to this policing ideal, but it is none the less the ideal that is aimed for. In extension of the policing ideal the present justice system is based upon a fair trial and humane punishment. In most justice systems there is also an idea of rehabilitation to help criminals to become non-criminals. The differences’ of Die Hard justice and western established justice are glaring and there is no possible connection between them.The Die Hard franchise is part of a larger section of Hollywood and the particular form of justice is a much used approach in action movies. Thus we can conclude that there is a global industry structure that produces and distributes cultural products that adhere to an ‘eye for an eye’ style of justice, or to put in into the theoretical framework I have presented. The Die Hard franchise is part of an ideological apparatus that reproduces an ideology of revenge based justice. From this conclusion the speculation arises as to what impact this influence has and will have on western societies.

One of the major concerns is the high number of cultural products that present their mental models of conflict solution that are revenge and violence based and the level of influence these products have. The high amount and constant supply of examples of the ideological discourse create a state of immersion in the content. As postmodern theory lets us know we live in a time where value and ideology have very few power centers to function from, which put the Hollywood ideology in a position of ever increasing strength. This suggests that ideology on a global scale might be moving in this direction, but empirical proof is hard to come by. One other concern is the naturalization of violence. There is very little evidence to suggest that violence is part of the natural human condition. In hunter/gatherer terms the violence of the hunt has most likely had a function of social bonding as the humans worked together to ensure life and prosperity. Violence is then rather a part of the civilized condition. With the exception of highly emotional violence, all forms of violence are related to the abstract and constructed goals of a societal order and therefore violence can be subdued or controlled by societal means. If one of the strongest ideological and emotional influences in society promotes that violence is a natural response to conflict, or other obstacles, then the human and individual rights that have their origin in the enlightenment and fortification in the period after the Second World War, will face a challenge in staying the ideological bases of the western world. But, like with the first speculation, empirical proof is difficult to extract from the processes of media dissemination and audience reception, and therefore the speculations will remain speculations. We will now move on to look at some of the marketing aspects of the franchise.

Marketing influence.

In this short section I will highlight some of the differences that the fourth movie has from the other films. This is in order to show the developments of Global Hollywood and its influence on content. The first film was released in 1988 and the explicit foreignness of the antagonists suggests that the film was not intended for major exportation, but as the franchise grew the marketing considerations also grew and by the fourth film that came in 2007, the content was streamlined in accordance with marketing strategies. The easiest way to show the workings of the fourth film is to compare it to the first film as they serve as opposites, within the context. There are two main areas that I will focus on and they are: the construction of the enemy and the presence of youth. In the first film the portraying of the foreignness is so stereotypical that when the film was released in Germany the names of the enemies where Anglicized and the accents where left out of the dubbing. In the fourth film the main antagonist is American while his army of mercenaries consists of a plethora of nationalities. All are endowed with a certain ‘special’ abilities that define them as henchmen. The abilities range from sniping, to parkour and martial arts. This is done in order to spread the vilification across as many segments a possible without locking it to one in particular. Similarly the identification through competence rather than traits sidesteps any stereotyping. The presence of youth in the films also shows the marketing streamlining. In the first film there is a total absence of youth. The youngest character, Argyle, is in his twenties and in no way represents a teenager segment. In the fourth film we see five teenagers in the first few minutes and only two adults. The terrorists perform a cyber-attack so the secondary character that helps McClane is a young computer geek, and McClane’s personal life plot is intertwined into the action plot as his daughter is kidnapped by the terrorists. This provides identification markers for both young boys and girls and a sparking love interest between the two characters only adds to the, perceived, appeal. The fourth film has less graphic violence than the prior films. This is done in order to not receive a too high rating in the American ratings system, which would translate into a loss in revenue as a too high rating excludes the strong segment of American teenagers. This race to ensure a low placing in the rating system eve affected the very core of the franchise. McClane is about to kill the main antagonist, and use the catchphrase of the franchise. He is supposed to say ‘yippee-ki-yay motherfucker’ but the ‘fucker’ is blocked by the sound of a gunshot. In many ways this illustrates that there is nothing that is not subjugated to the marketing and segmenting exercises. The inclusion of youths has had a big effect on the content of the last film, as it seeks to not get a too high rating it sacrifices a lot of the original content. It could well be argued that the absence of violence is a good thing for the viewers, but in reality the producers only mask and camouflage the violence in order to ensure revenue. So instead of an total absence of violent content, the film is edited in order to accommodate the needs of the marketing department so that the film does not get a too high rating. In the marketing terminology this is known as the ‘peter pan’ syndrome where the target audience is a young male. The idea is connected to the explosion of young consumers that the last few decades have seen.

This condition clearly shows the streamlining of content in the name of profit. Furthermore it shows that there is a will alter content and this means that whatever content is the most profitable will be the chosen content. This lead to the speculation that even if the content would be judged as bad by other standards such as ethical, social, or moral it would still be chosen as it ensures profit. Now we move on to the way the cultural products are experienced on the personal level.

## Emotional impact

After having identified the ideological and structural nature of the films I will now move on to the reception of the film and how the films impact the individual viewer in an attempt to connect the abstract structuralism with the real cognition of the film. This section will be based on the theories of Torben Grodal. First I will look at the action genre as it is defined by Grodal and what that means for the Die Hard franchise. Then I will look at the viewing position and identification on an emotional level. Finally I will develop a joint understanding of the Die Hard franchise where both ideology and emotional impact are part of the concluding understanding.

In Grodal’s genre system he identifies *the canonical narratives of action* as a genre category. This is the genre category that the Die Hard films belong to. It is defined as the most used narrative form of present day movies. The two main staples of this genre are an enactive cognition and empathic identification. These two elements are invoked by the Die Hard films. As I have already discussed above the Die Hard formula uses both goal oriented action and emotional identification to engage the viewer. Grodal states that if these narratives are successful they draw the viewer in and he is fully absorbed to the point where he loses self-awareness. While this process has to be evaluated individually the Die Hard films live up to all the parameters of drawing the viewer into the narrative world and engaging them fully with the desires and aversion that the main character feels. The cognitive and emotional involvement is tied to the McClane character, and the viewer follows his journey in the fictional world and shares his desire to destroy the enemies of the different films. Grodal states that this category utilizes a closed structure and as we have seen above the Die Hard franchise uses the closed three act structure. The important part her is of course that the viewer gets totally submersed in the action and, under ideal conditions, loses self-awareness. Grodal terms this viewer position *Immersed Simulator[[37]](#footnote-37)*

This extremely high level of identification means that the possibility of a deep influence is very likely. When audiences loose self-awareness the cognition is nearly turned off and is only activated to ac conscious level if there is an interruption. This interruption might come from a situation outside the movie seeing situation or it might come from a ‘flaw’ in the narrative. Narrative flaws are mistakes that arise as the genre conventions are broken. If the traditional action narrative where to invoke for example associative lyricism, the least narrative form of Grodal’s genre system, it would disrupt the film and break the flow and the audience would regain awareness as they would be forced to think about the motive for breaking the genre conventions as well as applying hermeneutical analysis to the lyrical forms. The impossibility if a solid answer would mean that the loss of self-awareness would be hard to regain. But as we saw in the chapter about Hollywood’s historical development Hollywood movies are produced with the expressed intention to maintain the internal logic and preserving the naturalization of the movie experience. In the waste majority of films, the loss of self-awareness in never an option. In fact, as it is an industry standard of Hollywood we can safely assume that the cases where a Hollywood film disrupts its own narrative world are almost none. While cognition is not particularly active during *traditional action narratives* it is not completely turned off. It still accesses the logic of the input, but since critical thinking and evaluation are part or the higher cognitions, on can speculate that the mental models that the Die Hard films use become part of the mental makeup of the recipient. I am not suggesting that films can brainwash you, which is the pedestrian argument often heard, but that the uncritical implementation of mental modes might very well mean that when a similar situation arises there are a set of mental models available to deal with conflict. To deal with a conflict, which is a highly emotional state, the cognition has to deliver models that control both the strong emotions and the motoric actions. This is why persons that deal with conflict on a regular basis such as police and military train in the scenarios that might arise so that there are mental models ready to activate as in the situation. If a narrative or mental model has be implemented in the viewers cognition that establishes violence and confrontation as a solution to conflict, then this might be activate in a real life situation. This activation might then lead to an actual real life violent confrontation. Of course, this does not mean that all individuals that watch the Die Hard films, or other action films, will react with violence if confronted. Fortunately there are other apparatuses that reproduce other ideologies in form of mental models and these then counter the violent models as the cognition deems these responses as the appropriate ones. But in a structural sense, the ever growing strength of the particular Hollywood ideology, with the accompanying mental models, in a world where other ideologies are deprived of apparatuses of similar strength is worrying. This problem is not isolated to violent and confrontational mental modes as the traditional action narrative is invoked to tell a vied array of different stories that all present a particular ideology. Romantic comedies also fall under Grodal’s genre heading of traditional action narratives and the ramifications of this might be even more disturbing than the export of a violent ideology.

Grodal speaks about this character simulation and emotion and the possible positions of ‘seeing’. These range from direct emotional simulation to distant observer. In the Die Hard film we find the direct emotional simulation. Grodal uses the word simulation slightly differently than other theorists do. In Grodal’s terminology simulation does not mean the imaginary projection of a scenario. It means a direct simulation where the first part of the reaction takes place inside the brain and we then as we are able to grasp the situation do not act on the initial impulse. This is because the cognitive cortex makes sure that the motoric center is not activated even though simulation is activated inside the brain. This functions by the fact that a simulation is not a mental image but an activation of the relevant centers. The best example of this is how we can become frightened or startled during a film, but this does not make us resonate that we should flee.

Similarly all of the actions of the point of identification, McClane, are mimicked in this simulation. The reason for this, says Grodal, is that our brains have not developed to distingue between fictive or narrative information. Grodal’s assertion has some very interesting ramifications of the viewing of the Die Hard films. The films are extremely violent, but the violence is not directed at the enemies. In fact there are not any prolonged deaths of the antagonists; all of the enemy deaths are quick. Some of the deaths are very brutal, but they function as flashes not prolonged portraits. The pain and suffering we see is McClane’s and he is also the center of identification for the audience. So what are the ramifications of the extreme suffering that McClane’s goes through? The suffering of McClane is one of the defining features of both McClane and the franchise, and furthermore it is an action hero genre stable. One interpretation could be the that the suffering causes masochistic emotions in the audience, but this psychological interpretation does not offer any explanation as to why this feature has become an industry constant as not all of the audience can be said to have masochistic tendencies. Instead the explanation can be found in the identification that is based on McClane and the active simulation that takes place in the brain and body as the audience sees the film. Each cut, bruise, wound and injury that McClane endures activate a simulation in the viewer. Obviously the audience does not feel the pain from the narrative but what is activated is the frustration of and the endurance to overcome the hardship. The frustration and endurance are channeled in to the telic nature of the narrative and the need for release of frustration is provided through the killing of the enemies. The simulation enacts the suffering in the embodied mind and the immediate outlet for the tension is provided by the hero’s actions, and in the Die Hard the action is killing bad guys. This process is primarily emotional, as it focuses on pain and frustration, but the telic element engages the cognition for two reasons. Firstly, because the cognition functions as arbiter when the emotional engages the motor cortex and in this case the cognition subdues the impulse towards action. Secondly, the cognition is activated as the killings on the screen release the built up tension and become a way of dealing with the situation. This establishes the killing as a release strategy and furthers the cognitional logic for the revenge scenario. Through this process there is created an internal mental model for revenge as the emotional need is combined with the positive logic of the revenge act. In other words the audiences get both release and revenge through the on screen killings. In this we see the connection between the personal film experience and the structural ideology of the films.

As we see the impact on the personal level is great and the possibility of total self-immersion means that the inherent ideological logic is accepted fully. This serves to heighten the impact of the ideological apparatus and I have now established a link from the infra- and superstructures to the personal experience and the possibility of an ideological impact of Hollywood products is present.

The findings of this analysis lie outside of the generic understanding of film and their influence on individuals and societies. Therefore I will investigate the ramifications of this understanding of films. The discourse of cultural imperialism gains much from these results and the arguments that Global Hollywood has a dominating position in the world today seem to be substantiated. The possibility for film to exude a deep and lasting influence, on both a personal and structural level, means that the understanding of what films as a medium constitutes must change drastically if the ramifications of Global Hollywood are to be controlled. In the world today there are no instances that can control or even challenge the apparatus of Hollywood. If the findings of this thesis are to be adhered to there is an immediate need for information and education to those billions that use the cultural products of Global Hollywood and in the long run there is a need for the content and form of Hollywood to be challenged and exposed.

In the chapter about Global Hollywood I underlined that this thesis was in no way a part of the conspiratorial discourse that already exists about Global Hollywood, but in the statement above the conspiratory discourse seems to haunt the lines. Therefore I feel the need to state again that there is no direct agency behind the content of Global Hollywood’s cultural products. Perhaps it is the western languages difficulty in speaking without agency that keeps establishing a (evil) intentionality behind the findings of this thesis. Althusser’s notion of reproduction illustrate very well that, while there is certainly a set of intentions and motivations behind the creation of the cultural products it is not intention on a deep ideological level, as the ideological reproduction happens without any necessary agency. The reproduction takes place on its own on a level that is not directly conscious to us.

As we move towards the conclusion of this thesis it is important to point out the possible weaknesses of the findings. Any approach that is based theory and analysis will be without empirical foundation. The findings I have produced might be corroborated by an empirical approach to the filmic experience that could induce an element of measurability to the mental and structural processes that I have described. The cognitive element of my work helps to alleviate this concern as Grodal’s work is based empirical and falsifiable work. As I argued in the chapter of ‘cognitive ideology’ the division of the two branches of sciences is becoming obsolete but until that happens this thesis might have benefited from an empirical approach to the Die Hard franchise. Unfortunately, a large scale investigation of the personal and ideological conditions of the Die Hard film experience was without the resources of this thesis. We now move on to the conclusion.

# Conclusion

In this thesis I set out to, through the analysis of the Die Hard franchise, answer these questions:

**What are the social and cultural effects of the Hollywood film on a personal and structural level?**

**How do the social and cultural effects of Hollywood films manifest themselves in society?**

In attempting to answer these questions I first looked at Hollywood as a structure of production, I examined how Hollywood’s historical development has forged a product that is based on naturalisation in both form and narrative. The ideological development of the product was also included. After looking at the state of Hollywood today I looked at Global Hollywood as a globalized structure of production and marketing that dominates the planet in the realm of entertainment, and more specifically film.

In order to provide an understanding of the structural side of the first question I used Louis Althusser’s theory of ideology and the ideological state apparatus. From this I established an ideological structural topography, where the foundation was materialistic and the reproducing levels of superstructural ideology become more consciously accessible the higher up in the topography we move.

For the personal part of the first question I used Torben Grodal’s work on film. Firstly I introduced the PECMA flow which is a chart of the activities in the brain as we watch films. Then I used his genre system to identify the genre of the Die Hard films and lastly I applied Grodal’s notion of simulation and emotion in order to explain what happens on an individual level as a film audience sees a film.

My findings showed that on the conscious level of ideology the films showed a white conservative ideology, but on the lower levels I found a revenge based justice ideology. This low level ideology was being disseminated and reproduced on a structural level, but also implemented on a personal level through simulation and identification.

In order to answer the second question I looked at some of the ramifications of my findings. The implication on a personal level and the dissemination, on as structural level, of a revenge based justice ideology had some possible serious ramifications. The output of the media infrastructure is greater than ever before in the history of humankind. While at the same time western societies are fragmented and have no ideological apparatuses that have the same strength as the entertainment media. Therefore, the possibility arises that the ideological content of Hollywood will attain an ever more powerful position in the world. Thus changing the societies that receive the cultural products so that they adhere to the ideological values that Hollywood reproduces.

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