HOW THE THREE LITTLE PIGS CAME TO STAR IN INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Relationship Between the European Fairy Tale and the American Disaster Movie

by

Roz Williams

Ph.D. Thesis

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis sets out to determine the relationship between European fairy tales and the American disaster movie genre. It examines how these fairy tales may have impacted on a fledgling film industry through its European creators. It does this by drawing on examples of mythology, folklore and fairy tale, anthropology, archaeology, psychology, political and social history, geopolitics and sociology. It also investigates film genre, story structure and the history of Hollywood and its creators; and is told in a personal narrative style with supporting anecdotal contributions to illustrate the effect of the disaster movie on the individual.

The thesis exposes how the motifs of myth and fairy tale are prevalent in this genre of film, using case studies and analysing them against social anthropological paradigms to argue that European fairy tales have influenced American disaster movies. It demonstrates how geopolitical and sociological events have shaped the stories told in these films throughout the decades since the genre’s inception at the birth of film, and the author posits that disaster movies will continue to be relevant not only to audiences and storytellers, but also to disaster relief agencies.

In conclusion, the thesis argues that disaster movies are the fairy tales of our modern times and that they serve a purpose in telling the stories that explore our concerns and allay our fears.
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This thesis has been professionally copy edited by Dr Rachel Le Rossignol according to the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (D1, D3-D5, E1, E2 & E4).
Student Declaration

I, Roz Williams, declare that the examinable outcome:

contains no material which has been accepted for the award to me, the candidate, of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome; and

to the best of my knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome.

Roz Williams
7 December 2015
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SETTING THE SCENE

How It Began…

We are a wounded species afflicted with global collective fear. (Hand Clow, 2001: 11)

Going to the cinema was a very important way of escaping the drabness of post-war London. In fact, the whole cinema-going process was a ritual to which I looked forward every week. As far back as I can remember my mother used to take me to the pictures every Monday afternoon. Often, the choice of films was not suitable for young children, but come rain, hail or shine, we donned our coats and walked down the street, past the bombsite to the local cinema in Lower Edmonton. This was the earliest memory of my world: North London, early 1950s – a world of grey rubble and bomb craters.

A Wurlitzer organ played in the orchestra pit as we entered and took our seats. The lights would begin to dim and a sense of anticipation pervaded the cinema. At this point, the organist and Wurlitzer would descend as one into the bowels of the cinema. I remember wondering if demons in that black pit gobbled him up, but as soon as the program began, I very quickly forgot about him.

The newsreel would be the first cab off the rank as this was in the days before television news, followed by either a Walt Disney cartoon or a black and white ‘B picture’.

Between the first film and the main film came the intermission. Apart from the eager anticipation I felt at the start of each program, this was my favourite part before the main film started. This was when the ice cream lady came around with her tray full of vanilla ice cream tubs. Sometimes the Wurlitzer man would ascend from the depths of the earth and play for us.
The films that really stood out in my mind were not the films deemed suitable for children; films like Dumbo (1941), Sleeping Beauty (1959) or Bambi (1942). Rather, they were films like The Incredible Shrinking Man (1957), The Cat People (1942) (it took me years to stop being afraid of cats) and The Ten Commandments (1956). Fear: the emotional response that The Incredible Shrinking Man instilled in me as a child still exists to this day. I saw the film on television a couple of years ago and it brought back memories in very vivid detail of virtually every scene in that film. I found this, in itself, remarkable as I’ve observed over the years as a filmmaker, writer and teacher that most people leave a cinema only recalling the last five minutes of a film. It was my first realisation that bad things could happen to people, and the fear it evoked is now deeply etched in my psyche.

When my family and I went to see epics, the films that we now regard as ‘blockbusters’, we would take the trip from North London into the West End of London to the fancy cinemas where we watched films like The Ten Commandments and Ben Hur (1959) on those big screens. I recall lots of red plush velvet, shiny glass and gold lights, and most importantly, you could even get strawberry-flavoured ice cream. We were provided with a glossy program on the making of the film: the precursor of the 'extras' now found on DVDs and as the lights dimmed in the auditorium, the plush red velvet curtains parted and kept on parting to reveal a panoramic screen – certainly not something we could experience in Lower Edmonton, North London.

My mother, being my mother, made sure we had what she considered were the best seats in the front stalls, and she always took a well-stocked picnic basket regardless of whether or not we had just eaten at the Lyon's Corner House near the cinema.

The Ten Commandments brings back memories of the fiery mountain where God lived, the green mist that came down, killing all the first born at the first
Passover, Moses turning the temple water into blood and, of course, the parting of the Red Sea. I was enthralled by the spectacle and overawed by the miracle of watching a sea part, as well as terrified by it.

I can still see the parting of the Red Sea, feel the awe at the height of those watery walls, the suspense and anxiety of anticipating the water would cave in and drown me, let alone all those characters on the screen. When God, or rather, Cecil B. de Mille, allowed the avenue of water to collapse, I hid my face in my father’s armpit and listened to the sound of the Egyptian charioters screaming and the thunder of the water drowning them. When I peeped around to see what was happening, all I could see was water with lots of horses’ legs flailing against bits of chariots.

As an adult, I thought I had overcome the traumatic effect of the parting of the Red Sea in The Ten Commandments – that is, until I saw more recent films like Wolfgang Peterson’s remake of The Poseidon Adventure: Poseidon (2006), Stephen Spielberg’s remake of the H.G. Wells novel, The War of the Worlds (2005) and Roland Emmerich's apocalyptic world-ending 2012 (2009). In my opinion, neither remakes of The Poseidon Adventure and The War of the Worlds were as good as the originals. However, the hyper realism of those underwater scenes as the SS Poseidon was turned upside down in Poseidon, the Martians capsizing a ferry in the later version of The War of The Worlds and the tidal wave swamping the Tibetan temple at the top of the Himalayas in 2012 touched a very deep nerve within me – something that James Cameron’s films Titanic (1997) and The Abyss (1989) failed to do.

Over time, I have discovered that I have many friends who are all scared of ‘drowning’ or ‘deluge’ scenes in films. One friend even goes to the extreme of not watching these films, even when their impact is greatly reduced when they are shown on television. She cannot recall experiencing any such incident in her life or the lives of people she knows or has known.
My observation of the effect these kinds of film had on my friends piqued my curiosity. What is it about these films that provokes this kind of response in some people and fascination in others, myself included? Even in real life, people are glued to the TV set to learn the outcome of, for example, the rescue of surviving miners entombed in a mine shaft for days, or as drivers, they slow down at the scene of an accident to see what has happened. I wanted to know what it was about disaster that so intrigues us. Is it a recent phenomenon or something that is hot-wired into us humans? In my quest to understand this, I started reading around and looking for any material that could help me comprehend why this is so. During my search, I became aware of certain patterns and motifs in disaster stories that seemed to remind me of fairy tales and, as a teacher of mythology and symbolism as well as film storytelling and production, I decided to examine in depth the links between the two, and the effect of this type of tale on people.
CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

Years ago, as a film producer, I sat and watched a director's cut of a film in an executive producer's office with only the director, the executive producer and I present. I was not the film's producer but had worked on its script development so this was the first time I had seen the actual film cut together. At a crucial moment, the executive producer leaned across me to comment on some aspect of the film to the director. I was so caught up with the emotion of that crucial moment in the film that I forgot the executive producer was my boss as I thumped him across the chest and told him to shut up. He quickly moved his chair out of (my) arm's reach. He did not sue me for assault: as an experienced filmmaker, he was pleased that the film elicited such a strong emotional response from an audience member.

I realised at that moment what a powerful tool storytelling can be, particularly the type of stories we tell in film. That, coupled with observing the effects that the extreme screen stories in disaster movies have on people, created a curiosity in me to learn more about what it is about the medium that has such a strong influence. This curiosity led me from film producing to screenwriting and then on to teaching film production and screenwriting to both undergraduate and post-graduate students. The deeper I got into finding out about screen storytelling, the more passionate I became about the topic and the more I wanted to go back to what the influences were and are for us to create these stories. It has led me to become the teacher I am now as I have expanded my teaching to include mythology and symbolism in screen storytelling, and it has led to this point of exploration.

This thesis, through a series of personal observations, close readings of film narratives and historical investigations, will interrogate the relationship between European Fairy Tales and the Hollywood Disaster Movie. Arising from observations by both my friends and myself was the desire to consider
whether we are hot-wired genetically to fear floods and tidal waves, or is it purely part of our collective unconscious, as Jung would have us believe (Jung 1969: 42-44). This in turn led me to question why there have been a plethora of disaster movies leading up to the new millennium and beyond. Patterns were emerging in the narratives of these films that were similar in structure to the fairy tales I had grown up with in England. In particular, Independence Day (1996) encapsulated the essence of all these disaster movies. Its writer/director was a European who, like others, was making big blockbuster disaster movies.

This was interesting because I had resisted seeing this film at the cinema, being put off by all the hype surrounding it. I watched it on DVD after I had seen Mars Attacks (1996), the spoof of Independence Day, at the cinema. I thought that Mars Attacks was hilarious and at that point, decided I should watch the serious film upon which it was based. Although I am sure it was not the filmmaker’s intention, I found Independence Day much funnier because it was so formulaic that its characters were like caricatures. What did strike me, though, was that the cautionary tale and the symbolic number three so often prevalent in fairy tales, which I will discuss in chapter 4, kept cropping up in the plot structure and characterisation of not only that film, but also other disaster movies.

After watching Independence Day, I felt that the predictability of fairy tales and disaster movies, with their fight between good and evil, was leading to this type of narrative being doomed to failure. Then came along the disaster movie that deeply resonated with me: The Day After Tomorrow (2004). Roland Emmerich, the German filmmaker, reinvigorated the tired ‘fairy tale’ formula in The Day After Tomorrow. Unlike other disaster movies that seemed more reactionary to the times in which they were made, this film incorporated the themes of global warming and major climate change, foretelling what we are now experiencing. Paradoxically, Emmerich had also made Independence Day, a film that epitomised the malaise of the formulaic, predictable Hollywood blockbuster despite the spectacular event of blowing up the White House.

My knowledge that these films were made in the Hollywood studio system and that European immigrants created Hollywood, led me to consider
whether the influence of European mythology, folklore and fairy tales had a more direct bearing on these films, with the resultant formulaic and highly predictable screen stories. I discovered in my research that it appeared there was a connection that had not yet been identified, thereby revealing a gap in the literature.

In response to these thoughts and my long-standing interest in the narratives of film, I embarked upon this study to discover what had led to my hypothesis that disaster movies are today’s fairy tales. To fully understand this I needed to establish what, if any, links existed between disaster movies and fairy tales and in turn, identify what impacts are evident. It was necessary for me to consider the following questions:

- **What are the characteristics of the fairy tale narrative?**

- **Is there a relationship between European fairy tales and the American disaster movie?**

- **If so, in what ways have European fairy tales influenced the disaster movie genre’s story structure and characterisation?**

This study will seek to provide answers to the above questions by analysing and interrogating the relationship between European fairy tales and the Hollywood disaster movie. Such a study will provide new understanding of this popular entertainment genre.

The research is historically based, determining the types of stories found in disaster movies and discussing why this kind of storytelling continues to resonate with its audiences. By drawing upon recent archaeological discoveries that bear some relationship to the myths created by our early ancestors, the study will explore how these stories began and why they were told. Material will be sourced from seminal works in the field by archaeologists such as Wilson (2001) and his discoveries of the events leading to the great flood myth; Hawkes (2002) on her Sumerian discoveries of the earliest recorded literary
writings; and documentary films in which key scientists speak about their findings.

The Creation, Hero and Apocalypse myths and the archetypes found in myths, folklore, fairy tales and disaster movies; the works of prominent anthropologists and key fairy tale and folklore theorists such as Joseph Campbell (1993a and 1993b), Marie von Franz (1996) and Vladimir Propp (2001); along with the works of psychologists like Carl Jung (1969), will be examined. These writings will form the basis of a discussion that seeks to establish why people are fascinated with stories about disasters.

Stemming from my extensive experience as a filmmaker and writer, I have chosen the Jungian approach instead of adopting the more usual Lacanian position as followed by film theorists during the second half of the Twentieth Century. Jacques Lacan (McGowan 2003) approached psychology from a theoretical and ideological perspective whereas Jung focused on the mythological and archetypal elements of storytelling. Lacan followed many of the theoretical concepts of Freudian doctrine such as the Oedipal conflict, repression and infantile sexuality. He believed that our sense of individuality is an illusion and is created by a vast set of symbols around us (Bordwell 2015). The unconscious is not able to overthrow or remake elements of the symbolic order, whereas in Jungian theory, it does (Izod 2001: 6).

For me, Jung's approach is best suited to the art of storytelling. It appeals to the audience's emotions rather than their ideology, and is, in my experience, an extremely important element in film storytelling. Lacanian theory gathered anything to do with emotion into the basket of "pleasure vs. unpleasure" whereas since the last quarter of the Twentieth Century, the focus has been growing on accepting the emotion that films evoke (Bordwell 2015). Jung recognised the immense force that emotion can have over the individual and that emotion is the key to the deeper levels of the psyche. It is inextricably linked to the formation of myths, no matter the medium of communication (Izod 2001: 7).
In choosing the Jungian approach, I will not be engaging with Lacanian theorists such as Christian Metz and Laura Mulvey and due to limited space, a feminist perspective will not be discussed at this time. However, I would suggest this would provide an excellent focus for future studies.

Analysis of folklore, fairy tale, political and social history will trace the sociological effects of storytelling that helped develop and create Hollywood and the disaster movie. I have turned to the rich data of the folklore and fairy tales themselves, publications and websites about religious and racial persecution in Europe and the migration to the New World of European refugees, as well as documentaries made in the latter half of the Twentieth Century. These documentaries feature prominent experts in their respective fields. Martin Scorsese (BFI 1995), Neal Gabler (1988) and David Thompson (2004), as well as biographies of the early Hollywood pioneers, have all provided a tapestry of stories.

As there has been scattered research on this subject, particularly around the disaster movie, disparate areas and less traditional reference materials have been employed to substantiate connections related to the research under discussion. The full impact on our culture of the European Jewish immigrants to the New World, some of whom became the first Hollywood studio moguls, needed to be established. This is an essential connection that needs interrogating because they brought their traditions and fairy tales with them from Europe and created new ones when they moved to Hollywood. Their stories have continued to form part of modern popular culture and given this focus, I have excluded non-European myths, fairy tales and folklore in this thesis.

In this study, I will explore the cycle of European influence on Hollywood and its stories, and in particular on the disaster movie. I have taken a contextual approach to interrogating film and have examined what has happened in each decade of the Twentieth Century in terms of geopolitics, sociology, technology and the type of disaster films that were being made at the time. I ask whether the films have largely been a reaction to their times, and the matrices developed in response in the following chapters from such an
historical perspective will reveal, in the following chapters, a significant correlation between the world at large and the fantastic world of Hollywood.

I have specifically not examined disasters such as the Holocaust, the fight for racial equality and other political issues because to date they have not been taken up by Hollywood in telling the disaster movie story. I acknowledge, however, some films do at times represent such issues in a tangential manner, such as the opening scenes of Mexican workers demonstrating and a subplot featuring African-American race relations in Volcano (1997).

2. Recent Times

In the lead up to the new millennium, there had been an increased reliance on technology, such as computer generated imaging with a parallel decrease in innovative or interesting storytelling. The storylines in more recent times have also become very patriotic, parochial and American–centric, reflecting political events of the times. For example, in Independence Day, Armageddon (1996) and Deep Impact (1998), the world is saved by America, although there are two token Russian astronauts in the two latter films. In Independence Day, the rest of the world looks to America to solve the problem of those pesky aliens and in Armageddon, Bruce Willis and his team of American misfit oil drillers are the only people able to destroy the asteroid from hell as it hurtles towards earth. During the 1990s, the USA had become the world’s policeman and this role was reflected in the types of disaster movie made during that decade. Further exploration of these developments will be discussed chapter 8.

Disaster stories have now become formulaic, predictable and sometimes unintentionally funny in their one-dimensional treatment of the genre. It can be argued that the European influence has become lost, even though European filmmakers were amongst the ‘A’ list of directors making this type of film: people like Jan de Bont and Paul Verhoeven (Dutch), and Wolfgang Petersen and Roland Emmerich (German). Jan de Bont, a noted former cinematographer, directed Twister (1996) whilst Wolfgang Petersen directed Poseidon, The Perfect Storm (2000) and Outbreak (1995), Roland Emmerich
directed *Independence Day*, *Godzilla* (1998) and *2012*, and Paul Verhoeven directed *Total Recall* (1990) and *Starship Troopers* (1997). These Europeans have, like the original European studio moguls, become more American than the Americans in their storytelling.

Through this research, it will become evident later European directors were not only influenced by Hollywood as they grew up, but they were also reliant on the system that supported them to play with budgets larger than some countries’ economies. Wolfgang Petersen, born in Emden, Germany in 1941, recalls the influence Hollywood had on him: "I was right away hooked to American stuff that came over to Germany in the 50s" (Littger 2006: 36).

Roland Emmerich, born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1955, explains why Hollywood had such an allure for him: "People from all over the world come to Hollywood because for a director, it’s a very good thing to come here when you want your movies seen outside your home country: (New York Times 2000). Making the financially successful disaster films that he had in the 1990s meant that Emmerich was given greater leeway by a studio when he came to making *The Day After Tomorrow* in the new millennium. He had sufficient clout to withstand studio executives’ demands that he place less emphasis on his story’s characters and more on the special effects. In effect, he was able to use the old-style Hollywood mogul’s method of using his power in successfully telling the type of story he wanted to tell and at the same time, change the boundaries and motifs of the fairy tale deployed in the disaster movies of the time.

The study will include an exploration of the key elements of story structure, characterisation and thematic issues in order to understand how the disaster movie has evolved or devolved. This will include an analysis of the other genres that play into this genre, like science fiction, horror, adventure, fantasy, romance and melodrama. The films, *Independence Day* and *The Day After Tomorrow* will provide case studies for a comparison against fairy tales and Vladimir Propp’s (2001) analysis of the fairy tale structure.

Because a whole range of disparate areas of thought and theory are being brought together to provide a deeper understanding of the evolution of the
disaster movie, any discussion limited to a literature review would be problematic. To that end, the literature review will be embedded in each chapter, where a discussion will occur within the relative themes.

To date there has been no systematic exploration of the disaster movie genre, thus revealing a significant gap in the literature. While some literature I have sourced may appear independent of the topic, I will establish links between ideas so that when combined they will support the argument.

3. Understanding the Research: The Jigsaw Approach

The method I have titled a ‘jigsaw approach’ had to be developed because each of the areas describes only a part of the whole. Just as in a jigsaw each part of the puzzle is important in defining the whole image, each of these elements I have employed join to form the whole of the research. Central to this mapping process was the Disaster Movie genre. Linked closely to this was the nature of fairy tales with the common focus being the mythology underlying the narratives. Each component is inextricably linked to the others. It can be illustrated thus:

Trying to answer why we tell stories of this kind and when and from where they have originated led me to the following fields:
3.i. Archaeology and Anthropology

In the field of ancient archaeology and anthropology, I sourced collaborations between archaeologists, anthropologists and folklorists. To explain phenomena that they could not understand people created myths, whilst in much more recent times, archaeologists have discovered what they believe are the actual events that led to the creation of certain myths (see Jadczyk 2012, Kobres 1993, Wilson 2001). The collaboration between archaeologists and anthropologists along with folklorists has led to a fuller understanding of why and how people started to tell stories, which came to be known as myths.

3.ii. Psychology

To delve even deeper into why people tell stories, it was necessary to examine the area of psychology involved in film and fairy tale storytelling. Published material on the ideas of Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud and Jaques Lacan were reviewed to establish an appropriate approach to explore the psychology behind myths, folklore, fairy tales and disaster movies.

3.iii. European history/Jewish history and migration

Concurrently, I explored periods in European history and the conditions that led from myths to folklore being created, which in turn led onto fairy tales. It became apparent that these folklore and fairy tales in Europe were used as a tool to persecute Jews as well as people deemed to be witches and heretics. This revelation led to more intensive research into Jewish history; particularly European Jews up to the time when film was invented. It was at this period that the founding fathers of Hollywood, who came to be known as The Hollywood Moguls, began their film careers in the USA and their story is crucial to this study.
3.iv. The Hollywood Moguls

I established that the migration of European Jews fleeing Europe to the USA allowed them the hope they could start a new life in a new world without prejudice. However, they found prejudice in the new world in most areas of life. It was at this time that filmmaking began and some of the Jewish immigrants found themselves in competition with the Edison-led establishment that banned them from filmmaking on the east coast of the USA.

The moguls' biographies provided a rich source of knowledge about their inner drives, what they had in common, how they operated, and the history of early film in the USA. From these biographies, the reasons that led to the moguls fleeing from the east coast to the west coast of the USA, to a small country town called Hollywoodland, later to be known as Hollywood, became clear. This knowledge was placed within the geopolitical/social events of the times that led to Hollywood becoming the frontrunner in world cinema and to the creation of the studio system.

3.v. Birth of filmmaking/Hollywood

This study will reveal how the studio system was created by the genre of the films made at each studio whilst being economically driven. It will show how the moguls invented what we now know as the American way of life through their creation of their own fairy tale world: an ideal world that was the total opposite of the persecution they and generations before them had suffered. It also establishes how social, political, folkloric and fairy tales influenced the way in which they told their stories.

3.vi. Geopolitics/sociology, filmmaking technology

Through an investigation of world and American history, each decade of filmmaking (in relation to the disaster movie, the geopolitics and social events...
of the time, and how technology came to affect the way in which these film stories were told) will be linked with fairy tale and myth.

3.vii. Film genre and story structure

Understanding film genre theory and storytelling structure was essential to enable mapping of the genres that cover the disaster movie to the theory and storytelling structure of fairy tales. The works of film genre theorists and storytelling structuralists will provide an invaluable resource for this study.

4. Hollywood Influence Today

Finally, the research will investigate how the marketing of Hollywood films influences the way in which the films are created and how technology has played a major part in that storytelling.

My research remains ongoing as new disaster films are made. It is important to note that there is both a cyclical element to the types of stories and a reactive element directly related to the physical world and, for example, extra-terrestrial events such as near-Earth misses by meteors.

The following mind map reflects the areas of research:
During the conduct of my research, I created brief summaries and breakdowns of my chapters. The breakdowns were divided into columns covering each of the elements shown in the mind map. This created a matrix around which I based my research. As each piece of knowledge was acquired, it was added to the relevant chapter breakdown and column, at the same time listing the source of the research.

The research methods used were interrogatory and contextual. Through looking into the circumstances in which events took place and questioning the research material, I was able to piece together links between each of the topics I researched (see Hammond & Wellington 2013: 164, Walliman 2011: 139-141). I discovered that one topic led to another. The research material was acquired from published written primary and secondary literature both in hard copy books/journals and on the Internet. I followed interviews in the press with relevant filmmakers of the genre as well as viewing many disaster movies and
telemovies. The first of these was made in 1908 and my selection included the very latest releases, up to the end of 2014. In relation to the topics raised in my mind map on page 27, I also found a wealth of primary and archival material in television documentaries and in material published by the academy (and their colleagues) that were interviewees in them.

5. Issues that Influenced the Writing and Structure of the Thesis

In the writing of the thesis I initially encountered two major problems. Firstly, I tried to write a separate literature review but realised very little has been written on this topic. This meant I had to look at other areas in order to fill in the gaps in the research.

The second problem was in some of the structure. I found that if I showed the links between fairy tales, mythology and disaster movies at the start when it seemed logical to discuss the genesis of storytelling, it did not afford me an opportunity to engage with the research question in any depth. The links really needed to come as my research progressed. Once I realised that, I was able to proceed with a much clearer view of the shape of the thesis. The form and content of the thesis emerged, with each piece of content like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle: the whole cannot be seen until the parts are all connected. One could suggest this methodology is by nature a jigsaw construction.

The completed thesis takes the shape of a journey of discovery with chapters, told in part in the first person. There are a few segments, clearly identified, where I disclose personal experiences relating to the area under analysis. I have also included stills, graphs and tables to augment and/or clarify the material under discussion, breaking down the content into five phases. These phases will provide an historical progression from when myths began through to present day disaster with Phase 1 encompassing the creation of stories and how they influenced the Hollywood moguls; Phase 2 relating to the birth of Hollywood and the influence of mythology and fairy tales on the early disaster movies; Phase 3 demonstrating the influence of the Cold War on
mythology, fairy tale and the disaster movie of the 1950s; Phase 4 revealing the obverse of the fairy tale due to generational change and external events; and Phase 5 shows a return to the fairy tale/mythological structure of disaster movies from the 1970s on. The following table demonstrates in more detail the breakdown of these phases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Mythology</th>
<th>Fairy Tales</th>
<th>Disaster Movies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Why myths were created and their relationship to fairy tales and disaster movies.</td>
<td>The evolvement of fairy tales from myths and the influence on the Jewish migrants to the USA who became the Hollywood Moguls.</td>
<td>The fascination of disaster movies. The influence of European fairy tales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The influence of mythology on the early disaster movies.</td>
<td>The influence of fairy tales on the types of screen stories created by the Hollywood Moguls, specifically the disaster movie.</td>
<td>The creation of Hollywood and the early disaster movies from the 1910s through to the Second World War. The geo-political and social influences during the period these films were made. It is also the end of the Hollywood Moguls' influence on screen storytelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The influence of mythology on the early disaster movies.</td>
<td>The challenge to fairy tale influences on disaster movies at this time as a result of the geo-political and social issues arising from the Cold War.</td>
<td>The 1950s and the Cold War influence on how disaster films were told. The geo-political and social influences during the period these films were made. It is also the end of the Hollywood Moguls' influence on screen storytelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The obverse of mythological influences on film during the 1960s and the Vietnam War.</td>
<td>The obverse of fairy tale influences on screen stories in general as a result of the geo-political and social issues arising from generational change during the 1960s and early 1970s.</td>
<td>The generational change heralding in New Hollywood and the auteur director, with no disaster movies made at this time. The fairy tale and mythical influences missing in screen stories and an exploration of why this situation existed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A return to the influence of mythology on disaster movies brought on by geo-political and social events from the 1970s through to present day.</td>
<td>A return to the influence of the fairy tale on the disaster movie.</td>
<td>A return to the disaster movie and the influences on it of myth and fairy tale. The evolvement of the disaster movie narrative and characterisation during the 1970s, creating a template for disaster movies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the following chapters, I will discuss at length myths, fairy tales and disaster movies. To ensure the reader is clear about how the terminology will be used in this text, a clear short definition of each genre follows.

6. Definitions

For the purpose of this research the following definitions will apply:

6.i. Myths:

Myths are early humans’ explanations of events, which they attributed to supernatural beings. Whilst the stories are fantasy, there is an element of fact in them. Plato described a myth as being a metaphorical tale used to explain realities beyond the power of simple logic (Leeming 2002). This would relate to questions like: “How did the world begin?” or “Who am I and what happens when I die?” According to social anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss, "myth gives man, very importantly, the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he does understand the universe (cited in Leeming 2002: 16).

6.ii. The Hero Myth, or Monomyth:

One of the myths central to our culture is the Hero or Monomyth where the hero searches for something lost or sets out to redress a wrong to the society. Along the way, he enters a new world, makes new friends and enemies, undergoes a number of trials – each being more severe than the previous one – before confronting the enemy or demon that holds the prize for which he has searched or who has caused the wrong to the society. The hero conquers the enemy or demon, grabs his prize and returns with it to his society.

As Campbell summarises, "The hero is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms" (cited in Leeming 2002: 20).
Although Campbell defines the hero as a man or woman, my research shows that the various stages of the hero's journey relate to men. For the purpose of this thesis, I have therefore, followed the traditional hero's journey, which is masculine-based, thus reflecting the use of male characters in the hero's role in disaster movies.

Myths tend to be national in nature. For example, Gilgamesh is of the Sumerian-Hittite-Babylonian cultures and Odysseus and Achilles are Greeks, whereas fairy tales are not so location-specific. The heroes in myth tend to be specific characters that have greater powers than the everyman hero of fairy tale. Myths also tend to be more pessimistic in their outcome whereas fairy tales have an optimistic outcome (Bettelheim 1976).

6.iii. Fairy Tales:

Fairy tales could have been based on a real person or event, with the story changing over time with each retelling. It then becomes folklore and eventually evolves into a story for children where it simplifies all situations. Its characters are clearly drawn, and its main theme is the struggle between good and evil. Unlike mythological heroes, fairy tale characters are not ambivalent: they are either good or they are evil. They cannot be both. The fairy tale helps the child to relate to his/her world.

Tolkien notes that, "Fairy stories deal largely, or (the better ones) mainly, with simple or fundamental things, untouched by Fantasy, but these simplicities are made all the more luminous by their setting" (Tolkien 2012: 31).

Fairy tales have a hero, often a child or young person who has lost a parent. There is an upset to the order of things in that hero’s life, such as a jealous witch seeking retribution by trying to kill the hero, or the hero is unjustly subjected to a life of hardship. The hero’s journey is to overcome the evil against him or her. This culminates in the hero meeting with the evil, fighting it (literally or through his/her wits), and then living happily ever after.
6. iv. The Disaster Movie

For the purpose of this thesis, the disaster movie has as its central focus a disaster, with the whole film predicated around that disaster. Whilst I understand there are many other areas of disaster, I am looking at the disasters portrayed in Hollywood films that are categorised as 'disaster movies': they can take the form of natural events, like an ice age (*The Day After Tomorrow* 2004); a volcano erupting (*Dante’s Peak* 1997); inclement weather patterns (*Twister* 1996 and *Poseidon* 2006); earthquakes (*Earthquake* 1974). They can be about living entities terrorising a community (*Jaws* 1975 and *Outbreak* 1995). They can be extra-terrestrial, like an asteroid or comet hit (*Deep Impact* 1998) or alien invasion (*Independence Day* 1996). The disaster occurs and we follow the lives of the main characters and how they overcome or succumb to the disaster.

These types of stories run across genres; for example, in *Independence Day* there is science fiction with elements of romance, adventure and melodrama. *Dante’s Peak* and *Twister* are action adventure and romance whilst *Earthquake* is action adventure, romance and melodrama.

6. v. The Hero in the Disaster Movie:

What disaster movies all have in common is a main hero (or three heroes in the case of *Independence Day* and *Jaws*) who finds himself embroiled in the disaster and has to survive it. Often, these heroes have expert knowledge about the disaster that has occurred. For example, the hero of *Outbreak* is a virologist working with viruses for the US Army (USAMRID) whilst the hero in *Dante’s Peak* is a vulcanologist whose warnings about an impending eruption are ignored until it is too late. The hero of *The Day After Tomorrow* is a climatologist working for the US Weather Bureau, who identifies and predicts the coming ice age.

These heroes, through their knowledge, expertise and bravery are able to save the lives of others and themselves. They expose the situation to those in
authority, but they are not believed. They remain faithful to their ideas and knowledge and desire to save the world. They invariably conquer or seem to overcome the elements and in doing so, they are favoured by the Gods.

In the Monomyth, or Hero Myth, the hero has bravely survived all the trials and tests thrown at him by the Gods, and is deemed a hero when he returns to his society with the prize; some elixir or new knowledge that will benefit all.

7. Summary and Overview of the Thesis

In this chapter, I have established the parameters of this research study and the research questions and my reasons for conducting it. I have provided brief explanations of the terms 'myth', 'fairy tale' and 'disaster movies'.

This overview of the scope of this study reveals the topics to be covered in each chapter. It is organised as follows:

Chapter Two:
The birth of the film industry in America falls into Phase 1 of the historical development of the disaster movie and will be examined in this chapter to establish how the future Hollywood moguls, all Jewish immigrants fleeing European persecution, entered this profession and the issues that led them to move from America’s east coast to the small country town of Hollywoodland on that country's west coast.

Chapter Three:
The creation of myths, also incorporated in Phase 1, is explored and the impact on storytelling throughout the ages analysed, culminating in the disaster movie. Similarities in narrative structure in mythology, particularly the 'hero myth', will be explored to determine whether or not there is any influence by northern European mythology on the disaster story.
Chapter Four:
This examines how the structure and motifs of northern European mythology evolved into the European fairy tale and its influence on the disaster movie. This is achieved by mapping across the fairy tale structure with the myth and disaster movie structures and falls into Phase 1. Analysis of the symbolic number three is undertaken to establish the connection between the disaster movie and the fairy tale.

Chapter Five:
The birth of the disaster movie is investigated and its development up to the end of the Hollywood moguls’ reign. This chapter encompasses Phases 2 and 3 of the disaster movie’s development and covers the sociological, historical and geopolitical events of each decade and the influences on storytelling, ranging from the moguls creating their own fairy tales in their storytelling to the end of the 1950s/start of early 1960s when world events began to replace the fairy tale.

Chapter Six:
The effects of the Cold War, the Vietnam War and the new auteur filmmakers are explored in this chapter, which falls into Phase 4. Phase 4 demonstrates how the fairy tale was replaced by more gritty realism that reflected the immense social changes and nihilism of the era and how this was overturned by the re-introduction of the disaster movie in a more modern form and the start of Phase 5, the 1970s decade where the current template of the disaster film was created.

Chapter Seven:
The impact of *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) on the Hollywood film industry and the way in which disaster movies are now told is examined here. The way in which these films encompass the fairy tale is also investigated as the final phase, Phase 5 of the disaster movie’s development is consolidated into the format we are familiar with today.

Chapter Eight:
The 1990s disaster movie cycle is examined in this chapter. The decade's films' connection to fairy tale and myth is also examined, along with the reasons why these particular stories are told.

Chapter Nine:
This penultimate chapter examines how the events of 9/11 have impacted on the disaster movie through to 2014. I establish a cyclical link between disaster movies from the birth of the genre to those of 2014 and explore how geopolitical events have shaped an even greater desire on the public for the fairy tale and disaster movie.

Chapter Ten:
This concluding chapter answers the research questions raised in chapter 1, demonstrating the relationship of European fairy tales to the American disaster movie, and shows my findings. It also discusses the contribution that this thesis makes to a number of fields as well as proposing future topics of research.

The following chapter provides a background into the structure of myth, fairy tale and film genre. It discusses archetypal figures of historical and mythological accounts and how they are influenced by archaeological and anthropological events. It then leads to how myths evolved into fairy tales and film genre structure and characterisations. The chapter also explores the reasons why this form of storytelling has such universal resonance with human beings.
CHAPTER TWO

Going into the Dark to See the Light

(Louis B. Mayer, cited in Thomson 2005: 23)

The Lord had said to Abraham, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you” (Genesis 12:1)

In this chapter, I explore the European influences on the people who created the Hollywood studio system: a system that in turn is the key producer of disaster movies in the world. The people who created Hollywood were Jewish immigrants who had fled persecution in Europe, arrived on the east coast of America and became part of the fledgling film industry there.

There were several factors that forced these future moguls to move from the east coast of America to Hollywood and create their own stories. These included their fear of persecution from the already existing filmmaking establishment, their desire to create a new life for themselves and to succeed despite finding the same prejudices in their new country. All of this led them to Hollywood. It was there that they were able to create their own fairy tales and re-invent the disasters that had befallen them in the old European world.

This is important because it informs the way filmmakers have generated screen stories and directly relates to making disaster movies. As narrated in the documentary, Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream (1998), "Hollywood was a dream, dreamt by Jews who were fleeing a nightmare".

1. Who Were the Moguls?

The Hollywood moguls were Carl Laemmle, William Fox, Samuel Goldwyn, Warner brothers Jack, Harry, Albert and Sam, Louis B. Mayer and Adolph Zukor. They had much in common.
They were all Yiddish-speaking European Jewish immigrants or their sons, born in shtetls or ghettos in Europe, to poor families, headed usually by unsuccessful fathers. Many were semi-literate in English and lacked social graces. They began arriving in America during the 1880s, most initially working in fashion and retail where they became masters of gauging market swings and acquired a special feel for detecting public taste. They were a group of ambitious men determined to thrust themselves into the epicentre of American life (Libo & Skakun 2003).

What united them was their absolute devotion to their new country and their total rejection of their past: growing up in destitution with unsuccessful fathers who moved from one job to another and from one place to another. These fathers found themselves unable to adjust to living in America while for their sons, the future moguls’ most formidable challenge was to be accepted as Americans at a time when nativism and xenophobia were extreme (Gabler 1989: 4).

They began moving to California in 1912. Film historians have different views on why there was such a mass migration at this particular time. Some, like Gabler and Bach believe it was to escape persecution from Thomas Edison and his cronies, whilst others like Cook believe that they needed a place with a good climate, long daylight hours and a variety of handy locations so they...

It could well be all these factors. However, like Gabler and Bach, I suggest that it was primarily to escape the White Anglo Saxon Protestant (W.A.S.P.) persecution they faced on the east coast of America. It was not only an ethnic persecution but also an economic one. The future moguls had to contend both with being excluded from the white Anglo Saxon elite and also with the monopoly in filmmaking and distribution created by Thomas Edison. In order to understand the then established filmmaking landscape from which the future moguls fled, we need to explore briefly the genesis of the film industry in America and the effect it had on them.

2. Birth of the Movies

When I was twelve years old, my family moved from London to the seaside resort town of Brighton on England’s south coast. The town boasted two piers on its beaches, one of which had all sorts of interesting paraphernalia in an amusement arcade. One such piece was a kinetoscope. I had great fun putting a penny in the slot and looking at the short films from the late 1890s. It was like looking into a time capsule at the moustached men, the dancing ladies in their diaphanous costumes with the hint of breasts showing through and the totally different body shape from modern (1960s) women. What I didn’t realise at the time, nor appreciate, was that I was looking at the genesis of the movies.
Movies appeared in 1895 at around the same time as universal education was being enacted. It was the first time in human history that the most enlightened countries undertook to ensure that every child would be educated, providing each one a chance to succeed in the world. For many who were illiterate, the movies were a narrative form that gave some small hope of shared experience in new societies (Thomson 2005: 53-54). It allowed them the alternative of dreaming. In fact, the movies had become the new teller of fairy tales and folklore, moving audiences from storytelling around a campfire to the darkened comfort of a cinema.

Most American film stories at the turn of the Twentieth Century were created, distributed and exhibited by Thomas Edison, inventor of the light bulb,
who, in fact, believed that movies were a passing fad. The types of stories shot were for the amusement of the working classes and portrayed those of the white, middle/upper class Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture in heroic roles, with ethnic minorities portrayed as caricatures in the secondary and villain roles (Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism & The American Dream 1998). Edwin S. Porter, who joined the Edison Studios in 1900, was responsible for all Edison productions until 1909, including films such as The Life of an American Fireman (1903), Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1903) and The Great Train Robbery (1903), which would later play a role in the Warner Brothers’ story.

In 1905, Harry Davis, a local vaudeville tycoon, placed a few chairs, a projecting machine, a screen and a phonograph in an empty store. He borrowed a name used by existing amusement arcades and christened it the Nickelodeon because the admission fee was a nickel (five cents), while the addition of the term Odeon suggested a connection with the values of classical Greek theatre. His first venture was so successful that Davis quickly installed similar shows in other empty shops all over the city.
It led to a revolution in the American film industry and the birth of the cinema despite the subsequent efforts of Edison and his cohorts to create a monopoly controlling the fledgling industry to their benefit.

3. The Trust

By 1908 cinema had risen from being a risky commercial venture to that of a permanent and full scale, major respectable industry. In that year, there were ten thousand nickelodeons operating in the US. Financial competition among rival production companies was fierce and often lawless. Although Edison claimed ownership of essential patents for the motion picture camera, many companies were using versions of his machines without paying royalties (Cook 1981: 33-34).

Edison’s determination to exploit the money-making potential of his company’s invention led him to try and force competing filmmakers out of business by bringing patents-violation suits against them. For instance, he decided these filmmakers had overstepped their bounds and to exclude them and others, he organised a producers’ trust that declared a monopoly in
America. On 18 December 1908, he colluded with Biograph to bring these other companies under their control by forming the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), a group of ten organisations based primarily in Chicago, New York and New Jersey. Edison and Biograph were the only stockholders and patent owners of the MPPC, which they called The Trust. They licensed other members to make, distribute and exhibit films. No film could legally be made, distributed or exhibited without licensing agreements with the Trust (see Cook 1981: 30, Gabler 1989, Jews, Movies Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

Eastman Kodak colluded with other Trust members to sell its raw film stock only to Trust licensees; the length of a finished film was decreed by the Trust (perhaps the first-known instance of a final cut) and could be exhibited only in theatres bound by Trust agreements; films could be projected only on projectors covered by Trust patents, and only so long as those projectors "remained undefiled by celluloid which had evaded the Trust’s tentacles" (Bach 1985: 30).

Film length had originally been standardised at one reel (ten minutes) out of a conviction that the public had a negligible attention span and would not sit still for more. The entire MPPC system was geared toward the production of one-reelers, and its licensees were expressly forbidden to make or to distribute films of greater length (Cook 1981: 38).
The rapid expansion of the storefront theatre in America and the screening of films longer than The Trust’s ten minutes one-reelers had attracted a new breed of businessmen who shared much in common with their customers. They were the future Hollywood moguls (Puttnam 1997: 52).

4. The Audiences

These men’s determination to succeed would eventually lead the charge against Edison and The Trust, and in doing so, transform the shape of the American film industry (Puttnam 1997: 52). Being immigrants themselves, they closely identified with their audiences and began making films that were very different to Edison’s.

The audiences were, almost without exception, the urban poor: the new immigrants who could hardly speak English and who could not afford admission for themselves and their families to the more conventional forms of entertainment such as the theatre, opera or vaudeville houses. They lived in slums in the eastern American cities and represented at least ninety per cent of
the American population who could not be reached by any conventional method of storytelling at the time. In many working class districts, the movie was the only source of amusement available (Puttnam 1997: 36-38).

The incumbent Americans at that time preferred to watch subject matter derived from American life, such the exploits of the policeman and burglar, the cowboy, the factory worker, farmers, and storekeepers. However, the new immigrants wanted to watch films that went beyond the American W.A.S.P. landscape and culture. They wanted stories in which they could escape the drudgery of their lives: wish fulfilment stories like fairy tales, fantasies and storybook romances. They had left behind poverty and discrimination in Europe only to re-discover it in the new world and the stories they wanted to see formed a means of escape from their everyday lives. Their insatiable appetite for this new form of entertainment encompassed more than Edison’s one-reelers, which had very little narrative (Jowett 1976: 43).

Film producers in Europe and some in America were beginning to realise this. They would need to be more adventurous and make longer films and they now had the technology to achieve this. The progression from Edison's Kinetoscope to the movie projector, coupled with the change in audience tastes, led to a change of content in films. The resulting pictures, often several reels in length and a radical departure from the regular diet of short films, became the forerunners of what we now know as ‘feature’ films (Puttnam 1997: 66). This is something that the future moguls foresaw as the way of the future, unlike Edison, who did not believe films should be longer than one reel or ten minutes.

The Trust underestimated the audience. The multi-reel films being imported from Europe by future Hollywood moguls, Adolph Zukor and Carl Laemle, were so popular that it led to the nickelodeons being replaced with first class legitimate cinemas. One film that was foremost in leading the change was one of the earliest disaster movies: the Italian production Quo Vadis (1913). The film contained vast crowd scenes and lavish special effects that kept audiences entranced throughout its running time of more than two hours. The film also
established another important precedent: it was shown exclusively in first class cinemas rather than nickelodeons (Wenden 1975: 154).

5. The Fight with The Trust

Carl Laemmle, one of the future moguls, had not intended to go into film production, nor had most of the others. He was finding it increasingly difficult to get a sufficient number of movies from Europe with which he could circumvent the monopoly and supply his customers, and the films he could obtain were of variable quality. He decided in 1909 that the solution was to make his own films, a decision echoed by his fellow future moguls (Gabler 1989: 60).

Even though they were successful and audiences flocked to see their films, they still had a big fight on their hands with Edison. The latter's determination to exploit the money-making potential of his company's inventions led him to try and force competing filmmakers out of business by bringing patents-violation suits against them (Cook 1981: 30). From about 1908 to 1912, The Trust used federal marshals or hired thugs who enthusiastically swept up the competitors and also kept licensees in line when they showed signs of straying. The police prevention of the non-authorised use of Trust equipment forced many outlaw producers further and further from the Trust’s most effective area of domination, the East (Bach 1985: 30).

The future moguls had to be inventive in the ways they avoided lawsuits. Carl Laemmle, for example, had his own problems with The Trust. To thwart it, Laemmle created diversions such as hiding his camera in an express wagon or icebox, while a ‘dummy’ camera, one that ostensibly did not violate Edison’s patent, was kept in full view. One evening, when The Trust’s squad made an unexpected appearance, Laemmle and his colleague, Cochrane, had to collect their cameras and spend the evening hiding in the studio cellar. In 1911, again to avoid Trust persecution, Laemmle sent his entire company to Cuba, but the company became homesick and the humidity proved to be as...
much an annoyance as Edison. Within weeks, they were back in New York, practicing stealth once again (Gabler 1989: 60-61).

Sigmund Lubin, the oldest of the future moguls, designed and developed his own projector and was able to exhibit his own films as well as those of other filmmakers. Independently, the other future moguls began making, distributing and exhibiting their own films (Berrystone 2008: 7). However, Edison’s claims of copyright infringement led to a ten-year battle not only with Lunbin, but also with other film companies and individuals. This led to the US Government bringing a suit against The Trust in 1912 and declaring it a monopoly in 1915 (see Bach 1985: 31, Bordwell & Thompson 1997: 446, Cook 1981: 43-44). However, it was not the only the US federal government that ended The Trust; it was its own inflexible rules about film length of ten minutes that would eventually destroy its production and distribution (Cook 1981: 38).

It was only a matter of time before the future moguls and other independent filmmakers would move as far away as possible from The Trust. California’s distance from The Trust’s headquarters in New York and its proximity to the Mexican border made it an attractive sanctuary. Filmmakers could hop over the border if The Trust thugs came to visit. This new epicentre of filmmaking was a small country town called Hollywood.

The threats and violence from The Trust were a culmination of millennia of persecution that the forebears of these Jewish men had endured. It was what had led this new generation to migrate to the USA with a desire to succeed in a new life free of persecution. In order to understand what motivated these men, we need to examine their background and that of their people.

6. Always the Outsiders

The main driving force behind these men, apart from making money, was fear. Fear had been hot-wired into their genes as a result of generations of persecution, so when they went to America, they did everything they could to expunge their Jewishness. They desperately wanted to belong and stop being
regarded as outsiders. However, ultimately, they found they were still the outsiders. Samuel Goldwyn Junior remembers of his father: "No matter how much success he had, he was still an outsider" (Berg 1989: 315).

The future moguls regarded themselves as Americans, not Jews. They wanted to reinvent themselves as new people. They celebrated Christmas, had Easter egg hunts and some of them sent their children and grandchildren to Catholic schools. They even hid their Jewishness from their children and grandchildren (Gabler 1989: 2). For instance, Adolph Zukor II, Adolph Zukor's grandson, did not know he was Jewish until at least the age of seven. Betty Warner Sheinbaum, Harry Warner's daughter, did not know anything about her father's European background or being Jewish, nor what their family name was originally; and Catholic governesses hired to bring up Jesse Lasky's daughter, Betty, regularly took her to Catholic churches (Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

The first thing the future moguls did to make themselves more American than the Americans was to expunge their Jewish names and anything Jewish. For example, they adopted Anglicised names, which would become universally famous. Wilhelm Fried, born 1897 Hungary, would become William Fox; Jacob Leonard Wonskolaser, born 1892 Canada to Polish Jewish immigrant parents: Jack Warner; Schmuel Gelbfisz, born 1879 in Poland: Samuel Goldwyn; and Lazar Meier, born 1885 Russia: Louis B. Mayer.

These men, along with Sigmundd 'Pop' Lubin, born 1851 Germany; Adolph Zukor, born 1873 Hungary; Carle Laemmle, born 1867 Germany; and Irving Thalberg, born 1899 USA of German Jewish immigrant parents, shaped Hollywood in the early Twentieth Century. They and their families had fled the persecution of Jews throughout Europe to begin a new life in the USA (Berrystone 2006: 3-4). Most were born within a five hundred miles radius of each other and all ended up living and working within fifteen miles of each other, enabling partnerships to be created and dissolved and individuals to pursue their own creative directions. They had come a long way from the history of their people (American Film Institute 2013, Gabler - Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).
7. The Jewish Diaspora in The Old World

The history of the Jewish Diaspora goes back to pre-Christian times when Nebuchadnezzar deported the Jews to Armenia and the Caucasus after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC (Cohen 1950: 6). In the Middle Ages, anti-Semitism was rife in European Catholic and Orthodox countries. It was a hangover from early Christian times when the Jews were blamed for the death of Christ (Witches 1996).

When the continent of Europe was overrun by the Black Death plague in the Fourteenth Century, one in three people died. This resulted in mass hysteria and the belief that the plague was caused by the devil. As a result, the Catholic Church set up the Inquisition to root out the devil’s consorts and heretics. Scapegoats in the form of Jews, heretics and witches were singled out for punishment. It was against this backdrop that folklore and fairy tales emerged, reinforcing the persecution of these people (Witches 1996).

8. European Fairy Tales, Folklore and Anti-Semitism

As scapegoats, Jews, along with witches, were typecast as the villains in local folklore and fairy tale in the predominantly Christian population of Europe. The power of myth, folklore and fairy tale to influence a peasant community was paramount. Von Franz (1996: 18-19) provides examples of how, when something strange happened, peasants gossiped about it and handed it on, just as rumours are handed on. Under favourable conditions, the account becomes embellished with already existing archetypal representations and slowly becomes a story. There is no ambivalence in fairy tales. Good and evil are clearly drawn and, as Bettelheim suggests, “all characters are typical rather than unique” (Bettelheim 1991: 8-9).

This simplification appealed to the European peasantry of the time. European anti-Semitic folklore and fairy tales portray the Jew with the same motifs of evil as those of the witch. A common motif in many of these stories is
that of the Jew as a child killer. For example, in The Jews’ Stone (Austria 1462), a number of Jews persuaded a poor farmer to surrender his child to them for a large sum of money. They took the child into the woods and murdered it on a large stone. The farmer then discovered the money paid for the child had turned into leaves. He went mad and killed himself (Grimm Brothers 1816-1818). The stone on which the child was sacrificed was carried to the church at Rinn.

In a tale from Germany (1267), The Girl Who Was Killed by Jews, a greedy old woman sells a seven years old girl to the Jews. They torture the child to death and throw her body into the river. The girl surfaces a few days later but before she dies of her wounds, she asks her rescuers to avenge her death. The local Jews are summoned to appear. As they approach the corpse, blood begins to stream from its open wounds. The Jews and the old woman are executed (Grimm Brothers 1816-1818).

Today, the child’s coffin stands next to the bell rope near the entrance to the palace church at Pforzheim. The legend has passed down through the generations, and today it is incorporated in the annual carnival celebrations in Pforzheim.

The largest number of European Jews lived in the Russian Pale of Settlement, situated between the Baltic and Black Seas.
The Pale was established in 1835. It contained six million Jews (Cohen 1950: 114).

It is against the backdrop of persecution and fear that over two million Jews would flee the pogroms of the Russian Empire for the safety of the USA from 1881 to 1924. Prior to that, tens of thousands of Jews from other European countries had migrated to the US, Canada or Britain to escape anti-Semitism. Among these émigrés were the future moguls of Hollywood and their families (Berrystone 2006: 6).

One of the most influential sources is the documentary, *Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream* (1998). In that film, Hoberman tells us that amongst the Jews of the Pale lived the families of the men who would become the Hollywood moguls and who carried those influences to America: the moguls and their families spoke Yiddish. Their cultural history had its own songs, tales and theatre, which these men would eventually take with them to the New World.
The oldest of the Warner Brothers, Harry Warner, confided in his granddaughter, Cass Warner Sperling, that:

_We have to hide to learn. Perhaps this need to steal to gain knowledge was the seed that made me strive to make movies the way I did. I didn’t want to just entertain. I felt the need to educate_ (Warner Sperling 2008: 18).

His younger brother, Jack, described what life was like in Krasnosielc, the village where his family had lived:

_Like conspirators in crime, they herded their children into the largest stable available, and there the rabbi taught them the lore of their religion and race… There was always a lookout posted in a loft where he could cry alarm at the approach of the village police… The children, long trained in the arts of escape, crawled through a crude earth and rock tunnel into the Christian cemetery. There, because tradition made it a sacred little island where the law dared not trespass, the Jewish children huddled in a cave beneath the gravestones, and were safe_ (Warner Sperling 2008: 18).

One could conjecture a link between the lives of these children who lived in fear and the scenes depicting fear in the lives of characters from disaster movies, such as: _Volcano_ (1997), where citizens of Los Angles took shelter in an underground car park from the ravages of a volcano forming in the centre of the city; _Independence Day_ (1996), where survivors gathered in an underground bunker at Area 51 to escape the attacking aliens;
Fig 8: Independence Day (1996) - people fleeing to Area 51, escaping from alien attackers (20th Century Fox)

and The Day After Tomorrow (2004), in which people sheltered in the New York Library from the killer storm surge and subsequent ice/snow cyclone that hit the city. For the children of The Pale, the horror stories were more like historical reality.

9. Destination America

They became American when they made the decision to leave. They knew there was no going back (Avashi - Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

When the Hollywood moguls and their families arrived in the US with little money and few possessions, they expected to find a place where "the little guy could make it to the top" (Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

Samuel Goldwyn, who was born in Warsaw as Schmuel Gelbfisz, recalls:

When I was a kid the only place I wanted to go was to America. I had heard them talking about America, about how people were free in America…Even then America, actually only the name of a faraway country, was a vision of paradise (Berg 1989: 8).

Instead of paradise, they found a protestant elite whose mission was to educate the immigrants and keep them in their place. Yet again, they found
themselves outsiders and disenfranchised. They were not allowed to work in the legal and finance areas nor live in good neighbourhoods, so they lived in tenement slums. Instead, they found work in various aspects of the sales business: dry goods, clothing, diamonds and scrap metal (*Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream* 1998).

From about 1890, roughly two thirds of America’s Jews were concentrated in a handful of cities: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston. Their poverty condemned them to live, initially at least, in the poorest and most densely-crowded districts: the Lower East Side of New York, the West Side of Chicago, the North End of Boston, and the city centre of Philadelphia. German and Irish immigrants had previously inhabited these neighbourhoods (Jones 1976: 172) before moving up the social and economic scale. In New York, the Jews of Eastern Europe supplied the bulk of the ‘sweated labour’ needed by the rapidly expanding garment industry (Jones 1976: 176).

In the early 1900s in America, as the east-European Jews made their way out of the ghettos, they ran into more barriers of discrimination: restrictive covenants debarring them from some apartment houses and certain residential areas. Their Jewish origins made it difficult to enter certain occupations, whilst newspaper advertisements specified that, ”only Christians need apply” (Jones 1976: 188).
Some of the Hollywood movie moguls, such as Louis B. Mayer, the Warner brothers (Jack, Harry and Sam), Harry Cohn, and William Fox had fathers who failed to adjust to the New World, but they also had very strong, supportive mothers. At an early age, these young men and boys became the breadwinners. They developed a very strong urge to succeed in the America that existed beyond the Jewish ghettos (Cripps - Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

However, they were outside the New England-Wall Street Middle West money. They came from various aspects of sales businesses. For instance, Adolph Zukor made his first fortune with the invention of the fox stole. Carl Laemle was a clothier whilst Sam Goldwyn was a glove salesman, and David O. Selznick began his working career in the diamond business (Kozarski - Jews, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

The fledgling movie industry provided the opportunity to move beyond the ghettos. It was regarded as faintly disreputable but there were no social barriers and none of the impediments imposed by more established professions to keep out Jews and other undesirables. The financial barriers were lower too, which attracted the Jews and other immigrant entrepreneurs. These men, excluded from the real power base of the country, had to employ various methods to circumvent the discrimination.

Anti-Semitism was prevalent in the mid 1920s when Sam Warner, the man responsible for introducing sound into the movies, signed a contract with Bell Telephone to make the Vitaphone work. Warner Sperling recalls:

There is an interesting footnote to the Western Electric contract that was signed a little over a week before Sam and Lina were married. My great-aunt Lina told me, “There was a lot of anti-Semitism going on in the days when Sam first signed the contract with Bell Telephone. The brothers never would have gotten the rights to the sound equipment if Bell had known Sam was a Jew.” She claims it was her wearing of her little gold crucifix to a formal dinner with the directors of Western Electric, AT & T, and Bell Labs that put the deal over (Warner Sperling 2008: 99).
10. From the Rag Trade to the Film Trade

Nearly all these men had built up successful careers and were flourishing in their new homeland. So why did they decide to give up their lucrative careers and move into a business that was considered by many to be a novelty that would quickly fade?

The richness of their stories about why they entered the movie industry comes to us through the stories they told to their families. Their decisions to move into the film business were more than just about making money. For instance, William Fox recalls:

*I reached the period in 1912 or 1913 where I found myself with $500,000 in cash that I wanted to invest, and I realised that there was a great deal more in life than just making money. What concerned me far more was to make a name that would stand for the finest in entertainment the world over* (cited in Gabler 1988: 69).

Fox’s motivation was to become famous in the world of entertainment whereas Carl Laemmle had a different motivation. He describes:

*… one rainy night I dropped into one of those hole-in-the-wall five-cent motion picture theatres … the pictures made me laugh, though they were very short and the projection jumpy. I liked them, and so did everybody else. I knew right away that I wanted to go into the motion picture business. ‘Funny pictures are the thing,’ I said to myself. ‘Charge people and make them laugh.’ Everybody wants to laugh. As I walked back to my hotel that night in Chicago, I began to build my plans, and the next day I learned everything I possibly could about the business. Three weeks after watching those funny pictures…I owned my own theatre, which was on Milwaukee Avenue, in Chicago* (cited in Gabler 1989: 52).
Sam Goldfish (Sam Goldwyn) had an additional motivation and recalls the moment he decided to enter the film industry: "Going into a nickelodeon wasn't considered in entirely good taste". Upon entering one, he could identify why because inside the darkened theatre, he was almost overcome by the heavy odour of peanuts and perspiration. For five or ten minutes at a time, images of cops and robbers and bar room slapstick flickered on a crude screen. A cowboy on horseback, identified as ‘Broncho Billy’, suddenly appeared, jumping onto a moving train.

Goldfish left the dingy three hundred-seat theatre and walked uptown. By the time he had reached the southwest corner of Central Park, his mind was made up. He could not get that image of Broncho Billy out of his head. It had, Goldwyn pinpointed years later, "brought me into a whole new, exciting world and I wanted to be a part of it" (cited in Berg 1989: 28-29).

It was the experience of being in a darkened theatre in the thrall of the moving picture that had motivated Goldwyn whereas the Warner Brothers' motivation was purely business and being part of something new. In their case, it was the family business.

Sam Warner had seen an Edison Kinetoscope, a primitive projector, and spent hours learning how to run it. He introduced his older brother Jack, who was twelve or thirteen at the time, to the industry. A neighbour’s son had a projector for sale so Sam convinced his family to make the $1,000 investment to buy it. They, with their mother, pooled their savings and sold their father’s delivery horse, before he came home, and were now in the movie business. The Warners launched their new venture in 1903, setting up a tent in their yard and charging admission to see their movie, made by Edison’s employee, Edwin S. Porter, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), a copy of which had come with the projector (Pickard 1978: 124-125). In 1907, the family established a film distribution business and as soon as Jack was old enough, he joined the business. He and his brothers would eventually form the Warner Brothers Studio in 1923.
Cass Warner Sperling, Harry Warner's granddaughter, described how the Warner brothers split the work in exhibiting. One would load up the film projector, another would be the business manager, another would sell tickets whilst Jack Warner sang an off-key rendition of *O Solo Mio* in front of house before every screening to chase audiences out after each screening because they liked to stay and watch the screening again (American Film Institute, *Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream* 1998).

Louis B. Mayer was helping out at a local movie house and had noticed that people liked going into the dark to see the light (Thomson 2005: 23). The idea came to him to lease a theatre so he moved to Haverhill in autumn 1907 where he opened a theatre, the Gem (Gabler 1988: 79-85).

Adolph Zukor’s motivation was the unique quality of each film and his enjoyment in the whole process. In Gabler he explained what attracted him to the movies:

> It’s not like making shoes or automobiles, where you have a model and you follow through for the year. Every picture is an enterprise by itself. There are certain ingredients you have to study, and certain ingredients that you have to say, “I don’t think I’ll take that story, I don’t think I’ll make it, I don’t think it’s what the public will take.” All of that is a very pleasant occupation (cited in Gabler 1988: 17).

Zukor came to realise that the movies only seemed like novelties because they were treated like novelties. He believed their potential was much greater. By 1908, he perceived, “that these short films, one-reelers or less, didn’t give me the feeling that this was something that was going to be permanent” (Gabler 1988: 17).

He felt that permanence would only come by attracting the middle-class as well as the working class audience, and one could attract the middle class audience only by exhibiting longer and better films, which came to be known as feature films (Gabler 1989: 24-25) and creating a better type of venue.
Zukor, who had learned a good deal about public taste from his years in the fur business, decided to convert the top floor of Automatic Vaudeville into a small theatre, as his rival, Marcus Loew had done across the road from him. He recalls:

*We put in two hundred seats and then began to worry because it seemed like an awful lot, especially as most of our customers didn’t know what moving pictures were and were used to paying one cent, not five. So we put in a wonderful glass staircase. Under the glass was a metal trough of running water, like a waterfall, with red, green, and blue lights shining through. We called it Crystal Hall, and people paid their five cents mainly on account of the staircase, not the movies. It was a big success* (Gabler 1989: 22).

In 1912, he established Famous Players as the American distribution company for the French film *Les Amours de la reine Élisabeth* (1912) and in the following year, obtained financial backing to create the Famous Players Film Company. The company evolved into Paramount Pictures, for which he served as president until 1936.

### 11. The Move to Hollywood

To escape The Trust, all these pioneers had moved to a small town in California called Hollywoodland by 1916.

Fig 10: Hollywoodland, later to become Hollywood, in the early 1900s (Allan Ellen Berger)
When they first arrived, Hollywood was a small independent township with less than one thousand inhabitants. The earliest film units appeared in the winter of 1907-8. Two years later, D.W. Griffith and his company made films there and in 1913 Cecil B. DeMille opened a studio for the Famous Players Company on Sunset Boulevard. DeMille, Zukor and their associates later built up Famous Players into the Paramount Corporation (Wenden 1975: 154).

As it turned out, Hollywood proved not only to be a safe refuge, but also an ideal centre for filming. Since most shooting in those days occurred out of doors in available light, schedules could not be maintained throughout the year in the vicinities of New York and Chicago, where the industry had originally located itself to take advantage of trained theatrical labour staff. Hollywood provided warm weather, a temperate climate, longer daylight hours, a variety of scenery, and other qualities essential to this new highly ‘unconventional form of manufacturing’ (Cook 1981: 42), as well as safety from The Trust.

The future moguls' rise to power in Hollywood was assured by the First World War, which temporarily eliminated the European competition, mainly French and Italian, and gave America dominion over the world film market for the next fifteen years (Cook 1981: 47). With the onset of the First World War, the vibrant French and Italian industries cut their production dramatically, as did the smaller industries in the UK and Germany. It was from Italy that the first disaster movies were made. The US moved into markets hitherto dominated by other suppliers, not only in Europe but also in Latin America, which was previously dominated by the French, and Japan, previously Italian-dominated (Cook 1981: 14).

By the end of the First World War, the studios the future moguls had created in Hollywood were firmly established (Wenden 1975: 155) and led to their domination of world film culture and the disaster movie as we know it today. They became known as the Hollywood Moguls, named after the barbarian conquerors of the Indian Empire (Cook 1981: 44-45) and created a world which became synonymous with glamour, expensive living and make-believe movies.
Centuries of persecution, influenced by government policies and populist folklore and fairy tales, led to mass migrations from Europe to America. Amongst those immigrants were the creators of Hollywood. They had left Europe penniless but, within two decades, had become the highest paid executives in America, with Louis B. Mayer the highest salaried man in the world (Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998). The factors that forced the moguls to move from the east coast of America to Hollywood were their fear of persecution, their desire to create a new life for themselves and their desire to succeed, despite finding the same prejudices in their new country. The desire for success led them to Hollywood.

The mythology, folklore and the fairy tale that impacted upon these men and led to how they created their own fairy tale world, The Dream Factory, will be considered in chapter 3.
CHAPTER THREE

In the Beginning...

All the disaster movies you can eat (http://disastermovieworld.com).

I will now provide an explanation of the structure of myth and the narrative film to establish how over time myths evolved into fairy tales and narrative films (movies). It will be made evident that they all share a common storytelling structure.

When I first embarked on this research, there was a dearth of information on the disaster movie. It seemed that only the American studios were making big blockbuster disaster films and there was very little published on the subject. Some six years later things are changing. A lot of telemovies, some non-American, and end-of-the-world movies have recently been made with titles like Category 5, Sharknado: The Second One and Into The Storm, all released in 2014. There is now even a disaster movie fanatic’s website called Disaster Movie World where one can lose oneself in the world of the disaster movie, never to be seen again.

These developments give rise to me questioning the following:

• Why are people fascinated with disaster stories?
• Is it the disaster itself or are we fascinated with what happens to the central character in the disaster?

1. Why are People Fascinated with Disaster Stories?

I would posit the view that a disaster is an extreme event and to see someone struggling and overcoming the odds when he or she is confronted
with it harks back to when the first stories were told. It arouses in us the desire for hearing the narrative and finding a satisfactory resolution.

In 1997, there was a major landslide at the Thredbo Alpine Village in New South Wales where seventeen people were killed. Two days later, despite the freezing winter conditions, rescuers found a survivor: Stuart Diver. He was pinned under slabs of concrete but otherwise unhurt. However, he had endured his wife drowning next to him as water filled the cavity in which they lay. The whole of Australia became entranced, glued to the TV and watching the efforts that took place over the next eleven hours to rescue him. He was eventually freed after spending sixty-five hours trapped under rubble. I was one of those TV viewers, thankful that I was not the one in the hole and desperately feeling for this poor man who had experienced the horror and sorrow of his love dying beside him whilst he could not do anything about it. We were all very, very relieved that he made it. It could have been one of us.

As an audience, we are fascinated by disaster movies because we imagine ourselves in that dangerous situation. We find comfort in the safety of the seat in the cinema or our homes when we see our heroes surviving the catastrophes into which they are placed, and we want to see them survive. Cameron believes we are the result of generations of humankind who experienced and survived to tell the tales of disasters visited upon us (Cameron - Hollywood Science – Disasters at Sea 2006).

Bill Thompson, professor of psychology at Macquarie University, believes fear is something people instinctively seek out as part of their development. He tells us, "We are still living with the genes we inherited from our ancestors...the fear of a large animal consuming us; [films] like Alien or Jaws...those definitely play into something that is very deep-seated in our evolutionary history" (cited in Arlington 2014: 25). The experience of watching such movies as these also has its biological rewards. Thompson goes on to explain that the build-up of tension releases adrenaline, followed by the resolution, which released dopamine. "It's like a high, in effect" (Arlington 2014: 25).
Folklorist, Marina Warner (2007) describes how pleasure derived from scariness has gained ground and suggests that this is a symptom of the late Twentieth Century. She notes the mixed feelings we suffer when new beginnings and new endings collide at the end of the millennium. She claims that attitudes to scariness change over time from the motifs in a fairy tale to “contemporary, loving obsession with monsters and other horrors” (Warner 2007: 4). Warner goes on to describe how filmmakers today are able to conjure up the terrors realistically through the use of computer-generated images (Warner 2007: 5-6).

Keane (2001) also believes that disaster film stories tap into a number of “fashionable anxieties surrounding the run up to the end of the millennium” (2006: 2). However, their propositions do not explain why disaster films have fascinated audiences since the early days of the medium at the start of the Twentieth Century.

Izod points out that:

*the potent impact of moving pictures on the imagination is plain from audience response. A particularly striking feature film or television drama will be received with the most intense private and public reactions. And ever since they first became sources of popular entertainment, both large and small screens have been channels for deeply felt legends, myths and cults* (2001: 1).

These ‘channels’ for storytelling began as stories told around the campfire when our ancestors observed natural phenomena events, such as asteroid passes. They told their version of the disaster movie story through their myths.

2. Why Do we Need Myths?

Creating myths is part of what makes us human. It has led to historians like Dr. Russell Rees observing in the documentary film, *Merlin, The Legend,*
2008: "I think that myth is one of the essential parts of human imagination. A world without myth would not be a human world" whilst Leeming points out, "We need myths and a mythical consciousness to show us who we are" (2002: 13).

We have come to replace ancient myths with our own brand suited to the times in which we live. The stories told in moving pictures, whether they are on film, television, digital or holographic, are part of the natural progression from the tales our ancestors told around the campfire. These ancient people were not blessed with computer generated imaging (CGI) or scientific facts about catastrophic events. Their imagination and their limited knowledge of the world were employed to explain such phenomena. At the time of the catastrophe, whether it was flood, famine, pestilence, volcanic, seismic or astronomical activity, to our ancestors it would have seemed that their world was coming to an end (Leeming 2002: 13).

They created these stories so they and future generations would remember highly dramatic and often catastrophic natural events. The themes embedded in these tales survived for thousands of years and were spread across communities around the world. Wilson (2001: 13) proposes that the verbal recounting of these stories was probably humanity’s oldest collective memory.

Eventually, the stories about disasters evolved into entertainment as they emerged out of the activity of re-enacting the spectacular and the traumatic. Talbott (The Saturn Thesis 1994) suggests they became the acts and events in the mythological age of gods and heroes.

Humans have progressed from telling stories around a campfire to using high tech devices. Nowadays, film, television and the Internet are the latest tools used in storytelling. However, tools do not create stories: it is the human mind that creates them, and their structure has changed very little since storytelling first began.
As a child, I was fascinated by thunderstorms. They did not frighten me at all, although I think they did scare my mother who would tell me (and re-assure herself) that it was only God moving His furniture. I demanded to know how she could explain the lightning. Without pausing for breath, she informed me that He was turning His lights on and off. She had been handed down this explanation by her mother, who had been handed it by her mother, and so on.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1995) suggests that there is the common denominator in humans to always introduce some kind of order in storytelling:

> If this represents a basic need for order in the human mind and since, after all, the human mind is only part of the universe, the need probably exists because there is some order in the universe and the universe is not a chaos (Lévi-Strauss 1995: 12-13).

Throughout my career as a filmmaker and in my research I have noted that even with modern technology, screen storytelling follows a pattern of ordering story and character motifs. Whether intentionally or not, we categorise the types of film stories into what we call genres. As Vogler observes, "All stories consist of a few common structural elements found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams and movies...(but) the structural patterns and archetypal characters of myths provides the basis of all stories" (Vogler 1992: 3-4).

This need for order originally took form when creating mythological stories, which revealed the fears, beliefs and desires shared by all of the early
cultures. Joseph Campbell (1993) notes that the first tangible evidences of mythological thinking are from the period of Neanderthal man, from around 250,000 to around 50,000 B.C. These comprise burials with implements for the afterlife (Campbell 1993b: 32).

The ancients attributed what they thought were the mysteries of life to the gods, whether these deities formed a pantheon of gods such as in Ancient Greece or in the Scandinavian countries, or a monotheistic deity, such as in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Talbott states that a "good starting point is simply to acknowledge that there was a myth making age, a period tracing to what the myths themselves call 'the age of the gods'" (The Saturn Thesis 1994: n.p.).

The island of Samos in Greece was the place in ancient Greek mythology that was inhabited by monsters and Gods, and it is where the fable teller, Aesop, was born. In one myth, Dionysus, the god of wine, wanted the Amazons to fight with him in his war against the Titans. They opposed him and he chased a band of them on his elephants to Samos, where, according to Plutarch, he wiped them out. Their bones and those of the elephants were reputed to be buried in the Red Blood Field on Samos. In recent times, folklorists, archaeologists and palaeontologists discovered how these myths might have begun. They believe bones were dug up by locals on Samos with femurs three times the size of humans and that this led to the locals thinking they were the bones of the Amazons.

After bush fires in the mid 1980s on Samos, vegetation was burnt down to bedrock and revealed red blood earth and the bones which Plutarch had described as those of the Amazons and Dionysus’ elephants. The ancients would not have had the scientific knowledge we have now and believed that prehistoric bones represented 'the gods'. The finds date back to seven million years ago, in the Mycene and Pleistocene eras.
These bones are scattered around the Aegean and because of the constant seismic activity of the area, they have been unearthed over the millennia. They are of giant prehistoric mammals such as mastodons, mammoths, hyparriums and samatherium. The ancients would have been looking at masteodon skulls, seen the big nose opening at the front of the skull, as the eye sockets were on the side of the head like an elephant’s, and deduced that it was one huge eye – hence The Cyclops from Homer’s *The Odyssey*. 
Seismic activity would have mixed up the bones, which is why ancient Greeks came up with composite creatures such as centaurs. When the ancients unearthed these bones, they would re-bury any they found, re-arranging them into a human shape. Grave offerings would be included in the grave, and a burial ceremony undertaken, honouring the bones as one of the Gods or the Gods’ creatures.

During this mythological era, the ancients believed that all the heroes and heroines were three times the size of humans, including animals. They were ten to fifteen feet tall. They were given the name of Titans, Amazons and Giants. As Dr. Brian Lavelle of Loyola University, Chicago, describes in the documentary film, *Ancient Monster Hunters* (2004), "power indicated height and might".

Astronomical evidence indicates our ancestors viewed a much more active sky than we do because the solar system was more active and Earth was subjected to more meteorite hits. The ancient Greeks described fragmentations
as “Athena being born fully formed from the head of Zeus” (Kobres 1993), and along with other ancient civilisations, revered iron meteorites and created weapons from them. They also placed them in their temples to worship, and in tombs (http://abob.libs.uga.edu.bobk/phaeth.html).

For example, a rock of unknown origin is enshrined in Mecca. Because of its dark appearance, the dark stone of Kabah, to which Moslems worldwide pray five times a day, is thought by some to be a meteorite. It is said that this once white stone was given to Adam on his expulsion from paradise but that it has turned black through absorbing the sins of pilgrims who touch it. Because the rock is revered, it has not been examined to see if it is a meteorite (Kobres 1993, Kobres - Meteors - Fire in the Sky 2005).

Kobres describes how a near-Earth asteroid, called 1989FC, had a seven-hour separation from colliding with our planet in March 1989. If the asteroid had hit Earth, it would have introduced the energy equivalent to more than two thousand tons of TNT into the environment with little or no warning as the object was only discovered on photographs days after the close pass, and it would have pushed our contemporary civilisation into a dark age. This event led to two asteroid/comet hit disaster movies being made in 1998: Armageddon and Deep Impact (Hand Clow 2001: 25).

It was not only the ancients who placed a supernatural explanation on sky phenomena. Shooting stars were often thought to be a sign from the gods:

Human belief systems have been greatly influenced by the phenomena attending the progressive break-up, over thousands of years, of this large comet. The idea of a wrathful sky god or star positions influencing events on Earth are legacies of this influence (Meteors - Fire in the Sky 2005).

Emperor Constantine may have interpreted a meteor this way. In 312 AD, he found himself outnumbered on the eve of battle. He prayed to the Christian God for help. His soldiers said they saw a blazing cross in the sky. Constantine won the battle, credited the win to the Christian God and converted to Christianity, along with the rest of the Roman Empire (Meteors - Fire in the Sky 2005).

Roz Williams
Professor Bill Napier of Cardiff University describes how dragons appear in ancient Chinese and Mayan mythology as well as in Britain in the Sixth Century. He points out that dragons are often described as having a red tail and compares this with how a great comet has a red tail. Dragons have often been associated with a blast on the ground with trees being pushed over, hot winds, and the ground shaking. Meanwhile, Mike Baillie has examined tree rings of the time and identified major catastrophic events. At 540AD, tree rings show something significant happened but he could not find any historical record. However, when he checked the mythology, he found legends of dragons (Baillie - Meteors - Fire in the Sky 2005).

However, superstition changed to science when an eye witness, a young boy in Ensisheim, Rhine Valley in Germany, in 1492 saw a meteorite drop out of the sky and fall into a field in front of him. Emperor Maximillian was nearby and saw the stone as a good sign from God. He went on the fight the French successfully, leading chroniclers of the time to attribute his success to the stone (Meteors - Fire in the Sky 2005).

Many of these mythic narratives are also stories about religions, birth, life, death, resurrection, paradise and hell. Leeming (2002) believes mythic narratives are the sacred stories of religions. All cultures and religions have sacred stories, which are recognised as myths, such as Persephone, who was carried off to the underworld by Hades; the various deeds of the Greek and Norse pantheons of gods; Jesus rising from the dead; Muhammad’s Night Journey; and the parting of the Red Sea (Leeming, 2002: 8-9). Campbell (1993b: 9) provides the example of Cortes and his Spanish Catholic priests on their expedition to the New World in 1502, where they discovered many parallels in their own faith with that of the Aztecs.

In order to better understand the universality of these stories, we need to examine how myths and their archetypes are structured.
3. Myths and Archetypes

There are many definitions of myth. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary states that a myth is a “traditional narrative usually involving supernatural or fancied persons etc. (sic) and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena” (1984: 486).

Bierlein describes myth as a “telling of events that happened before written history” (1994: 5) whereas Dick believes that myths are the ultimate truths about life and death, fate and nature, God and humans (1998: 130-132). Leeming describes myth as, "Mythology or mythologia is a combination of mythos and logos, or informing principle; expressions of our defining drive to make a metaphor, to “tell a story”, a drive that continues into the present" (2002: 46) and has taken eons to form. He takes a Jungian approach by claiming that myths are created by the collective imagination as metaphorical projections of the way things are in life because they emerge from our experience of reality (Leeming 2002: 48-49). He describes the collective unconscious as being the repository of humankind’s experience and at the same time, the prior condition of this experience.

4. The Psychology

Carl Jung goes on to tell us that, “the hypothesis of a collective unconscious belongs to the class of ideas that people at first find strange but soon come to possess and use as familiar conceptions” (1969: 3). He describes how the concept of the unconscious initially was limited to denoting the state of repressed or forgotten contents. He says that for Freud, the unconscious is specific only to the individual. Jung calls that the personal unconscious, which he considers to be a superficial layer of the unconscious. This layer rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition, but is inborn. Jung calls this deeper layer the collective unconscious because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal (1963: 3).
He defines the collective unconscious as a part of the psyche, which owes its existence exclusively to heredity. Whilst the personal unconscious consists for the most part of *complexes*, the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of *archetypes*. Jung claims that psychologically, archetypes are the unconscious images of the instincts; in other words, they are patterns of instinctual behaviour (1969: 42-44).

For Leeming, archetypal images become the basis for a kind of universal symbolic language (2002: 14). The term 'archetype' occurs as early as ancient Grecian times and was referred to as the *Imago Dei* (God-image) in man. Jung believes that as far as earlier collective unconscious contents were concerned, "we are dealing with archaic or - I would say - primordial types, that is, with universal images that have existed since the remotest times" (1969: 4-5). He indicates that another well-known expression of the archetypes is myth and fairy tale. "The term 'archetype' thus applies only indirectly to the 'representations collectives'" (1969: 5). Marie von Franz describes how, in the last paper Jung wrote, he pointed out that intellectuals overlook the emotional and feeling factor, which is always connected with an archetypal image, "an archetypal image is not only a thought pattern ... it is also an emotional experience – the emotion experience of an individual. Only if it has an emotional and feeling value for an individual is it alive and meaningful" (1996: 10).

Is it possible to surmise that it is the emotional experience that is essential in keeping a film audience involved with the film they are watching? They identify with the protagonists, who are archetypes, and watch to see how these characters overcome the difficulties in which they are placed. The film characters' stories have evolved from the central myths.

5. Film and Myth

Dick (1998) points out that film is receptive to myth as they both speak the same language: picture language. He asserts that long before myths were written down, they were transmitted orally through epics and visually through
artwork on walls, vases, bowls and wine vessels (Dick 1998: 132). Seger (2003) supports this notion. She describes how the first stories may have been dramas about a lion hunt that were re-enacted around a campfire. She points out that this story easily falls into a three-act structure, "the preparation, the hunt, the climactic event when the lion is killed, and the resolution of the celebration feast afterward. It contains many elements we associate with drama: conflict, action, tension, and momentum" (Seger 2003: 4).

Film and myth are also intimately associated with dreams and as such, are part of the collective unconsciousness. Dick believes that myth is part of a film’s subtext (1998: 132).

This suggests that screen storytelling is able to evoke our emotional responses. One thing in common that most films have with myth, especially with the hero myth, and with fairy tale is that they all tell the story of:

• a hero,
• an upset to the order of things, which McKee (1999) calls the 'story event',
• the goal is set for the hero to right the upset: it is the hero’s journey or quest that he/she undertakes the journey,
• along with way, the hero experiences trials and tribulations, tests, victories, losses; before,
• he/she reaches the resolution of the goal: to right the wrong.

Through the unfolding of the drama, the audience becomes emotionally involved with the hero, either imagining themselves in the position the hero finds him/herself in or identifying with the wrong to society and urging the hero to rectify it (see Aronson 2000, Dawson 2000, Dethridge 2003, Drouyn 1994, McKee 1999: 33).

In the Judaic-Christian culture, the hero myth or monomyth (hero’s journey) is often combined with the apocalypse myth and follows the same pattern mentioned immediately above. Joseph Campbell describes it as “the end of the macrocosm” (Campbell 1993a: 374). It is the myth of the destruction
of the world and is depicted across many cultures. It is this myth that provides
the basis for all disaster movies.

6. The Central Myths

Anthropologists (see Campbell 1993a, Leeming 2002, Raglan 2003) have
established that there are three main types of myth central to human cultures:

- **Creation** myths: these tell us where we came from and how things
  began. Creation is almost always linked to the concept of deity.

- **Deity** myths: the gods and goddesses are the reason why the world and
  its natural events are the way they are.

- **Hero** myths: the most human and overtly psychological of the dominant
  myth patterns. Hero stories can be said to be metaphors for our personal
  and collective progress through life and history (Leeming 2002: 7-8).

The planets and stars were once considered to be the gods, especially in
the age of the gods when the heavens were being created. Bierlein informs us
that in one of the Ancient Greek creation myths:

*Geia, Mother Earth, emerged out of Chaos (a vast sea in which all elements were
mixed together without form) and then bore her son, Uranus (which means
“heaven” or “sky”) whilst she was sleeping. When Uranus ascended to his
place in the heavens, he showered his gratitude on his mother in the form of rain,
which fertilised the earth, and all the dormant seeds within her came to life
(Bierlein 2004: 47).*

Dick tells us that:

*Myth is a narrative and as such, obeys the rules of narrative: beginning, middle
and end structure. Myth operates on an unconscious level, presenting us with
characters (questers, the enchanted and the enchanter, ogres, scapegoats,*
monsters), themes (the homeward journey, the quest, ancestral curses, revenge, patricide, matricide), and setting (caves, wastelands, subterranean rivers, enchanted islands, flat-topped mountains, ominous castles, desolate moors) (1998: 132).

Cultures anthropomorphised their gods, either into human form as in the Greek and Norse pantheons or into animal form as is common in the Australian Aboriginal and North American myths. The following indigenous Australian myth describes how an Australian animal came to look the way it did:

There was a shortage of water and all the animals were dying of thirst except Echidna, whom the other animals suspected had a secret water supply. Bimbutower, the Finch, was told by the other animals to watch Echidna. He did so, but Echidna realised he was being observed. He said nothing, but burrowed into the earth with his strong claws. Finch put his head in the tunnel, but the ceiling collapsed and he withdrew in alarm. After Finch’s failure, Tiddalick, the giant frog, who was much more wily than Finch, finally saw Echidna go to a large flat stone. When Echidna lifted it, Tiddalick darted across and dived into the depression beneath it and discovered it was filled with water. He let out a loud croak and the other animals rushed up. They threw Echidna into a thorn bush, then slaked their thirst. In memory of this occasion Echidna continued to have the thorns sticking from his back (Morton 1994: 58).

People eventually stopped creating stories about deities who came down and interacted with mortals (Leeming 2002). They left the gods or God to theologians and philosophers, and turned to human heroes: people infused, to varying degrees, with divine or superhuman qualities. Leeming points out that heroes have been both fictional and historical: "they reflect our priorities...and are metaphorical representatives in myth of our particular cultural values-personae of our cultural psyches" (2002: 117).

However, there is one myth that has not been recognised as one of the central myths and that I am suggesting should be included with the core deity, creation and hero myths: the apocalypse myth, which is highly relevant to all
cultures and specifically, to the disaster movie. It is also known as the doomsday myth or catastrophism myth (Hand Clow 2001: 25).

7. The Apocalypse Myth

The apocalypse myth describes the end of the world as we know it and the rebirth of a new world. Arising from the apocalypse myth is one of the most important disciplines in modern times to address the problem of the end of the world, depth psychology. Depth psychology holds that mythological material appears ‘in’ the collective unconscious (Metareligion – The End of the World 2007). In the Christian bible, the Apocalypse is where the dead will arise and the righteous will be taken up to heaven. The Buddhist scriptures describe the world as lasting one hundred thousand years before the planet dries up and dies. The Mayan predictions state that:

Here we see the rain serpent, stretching across the sky, belching forth torrents of water. Great streams of water gush from the sun and moon. The old goddess, she of the tiger claws and forbidding aspect, the malevolent patroness of floods and cloudbursts, overturns the bowl of the heavenly waters. The crossbones, dread symbol of death, decorate her skirt and a writhing snake crowns her head. Below with downward pointed spear, symbolic of the universal destruction, the black god stalks abroad, a screeching owl raging on his fearsome head (Campbell 1993a: 374-375).

In the Poetic Edda of the ancient Vikings, Wotan or Odin, the chief of the gods, has asked what will be the doom of himself and his pantheon. The Wise Woman, a personification of the World Mother herself, tells him that the earth will tremble, the monsters will break free of their chains and destroy the gods and

The sun turns black, earth sinks in the sea,
The hot stars down from heaven are whirled;
Fierce grows the steam and the life-feeding flame,
Till fire leaps high about heaven itself (Campbell 1993a: 375 -376).
The Buddhist and Christian examples state that the righteous will not be destroyed. This motif carries through to fairy tales and into disaster movies. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4. However, given the hero myth is integral to nearly all screen narrative stories, it is important that consideration is given to the hero’s journey.

8. The Journey of the Hero

Campbell tells us that the hero of the monomyth or the hero myth is the "man of self-achieved submission, in that he needs to die and be reborn to achieve heroism and a new world order” (1993a: 16-17).

Campbell explains that the word monomyth is from James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (1993a: 30). He contends that the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation, initiation and return, “which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth”: 

![Fig 14: Ragnarok - the Norse Apocalypse (Mono-lab)](image-url)
A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (1993a: 30).

Both Leeming (2002) and Campbell suggest that when we compare heroes and their myths, we discover a universal hero myth that speaks to us all and addresses our common need to move forward as individuals and as a species. The giving of life to something bigger than itself is the essential characteristic of this archetype. By definition, the true hero does not merely stand for the status quo; he or she breaks new ground (Leeming 2002: 118).

In western monomyth culture the hero searches for something lost. In that process, as significant thresholds are crossed usually he/she undergoes a series of transformations. Three essential elements make up the monomythic life. They are:

- the Departure from home,
- the Adventure in the unknown world,

This structure is identically named by Propp is his morphology of fairy tales (2001: 25-65).

The adventure of the hero is marked by several universal themes:

- **Search for something lost** (Jason: the golden fleece, Knights: the Holy Grail, Gilgamesh: land where the sun rises).

- **Difficult trials** (where the hero needs to overcome frightening and dangerous guardians at each threshold).

- **Tests** (the hero has to prove him/herself and not be tempted off his/her course by personal desires: Satan tempting Jesus).
• **Death/Resurrection** (many heroes must die and descend to the place of death itself where the terrors and demons of the underworld are confronted before the hero is resurrected).

• **Return** (the hero brings back the boon to his/her people (Leeming 2002: 112-113).

### 9. How the Hero Myth Relates to Film Structure

Below is a brief description of how the hero myth relates to film structure:

• The first act of the screen story establishes that something is lost or there is a disturbance to the society. The hero is charged with finding the lost object, correcting the disturbance to society or attaining a goal that he/she needs to achieve.

• In the second act, he/she sets off to a different world or society from which they came and comes across obstacles placed in their way to hinder achieving their goal. The hero has to undergo a number of tests and trials, each one bringing him/her closer to his/her goal, but each one becoming harder to overcome. Just as he/she hits rock bottom in their quest and all seems lost, they somehow find the strength to go on to achieve their goal and enter the third act.

• As they race to the climax of the quest in the third act, there is one last fight with the forces that are trying to thwart them. They win and are able to right the wrong, correct the disturbance to society or find the lost object.

This is the traditional three-act narrative film structure and is identical in its structure to that of the hero myth and the fairy tale, which will be discussed in the following chapter.
Campbell (1993a) explains the hero myth comprises three acts in which there are seventeen stages. His depiction, which he formulated by comparing mythic stories from numerous cultures over millennia, suggests that the hero is male. His synthesis of mythic traditions presents a hero called from the ordinary world to embark on adventure. The hero enters a ‘special world’ of trials, allies and enemies. Eventually the hero approaches the ‘inmost cave’, the arena of a supreme ordeal. After winning, the hero returns to everyday life transformed (Bordwell 2006: 33). Campbell called the hero myth the monomyth. The stages are as follows:

I. Departure:
1. The call to adventure
2. Refusal of the call
3. Supernatural Aid
4. The Crossing of the First Threshold
5. The Belly of the Whale

II. Initiation:
6. The road of trials
7. The meeting with the goddess
8. Woman as the temptress
9. Atonement with the father
10. Apotheosis
11. The ultimate boon

III. Return:
12. Refusal of the return
13. The magic flight
14. Rescue from within
15. The crossing of the return threshold
16. Master of the two worlds
17. Freedom to live.
Vogler and others integrated the journey trajectory into three-part plot architecture. As Hollywood action films swept the world, producers were receptive to suggestions that the quest myth had cross-cultural reach. The journey idea lent a universal resonance to ordinary adventure plotlines. The embrace of the mythic journey also harmonised with the industry’s growing dependence on the fantasy genre during the 1990s (Bordwell 2006: 34).

Vogler devised the following table that demonstrates how closely film narrative structure follows the Hero’s Journey. However, he found that whilst there are three acts as we have in screen stories, not every stage in Campbell’s paradigm is relevant to film:
# Table 1: The Stages of the Hero’s Journey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Writer’s Journey (Vogler)</th>
<th>The Hero With A Thousand Faces (Campbell)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Act One</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary World</td>
<td>Departure, Separation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to Adventure</td>
<td>Call to Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal of the Call</td>
<td>Refusal of the Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with the Mentor</td>
<td>Supernatural Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing the 1st Threshold</td>
<td>Crossing the First Threshold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belly of the Whale</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Act Two</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests, Allies, Enemies</td>
<td>Descent, Initiation, Penetration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to the Inmost Cave</td>
<td>Road of Trials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Ordeal</td>
<td>Meeting with the Goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Woman as Temptress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atonement with the Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Ultimate Boon</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Act Three</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Road Back</td>
<td>Return</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refusal of the Return</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Magic Flight</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rescue from Within</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Crossing the Threshold Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection</td>
<td>Master of the Two Worlds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return with the Elixir</td>
<td>Freedom to Live</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Vogler 1992: 6)

Table 2 is an interpretation of Campbell’s stages of the hero’s journey and Vogler's translation into narrative filmic structure. Vogler omits Master of the Two Worlds and Freedom to Live as he believes it is not found in film. However, films like *Fearless* (1993), *The Never Ending Story* (1984), *Lord of the...*
Rings: The Return of the King (2003), and Star Wars: Return of the Jedi (1983), all have the Master of the Two Worlds stage. Vogler also places Return with the Elixir as the last stage.

I have not specifically focussed on the disaster film as this will be covered in future chapters: my intention here is to show the correlation between Campbell and Vogler’s stages and the three film acts in narrative structure. Instead, I have used three disparate film examples of how the three-act structure works using Campbell and Vogel’s paradigms. These are: Star Wars (1977): science fiction, The Name of the Rose (1986): period murder mystery, and High Noon (1952): western. I have used these films as representative of films from the eras of Phases 3 and 5 as outlined in later chapters.

**Table 2: Hero Myths and Film Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Hero With a Thousand Faces (Campbell)</th>
<th>The Writer’s Journey (Vogler)</th>
<th>Vogler - Explanation</th>
<th>Cinematic Structure</th>
<th>Myth/Film Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departure, separation</td>
<td>Ordinary world</td>
<td>Vogler establishes the Ordinary World</td>
<td>1st act</td>
<td>Star Wars: Luke Skywalker’s life as a farm boy, helping his uncle to buy two droids. The Name of the Rose: Brother William arrives at a northern Italian monastery for an ecclesiastical conference. High Noon: Will Kane marries Amy Fowler.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to adventure</td>
<td>Call to adventure</td>
<td>Setting the story’s conflict/goal</td>
<td>Will the Knights of the Round Table find the Holy Grail and heal the land? Will Odysseus find his way home? Star Wars: Luke Skywalker sees part of Princess Leia’s holographic message to Obi Wan Kenobi. The Name of the Rose: The Abbot asks Brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refusal of the call</td>
<td>The hero can elect not to go. The refusal of the call is always motivated by the hero's self-interest. The refusal of the call allows the hero to begin his journey.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supernatural aid to Meeting with the Mentor</td>
<td>The supernatural aid can take the form of a wise person or mentor. The supernatural aid can provide information that will help the hero on his journey.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crossing the first threshold</td>
<td>The hero has to venture forth and reach a demarcation line. This line lies between the known world and the unknown, and can either be physical or internal. The line is important because it shifts the hero to a place of trial. There is always a threshold guardian, who only allows those who are ready to pass through. The hero must challenge and overcome the guardian in order to pass to the new, unknown world. He cannot rely on his supernatural aid. He must rely on his own powers and resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st turning point</td>
<td>The three-headed dog, Cerberus, guards the entrance of the underworld. The hero has to work out a way to move past the creature. Star Wars: Luke's world is destroyed when he discovers storm troopers have killed his family. He embarks on the quest with Obi Wan and the droids. The Name of the Rose: Brother William is helped by Adso, his novice, to investigate monk's death.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belly of the</td>
<td>Instead of the hero conquering or consolidating the power of the threshold,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hero</td>
<td>is swallowed into the unknown and would appear to have died.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Descent</td>
<td>Initiation, the hero is now in his new world and anything can happen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Road of trials</td>
<td>He undergoes tests and trials with the help of his supernatural aid. Some</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of these can take the physical form of slaying dragons and monsters. The</td>
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<td>hero is covertly aided by advice, amulets, secret agents of the supernatural</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>helper whom he met before his entrance into this region.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with the</td>
<td>On the road of trials, the hero has to meet with the Goddess: in the central</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goddess</td>
<td>point of the cosmos, or in the tabernacle of the temple or within the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Road of Trials becomes Tests, Allies, Enemies/Approach to the Inmost</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cave.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The second turning point represented by the Supreme Ordeal/Reward stages.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Approach to the Inmost Cave</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supreme ordeal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vogler creates Supreme Ordeal, which is a more concentrated form of Tests,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Allies, Enemies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Star Visits: The Millenium Falcon is sucked into the Death Star.</td>
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<td>The Name of the Rose: After more murders, Brother William wants access to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>hidden library.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Note: Will returns to face his enemies.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How The Three Little Pigs Came to Star in Independence Day/Ph.D. Thesis

Roz Williams

the deepest chamber of the heart.
It is here that he begins to lose any cultural baggage from his old world and comes to understand the different aspects of the Goddess/Queen of the World, who is in every woman. This stage tends to relate more to mythology such as Jason meeting Medea, than in film. Meeting with the Goddess is like the call to adventure. The hero who is motivated by self-interest is forced into an awareness of the Goddess. The hero, motivated by self-protection experiences revulsion of the Goddess and all that she stands for. life, sex.

Woman as temptress

The negative aspect is Woman as Temptress. The Goddess symbolizes life and the hero’s union with her is a union with life. Failure to achieve this is a failure to achieve union with life itself. This happens because the hero is either self-protected or self-interested. Female heroes are the same as males, although they do not necessarily regard woman as temptress. The mother/sister/daughter relationship replaces the stage of woman as temptress. Female heroes expose the same rejection of life and living. The successful meeting of the Goddess symbolizes triumph and knowledge whereas an expulsion of the woman as temptress symbolically represents defeat.

Atonement with the father

Once the hero has successfully met with the Goddess, he has to reach Atonement with the Father/God. The Father, like the Mother or Goddess, has both benign

Omits Meeting the Goddess. Woman as Temptress and Atonement with the Father as this does not occur in film.

where killer is. Abbot refuses as Holy Inquisitor arrives. High Priest. Wall is divided by Miller’s friends. Is hopeful he can still find help.
| The ultimate boon | Reward | 2nd turning point
| The hero returns with his prize | The road back | Star Wars: Obi Wan is killed by Darth Vader so Luke can escape with the princess. Luke is devastated. The Name of the Rose: Brother William is arrested by his arch enemy, the Holy Inquisitor.

High Noon: Friends tell Will they will not help and he must leave before Miller arrives. His remaining deputy abandons him and Amy gets ready to board the noon train. | The Road Back replaces Reunion of the Return. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refusal of the return</td>
<td>He can refuse to return. The hero has a responsibility to return to his society with the prize or boon. If he does not, then he has not completed the hero's journey/quest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The magic flight</td>
<td>If the hero decides to return, he needs the blessing of the God or Goddess so he can safely return to his society with the prize. However, if he has had to seize the prize without the blessing of its guardian or, if the hero's return to his own world is resented by the gods or demons, then he has to take the Magic Flight where he fights off these gods or demons with magical intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescue from without</td>
<td>He may also need to be rescued from Without: cutside assistance to remind him of his quest and help him return safely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing the threshold return</td>
<td>The Crossing of the Return Threshold is the point where the hero crosses over from the new world back into his own world with the prize or boon, or the call to adventure resolved. However, he is no longer the same person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of the two worlds</td>
<td>He now has the ability to be Master of the Two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Magic Flight,</td>
<td>Rescue from Within and Crossing the Return Threshold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Arthurian Stories, Sir Galahad finds the grail first and takes it up to heaven with him instead of returning to Camelot and healing the land. In The Odyssey, Odysseus is too comfortable in the clutches of a nymph, Calypso, and forgets that he is supposed to return home to his wife.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd act</td>
<td>Star Wars: Luke and his friends are chased to the rebel base by empire spacecraft after they have rescued Princess Leia. The Name of the Rose: Father William escapes from his guards and with Adso's help, gains entry to the hidden library. High Noon: Will goes out to meet Miller and his henchmen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to Live</td>
<td>Resurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The last stage is the Freedom to Live. The hero has to prove or reveal who he is to his society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Myths, Archetypes and Film Structure

The use of mythic structure and archetypes is a very potent tool in film stories. For instance, with *Star Wars* (1977), George Lucas' early film story was very different from the final version. (A copy of that film treatment is attached as Appendix 1.) Whilst it has some elements we see in the final film script, it has Luke Skywalker as a much older character and not the main hero, the droids C3PO and R2D2 are bumbling bureaucrats, and the story is more about trading rights. Lucas fully espoused Campbell's monomyth and incorporated it into a new version of the script, turning the story into a mythical quest with Luke much younger and the hero, and the bureaucrats retaining their personalities but becoming the droids.

The study of myth by Joseph Campbell and Lévi-Strauss and of folk tales by Vladimir Propp has provided insight into the development and structure of film story. Campbell says that good or successful stories “see a hero grow and change throughout the journey, typically for the better” (cited in Paice 2003: 23). Paice continues, "The classical narrative film typically portrays the character (the hero) as the ‘agent of change’, the catalyst for the creation and seeking of goals and their ultimate resolution…” (2003: 54).

The following graph shows the structural and emotional connection points between myth (shown in red) and film (shown in black).
Paice notes that Lévi-Strauss believed that the telling of the myth is in fact a highly organised system that operates through structural codes and conventions that have universal appeal to an audience (2003: 24). This universal appeal is what causes the same types of stories to be told and re-told. They not only form the basis of the hero myth but also film genre. They inhabit the story with rich symbols and motifs as well as universal characters that are described as archetypes.

Vogler believes the use of archetypes plays an important role in film narrative:

_The concept of archetypes is an indispensable tool for understanding the purpose or function of characters in a story. If you grasp the function of the archetype which a particular character is expressing, it can help you determine if the character is pulling her full weight in the story. The archetypes are part of the universal language of storytelling_ (1992: 33).

Izod’s (2001) archetypal theory provides us with a deeper perspective on genres. It shows that:
their repetitious and conservative nature does not only derive from spectators’
desire for the reassurance gained by reinforcing the familiar. They connect
people to the shared experience of common and potent myths whose source is
often deep within the history of each culture, and they do so precisely because
they serve the need to express collectively felt urges (Izod 2001: 36).

Voytilla (1999) provides us with an overview of the hero myth
archetypes:

Table 3: Overview of Hero Myth Archetypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archetype</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hero</td>
<td>To serve and sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>To guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold Guardian</td>
<td>To test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herald</td>
<td>To warn and challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shapeshifter</td>
<td>To question and deceive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow</td>
<td>To destroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trickster</td>
<td>To disrupt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Voytilla 1999: 13).

Whilst all the arts are rich with symbolic material, Izod (2001) believes
that with their ability to use images, speech, narrative and music, this is
particularly true with screen and television material. Feature films and
 television dramas are confined only by the limits of form and human
imagination when they rework myth and adapt it to the needs of our time (Izod
2001: 15).

Izod has pointed to his analysis of Jungian and Freudian/Lacanian
psychological thought about the importance and power of the role that film
plays on stirring audiences’ emotions and psyches. He describes how, during
How The Three Little Pigs Came to Star in Independence Day/Ph.D. Thesis

the past twenty-five years, something of a rapprochement has occurred
between some of the leading post-Jungian and post-Freudian adherents in what
had previously been two warring factions. However, this rapprochement has
not transferred across to Film, Media and Cultural Studies. Izod believes that
Freudian and Lacanian theories have proved for several reasons to be "at best
rather limited, and at worst cack-handed implements" (2001: 3). He quotes
Robert Eberwein:

'film and dreams force us to regress back to a level of childish perception in as
much as we are constantly assaulted with "scenes" that we must appropriate
initially as belonging solely to our perspective' (cited in Izod 2001: 4).

Izod argues that it is a feature of Freudian and Lacanian film theory that the
unconscious is not conceived of as having the power to overthrow or remake
elements of the symbolic order nor rewrite cinematic and spoken language to
meet the insistence of hitherto unvoiced desires. “Jungian theory, by contrast,
hypothesises the unconscious as containing just such high potential energy”
(2001: 6). He contests that Freudian and Lacanian work is conveyed “in the …
jargon of high theory” whereas Jungian screen analysis delivers information
more engaging and intuitive to the reader.

It is no accident that emotion is the key to the deeper levels of the psyche
because the expression of deep-seated needs and desires is inextricably bonded
to the formation of myths, no matter what medium of communication is used.
“Jung recognised in every aspect of his psychology the over-mastering force
that emotion can exert on the individual” (2001: 7). The Jungian approach can
also address the cultural significance of the audience’s experience. “In doing
so, the Jungian invokes the feel of the remembered text and invites the readers’
participation – in a way which Freudian and Lacanian film analyses seldom do”
(2001: 8).

It is for this reason I have adopted a Jungian position as a filmmaker,
screenwriter and viewer: one connects more with an audience if one appeals to
their emotions rather than just their intellects. This emotional engagement can
also be seen when a fairy tale enthral a child or a film enthral an adult. The
two are very interconnected. However, in order to see that connection, we must explore how myth became folklore, folklore became fairy tale and fairy tale became film.

11. European Mythology

I am now going to discuss the influence of European mythology on the disaster movie. Western culture, in the main, has descended from Ancient Greece. It was also very much influenced by Celtic and Germanic myths. Anson states that these legends “stood in a similar position towards the old Teutons as the later Greek heroic legend stood to the Greeks of history” (cited in Wagner 2004: 3).

Carus posits that when Christianity spread over Northern Europe it came into contact with the Teutonic and Celtic nations, who added new ideas to their world-view (1996: 245-246). The universal themes they encompassed in their storytelling became consolidated into European folklore, then fairy tales, and were ultimately adapted to the disaster movie genre. As has been shown in the preceding chapter, the creators of Hollywood and the American disaster movie came from Europe and took their cultural influences with them when they migrated to the USA.

In order to see the relationship between European folklore and fairy tale and the disaster movie, we must examine the background and mythology of the northern Europeans.

12. The Northern European Myths and Deities

The Celts were spread throughout northern Europe before 700 BC. They were displaced out of the Danube, Rhine and Rhone areas by Germanic (Teutonic) tribes during the First Century BC (Nardo 2002: 177-178). The Teutons were a race of northern peoples described as barbarians by the Romans. They were composed of Goths and Vandals who lived in Scandinavia, and the Germans who dwelt north of Italy and east of Gaul (Kelly 1919).
The nature of the northern country was such that the people could not extract a living by peaceful agriculture so, in between cattle tending, they explored the seas all about and ravaged neighbouring lands. The Romans and the Gauls experienced this in the centuries just before and after Christ, as did the English from the Eighth to the Tenth Centuries. These Norsemen or Vikings were adventurous, hardy, warlike, independent, and quick to action, whilst the Celts preferred peaceful social gatherings and, according to Kelly (1919), were thought to be quicker witted and more intellectual.

Most sources documenting their myths were destroyed when Christianity slowly gained dominant political power in Germania and later in Scandinavia throughout the medieval period. However, much of our knowledge of their beliefs comes to us through literature written in Iceland during the Twelfth Century, namely the Sagas and the Eddas. Some information is also found in the Nibelungenlied and in Beowulf, and limited information also exists in Tacitus’ ethnographic work Germania, which was written towards the end of the First Century AD (Halsall 1996: n.p.).

Like the Greeks and Romans, the Teutons had twelve gods and goddesses, among whom were Odin or Woden, the king, and his wife Freya, queen of Beauty and Love. Odin guarded the apples of immortality, which the
gods ate to keep them eternally young. The chief difference between Teutonic and Ancient Greek mythology was the presence in Teutonic mythology of an evil god, Loki. Like Vulcan, Loki was a god of fire and the lame because he had been cast out of heaven. He was always plotting against the other gods. There are parallels in the Christian religion with Lucifer, who was banished from Heaven by God for plotting against Him and His people and who became known as Satan, "the enemy" (Kelly 1919).

Below these Teutonic gods, all of nature was inhabited by divinities. There were elves of two kinds: black elves, called trolls, who were frost spirits and guarded treasure (seeds) in the ground; and white elves, who lived in mid-heaven where a mortal entered after dying, and who danced on the earth in fairy rings (Kelly 1919).

Unlike their Hellenic counterpart Celtic mythical heroes were made into gods and their gods into heroes (Raglan 2003: 180). Raglan tells us that the ancient Greeks tended to draw a clear distinction between heroes, who were human and never performed miracles, and gods, who never did anything else, whilst in Ireland there was no writing, “and therefore no theology”, so that no attempt was made to distinguish between gods and heroes (2003: 89-90).

Raglan (2003) believes that European culture was greatly influenced by the Norse myths and legends that form the common theme of English, German and Scandinavian poems. For example, Sigurd or Siegfried, the dragon slayer, is the hero of the Volsunga Saga upon which all later sagas have been modelled.
Another example is *Beowulf*, an Anglo-Saxon epic poem:

> At midnight a great column of water rose in the midst of the sea, and out of it came a gigantic woman, whose face was as grey as her garments. Her eyes shone like coals of fire, her bristly hair stood upon end, and her long bony arms were stretched out as though in search for prey. It was Grendel’s mother, who had come to avenge her son (*The Legend of Beowulf*, in Wagner 2004: 202).

Elements of both stories, such as a magic sword, have similarity in hero monomyth stories (Raglan 2003: 56-57) and this motif has woven its way into British legend with the sword, Excalibur, in the Arthurian stories and in much more recent times, the gadgets used by James Bond or Luke Skywalker’s light sabre in the *Star Wars* films. The 'magic sword' can also be substituted for knowledge: the knowledge that a hero in the disaster movie possesses that is vital to progress the story to its conclusion.

We have explored how the hero myth and narrative film structures are similar and how Northern European mythology influences modern storytelling. As the creators of Hollywood and the American disaster movie came from a European culture, the myths and the fairy tales that emerged from this culture influenced these moguls. In the following chapter, I will examine how the myths became fairy tales and how they relate to the disaster movie.
CHAPTER FOUR

Once Upon A Time…

*Fairy tales, as well as folk stories, have much in common with myths* (Bettelheim 1976: 26).

Fairy tales evolved from myths and played a major part in how the creators of Hollywood and the American disaster movie viewed their world. It shaped how they told their stories. In the previous chapter, I explored the mythical story structure and its relationship to film. I discussed the importance of northern European myth on the Hollywood moguls and on western culture's storytelling. Scandinavian mythology became marginalised during the High Middle Ages, and blended into rural folklore whilst elements of Germanic myth survived and developed into fairy tales (http://www.worldlingo.com/ma/enviki/en/Germanicpaganism). We now need to examine how the fairy tale evolved from its mythological roots and explore its connection with the disaster movie.

1. Origins

As Bettelheim (1976) explains, myth is the story of a particular hero, such as Odysseus whereas in the fairy tale, the protagonist is the everyman hero and non-specific: 'a girl' (Bettelheim 1976: 40). Kready (1916) informs us that fairy tales are the detritus of myth, surviving the echoes of gods and heroes, and quotes Max Muller: "The gods of ancient mythology were changed into the demi-gods and heroes of ancient poetry, and these demi-gods again became, at a later age, the principal characters of our nursery tales". The origin of the word 'fairy', as given by Thomas Keightley (see Kready 1916) in his Fairy Mythology, and later in the Appendix of his Tales and Popular Fictions, is the Latin fatum, 'to enchant' (Kready 1916).
Von Franz (1996) concurs with this, pointing out that some folklore and fairy tales have evolved out of myths whilst others were incorporated into them. She suggests the fairy tale might originally be based on how myth and folklore that changed over time with each re-telling:

They become enriched by the addition of archetypal motifs. The more original forms of folktales are local sagas and parapsychological stories, miraculous stories which are due to invasions from the collective unconscious in the form of waking hallucinations (von Franz 1996: 19).

They then become fairy tales, a general story in a form that could migrate to another village, for it is no longer bound to a specific location or person (von Franz 1996: 20).

Bettelheim explains that the form embodies the cumulative experience of a society “as men (sic) wished to recall the past wisdom for themselves and transmit it to future generations” (Bettelheim 1991: 26). Von Franz (1996) is in agreement and provides an example of how, when something strange happened, peasants gossiped about it and handed it on, just as rumours are handed on today. Under favourable conditions, the account became embellished with already existing archetypal representations and slowly it became a story. She illustrates this through the general archetypal belief that witches could take the form of foxes, describing how a hunter, coming across a fox, shot and wounded it in the paw. The next morning, a woman was seen sneaking about with her arm in a sling and when asked what had happened, she refused to divulge any details. In diverse countries like Switzerland, Austria, Japan and China, witches and hysterical women were believed to have fox souls, "so a general archetypal motif has been associated with our special fox story, and the story has been nicely enriched and made more coherent" (von Franz 1996: 18-19).

Von Franz believes that fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of the collective unconscious psychic processes as they represent the archetypes in their simplest, barest and most concise form. Myths or legends show the basic patterns of the human psyche through an overlay of cultural material
whereas in fairy tales, there is much less specific conscious cultural material, and therefore they mirror the basic patterns of the psyche more clearly (von Franz 1996: 1).

Zipes (2000) informs us there are two traditions of fairy tales: oral, which have been evolved through folklore becoming fairy tale through the traditions of each community; and literary, where the motifs have been adopted to create literary forms of new fairy tales. He believes that the fairy tale is based on a hybrid formation that encompassed the chronicle, myth, legend, anecdote and other oral forms, and is constantly changed depending on the circumstances of the teller (Zipes 2000: xvi).

There is some evidence that fairy tales have existed since ancient times: Aristophanes (see Anderson 2000) refers to a storyteller, Philepsios, who orally told fairy tales. Mostly, the storytellers were children’s nurses, older women and those women who worked (Anderson 2000: 8). Anderson tells us that various versions of the Cinderella story existed in Classical Antiquity, Egypt, Persia and Judea (2000: 27-39).

Bell writes that "the history of fairy tales is the history of the cultures that tell them" (2007: 7). In Europe, fairy tales used to be the chief form of winter entertainment. Until the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, they were told to adults as well as to children. Scientific interest in them began in the Eighteenth Century with Winckelmann, Hamann and Herder. Von Franz refers to Herder as saying that these tales contained the remnants of an old, long-buried faith expressed in symbols but she believes it was the result of dissatisfaction with Christian teaching and the rise of neopaganism in Germany (von Franz 1996: 4).

It was this search for something spiritual which seemed lacking in the official Christian teaching that first induced Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm to collect fairy tales. This was the first systematic attempt to transcribe and record them verbatim from oral tradition: Kinder-und Hausmärchen (1812–15), popularly known as Grimm’s Fairy Tales. Before then, these tales were taken for granted: always there and used in magic and talismans (von Franz 1996: 4-5).
The Grimms' publication was extremely successful and led to other European countries making a basic collection of their national fairy tales that led to a wide acknowledgement of the enormous number of recurrent themes (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2012: n.p., von Franz 1996: 5).

2. Characteristics of the Fairy Tale

Most fairy tales hinge on the struggle between good and evil. Max Luthi states:

*Fairy-tale style is characterized first and foremost by a simple, unshaded opposition between black and white, good and evil...The hero attains his goal by courage, guile, humor, or luck...Often the evil principle condemns or does away with itself at the end of the story, or it may unconsciously choose its own punishment* (cited in von Franz 1996: 75).

This observation is absolutely relevant to Hollywood style film structure and specifically to the disaster movie in films such as *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and *Independence Day* (1996) as well as to *The Three Little Pigs* fairy tale.

Folklorists use the German term Märchen, and whilst it embraces tall tales and humorous anecdotes, it is often translated as 'fairy tale'. The Märchen is a folktale characterised by elements of magic or the supernatural, such as the endowment of a mortal character with magical powers or special knowledge; variations expose the hero to supernatural beings or objects and usually begin with a formula such as 'once upon a time', setting the story in an indefinite time and place. The major theme is the triumph over difficulty, with or without supernatural aid by the hero. This is also the same theme that embodies the hero myth and the disaster movie.

Versions of these stories, sometimes almost identical, have been found all over the world. Their origin is unknown. The characters are stylised: wicked stepmothers, stupid ogres, or handsome princes; and the situations are familiar to the listeners in that they reflect the economic and domestic
arrangements of peasants and simple workmen, such as millers, tailors, or smiths. The hero, however poor or friendless, has easy access to the king and may, through luck, cleverness, or magic information, win the king’s daughter in marriage and automatically inherit the kingdom (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

3. Wonder Tales

Fairy tales mostly have happy endings. They are ‘wonder tales’ (see Tolkien 2012, Zipes 2000: xvi-xvii). They offered hope and escapism for the peasants in the Middle Ages who comprised the majority of the population in Europe. There was always the dream that if someone moved up the social ladder by marrying a prince or princess, they would live happily ever after. Everybody and everything can be transformed in a wonder tale. In particular there is generally a change in the social status of the protagonists. For the peasants, the hope for change was embedded in this kind of narrative (Zipes 2000: xvii).

Most of these tales also contain a kind of natural morality that is elucidated in the course of the action: appropriate behaviour leads to a happy ending, in contrast to inappropriate behaviour, which leads to disaster (von Franz 1996: 76). Bettelheim agrees with von Franz. He explains:

*fa*iry tales intimate that a rewarding, good life is within one’s reach despite adversity, but only if one does not shy away from the hazardous struggles without which one can never achieve true identity. These stories promise that if a child dares to engage in this fearsome and taxing search, benevolent powers will come to his aid and he will succeed. The stories also warn that those who are too timorous and narrow-minded to risk themselves in finding themselves must settle down to a humdrum existence - if an even worse fate doesn’t befall them (Bettelheim 1976: 24).

In the disaster movie The Day After Tomorrow (2004), one of the heroes ventures into the deadly snow storm to find antibiotics for his girlfriend who is dying from blood poisoning. He is helped by his two friends and makes it back
safely with the drugs despite being chased by a pack of wolves. As a result, she lives and they are blessed with a future together. In *Volcano* (1997), a selfish property developer wants his wife, a doctor who works in the emergency room in a public hospital, to abandon helping victims injured by the volcano. He envisions her working in a wealthy private hospital across the road from the penthouse he is providing for them above a brand new apartment block. The private hospital’s car park is turned into an emergency triage centre. The volcano’s lava threatens to erupt at a crossroad between these two buildings, killing hundreds. The film’s hero, who is in charge of all emergency systems, orders the new apartment block be dynamited to block the lava and re-route it to safety. The developer has not only lost the respect of his wife, but his brand new building.

Film narrative structuralists agree that fairy tales, myths and genre all play a very major role in the telling of the classic narrative film story. Aronson (2000) writes about how myths, fairy tales and fables are easy to use in film stories because they specify protagonist, supporting characters and details of the scenario. She asserts that they traditionally follow the three-act structure, which means they are ready-made templates (2000: 22).

For example, the *Cinderella* fairy tale has now been made into the film *Pretty Woman* (1990); *Little Red Riding Hood* has been turned into many thrillers featuring the villain in disguise, such as *Psycho* (1960). The Three Little Pigs fairy tale can be used for the serial killer film, although *Home Alone* (1990), claims Aronson, is a comic inversion of the idea. She sees *Being John Malkovich* (1999) as a *Jack and the Beanstalk* story and believes that this particular fairy tale is the model for spy and heist films, complete with dramatic final chase (2000: 22).

Any investigation into the relationship between film and fairy tale needs to include the seminal work of Vladimir Propp.

### 4. Morphology of the Fairy Tale
Vladimir Propp (1968) created a morphology of the Russian fairy tale.

In his analysis, he establishes that the structure and characterisation of all fairy tales are similar. He demonstrates that there is some sort of initial situation that sets up the story: the main character and/or his/her family is introduced. Propp always uses the male pronoun when discussing the hero. For the sake of brevity, I will do the same, although the hero can be a female, such as in *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, or *Snow White*. From that point onwards, Propp has broken down the fairy tale characters and plot line into functions or stages. As with the hero myth, not all the functions relate to film structure but many of them are to be found in the disaster movie story structure. In table 4, I combine the fairy tale structure with the disaster movie structure and identify where they dovetail as each stage of the story progresses:
Table 4: Fairy tale structure and the disaster movie

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Theory</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Disaster movie examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A family member absents himself from home</td>
<td>• Going on long journey and leaving family at home in the care of strangers.</td>
<td>• Contagion (2011) - the hero’s cheating wife is on an overseas business trip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Death of a parent or parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Children leaving to visit, fish, gather berries, walk (Snow White, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. An interdiction is addressed to the hero</td>
<td>• Forbidding someone to carry out an action, i.e. don’t pick the apples, don’t open the chest, do not say anything.</td>
<td>• Deep Impact (1998) - Jenny Lerner is tries unsuccessfully to discover why a prominent politician has resigned his post.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or</td>
<td>• An inverted form of interdiction by an order or suggestion to perform a certain act: 'Take your brother with you into the woods'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The interdiction is violated</td>
<td>• The hero disobeys the instruction.</td>
<td>• Dante’s Peak (1997) - a young couple ignore the warning sign next to a volcanic pool and plunge into its waters only to be boiled alive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It is at this point that the villain enters the tale. The villain’s role is to disturb the peace of a happy family by causing some form of misfortune, damage or harm. The villain can take the form of a dragon, a devil, a bandit, a witch, a stepmother.</td>
<td>• Jaws (1975) - an intoxicated young woman takes a night swim, even though common sense says it is not wise to swim in dark sea waters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance</td>
<td>• The aim is to find out the location of children or precious objects.</td>
<td>• Dante’s Peak - it is the long-dormant volcano, Dante’s Peak, that suddenly awakens at the start of the screen story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or</td>
<td>• It can be an inverted form of reconnaissance where the intended victim questions the villain, such as wanting something from the villain.</td>
<td>• Jaws - the young woman is eaten by the shark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In separate circumstances others do the reconnaissance on behalf of the villain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The villain receives information about his victim</td>
<td>• The villain receives a direct answer to his question, such as the stepmother asking the magic mirror who is the fairest in the kingdom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or his belongings</td>
<td>• The villain assumes a disguise to make the victim feel at ease, such as turning into a sweet old lady or imitating a mother’s voice before using persuasion.</td>
<td>• Independence Day (1996) - alien ships arrive and park themselves above various cities around the world. Everything seems to be benign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The villain acts by direct application of magical means.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The villain employs other means of deception or coercion, such as clearing the way for the victim to move forward without realising they are in danger.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The villain causes harm or injury to a member of the family</td>
<td>• This is the action whereby the tale is created. All the previous steps result in this action.</td>
<td>In the disaster movie, it is foreshadowing that something is about to go wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The villain:</td>
<td>• The Towering Inferno (1974) -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• abducts a person, such as a princess or a child
• seizes a magical agent, or can order the slaying of a magical animal such as a duck or chicken
• pillages or destroys crops
• seizes the daylight
• plunders in other forms
• causes bodily injury
• causes a sudden disappearance
• entices his victim away
• orders someone to be thrown into the sea
• casts a spell upon someone or something, such as changing the person into an animal
• effects a substitution, such as a changing a bride into a duckling and substituting the villain’s daughter in her place
• orders a murder to be committed, such as a stepmother ordering a servant to kill her stepdaughter whilst out walking in the forest
• commits murder, whereby the villain kills someone very dear to the hero
• threatens forced matrimony, such as a dragon demanding a princess as his wife
• makes a threat of cannibalism, such as a dragon demanding the tsar’s daughter for dinner after having eaten almost all of the villagers
• torments at night
• declares war, such as a dragon ravaging kingdoms or a neighbouring tsar declaring war.

8. Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched

This function brings the hero into the tale. The hero can either be a victimised hero who has to escape and destroy the villain, or it can be someone who sets about rescuing the victim and destroying the villain. Propp defines the latter as The Seeker Hero.

- A moment of mediation is present in both types of scenarios as it leads to the hero’s departure from home.

The moment of mediation for the rescuing hero can be:

- A call for help is given, with the resultant dispatch of the hero. The call usually comes from an authority figure such as a king and is accompanied by promises.
- The hero is dispatched directly. The dispatch is presented either in the form of a command or a request. Sometimes the hero has to be threatened or cajoled into action.
- The hero is allowed to depart from home. In this instance the initiative often comes from the hero and not from a dispatcher and parents bestow their

an electrical wire shorts in a storage room at the very start of the film just as everyone is getting ready for the big opening night of the building.

• Armageddon (1998) - a huge meteorite hurtles towards Earth, sending out smaller chunks of rock before it that devastate areas of the Earth.
• Airport 75 (1974) - The pilot of a light plane is very stressed when he boards his craft. In mid-flight he has a heart attack at the same time as a nearby passenger jet flies near it. The jet in which Chief Stewardess Nancy Pryor is working collides with the light plane and the jet’s pilots are killed.

• The Core (2003) - Dr. Josh Keys (seeker hero), an expert in sound waves, discovers the core of the Earth has stopped and we will all soon die.
• The Day After Tomorrow (2004) - Jack Hall (seeker hero) discovers what is causing extreme weather conditions around the world.
With the victim hero, the structure of the tale demands that the hero has to leave home at any cost, which can only be achieved by some form of villainy:

- The banished hero is transported away from home, such as a princess demanded by a dragon otherwise her people and lands will be destroyed.
- The hero is condemned to death and is secretly freed, such as in the case of the servant who spares the stepdaughter in the forest and takes home the heart and liver of a slain animal as proof of the girl's death.
- A lament is sung. This form is specific for murder, bewitchment with banishment and for substitution. For example, a surviving brother sings a lament that results in the misfortune becoming known. This is turn evokes counteraction.

9. The Seeker Hero agrees to or decides upon counteraction

10. The hero leaves home

Departure for the seeker hero is different from the victim hero, in that the former has the choice to leave and undertake the journey whereas the latter left home much earlier in the tale.

This stage relates to all the heroes of disaster movies. All are seeker heroes and have to 'leave home' to face the disaster and survive it.

- **The Day After Tomorrow** - Sam Hall, the victim hero, is stranded in a snow-bound New York waiting for his father, Jack Hall to rescue him.

11. The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his receiving a magical agent of helper (known as the Donor):

- The donor tests the hero: a witch gives a girl household chores; forest knights propose that the hero serve them for three years; the hero is supposed to serve as a ferryman for three years without remuneration; a dragon suggests the raising of a heavy stone; a witch proposes the guarding of a herd of mares, etc.
- The donor greets and interrogates the hero. This form may be considered as a weakened form of testing. If the hero answers rudely he receives nothing whereas if he responds politely he is rewarded with a steed, sabre, etc.
- A dying or dead person requests the rendering of a service: this form also sometimes takes on the character of a test, such as when a dying father requests his sons to spend three nights beside his grave.

In the disaster movie, someone with expert information often joins the hero, or the hero already possesses the knowledge:

- **Jaws** - Chief Brody is joined by marine biologist, Hooper, who possesses the expertise on sharks and also has a myriad of gadgets for locating and killing the fish.
- **Dante's Peak** - the hero volcanologist, Harry Dalton, possesses not only the academic expertise but also an instinct that the volcano is going to erupt.
- **Volcano** (1997) - Roark is joined by geologist Dr. Amy Barnes, a seismology expert.
- **Airport 75** - Pryor's boyfriend, expert pilot Cpt Alan Murdock, starts giving her advice as she steers the stricken jet.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12. The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor</th>
<th>In the majority of cases, the reaction is either positive or negative. The hero:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A prisoner begs for his freedom: a devil sits in a tower and begs a soldier to free him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The hero is approached with a request for mercy: the hero catches a pike that begs him to let it go.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disputants request a division of property: the hero is tasked with dividing the property between disputants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other requests: these can be mice asking to be fed; a thief asking the robbed person to carry the stolen goods for him, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A hostile creature attempts to destroy the hero: such as a witch trying to kill the hero.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A hostile creature engages the hero in combat: the hero fights with various forest dwellers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The hero is shown a magical agent, which is offered for exchange.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The hero acquires the use of a magical agent</td>
<td>The following things are capable of serving as magical agents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• objects out of which magical helpers appear (a flint stone containing a steed, a ring containing young men)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• objects possessing a magical property, such as cudgels, swords, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• qualities or capacities which are directly given, such as the power of transformation into animals, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The forms by which they are transmitted are:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The agent is directly transferred: very often they are a reward, such as an old man presents a horse as a gift.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The agent is pointed out: an old woman indicates an oak tree under which lies a flying ship; an old man points out a peasant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jaws - Brody is relieved to meet Hooper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Volcano - Roark is relieved to meet Barnes as she can answer his questions about what is happening as a volcano is born in the middle of Los Angeles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Independence Day - Levinson, a computer expert and one of the heroes, discovers the code that has taken over all computers and communications satellites is a synchronised countdown put into place by the alien invaders with a view to destroying Earth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Armageddon (1998) - Stamper has the equipment and crew to dig a deep hole in an asteroid in which a bomb will be placed, detonate and save the world.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Core - a suitable vessel to transport Josh Keys and the terranauts to the centre of the earth is found and readied for action.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 14. The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search

| Usually, the object of the search is located in another or different kingdom which may lie far away horizontally or vertically. The hero: | • Armageddon - Stamper and his crew fly out into space in modified space shuttles to the asteroid.
• Jaws - the town's mayor and council finally concede after the shark eats another victim on 4 July Holiday that Brodie, Hooper and Quint have to pursue and kill the shark.
• Independence Day - Levinson and Hillier, another hero, use an old alien craft previously left on Earth to fly to the mother ship out in space.
• The Core - the terranauts burrow their way to the centre of the earth.
• Airport 75 - A military pilot is flown to the stricken jet with the intention of climbing through the broken cockpit windows.

### 15. The hero and the villain join in direct combat

| This form can either be defined as struggling with a hostile donor in order to reach the next stage of the quest, or achieving the victory of his quest: | • Independence Day - Levinson and Hillier enter the mothership by subterfuge and plant a virus in the mainframe, which destroys its protective shield and communications. They plant an atomic bomb.
• The Core - one by one, each of the terranauts are killed and sections of their vessel destroyed.

### 16. The hero is branded

| A brand is applied to the hero’s body, such as a wound from a skirmish. The hero receives a ring or a towel, where if the hero is wounded in battle, the wound is bound with the kerchief of either a princess or king. | • Independence Day - Levinson and Hillier’s spacecraft is trapped by a holding mechanism in the mothership. They cannot escape.
• Volcano - Barnes informs Roark that the underground lava will break through and destroy a triage centre where his daughter and others are hiding. There is nothing he can do to save them.
• Jaws - The shark eats Quint, Hooper is attacked underwater, the boat... |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>17. The villain is defeated: this stage is defined by Propp as Victory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The villain is:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• beaten in open combat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• defeated in a contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• loses at cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• loses on being weighed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• killed without a preliminary fight, i.e. a dragon is killed whilst it sleeps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• banished directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Victory is also encountered in a negative form, such as if two or three heroes have gone out to do battle, one of them hides whilst the other is victorious.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18. The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The narrative reaches its peak in this function:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The object of a search is seized by the use of force or cleverness. Here heroes sometimes employ the same means adopted by villains for the initial seizure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The object of search is obtained by several personages at once, through a rapid interchange of their actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The distribution of action is evoked by a series of consecutive failures or attempts on the part of the abducted person to escape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The object of search is obtained with the help of enticements, such as the hero lures the princess on board a ship with the aid of golden objects and carries her away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The object of a quest is obtained as the direct result of preceding actions, i.e. the hero kills the dragon and wins the captive princess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The use of a magical agent overcomes poverty: a magic duck lays golden eggs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The object of search is caught, such as catching the villain who has been causing mayhem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The spell on a person is broken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A slain person is revived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A captive is freed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>19. The hero returns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>An agent is often given, such as a horse or magic carpet to help the hero return. Sometimes the return has the nature of fleeing.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20. The hero is pursued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The pursuer:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dante’s Peak - Dalton drives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• flies after the hero  
• demands the hero, who he/it considers is a guilty person  
• pursues the hero, rapidly transforming himself into various animals  
• turn into alluring objects which place themselves in the path of the hero  
• tries to devour the hero  
• attempts to kill the hero  
• tries to gnaw through a tree in which the hero is taking refuge  

for cover as a pyroclastic flow surges down the mountain towards him.  
• Earthquake (1974) - hero Stewart Graff tries to save his wife from being swept away by flood in a storm water drain.  
• Independence Day - Levinson and Hillier are chased out of the mother ship just as it blows up.  
• Elysium (2013) - Max da Costa, the hero, successfully alters the mainframe computer on Elysium, thus allowing much needed medical help to reach Earth.  

21. Rescue of the hero from pursuit  

The hero:  
• is carried away through the air, such as on a horse or goose  
• flees, placing obstacles in the path of his pursuer  
• while in flight, changes into objects which make him unrecognisable  
• hides himself during his flight  
• is hidden by blacksmiths  
• saves himself while in flight by means of rapid transformations into animals, stones, etc.  
• avoids the temptations of transformed she-dragons  
• does not allow himself to be devoured  
• is saved from an attempt on his life  
• jumps to another tree  

Propp points out that a great many tales end on the note of the rescue from pursuit where the hero arrives home and then, if he has obtained a girl, marries her. However, in some tales, the villain may appear again for another chance to thwart the hero.  

• Twister - Harding and Jo survive an F5 tornado that passes over them after they have secured the information they had been seeking.  
• Dante’s Peak - Dalton, Rachel Wando (the town's mayor and Dalton's love interest) and her children have survived the pyroclastic flow and are rescued.  
• Jaws - Brody survives killing the shark and discovers Hooper is not dead after all. They successfully head back to shore on some of the boat's wreckage.  
• Independence Day - Levinson and Hillier successfully land on Earth.  
• The Day After Tomorrow - rescue helicopters arrive in New York to whisk Jack, Sam and other survivors back to safety.  

The following functions or stages bear some similarity to the final non-cinematic stages of the hero myth:  

22. The hero, unrecognised, arrives home or in another country  

This stage is defined as Unrecognised Arrival and is distinguished into two cases:  
• arrival home, in which the hero stays with some sort of artisan, such as a goldsmith, tailor, shoemaker, etc., and serves as an apprentice; or  
• he arrives at the court of some kind, and serves either as a cook or a groom.  

23. A false hero presents unfounded claims  

24. A difficult task is proposed to the hero  

• Ordeal by food and drink.  
• Ordeal by fire.  
• Riddle guessing and similar ordeals.  
• Ordeal by choice.  
• Hide and seek.  
• To kiss the princess in a window.  
• To jump up on top of the gates.  
• Test of strength, adroitness, fortitude.  
• Test of endurance.
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **25. The task is resolved** | - Tasks of supply and manufacture.  
- Other tasks, such as picking berries from a certain bush or tree. |
| **26. The hero is recognised** | - He is recognised by a mark, a wound or a thing given to him such as a ring.  
- The hero is also recognised by his accomplishment of a difficult task.  
- Finally, the hero may be recognised immediately after a long period of separation from family. |
| **27. The false hero or villain is exposed** |   |
| **28. The hero is given a new appearance** | - A new appearance is directly effected by means of the magical action of a helper.  
- The hero builds a marvellous new palace and resides in it as a prince.  
- The hero puts on new garments and is endowed with a radiant beauty at which everyone marvels. |
| **29. The villain is punished** | - The villain is shot, banished, tied to the tail of a horse or commits suicide. |
| **30. The hero is married and ascends the throne:** | - A bride and a kingdom are awarded at once, or the hero receives half the kingdom at first and the whole kingdom upon the death of the parents.  
- Sometimes the hero simply marries without obtaining a throne, since his bride is not a princess.  
- Sometimes, on the contrary, only accession to the throne is mentioned.  
- If a new act of villainy interrupts a tale shortly before the wedding, then the first move ends with a betrothal or the promise of marriage.  
- In contrast to the preceding case, a married hero loses his wife; the marriage is resumed as the result of a question.  
- The hero sometimes receives a monetary reward or some other form of compensation in place of the princess’ hand.  
- At this point the tale draws to a close. |

(Williams 2015)

In graph 1, I demonstrated the relationship of myth and film. In the following graph (graph 2), I have incorporated fairy tales into that structure to demonstrate the similarity and connections between myth, fairy tale and film:
It is this 'wonder tale' structure (see page 90) that the Hollywood moguls embraced as the basis of the majority of their film stories where many of their heroes climbed the social ladder and lived happily ever after. Table 3 shows how the various stages in the fairy tale hero’s journey devised by Propp (1968: 26-64) maps across to that constructed by Vogler and Campbell. As Vogler (1992: 6) discovered when he mapped film structure to the stages of the hero’s journey identified by Campbell, not all stages occurred in film. The same thing also occurs in Propp’s morphology depending on the type of film story.

In table 5 I have mapped across the stages in Propp’s morphology with Vogler and Campbell’s stages of the hero’s journey in film and myth respectively to demonstrate the similarity of story structure, thus establishing there are links between fairy tales, mythology and film structure:
### Table 5: The Stages of the Hero’s Journey in Fairy Tale, Myth and Film

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morphology of the Folktale (Propp)</th>
<th>The Writer’s Journey (Vogler)</th>
<th>The Hero With A Thousand Faces (Campbell)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family member missing</td>
<td><strong>Act One</strong></td>
<td>Departure, Separation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villain harms family</td>
<td>Ordinary World</td>
<td>Call to Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call for help to hero</td>
<td>Call to Adventure</td>
<td>Refusal of the Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero leaves home</td>
<td>Refusal of the Call</td>
<td>Meeting with the Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Meeting with the Mentor</em></td>
<td>Crossing the 1st Threshold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero is tested</td>
<td><strong>Act Two</strong></td>
<td>Descent, Initiation, Penetration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero receives magical help</td>
<td>Tests, Allies, Enemies</td>
<td>Road of Trials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero arrives at 'different' kingdom</td>
<td>Approach to the Inmost Cave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supreme Ordeal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero fights villain and is branded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villain is defeated and original misfortune liquidated</td>
<td><strong>Act Three</strong></td>
<td>Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Road Back</td>
<td>Refusal of the Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Magic Flight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rescue from Within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crossing the Threshold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero returns</td>
<td>Resurrection</td>
<td>Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is pursued</td>
<td>Return with the Elixir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marries and ascends throne</td>
<td></td>
<td>Master of the Two Worlds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom to Live</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williams 2015)

This structure is also relevant in the disaster movie where the hero survives a catastrophe that should realistically kill him. To establish these connections, I have provided three case studies of disaster movies in which I deconstruct the plot line in relation to the stages in Propp's fairy tale. I have chosen films from Phase 5 of the development of the disaster movie and show their relationship to the fairy tale:
Table 6 - Case Study 1: *Independence Day* (1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Fairy Tale</th>
<th>Independence Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1ST ACT</td>
<td>Villain arrives and harms family</td>
<td>UFOs arrive and station themselves over key cities. Disrupt satellite communication. Levinson recognises their countdown message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Call for help</td>
<td>Levinson travels to Washington to warn President Whitmore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero leaves home</td>
<td>Whitmore and Levinson escape just as countdown reaches zero and alien ships blow up entire cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Captain Hillier chases one alien fighter craft and both crash. He captures alien.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Whitmore and Levinson arrive at Area 51 to discover undercover research into aliens plus older captured alien craft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People at nearby trailer park take Hillier and alien to Area 51 where they are housed for protection. Levinson works out how to destroy aliens by planting computer virus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ND ACT</td>
<td>Heroes are tested</td>
<td>Levinson travels to Washington to warn President Whitmore. Whitmore and Levinson escape just as countdown reaches zero and alien ships blow up entire cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heroes arrive at 'different' kingdom</td>
<td>Levinson travels to Washington to warn President Whitmore. Whitmore and Levinson escape just as countdown reaches zero and alien ships blow up entire cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero is transferred to whereabouts of an object</td>
<td>Levinson works out how to destroy aliens by planting computer virus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero and villain join in direct combat</td>
<td>Levinson works out how to destroy aliens by planting computer virus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero fights villain and is branded</td>
<td>Levinson works out how to destroy aliens by planting computer virus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3RD ACT</td>
<td>The villain is defeated</td>
<td>Whitmore joins his air force and takes off, waiting for Levinson and Hillier to disable alien protective shields. Levinson uploads virus onto alien electronic system. Hillier releases nuclear warhead they have brought with them. It frees them from lock, enabling them to fly back towards entrance. Virus disables system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heroes return</td>
<td>Levinson uploads virus onto alien electronic system. Hillier releases nuclear warhead they have brought with them. It frees them from lock, enabling them to fly back towards entrance. Virus disables system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are pursued</td>
<td>Hillier and Levinson are chased but escape just as warhead detonates. On earth, Whitmore and crews locate weak spot and are able to destroy space ship. Send message to world. All alien craft destroyed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are rescued from within</td>
<td>Levinson and Hillier successfully land on earth where their respective wives are waiting for them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williams 2015)
Table 7 - Case Study 2: *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Fairy Tale</th>
<th>The Day After Tomorrow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1ST ACT</td>
<td>Villain harms family</td>
<td>Jack Hall witnesses huge Antarctic ice shelf break off. Tries to warn global warming conference but disputed by Vice President Becker. Strange weather patterns around world. Rapson and Jack deduce imminent ice age. Becker ignores Jack's warnings. Jack's son, Sam, and 2 friends (Laura and Brian) in New York when it's flooded. Stranded in NY Library. Jack going to rescue him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Call for help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero leaves home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ND ACT</td>
<td>Hero is tested</td>
<td>President heeds Jack's warnings. Jack leaves, accompanied by Frank and Jason. Country south of NY is evacuated south as country hit by huge blizzard storm. Frank dies. President dies, leaving much-chastened Becker in charge at a refugee camp in Mexico. Laura becomes sick. Jack and friends brave eye of the storm to bring back antibiotics to save her life. Eye wall of storm hits and everything snap-freezes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero arrives at 'different' kingdom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero fights villain and is branded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3RD ACT</td>
<td>Villain is defeated</td>
<td>Jack and Jason take cover. Storm ends and Jack crawls out of tent to discover serene but ice and snow bound NY. They are camped on the Hudson River. He and Jason walk past Statue of Liberty to Library. Jason believes Sam is dead. However, Jack and Jason find everyone safe inside and alert authorities to send helicopters. Antibiotics have healed Laura. Jack sees that Sam and she have become lovers and he's happy for them. At sound of helicopters, survivors in skyscrapers take to the roofs. Astronauts in orbiting space station comment on pristine new world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero returns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rescue of the hero from pursuit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williams 2015)
Table 8 - Case Study 3: *Volcano* (1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Fairy Tale</th>
<th>Volcano</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1ST ACT</td>
<td>Villain hurts family</td>
<td>Earthquake hits Los Angeles. Several utility workers scalded to death in tunnel under park. No-one believes Roark when he wants to close nearby underground rail-line work and park. Dr. Amy Barnes explores tunnel at night with colleague, who falls into opening tectonic fault-line. On surface, ash starts to fall. Another tremor. Roark and his daughter leave home for his command centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero leaves home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ND ACT</td>
<td>Hero is tested</td>
<td>Lava bombs bombard them. Roark leaves his daughter with doctor, who takes her and injured man to triage centre. Lava begins to spread through neighbourhoods. Dr. Amy Barnes (seismologist) informs Roark a volcano is building up in L.A. Roark orders barricades which temporarily halt lava flow. Amy discovers that the lava is taking a new underground course and heading straight for downtown L.A and the triage centre where it will break through to the surface.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Receives help from Donor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero arrives at ‘different’ kingdom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero and villain in direct combat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero is branded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3RD ACT</td>
<td>Villain is defeated</td>
<td>Roark orders explosives placed under high-rise buildings in that area, the intention being to create a dam which will re-route the lava into storm water drains leading to the ocean. As the detonations around the building occur, Roark sees his daughter wander out from the supposedly empty triage centre. He races to save her and the small boy with her. The high-rise falls down and dams up the street where the lava is diverted according to plan. Roark survives. The volcano is named Mount Wilshire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hero returns/is pursued</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rescue of hero from pursuit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williams 2015)

In these case studies, the stories are all resolved and the hero survives. However, not all fairy tales have happy endings, and these are classified as
cautionary tales or fables (see Bettelheim 1976: 27), and not all disaster movies end with the hero living happily ever after either.

5. Cautionary Tales

Bettelheim explains that the difference between fable and fairy tale is that fable is folktale handed down “but is often sanctimonious, explicitly stating a moral truth” (1976: 42-43). It leaves nothing to the imagination and does not entertain any pleasure. He claims that the moral in fable states that it is wrong to enjoy life whilst on the other hand the fairy tale is folktale handed down and does allow for enjoyment of life and entails the destruction of the evil character (Bettelheim 1976: 43-44). This is certainly true of disaster movies, especially those of the 1970s and 1990s where those who have sinned do not live long enough to enjoy their sin. In *The Towering Inferno* (1974), the building owner’s son-in-law is unfaithful to his wife and has skimped on the safety of the building. The gods suitably punish him by letting him fall to his death from the burning skyscraper.

The hero of *Earthquake* (1974) has to die because he has been unfaithful to his wife even though he tries to save her from drowning rather than climb to safety to join his lover. The same applies to the hero of *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), a cleric who rails against God and ends up falling into a fiery pit whilst saving the lives of others. Another example is the builder of the Red Line subway in *Volcano* (1997), who refuses to believe that his blasting a new rail tunnel on a seismic fault is the cause of volcanic activity. He, too, is suitably punished by the lava from the volcano as shown in the still below:
even though he tries to save the life of one of his workers who has been injured in an underground train crash caused by seismic activity.

Like the characters in most early Hollywood film stories and the disaster movie, fairy tale characters are clearly drawn. As Bettelheim posits: "Its figures are clearly drawn. Details, unless important, are eliminated. All characters are typical rather than unique" (1976: 8-9). He explains that traditional fairy tales are about the struggle between good and evil. The characters in fairy tale are not ambivalent. They are not bad and good at the same time. There is no middle ground: the fairy tale presents polarities of characters (Bettelheim 1976: 8-11). The disaster movie displays a similar simplicity. Because the genre encompasses the action adventure genre, there is little time for character development. Through necessity of screen time, the characters are clearly drawn and the evil easily identifiable.

Jung points out that that the fairy tale instructs us on how to proceed if we want to overcome the power of darkness, for example, turn the villain’s own weapons against him (1969: 252) such as in the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale where the witch is cooked in the pot in which she was going to cook Hansel and Gretel; and The Three Little Pigs where the wolf falls down the chimney and is eaten by the surviving pig. In film, one example is the final showdown.
between Harry Potter and Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* (2011) where Voldemort’s death spell rebounds and kills him instead of Harry Potter. Another is *Independence Day* (1996) where one of the three heroes, a computer scientist, plants a virus in the alien mother ship’s mainframe computer, destroying its protective shield and communication with its fighters. As a result, this enables fighter jets to combat and kill the aliens.

Fig 20: The big bad wolf from *The Three Little Pigs* (Gopix)

6. The Presence of the Number Three

One motif that presents itself over and over again is the number three. It is present in disaster films and it is also present in many fairy tales. A quick perusal of the latter reveals the following: *The Three Little Pigs*, the three bears in *Goldilocks*, *The Three Carnations*, *The (three) Princesses in White Land*, *The Three Spinners*, *The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs*, *The Three Feathers*, *The Three Apprentices*, *The Three Brothers*, *The Three Black Princesses*, and so on (see Aronson 2000, Bettelheim 1991, Brothers Grimm 1972, Kready 1916, Propp 2001, Tatar 2002, von Franz 1997, Zipes 2000).

In *Goldilocks*, Goldilocks knocks three times before entering to discover three bowls of porridge, three beds, and three bears. In *Snow White*, Snow
White’s mother pricks her finger whilst sewing and three drops of blood fall on the snow. In *The Three Little Pigs*, the wolf tries three times to lure the third pig away from the safety of the home by tempting the pig with food.

The number ‘three’ is a recurring symbol in many aspects of our lives as well as in myths, fairy tales and disaster movies. We think of ‘three’ as a holy number such as in the Holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. However, its symbolism has been in existence well before the establishment of Christianity. For instance, the example of the snake, Adam and Eve stands for the relationship between father, mother and child (see Bettelheim 1976: 219-220, Biedermann 1992: 335). Biedermann (1992) states that three is a number that symbolises perfection and mystery. He believes that "the third time’s the charm", in that heroes in fairy tales must prove themselves by accomplishing three feats (Biedermann 1992: 240).

In Greek mythology, the three gorgons are often attributed to the anima and depicted in the triple form of maiden, mother and crone (Chetwynd 1993: 177). In alchemy, the chemical sphere is divided into salt, sulphur and mercury whilst in humans it is the body, soul and spirit (corpus, anima, spiritus) (Biedermann 1992: 353). Bettelheim (1976) uses psychoanalysis in his description of the number "three" in fairy tales by stating that the symbol represents three aspects of the mind: the id, ego and superego (Bettelheim 1976: 102).

7. How the Number Three Relates to Film

I have demonstrated earlier that film stories usually have three acts and that film story structure is identical to that of myth and fairy tale. However, there are often three main characters in disaster movies and their characterisation is intrinsic to the plot, as are the themes of the pleasure principle, sacrifice and redemption, injustice and justice, hubris and nemesis. All these themes are encompassed in the fairy tale, *The Three Little Pigs*. 
Bruno Bettelheim (1991) describes The Three Little Pigs fairy tale as representative of the pleasure principle versus reality principle. He analyses the fairy tale: the two first two pigs live with the pleasure principle, instant gratification, and not thinking about future. As a result, the wolf eats them. The third pig has learned to live by the reality principle. He is able to postpone desire for play until he has secured his future, as he can foresee what will happen if he does not. Consequently, he is able to defeat powers more ferocious and stronger than him (Bettelheim 1976: 41-42).

This principle, Dalton, appears to be the standard rule in disaster films: destruction to those who do not foresee the future but live for instant gratification. For example, in Dante’s Peak (1997), his boss, Dreyfus, who does not want to alarm the town's citizens, ignores the hero's warning of seismic activity in a dormant volcano above the town of Dante’s Peak. The mayor of the town believes the hero whilst a powerful member of the town council does not. The mayor's stubborn ex mother-in-law refuses to leave her home on the flanks of the volcano as she does not believe it will harm her, so when the volcano erupts, the mother-in-law, the town councillor and the hero's boss are killed. Again, we see the number three plays a part.


8. How the Three Little Pigs Came to Star in Independence Day

The title of this thesis encompasses the question of whether or not there is a relationship between European fairy tales and the American disaster movie. In order to explore this further, we need to examine the fairy tale about the three little pigs. The Story of the Three Little Pigs by Joseph Jacobs (1854 - 1916) was first published in James Orchard Halliwell’s Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Tales, around 1843 (Tatar 2002: 345). Joseph Jacobs was responsible for creating Jack and the Beanstalk, Molly Whuppie, Kate Crackernuts, as well as The Three
Little Pigs. Jacobs was born in Sydney, Australia (then the British colony of New South Wales) and educated at Sydney and Cambridge Universities. He was a folklorist and historian at the University of Berlin and first came to renown for writing a series of articles on the persecution of Jews in Russia (Tatar 2002: 345).

The Three Little Pigs is told thus:

There was once an old sow with three little pigs, and as she had not enough to keep them, she sent them out to seek their fortune. The first that went off met a man with a bundle of straw, and said to him, “Please, man, give me that straw to build me a house”, which the man did. The little pig built a house with it. Presently came along a wolf, and knocked at the door, and said: “Little pig, little pig, let me come in”.

To which the pig answered: “No, no, by the hair of my chinny chin chin”.

The wolf then answered to that: “The I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house in”. So he huffed, and he puffed, and he blew his house in, and ate up the little pig.

The second little pig met a man with a bundle of furze (twigs) and said: “Please, man, give me that furze to build a house”. Which the man did, and the pig built his house.

Then along came the wolf, and said: “Little pig, little pig, let me come in”.

“No, no, by the hair of my chinny chin chin.”

“Then I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house in.”

So he huffed, and he puffed, and he puffed, and he huffed, and at last he blew the house down, and he ate up the little pig.

The third little pig met a man with a load of bricks, and said: “Please, man, give me those bricks to build a house with”. So the man gave him the bricks, and he built his house with them.

So the wolf came, as he did to the other little pigs, and said: “Little pig, little pig, let me come in”.

“No, no, by the hair on my chinny chin chin.”

“Then I’ll huff, and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house in.”

Well, he huffed, and he puffed, and he huffed and he puffed, and he puffed and huffed, but he could not get the house down. When he found that he could not,
with all his huffing and puffing, blow the house down, he said: “Little pig. I know where there is a nice field of turnips”.
“Where?” said the little pig.
“Oh, in Mr. Smith’s Home-field, and if you will be ready tomorrow morning, I will call for you, and we will go together, and get some for dinner.”
“Very well,” said the little pig. “I will be ready. What time do you mean to go?”
“Oh, at six o’clock.”
Well, the little pig got up at five, and got the turnips before the wolf came (which he did about six), who said: “Little pig, are you ready?”
The little pig said: “Ready! I have been and come back again, and got a nice potful for dinner”.
The wolf felt very angry with this, but thought that he would be up to the little pig somehow or other, so he said: “Little pig, I know where there is a nice apple tree”.
“Where?” said the pig.
“Down at Merry Garden,” replied the wolf, “and if you will not deceive me I will come for you, at five o’clock tomorrow and get some apples”.
Well, the little pig bustled up the next morning at four o’clock, and went off for the apples, hoping to get back before the wolf came; but he had further to go, and had to climb the tree, so that just as he was coming down from it, he saw the wolf coming, which, as you may suppose, frightened him very much. When the wolf came up he said: “Little pig, what! Are you here before me! Are they nice apples?”
“Yes, very,” said the little pig. “I will throw you down one.”
“And he threw it so far, that, while the wolf was gone to pick it up, the little pig jumped down and ran home. The next day the wolf came again, and said to the little pig: “Little pig, there is a fair at Shanklin this afternoon. Will you go?”
“Oh yes,” said the pig. “I will go. What time shall you be ready?”
“At three,” said the wolf. So the little pig went off before the time as usual, and got to the fair, and bought a butter churn, which he was going home with, when he saw the wolf coming. Then he could not tell what to do. So he got into the churn to hide, and by so doing turned it round, and it rolled down the hill with the pig in it, which frightened the wolf so much, that he ran home without going
to the fair. He went round to the pig’s home, and told him how frightened he had been by a great round thing which came down the hill past him.

Then the little pig said: “Ha, I frightened you, then, I had been to the fair and bought a butter churn, and when I saw you, I got into it, and rolled down the hill”.

Then the wolf was very angry indeed, and declared he would tear up the little pig, and that he would get down the chimney after him. When the little pig saw what he was about, he hung on to the pot full of water, and made up a blazing fire, and, just as the wolf was coming down, took off the cover, and in fell the wolf; so the little pig put on the cover again in an instant, boiled him up, and ate him for supper, and lived happily ever afterwards (Tatar 2002: 208-211).

Just as there appear to be several versions of Cinderella, there also appear to be several versions of The Three Little Pigs, each created with every re-telling of the story. This is one version of Jacob’s fairy tale. I recall as a child being told another version where the two younger pigs escaped being killed by the wolf by fleeing into the third pig’s house. I probably got the idea by seeing the 1933 Disney film of the fairy tale where the two younger pigs end up safely in the third pig’s house.

In 1933, Walt Disney Studios released The Three Little Pigs as a Silly Symphony cartoon that enjoyed great popular success.
The song, *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf* (written for the film in 1933 by Frank Churchill) led to a reading of the story as a rallying cry against the Depression in particular and economic hard times in general. Disney himself framed the moral: “Wisdom along with courage is enough to defeat big bad wolves of every description and send them slinking away”. In 1941 a short version of the silly symphony featured “Thrifty Pig” building his house with war bonds and managing to thwart a wolf sporting a swastika on his armband. In Jacob’s version of the tale, indolence and lack of foresight are responsible for the deaths of the first two pigs that built their houses quickly out of materials vulnerable to the destructive puffs of the wolf’s breath.

In *The Three Little Pigs*, retribution is carried out: the wolf, which has devoured the two other pigs, ends up as food for the third pig when it falls down his chimney into boiling water (Bettelheim 1976: 43). The third pig in *The Three Little Pigs* is clever, as well as being the oldest. In *Independence Day*, the third pig is Levinson, the telecommunications satellite whiz and the first human to realise the danger that humanity is in. The character of the American president is the first little pig in that he decides to stay in the White House and welcome the alien visitors. He survives by the skin of his teeth only when the telecommunications satellite whiz persuades him of the danger. The second pig
is an ace fighter pilot who does the bidding of the president. However, unlike his fairy tale counterpart, he is able to survive a dogfight with an alien spacecraft and help the third little pig to outwit and destroy the alien mother ship and civilisation that are hell bent on taking over Earth and its resources.

I have constructed the tables below to reveal the fairy tale structure/characterisations and outcomes in other disaster movies. Without going into the details of each film’s narrative, I have chosen to simplify the number of secondary characters in the roles of 1st and 2nd Little Pigs. Each film has more than one character falling prey to the antagonist through their lack of foresight and/or hubris:

**Table 9: The Three Little Pigs - Volcano (1977)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>3rd Little Pig (main hero)</th>
<th>2nd Little Pig</th>
<th>1st Little Pig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volcano</td>
<td>Mike Roark (Head of Los Angeles Emergency Management)</td>
<td>Dr. Amy Barnes (seismologist)</td>
<td>Stan Olber (manager and builder of subway line on seismic fault)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is first official who recognises the danger but is ignored until all other authorities realise a volcano is erupting in Los Angeles.</td>
<td>Recognises an earthquake at start of film may be caused by Olber’s subway construction. Advises Roark throughout.</td>
<td>Is seen at start of film taking bets from his workmen on the epicentre of the earthquake. In conflict with Barnes as he does not believe his construction is affecting seismic activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roark ignores Barnes’ suggestion of evacuating people as there is no time; orders placement of concrete freeway barriers and blowing up foundations of new high-rise building so that lava flow is diverted away from people and into the ocean.</td>
<td>Her suggestion is to get as many people out of the lava flow’s path, which means those left behind will perish.</td>
<td>Saves the life of one of his subway drivers but is killed in the process by the lava.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williams 2015)
Table 10: The Three Little Pigs - *Jaws* (1975)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>3rd Little Pig</th>
<th>2nd Little Pig</th>
<th>1st Little Pig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Jaws   | **Martin Brody**  
         (Chief of Police, Amity Island)  
         Tries to close the beach after the remains of shark victim are found. Town council insist beach remain open because of forthcoming July 4 holiday.  
         He is only taken seriously when the shark kills holidaymaker in full view of everyone.  
         Is part of a 3-man team to hunt down and kill the killer shark.  
         First to see the shark. Advises Quint to get a bigger boat.  
         Is only one left to kill the shark. As boat sinks, Brody fires at the scuba tank shark has in its mouth and successfully blows it up. | **Matt Hooper**  
         (marine biologist - expert on sharks)  
         Expert brought over from the mainland by Brody.  
         Is ignored by town council who mistakenly think the killer shark has been killed.  
         Relies heavily on scientific equipment rather than instinct.  
         Hooper gets into shark cage to try and stick poison dart into shark. Drops dart and disappears when shark attacks the cage.  
         Hooper re-appears on the surface after shark’s demise. (In the novel, he is eaten by shark.) | **Quint**  
         (Amity Island fisherman)  
         Quint believes he has what it takes to capture the shark. Ego is such that he feels he can do it all by himself. His services are declined by the council.  
         Quint holds council to ransom and demands $10,000 fee for killing shark.  
         Very much resents Brody and Hooper on his boat. Derides Brody for his lack of seamanship and has no time for Hooper and his scientific gizmos.  
         Quint refuses to turn back to get bigger boat.  
         Shark starts to eat the boat and devours Quint. |

(Williams 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>3rd Little Pig</th>
<th>2nd Little Pig</th>
<th>1st Little Pig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The Day After Tomorrow</em></td>
<td>Jack Hall (paleo-climatologist)</td>
<td>Frank Harris (Jack’s senior assistant)</td>
<td>Vice President Becker (Vice President of USA, also in charge of funding for Climatology Centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Through his paleo-climatology computer model, he discovers rapid onset of global warming and an encroaching ice age. Is ignored by Becker until American President listens to him and follows his advice to evacuate everyone south of Washington to the southern American states.</td>
<td>Loyal follower and friend. Is with Hall at the South Pole when the Larsen B Ice Shelf breaks off from the mainland. Has worked with him for a long time.</td>
<td>Basically runs the country because the President is always out playing golf and is indecisive. Becker does not believe in climate change or global warming. He believes that the economy is more important and cannot be compromised because of some future climate event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hall’s son, Sam, is stranded in New York and Hall sets off to find him, accompanied by Harris and another assistant, Jason. Hall's polar experience and preparation helps him and Jason to reach NY and rescue his son. He discovers other NY survivors, bringing hope to the American Government now housed in a refugee camp in Mexico.</td>
<td>Insists that he and Jason help Hall to get to NY. Unknowingly walks on the snow-covered glass roof of a shopping mall and falls through it. Decides to sacrifice himself so that Hall and Jason can survive.</td>
<td>Is shocked when the President is killed by the weather.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williams 2015)
Table 12: The Three Little Pigs - *Twister* (1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>3rd Little Pig</th>
<th>2nd Little Pig</th>
<th>1st Little Pig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twister</td>
<td>Jo and Bill Harding (Meteorologists - Jo is a working storm chaser; Bill is her estranged husband and a former storm chaser, now weather man)</td>
<td>Dr. Melissa Reeves (A psychotherapist engaged to marry Bill)</td>
<td>Dr. Jonas Miller (Climatologist who has unlimited commercial backing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jo, as a small child, witnesses a massive tornado killing her father. As an adult, she is an obsessive storm chaser working on a shoestring budget. Bill is trying to get Jo to sign divorce papers so he can marry Melissa when tornadoes strike. He sees that Jo is using his invention, which has the acronym DOROTHY to get information from the centre of a tornado. Jo's obsession with trying to get DOROTHY to a tornado so she can discover the inner mysteries of tornados means that Bill has to chase her for her signature. Gradually, he re-discovers his love of chasing storms and helps Jo. They become stranded in a barn but are able to secure themselves as a massive tornado passes over them. They survive and realise they still want to remain married to each other.</td>
<td>Melissa is very much a city girl and totally unsuited to the rough and tumble life of storm chasing. She is unable to share the same emotions that the storm chasing team have for tornados. She realises she's lost Bill to the storms and Jo. She departs.</td>
<td>Jonas and his crew symbolically drive black SUVs. Unlike the Hardings, he has no intuition for storm chasing, relying instead on his expensive computer equipment. When a massive tornado touches down, the Hardings warn Jonas not to drive on the route he has chosen, as he will be driving into danger. He ignores them, believing his interpretation of the weather is accurate and theirs is not. He is killed by the tornado.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williams 2015)

In this chapter, I have provided an explanation of the evolution of myth into fairy tale and its relationship to the disaster movie: the similarity in story structure between all three; characterisation and character functions; and the importance of the symbolism in the number three that plays as a constant motif between fairy tale and disaster movies.
In my next chapter, I return to look at the way the Hollywood moguls created their own dream factory in which the European fairy tales influenced their storytelling and how that related to the disaster movies of the time. The birth and evolvement of the disaster movie will be examined, along with the concurrent geopolitical events that coloured the types of stories told and how those stories related back to the European fairy tale.
CHAPTER FIVE

Hooray For Hollywood

(Johnny Mercer, 1937)

Earlier in this discussion I established why the creators of Hollywood leaving Europe penniless and arriving in America at the birth of the movie industry and examined the factors that forced them to move from the east coast of America to Hollywood. Combined with this I have also explored and connected how myth, fairy tale and film structures are similar and how the disaster movie structure is directly related to the fairy tale’s structure and purpose.

To further the discussion about the influence of European fairy tales, I will now look at how, after the move to Hollywood, the future moguls became The Moguls and created what has become known as The Dream Factory. They had the freedom to create their own fairy tales influenced by their previous lives in Europe. They did this by creating the stories and the worlds in which they would like to live: the wish fulfilment of the fairy tale.

I’m not sure that there was an American dream before the Jews came to Hollywood and invented it. What you have was a westward movement and you had the idea of freedom, but you didn’t have what we have today, which is a popular culture that creates dreams, that is a dream factory (Harmetz - Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

Built into the dark side of this fairy tale is the creation of the disaster movie as we know it today. Its evolvement from its European roots to the end of the Cold War will be examined in this chapter, together with the genres associated with it: genres created by the moguls and the Hollywood studio system.
1. The Dream Factory

The moguls prospered in Hollywood by creating their own studio system between the end of the First World War and 1920. By the early 1920s, they had earned the title The Moguls. They created a mythological wish fulfilment version of their own lives, which replaced the reality of the flight from persecution in their collective pasts, where their own families had been persecuted and destroyed. Their new fairy tales championed the common man and an open, equal society and patriotism (see Hollywood Moguls n.d., Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism & The American Dream 1998).

Their personal stories were highly popular, but what really resonated with the common people was that their own were like Cinderella stories: they were the underdog immigrant who succeeded and became American royalty. Hollywood was the very embodiment of this magical success. Jowett writes, "One reason for its stars becoming national idols was that they represented a new type of hero for Americans at that time, a folk hero in a society whose ethos rests upon 'hard work and virtuous deportment'" (Jowett 1976: 268).

The moguls brought with them the influence of the European fairy tale and its motifs of good and evil, of the socially challenged good outsider winning and overcoming evil and living happily ever after. They identified with the common man, the oppressed and disenfranchised. The outsider was at the centre of their personal mythology: the fish out of water, which is one of the major tenets of the hero myth and the fairy tale. However, whilst they identified with the common man, they extolled the virtues of the middle class. They were equally at ease making glamour films like Top Hat (1935) as they were in making gritty realism films like The Grapes of Wrath (1940).

The moguls created fantasies of their own lives by creating an America where families are strong with the loving mother at its centre (the Hardy Family film series 1937-1946), which is in direct contrast to the European Christian fairy tales of the absent mother/evil stepmother-witch of Cinderella and Snow White. They also made films that portrayed a rampaging oppressor against
vulnerable innocents: one example is the genre of the western, which is a flashback to the experiences they and their families suffered whilst living through the pogroms. They portrayed on screen a mythical America, a land of boundless optimism and home spun truths, a land of broad verandas and white picket fences, gleaming streets with shiny friendly windows.

When I was growing up I thought that this was a true depiction of America. I discovered that my husband had felt the same way to such an extent that when he first visited that country in the late 1970s, he was very surprised to find that outside of New England, very few places actually had the broad verandas and white picket fences.

The moguls created the images and icons and the visual forms that we now identify as the American way of life. In fact, they created the most flourishing factory of popular mythology since the ancient Greeks: "a factory of the world’s daydreams" (see Cooke 1973: 319, Jews, Hollywoodism & The American Dream 1998).

These men had phenomenal power to shape society. For example, by the 1930s, seventy five per cent of Americans went to the cinema at least once a week. Rosenbaum observes it has been defined as, "a religion: the cinema a temple of worship, the screen larger than life, and the actors the new gods" (Rosenbaum - Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism & The American Dream 1998).

They realised from very early on that their audiences were in awe and entranced by European disaster movies, like The Last Days of Pompeii (1908) and Quo Vadis? (1913).
It wasn't only pre-World War I audiences who were in awe of what those early masters of cinema could do. In 1927, the French filmmaker, Abel Gance, released his film, Napoléon, which included triptychs: a wide-screen image made up of three synchronised standard images. I saw this film half a century later at the Sydney Film Festival where we had learnt that we would be watching the film on three screens. There was also a live orchestra playing throughout the screening. The first two acts were projected on one screen, which was somewhat disappointing. However, I was absolutely enthralled and awed at the sight and sound of when the left hand and right hand side curtains of the screen rose in unison and two more projectors started in sync with the main projector to see this magnificent production on all three screens. It really did take my breath away.

Italy had been the leader in making disaster movies up to the First World War. However, its influence waned during the war years. In that time, Hollywood had been able to fill that void as it had the financial wherewithal and the creativity to give the audiences what they wanted.

2. The Creation of the Film Genre System

Once the moguls established Hollywood and the studio system, the studios began to group their productions into standard narrative forms, which became known as 'genres', the most prominent of which were the home-grown
genres of the musical, the western and the gangster film. The system also
included horror movies, screwball comedies and war films.

The system of constructing a ‘narrative image’ for each individual film,
its genre, was central to the practices of Hollywood. Ellis states:

*An idea of the film is widely circulated and promoted, an idea which can be
called the “narrative image” of the film, the cinema’s anticipatory reply to the

Metz describes how, "Each genre had its regular scriptwriters, sometimes on a
yearly contract, its directors, its craftsmen, its studios" (Metz 1974: 122).

Despite the common features of the system as a whole, individual
movies began to acquire a clearly identifiable house style that greatly helped in
their marketing and advertising both at home and overseas. In addition, each
studio had its own particular character, which was often a reflection of the
mogul or moguls who ran that particular studio (Puttnam 1997: 174).

During the 1930s for example, Warner Brothers became renowned for its
parsimonious approach to production costs and star salaries, turning out a
stream of gritty gangster movies like *Public Enemy* (1931), *Little Caesar* (1931)
and *Angels With Dirty Faces* (1938),

![James Cagney in Public Enemy (1931) (Warner Bros)](image)
whereas MGM specialised in classy upmarket films such as *Grand Hotel* (1932), *Mata Hari* (1931) and *Queen Christina* (1933). It was known as the Tiffany’s of the movie business, named after the opulent New York store. Darryl Zanuck’s predilection for costume epics at Twentieth Century-Fox led to his studio being nicknamed ‘Sixteenth Century-Fox’ (Puttnam 1997: 174-5).

![Fig 24: Greta Garbo in *Queen Christina* (1933) (MGM)](image)

Neale defines ‘Genre’ as a French word meaning ‘type’ or ‘kind’. On occasion, the term ‘sub-genre’ has also been used, generally to refer to specific traditions or groupings within these genres, as in romantic comedy, slapstick comedy, and gothic horror. He goes on to quote Barry Keith Grant:

*Stated simply, genre movies are those commercial feature films which, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations. They have been exceptionally significant in establishing the popular sense of cinema as a cultural and economic institution, particularly in the US, where Hollywood studios early on adopted an industrial model based on mass production* (cited in Neale 2000: 9).

Altman states that genre is a complex concept with multiple meanings:

- genre as blueprint, as a formula that precedes, programs and patterns industry production;
- genre as structure, as the formal framework on which individual films are founded;
- genre as label as the name of a category centre to the decisions and communications of distributors and exhibitors;
- genre as contract, as the viewing position required by each genre film of its audience (Altman 1999: 14).

Schatz explains that film genres ‘express the social and aesthetic sensibilities not only of Hollywood filmmakers but of the mass audience as well’ (cited in Altman 1999: 14). In the 1920s, virtually every film was identified as either a melodrama or a comedy. By the 1940s, films were regularly identified by sub-genres, such as comedy melodrama, juvenile comedy, or comedy-fantasy.

Some sample major genres include Westerns, Science Fiction, Melodrama, Gangster movies, Musicals, War films, and more recently Disaster films, and so on. Williams explains that the phrase ‘genre films’ is mostly synonymous with the phrase ‘film narrative’ (cited in Neale 2000: 20).

Film theorists have explored the notion that genre, whether it is literary or filmic, is closely allied to myth. For instance, Altman believes that even more than Jungian psychology, Lévi-Straussian influence on literary structuralism heavily contributed to a persistent tendency either to compare genre to myth or to treat genres as current embodiments of myth (Altman 1999: 19).

Leach shares a similar view:

*Mythological systems, for Lévi-Strauss, have crucial similarities to language systems. They operate according to a set of codes and conventions. Lévi-Strauss took what was in the end, after the wonderful ingenuity of his formal analyses, a functionalist view of myth: myths ‘express’ unconscious wishes which are somehow inconsistent with conscious experience…* (Leach 1974: 57-8).

Schatz summises that, "in the final analysis, the relationship of genre filmmaking to cultural myth-making seems to be to be significant and direct" (cited in Altman 1999: 263).
The repetitive and cumulative nature of genre films makes them predictable. The substance and the ending of most genre films not only can be predicted by the end of the first reel, but the repeated formulaic use of familiar stars usually makes them predictable on the basis of the title and credits alone (Schatz, cited in Altman 1999: 25); for example, James Cagney as the gangster or John Wayne as the cowboy.

It was from this system that the disaster movie evolved into what we have today. However, there had to be a beginning, a prototype disaster genre.

3. The Prototype Disaster Movies

The disaster movie as we know it today in Phase 5 of its development has, as the central focus, a disaster where the whole film is predicated around that disaster. However, in its infancy in Phase 2, the disaster was just one component and not the central core of the film.

The disaster genre has tended to progress through identifiable twenty year cycles, commencing in the 1910s (see Keane 2006). At a time when audiences were drawn towards the sheer novelty of cinema, a number of Roman epics were produced in Italy between 1908 and 1914. They set off the first notable cycle of disaster films, the most significant being *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1908 and 1913), *The Fall of Troy* (1910), *Quo Vadis?* (1913) and *Cabiria* (1914). The early disaster movies existed mainly as visual spectacles and were so successful in America and the rest of Europe that their disaster sequences, such as in the first two versions of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, would go on to be recycled in other remakes and other films throughout the 1910s and 1920s (Keane 2006: 6).

These early blockbusters had several things in common including expense, length, a focus on ‘weighty’, ‘important’, or epic-mythical subject matter and largeness in the staging of the spectacular events on screen. Crowds were attracted to the Italian epics such as *The Fall of Troy* (*La caduta di Troia,*
1910) and *Quo Vadis?* (1913), which offered a scale of events and production values that dwarfed the more routine cinematic fare. It was these Italian pre-World War One films, according to Neale (2000) that helped establish the multi-reel feature as a format (see Keane 2006: 115, Neale 2000: 85-86).

The American film industry’s response to these European-made films was to make their own, amongst them D.W. Griffith’s *Judith of Bethulia* (1913), *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), and the tradition of biblical historical epics in the studio era most commonly associated with the films of Cecil B. DeMille (Keane 2006: 115), such as *The Ten Commandments* (1923).

These films derived their generic and industrial traditions from the early 1910s and beyond. In the period between 1910 and 1914, large scale historical and ancient-world films, often made in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, helped establish the multi-reel feature as a format (Neale 2000: 85-86).

They became known as epics. The term was first coined in express relation to historical disaster films of the late 1930s (Keane 2006: 6). However, it came to be popularly embraced in the 1950s and 1960s to identify and sell two overlapping contemporary trends: films with historical, especially ancient-world settings; and large-scale films of all kinds which used new technologies, high production values and special modes of distribution and exhibition to
differentiate themselves both from routine productions and from alternative forms of contemporary entertainment, especially television (Altman 1999: 95).

It was another twenty years before the prototype disaster movies reappeared and began to establish themselves as something resembling today’s genre.

4. The 1930s: The Beginning of Narrative Disaster Films

The 1930s saw the first real wave of narrative disaster films from the major Hollywood studios.

4.i. Context

The unsettled world events of that decade may have played a part in why these stories began to flourish in this decade. In addition to the Great Depression, the political landscape in Europe was changing: Hitler was appointed German Chancellor in 1933 and two years later, began his massive military build-up; Italy invaded Ethiopia at the same time; and in 1936, the Spanish civil war began. In the Soviet Union, Stalin’s purges resulted in millions of deaths and imprisonment in slave labour camps and in 1937, Japan invaded China. Austria was annexed in 1938 whilst Germany and the US severed diplomatic relations (Phillips 1999: 524-526). It was a time of economic depression coupled with the fear and dread of another world war.

While the Depression brought many industries to a standstill, Hollywood thrived selling entertainment, spectacle and sheer escapism (Keane 2006: 7). Producers, understanding the appeal of catastrophes, created palatable fictionalised works based on real events, altering the acts of each to include a romantic subplot or a greater degree of melodrama. They were able to utilise the improvements in film technology such as sound and special effects to add to the spectacle of the disaster (Kay & Rose 2000: 2).
The 1930s disaster cycle is distinctive in two ways. Keane explains:

Firstly, in contrast to the intermittent and increasingly standard stream of epics produced throughout the 1920s, the 1930s provided for an identifiably new and concentrated trend; secondly, we can now distinguish 'disaster films' from Roman and biblical epics, in the sense that the term was first coined in express relation to historical disaster films of the late 1930s (Keane 2006: 6).

In contrast to the ancient-world epics, however, a number of much more ‘realistic’ films taking place in recent historical settings constituted the first identifiable cycle of disaster films from 1936 to 1939. The formative film in this respect is San Francisco (1936), based on the ‘Great Quake’ of 1906 (Neale 2004: 7).

The disaster movie could now encompass a variety of genres that became a reflection of the times in which it was made.

5. Historical Disaster Genre

It is thought the earthquake film Deluge (1933) may be the earliest big studio disaster film. Kay and Rose (2000) note it is not difficult to assume that the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 had influenced its filmmakers. Although this title is currently hidden away in a film vault and is unavailable, it was an extremely successful film in its day (2). The films San Francisco (1936) and In
Old Chicago (1937) met with even greater financial success. Another earthquake/flood picture called The Rains Came (1939) was also made during this period.

Irving Thalberg dreamed up the idea of San Francisco. He knew the film was a winner when he saw the preview. The economy had started to improve and those first instincts to quit a city where earthquakes can happen had passed over: San Francisco played very well in California. Thalberg recalls: "It was an early dynamic in moviegoing that we, the chumps, would pay money to test our own fears, to imagine our courage" (cited in Thomson 2005: 235). Thomson adds:

*And there was also that stealthy possibility growing that reality was not all it had been cracked up to be, that it might be something that stayed on a screen – like the screen where, one day, airliners slice into towers one morning in New York and we wonder what movie that was* (Thomson 2005: 235).

With big stars and a spectacular climax, San Francisco set the standard for a number of similar historical disaster productions, principally In Old Chicago (1937), Suez (1938), The Rains Came (1939), and the ‘Great Quake’ itself re-emerging in Flame of the Barbary Coast in 1945 (Keane 2006: 7).

San Francisco paved the way for Gone with the Wind (1939) because both films are essentially melodramas ending in scenes of destruction. Keane asserts that while the burning of Atlanta is one of many spectacular delights in Gone with the Wind, San Francisco is almost entirely predicated around its impending earthquake, which provides the film with a definite resolution. I disagree with his assertion regarding San Francisco because the earthquake is not the cause of the onscreen story. However, I do agree when he adds that what happens in San Francisco’s saloon is much more important than what happens with the San Andreas fault-line. When proprietor Clark Gable punches the priestly Spencer Tracy after Jeanette MacDonald’s risqué dance number, the moral implications are that San Francisco deserves everything that is going to happen to it (Keane 2006: 7-8). The moral aspect is a characteristic that appears in many subsequent disaster movies as discussed in chapter 4.
In Old Chicago probably best typifies the commercial drive of the 1930s historical disaster movie cycle as it was an obvious attempt by Twentieth Century-Fox to try and outdo MGM’s San Francisco. It cost $2 million dollars to make as opposed to San Francisco’s $1.3 million budget and was based on the equally spectacular historical Great Chicago Fire of 1871. However, as Keane opines, all that this competing film forgot to do was to make its characters interesting (Keane 2006: 9).

John Ford’s film The Hurricane (1937) followed. Its trailer had the caption, ‘The Most Spectacular Scenes Ever Shot By Man’ emblazoned across the screen (United Artists 1937). Another earthquake/flood picture, The Rains Came (1939) was made during this period.

6. An Expanded Genre is Born: The Disaster Movie

The disaster films of the 1930s began to evolve and encompass genres other than the historical drama/disaster and the biblical/epic disaster by utilising motifs from the science fiction (sci fi), horror, action-adventure and melodrama genres. This began the birthing process of what we now consider is the disaster genre:

6.i. Science Fiction (Sci Fi)

As a term, ‘science fiction’ was first used in the Nineteenth Century but only became fully established in the late 1920s in and around American pulp magazines like Amazing Stories and Science Wonder Stories (James 1994: 7-11). Richard Hodgens (1959) defines science fiction as:

Science Fiction involved extrapolated or fictitious science, or fictitious use of scientific possibilities, or it may be simply fiction that takes place in the future or introduces some radical assumption about the present or the past (cited in Cook & Bernink 1999: 191).
From a very early time in screen history, the genre was a perfect vehicle for ‘trick films’ like *The X-Ray Mirror* (1899). In 1910 the first film version of *Frankenstein* (1910)

[Image: Fig 27: *Frankenstein* (1910) (Edison Films)]

helped establish a link between sci fi and horror in the cinema, a link that was to be reforged in Gothic mode in the 1930s, in apocalyptic mode in the 1950s, and in body horror mode since the late 1960s (Cook & Bernink 1999: 192). A tradition of large-scale speculations on the future of modern society, as allegories in science fictional form about its current condition, was established in Europe by films such as *Metropolis* (1926), *Le Fin du monde* (1930) and *Things to Come* (1936) (Cook & Bernink 1999: 192).
An international spread of sci-fi and fantasy films specifically featuring scenes of disaster and destruction were also released in the 1930s, principally *King Kong* (1933), *End of the World* (1930), *Atlantis* (1932), *Transatlantic Tunnel* (1935), and *Things to Come* (1936) (Neale 2006: 7).

6.ii. Action-Adventure

‘Action-adventure’ is not a new term. It was used by the journal, *The Film Daily*, in 1927 to describe a Douglas Fairbanks film called *The Gaucho* (1927) (27 November 1927: 6):
The term ‘action-adventure’ has been used to pinpoint a number of motifs common to those genres and films: spectacular physical activity, a narrative structure involving fights, chases and explosions, state of the art special effects, and an emphasis in performance on athletic feats and stunts (Cook & Bernink 1999: 229).

Used separately, the terms ‘action’ and ‘adventure’ have an even longer history, and films in the action-adventure tradition have been a staple in Hollywood’s output since the 1910s (Cook & Bernink 1999: 230). As they explain:

> the term ‘action-adventure’ has been used to pinpoint a number of motifs common to those genres and films: a propensity for spectacular physical activity, a narrative structure involving fights, chases and explosions, and in addition to the deployment of state of the art special effect, and an emphasis in performance on athletic feats and stunts (Cook & Bernink 1999: 229).

With its immediate roots in Nineteenth Century melodrama, action-adventure has always encompassed an array of genres and sub-types: disaster movies, westerns, swashbucklers, war movies, space operas, epics, safari films, jungle films, and so on. Sobchak succinctly describes the action-adventure and in doing so, is describing the hero’s journey myth:

> All non-comic genre films are based on the structure of the romance of medieval literature: a protagonist either has or develops great and special skills and overcomes insurmountable obstacles in extraordinary situations to successfully achieve some desired goal, usually the restitution of order to the world invoked by the narrative. The protagonists confront the human, natural, or supernatural powers that have improperly assumed control over the world and eventually defeat them (Sobchack 1988: 9, cited in Cook & Bernink 1999: 230).

Its basic narrative structure, meanwhile, gives rise to two characteristic variations. ‘One focuses on the lone hero – the swashbuckler, the explorer who searches for the golden idol, the great hunter who leads the expedition, the lord
of the jungle’. The other, the ‘survival’ form, most apparent in war films, prison films and especially disaster films, ‘focuses on a hero interacting with a microcosmic group: the sergeant of a patrol, the leader of a squadron, the person who leads a group of castaways out of danger and back to civilisation’ (Cook & Bernink 1999: 230-231).

6.iii. Melodrama

This is the genre of the times in which we live. Colloquially, it has been described as ‘chick flicks’ or women’s films when relating to cinema, and soap operas when referring to television. It can also refer to over-dramatic acting and story plot. It is a dramatic work in which the plot, which is typically sensational and designed to appeal strongly to the emotions, takes precedence over the characterisation (Brooks 1995: xv). Singer argues that, "melodrama consistently displays "key constitutive factors": pathos, overwrought or heightened emotion, moral polarization (good vs. evil)” (2001: 44-53). However, it was one of the first genres created by the Hollywood system. Dirks defines melodrama films as

*a sub-type of drama films, characterized by a plot to appeal to the heightened emotions of the audience. Melodrama, a combination of drama and melos (music), literally means "play with music." The themes of dramas, the oldest literary and stage art form, were exaggerated within melodramas, and the liberal use of music often enhanced their emotional plots (Dirks 2011).*

Neale believes that the kinship between Nineteenth Century melodrama and Hollywood’s genres of action and suspense is also apparent in their actions and situations, and in the passions and emotions they help generate and bring to the fore (2000: 197). He goes on to say that melodrama’s actions and situations include:

* bodies roped to railway lines, heroes in cellars where tidewater is rising, circular saws or steam hammers threatening the lives of helpless victims, early Christians about to be thrown to the lions, sinking ships…earthquakes,*
volcanoes, tempest, fire and floor (Disher 1954: 1), all of which are much more reminiscent of thrillers and action films, of disaster films, and even of biblical epics, of films like No Man’s Gold (1926), The Towering Inferno, Quo Vadis (Neale 2000: 197-198).

In terms of being made in the Depression years, these films can be read as either providing escapism or dramatising moral and material decline, and as a reflection on European decadence and ennui leading up to the Second World War (Neale 2000: 7).

7. The 1940s

For the next decade, few disaster movies followed this intense decade of releases, with the exception of Titanic (1943), a German Nazi propaganda film that went unseen by most of the world until some of whose shots were used in the British-made Titanic disaster, A Night to Remember (1958) (Matte Shot n.d.). The war in Europe and the Pacific provided real disasters and there was no stomach to go to the movies and see manufactured ones.

Gritty realism films on grittier topics replaced the disaster movie. From the end of the Second World War and through the second half of the 1940s Hollywood produced a series of ‘message’ films, which were largely a continuation of the type of thematic exploration begun during the Depression, and perfected during the war. Movies like The Best Years of Our Lives (1946), Gentleman’s Agreement (1948), and Knock on Any Door (1949) explored a darker side of American life: unemployment, corruption, anti-Semitism, racial prejudice and crime (Jowett 1976: 366).

Audiences were also treated to films that looked at politics in All the King’s Men (1948), the medical treatment of insanity in The Snake Pit (1948), and alcoholism in The Lost Weekend (1945). The growing Communist menace was also explored in films such as The Iron Curtain (1948), The Red Menace (1949), and The Red Danube (1950). Hollywood also started to explore the world of the African American with movies like Home of the Brave (1949), Intruder in the Dust.
(1949), and Lost Boundaries (1949). In addition to these, a whole genre of films, now called film noir, came out of the American studio system in the early 1940s: The Maltese Falcon (1941), The Killers (1946), Cry of the City (1949), and Nightmare Alley (1947).

Gone were the fairy tale wish fulfillment films of what has become known as the Golden Age of Hollywood (the decade of the 1930s) and the young disaster movie genre lay dormant until after the start of the next decade, when it re-emerged slightly morphed from its previous incarnations.

8. The 1950s

Social anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker visited Hollywood and made this observation:

The public of 1950 will “buy” two kinds of pictures: those which state at the outset that they concern real human beings reacting to recognisable situation and which follow through to recognisably valid conclusion; and those which state in one way or another at the outset that they are really kidding and intend to entertain without reflecting life. These are the fantasies, the farces, the fairy tales. They must be labelled as such (Powdermaker 1950: 46).

Even visiting the cinema was to experience a fairy tale, especially with the way in which films were exhibited. The large-scale films would be 'roadshown': a term Hollywood gave to showing these films for months at a time at upmarket cinemas. The practice, begun in the 1920s, continued through the 1950s and early 1960s. This created an aura of exclusivity (Neale 2002: 2).

| During the 1950s and early 1960s, my family and I would make a day out of travelling to London’s West End where all the roadshow cinemas showing films like The Ten Commandments were located. My parents took me to see that film at a 'posh' cinema. I recall the curtains opening and continuing to open and open forever to reveal a very different screen size from our local suburban fleapit. My memory is of lots of gold embossing on the walls and light fittings, chandeliers, |

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mirrors, red carpets, rich velvet curtains, plush seating, ornately decorated Wurlitzer organs and glossy film programs. Even the ice cream we bought from the ice cream lady, as she came around in the intermission with her tray of little tubs of delight, was far superior to our local cinema. The splendour of the setting, I’m sure, has had a long and lasting effect on my memory of the films I saw at these cinemas.

The 1950s are most notable for the renewed popularity of ancient world epics and saw remakes such as Quo Vadis? (1951) and The Ten Commandments (1956). The decade allowed for:

*very pointed developments, with the usual meditations on decadence and destruction now located within the context of the Cold War. As most evident in DeMille’s prologue to The Ten Commandments, at a time when an increasingly Christian and evangelist America would be set against atheistic Communism, and the establishment of the state of Israel was to lead to renewed conflict between the Arab world and the West, religious epics were to take on greater ideological significance than ever before (Telotte 2001: 9).*

![Moses (Charlton Heston) parts the Red Sea in The Ten Commandments (1956) (Paramount)](image)

It was a time when people felt comforted by the familiarity of biblical heroes and leaders in uncertain post war times.

Musicals experienced their second ‘golden age’ in the late 1940s and 1950s with MGM producing a series of memorable contributions to the genre:
Easter Parade (1948), On the Town (1949), An American in Paris (1951), Oklahoma (1955), and The King and I (1956).

This decade also saw the start of escapist material, which increased, with films like Angels in the Outfield (1951), The Greatest Show on Earth (1952) and All About Eve (1950),

but by the late 1940s/early 1950s, political pressure on Hollywood from the House UnAmerican Activities Committee forced the industry to become more cautious about what themes it allowed its directors to explore (Jowett 1976: 367). Filmmakers had to hide themes in a genre that would be seen as fantasy: sci fi.
9. The Spawn of the Cold War: Resurrection of the Sci Fi/Disaster Movie

This was the time of the re-emergence of the disaster movie in the guise of sci fi films, and Phase 3 of its development. These films were brought about by the nagging fears of the possibility of atomic conflict that plagued Americans. These fears were examined in films such as *Five* (1951) which looked at survival after the holocaust and also at race relations; *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)
that prophesied doom if the world did not cease its atomic arms race; *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) which was seen as an allegory of the Communist invasion by posing a similar threat from outer space; and *On the Beach* (1959) which showed a look at the end of the world after a series of atomic explosions. A similar theme, including the racial issue again, was examined in *The World, The Flesh and the Devil* (1957) (Jowett 1976: 368-369).

Sontag (1969) observes that these sci fi films and most of the comics of the time had an essentially innocent relationship to disaster. Mainly they offered new versions of the hero myth or monomyth: the strong and invulnerable hero with a mysterious lineage comes to do battle on behalf of good against evil (Sontag 1969: 215).

Generalised disaster as a fantasy was the way one was released from normal obligations. For instance, the trump card of the end-of-the-world movies like *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1962) is the scene where New York or London or Tokyo are discovered empty, their entire populations annihilated; or, as in *The World, The Flesh, and The Devil* (1957), the whole movie can be devoted to the fantasy of occupying the deserted metropolis and starting all over again, a world Robin Crusoe.

Another kind of satisfaction these films supply is extreme moral simplification: a morally acceptable fantasy where one can give expression to cruel or at least amoral feelings. In this respect, Sontag (1969) believes that sci fi films partly overlap with horror films:

> this is the undeniable pleasure we derive from looking at freaks, beings excluded from the category of the human. The same things happen in sci fi films. In the figure of the monster from outer space, the freakish, the ugly and the predatory all converge and provide a fantasy target for righteous bellicosity to discharge itself, and for the aesthetic enjoyment of suffering and disaster. Sci fi films are one of the purest forms of spectacle, that is, we are rarely inside anyone’s feelings, except for *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957). We are merely spectators: we watch (Sontag 1969: 215).
My mother used to be given free weekly tickets to the local cinema near where we lived in North London in return for displaying the cinema’s poster in her front window. Every Monday afternoon she would go to the movies and take me with her regardless of the film being shown. My earliest horror film, which gave me nightmares in weeks to come, was The Incredible Shrinking Man. I was only a small child at the time and found myself living through each scene in story order every night in my dreams until the very last scene. Decades later, I saw the film again on television and was able to recall it in great, vivid detail. It was a world of nightmare that still haunts me to this day … even now I wonder just how small the man would shrink after the on-screen story had ended and what new terrors would he face being the size of a microbe?

These disaster sci fi films were largely produced in low budget B formats, designed for a predominantly teenage audience. The decade saw Earth or humanity constantly threatened by aliens in films such as The Thing (1951), also known as The Thing (From Another World), War of the Worlds (1953) and Earth vs. the Flying Saucers (1956). Alternatively the danger came from humanity’s own creations, usually the bizarre offspring of radiation experiments, as in The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms (1953), Them! (1954) and Gojira (1954) (King & Krzywinska 2000: 4-6).

1950s disaster sci fi content also suggested that people were being ‘substituted’ or ‘depersonalised’ as a result of alien encounters, a phenomenon explored in It Came From Outer Space (1953) and The Brain Eaters (1958). King and Krzywinska (2000) explain how the ‘meaning’ of these films offers a good example of the different interpretations that can sometimes be made of popular sci fi. For example, the original Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) could be read in terms of the air of paranoia created by McCarthyite America in the 1950s, while the remake in 1978 evokes something of the 1970s post-Watergate era. Both versions leave the end open and the threat unchecked. At the same time the idea that people might be ‘taken over’ in this brain-numbing manner, King and Krzywinska have related to concerns much closer to home: the fear
expressed by some sociologists that 1950s America was sinking into a morass of suburban conformity and complacency (King & Krzywinska 2000: 51).

Some 1950s films, such as *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1953), were presented as more ‘serious’ and ‘respectable’ than the routine drive-in fodder, but many of the low-budget, comic book style films of the decade are now regarded as camp or trash classics. Examples such as *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (1958) and *Queen of Outer Space* (1958) are celebrated for their low quality and exaggerated depiction of gender (King & Krzynska 2000: 51).

In their own way, these films were the fairy tales of their time. The Big Bad Wolf or the bad witch represents the Communists and the threat of nuclear annihilation. The order and harmony of the community is destroyed by possible abduction of our heroes by these extra-terrestrial villains ... or Communists! It is the fight of good against evil: one of the main themes of fairy tales.

In discussing the birth and development of the disaster movie up to the middle of the Twentieth Century, I have shown how the Hollywood moguls responded to the realisation that audiences liked the spectacle and awe created by catastrophes. This realisation led to the genesis of the disaster movie. I have explored the systemisation of genres by the studios, and how the disaster genre grew out of this system and morphed with the times, leading to a new take on the disaster movie during the 1930s and the Cold War years of the 1950s.

The Cold War years were the beginning of the end for the moguls and the start of the era we now know as New Hollywood. It was set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and heralded in the age of the blockbuster movies. This will be examined in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX

The Day the Tectonic Plates Beneath the Back Lots Began to Shift...

(apologies to Biskind 1999: 14).

The Hollywood moguls realised that audiences liked the spectacle and awe created by catastrophes. This realisation led to the genesis of the disaster movie and its development during the 1930s and the Cold War years of the 1950s. In this chapter, we must turn our attention to a different America: one set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War. This heralded the age of the blockbuster disaster movie but before that, we need to look at the end of Hollywood and the birth of New Hollywood.

1. The End of the Moguls – A New Era

The rise of the Cold War coincided with the beginning of the end for the moguls. The fairy tale that they had created for themselves and cinemagoers was changing. The fear that had haunted them and their ancestors of danger, not belonging, and persecution reared its ugly head during the McCarthy witch-hunt for communists, specifically in Hollywood as McCarthy believed it was the key influence on American culture.

After their appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947, the moguls began to lose control of the Hollywood they created (see Gabler 1989: 362, Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).
Many of them stayed in charge of their studios until the 1950s and into the 1960s, before retirement, death or re-organisations removed them from the top (Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

In order to understand how paranoid the moguls were about needing to belong and be part of the fairy tale they had created, we need to look at the events that led not only to the breaking up of the powerbase they had built, but the anti-Semitic persecution leading up to and post Second World War. All of that, plus the communist witch-hunts, heightened the need for them to revert back to the escapist material that had served them so well before the war. Unfortunately, audiences after the war had moved on but the moguls had not.

1.i. Approaching Storm Clouds

The moguls had formed five major companies in Hollywood: MGM, RKO, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, and Paramount Pictures. These studios controlled a large number of subsidiaries such as film laboratories, lithographing concerns, radio manufacturing subsidiaries, music publishing houses, real estate companies, booking agencies, broadcasting corporations, and recording studios. However, the real backbone of each studio’s monopoly was the formation and control of production, distribution
and exhibition, known as vertical integration. The Federal Trade Commission and the Anti-Trust Division of the Department of Justice began to investigate this three-way control of the film industry during the 1930s (Powdermaker 1950: 47-48).

In 1938, the studios found themselves facing the US Supreme Court. It was the government’s first challenge to vertical integration. After the Second World War the US Supreme Court outlawed the practice of vertical integration. Exhibition was separated from production and distribution by the ruling of 1948, providing a model for other countries to follow, although some did not do so until well into the 1970s (Turner 1996: 17).

Adding to the Hollywood mogul’s woes was their concern at the growing power of Germany and the persecution of Jews by Hitler and the Nazis. However, most of them did not want to draw attention to their own Jewishness. Berg points out that like most American Jews at that time, Sam Goldwyn remained silent on the subject of religion because 'he didn’t want to make waves'. This reticence to speak out might have been due to the surging feeling of nationalism and mass hatred generated by the First World War, which manifested in fear of communism, suppression of civil liberties, anti-Semitism, and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan (Berg 1989: 311).

At the end of the 1930s the moguls were afraid of warning American audiences about Nazi activities because they did not want to stand out. They felt that any warning would look as if it was only given from a special Jewish angle and would look parochial. As a result, it was hard to make anti-Nazi movies in Hollywood for this desire not 'to make waves' (Whitfield - Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1989).

Only two anti-Nazi films were made before the war: The Great Dictator, made and financed by Charlie Chaplin in 1940, and Confessions of a Nazi Spy (1939). Chaplin was neither Jewish nor American so he did not share the fears of the moguls. Warner Brothers made Confessions of a Nazi Spy (1939) only after their Jewish representative in Germany was beaten to death by Nazi henchmen. However, the film makes no mention of anti-Semitism or Jews (Jews, Movies,
Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998). Sam Goldwyn and his brothers tried to get their remaining relatives out of Poland, but it was too late. Those who had not already left were subsequently sentenced to concentration camps, where they all perished (Berg 1989: 345).

Before the release of Confessions of a Nazi Spy, Harry and Jack received a threat that they would be 'executed' if the movie made it to the screen. They were also told that the theatre where the film was to be shown would be blown up. Harry gave a speech at a St. Patrick’s Day dinner in 1939:

I wonder what is happening when I hear of American radicals wearing a foreign emblem on their sleeves and drilling and marching in a foreign style – with the goose-step! And so our producing company is making right now a picture revealing the astonishing length to which Nazi spies have gone in America. We are making this – and we will make more like it, no doubt, when the occasion arises. We have disregarded, and we will continue to disregard, threats and pleas intended to dissuade us from our purpose. We have defied, and we will continue to defy, any elements that may try to turn us from our loyal and sincere purpose of serving America (Warner Sperling 2008: 233).

Joseph P. Kennedy, the father of the future president, John F. Kennedy, was the US Ambassador to Britain at the time. He was against his country becoming involved in a war with Germany and in 1939, tendered his resignation.

When he reached Hollywood on 13 November, he said at a lunch in his honour that America should limit its aid to Britain so as not to jeopardise itself in the event of an Axis victory. Then he filled the room with the fear of God by telling them to, "stop making anti-Nazi pictures or using the film medium to promote or show sympathy to the cause of the ‘democracies’ versus the ‘dictators’" (Berg 1989: 346). He said that anti-Semitism was growing in England and that the Jews were being blamed for the war. He continued, "Any Jewish outrages would make the world feel that a ‘Jewish War’ was going on...Hitler liked movies and would want America to continue producing them, but you’re going to have to get those Jewish names off the screen" (Berg 1989: 346).
One of the lunchtime guests, Ben Hecht, observed,

*As a result of Kennedy’s cry for silence all of Hollywood’s top Jews went around with their grief hidden like a Jewish fox under their Gentile vests. In New York, the influential Jews I met had also espoused the Kennedy hide-your-Jewish-head psychology* (cited in Berg 1989: 346).

Once again, the moguls were reminded of their ‘outsider’ status and the fear that brought. However, on 7 December 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and America was dragged into the Second World War. The moguls would have a new opportunity to prove their patriotism to their new country in the rousing films they made during the war such as *Casablanca* (1942), *Destination Tokyo* (1943), *Mission to Moscow* (1943), *Marine Raiders* (1944) and *They Were Expendable* (1945).

**1.ii. The Cold War**

To the moguls’ surprise, elements of the American Government after the war saw their patriotism as thinly disguised Communism. Now at the height of their success, the moguls saw it all crumbling away. Although economic factors played a role in their demise, it was the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) that really brought them down. The advent of the Cold War led to HUAC condemning the sorts of films Hollywood made about Russian life, films that President Roosevelt had encouraged them to make during the Second World War. On 27 October 1947 the House Un-American Activities Committee began its investigation of Communist influence in Hollywood (Jowett 1976: 368). The key antagonist in HUAC was Senator Joe McCarthy.

Lipset believes that McCarthy was a symbol of rebellion: "He defied authority, ruled American politics by tantrums and melodrama, was publicly truculent, aggressive, ill-mannered and paranoid" (Lipset 1962: 447 - 448). McCarthy was the ‘shock jock’ of his day to the many Americans of no
particular social group who projected onto him their response to the problems of the real world. For those who felt McCarthy was speaking the truth, the world was bristling with Communist expansion. The radical right also used anti-Semitism as a rightist functional equivalent for the socialist attack on capitalism. The Jewish banker replaced the exploiting capitalist as the scapegoat (Lipset 1962: 447 448).

Rabbie Edgar Magnin, in referring to the HUAC, said:

_There was no doubt in my mind that the committee was out to get Jews. Those Americans who blamed Jews for ‘creating the war’, now wanted their pound of flesh. Anti-Communism may have been on their tongues, but anti-Semitism was on many of their minds. To give impetus to their cause, they turned not to that industry most riddled with Communists but to one almost exclusively dominated by Jews, one guaranteed to draw headlines_ (Berg 1989: 433).

Abraham L. Polonsky, a director/screenwriter who was blacklisted by HUAC, said that the prospect of being accused of being Communists and un-American "scared the shit" out of the moguls as they had thought they had at last been accepted as Americans (Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

Louis B. Mayer felt with the HUAC that he was caught in the middle. He was a certified enemy of the left, whilst many in the right felt he was insufficiently zealous in persecuting the leftists in his employ (Berg 1989: 391).

Jack Warner too had his share of problems with HUAC. Cass Warner Sperling’s father, Milton Sperling, told her about seeing Jack Warner in the studio dining room after the HUAC hearings:

_Jack had this gloomy look on his face when he sat down beside me and didn’t respond when I said hello. I knew better than to say anything when he was in one of his moods so I kept quiet. Finally he said, “Sperling, you better not eat lunch next to me, or in the same room.” I asked why and he growled, “one of us will not be eating here again.” Uh-oh, I thought. He’s mad at me for the petition I had signed to protest the committee. I got up and said, “Well, it’s your studio, _
I’m leaving.” Before I got two steps, he called me back. “We have to stick together.” Then in a desperate voice: “They’re after all of us.” (Sperling 2008: 275).

Gabler believes that:

if you looked at the moguls’ decline, you have to look at it psychologically. HUAC demonstrated that all the hard work and hopes they had put into assimilation were empty. They had, in effect, surrendered control of the industry (Gabler - Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream 1998).

Real life events had caught up with the fantasy world the moguls had created. Filmmakers expressed the fears of their audiences through making the sci fi B grade films of the 1950s whilst the moguls’ way of coping was to reinforce the fairy tale by making more and bigger musicals and in most cases, trying to ignore the onset of new technology: television. More significantly, they had lost touch with their audiences. They were mostly aged in their fifties and sixties while the bulk of their audiences were in their teens or early twenties.

Movie-going trends became diversified during this period, particularly with the emergence of the ‘youth market’. The baby boomer generation was now reaching the age where it had an impact on consumerism and where its tastes were very different from its parents. As a result, the studios began to focus on marketing pictures to American youth; in particular, the group of American teenagers described by the producer and distributor Samuel Arkoff as, "gum-chewing, hamburger-munching adolescents dying to get out of the house on a Friday or Saturday night" (Puttnam 1997: 288).

Coupled with this was a marked surge in drive-in theatre attendance in the US where the movies shown were predominantly low budget ‘teenpics’ and ‘exploitation’ films such as I Was A Teenage Werewolf (1957), Follow the Boys (1963), Gidget (1959), Sex Kittens Go to College (1960), Where the Boys Are (1960) and Beach Party (1963). Because of this ever-narrowing focus of marketing effort, a trend that continues to this day, the tastes of sixteen to twenty four year
old American males began to exercise an increasingly disproportionate influence over the kinds of films made and the way in which they were marketed (Puttnam 1997: 288).

2. The Kings are Dead, Long Live the Kings!

The moguls were literally dying out and Hollywood itself was also changing, with long held traditions being abandoned in a process of general liberalisation, such as the appointment in 1966 of Jack Valenti as head of the Motion Picture Association of America:

![Fig 36: Jack Valenti, father of the current American film ratings system (Godefroy, R.)](image)

Valenti had been a special assistant to the Democratic president, Lyndon B. Johnson and was not bound by conservative Hollywood traditions. He immediately set about abandoning the Production Code introduced by the moguls during the 1930s, which governed the use of on-screen sex and violence. With the breakdown of the Production Code and the emergence in 1968 of the new ratings system, filmmakers were experimenting with more politically subversive, sexually explicit, and/or graphically violent material (Krämer 2005: 81/22).

Valenti was not the only liberal inhabiting a position of great power in Hollywood in the 1960s. Others included Arthur Krim, one of the lawyers who had taken over United Artists in 1951, and Lew Wasserman, architect of MCA’s takeover of Decca/Universal in the early 1960s. Hollywood was changing from the top down, with the moguls’ long-held traditions being abandoned in a process of general liberalisation (Krämer 2005: 81).
The studios’ new owners often appointed relatively young top executives, mostly born in the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, from the bottom up many young filmmakers, mostly from the same age group as the new top executives, were given a chance to make major Hollywood movies in the 1960s. Their entry into the industry was partly made possible by the ageing of those veteran filmmakers whose formative years had been during the studio system of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s (Krämer 2005: 84).

The financial climate was also changing by 1960. The old studio space, once purchased so cheaply, could no longer be in constant use, not even by turning over sound stages to television production. In addition, production costs had also sky-rocketed (Thomson 2005: 317).

It was also a time when the disaster movie took a back seat to the films of the New Hollywood filmmakers and led to Phase 4 in the genre’s development.

3. New Hollywood

*It's out of control, and it's coming your way. You got about fifteen minutes.*

(Chief O’Halloran: *The Towering Inferno* 1974)

The vacuum left by the demise of the old moguls was not left empty for long. It was replaced by the New Hollywood. ‘New Hollywood’ refers to a brief window of opportunity that existed from the late 1960s to the early 1970s when an adventurous new cinema emerged, linking the traditions of classic Hollywood genre filmmaking with the stylistic innovations of European art. Bach suggests, “it was a period of productive uncertainty during which Hollywood became open to new blood and new ideas simply because no one knew for certain which direction to take” (Bach 1985: 100). It was the era of the auteur filmmaker who made films that reflected American society of that time.
My memory of this period was one of transition from childhood to adulthood. The films of the late 1950s to mid-1960s were family affairs where I would go to the cinema with my parents. They would enjoy the saccharine large-scale musicals as I became more interested in the gritty black and white British kitchen-sink dramas of the time and would lie about my age to get into a cinema to watch them. New Hollywood became a feature in my life when I became a student and started living away from home and enjoying boys. It was the time of swinging London and the Beatles. It was exciting.

4. Context

The 1960s was a decade of tremendous social change. In the US, for example, one key aspect of this change was an increasing internal division of American society between college students, their parents’ generation and non-college workers, and a polarisation of the opposing beliefs, attitudes and actions of these different social groups. Hollywood films across the 1960s and into the 1970s were affected by such developments (Krämer 2005: 68).

The real earthquake, the cultural convulsion that upended the film industry, began at the start of the 1960s when:

> the tectonic plates beneath the back lots began to shift, shattering the verities of the Cold War: the universal fear of the Soviet Union, the paranoia of the Red Scare, the menace of the bomb, freeing a new generation of filmmakers frozen in the ice of ‘50s conformity. Then came, pell-mell a series of premonitory shocks: the civil rights movement, the Beatles, the pill, Vietnam, and drugs. That combined to shake the studios badly, and send the demographic wave that was the baby boom crashing down about them (Biskind 1999: 14).

Litwak adds that in the late 1960s:

> a widening ‘generation gap’ appears in values, morals and outlook, dividing young people, especially college youth, from their parents, while a similar gap
also occurred between college students and the non-college majority (Litwak 1986: 75)

These gaps concerned attitudes about sex and race relations with students being more liberal in their attitudes towards violence. The students viewed law and order more critically than their parents and were the harshest critics of major institutions such as political parties, big business, and the military (Litwak 1986: 75). They had a vested interest as they were the ones being sent to fight in the Vietnam War, which was no concocted cinematic disaster movie or fairy tale, but a real-life disaster for them. The European fairy tale influences that the Hollywood moguls had brought with them and which they had shaped into their brand of modern day fairy tale were forgotten. The heroic hero of the hero myth and the fairy tale had disappeared only to be replaced with a more gritty realism that reflected the changes and nihilism of that era.

The films that appealed to this younger audience were mainly the work of a small group of young directors, many of whom were film school graduates like Francis Ford Coppola, who had studied at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). They all made anti-hero films such as The Graduate, Bonnie and Clyde (both 1967), 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968), Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Easy Rider, M*A*S*H and Midnight Cowboy (all 1969), Woodstock (1970) and Klute (1971).
In most of these films, the protagonists’ violent deaths were a key ingredient in the stories. While the death of protagonists was also a staple of the hit movies before the late 1960s, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and other New Hollywood successes tended to foreground its meaninglessness (Krämer 2005: 14), something which is the opposite to that found in the hero myth and fairy tales.

At its beginning, New Hollywood took us away from the world the moguls had created: of the heroic protagonist out to survive a catastrophe, to the anti-heroic protagonist who died for no real meaningful reason, something that echoed the meaninglessness of the Cold War and Vietnam. This Phase 4 period came to an end with the Manson murders (*A Decade Under the Influence* 2003) and the decline of the Flower Power Movement. The films of this era segued into Phase 5 of the disaster movie development that began in the 1970s, which mostly reversed the trend of meaningless death with movies such as *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972) and *The Towering Inferno* (1974) where the hero sacrificed himself for the good of the community and the villain died a deserved death (Krämer 2005: 63). It was from this point onwards that filmmakers reconnected to myths and fairy tale structure in disaster movies and films from most other genres.

5. The Savage Seventies (Keane 2006: 16)

The continuing anxiety about the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the loss of American dominance of the global economy, the oil crisis and the loss of faith in American government brought about by Watergate (King 2009: 154) led to
audiences wanting a change in the types of film stories on offer (John G. Avildsen - *A Decade Under The Influence* 2003). Audiences wanted heroic heroes again. Cue the disaster movie...

> No literary device in this century has earned so much for so many people. Unite a group of people in artificial surroundings – a hotel, a life boat, and airliner – and, almost automatically, you have a success on your hands - Kenneth Tynan (cited in Bordwell 2006: 95).

In the 1970s, actual disasters such as Watergate (from 1972 to 1974), the collision of two 747 planes in the Canary Islands in late March 1977, and the Three Mile Island incident in late March 1979, plus the more pervasive workaday concerns surrounding ‘the spectre of corporatism’ made the time ripe for Hollywood to contribute. Big budget disaster films provided all star casts and interlocking stories, with suspenseful action, races against time, and impending crises in locales such as aboard imperilled airliners, trains, dirigibles, crowded stadiums, sinking or wrecked ocean liners, or in towering burning skyscrapers or earthquake zones (Dirks 2015 n.p., Dixon 1999: 5). Their stories could be seen as allegories of the times in which they were told. For instance, Dixon (1999) believes that Charlton Heston taking control of the damaged plane in *Airport 1975* (1974) can be seen as a direct contrast to Richard Nixon, or the burning bodies in *The Towering Inferno* (1974) linked with the slaughter in Vietnam.
The Towering Inferno becomes roughly equivalent to Fritz Lang’s Metropolis (1926). In each film, the hub of a gigantic city collapses. In The Towering Inferno, it is an enormous skyscraper, and in Lang’s Metropolis, an underground worker’s city collapses, while frantic efforts are made by various figures of authority to re-establish order (Dixon 1999: 5).
6. The Disaster Movies of the 1970s

Where the early disaster movies, the Roman and biblical epics, took place in the ancient past, and 1950s post-apocalyptic sci fi extended to the distant future, it was the disaster movies of the 1970s that brought disaster into the present. The 1970s disaster cycle followed more modest and relatively believable disaster scenarios through action, adventure, excitement and spectacle. In part, they filled the commercial and moral vacuum left by ancient world epics, and they replaced the paranoia of the 1950s Cold War-induced sci fi films (Keane 2006: 11-13).

The established newsprint media of the time raved about the return of the good old values. For instance, when the G-rated film, Airport (1970), had received its initial roadshow release in February that year, Variety Magazine had described it as 'a handsome, often dramatically involving $10 million epitaph to a bygone brand of filmmaking'. Entertainment World found it heartening that Hollywood still occasionally surfaced from the contemporary, ‘psychedelic subculture’ and produced a successful, old-fashioned film whilst The Los Angeles Times found the film 'breathtaking in its celebration of
anything which used to work when Hollywood was younger and we were all more innocent’ (Krämer 2005: 63). It harkened back to the days of the moguls and their fairy tales.

What made this revisited form of movie so popular? It brings us back to asking the question again: why do we so consistently return to choosing thrills over safety and seeking out fear and the unlawful or inhuman when we could have security and the company of our kind and culture (Altman 1999: 154)? We like to be scared within the safety of our own homes or the darkened cinema. We like to believe that whatever the catastrophe, we, like the heroes in the disaster movie, are capable of surviving.

Viewers were promised and received emotional gratification from the viewing experience, one similar to the thrill of riding a roller coaster. The audience was taken on an exciting journey, offering them breath-taking excitement and the rush of adrenaline, all in the safety of a cinema. These movies cashed in on the public’s fascination with the tragedy of others and audience feelings were made even more intense when the films capitalised on their star power. When familiar faces are put in danger, ones to whom the audience could relate, it created a sense of emotional investment for the audience in wanting to desperately find out the fate of their favourite stars. Added to these factors and the special effects, was a reversal of the New Hollywood liberalism and realism of the 1960s where the bad guys get away with it (Rabinowitz 1997).

These story elements moulded their way into a different type of story from those of the New Hollywood era. The heroic hero replaced the anti-hero of the 1960s with stories that began again to follow the stages of the hero’s journey in myth and Propp’s fairy tale morphology mentioned (see chapters 3 and 4). Bordwell (2006) surmises the decade saw the resurrection of the fairy tale/hero myth structure in screen storytelling:

The hero or heroine dying a useless death in the films of the early New Hollywood era had come to an end. It was the time again of the hero, culminating towards the decade in the Star Wars trilogy, which some have said
The early 1970s also saw the return of a pre-New Hollywood moral logic that if we are virtuous, we will probably survive whatever the disaster. However, after *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), any big star could die in one of these films, regardless of whether or not they are virtuous. Their characters are distinguished by their jobs, status or standing in society and how they interact with each other in the face of disaster. In all these films, a series of conventions or archetypes are at work, including the use of various cast members to dramatise racial and/or social inequities. This new form of disaster movie also isolates its characters in order to place them in a position in which 'all systems fail' inexorably, one after the other (Dixon 1999: 5).

Hollywood took all of these elements and built them into the storylines of the 1970s disaster movie. Even the concern about the cost cutting measures in real life undermining public safety played a major role in some of these films. For example, cheap wiring leads to the burnt high rise tower in *The Towering Inferno* (1974) and shoddy architecture ensures that the massive earthquake in *Earthquake* (1974) will cause scores of deaths (Rabinowitz 1997).

In addition to disaster movies about airplane and shipping disasters, defective skyscrapers and an earthquake-prone city, there were movies about killer viruses, such as in *The Plague* (1978) and *The Cassandra Crossing* (1976), as well as alien killer viruses in *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) where a returning space capsule lands on earth along with its deadly cargo. Insects and animals featured, too, such as the bloodthirsty worms in *Squirm* (1976), the giant mutant rats, chickens and insects on a remote island in *The Food of the Gods* (1976) and the killer bees from South America invading Houston in *The Swarm* (1978). Towards the end of the 1970s, there were meteors in *Meteor* (1979) and a near nuclear plant meltdown in *The China Syndrome* (1979) (Rabinowitz 1997).

This has led to Yacowar (1997) codifying the types of disaster stories into eight 'Basic Types' of disaster movie stories up to this time. From his typology I identified the types of movies that fall into these categories:
Table 13: Categories of Disaster Movies up to the 1970s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Disaster Movie example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Natural Attack:</td>
<td>• The Day the Rains Came (1939)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Earthquake (1974)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jaws (1975)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The Ship of Fools:</td>
<td>• Airport 75 (1975)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Hindenburg (1975)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Zeppelin (1971)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The Poseidon Adventure (1972)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The City Fails:</td>
<td>• The Towering Inferno (1974)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A Night to Remember (1958)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Any film on the sinking of the SS Titanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Monster:</td>
<td>• Any zombie films</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Andromeda Strain (1971)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• On the Beach (1959)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Any film on the sinking of the SS Titanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. War:</td>
<td>• The Day the Earth Stood Still (1962)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• War of the Worlds (1953)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Historical Disaster:</td>
<td>• San Francisco (1936)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Any film on the SS Titanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pompeii (1908/1913)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The Comic:</td>
<td>• It’s A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World (1963)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dr. Strangelove (1964)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Williams 2015).

It is a typology that exists to this very day.
7. Context

The 1970s disaster films have usually been interpreted in terms of their immediate historical context, which is not surprising given the nature of the social, economic and political events of the late 1960s and early 1970s: the Vietnam War, flower power, the Pill, and the civil rights movement. Natural disasters in the early 1970s films were seen as a metaphor for the ‘immorality’ and ‘disorders’ of the late 1960s, or for the ‘democratic distemper’ that conservatives saw at work during the period. In the disaster movies, order was re-imposed upon such crises by a paternalist order. The authority figures that emerge are presented as ‘natural’ rather than official leaders, who demonstrate by example their fitness to exercise control over others (King 2009: 153), a significant motif in the hero monomyth and the fairy tale, and they are all male.

This decade’s disaster movies carry the ideological signs of the times in which they are made and set the standard with regard to what might be considered the most transparent aspect of ideological analysis: namely because these films take place in clear-cut contemporary settings where they expressly deal with contemporary issues with characters who represented a cross-section of American society. The heroes of these films are lay groups and specialist heroes. The films also often developed romantic subplots, and all characters’ fates invariably revolved around the theme of ‘poetic justice’ (King 2009: 14).

The characters are played by the Who’s Who of Hollywood, the point being that "star power really does live up to the power of its spectacle" (Keane 2006: 37). Roddick explains:

Disaster movies are peopled by archetypes who react to the given situation in function of their sex, class or profession and not in function of any individual identity. What is more, the archetypes are extended by the known personality of the star playing the part: in accordance with the usual formula, what we respond to on the screen is not someone called Stuart Graff (Earthquake) or Alan Murdock (Airport 75), but someone far more substantial called Charlton Heston (Roddick 1980: 252).
Keane (2006) argues that one of the most common criticisms of disaster movies is that they contain clichéd characters: stereotypes bordering on cardboard cut-out figures, although:

> it could be said that Airport was quite novel in deploying such clichéd characters so earnestly and that the criticism becomes much more pertinent when the stereotypes themselves became such a common characteristic in future disaster movies. Airport came up with new combinations of reassuring stereotypes: the brave manager, the dashing pilot, the cigar-munching engineer, the mad bomber, and the nice little old lady (Keane 2006: 20).

Ryan and Kellner (1988) believe that disaster movies can be criticised for putting stock characters in exceptional circumstances, as far as more in-depth analyses and criticisms of the genre are concerned. They feel that much attention has been directed towards the fact that these isolated stereotypes can also be read as offering a particular, microcosmic view of American society. They present disaster movies as unremittingly conservative:

> They exhibit a return to more traditional generic conventions and depict a society in crisis attempting to solve its social and cultural problems through the ritualised legitimation of strong male leadership, the renewal of traditional moral values, and the regeneration of institutions like the patriarchal family (Ryan & Kellner 1988: 52).

The films themselves followed the fairy tale structure or morphology commencing with the stage where the villain causes harm or injury to a family member: in this case, the society. It could be someone on a train being diagnosed with a deadly virus as in The Cassandra Crossing (1976) or an extraterrestrial killer virus brought down in a capsule as in The Andromeda Strain (1971); or it could be the faulty wiring of a building (The Towering Inferno 1974) or earth tremors as in Earthquake (1974). The stories follow through to the final stage where the hero has succeeded in his or her quest: function 22 of Propp's morphology, as discussed in chapter 4.
As the 1970s progressed, the disaster movies became repetitive and redundant. On a basic generic level it could be said that they became increasingly limited by their own ostensible realism, the cycle having quickly reached its ideal balance of believability and extravagance with *The Towering Inferno* and *Earthquake* in 1974. Whilst the disasters did become more and more spectacular, the same representative characters remained in the same narrative situations (Gale 2009).

Keane (2006) believes that the most successful disaster movies of the 1970s were the ones that paid more or less equal attention to character and disaster. In his opinion, *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), *The Towering Inferno* (1974) and *Earthquake* (1974) were the best of the cycle in this respect (Keane 2006: 27) whereas I find that the characterisation in *Earthquake* is one-dimensional and pays lip service to the disaster.

Whilst *Airport* is categorised as a disaster movie, the present-day understanding of a disaster around which the film is predicated did not occur until towards the third act, rather than at the end of the first act or early into the second act. Structurally, this makes it very different to the films that followed, including its own sequels. The structural template, which all disaster movies have since followed, was created initially with *The Poseidon Adventure*, followed by *The Towering Inferno* and then *Earthquake*. What follows is an explanation of this structure.

8. Story Structure

In *The Poseidon Adventure*, we are quickly introduced to the ensemble of characters. The disaster occurs at the end of the first act when a tsunami wave overturns the liner, leaving a handful of survivors to make it to the surface alive. By introducing the disaster early, the rest of the film focuses on how these people survive the disaster. It is a motif that has been followed since in many disaster movies and can be seen at the start of films like *Jaws* with the attack on the girl, *The Day After Tomorrow* with the breaking off of the Larsen B ice sheet from the Antarctic mainland, and *Independence Day* with the
astronaut’s footsteps shaken into a smudge by the presence of something huge flying overhead; whilst in *The Core* (2003), people unexpectedly die and birds fly into objects. It is stage 7 of Propp’s morphology, as shown in table 4 in chapter 4.

*The Towering Inferno* is the first big blockbuster disaster movie that foreshadows very early in the first act that something bad is going to happen and it relates to faulty electrical wiring and fire. The actual disaster does not unfold until the second act. The foreshadowing becomes a regular feature in future disaster movies, such as the camera craning down below street level to reveal magma during the opening titles in *Volcano*, signifying that all future events in the film are going to be seismically related, or early tremors in *Earthquake* foreshadowing something bad is going to happen with the reservoir/dam and the city below.

The structure of *Earthquake* continues to build on the structural template for many future disaster movies by focussing on the change of pace in the story at the midpoint. The first part of *Earthquake* relates to the build-up and the big earthquake destroying the city. From the midpoint on, the story shifts to the characters surviving the aftermath. This is a structure that is followed to this day in the more formulaic disaster movies, telemovies and mini-series. One such movie is *Armageddon*, whose hero Harry Stamper and his oil-drilling crew train as astronauts before landing on the killer asteroid midway through the film. The second half of the film is devoted to drilling a big enough hole on the asteroid and placing a nuclear device in that hole. Another is *The Core*, where the terranauts are trained whilst their Earth core craft is being readied to drill towards the centre of the planet. The mid point in this film is where a radiation storm melts the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and destroys Rome’s Coliseum. Earth has run out of time and the terranauts have to get going. This is stage 10 of Propp’s morphology.

Characterisation is the other major element in screen storytelling, especially the way the characterisation changed from *Airport* to the disaster movies that followed in that decade.
9. Characterisation

*Airport* featured the archetypes of the busy yet competent leader (the airport manager, played by Burt Lancaster), the playboy pilot, the little old lady, the mad bomber, and the cigar-munching engineer, a feature of the film’s poster:

![Airport Poster](image)

*Fig 41: Poster for Airport (1970) (Universal Pictures)*
The authority figures in this film represent the status quo: the official leaders rather than those who are natural leaders, whereas in *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), the authority figure that emerges is the renegade clergyman, Reverend Scott (played by Gene Hackman) instead of the remaining ship’s officer, the purser. Scott’s unconventional methods have led to his rejection by the church establishment but his tough have-a-go individualist approach makes him an ideal hero of the disaster-frontier (see King 2009: 153). The archetypal grizzled policeman and his former prostitute wife, the nice old Jewish couple, the inquisitive boy, his long-suffering teenage sister, the bombastic purser, and others join him. Reverend Scott demonstrates his leadership qualities over those of the officious purser by insisting everyone moves upwards in the upside-down ship against the authority figure of the purser who insists everyone remains where they are. Once Scott and his small group have moved to the next level, a deluge of water crashes into the ship, drowning the purser and his followers.

In *The Towering Inferno*, the architect, played by Paul Newman, takes it upon himself to act as a natural leader when the owner of the building, played by William Holden, refuses to do so, mistakenly believing that everyone is safe from the fire because of the building’s design. Other archetypes are the doomed lovers: the press officer and his secretary, who make love in his office, unaware of the fire until it consumes them. The villain of the piece, the builder’s son-in-law, refuses to accept his responsibility in the disaster and even demonstrates just how craven he is by pushing his way forward in the queue to leave the building, resulting in him falling to his death.

Fig 42: Poster for The Towering Inferno (1974) (Fotos.org/20th Century Fox/Warner Bros)
Romantic lovers feature in all these films. For instance, the playboy pilot, played by Dean Martin, in Airport, who is unhappily married and childless to the airport manager’s sister, has impregnated one of the cabin crew, Jacqueline Bissett. He is ambivalent about the pregnancy at the start of the flight. Her serious injury by the bomber forces him to admit he does love her and he does want to father her children. In The Poseidon Adventure, the lovers are the grizzled cop, played by Ernest Borgnine, and his street-wise prostitute wife, played by Stella Stevens. Theirs is not the romantic love of flowers and soft music but the wise-cracking hardness of the city streets. The romantic sub-plot in The Towering Inferno is between the architect, played by Paul Newman, and his fiancee, played by Faye Dunaway. Unlike the press officer who has absconded his post for the evening to make love to his secretary, Newman and Dunaway do not abandon their posts to warn and help others so they survive.

10. Themes in Disaster Movies

Disaster movies share similar themes to myths and fairy tales. These are noted below:

10.i. Hubris, Nemesis, Redemption and Sacrifice

Disaster movies work on the perennial theme of ‘hubris’ and where all the marks of ‘civilisation’, from moral codes to technological systems, duly fail in the disaster (King 2009: 152). An example of this ‘poetic justice’ theme can be seen in The Towering Inferno where the characters believe the building cannot be burnt down because of the safety factors incorporated by the architect. The entire community, except for the fire fighters, believe this myth, just as the arrogance of humans conquering the oceans in the form of the SS Titanic led to the belief that the Titanic was unsinkable. It is also this hubris that pertains to the first and second little pigs in the fairy tale. It never occurs to them that their houses are vulnerable.

The main villain of the piece in The Towering Inferno suitably dies as a result of the mayhem he has caused. The ‘poetic justice’ strand, very relevant in
fairy tales, features in disaster movies from this time onwards. Richard Chamberlain, who plays the owner’s philandering corrupt son-in-law, not only cuts safety corners, but is, according to Keane (2006), ‘unmanly’ in trying to escape the burning tower ahead of women and children. He shows no regret at having caused the fire, choosing instead to blame his father-in-law, Holden, for pressuring him to cut costs. It is only fitting that he falls to his death. Holden, who helps people out of the building, survives, telling his grieving daughter ‘All I can do now is pray to God that I can stop this from ever happening again’. Newman, instrumental in helping to put out the fire and save lives, also survives to design safer buildings with the chief fireman, played by Steve McQueen, there to advise him on health and safety issues (Keane 2006: 4, 1-2).

One of the film’s themes is about redemption. Fred Astaire plays a con man, who lies his way into the opening of the glass tower so that he can con money out of a rich widow played by Jennifer Jones.

Astaire falls in love with Jones and confesses his motives to her. She says she already knows but accepts him as he is. However, she dies, and he is left a better person for having known her and because of her death. He even adopts her cat after he and it are rescued. Keane explains that even in death, there are life lessons to be learned and only the repentant survive (Keane 2006: 41-42).
The Poseidon Adventure takes the themes of hubris, nemesis, sacrifice and redemption even further. It has the promotional tagline: ‘Hell Upside Down’. Keane explains that it deploys its mythic, moral symbolism with a sledge hammer by, among other things, having the preacher fall into the burning fire of an upside-down, boiler-room hell (Keane 2006: 34). The name Poseidon harkens back to Homer’s The Odyssey, where the hero insults the god, Poseidon, by stating that man needs no gods. And, just like the mythic god of the sea, the forces of nature in The Poseidon Adventure punishes the hubristic Greek ship’s owner by causing a tsunami which flips the vessel upside down.

Roddick observes:

If The Poseidon Adventure is more or less alone in making explicit use of religious imagery, the idea of the disaster as a primitive elemental test sent by God is strongly present in all the movies with the exception of Juggernaut. What is more … a recurring image in the movies is that of the rescuer appearing from high like an angel (Roddick 1980: 254).

And an angel in the form of Charlton Heston does appear from above, climbing down into the shattered cockpit in Airport 75 (1974) and saving the doomed plane. The imagery resonated with many Americans at this time as they began turning to evangelical religion and born-again Christianity for relief from a world of disappointment, insecurity and frustration that inflation and unemployment helped usher in.

Some film theorists believe The Poseidon Adventure follows in terms of ‘right-wing, religiously based authoritarian solutions’. However, it can be argued that the more bitter and twisted the disasters through the 1970s, the more solutions are tested to their limits in these films. For example, Reverend Scott (Gene Hackman) has to die because he rails against God despite leading his small group to safety. He is on the point of leading them to their ultimate safety but sacrifices himself in doing so by unlocking the final sea door that is over a fiery pit. Usually, the heroic stars survive and the rest get what they
deserve, but it did not happen in this film or in *Earthquake* (Ryan & Kellner 1988: 55).

Earth tremors rock the Mulholland Dam in *Earthquake* and senior seismologists fail to act immediately upon the advice of a junior seismologist that a major quake is imminent for fear of losing their funding if the prediction is wrong. As a result, many people are killed when the big quake hits.

![Mulholland Dam workers during the earthquake in *Earthquake* (1974) (Universal Pictures)](image)

The main hero, Stuart, played by Charlton Heston, is unhappily married to Remy, played by Ava Gardner, whose father, Sam, played by Lorne Greene, is Heston's boss. The men are successful builders with Stuart very aware of safety. Sam would rather not lose a lucrative contract than insist on safety. As a result of the earthquake their building partially survives so that they can get their staff to safety. Sam has a heart attack, as he is the last to leave the building. He has to die because he was prepared to sacrifice safety for money whereas Stuart survives to leave the building.

Stuart has an affair with the widow of one of his workers, Denise, played by Geneviève Bujold. An after shock tremor causes the shopping centre above the car park, where many people, Denise and Remy amongst them, are gathered after being rescued, to collapse. Stuart, with the help of Lou, a cop played by George Kennedy, burrow into the side of the car park to save everyone. Stuart hugs Denise and then sees Remy glaring at them. At this point, the Mulholland Dam gives way, sending water down into the sewers. Lou and Denise successfully make their way to safety, but Stuart sacrifices his
life by attempting to save his wife as she is swept away to her death. He has to
die because of his adultery.

10.ii. Greed and Society Breakdown

These themes are very closely tied in with hubris and nemesis and the
stories based on public concerns at the time. For instance, *The Towering Inferno*
has its basis in two novels published in that era: *The Tower* by Richard Martin
Stern (1973) and *The Glass Inferno* by Thomas N. Scortia and Frank M. Robinson
(1974) whose respective authors wrote about their concerns that greedy
developers building higher and higher buildings would put the safety of people
at risk. The greed represented here is symptomatic of societal breakdown. The
cutting corners in safety when it came to building the glass tower in *The
Towering Inferno* led to its demise, along with the death of many. The builder’s
son-in-law accuses the former of being corrupt and insisting the tower be built
as cheaply as possible, even though his shoddy electrical work brought on the
inferno.

In *The Poseidon Adventure*, the new owner of the ship does not allow
sufficient time for the captain to even out the ballast so that the ship is not top-
heavy. He is keen for no time to be lost in reaching their destination, as it will
cost his company additional money. As a result, the ship has no stability to
survive upright when the tsunami wave hits it and turns over a whole one
hundred and eighty degrees, killing the owner, the captain and fourteen
hundred others.
Concern for safety is introduced in *Earthquake*. The chief proponent for cutting safety measures is Sam and Stuart’s major client. He wants skyscrapers built as cheaply as possible, even if it means sacrificing safety. When the quake hits, he is the first to ram his way into a lift to escape, only to die when the lift plummets to the ground.

All these disaster movie themes introduced in the 1970s disaster movies together with the structure and characterisation follow right through to today’s disaster movies.

Another issue that has affected the way in which the disaster movies are told today is the need for mega spectacle, which has led to an emphasis on the special effects rather than the story and characterisation. This all began with the film *The Towering Inferno*. The Hollywood Reporter at the time compared it and *Earthquake* to the epics of Cecil B. DeMille (Krämer 2005: 65). It was the first time two studios, Twentieth Century Fox and Warner Brothers, collaborated in the making of a film because of the film’s very high budget (*Earthquake* 1974 Trivia). This set the precedence in the financing of today’s major blockbusters where studio collaboration is now common practice.

The 1970s saw a return to the fairy tale structure and themes not seen since the demise of the moguls. It also very clearly demonstrated how
geopolitical context played a major part in the themes, characterisations and
disaster stories told in this decade.

In this chapter, I have examined how the fairy tale structure and motifs in
disaster movies took a back seat to Phase 4 of the genre’s development, a
phase that showed an abandonment of the fairy tale/mythic influence seen up
to the 1960s. The beginning of Phase 5 began when the disaster movie with its
fairy tale influence made its return in the 1970s and set down the template for
all future films in this genre. It was the first time a whole story was predicated
around a disaster rather than being just one of a series of events that occurred in
a story. *The Towering Inferno*, with its high budget, led to the now common
practice of studios joining forces to spread the risk of investing so much money
into a film.

In the next chapter, I will explore how *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977) and
the blockbusters of the 1980s replaced the disaster movie until its next cycle,
which was in the 1990s. The 1970s cycle of disaster movies began to be replaced
by the adventure heroes of the *Star Wars* trilogy and the *Indiana Jones* films,
commencing in 1977 and moving well into the next decade. The film *Jaws* was
the frontrunner in the demise of the 1970s disaster stories, simply because it
changed the way in which films were cast, financed, marketed and exhibited. It
and *Star Wars* set the groundwork for the way in which blockbuster films,
disaster movies included, would be made, marketed, distributed and exhibited
in future, as well as reinforcing the fairy tale and mythic structure.
CHAPTER SEVEN

The Polyester People

I have examined how the disaster movies made in the 1970s, led by Airport (1970), set down the template for all future films in this genre. The Towering Inferno (1974), with its high budget, led to the now common practice of studios joining forces to spread the risk of investing so much money into a film.

In this chapter, I look at how the 1970s cycle of disaster movies began to be overtaken by an unstoppable force: Jaws (1975) and Star Wars (1977). It is important to spend time looking at these two films as they set the groundwork for how blockbuster films, which included all future disaster movies, would be told, made, marketed, distributed and exhibited in the future. Whilst Star Wars is not a disaster movie, it plays a pivotal role in returning the mythic and fairy tale element back into film and, like Jaws, heralds in the blockbuster movie and disaster movie as we now know them but for different reasons.

1. The Age of the Blockbuster

The 1970s cycle of disaster movies with their everyman heroes played by movie stars heralded in the start of Phase 5 of the disaster movie development. These films began to be replaced by relatively unknown actors playing the adventure heroes of Jaws, the Star Wars trilogy, the Indiana Jones films (1981 – 1989) and First Blood (1982), the first of the Rambo series of films. Even though we have come to think of these films as blockbusters, they fully espouse the mythic/fairy tale structure and characterisation. They saw a return to the types of films made in Phases 2 and 3. However, unlike those films in the early phases of the disaster movie development, these new films became high
budget, leading to storylines being more formulaic and less flexible and setting up the current way such films are made.

The importance of *Jaws* and the *Star Wars* trilogy is that they not only re-invented Hollywood, but they took six major Hollywood studios into an age of profitability never seen before in that town. The blockbuster altered the way that studios were run and how decisions on which films to be produced were made. A studio’s existence now relies on reports published in financial publications (like the *Wall Street Journal*) on increases and declines in stock prices, based simply on first weekend box office takings of a film’s release (see Gomery 2003: 81, Stringer, 2003: 4).

The blockbusters not only relied on the sci fi genre but also action-adventure. Action movies proliferate on the shelves in video stores, although the term 'blockbuster' apparently did not become common until the late 1970s (Schatz 2003: 16). The disaster movie took a back seat as these blockbusters took over the 1980s, in line with the genre’s twenty-year cycle. The next time it re-emerged was in the 1990s.

Today, we have come to think of a blockbuster movie as one with big stars, big special effects and even bigger budgets. As Arnold Schwarzenegger, the doyen of blockbusters in the late Twentieth Century commented to fellow actor, Charles Dance on the set of *Last Action Hero* (1993), "You see, Charles, you make your art films, but I make films for the Polyester People" (Shone 2004: 209).

Stories follow the hero myth/fairy tale pattern of good overcoming evil to such an extent, that every twist and turn in the plot is so predictable and nothing is left to the imagination. This is because the studios, now conglomerates and only interested in the bottom line, will leave nothing to chance. In order to understand the ramifications of this, we need to look at the way that marketing the blockbuster, which includes all future disaster movies, took over the storytelling during this period.
2. The Bottom Line

Studio executives replaced the moguls. Part of their job required them to cajole filmmakers into working for them whilst at the same time having to placate a board of directors concerned with the financial soundness of their decisions. It was a difficult job because the artistic desires of filmmakers often conflicted directly with the studio’s desire to maximise profits (Lewis 2003: 66). Those who survived often did so because of their political savvy as much as their creative ability. They excelled at bureaucratic infighting and did whatever was expedient for their careers. Executives preoccupied with bureaucratic intrigue had less time left to devote to moviemaking concerns. Litwak explains: "Hollywood is like Washington. The system is the same as politics. As soon as somebody gets elected they start planning the campaign for the next election. And they never get around to doing what they promised" (Litwak 1988: 66).

Director, Billy Wilder complained at the time that filmmakers now spend eighty per cent of their time making deals and twenty per cent in making the films, echoing the frustration of many filmmakers about how, during the 1970s onwards, deal making had replaced filmmaking as the principal activity of Hollywood (IMDB n.d.).

Executives during and after the New Hollywood were hired hands who could be easily dismissed. Consequently, they were not inclined to take risks. Their primary concern was with maintaining short-term profits and making deals with proven talent for ‘sure-fire’ formula pictures. The executive who agrees to produce an unconventional story with a new director or without a star, risks losing his/her job if the project fails (Littman 1998: 26).

Schatz sees:

*the blockbuster mentality establishing itself in the later 1970s, with the mass appeal of Jaws, Close Encounters of the Third Kind and Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981). Such successes demonstrated the appeal of high concept, plot driven, visceral entertainment based increasingly on special effects, and targeted at younger audiences* (Schatz 2003: 126).
This new blockbuster era dates from the wide simultaneous release of *Jaws* (1975). Initially budgeted at $3.5 million dollars, *Jaws* was expensive by contemporary standards given the average production costs in 1975 were $2.5 million (Schatz 2003: 23). The film eventually cost Universal $12 million to produce, on four hundred and sixty four domestic screens, accompanied by a nationwide print and TV advertising campaign. As a result, the success of this strategy with future blockbusters, also known as ‘event’ or ‘high concept’ movies, led to each subsequent blockbuster release outdoing the previous one with the number of film prints simultaneously screened on release (Schatz 2003: 21). It is a practice that continues right up to the present, along with even bigger budgets and spectacle. Also, these ‘event’ or ‘high concept’ movies accompanied the rise of the multiplex cinemas (Gilbey 2003: 4).

For Universal Studio and its chairman, Lew Wasserman, *Jaws* was earning $100 million dollars and changing the business. Wasserman realised that advertisement ‘bites’ ideally suited to TV advertising would be the most appropriate method of attracting audiences to the film so he spent almost one million dollars on TV advertising (Thomson 2005: 340). He artificially reduced the number of screens, from nine hundred to six hundred across America in order to create demand. *Jaws* would soon be credited, and blamed, with having pioneered the trick of opening a film ‘wide’

This has now become a tool of mainstream movie distribution: a film is opened in as many theatres as possible before word of mouth can kill it (Schatz 2003: 25). It is a very common practice today and all began with *Jaws*, which as Biskind observes:

... changed the business forever. As costs mounted, the willingness to take risks diminished proportionately. Moreover, *Jaws* whet corporate appetites for big profits quickly, which is to say, studios wanted every film to be *Jaws* (cited in Turner 1996: 35).

This practice diminished the importance of print reviews, making it virtually impossible for a film to build slowly and find its audience by word of
mouth on its mere quality. As costs mounted, the willingness to take risks diminished proportionately (Biskind 1998: 278). It had an impact on all future Hollywood films, including most of all the disaster movies and blockbusters. As a result of *Jaws*, a film now has to succeed in its first weekend, which means having screen stories that are more formulaic and more spectacular with less emphasis on character as it has to appeal to the largest demographic of cinema goers: teenage boys.

This deduction was the result of a survey conducted in the summer of 1979 by the Motion Picture Association of America where it found that forty per cent of filmgoers were between the ages of twelve and twenty, whilst another twenty-seven per cent were between twenty-one and twenty-nine. As Gilbey (2003) points out:

> This statistic, combined with the runaway popularity of the special fx laden ‘event movie’ meant that fewer small or personal films were being made. And of those that were, fewer still were being afforded a chance to prosper from that hallowed breed of goodwill known as word of mouth. A movie opened big today, or else it closed tomorrow (Gilbey 2003: 220).

*Jaws* was not the only film to bring about huge changes. The impact of *Star Wars* on subsequent film production and audience choices was enormous, most directly through its sequels. Sequels and film series were by no means a new phenomenon. Feature films that continued the story told in a previous film, or which used the same set of characters as an earlier film without establishing any clear chronological sequence or causal connection between events in both films, had been around for long time (Krämer 2005: 92).

*Star Wars* also changed the way that post production was conducted. At no other time in Hollywood history would films less resemble their final finished state than in those few weeks prior to release. *Star Wars* was not evolving in traditional cinematic space: it was evolving elsewhere, in hyperspace, emerging in some hitherto uncharted relationship between the editing and the effects and the music, all brought into optimal conjunction only
at the very last minutes. Nobody knew what Star Wars was going to be like until the premier (Shone 2004: 51).

Since then, companies have split and recombined, the marketplace has splintered into dozens of demographics, and merchandising has spun off ancillary products. Schatz states:

*Equally fragmented, perhaps, are the movies themselves, especially the high cost, high tech, high stakes blockbusters, those multi purpose entertainment machines that breed music videos and soundtrack albums, TV series and videocassettes, video games and theme park rides, novelisations and comic books* (cited in Bordwell 2006: 5).

Bordwell comments, "Hollywood thus found itself caught in a paradox of quite fiendish circularity: it actually made more sense to spend more money, not less. Variety called it ‘peace of mind through profligacy’" (2006: 93).

Coupled with the rise of high budgets was the introduction of merchandise associated with each film, especially the sci fi blockbuster. King and Krzywinska (2000) propose that films in this particular genre often used the sale of branded merchandise to increase its revenues as well as these being used as a form of marketing for the films themselves (King & Krzywinska 2000: 6 - 7).

These films also led to a change in audience demographic. Following the huge success of *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977), the Motion Picture Association of America conducted a survey in the summer of 1979, which found that forty per cent of filmgoers were between the ages of twelve and twenty, while another twenty seven per cent were between twenty-one and twenty-nine. These young viewers were exposed to the emphasis on the hero myth/fairy tale structure and themes, which played an important part in cementing the expectation that all future blockbusters, including the disaster movie, would follow this pattern. It led to the criticism by auteur filmmakers of the time that these films infantilised the audience. As Peter Bogdanovich, one of the 1960s - 1970s auteur filmmakers, observed, "Jaws was devastating to making artistic,
smaller films. They forgot how to do it. They’re no longer interested” (cited in Biskind 1999: 255).

Biskind proposes that Spielberg was the Trojan horse through which the studios began to reassert their power (Biskind 1999: 278). However, *Jaws* was not the only film to hammer in the nails of the 1970s auteur coffin. It was ably assisted by *Star Wars*. William Friedkin complained that "Star Wars swept all the chips off the table. What happened was like when McDonald’s got a foothold, the taste for good food just disappeared…everything has gone back towards a big sucking hole" (cited in Shone 2004: 9). Biskind believes that in 1977, the release of *Star Wars* was the start of "infantilizing the audience…overwhelming him and her with sound and spectacle, obliterating irony, aesthetic self-consciousness, and critical reflection" (cited in Shone 2004: 10-11).

Of course, the auteur filmmakers would say this. It goes back to the moguls’ fairy tale film stories but now, the marketing dominance has forced the stories to have fewer nuances, as seen in the moguls’ day.

Both *Jaws* and *Star Wars* were the next seminal step in the evolvement of the disaster movie as we know it today. Whilst *Star Wars* is a cross genre blend of action, adventure, sci fi, western and romance, *Jaws* falls into the category of the disaster movie and Yacowar’s typology: natural attack. It is important to examine how these two films set the pattern for the storytelling and the disaster genre we see today.
3. Jaws

You’re going to need a bigger boat! (Brody to Quint: *Jaws*, 1975)

I never had the nerve to go and see this film when it was first released. I was terrified that I’d be terrified. Sharks were not part of my psyche as up to 1974, I had lived in England - well away from the creatures. And we never had reports of anyone being munched by the sharks that basked off the Cornish coast of southwest England. I recall when the film was released I was in the process of living between Australia and England. In England, people still went swimming after having seen *Jaws*. Even people living in Cornwall and Devon on England’s south west coast, which has the very occasional shark, went swimming that summer. However, it was a very different story in Australia. Because sharks do swim in Australian waters all year round and some do attack humans, people were more afraid to tempt fate and go for a dip. I wouldn’t go out beyond knee-height…and I hadn’t even seen the film! However, when I embarked upon this research thesis, I saw the film for the first time, thoroughly enjoyed it and thought that it is probably Spielberg’s best film to date. I still won't go out beyond knee-height.

One has to ask why this film had such an impact on people? Speaking personally, it is that fear of the unknown that you cannot see hunting and then killing you. It goes to the heart of the survival instinct in all creatures. The film not only taps into these deep-seated fears, but also draws upon the Flood and Leviathan myths as well as the Death archetype and the Three Little Pigs fairy tale (see chapters 3 and 4).

Fig 46: The three heroes of *Jaws* (1975): l - r Hooper (Richard Dreyfus), Brody (Roy Scheider) and Quint (Robert Shaw) (Universal Pictures)
It fully embraces the monster movie tradition with the revenge by nature subtext in films like *King Kong* (1933), or *The Birds* (1963). In *Jaws*’ latter stages the shark begins to take on supernatural, even Satanic, qualities as found in *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973). Given the fact that the initial victims are women and children in those two films, *Jaws* also had ties to the high-gore slasher film which had been given considerable impetus a year earlier by *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974).

As Schatz (2003) observes, the provocative poster art showing the image of a huge shark swimming up to the tiny vulnerable woman unaware of its existence, together with John Williams’ pulsating, foreboding musical theme, conveyed the essence of the film experience and worked their way into the national psyche. With the public’s appetite sufficiently whetted, the release of *Jaws* set off a feeding frenzy as twenty five million tickets were sold in the film’s first thirty eight days by public viewing (Schatz 2003: 25).

Like *The Godfather* (1972), *Jaws* was very much a picture of its time, a post Watergate look at corrupt authority. The Amity power structure, apart from the chief of police, is united in wanting to cover up the shark attacks to protect...
the almighty dollar in the form of tourism. The picture’s only villain, apart from the shark, is the mayor, an elected official: a politician. *Jaws* was a film of the political centre: of the three men who take on the shark, Quint, the macho man of the right, is killed, while Hooper, the intellectual Jew of the left, is marginalised, leaving Brody, the everyman cop, to dispatch the shark (Biskind 1998: 279). The three heroes can also be seen to echo the context of the three little pigs in the fairy tale, *The Three Little Pigs* (see chapter 4 and table 9).

![Fig 48: Brody kills the shark in *Jaws* (1975) (Universal Pictures)](image)

The film was ‘a social, industrial and economic phenomenon of the first order, a cinematic idea and cultural commodity whose time had come’ (Schatz 2003: 25). While Schatz believes that *Jaws* is historically crucial to the extent that its lasting meaning is the money it made (2003: 340) I contest the suggestion that its only lasting legacy was the money it made: its other legacy was a generation of moviegoers afraid to go into the water.

Gilbey (2003) surmises that Spielberg’s movies present one dramatic but barely perceptible reversal after another and *Jaws* is no exception to that. The film is actually about the vulnerability of people. The shark is a convenient means of exposing that vulnerability (Gilbey 2003: 67). He believes the reputation of *Jaws* as the seminal blockbuster, as we know that term today, is beyond dispute (Gilbey 2003: 70-71).
“Jaws” was followed by a very dissimilar film, which had a totally different effect on its audience and would complete the patterning of the disaster and blockbuster movies as we experience them today. That film was *Star Wars*.

4. Star Wars

*Star Wars was the film that ate the heart and the soul of Hollywood. It created the big-budget comic book mentality* – Paul Schrader (cited in Biskind 1998: 316).

I was working on the sound mix of a film in London at the time of Star Wars’ release. We had been in the dubbing theatre for three eighteen-hour days when we finished our mix (two of our sound editors had worked on the sound effects on Star Wars, creating sounds like the engine of the Millenium Falcon and the light sabre). Someone suggested we go and have a drink or four, which we did before embarking on a busman's holiday by finding the cinema with the biggest screen in London's West End, sitting in the only remaining seats in the front and being blown away by the opening scene of Star Wars where the space ship flew over our heads, followed by an even bigger ship that takes up the whole width of the screen. Apart from our two sound editors, the rest of us had seen nothing like it before. It was a new type of film shot in film grammar, and one much emulated by future filmmakers and it held us all enthralled, as tired as we were, in its simple fairy tale of the farm boy avenging his family's deaths by rescuing the imprisoned princess and blowing up the death star. It was a wonderful panacea to the political corruption in the world and the British miner's strikes and three long days in a dubbing theatre. Oh, and Han Solo was very delectable!

On 25 May 1977 Variety Magazine published an enthusiastic review of *Star Wars*, declaring it to be 'a magnificent film', which 'like a breath of fresh air…sweeps away the cynicism that has in recent years obscured the concepts of valour, dedication and honour'.
Turner comments, "For a generation of fans, 1977 would forever be a sort of cinematic year zero: the year movies proper began" (Turner 1996: 52).

According to Variety (see Krämer 2005), the film drew on and revived older forms of Hollywood entertainment including the *Flash Gordon* (1930s, 1950s) serials and Errol Flynn adventures. Like this older Hollywood, *Star Wars* had an all-age appeal and was an

*affirmation of what only Hollywood can put on a screen: exciting action, spectacular technology and a rousing score combined with sympathetic characters and human drama set in an intriguing intergalactic world: this is the kind of film in which an audience, first entertained, can later walk out feeling good all over* (Krämer 2005: 89).

George Lucas, the film's writer, director and co-producer, had felt cinema to be lacking the naive, uncomplicated thrills that he remembered from the old swashbucklers and adventure movies, and with *Star Wars* he sought to locate this footloose glee within a strain of fantasy resistant to the academic sci-fi of the day (Gilbey 2003: 45).

Lucas’ skill lay in recognising that only the cosmetic appearance of adventure cinema was in need of alteration. Its heart and soul could be transferred intact, and audiences would still applaud the same things that their grandparents had whooped and cheered at in the swashbucklers and serials of the 1930s and 1940s. He had not just given America a hit film. According to Gilbey, Lucas had given the nation back something of its youth at a time when it was feeling a little middle aged (Gilbey 2003: 46, 56).

Lucas discusses how, "Once I got into Star Wars, it struck me that…a whole generation was growing up without fairy tales. You just don’t get them any more, and that’s the best stuff in the world – adventures in far off lands. It’s fun" (cited in Gilbey 2003: 46). To that end, Lucas even rewrote the form’s traditional fairy tale opening, ‘Once upon a time…’ to become ‘A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away…’ (Gilbey 2003: 46).
The story is populated by the hero myth and fairy tale archetypes:

Fig 49: The three heroes in *Star Wars* (1977): l - r Luke Skywalker (Luke Hamill), Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) and Han Solo (Harrison Ford) (20th Century Fox)

the imprisoned princess, the pauper boy hero who rescues her, the mentor in

Fig 50: Alec Guinness as Obi Wan Kenobi, The Wise Old Man in *Star Wars* (1977) (20th Century Fox)
the form of an old Jedi knight, the villain of the fairy tale - the all-powerful emperor and the dark Jedi knight who serves him, allies like a cynical smuggler and his wookiee offsider, and the light sabre - a magical gift from the Jedi.

Fig 51: The villain, Darth Vader (David Prowse), in *Star Wars* (1977) (20th Century Fox)

Some of Lucas’ peers believed it was the end of thought-provoking filmmaking. Kael (see Biskind 1998: 316) believes it "infantilises the audience, reconstituting the spectator as child, then overwhelming him and her with sound and spectacle, obliterating irony, aesthetic self-consciousness, and critical reflection", whilst Paul Schrader, who wrote the screenplays for *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *Raging Bull* (1980), points out, "Star Wars was the film that ate the heart and the soul of Hollywood. It created the big-budget comic book mentality" (cited in Biskind 1998: 316).

Lucas, of course, rejects the idea that *Star Wars* ruined American movies and provides a Reagan-era trickle down spin of the situation, arguing somewhat contradictorily that movies are better than ever:

*Star Wars didn’t kill the film industry, or infantilise it. Popcorn pictures have always ruled. Why do people go see these popcorn pictures when they’re not good? Why is the public so stupid? That’s not my fault* (cited in Biskind 1998: 344).
Coupling the fairy tale tone of the film with a revision of the tone set by the sci fi genre films at that time, Lucas’ aliens became warm and fuzzy, leading the way to even warmer and fuzzier off-planet visitors in Spielberg’s Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977). Before that, as Gilbey observes:

sci fi had long been associated with feelings of dread and foreboding, and Star Wars feels now like a spirited reaction against what had become a genre governed by paranoid worrywarts, and an attempt to return it to its former state of purity. Everything was going wrong in the future: the robots in Westworld (1973) were malfunctioning, as was HAL the computer in 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968). Basic human identity was under siege in Planet of the Apes (1968) and Zardoz (1974). Carnage was on the roads in Death Race 2000 (1975) and the roller-rink in Rollerball (1975), while an extraterrestrial visitor was destroyed by western civilisation in The Man Who Fell to Earth (1976) (Gilbey 2003: 45)

Star Wars also led to the sequelisation of future films. However, they became very prominent and firmly established since Star Wars to such an extent that personally, it is a pleasure to see a stand-alone blockbuster and one that is not part of a franchise.

More importantly to the future of the disaster movie and blockbuster because of their high budgets, Star Wars woke up the studios to the potential of merchandising, and showed that the sale of books, t-shirts and action pictures could be a significant profit centre (Biskind 1998: 340-341). This would lead to a situation in today’s climate, for example, where these films make more money from the video game created as a by-product of the film than through theatrical box office takings.

Star Wars put Twentieth Century-Fox on the map. Suddenly, its chief executive Alan Ladd Jr. was a genius. He had seen something in Lucas’ Star Wars script, which no one else had. Star Wars drove home the lessons of Jaws: that kids and young adults would come back again and again to a movie without stars. They wanted fairy tales back in their lives. However, unlike Jaws, which was adapted from a novel, Star Wars demonstrated that a
phenomenally successful movie without stars could be made from original material (Biskind 1998: 340-341). So great was the effect of *Star Wars* on Hollywood’s storytelling at this time that it led to future blockbusters taking on the hero mythic/fairy tale story structures and characterisation and setting in stone the fairy tale influence on disaster movies.

In this chapter, I have examined how the huge success of *Jaws* and *Star Wars* has set up the way in which blockbuster films are made today, which includes the disaster movie. *Jaws* changed the way in which films are marketed, distributed and screened; *Star Wars* brought the fairy tale to the fore and popularised the sequelisation and formulisation of blockbuster movies, thus setting up the groundwork for all future such films. Both also paved the way for merchandising as a means of selling the film and reaping profits for the studios, which meant the spectacle could become more spectacular.

Despite all of these economic factors, external events still played a role in the disaster movie in the upcoming pre-millennium period. The disaster movies of the 1990s decade and what inspired them will be explored in the following chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Millennium

Guess what guys, it’s time to embrace the horror! Look, we’ve got front row tickets to the end of the earth! – Rockhound (Armageddon 1998)

*Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) set up the way in which blockbuster films, including disaster movies are made today. *Jaws* changed the way films are marketed, distributed and screened whilst both films paved the way for merchandising as a means of selling the film and reaping in the profits for the studios. *Star Wars* re-introduced and reinforced the heroic myth and fairy tale structure, and promoted the start of today's sequelisation or ‘franchising’ of film series. The immediate impact of these films' successes was examined in the previous chapter as to how it paved the way for the fairy tale/mythic motifs to be cemented into the disaster movies of the next cycle of films: the 1990s.

The previous decade, the 1980s, was the next ‘off’ decade following the 1970s with regard to the disaster movie. As Keane observes, "...the disaster genre has tended to progress through identifiable twenty-year cycles commencing in the 1910s" (Keane 2006: 5-6).

In this chapter, the long-term impact of *Jaws* and *Star Wars* on the disaster movie and its interaction with the fairy tale is explored. It is not only the economic and storytelling factors that changed the disaster/blockbuster film industry into what it is today. External events, including the approach of the new millennium, even more so played a bigger role in the disaster movie in the 1990s pre-millennium period and also inspired the type of stories told. The decade ushered in the use of scientific facts to re-tell the stories the ancients created.
1. The 1990s

A major theme in the end of the millennium films is that of impending disaster and doom. Millennialism groups, whether religious or secular, often predict an imminent and redemptive apocalypse of the kind anticipated and at least partially realised in disaster movies and documentaries on the subject. It is the Apocalypse or Catastrophism myth.

The myth or ideology is rooted in the notions of a fresh start: shedding the old and corrupt in favour of a new and supposedly more authentic beginning. It is the myth of Ragnarok or the Apocalypse. Added to this was the potential impact of the date 2000 on global computer systems. It led to more general anxieties about the dangers of over-reliance on technology, playing on fears about the ‘millennium bug’, which was also known as the Y2K bug (King 2009). There was considerable concern that the binary system on the world’s computers would fail as the clock ticked over from 1999 to 2000. This would result in system failure in all aspects of western life such as water, electricity and gas supplies, banking systems that would prevent people accessing their money through ATMs, aircraft falling out of the sky, and global communications. It would mean the end of our current western civilisation and a return to a more primitive way of existing (King 2009: 157).

Needless to say, when the clock did tick over on New Year’s Eve, 1999, nothing happened. The sky did not fall in ... at least, not on New Year’s Day, 2000.

These anxieties played a major part in the 1990s disaster movies, especially those films made closer to the end of the decade. Like the fairy stories told to Middle Ages European peasants that reflected their fears, the stories told in disaster movies reflect the fears of the times in which they are told. They have become the myths of today. As King points out:

The disaster film can be seen as one of the new myths about the perennial human anxiety about death...There is continuity in the structure of the mythology that
links the original European move to America with the hopes and fears aroused by the approach of the second millennium (2009: 152,157).

And for the major maker of disaster movies, Hollywood, the 1990s decade was not only a time when special effects and spectacle came into their own with the development of digital post-production technologies and computer-generated imaging (CGI), it was also a time when new filmmakers from Europe and Australia joined their American counterparts in creating the most memorable disaster films and other blockbusters of that decade (see Bordwell & Thompson 1997: 469, Davies & Wells 2002: 2).

2. The New Guard

Prominent in this new blood are the Scott brothers: Tony and Ridley, from Britain; Peter Weir and Fred Schepisi from Australia; Paul Verhoeven and Jan de Bont from The Netherlands; Rennie Harlin from Finland; and Wolfgang Peterson and Roland Emmerich from Germany (Bordwell & Thompson 1997: 469).

The last time Hollywood had seen such an influx of foreign directors had been in the 1930s and 1940s with Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder and Alfred Hitchcock. This recent influx of directors has echoes of the old Hollywood moguls and their
desire to conform. Unlike the moguls and earlier European filmmakers who brought the influence of old European fairy tales with them and moulded them into the Hollywood story, the newcomers brought nothing new to the table. Their influences had been the Hollywood films they had grown up with in their own countries. Shone explains they "... brought less in the way of cultural and cinematic baggage with them, aiming for a style that carried no foreign accent and that was, if anything, more American than the Americans" (Shone 2004: 247).

Wolfgang Peterson and Roland Emmerich both describe how they were very much influenced by watching Hollywood films when they were growing up in Germany and they brought this experience with them when they moved to America (see Littger 2006: 33–35).

Unlike their predecessors, they brought the fairy tale story created by the Hollywood moguls back to The New World instead of importing something different or new. With the use of technology, they told new disaster tales that reflected the external events of the times, including the encroaching millennium, a near miss between an asteroid and earth, and politics. These are the equivalent of the myths created by ancient people as a means of explaining, what was to them, the unexplainable: the birth of Athena out of Zeus’ head (a comet), Noah’s ark and flood (melt waters from the end of the ice age flooding
into the Black Sea), Sodom and Gomorrah (either an exploding volcano or a meteor shower).

3. Context

The stories reflected primarily what was happening in the USA as Hollywood, the key producer of disaster movies at that time, is part of that country. Despite the end of the Cold War in 1991, the US had more than its fair share of geo-political problems such as the first Gulf War in 1991; the bungled raid by the US military in Mogadishu, which led to the 2001 film, Black Hawk Down and influenced Independence Day; and US servicemen killed in the Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia.

At home, a truck bomb exploded under the World Trade Center in 1993 there was the fiery demise of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas;

the Oklahoma bombing in 1995 carried out by a local white American citizen; and a year later, there was the terrorist bombing at Centennial Park at the summer Olympics in Atlanta. Home-grown violence capped off the decade with the 1999 Columbine High School massacre by two teenage schoolboys.
There were air disasters, like the TWA plane that exploded off Long Island in 1996, killing all two hundred and thirty on board; and an Egyptian first officer deliberately crashing an Egypt Air jet south of Nantucket, Massachusetts, killing all two hundred and seventeen passengers and crew, although this is denied in his home country (*Aircraft Investigation* 2005).

Extreme weather events added to the mayhem with Hurricane Andrew in 1992;
With the extremes of weather, I nearly lost a dear friend, who was on the doomed Winston Churchill yacht in the 1997 Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. A killer storm developed off Bass Strait and killed sailors taking part in that race. My first awareness of the disaster was on the morning radio when the mayday broadcast was played as part of the news. My friend, who is married to one of my closest friends, climbed into a life raft after the boat sank. The life raft tipped over, a la Poseidon, and someone had the bright idea of cutting a hole in what was now the ceiling so the sailors could get some air. Unfortunately, the raft righted itself and the hole ripped, destroying the floor and resulting in three sailors being sucked out by the waves to their deaths. My friend and one other survived as they were holding on to the edges of the raft at the time. Documentaries have been made about this race and the people involved, and I have no doubt there will be a feature film or telemovie in it someday. However, the physical scars have been healed but my friend is now a very different (and better) person from his experience. I notice that every now and then, the 1997 Sydney to Hobart is raised as a spectre and has gained its own mythology.

The world economy thought the end was nigh with the Global Financial Crisis in 1997 while it prepared itself for a worldwide computer meltdown with the anticipated Y2KBug. The only piece of relatively light news that came out of the USA during the 1990s was what President Bill Clinton and intern Monica Lewinsky could do with a cigar, which was revealed during the 1998 - 1999 Lewinsky scandal.

The effect of this real-life disaster-laden decade led to a plethora of disaster movies, which highlights the quote by Oscar Wilde, in his 1889 essay, ‘The Decay of Lying’ (published in 1909): “Life imitates art more than art imitates Life”. It is not something new. Human beings have always told stories about disaster events, initially to not forget, but also as an explanation that satisfies their need to know. We call them myths. Hollywood writers observed the real-life disasters in this decade and constructed the same type of stories as their ancient predecessors had done when they, in their turn, were creating myths. The only difference is that today’s writers are able to incorporate the
How The Three Little Pigs Came to Star in Independence Day/Ph.D.Thesis

science into their own storytelling. The stories might be less fantastical, but they follow the same apocalyptical mythic structure and they hark back to human fears of survival. Here was ample material for today’s screenwriters to create make-believe disasters, and these events contributed to such an extent that it led to Shone observing:

*The genre was beginning to double up on itself, with 1997 boasting two one hundred million dollar volcano movies: Volcano and Dante’s Peak; two one hundred million dollar boat movies: Speed 2: Cruise Control and Titanic; and two one hundred million dollar alien movies: Alien: Resurrection and Starship* (Shone 2004: 247).

There was an obvious need for these films as people flocked to see them. Three of the top ten highest grossing domestic films of 1998 were disaster movies, with *Armageddon* reaching second position ($201m), *Deep Impact* eighth ($140m) and *Godzilla* ninth ($136m) (Keane 2006: 81), all of them science fictions, which is interesting as sci fi in this decade represents an exploration and depiction of fear of the unknown. In fairy tale and myth, it represents the land beyond the village: the forest or the expanse of water.

The sci fi genre played a major part in the disaster movies of the 1990s. King and Krzywinska note that:

*it demonstrated a number of strategies, including homage to the 1950s in Mars Attacks! (1996), and to the 1960s TV serial in Lost in Space (1998). It has also maintained strong links with the disaster movie, Armageddon (1998), Deep Impact (1998) and the horror films, the Alien quartet (1979, 1986, 1992, 1997), Event Horizon (1997) and Cube (1997) (King & Krzywinska 2000: 7).*

Sci fi/horror hybrids such as *Event Horizon* bring the millennial fear of Judgement Day into the hi-tech present, a quality also found to some extent in the sci fi-disaster blends that characterise *Deep Impact* (1998) and *Armageddon* (1998) (King & Krzywinska 2000: 53). The last two films were inspired by the real-life events: *Armageddon* by a very near collision between earth and an asteroid, 1989FC, which, if it had hit earth, would have thrown us back into the
Dark Ages with its destruction; and Deep Impact, with the world witnessing on television news and the Internet planetary destruction caused by the Shoemaker-Levy comet when it hit Jupiter in 1994 (see Chapman et al 2012, Culver 1995, Kobres 1993).

Such was the interest and general fear in these extra-terrestrial rocks that at one stage, two other asteroid pictures were also in the pipeline, one to be developed by Peter Hyams and another planned by the producer-director team Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich, who went on to make Godzilla (1998) instead after learning of the competition (King 2009: 160).

The stories were becoming repetitive even by the standards that see repetition in story formulae as a mainstay of blockbuster production. This repetition in story formulae is a motif that is carried across from mythology, folklore and fairy tales, in particular, The Three Little Pigs fairy tale. However, unlike the characters in fairy tales, the heroes in these 1990s disaster movies, as Flanagan points out, are closer to the archetypal hero of the Greek romance: they do not undergo any real biographical or maturational adjustment over the course of their adventures (Flanagan 2004: 109). Like James Bond, their job is to save the world, or their world.

4. The Categories of 1990 Disaster Movies

Davies and Wells categorise the 1990s disaster movies into:

- Alien Attacks
- Natural Disasters
- Asteroid and Comet Hits
- Technological Disasters

(Davies & Wells 2002: 8).

I have created the following table, which identifies the category and examples of the 1990s disaster movies that apply to these categories against the old myths and the fairy tale:
### Table 14: 1990s Disaster Movies and Fairy tale/Myth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Fairy tale/Myth tie-in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The hero myth  
Apocalypse myth: Ragnarok, clash of the Titans. |
| Natural disasters       | *Twister* (1996)  
*Volcano* (1997)  
*Dante’s Peak* (1997) | Destruction & weather myths: Whirlwind Woman (Shawnee)  
Poseidon/Zeus fight over weather  
Hephaestus, son of Zeus and Hera, god of fire and volcanos  
The hero myth  
Fairy tale: The Three Little Pigs |
| Technological disasters | *Apollo 13* (1995)  
*Titanic* (1997) | The hero myth: The Odyssey |
| Asteroid and comet hits | *Armageddon* (1998)  
*Deep Impact* (1998) | Creation and Apocalypse myths:  
Zeus birthing Athena  
Fiery chariots falling from the sky (Amer-Indians of Arizona)  
Phaethon myth (Greek)  
Quetzalcoatl myth (Mexican)  
The hero myth |

(Williams 2015)

### 4.i. Alien Attacks

The major Alien Attacks disaster movie of the 1990s was *Independence Day* (1996).

*I saw... its thoughts. I saw what they’re planning to do. They’re like locusts.  
They’re moving from planet to planet... their whole civilization. After they’ve consumed every natural resource they move on... and we are next. Nuke ’em.  
Let’s nuke the bastards* - President Thomas Whitmore (*Independence Day* 1996).
Roland Emmerich, the writer, director and co-producer of *Independence Day*, was very much influenced by the special effects Ray Harryhausen created in the 1956 film, *Earth vs the Flying Saucers* to such an extent that, according to Dixon (1999:5), he used that as a template for *Independence Day*. Emmerich describes on the commentary track of the *Independence Day* DVD that the inspiration came from a press junket that he and his co-producer, Dean Devlin attended for *Stargate* (1994). A reporter asked Emmerich if he believed in aliens. He said "Of course not" and then thought "I wonder what would happen if you woke up one day to see a city-sized spacecraft above your house". He turned to Devlin and informed him that he knew what their next film would be about (The Making of ID4 1996).
The film revolves around the date celebrated for the signing of the Declaration of Independence and provides an opportunity to revive hallowed American values. Just like their counterparts in myths and fairy tales, foolish or ignorant characters who attempt to engage alien spacecraft without adequate protection, preparation or knowledge come to a grisly end. Only the true heroes as per the hero in the monomyth are qualified to take on the deadly force. Gone is the warm and fuzzy alien of Spielberg's and Lucas' films. In its place is the evil alien of sci fi, which, according to King, once stood potentially as a metaphor for the Soviet Union in the 1950s sci fi movies and is revived here in the post Cold War era as "the Other against which internal unity can be asserted" (King 2009: 20, 26). In the fairy tale, it has the function of the villain, or the big bad wolf.

The alien mother ship, moored outside Earth’s atmosphere, taps into Earth's communications satellites, which it uses as a countdown signal to its battle ships that have been strategically placed over the capital cities of the world (stages 4 to 6 of Propp’s morphology - see chapter 4, table 4). The countdown ends as the clock ticks over into July 4th and ticks into stage 7 of the morphology: cities are destroyed and nobody can defeat these aliens with their advanced technology. It becomes clear that their intention is to annihilate the whole of humanity. When all seems lost, an American communications scientist, played by Jeff Goldblum, discovers how to use the aliens' communications system to deliver a computer virus, destroying the mother
ship's ability to signal its battle fleet. It is the same motif used in fairy tales like Hansel and Gretel where the witch who is heating up a pot to cook one child is tricked into the pot by the other, thus using the villain's own weapons against herself.

![Fig 58: l - r: Levinson (Jeff Goldblum) and Hillier (Will Smith) plant the computer virus inside the alien mother ship in *Independence Day* (1996) (20th Century Fox)](image)

The Alien Attack category disaster movie provided a fairy tale alternative for America as a whole to redeem its world standing, at least in its own eyes. However, it is the individual who is pitted against the forces of nature, unable to control the outcome but at least is able to survive and lives to tell the tale who features in the Natural Disasters category.

### 4.ii. Natural Disasters

#### 4.ii.i Tornados

*You’ve never seen it miss this house, and miss that house, and come after you!* - Jo (*Twister* 1996)

The Natural Disasters category of disaster movie was more grounded in reality than the fantasy of the alien attack. It dealt with killer tornadoes and earthquakes, events suffered in real-life and not political metaphors as in the Alien Attack category. *Twister* (1996) was the first of the natural attack disaster
movies of the 1990s, making full use of CGI (computer generated imaging) to create the mother of all tornadoes: that film’s big bad wolf.

The heroes, Harding, played by Bill Paxton, and his estranged wife Jo, played by Helen Hunt, are portrayed as having what it takes to get close enough to penetrate the heart of the tornado and survive the experience.

![Image of Jo (Helen Hunt) and Harding (Bill Paxton) from Twister (1996)](image)

Their human antagonist is Miller, played by Cary Elwes, who lacks Hardy and Jo’s intuition. Apart from driving a black four-wheel drive late model vehicle, he has the very latest state of the art technology, including a more scientific-looking version of DOROTHY, a machine invented by Harding that can send probes into the core of a tornado and whose design plans Miller had stolen from Harding. The former’s dependence on technology leads him astray as he lacks the human intuition to locate tornado touchdown. Like the first two pigs in The Three Pigs, he ignores the warnings from the third pig, Harding and Jo. His pride results in him being killed by the tornado.

The themes of hubris and nemesis manifested in the over-reliance on technology rather than relying on human ingenuity and intuition, are seen in the other natural disaster films of the decade: the volcano disaster movies.
4.ii.ii. Volcanic Eruptions

1997 was the year of the volcano disaster movie...or rather, two volcano disaster movies: *Volcano* (1997), which wrecks a swathe of Los Angeles but is prevented from destroying far more of the city, and destroys the entire community of *Dante’s Peak* (1997). King observes that one theme common to both films is that of a natural force destroying an unnatural world of townships and concrete created by humans, whilst another theme is sacrifice and redemption (King 2009: 145-146, 152).

The opening credit sequence of *Volcano* juxtaposes the decadent and superficial world of Los Angeles with shots of a subterranean world of hell below the streets, waiting to destroy all the sin above. Even the music changes from being light-hearted in its portrayal of a vacuous cityscape to foreshadowing that something nasty is about to happen to Los Angeles and it will be emerging from underground. This motif has throwbacks to the Old Testament and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, where God wipes out all the sinners and non-believers.

*Volcano* maintains a tradition of the strong male leader in times of crisis. Mike Roark, played by Tommy Lee Jones, is presented as a figure who stands above the petty self interest displayed by various institutions initially caught up in the
disaster (King 2009: 148). He is on holiday when disaster strikes and returns to work. Like the older third little pig, his warnings go unheeded until the big bad wolf - a new volcano - emerges from the depths of the La Brea tar pits.

The film follows the hubris, nemesis, sacrifice and redemption themes common to myth and fairy tale. For instance, the manager of a subway rail system refuses to acknowledge the blasting his company is doing underground whilst they are building a new subway near a fault line is the cause of an earth tremor at the film’s start. He subsequently refuses to close a nearby subway line for safety reasons because his company will lose money. However, the fault opens up, lava bombs bombard the city and lava begins to spew from the birth of a new volcano on Wilshire Boulevard. It enters the subway where a train has stopped. The manager of the rail system succeeds in getting everyone except the driver to safety. He then sacrifices his own life by jumping into the lava and throwing the unconscious guard to safety. Like the first and second little pigs of the fairy tale, he has to die for his disregard of the dangers.

King observes the official appears to be a classic ‘blame’ figure in the disaster tradition, "associated with an arrogant disregard for the forces of nature, but is able to redeem himself by saving others, dying redemptively in a pool of lava while saving a train driver" (King 2009: 152).

The same themes and fairy tale motifs that drive Volcano also drive Dante's Peak. In addition, intuition rather than relying only on technology is the motivating factor with the hero of this film. Dr. Harry Dalton, played by Pierce Brosnan, works for the United States Geological Survey as a volcanologist. Like Roark in Volcano, Dalton is on holiday when his boss, Dr. Paul Dreyfus, sends him to Dante's Peak, a small town in Washington, situated near a dormant volcano, the mountain after which the town is named.

Dalton alerts the local town to the danger but the council is very much against any interference from Dalton, as it will impede economic progress with a development company. Only the mayor can see the danger. Dreyfus, Dalton’s boss, is reluctant to take any evacuation action until there is firm evidence that the volcano is going to erupt. He would rather trust the
technology than Dalton's intuition. His team arrive to monitor the volcano, leading to their observation at first sight of Dante's Peak:

_Isn’t this beautiful, nestled all cozy right up against the mountain?_ - Stan
_Yes, just like Pompeii - Nancy (Dante’s Peak, 1997)_

It is not very long before the mountain erupts. The story is one of flight and survival, harking back to the flood myth, the lava replacing the water of the myth. Those that did not heed Dalton’s third pig warning have to die: the obnoxious greedy town councillor, who has no redeeming qualities and dies a cowardly death; Ruth, the mayor’s mother-in-law sacrifices herself to save her family, fully knowing that she is the cause of their dilemma; and Dreyfus sacrifices himself by ensuring his remaining team reach safety before he can look to his own needs. He has already acknowledged he was wrong and apologised to Dalton, and redeems himself by this and unselfishly saving his team.

King points out that both Dalton and Roark could also be described as Pandora-type characters: nobody wants to listen to their concerns until the disaster happens (King 2009: 155).
Whilst the stories in the Natural Disasters category of disaster movies in the 1990s were set in contemporary times, the two notable Technological Disasters category of disaster movies harkened back to historical events.

4.iii. Technological Disasters

Houston, we have a problem - Astronaut Jim Lovell (Apollo 13 1995)

Unlike the 1970s technological disaster movies that were seen as metaphors for cost cutting measures in real life undermining public safety, the two notable Technological Disasters movies of the 1990s, both based on historical events, look back nostalgically at a time when human endurance or ingenuity overcame disaster: Apollo 13 (1995) and Titanic (1997).

Apollo 13 was based on the 1994 non-fiction book of the same name, written by one of the Apollo 13 astronauts, Jim Lovell, and Jeffrey Kluger. The book is about the events leading up to the disaster on Apollo 13 and how Lovell and his two crewmen safely returned to Earth. The film, Apollo 13 showcases
how its characters resorted to basic technology and human ingenuity to overcome the disaster of an exploded spaceship and bring it and its human occupants safely back to Earth. As King points out:

*the fact that the only real Apollo mission made into a Hollywood feature is Apollo 13, “the one that went wrong”. An element of pioneer heroics is restored after a technological fault threatens the lives of the crew in Apollo 13 (1995)* (King 2009: 81).

The Apollo space program is seen as almost mythical, according to Launius (2005), and one of the more important events in American history. He refers to Robertson’s study (see Robertson 1980: xv, 2) that focuses on American myths, such as the myth of the chosen people, the myth of a God-given destiny and the myth of a New World innocence or inherent virtue (Launius 2005: 129-130).

Given this description of the American psyche, it would not be hard to see why a film such as *Apollo 13* resonated as much as it did when it was released. The country was going through a myriad of real-life disasters and its geo-political position in the world had weakened. It very much needed a film that, whilst it told the story of a failed moon landing mission, harkened back to a past era, with Powers, in The Washington Post, noting:

*the film’s incessant nostalgia for the paradisiacal America invoked by Ronald Reagan and Pat Buchanan - an America where men were men, women were subservient, and people of colour kept out of the way* (Powers, The Washington Post: 9 July 1995).
The film certainly resonated in more than one way with me. I could really relate to the three astronauts having less electrical energy than that needed to heat a filter coffee machine. This was a scene in the film where engineers were trying to work out how the astronauts could safely get back into Earth's atmosphere when they had to turn the electricity back on in their stricken space capsule. Shortly after I saw Apollo 13 my car had broken down with electrical problems. The RACV man temporarily fixed the problem but warned me not to stall the car before I got home. My destination was thirty kilometres away from the centre of Melbourne, where the car had been parked, and it was peak hour. All through that harrowing trip, I kept chiding myself for being so anxious as I thought about the plight those three astronauts in the film had found themselves in. It also resonated on another level. During the actual launch and return, I was working on live television news in London where we covered the event. I recall a cartoonist with one of the British daily tabloids publishing a cartoon of a tiny space capsule hurtling through space towards a heart-shaped Earth. It fully encapsulated everything we were all feeling with millions of people glued to their TV sets, praying for the men's safe return home.

At the time of the real-life incident, Americans had beaten the Soviets to be the first to land on the moon. After the successful landings and moon walks of Apollos 11 and 12, the public, as depicted in the film, were beginning to become blasé about space. The TV networks did not broadcast the live blast-off of Apollo 13 in 1970 and only became interested when the news came through that there had been an explosion on board the spacecraft.

In the movie, technology has let down the astronauts and engineers and it is left to human ingenuity to overcome each obstacle and get the crew back safely. As the real-life Jim Lovell stated, "The real Apollo 13 mission was strictly a case of survival" (Wright 1970: n.p.). which is the hero myth journey and has the functions of the fairy tale even though it is a real event.

Another film released at this time that showed the failure of technology was James Cameron’s Titanic (1997), a love triangle story set against the sinking
of the RMS Titanic on 15 April 1912. The sinking of the SS Titanic represents human hubris in that humans assume they can conquer nature by building an unsinkable ship, as conveyed in the film by the ship’s owner, Bruce Ismay, to its designer, Thomas Andrews:

Ismay (incredulously):  *But this ship can’t sink!*

Andrews:  *She’s made of iron, sir! I assure you, she can…and she will.* (Titanic 1997)

Like *Apollo 13* (1995), it is a fight for survival and heroic endurance and sacrifice by the characters, both fictional and historical, as a result of people over-extending the technology for the times in which they lived.

As Negra discusses:

Titanic sets itself in an analogous turn-of-the-century moment as an oblique means of interrogating current perceptions of economic, national and technological fragility, and it suggests that our century began (as it might end) with disasters brought on by overly expansive human visions of technology in relation to creation (Negra 1999: 220).

However, the use of technology is central to saving Earth and its inhabitants in the last of Davies and Wells’ (2002) four categories of 1990s
disaster movies: asteroid and comet hits, as are the themes of sacrifice and redemption, hubris and nemesis.

4.iv. Asteroid and Comet Hits

Nobody down there can help us. So if we don’t get this job done, then everybody’s gone - Harry Stamper (Armageddon 1998).

Global annihilation is threatened in both Deep Impact and Armageddon, competing blockbusters from the summer 1998 season (King 2009: 145).

In Armageddon (1998), NASA discovers a large asteroid the size of Texas has been knocked out of orbit and is expected to hit Earth in eighteen days. The plan proposed by scientist, Dan Truman, played by Billy Bob Thornton, is to land on the asteroid, drill a hole eight hundred feet deep, place an atomic bomb inside the asteroid and blow it into two large chunks that would fly safely past Earth. The only person on Earth that can help NASA is Harry Stamper, played by Bruce Willis, who is the best deep-sea driller in the world. Stamper will only help if he and his drilling crew can do the job.

Fig 64: The asteroid-drilling heroes of Armageddon (1998), l - r: Rockhound (Steve Buscemi), Chick (Will Patton), Harry Stamper (Bruce Willis), A.J. Frost (Ben Affleck), Bear (Michael Clarke Duncan) (Touchstone Pictures/Jerry Bruckheimer Films)
As in the hero myth and fairy tale, they move into a new world: the world of outer space, where eventually they are able to implant the bomb only to discover the remote-controlled detonation device has been destroyed and someone will have to stay behind to press the button. Stamper sacrifices his own life by staying behind whilst everyone else takes off for Earth. At the very last moment, he presses the button and the planet is saved. In doing so, he has become the tragic, classic hero of myth.

In *Deep Impact* (1998), the symbolic number three is represented by the film’s three plots: Biederman and the romance with his girlfriend, Lerner’s journey from ambition to sacrifice, and the resolution of generational conflict between an aged astronaut on the Messiah and the much younger leader of the space mission to destroy the comet.

The themes of sacrifice and redemption, redolent in fairy tale and myth, are paramount in this film. The only real hubris is portrayed through the character of journalist, Jenny Lerner. She is ambitious to reach the top of the pile and in her earnestness to reveal a senior government official is having a secret affair, she instead discovers a secret government plan to survive a planetary holocaust. The President buys her silence with the promise to allow her the first press question when he briefs the media. Despite giving up her place in the government-built shelter to a colleague and her baby, Lerner has to be punished by the gods for her hubris whereas Biederman survives the same tsunami.
Biederman has not only alerted the world to the presence of the comet, even though, as a school student, he did not know exactly what it was, but he has given up his place in the shelter to be with his new wife and her family who are refused entry. At no time has he shown any hubristic tendencies and because of this, the gods have rewarded him with life. He and his wife are able to reach safety from the tsunami.

The crew on the American-Russian space mission, Messiah, have broken up the comet into two. The smaller of the two space chunks hits the Atlantic Ocean just off the east coast of America. It creates the mega tsunami, which kills Lerner and her father. In the meantime, the crew on the crippled Messiah decide to sacrifice themselves by getting next to the second chunk of meteor
and detonating the remaining nuclear bombs. As they ponder their fate, one of the crew states:

Well, look on the bright side. We’ll all have high schools named after us - Andrea Baker (Deep Impact 1998).

The meteor is blown up and Earth is saved by their sacrifice.

I have devised the following table, which maps across the fairy tale and mythic themes of hubris and nemesis, and sacrifice and redemption, to each of these films and some of the fairy tales and myths that relate to them:
### Table 15: Fairy tale themes in 1990s disaster movies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Hubris (pride) and Nemesis</th>
<th>Sacrifice and Redemption</th>
<th>Fairy tale/Myth tie-in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Independence Day  | President Whitmore - initially ignoring Levinson. His wife is killed by alien attack. | President’s wife - owing to her procrastination and ignoring calls of danger. | Fairy tale: The Three Little Pigs  
Myths: The Hero myth |
| (1996)            |                             |                          |                                                                                        |
| Twister (1996)    | Miller has wealthy backing and relies on state-of-the art equipment to track tornadoes. Is dishonest as he has stolen design plans of DOROTHY to make his own tracking device. Is killed by the tornado as he not only ignores calls of danger, but because his own ambition blinds him. | Jo is prepared to sacrifice her marriage in the quest of saving others from being killed by tornadoes. Her redemption is that her husband returns to her and their marriage is saved. | Fairy tale: The Three Little Pigs  
Myths: The Hero myth  
Destruction & weather myths: Whirlwind Woman (Shawnee) Poseidon/Zeus fight over the weather |
| Volcano (1997)    | Manager of Red Line trains ignores danger of seismic activity and refuses to believe his actions may have triggered latest earthquake, resulting in LA's new volcano. He is killed by lava from it. | Manager of Red Line trains realises his mistake, successfully saves passengers on stranded train but has to sacrifice his own life in order to save the driver's life. Amy Barnes' assistant is killed by the volcano as she's not up to the job. | Fairy tale: The Three Little Pigs  
Myths: The Hero myth  
Destruction & weather myths: Hera, god of fire and volcanos |
| Dante’s Peak (1997)| Roark's bratty daughter only begins to display any consideration for anyone else when she's forced to do so. Because she saves a little boy, she is not killed by the volcano. | Dreyfus apologises to Dalton. Waits for Dalton until it is almost too late. Is able to save his remaining colleagues at the expense of his own life. Ruth, Dalton, the mayor and her children are in a boat slowly melting on an acidic lake. As they near a pier and safety, the boat's oars are destroyed by the acid. Ruth jumps in the | Fairy tale: The Three Little Pigs  
Myths: The Hero myth  
Destruction & weather myths: Hera, god of fire and volcanos |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Myths:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apollo 13 (1995)</td>
<td>Fred Haise treats fellow replacement astronaut Jack Swigert like an ignorant fool and resents him being on the mission. Fred wrongly blames Jack for the spaceship’s mishap. It is only when Jim Lovell asks Fred to work out the CO2 level, that Fred realises he has only worked it out for two people. He realises his mistake nearly killed all 3 of them and he accepts that he is no better than Jack.</td>
<td>The Hero myth The Odyssey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titanic (1997)</td>
<td>Rose’s fiancé treats her like a possession and is violent towards her. He loses her to lower class Irish immigrant, Jack. Rose’s fiancé handcuffs Jack to metal bar in the sinking ship. She remains with him rather than leave with fiancé and certain safety. She is able to rescue Jack. Jack sacrifices his life to save Rose’s by giving her the space on top of wreckage even though he knows he will die in the water from hypothermia.</td>
<td>The Hero myth The Odyssey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armageddon (1998)</td>
<td>Stamper and AJ are at loggerheads over Stamper’s daughter, to whom AJ is engaged. Stamper is being unreasonable in his opposition to his daughter and AJ marrying. The remaining drilling crew draw straws as to who will remain behind on the asteroid to detonate the atom bomb. AJ draws the short straw and Stamper offers to take him out onto the asteroid. There, he pulls out AJ’s air hose, forcing the latter to take refuge inside the shuttle as it takes off. Stamper sacrifices his life.</td>
<td>The Flight of the Beasts Creation &amp; Apocalypse myths: USDA birthing Athena Fiery chariots falling from the sky (Amer-Indians of Arizona) Phaethon myth (Greece) Quetzalcoatl myth (Mexican) The Hero Myth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Deep Impact (1998) | Jenny Lerner is an ambitious TV journalist whose discovery forces the President to reveal earlier than intended the plans for survivors of the encroaching comet that will hit Earth. President promises her the first question at his press announcement in return for her silence until then. She experiences a meteoric career rise. She reconciles with her estranged father, who left her mother for a younger woman. Both die when the first space chunk hits the ocean, creating mega tsunami. | Fairy tales:  
The Flight of the Beasts  
Tannhäuser  
Creation & Apocalypse myths:  
Zeus birthing Athena  
Fiery chariots falling from the sky (Amer-Indians of Arizona)  
Phaethon myth (Greece)  
Quetzalcoatl myth (Mexican)  
The Hero Myth |
| --- | --- | --- |

She learns a colleague and young daughter are not selected for survival, she relinquishes her space in the survival program (bunkered inside a deep mountain). Leo Biederman, who discovered the comet, marries his school sweetheart in an attempt to save her and her family. When they are denied access to the underground bunker, he sacrifices his place of safety to be with his bride. His sacrifice is rewarded as he, his bride and bride's baby brother escape to high ground above the mega tsunami.

In this chapter, I have continued to map the influence of myths and fairy tales on *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977) with particular reference to the blockbuster of the 1990s, many of which were disaster movies reflecting the uncertainty of the times in which they were made.

The impact of 9/11 will be examined in the next chapter and how it radically changed the thematic motifs in the types of disaster movie made during the years from 2001 to the present day.

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*Roz Williams* 232
CHAPTER NINE

Apocalypse Now

Okay. You’re officially scaring the shit out of me right now - Phil Bergman, Knowing (2009)

I examined how the end of the millennium led to a number of disaster movies in the 1990s with millennial fears being exacerbated even more by external events during that decade. The template for making and distributing disaster movies was set down by the end of the 1990s and remains the same to this day, as does its connection to the fairy tale/myth narrative.

Fears resulting in the wide range of real-life disasters have led to several predictions of the apocalypse myth: the mayhem from the Y2K Bug, which did not occur; The Rapture in 2011 with US preacher Harold Camping first saying The Apocalypse would happen in May of that year and then changing the date to October; and the Mayan Apocalypse predicted for 2012.

The story of the Mayan prediction started with claims that Nibiru, a supposed planet discovered by the Sumerians, is headed toward Earth. This catastrophe was initially predicted for May 2003, but when nothing happened the doomsday date was moved forward to December 2012. Then these two fables were linked to the end of one of the cycles in the ancient Mayan calendar at the winter solstice in 2012, hence the predicted doomsday date of December 21, 2012, which, as O’Donnell pointed out, "passed with lots of parties but no lasting fireworks" (O’Donnell 2013: 1).

However, it was a real-life event that nobody could foresee that eclipsed all the fears of Y2K Bugs and Apocalypses. This was the terrorist attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001 and it would completely change the two-decade cycles of disaster movies. The effect on the genre will be explored in this chapter.
1. Post Millenium and 9/11

The defining of disaster of the Twenty-first Century was 9/11 (Keane 2006: 89).

I was on a volcano-hopping holiday in New Zealand when 9/11 happened. I was staying in a hotel, getting ready for a day on a live offshore volcanic island and found I could not get the radio working in my room so I turned on the TV and put on the breakfast news. I thought initially I was looking at a disaster movie, with planes flying into the World Trade Center, and then shots of one building collapsing, followed by the other. I had to double check that I was actually looking at CNN and not a movie channel. I sat for the next five minutes, totally dumbfounded at what I was watching. When I left New Zealand a couple of days later, I was thankful that I was on a Qantas fight because Auckland Airport was crammed full of stranded travellers travelling to the US. Planes weren’t allowed to fly over American airspace or land anywhere in America.

The Y2K Bug did not eventuate despite all the hype beforehand, and the world did not come to an end on New Year’s Day in 2000. However, the world as we knew it changed a year later on 11 September when Al-Qaeda terrorists flew two jet liners into the World Trade Center in New York, a third plane into the Pentagon, and a failed attempt with the fourth, flight United 93, into the Capitol Building.
As Stringer (2003) observes, the spectacular destruction on live television of the World Trade Center generated previously unimagined associations around Hollywood blockbusters. In the days and weeks following the attack, as millions of people throughout the world sought to make sense of the traumatic events they had witnessed as if ‘watching a movie’, innumerable comparisons were made to films such as The Towering Inferno (1974), the Die Hard series (from 1988), Godzilla (1998), Independence Day (1996), The Siege (1998), and True Lies (1994) (Stringer 2003: 12). This was a disaster nobody except the perpetrators could image.

The immediate effect on Hollywood was the elimination of scenes of disaster from films being made or just made at the time, and their release dates being put back (Keane 2006: 92). It led to Steven Spielberg commenting:

I don’t think September 11 is going to create one type of a movie, but I think it’s going to cause filmmakers to tell more and more personal stories, about isolation, loneliness, and vulnerability. I’m not sure there’s going to be a whole spate of movies about 9/11 – Steven Spielberg (cited in Shone 2004: 301).
Only time will tell whether Spielberg’s supposition is correct, and the same applies to Stephen Keane’s. At the time of publishing his book, *Disaster Movies: The Cinema of Catastrophe* in 2006, Keane believed that the greatest challenge to definitions of the disaster movie would come from films directly based on the events of 9/11:

*It is a spectacular proposition but also safely retro and it remains to be seen whether this will lead to a further retreat from the present for disaster movies. That present was eventually tackled in more sober, verité-style 9/11 films such as Oliver Stone’s *World Trade Center* (2006) and Paul Greengrass’s *United 93* (2006). Perhaps this, then, will be the main distinction between disaster movies and disaster films, spectacle on the one side and a form of ‘new realism’ on the other* (Keane 2006: 106).

Keane surmises that disaster movies subsequent to 9/11 can be very much distinguished by tone. He feels the impact of 9/11 will compel filmmakers to separate sadistic pleasure, comedy and irony from disaster in reverence for the victims and survivors of 9/11 (Keane 2006: 93).

That reverence came five years later when the first of the 9/11 films were released: *United 93* (2006) and *World Trade Center* (2006). Both these films were dramatised documentaries of the real-life people and events whereas *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2012), adapted from the novel of the same name, was a fiction about a young boy whose father had died in one of the Twin Towers. The main plot was not specifically about 9/11.

However, filmmakers of disaster movies moved on from focussing on 9/11. They left the fallout of the war on terror to other filmmakers who made films like *Rendition* (2007) and *The Hurt Locker* (2008). Instead they concentrated their attention on global issues that fuelled the fear in people of an even more uncertain future caused by climate change, man-made disasters, epidemics and war than any millennial fear had produced. And there were plenty of real-life events from which to draw upon in creating disaster movie stories.
2. Context

For me, I feel like I live in an apocalyptic world with global warfare, a recession, and resource scarcity - Jesse Alexander (The Wall Street Journal: 31 July 2009)

There were a large number of major earthquakes from 2001, killing thousands around the world before the big one on 26 December 2004, which led to the Boxing Day tsunami. To date, approximately two hundred and thirty thousand people are dead or still missing from that event. In 2011, a massive earthquake off the coast of Japan caused a tsunami that severely damaged the Fukushima nuclear power plants and led to radioactive contamination of water, soil and crops in the area. All of this, including the tsunami, was captured live on TV.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina nearly destroyed New Orleans, followed by Hurricanes Rita and Ike. Europe experienced one of the worst heatwaves in recorded history, killing thousands and in Australia, the Black Saturday bushfires killed hundreds and left thousands homeless, destroying whole towns in its wake. The obverse was a cold snap at the end of the decade, which led to the largest December snowfall recorded in St. Petersburg, Russia, since 1881.

Fig 68: Hurricane Katrina (UltimateChase.com)
Epidemics became more extreme, with the SARS outbreak spreading to thirty-seven countries in early 2003 and the H1N1 swine flu pandemic in 2009 infecting two hundred and thirteen countries. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014 is the largest outbreak in history and has already killed thousands of people in that area and is predicted to kill many more (CDC: 2014).

There were also plenty of non-natural disasters, particularly plane crashes - both accidental and deliberate: the Malaysian jet shot down in 2014 over the war-torn Ukrainian and Russian borders, as well as the sinking of ferries around the world, Russian submarines, and the Italian cruise ship Costa Concordia going aground on a reef; and to top it all off, BP’s Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig explosion which led to the worst environmental disaster in US history.

No list of disasters would be complete without the extra-terrestrial invasion type. In early 2013, a twenty metre wide asteroid exploded twenty-six kilometres into Earth’s atmosphere over Russia with an energy force of twenty to thirty times that of the atom bomb detonated at Hiroshima. Its trajectory and explosion were photographed by press and locals alike and immediately went viral worldwide on social media. Over seven thousand buildings across six cities in the region were damaged by the explosion’s shock wave.

3. High Anxiety: Where is it Coming From?

With all the above-mentioned disasters, together with the number of terrorist attacks around the world since 2001 and the establishment of the Islamic State in 2014, the world is not a safe place in which to live. There is a lot of anxiety around about probable global disasters and social instability and it is being nourished by news reports (Hulme 2009: 345).

Satpathi and Smith (2014) agree that the media play a big role in influencing how we perceive risks. However, they note commercial films,
namely disaster movies, amplify the viewer's perceptions of risk outside the
cinema, particularly if viewers seek information as well as entertainment from
their time in the cinema (Satpathi & Smith 2014: 6). Their observations concur
with those of Eskjær (2013), who believes that the disaster movie participates in
generating and sustaining public preoccupations and social anxieties (Eskjær
2013: 338).

Hulme, however, posits that by contrast,

*disaster fiction is a constant reassurance that personal survival, however,
unlikely it may seem, is not only possible, but also the norm....the real question
is rarely if, but how the protagonists escape from a burning tower, a sinking
cruiser, a deadly virus, a post-apocalyptic world, or major climatic shifts

He adds that in these times we are spectators of real-life events and we will
experience the horror and mayhem, but our "fictive alter egos" survive in the
fictional stories, leaving us with a glimmer of hope and comfort (Hulme 2009:
330).

Non-fictional scenarios are at the core of National Geographic Channel's
first season of *Doomsday Preppers*, which was launched in 2012. The series
explores people who prepare for any oncoming apocalypse and what their
preparations are. One such participant was Nancy Lanza, a prepper with an
enthusiasm for guns. Unfortunately, her son Adam became the Sandy Hook
school massacre shooter. Berger (see O'Donnell 2013) points out that it is far too
easy to blame Nancy's gun love or her survivalist beliefs for the horrific events
in Newtown. However, survivalist doomsday beliefs have been associated
with a number of other terrorist and shooting deaths.

World ending, conspiratorial beliefs are easy to dismiss as symptoms of
possible mental illness but sociologists, psychologists, theologians and literary
schools who have studied apocalyptic narratives and beliefs are more inclined
to speak of them as a form of sense making. This has led to Western Australian
academic Mick Broderick's suggestion that rather than analyse these films as
Sontag did, they ought more rightly be seen as being primarily about survival (O’Donnell 2013: 2).

It is this glimmer of hope for humanity that is a common thread in the post 9/11 disaster movies to date. It harks back to the stories told by the ancient creators of myth. The myths were created not only for people to not forget the events upon which they were based, but as a way of re-assuring their listeners that there were survivors, and their descendants were there, sitting around the campfire, very much alive and safely re-living the events in their imaginations as the storyteller recounted the myths. It is the same re-assurance that whatever the world throws at us today we will survive, even though in reality we probably would not.

The first successful major disaster movie of the post 9/11 era was Roland Emmerich’s The Day After Tomorrow (2004). It began a plethora of environmental disaster stories, both natural and man-made, that continues unabated ten years later and ties into that mythical and fairy tale re-assurance and explanation of disastrous events. It was also a hugely successful film produced by Emmerich’s own company Centropolis and the Canadian studio Lionsgate with a budget of $125 million and distributed by 20th Century Fox. It achieved a total gross revenue of $625 million which, according to Box Office Mojo, makes it the second highest grossing film of all times in the category ‘environmental’, behind James Cameron’s Avatar (2009) (Box Office Mojo 2010).

4. The End of the World as We Know It

When this storm is over, we’ll be in a new ice age - Jack Hall (The Day After Tomorrow 2004).

Before it was released in the USA, The Day After Tomorrow generated an intense storm of media controversy as scientists, politicians, advocacy groups and political pundits debated the scientific and political implications of the film and global climate change (Leiserowitz 2004: 23). Satpathi and Smith (2014) describe how some of the press began predicting that seeing the film would
cause people to discount the film's message of global warming as being wildly exaggerated whilst others predicted that the film's drastic portrayal of global warming would have the opposite effect and cause people to increase their concern about the issue and the desire for government intervention (Satpathi & Smith 2014: 10).

Anthony Leiserowitz conducted a study of climate change risk perception in 2004 following the film's release. His findings showed that *The Day After Tomorrow* had a considerable impact on the global warming risk perception of those who saw the film (Leiserowitz 2004: 28). This was despite the considerable criticism by the scientific community about the film's narrative distorting scientific climatic shifts, meteorology and the basic rules of physics (Eskjær 2013: 343).

Keane (2006) agrees with scientists who criticised *The Day After Tomorrow* as bordering on science fiction. However, he explains that this is the result of the science behind the film being used for dramatic purposes, the possible events leading to the next Ice Age condensed from centuries into weeks. For instance, the Larson B ice shelf took three months in reality to break off whereas in the film, it took less than five minutes. The exaggerated or accelerated science, therefore, becomes part of the framework, grammar and pace of the film as a whole (Keane 2006: 98).
It is a reversal of the ancient people's mythologies that explained why external events like ice ages, for example, occur. We now have our own science to explain these phenomena and we have incorporated it into our own storytelling. We are able to do this with a degree of realism because of computer-generated imaging. As Sanders argues, "the blurring of reality and fiction helps to add authenticity to the film, tapping into people's fears about climate change and natural disaster" (Sanders 2009: 71).

There have always been climatic and natural disasters, but 9/11 seemed to make people, particularly Americans, hyper sensitive to the world around them. It was for this reason that Roland Emmerich, the film's director, co-writer and co-producer, deliberately symbolised the hope in the future by not destroying New York buildings as he did in Independence Day:

*If that much water would hit the Statue of Liberty, it would topple over. But in our movie it stands...you could not do a movie like Independence Day today anymore because it’s too upsetting to people to see these national things destroyed* (cited in Gillette 2013: n.p.).

However, this did not stop the monster in Cloverfield (2008) ripping off the statue's head and hurling it across the water onto the streets of New York. More about this is discussed towards the end of this chapter. Generally, the image of the undamaged Statue of Liberty's arm with her torch remains a beacon of hope,
the apocalyptic/post apocalyptic template now set for most disaster films that have been made since 2004.

The need for a beacon of hope had become universal. It was not only the USA that was making these post 9/11 global catastrophe films. Other countries began to do so as well. For example, *Japan Sinks* (2006) is a remake of the 1973 screenplay based on Sakyo Komatsu's novel *Nihon Chinbotsu*. The story is about the encroaching destruction of Japan by each of its islands being sucked back into the earth's crust by its tectonic plates. Only a series of nuclear explosions can separate what is left of the remaining islands before they too are destroyed. The 2006 films ends with Japan being saved whereas the novel and original screenplay in 1973 have Japan sinking in the end with Mount Fuji erupting.

The threat of apocalyptic events in disaster movies has now become post apocalyptic with films like *Elysium* (2013), set in the Twenty Second Century where the differences between rich and poor are very marked. One of the major themes in this film is the redemption of the poor by an unlikely redeemer, who redresses the balance of power so that everyone can share in the common wealth. It is an indictment of the worst-case scenario of Darwin's theory of evolution where the weak are destroyed by the strong, but also an indictment of the current growing schism between rich and poor in today's world. However, the film is very representative of the wish-fulfilment story told to the poor peasants in Medieval Europe: the fairy tale. The hero, played...
by Matt Damon, sacrifices himself so that this balance in power is resolved and in doing so, the sick daughter of a poor friend is able to have medical treatment to save her life.

Sharing the wish-fulfilment motif of the fairy tale are the monster and plague films the proliferated in the post 9/11 era.

5. Monsters

As a sign of the times, the monster in the post 9/11 era has come to symbolise the terrorist threat (Keane 2006: 97) just as its predecessor in the Cold War period symbolised the threat of take-over by Communism and nuclear annihilation. It is the big bad wolf from fairy tale.

One successful monster film since 9/11 is the 2006 Korean film, *The Host* (2006), where an American military scientist orders his Korean lab worker to empty all the toxic chemicals housed in the lab because the bottles containing the toxins were dusty. The chemicals end up in a river and as a result, a huge fish-like monster evolves and chases after the local populace, eating whomever it catches. The underdog hero and his family are instrumental in eventually killing the creature, but not before it has killed the hero’s daughter.

The themes of sacrifice and redemption and fairy tale/mythic motifs are prevalent in this film. For instance, the wayward father loses his daughter to
the monster after she has saved the life of an orphan boy. As a way of acknowledging the sacrifice, the father redeems himself by adopting the boy and becoming a much better father. And like the third pig in the fairy tale, he has thrown off his first and second pig ways and is now keenly aware of any threat that could come from that polluted river.

In the USA, the creature in Cloverfield (2008) is revealed at the end as having fallen from space onto New York.

Okay, just to be clear here, our options are: die here, die in the tunnels, or die in the streets - Hud (Cloverfield 2007).

Cloverfield is one of the disaster films to appeal to the YouTube audience. It is littered with references to the 9/11 attacks on New York and is set in that city. Keane explains:

The desecration of the Statue of Liberty (the monster pulls off its head and throws it into the crowd) can be equated with the destruction of the World Trade Center whilst the smoke billowing down streets recalls scenes from that day (Keane 2006: 96).

Fig 72: The monster hell-bent on destroying New York in Cloverfield (2007) (Paramount Pictures)

The film is presented as found footage from a personal video camera recovered by the United States Department of Defence, a disclaimer text stating...
that the footage is of a case designated ‘Cloverfield’ and was found in area US447, ‘formerly known as Central Park’. The video contains mostly segments taped the night of Friday, 22 May 2009 by its owner, Rob, who is filming his own going away party when New York is attacked by a huge creature running amok and smashing anything in sight. What look like parasite creatures fall off it and they, like their host, are able to kill any human with a bite. Unlike other current disaster films, there is no happy ending: a throwback to disaster movies of the 1970s where some heroes die. All of the heroes die here. Following this film, the audiences move on from monsters and into the genre satirising itself.

It did this with the 2013 made-for-television satire Sharknado about a waterspout that lifts sharks out of the ocean and deposits them in Los Angeles where they dine on the humans entrapped with them. There is a respite when the weather improves, which leads to two of the films’ characters commenting:

Baz Hogan: *Storm’s dying down.*
Nova Clarke: *How can you tell?*
Baz Hogan: *Not as many sharks flying around (Sharknado 2013).*

![Raining sharks in Los Angeles: Sharknado (2013)](The Asylum)

The telemovie was a resounding success around the world, with the SyFy Channel and its production company, The Asylum, releasing Sharknado merchandise. Its sequel, Sharknado 2: The Second One was released in 2014 to
mixed reviews but, with an audience worldwide of 3.9 billion views (Pennington 2014), it could hardly be described as unsuccessful.

6. Plague: Pestilence in Disaster Movies

Monsters morphed into plague after the outbreak of SARS and bird flu caused hundreds of people around the world to die. The fear of a pandemic on the scale of the 1918 Spanish flu, which killed millions, is never far from people's minds. Together with the anxiety of terrorist attack and global warming, it heightened global fear of survival and never more so than in America, the home of the disaster movie. It led to films whose primary theme revolved around what Keane describes as 'Western anxiety' (2006: 97).

One major American disaster film that portrays this theme on a global level is Contagion (2011). The film has no CGI stampeding monsters or special effects and hearkens back to films like The Andromeda Strain (1971 and 2008) and Outbreak (1995) where the enemy is hidden. How the pandemic began is revealed as a flashback at the end only to the audience but not to any of the film’s characters. However, unlike The Andromeda Strain, where the organism has come to Earth in a returning satellite, or Outbreak, where the organism was manufactured for biological warfare, the virus in Contagion evolves through a pig in an Asian country eating some food on which a bat has defecated. An American woman, played by Gwyneth Paltrow, shakes hands with the chef of a restaurant after he’s been preparing some of the dead pig meat and the disease is spread around the world with devastating results. It ties into our fears that we could be wiped out easily through the food we eat. In this case, the big bad wolf is the virus.
It is also reminiscent of the 1970s disaster films where big-name stars like Charlton Heston and Gene Hackman die. In this film, Gwyneth Paltrow and Kate Winslet die from the disease. A vaccine is eventually developed with some of the stars, Matt Damon and Marion Cotillard, surviving. Like those 1970s films, hubris and nemesis play a major part: Paltrow’s character has to die horribly as she is the one who not only inadvertently spread the disease, but is unfaithful to her husband, played by Matt Damon. Winslet’s character is part of the team treating the illness. Her life is sacrificed but as a result her knowledge is passed on. Cotillard’s character reveals corruption in government and medical circles whilst Damon, the cuckolded husband, is not only innocent of wrongdoing, but has natural immunity to the disease.

Whilst Contagion presents a very realist portrayal of pandemic, another form of pandemic disaster movie presents a more fantastic view: the Zombie movie.
7. Zombies

_Zombies are important as a reflection of ourselves - Vidergar (2013)_

I have not covered zombies in any previous chapter as they have inherently been included in the Cold War sci fi movies with alien beings taking over human minds, and are part of the horror genre. However, as Newitz’s research (2008) demonstrates, there has been a huge spike in zombie films since the start of the millennia (Newitz 2008) and they are very much part of the general anxiety-related disaster movie scenario.

Clasen believes that the reason why zombies ‘engender terror’ is because of ingrained phobia of infections, contagions, loss of personal autonomy and death (cited in Platts 2013: 547). They are the big bad wolf from fairy tale and must be defeated by those not infected, even if it means the hero’s life is sacrificed, as in _I Am Legend_ (2007) where the hero, played by Will Smith, is able to create an antidote to the virus and smuggle it out before he is killed.

Fig 75: Will Smith as Robert Neville, the film’s hero, _I Am Legend_ (2007)  
(Warner Bros/Roadshow Entertainment)
Videgar (see Geiser 2013) posits that many zombie stories are clustered around crises points like the post World War Two decade and the years since 9/11 (Geiser 2013: 2-3). Newitz (2008) supports this position and provides a graph of her findings:

![Graph of zombie movies](image)

It is not surprising, therefore, to see the unprecedentedly huge spike in the popularity of the zombie movie following 9/11, SARS and Hurricane Katrina (see Bishop 2009: 18, Platts 2013: 547-548). The zombie phenomenon has taken off this century in a way that it has not done before. Dendle explains that, "one of the hallmarks of the Twenty-First Century zombie is the proliferation of diverse media and narrative formats" (Dendle 2012: 4, 7-8). These include video games, comic books, TV series, zombie walks, role-playing games, zombie-related merchandise, clothing, music, fan sites, and so on. According to Platts, zombie pop culture now contributes an estimated $5 billion to the world economy per annum (Platts 2013: 548).

The zombie movie reached its zenith in 2013 with the mainstream big-budget movie, World War Z, starring Brad Pitt. Since then, it has begun to fade and its replacement takes us right back to where disaster movies first began: the re-telling of ancient historical disasters, even if they are set in present day.
8. The Noah Principle ... Yet Again

The mother of all disaster movies was 2012 (2009) about the end of the world. The film’s director, Roland Emmerich, in an interview describes it as:

…the story of people who know that the world is coming to an end, and people who don’t know. The people who know secretly build ships. It’s the government of the world, secretly building ships and not telling the people – Roland Emmerich (www.moviesonline.ca/movienews).

The seeds of Emmerich’s interest in the end of the world were most likely sewn in his first film, The Noah’s Ark Principle (1984), which tells the story of a space station with the potential to control the Earth’s weather. However, with 2012, Emmerich seems to have brought about the demise of his pet genre. He believes anything else he does from now on will be a pale imitation: "This will be the last one for a long time because I think there is nothing more to tell. I do not know how to top this one" (Lawes 2009).

Emmerich defines 2012 as being a retelling of the Noah’s Ark myth. The ships he refers to are three surviving arks, mostly carrying the ultra-wealthy who can afford the billion dollar price tag of a place on board, the world’s art treasures, government leaders and scientists, animals and some stowaways, who are the hero, his family and the family of a Tibetan worker on the arks.
The filmmakers credit the 1995 book *Fingerprints of the Gods* by Graham Hancock as inspiration for the film. In an interview with the London magazine *Time Out*, Emmerich states, "I always wanted to do a biblical flood movie, but I never felt I had the hook. I first read about the Earth’s Crust Displacement Theory in Graham Hancock’s *Fingerprints of the Gods*" (Jenkins 2009). The film was part of the hype leading up to December 2012 where, according to the Mayan Apocalypse, the world would end, which, of course, it did not.

In the story, the continents start breaking up, literally, the world is inundated with a flood of such immensity that the peak of Mount Everest is only a few thousand feet above sea level. When the flood begins to subside, the three arks head for the one remaining intact piece of land: Africa. The African continent has been forced upwards but is still the only home that these people can approach. Here, the storytellers revert back to the well-known and accepted theory that Homo sapiens, that is, us, came out of Africa and now we are returning to Africa to start all over again.
It was with great anticipation that I entered a cinema in December 2009. I had been waiting for months to see Roland Emmerich’s disaster blockbuster, 2012 when it was released in late 2009. However, I found I could not engage with the film. I even dragged my poor suffering husband, who, like me, was bored despite Los Angeles falling apart and its inhabitants dropping off land shelves, screaming in terror all the way to their deaths. The rollercoaster CGI special effects were spectacular, especially the Yellowstone Park supervolcano eruption. After the film, I analysed why I was unmoved. Even though it was a disaster film, it lacked many fairy tale/myth/archetypal motifs. Yes, there is disaster and it is caused by the alignment of all the planets at one time. However, it flies in the face of a general wish-fulfilment fairy story unless, of course, you are fabulously rich and can afford a place on one of the arks. It goes against the flood myth that the righteous has the right to survive whereas the wicked do not. The John Cusack every man hero, his family and the Tibetan family were not enough to satisfy the need for me to see a deserving character survive when all those other ‘ratbags’ do as well.

Another Noah’s ark film, this time set in a near dystopian future, is the Korean film *Snowpiercer* (2014), an adaptation of a French graphic novel. In *Snowpiercer*, a severe ice age is caused by human intervention trying to halt global warming. Every living thing has been killed except for those in a very long train that circles the globe. It has become a microcosm of society prior to the ice age, with the poor classes living in darkness at the back of the train whilst the privileged live at the front, able to look out at the world through picture glass windows. One of the heroes has observed over the years that the ice is melting and there is a chance of survival outside the Snowpiercer train and a way of beginning life all over again. He causes the train to crash but is killed, along with virtually everyone else. The sole survivors are his young daughter and another (male) child who escape the train wreck and start a new life outside.
9. Back to Square One

The disaster movie has now moved from telling stories predicated around a disaster back to where they started in 1908: religious and ancient historical stories with redeemer instead of science saving us. 2014 was 'the year of the Bible', starting off with Son of God, Noah, and Exodus: Gods and Kings - a remake of The Ten Commandments (1923 and 1956). There was even a remake of Pompeii (1908 and 1913). It has led to Nick Allen commenting that, "Studio executives who have spent the past few years releasing superhero and zombie films have, it seems, had an epiphany. Now their new best friends are evangelical pastors..." (Allen 2013). He believes that the executives now believe that films in which religious figures save the world will bring in big box office receipts and they base their faith on the success of The Bible (2013) mini-series shown on the History Channel in 2013, which averaged nearly eleven and a half million viewers and became America’s most watched cable TV show of 2013. Another mini-series was successfully screened early in 2014, Son of God (2014).

In 2014, the film Noah, starring Russell Crowe and Ray Winstone, was released. Noah is an American film whose director, Darren Aronofsky, chose not to treat the subject matter with the Sunday school reverence of earlier biblical films. The film begins with Adam and Eve, CGI characters who resemble taller versions of the aliens from Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), before showing the conflicts between Cain and Abel's descendants. The
good, personified by Noah and played by Russell Crowe, have descended from
Abel whilst the evil, personified by Tubal-cain and played by Ray Winstone,
from Cain.

Noah and his family take refuge from Tubal-cain with the fallen angels
known as the ‘watchers’, confined on earth as stone golems for helping humans
banished from the Garden of Eden.

It was at this point that I thought we had wandered into a Lord of the Rings movie
as the watchers looked like they belonged there instead of a biblical epic. My
husband, a former 2D animator and no lover of computer generated imaging, told
me, as he got up to leave, to phone him and he’d come back to the cinema to pick
me up once the film was over.

Real life disaster brought production of this latest film to a halt.
Ironically, the filming, which was taking place in Upper Brookville, New York,
was put on hold while Hurricane Sandy subjected New York to heavy rain and
flooding during late October 2012 (CNN 2012).

Disaster also beset the filming of Michael Curtiz’ *Noah’s Ark - The Story of
the Deluge* (1928). During the filming of the climactic flood scene, the great
volume of water used was so overwhelming that three extras drowned; one
was so badly injured that his leg needed to be amputated; and a number
suffered broken limbs and other serious injuries. This led to implementation of stunt safety regulations the following year (Baxter 1974: n.p.).

Another biblical film from 2014 was *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, a remake of *The Ten Commandments* (1923 and 1956). The film stars Christian Bale as Moses and Joel Edgerton as Ramses, and is directed by Ridley Scott, who describes the film as "F------ huge" (see Allen 2013).

The film has the advantage over its predecessors of CGI and relies on the more contemporary use of scientific knowledge to realistically depict the plagues of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea instead of the fantasy imagery used in the previous two films. And speaking of big, what could be bigger than *Ben Hur* (1959) than the remake of *Ben Hur*, currently in development and being produced by MGM and Paramount with a scheduled release date of February 26, 2016.

The other ancient epic remake is *Pompeii* (2014), a German-Canadian film. The plot is basically a love triangle between a Celtic gladiator slave, Milo, played by Kit Harrington; the daughter of a rich merchant, Cassia, played by Emily Browning; and a brutally evil senator, Corvus, played by Kiefer Sutherland, who wants to marry Cassia although she is in love with Milo. As Mount Vesuvius erupts, Milo and Cassia try to escape but find their path blocked by Corvus who chases them in a chariot race down a never-ending
main street of Pompeii. Corvus loses the girl and his life, whilst Milo and Cassia re-unite and, knowing they cannot outrun the volcano's pyroclastic flow, kiss as they are entombed by boiling hot ash. A plaster cast of their bodies in the embrace is shown in a flash-forward to contemporary times at the end of the film.

![Fig 81: Milo (Kit Harington) and Cassia (Emily Browning) caught as Mt Vesuvius erupts in *Pompeii* (2014) (Tristar Pictures/Constantin Film)](image)

The treatment of the Pompeii story is similar to that in the original *Pompeii* (1908): a human story that culminates with the destruction of the city by the volcano. However, unlike the early version where the hero survives, this updated *Pompeii* is more based in scientific realism that was not known at the start of the Twentieth Century. The heroes do not survive but their love for each other is immortalised some two thousand years later.

It could be said that these religious films are the next natural progression in the disaster movie because of the anxiety in the world. This is, however, a subject for a future study.

My observation of the disaster films made since 2001 is that films with a high internet connection such as *Cloverfield* (2008) and graphic novel bleakness as in *Snowpiercer* (2014) appeal to a more youthful generation and tend to be more nihilistic, an echo of the films of Phase 4 of the development of the disaster movie where heroes needlessly die. Like the films of the New Hollywood auteur period, these post 9/11 disaster movies reflect the dystopia felt by some of Generation Y and Z. These are the people I teach and I have
noticed that their view of the present and the future is bleak. Like the Vietnam War days, their world is no longer a fairy tale and they do not seem to yearn for the fairy tale endings of the traditional disaster movie. There is a similarity in socio-geographic influences between the two decades: unpopular wars such as in Vietnam and Iraq, lack of trust in governments, and in this decade the added uncertainty of globalisation and animal-borne diseases.

*Snowpiercer* is an adaptation of a graphic novel aimed at Generations Y and Z readership and *Cloverfield’s* marketing campaign by Paramount was conducted virally with tie-ins to anime magazines and soft drink advertising campaigns (Newman 2008) with Generations Y and Z viewership. It makes me wonder if the makers of these two films have more in common with their audience than the filmmakers of the present decade’s disaster movies - a throwback to the late 1950s/early 1960s when the Hollywood moguls had lost touch with their audiences. However, this topic is one for further study once we have moved along a few years and can reflect back upon these times.

**10. Post Millenium Disaster Movie Themes**

The post millenium disaster movies still follow the fairy tale and myth narratives as well as the thematic issues of sacrifice and redemption, hubris and nemesis. However, added to this is a new take on the disparity of wealth. The traditional European fairy tale featured this disparity, creating a wish fulfilment that the impoverished hero who does good will marry into a higher social class and live happily ever after.

Out of the three disaster movies that prominently feature this additional thematic issue, only one hearkens back to the traditional European fairy tale and that is *Elysium* (2013). However, the hero in that film is doomed to die from the first act and uses his impending death to reverse the disparity of wealth in the future world in which he lives. *Snowpiercer* (2013) is a post apocalyptic world in microcosm with the same type of wealth disparity. However, all the heroes die in this film, leaving two orphaned children to fend for themselves in a bleak new world. The third disaster movie is *2012* (2009)
where governments secretly collude with the fabulously wealthy to deny everyone else safety on the arks and a chance of life.

I have created a table below, demonstrating how these themes are played out as well as incorporating Yacowar's typology as discussed in table 13 in chapter 6:

**Table 16: Themes of 2000-2014 Disaster Movies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Disaster Movie example</th>
<th>Hubris/Nemis Sacrifice/Redemption</th>
<th>Disparity of Wealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Natural attacks</td>
<td>2012 (2009)</td>
<td>Karpov is a Russian billionaire who has bought ark tickets for his children. He sacrifices his life and redeems himself when he saves their lives.</td>
<td>Curtis discovers the mega wealthy have bought tickets from governments to be on the arks. No places are offered to poorer people. Curtis, his family and the family of Tibetan worker on the arks are sole proletariat survivors as they stow away in ark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>The Day After Tomorrow (2004)</strong></td>
<td>Vice President Becker refuses to heed warnings about climate change. His nemesis comes when the President is killed by the super storm and Becker is new president of USA, now housed on the Mexican border in refugee camps. He redeems himself by acknowledging he was wrong about the economy being more important than the climate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Pompeii (2014)</strong></td>
<td>Cassia's parents arrange a politically expedient (for them) marriage between her and Corvus. The volcanic eruption kills them. Corvus' brutal nature and cruelty lose him any chance of Cassia's love. She loves slave Milo, whose mother Corvus killed. Milo's revenge is Corvus' death. Corvus kidnaps Cassia and Milo sacrifices his safety to save her. Cassia refuses to leave him and they die, kissing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **The ship of fools**

*Noah* (2014)  
Noah's absolute adherence to God's word alienates him from his sons, leading to one aiding his enemy, Tubal-cain, and the other preparing to escape the ark with his pregnant wife. Noah is unable to sacrifice his newly-born twin grandchildren and is redeemed by allowing a new human race to evolve.

*Snowpiercer* (2013)  
Wilford's hubris of creating the severe poverty at the tail end of the train results in Everett confronting and disabling him. Everett's backstory is he nearly ate a child to survive. Everett sacrifices his hand to save child. Everett and Nampoong protect two young children with their own bodies as explosion occurs, killing them but saving the children.

The inhabitants at the tail end of the train live in abject poverty and squalid conditions. They break out and discover the rest of the train live in luxury. The train's owner, Wilford, ensures balance of people to resources by having his guards remove and kill the poorer ones.

3. **The city fails**

*Elysium* (2013)  
Da Costa, a former criminal, is fatally irradiated in an industrial accident. He helps Frey take her terminally ill daughter to Elysium to get medical help, dying in the process. His sacrifice opens up Elysium to the rest of Earth. Delacourt's attempt to take over the presidency of Elysium ultimately results in her being killed by one of her own agents.

*Snowpiercer* (2013)  
As above

The wealthy live on Elysium, a terraformed space habitat in Earth's orbit. The rest of humanity live in poverty and are denied medical assistance and other necessitates by Elysian Secretary of Defence Delacourt.

4. **The monster** (including pestilence)

*The Host* (2006)  
Gang-do is a wayward father. His young daughter dies saving a little boy from the monster. Gang-do's redemption is adopting the boy, caring for him and keeping him safe.

*Contagion* (2011)  
Beth is unfaithful to her husband, Mitch. She is the first to contract the disease and has to die because of her infidelity.

Social breakdown is personified by conspiracy theorist Krumwiede who spreads false
Mitch is the innocent victim of his marriage and he is resistant to the disease. Dr. Mears sacrifices her life in helping trace Beth as the 1st victim of the epidemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information on his blog site and goes unpunished. Vaccine meant for poor villagers is switched for placebo.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **I Am Legend (2007)**  
Any other zombie film | Neville, an army virologist, develops a vaccine to combat the virus. He sacrifices his life fighting off zombies whilst Anna flees to safety with the vaccine. |
| **World War Z (2013)** | Lane puts his life at risk by testing a new vaccine on his self. His reward is immunity so he can take the new vaccine to safety. |
| **Cloverfield (2008)** | Rob, Hud, Lily and Marlena risk danger to rescue Beth. In the process, they all die. |

5. Survival -  
6. War -  
7. Historical disaster  
| Exodus - Gods and Kings (2014) | Ramses’s denial in giving freedom to the Hebrew slaves leads to plague, pestilence and death for his land, people and family. |
| Pompeii (2014) | As above |

8. The comic  
| Sharknado (2013) | Fin risks his life to save Nova as well as destroying the last sharknado with a bomb attached to his car. |

The majority of these films fall into the Monster category, complimenting the discussion raised in section 6 (Zombies) in this chapter.

I have observed that other disaster movies made in the 2010s and not mentioned in this thesis are very formulaic and boring. The fairy tale elements are there, as are the mythical ones. However, they are retelling the same stories as those told in the 9/11 decade and consequently, the number of disaster movies being made in this decade has declined. I have also noticed that the
twenty-year cycle observed by Keane (2006) has been disrupted and now looks like it will move from the odd-numbered decades to the even numbered ones, possibly starting in 2020. This, too, is a subject for future study.

In this chapter, I have examined the disaster movie trend of the new millennium and the impact that 9/11 has had on the storylines. Additional to this has been the effect of major natural catastrophes, man-made disasters and the fallout from the war on terror that was begun after 9/11. We have now gone back to making religious movies again, back to where disaster films all began.
CHAPTER TEN

Back to the future...

It’s already mutated into human form! Shoot it! - Sherman Peabody (Back to the Future 1985).

1. Introduction

The study undertaken in this thesis arose from a strong personal interest in the study of film genres and mythology. This interest permeated both my personal and professional life. As a filmmaker and audience member, I have observed that people become emotionally involved in a screen story and its characters much as they do with real-life events and the participants in those events. The more extreme the danger to the character, whether it is fictional or actual, the more we are interested, and the most extreme stories are the disaster tales. My observation of disaster movies led me to wonder why disaster stories have such an interest. From that point, I progressed to noticing there might be a link with fairy tales, the trigger for this thought resulting from having watched Independence Day (1996).

The observations arising from how my friends and I react to disaster movies led me to question if humans are hot-wired genetically to fear catastrophic situations like floods and tidal waves or if, as Jung (1969: 42-44) would have us believe, it is part of our collective unconscious. It led to my exploring the genesis of storytelling; the creation of myths, where I found that disaster stories were amongst the first to be told. As Talbott informs us,

The original motive for storytelling was not to forget. What global mythology gives us is a profile of the way humankind related to intense experiences of beauty and terror. The two components of myth making experience human imagination and extraordinary natural occurrences. (Talbott 2007: n.p.)

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During my research, I began to see patterns of similarity in story structure and characterisation between myth, which evolved into fairy tale, and the disaster movie. Bettelheim discusses the pleasure principle versus the reality principle analysis of the fairy tale where the hero who sees the danger is able “to defeat powers more powerful than him” (Bettelheim 1976: 41–42). I began to notice that this was a common theme between the fairy tale and disaster movie, as was the use of the number three in terms of narrative and characterisation. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

As I explored the influence of fairy tale on the disaster movie, I found I had to limit the scope of the study to the main makers of this film genre, Hollywood, and the influences of myth and fairy tale on the creators of the Hollywood studio system. This narrowed the field even more specifically to examining the European fairy tale, as this was from where the creators of Hollywood came, and the American disaster movie, because, after the 1st World War, Hollywood became the major maker of disaster movies in the world. I examined how the influences of European folklore and fairy tale had affected the lives of these Jewish immigrants and how these tales added to the fuel of anti-Semitic activities against these people and their forebears, leading to their migration to the USA and the setting up of Hollywood.

I was able to find research material into how these men created their own fairy tale world through their movies and their realisation that the audiences were awed by the earliest of disaster movies such as Pompeii (1908) However, in the process, I discovered there were significant gaps in the literature and I had to 1) create my own form of research methodology: the jigsaw approach, which was in detail in chapter one; and 2) introduce five phases of the evolution of the disaster movie which I had not come across in my research. By identifying these five phases, outlines in chapter one and discussed in detail in subsequent chapters, I found a new way of identifying key aspects of this genre and for the study of film.

I began to ask myself the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the fairy tale narrative?
2. Is there a relationship between European fairy tales and the American disaster movie?

3. If so, in what ways have European fairy tales influenced the disaster movie genre's story structure and characterisation?

In the first instance, I needed to consider the influence of fairy tales on disaster movies as well as the relationship between European fairy tales and the American disaster movie, while questions 2 and 3 furthered the discussion to establish the hypothesis that a group of European Jews took with them to America the stories of their past and ultimately used them to regulate the oral and ethical bases for life's narratives within the film industry they created.

This study employed a wide body of knowledge collected and re-framed to take on new meanings within new contexts. It allowed me to use a variety of sources and resources to bring new understanding to a popular form of entertainment that was also designed to inform and mould a new set of paradigms.

2. Significant Findings Related to Content

2.1. Fairy Tale Narrative

The findings can be organised into four separate areas commencing with how fairy tales evolved from mythology by examining the main myths of creation, hero and apocalypse: all essential in the telling of fairy tales and disaster movies.

The hero myth narrative structure and archetypal characterisation were identified as being the basis of all fairy tales: the search for something lost and the quest to regain that something. The works of Campbell, Leeming, Dick, Izod and others were analysed to find the narrative structure and archetypes used in myth. As Leeming explains, there are three stages in the hero's journey,
“the Departure from home, the Adventure in the unknown world, and the
Return with some new understanding” (2002: 119).

This is the same structure in most film narratives. Vogler (1992: 6)
revealed this in his paradigm (table 1 on page 82). A matrix was created (table
2, pages 83 to 90) to demonstrate how Vogler (1992) and Campbell’s (1993a)
paradigms matched the major structural action points in film, and a graph
(graph 1, page 92) to show the similarity of the three-act structure. It was
discovered through this matrix and the graph that the action points occur in the
same way and places as they occur in the hero myth. This was tested against
ancient mythologies and three disparate non-disaster films: a sci fi, murder
mystery and western, and was able to confirm that the story structure in
mythology is the same as it is in narrative film stories.

From this point, the works of Propp, von Franz, Biedermann, Zipes,
Voytilla, Tolkien, Drouyn and others as well as the fairy tale collections of the
Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Andersen and Russian fairy tales amongst
others were examined to a) establish how myth became fairy tale, and b)
identify the similarities in story structure and characterisation. I explored early
Nordic and Teutonic mythology in the form of the Sagas and Eddas, the
Nibelungenlied, Beowulf and Germania to ascertain the motifs and characters
in these works were the forefathers of fairy tale motifs, in terms of elves, trolls,
giants, dragons, magic weapons or amulets and so on.

As Kready (1916), citing Muller, explains, the gods of ancient mythology
eventually became the principal characters in fairy tales. Von Franz and
Bettelheim support her analysis. By mapping the stages of Propp’s Morphology
with Campbell’s stages of the hero’s journey and Vogler’s adaptation of the
hero's journey to film structure in table 5 (page 115), I demonstrated their
common structure. To reinforce this graph 2 (page 114) was created to
demonstrate that the emotional highs and lows of the mythic, fairy tale and film
narratives all converged at the same points and in exactly the same places in the
narrative structure.

I moved on to looking at fairy tale characterisation by analysing Propp’s
Morphology and the works of other experts in the fairy tale field such as Zipes
and von Franz. A series of case studies were constructed to analyse how the characterisation and story characteristics in the fairy tale, *The Three Little Pigs*, correlated with the same functions in Propp's Morphology and with the disaster film. The results are shown in Tables 9 to 12 (pages 128 to 131), with the following film examples: *Jaws* (1975), *Twister* (1996), *Volcano* (1997) and *Independence Day* (1996), and establish there is a direct correlation between the fairy tale, the morphology and the sample of films used.

Propp's morphology of the fairy tale was analysed and mapped across screen narrative structure and characterisation, the hero myth and the disaster movie. It was demonstrated that the fairy tale had the same narrative structure, major action points and character functions as myth and screen storytelling, including that of the disaster movie. I explained how *The Three Little Pigs* came to star in *Independence Day* (1996) and demonstrated through case studies how the fairy tale structure and characterisation was identical to *Independence Day* (1996), *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and *Volcano* (1997).

I moved on to explore the number Three, a very common motif in myth, fairy tale and the disaster movie, and found it is intrinsic to plot and characterisation. The number three and its symbolism were examined not only in myth, fairy tale and film, but also in psychology and theology and by mapping across the characters of the first pig, second pig and third pig from the fairy tale *The Three Little Pigs* with those in *Independence Day* (1996) followed up by case studies on three other disaster movies: *Volcano* (1997), *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), and *Twister* (1996) (mentioned in 2.1.3 above), the importance of the number Three was confirmed.

**2.2. The relationship between European fairy tales and the American disaster movie**

The discussion established a link between myth and archetypal theory to fairy tales and to film genre
and disaster movies in particular. I drew initially upon the works of Wagner, Kelly, Nardo and others to establish the motifs of northern European mythology, which was mainly Teutonic with some Celtic and Nordic mythology thrown in. I focussed on this area as the creators of Hollywood came from this region of the world before migrating to the USA. It was discovered that the motifs that comprised many Teutonic myths had found their way down the centuries to European fairy tale. This information can be found in chapter 3, sections 10 and 11. I suggested that the northern European and Anglo Saxon culture, which is more the product of a mix of Teutonic, Celtic and Nordic mythology, folklore and fairy tale than that of other civilisation, played a major role in influencing the creators of Hollywood.

These filmmakers, who became known as the Hollywood Moguls, came from Europe and were influenced by millennia of European folklore and fairy tale. To establish this, the works of Bettelheim, Kready, von Franz, the Grimm Brothers as well as Gabler and documentary films such as Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream (1998) were examined.

Through the works of Neale, Powdernaker, Cooke, Jews, Movies, Hollywoodism and the American Dream (1998), Gabler and others, it was established that European fairy tales influenced the types of stories created by the moguls. The moguls’ stories took the same form of wish-fulfilment/wonder tales of the fairy tale and embraced the same fairy tale motifs and thematic issues.

Racial and religious persecution provided the breeding ground for anti-Semitic European fairy tales as well as government-sanctioned ethnic cleansing. The memoirs of the Hollywood moguls’ families reveal the fear felt during these times and how that fear travelled with them to the USA, leading them to move to the relative safety of California and to create Hollywood.

By researching the aforementioned experts and reading through the words of the moguls themselves, it became evident that the moguls wanted to create their own fairy tale stories of a new world in which they would like to live. The research reveals they drew upon their own cultural influences and
combined these as well as the European fairy tale motifs into the types of screen stories they told. This included the disaster movie. I demonstrated the European fairy tale connection in the disaster movie through matrixes and graphs, namely table 4 (pages 106 to 113), tables 6 to 8 (pages 116 to 118), table 15 (pages 223 to 235), table 16 (pages 262 to 264) and graph 2 (page 1114).

2.3. European Fairy tales and disaster movie story structure and characterisation

It was ascertained that European fairy tales influence the disaster genre’s structure, characterisation and thematic issues. In order to reach this finding, I analysed the works of Keane, Altman, Bordwell, King, Riddock, Puttnam, von Franz, Bettelheim, Leeming, Campbell, Vogler and others, as well a viewing disaster movies from each of the phases (1 - 5) of the genre’s evolvement.

I initially began by looking at myths as I consider these to be the bedrock of fairy tales, in particular the hero myth, or monomyth. By mapping the paradigms created by Campbell and Vogler to the three-act narrative structure of film, I identified that mythic and film structures follow the same narrative shape and are demonstrated in table 2. Graph 1 (page 92) shows how the emotional highs and lows correspond exactly in both film and myth.


This was reinforced by creating table 14 (page 217) where I took Davies and Wells’ (2002) categories of 1990s disaster movies and mapped those categories against disaster films and fairy tales and myths. The film samples

By mapping Propp’s morphology against Campbell and Vogler’s paradigms with film, it was revealed that all stages related to each other. These findings are contained in table 5 (page 115). This finding was confirmed when I tested it against three disaster movies: Independence Day (1996), Volcano (1997) and The Day After Tomorrow (2004).

Characterisation is implicit in the above findings. However, I specifically tested my findings on characterisation against The Three Little Pigs fairy tale, adopting Propp’s morphology, using the films Jaws (1975), Twister (1996) and Independence Day (1996). It was shown that the characters in these films performed the same function as those in the morphology and the fairy tale.

I examined the main common themes in fairy tale and found they are similar to those in the disaster movie: justice - righting the wrong, hubris and nemesis, sacrifice and redemption. The theme of justice is intrinsic to the hero myth, fairy tale and film. In the disaster movie, hubris and nemesis, sacrifice and redemption are also very important. To illustrate these findings, I created table 15 (pages 223 to 235) and mapped across various sections of plot and characterisation to these themes, showing the causal effects on characters of their hubris, nemesis, their sacrifice and redemption. Disaster movies follow the pleasure/work principle and the moral that is clearly part of The Three Little Pigs and other fairy tales. The films I used for this test were Apollo 13 (1995), Independence Day (1996), Twister (1996), Volcano (1997), Titanic (1997), Dante’s Peak (1997), Armageddon (1998) and Deep Impact (1998).

A new thematic issue appeared in disaster films after 2010: disparity of wealth. This is different from the wish-fulfilment of medieval peasants listening to fairy tales of their time where there is a social/economic disparity, leading to stories of someone from the wrong side of the tracks marrying someone from the right side, preferably royalty, and living happily ever after.
Two major films from the 2010 decade so far have used this theme as an intrinsic part of their main plots: *Snowpiercer* (2013) and *Elysium* (2013).


3. Significant Findings Related to the Research Process

Because it was necessary to look beyond the film industry itself, I was able to bring together influences to establish why the disaster movie became today’s fairy tale by creating a jigsaw approach to research and identifying five phases to the genre’s development.

In the absence of systematic research in this field, a jigsaw approach to research was created with each disparate area being part of the whole. Each component is inextricably linked to the other, forming a whole picture of the European influence on American disaster movies. From this method I was able to make connections that resolved the issues as they arose.

A new matrix to chart the evolution of the genre into the type of film we know today was created. It is a method of identifying key developments in the history of film storytelling against social, historical and geo-political events. This method could be used with any film genre, but in this case, it is used in the research process for demonstrating the influence of the European fairy tale on the American disaster movie.
It was ascertained that disaster movies are the new form of fairy tales in the modern world. The findings in phases 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the disaster movie's evolution revealed a correlation between fairy tales and disaster movies. From the works of Bettelheim, von Franz, Jung, Keane, Platts and others, I established that people listen to fairy tales and watch disaster movies as a way to understand and relate to the world around them. Both fairy tales and disaster movies reflect social, economic and geopolitical conditions of the world in which we live.

World events are reflected in each general phase of the disaster movie. In each of the disaster movie decades, I was able to demonstrate through the research that external events in the world as well as the USA have impacted on the types of stories told, e.g. those embracing the apocalypse myth such as the disaster movie genre. This has been specifically highlighted in chapters 5 and 9 by correlating societal fears with the popularity of certain types of disaster story.

The events of 9/11 broke the twenty-year cycle defined by Keane. There should have been very few if any disaster films made in the 2000s decade. However, following the event of 9/11 disaster films began to abound and continue up to the middle of the 2010 decade.

I found there appears to be a growing nihilism in younger generations in the 2010s that mirrors the baby boomer generation of the 1960s. In chapter 9, I note that disaster movies sourced from graphic novels and those with major internet marketing are different from disaster movies sourced through the traditional filmmaking channels in that they move away from the fairy tale structure and characterisation and are bleaker in their outlook.

The success and appeal of disaster movies has moved away from Hollywood and is being embraced by other countries. This became evident in the research revealed in chapter 9 where the popularity and appeal of the genre as well as globalisation has seen the American disaster movie with all its motifs being made in other countries. I provide examples of international films in this category.
It was ascertained that there was a moral link between fairy tales and disaster movies: from a sociological perspective, disaster movies are fiction, unless they are docudramas like *Apollo 13*. They show the fight of good against evil and a new hope emerging at the end of each film. As the fairy tale soothes the fears of a strange world for children, the disaster movie is the adult version and does the same thing. It is also a barometer for just how anxious people have become, as shown by the recent zombie inundation of our culture.

I established the consistency of the disaster movie template. As mentioned above, my research showed that the template for the current disaster movie was laid down in the 1970s, which was the start of Phase 5 of its development. I found that the disaster movie as we know it today remains unchanged since Yacowar created his typology of the disaster movie, commencing from the first half of the Twentieth Century through to the end of the 1970s. I created table 13 (page 176), identifying disaster movies examples from as early as 1913 against each of Yacowar's category. By way of rounding off research into the disaster movie's evolvement and its influence by fairy tale and myth as well as proving Yacowar's typology still works with current disaster movies, I created table 16 (pages 262 to 264) and found the typology remains unchanged.

There is now a cyclical link with disaster movies that began with biblical stories in the 1910s in Italy to remakes today of *Noah* (2014), *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014), and *Pompeii* (2014) as people are turning back to religion for a redeemer to maybe ease their fears.

Finally, I established the moguls invested in these movies, ensuring their European fairy tale influence carried over into the screen stories, and long after their deaths their influence still continues.

4. This Thesis Contributes to a Number of Fields
I have established there is a relationship between American disaster movies and European fairy tales by creating links between diverse fields of study. These are: archaeology, anthropology, psychology, mythology, folklore, Jewish history and migration, European political and social history, world geopolitics and sociology, history of filmmaking, history of Hollywood, filmmaking technology, film genre, and story structure.

Through my findings, this research has added to the knowledge about disaster movies and filled a gap in the literature. It has added to the variety of research methods by employing a new one: the jigsaw approach, and reveals that researchers, if faced with scant research material in an area, can look at related disparate areas in order to reach new knowledge about the main area under examination.

The study has the potential to contribute to the practice of creating stories and filmmaking by demonstrating that a) there are cycles in which the disaster movie is made, b) these movies are a representation of social fears, c) the later disaster movies of each cycle become formulaic, which leads to the end of that particular cycle. This may be of some use to filmmakers when making a disaster movie at a specific time and in how they tell that story.

5. Current Research in Other Fields

During this research, I discovered that not only were the disaster films of each decade influenced by world events, but in more recent times, they have influenced government agencies and initiated study into a relatively new area of risk perception. This research has shown just how serious governments take these disaster movies.

In 1999, the University of North Texas created a post-graduate course on disaster movies. The idea is to educate disaster relief staff on what to expect and how to deal with real-life disaster situations and the university's research findings are posted on FEMA's Higher Education website. The course uses segments from Titanic to cover panic, role abandonment and breakdown of
social order; *Dante’s Peak*, to examine extreme panic in all types of disaster events; and *Volcano* to illustrate misconceptions about the role of the Emergency Manager, played by Tommy Lee Jones, who leaves the emergency operations centre and appears to single-handedly save Los Angeles from the lava flow (McEntire 2014).

Disaster movies have now led to research into risk perception. The use of CGI technology to create hyper realistic realism has led to what Plantinga (2009) describes as "conditional realism" in spectator response where the viewer experiences emotions very similar to what he/she would feel in a real situation, with the difference that he/she is at the same time aware of that he/she is watching a fiction (see Plantinga 2009: 239).

Baum and Prior (cited in Satpath & Smith 2014) show that entertainment has the capacity to inform audiences and shape public opinion on risk perception and this carries over to cinema. For instance, *The Day After Tomorrow* so affected the people that saw it at the cinema when it was released in the USA that it changed the way they voted at the next election, favouring a government more concerned with climate change than one favouring conglomerates. It also altered the perception of climate change risk with audiences in Europe and elsewhere in the world (Balmford et al 2004: 1713, Leiserowitz 2004: 23-37 and Reusswig 2004, cited in von Mossner 2014).

The way in which disaster movies have infiltrated people's psyches was demonstrated even further when the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his 2009 address to the IPPC expressed his concerns about the risks associated with global warming. The scenarios outlined in the 2007 IPPC report were "as frightening as a science fiction movie, but they are even more terrifying because they are real" (Ban 2009, cited in von Mossner 2014). The film he had in mind was *The Day After Tomorrow* (von Mossner 2014: n.p.).

Risk perception and the disaster movie is a new area of research and as Leiserowitz states:
we have only scratched the surface...in the effort to understand the role of popular representations of risk (such as movies, books, television, fiction, and nonfiction) or of cross-national differences in public risk perception and behavior (Leiserowitz 2004: 44).

6. Future Research

As an extension to this study, there is scope to move away from Hollywood dictates and explore other types of disaster stories: those encompassing real-life catastrophes like slavery, the Holocaust, and ethnic cleansing in various areas of the world. For example, I have observed the hero mythic structure in films such as 12 Years A Slave (2013) and Schindler’s List (1993).

There is also scope to research feminist and Lacanian influences on the disaster movie whilst others may wish to investigate the influence of non-European fairy tales on the disaster movie in other countries.

The disruption of the twenty-year cycle in disaster movies by the events of 9/11 warrants future research to establish if a new twenty-year cycle has been established.

Future research on whether we are about to re-enter Phase 4 of the disaster movie’s evolvement - is disassociation by traditional major filmmakers to younger internet audiences a repeat of the ageing moguls’ disassociation with their audiences in the 1960s? Will this lead to another 'New Hollywood' in terms of filmmaking and, coupled with world events, lead to another move away from the fairy tale ending?

7. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have established a number of important elements that make explicit the links between fairy tales and disaster movies. This has been in response to the primary question:
Have European fairy tales influenced the disaster movie and in what ways have they influenced the disaster movie genre's story structure and characterisation?

From a storytelling point of view, the influence of the European fairy tale, and of myth before that, demonstrates that no matter how formulaic some may consider disaster stories, the influence of the European fairy tale on them resonates at a universal level as these movies are populated with archetypal characters faced with cataclysm. Disaster movies are today's fairy tales: they show us how to respond in such dire circumstances and they are a reflection of how we, as a society, react to the world around us. Of course, we can never predict how the world will progress but this thesis provides an opportunity to interpret and re-interpret such events as they appear and re-appear as time proceeds.
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Pompeii  2014 [feature film], Anderson, P.W.S., Tristar Pictures/Constantin Film, USA and Germany

Poseidon  2006 [feature film], Petersen, W., Warner Brothers, USA

Pretty Woman  1990 [feature film], Marshall, G., Touchstone, USA

Psycho  1960 [feature film], Hitchcock, A., Paramount, USA

Public Enemy  1931 [feature film], Wellman, W., Warner Brothers, USA

Queen Christina  1933 [feature film], Mamoulian, R., M-G-M, USA

Queen of Outer Space  1958 [feature film], Bernds, E., Allied Artists, USA

Quo Vadis  1913 [feature film], Guazzoni, E., Italy

Quo Vadis  1951 [feature film], LeRoy, M., M-G-M, USA

Raging Bull  1980 [feature film], Scorsese, M., United Artists, USA

Red Riding Hood  2011 [feature film], Hardwicke, C., Warner Bros, USA

Rendition  2007 [feature film], Hood, G., New Line Cinema, USA

Resident Evil  2002 [feature film], Anderson, P.W.S., Pathé, Metropolitan Filmexport, Screen Gems, UK, France and Germany, USA

Rollerball  1975 [feature film], Jewison, N., United Artists, USA
Rosemary’s Baby 1968 [feature film], Polanski, R., Paramount, USA

San Francisco 1936 [feature film], Van Dyke, W.S., M-G-M, USA

Schindler's List 1993 [feature film], Spielberg, S., Amblyn Entertainment/Universal Pictures, USA

Sex Kittens Go To College 1960 [feature film], Zugsmith, A., Allied Artists Pictures

Sharknado 2013 [telemovie], Ferrante, A.C., The Asylum, USA

Sharknado: The Second One 2014 [telemovie], Ferrante, A.C., The Asylum, Syfy Films, USA

Sleeping Beauty 1959 [animation/feature film], Geronimi, C., Walt Disney, USA

Snowpiercer 2013 [feature film], Bong Joon-ho, RADiUS-TWC, CJ Entertainment, USA, South Korean

Snow White and the Huntsman 2012 [feature film], Sanders, R., Universal Pictures

Son of God 2014 [feature film], Spencer, C., 20th Century-Fox, USA

Speed 2: Cruise Control 1997 [feature film], de Bont, J., 20th Century-Fox, USA

Squirm 1976 [feature film], Lieberman, J., American International, USA

Star Wars 1977 [feature film], Lucas, G., 20th Century-Fox, USA

Starship (Lorca and the Outlaws, 2084) 1984 [feature film], Christian, R., Associated-Rediffusion, UK

Starship Troopers 1997 [feature film], Verhoeven, P., Tristar Pictures, USA, Canada

Suez 1938 [feature film], Dwan, A., 20th Century-Fox, USA

2001: A Space Odyssey 1968 [feature film], Kubrick, S., MGM, USA

2012 2009 [feature film], Emmerich, R., Columbia Pictures/Sony Pictures, USA

12 Years A Slave 2013 [feature film], McQueen, S., Regency Enterprises/River Road Entertainment/Plan B Entertainment/Film4 Productions/Fox Searchlight Pictures/Entertainment One/Summit Entertainment, UK and USA

28 Days Later 2002 [feature film], Boyles, D., Fox Searchlight Pictures, UK

Taxi Driver 1976 [feature film], Scorcese, M., Columbia, USA
The Abyss 1989 [feature film], Cameron, J., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Andromeda Strain 1971 [feature film], Wise, R., Universal, USA

The Andromeda Strain 2008 [TV mini series], Salomon, M., Disney-ABC
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The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms 1953 [feature film], Lourie, E., Warner Brothers, USA

The Best Years of our Lives 1946 [feature film], Wyler, W., RKO/Goldwyn, USA

The Bible 2015 [TV mini series], NBC, USA

The Birds 1963 [feature film], Hitchcock, A., Universal, USA

The Birth of a Nation 1915 [feature film], Griffith, D.W., Epoch, USA

The Brain Eaters 1958 [feature film], VeSota, B., American International Pictures, USA

The Cassandra Crossing 1976 [feature film], Cosmatos, G.P., AVCO Embassy Pictures, UK

The Cat People 1942 [feature film], Tourneur, J., RKO, USA

The China Syndrome 1979 [feature film], Bridges, J., Columbia, USA

The Core 2003 [feature film], Amiel, J., Paramount Pictures, USA

The Day After Tomorrow 2004 [feature film], Emmerich, R., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Day the Earth Caught Fire 1961 [feature film], Guest, V., British Lion/Pax, UK

The Day the Earth Stood Still 1951 [feature film], Wise, R., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Exorcist 1973 [feature film], Friedkin, W., Hoya/Warner Brothers, USA

The Fall of Troy (La Caduta di Troia) 1911 [short film], Borgnetto, L.R., Pastrone, G., Itala Film, Italy

The Food of the Gods 1976 [feature film], Gordon, B.I., American International Pictures, USA

The French Connection 1971 [feature film], Friedkin, W., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Gaucho 1927 [feature film], Jones, R., Elton/United Artists, USA

The Godfather 1972 [feature film], Coppola, F., Paramount, USA
The Graduate 1967 [feature film], Nichols, M., Embassy, USA

The Grapes of Wrath 1940 [feature film], Ford, J., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Great Dictator 1940 [feature film], Chaplin, C., United Artists, USA

The Great Train Robbery 1903 [short film], Porter, E.S., Edison Manufacturing Company, Kleine Optical Company, USA

The Greatest Show on Earth 1952 [feature film], DeMille, C.B., Paramount, USA

The Hindenburg 1975 [feature film], Wise, R., Universal/Filmakers, USA

The Host 2006 [feature film], Bong Joon-ho, Showbox, Magnolia Pictures, South Korean, USA

The Hurt Locker 2008 [feature film], Bigelow, K., Summit Entertainment, USA

The Incredible Shrinking Man 1957 [feature film], Arnold, J., Universal-International, USA

The Iron Curtain 1948 [feature film], Wellman, W., 20th Century-Fox

The Killers 1946 [feature film], Siodmak, R., Universal/Hellinger, USA

The King and I 1956 [feature film], Lang, W., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Last Days of Pompeii 1908 [feature film], Ambrosio, A., Maggie, L., Ambrosio Film, Italy

The Last Days of Pompeii 1913 [feature film], Caserini, M., Rodolfi, E., Italy

The Life of an American Fireman 1903 [short film], Porter, E.S., Edison Manufacturing Company, USA

The Lost Weekend 1945 [feature film], Wilder, B., Paramount, USA

The Making of ID4 1996 [dvd extras documentary], 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Maltese Falcon 1941 [feature film], Huston, J., Warner Brothers, USA

The Man Who Fell to Earth 1976 [feature film], Roeg, N., British Lion, UK

The Noah’s Ark Principle (Das Arche Noah Prinzip) 1984 [feature film], Emmerich, R., Filmverlag der Autoren, West Germany

The Perfect Storm 2000 [feature film], Petersen, W., Warner Brothers Pictures, USA

The Plague 1978 [feature film], Hunt, E., Canada

The Poseidon Adventure 1972 [feature film], Neam, R., 20th Century-Fox, USA
How The Three Little Pigs Came to Star in Independence Day/Ph.D. Thesis

The Prince and the Showgirl 1957 [feature film], Olivier, L., Warner Bros, USA

The Prisoner of Zenda 1952 [feature film], Thorpe, R., MGM, USA

The Rains Came 1939 [feature film], Brown, C., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Red Danube 1950 [feature film], Sidney, G., M-G-M, USA

The Red Menace 1949 [feature film], Springsteen, R.G., Republic Pictures, USA

The Siege 1998 [feature film], Zwick, E., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Snake Pit 1948 [feature film], LiTVak, A., 20th Century-Fox, USA

The Swarm 1978 [feature film], Allen, I., Warner Brothers, USA

The Ten Commandments 1923 [feature film], DeMille, C.B., Paramount, USA

The Ten Commandments 1956 [feature film], DeMille, C.B., Paramount, USA

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 1974 [feature film], Hooper, T., Vortex, USA

The Thing (The Thing From Another World) 1951 [feature film], Nyby, C., Winchester/RKO, USA

The Three Little Pigs 1933 [animated short film from the Silly Symphonies series], Gillett, B., Walt Disney Productions, USA

The Towering Inferno 1974 [feature film], Guillermin, J., Allen, I., 20th Century-Fox/Warner Brothers, USA

The War of the Worlds 1953 [feature film], Haskin, B., Paramount, USA

The War of the Worlds 2005 [feature film], Spielberg, S., Paramount Pictures, Dreamworks Pictures, USA

The World, the Flesh and the Devil 1959 [feature film], MacDougall, R., M-G-M, USA

The X-Ray Mirror 1899 [short film], McCutcheon, W., USA

Them! 1954 [feature film], Douglas, G., Warner Brothers, USA

Things to Come 1936 [feature film], Menzies, W.C., London Film Productions UK

Titanic 1997 [feature film], Cameron, J., 20th Century-Fox, Paramount Pictures, USA

Top Hat 1935 [feature film], Sandrich, M., RKO, USA

Total Recall 1990 [feature film], Verhoeven, P., Carolco, USA
Transatlantic Tunnel  1935 [feature film], Elvey, M., Gaumont British, UK

Treasure Island  1950 [feature film], Haskin, B., Walt Disney Productions/RKO Radio Pictures, USA

True Lies  1994 [feature film], Cameron, J., 20th Century-Fox, Universal Pictures, USA

Twister  1996 [feature film], de Bont, J., Warner Brothers Pictures, Universal Pictures, USA

Uncle Tom’s Cabin  1903 [short film], Porter, E.S., Edison Manufacturing Company, USA

United 93  2006 [feature film], Greengrass, P., Universal Pictures, USA

Volcano  1997 [feature film], Jackson, M., 20th Century-Fox, USA

Westworld  1973 [feature film], Crichton, M., MGM, USA

Where the Boys Are  1960 [feature film], Levin, H., MGM, USA

Woodstock  1970 [documentary feature], Wadleigh, M., Warner Brothers, USA

World Trade Center  2006 [feature film], Stone, O., Paramount Pictures, USA

World War Z  2013 [feature film], Forster, M., Paramount Pictures, USA

Zardoz  1974 [feature film], Boorman, J., 20th Century-Fox, USA

Zeppelin  1971 [feature film], Perier, E., Getty & Fromkess/Warner Brothers, USA
Appendix I

THE STAR WARS

"THE STAR WARS"

May, 1973

Story Synopsis

BY

GEORGE LUCAS

A LUCASFILM LTD. FILM

Deep Space.
The eerie blue-green planet of Aquilae slowly drifts into view. A small speck, orbiting the planet, glints in the light of a near by star.

Suddenly a sleek fighter-type spacecraft settles ominously into the foreground moving swiftly toward the orbiting speck. Two more fighters silently maneuver into battle formation behind the first and then three more craft glide into view. The orbiting speck is actually a gargantuan space fortress which dwarfs the approaching fighters. Fuel pods are jettisoned. The six fighters break off into a power dive attack on the huge fortress. Lazer bolts streak from the fighters creating small explosions on the complex surface of the fort. Return fire catches one of the fighters and it bursts into a million pieces. Another of the craft plows into a gun emplacement jutting from the fortress causing a hideous series of chain reaction explosions. The chaos of battle echoes through the vastness of space.

It is the thirty-third century, a period of civil wars in the galaxy. A rebel princess, with her family, her retainers, and the clan treasure, is being pursued. If they can cross territory controlled by the Empire and reach a friendly planet, they will be saved. The Sovereign knows this, and posts a reward for the capture of the princess.

She is being guarded by one of her generals, (Luke Skywalker) and it is he who leads her on the long and dangerous journey that follows. They take along with them two hundred pounds of the greatly treasured "aura spice", and also two Imperial bureaucrats, whom the general has captured.

The two terrified, bickering bureaucrats crash land on Aquilae while trying to flee the battle of the space fortress. They accidently discover a small container of the priceless "aura spice" and are rummaging around the rocks pushing and pulling each other trying to find more when they are discovered by Luke Skywalker and taken to his camp.

The princess and the general are disguised as farmers, and the bureaucrats join their party with the intention of stealing their "land speeder" and "aura spice". It doesn't take them too long to realize the general isn't a farmer and that they are captives about to embark on a dangerous mission. The two bureaucrats are essentially comic relief inserted among the general seriousness of the adventure.

The small group in their sleek, white, two-man "land speeders" travel across the wastelands of Aquilae, headed for the space port city of Gordon, where they hope to get a spacecraft that will take them to the friendly planet of Ophuchi.

At a desolate rest stop, the rebels are stopped and questioned by an Imperial patrol. Apparently satisfied, the captain lets the group continue on their way, but a short distance into the wilderness, they are attacked by the patrol. The Imperial patrol of twelve men is no match for the incredibly skilled and powerful general, who makes short work of the enemy.

One of the two-man "speeders" is destroyed in the fight and the bureaucrats must ride on the back of the remaining one, which slows the group down considerably. They drive into a storm, run low on food and water, but eventually make it to the ruin of a religious temple. In the temple they discover
a rebel band of ten boys (aged 15 to 18) who are planning an attack on one of the Imperial outposts. The boys laugh in anticipation of the blow they will strike the Empire in the name of the princess. They all stop laughing, but the laughing continues and they look around in consternation. Into the sanctuary ambles Skywalker, scratching himself, amused at the idealism of the youths. He barely glances at them. The contrast between the boy rebels with their terse nods, their meaningful glances, and Skywalker, a real general, a real man could not be greater. The boys plead to join the party to protect the princess, but the general refuses, and insists they all return to their homes. They say they have no place to go and begin to follow the party across the wasteland.

One night the party is attacked by one of the large beasts that roam the plains, and is eventually killed by the boy rebels. The general reluctantly accepts the presence of the boys, and allows them to join the group.

The general, one of the bureaucrats, and one of the boys, venture into a shabby cantina on the outskirts of the space port, looking for the rebel contact who will help them get a spacecraft. The murky little den is filled with a startling array of weird and exotic Aliens laughing and drinking at the bar. The bureaucrat and the boy are both terrified as the general orders two drinks and questions the bartender about the rebel contact man. A group of bullies begin to taunt and ridicule the boy. Skywalker attempts to avoid a confrontation, but worse comes to worse, and he is forced to fight. With a flash of light, his lazer sword is out. An arm lies on the ground, one of the bullies lies double, slashed from chin to groin and Skywalker, with quiet dignity, replaces his sword in its sheath. The entire fight has lasted a matter of seconds.

Skywalker, the princess, and their party make contact with the rebel underground, but not before an Imperial spy, who followed them from the cantina, reports their plans to the city governor. The rebels enter the space port to board a trader’s ship, whose captain is friendly toward the rebels. The group doesn’t realize until it is too late, that it is a trap. Guards pounce on them from everywhere. The princess, the bureaucrats, and the boys run for a ship while Skywalker holds off the guards. They narrowly escape in a stolen space fighter and lose themselves among the giant Imperial fleet looking for the rebels.

The general orbits his ship further and further away from the planet, until he feels it is safe to head out into deep space toward Ophuchi. As he maneuvers to break out of orbit, a patrol craft hails the ship and requests to board and search her. Skywalker tries to discourage them, but the patrol becomes suspicious. Skywalker makes a run for it and the patrol craft fires on them. The rebels return the fire and destroy the patrol craft. The stolen Imperial ship races toward the safety of deep space as twelve fighter craft converge on the destroyed patrol and give chase.

A raging air-to-air battle and chase begins which continues halfway across the galaxy. The rebel boys shoot down many Imperial ships under the harsh and uncompromising instructions of the general. A few of the boys are angered at his cold and relentless directions, although they grow to respect him when they begin to see the results of his training. Their ship is hit several times and begins to break up, causing them to slow down. They maneuver the crippled fighter to an asteroid in an attempt to hide from their pursuers. The trick works, but as
they resume their trek across the galaxy, the ship is rocked by a series of explosions and plummets toward the forbidden planet of Yavin.

Everyone jettisons safely away from the doomed craft before it explodes, and using rocket packs, slowly drift to the foreboding surface. The general, the princess, the two bureaucrats with the "aura spice", and one of the rebel boys regroup and set up camp. When only one other boy shows up, the group decides to split up. The general, princess, and bureaucrats head for what appears to be a city, while the two boys go off looking for their comrades. They are watched by a giant furry Alien, who quietly disappears into the foliage.

Skywalker and his party race along a narrow pathway riding "jet-sticks" fashioned from their rescue packs. They round a bend and see the way is blocked by three or four Aliens, riding large bird-like creatures. The general instantly changes direction on to a side path, the others follow close behind, chased by the Aliens. Skywalker drops behind the others and begins shooting at the Aliens with his lazer gun. The Aliens sling a dart-like object at Skywalker as they rush along the road. The general kills the last Alien just as he reaches the gate to the Alien camp. Skywalker cannot curb his "jet-stick" in time and the momentum carries him directly into the enemies' hands.

The group is surrounded by Aliens. Skywalker jumps off his "jet-stick" and takes a defense stance. The Aliens give him room. They seem puzzled by these intruders and jabber to themselves. Two leaders carry on a heated argument. Finally one storms off in disgust and the other summons a guard who steps forward with a large spear in his hand. Skywalker and the Alien stand surveying each other. The Alien makes a lunge, the general counters, and the fight begins. A desperate fight ensues, but eventually Skywalker wins by cutting the Alien in half with his lazer sword. At this, all the Aliens worked into a frenzy mob, carry the general off and throw him over a thousand foot crevasse into a boiling lake.

The general's sure death terrifies the bureaucrats and moves the princess. The Aliens lead them to a small hut where they are imprisoned. Unknown to everyone, the general grabs an overhanging vine on his descent and swings to safety. He starts back to rescue the others when he encounters an Alien. Skywalker starts to attack, but the Alien drops to the ground jabbering and carrying on. The general recognizes the Alien as the one who argued with the leader, who ordered his death. The general tries to communicate with the Alien, but all he can make out is that the creature worships him and wants to take him some place urgently.

The Alien leads Skywalker to a clearing where a platoon of the Imperial guard is lounging, obviously waiting for someone or something. The general jumps undercover as a herd of Aliens arrive with the princess and bureaucrats in tow. A trade is made and the platoon leaves in a "speed tank" with the three captives. The general tries to follow, but is unable to keep up.

The Alien leads Skywalker to a small farm where he discovers the boy rebels are waiting for him. The farm is owned by a cantankerous old farmer who is married to an Alien. He tells the group that he hates the Empire and shows them the location of an outpost where they might have taken the princess.
The general and his army of youthful warriors plan an attack on the small Imperial outpost. They use surprise and the general's rigorous training to overcome the enemy and capture the outpost. They discover the princess has been taken to Alderaan, the capitol of the Empire. They make plans to rescue the princess from right under the nose of the Emperor. The only craft at the outpost capable of intergalactic travel is a squadron of one-man devil fighters, which the general trains the kids to use. When they feel they are ready, they strike out toward the center of the galaxy and the heart of the Empire.

Disguised as Imperial rangers, the small armada flies right through the gates of the impressive city-planet of Alderaan and stops at the prison complex. After overcoming a series of difficult barriers and traps they find the princess and free her.

An alarm sounds. The rebels are forced to fight their way out of the prison with "multiple lazer guns" and swords. A few of the boys are killed, but most of them make it to their spacecraft followed by Skywalker and the princess. They break through a ring of Imperial ships attempting to stop them and escape into deep space.

The princess' arrival on Ophuchi is celebrated by a huge parade, honoring the general and his small band. The princess' uncle, ruler of Ophuchi, rewards the bureaucrats, who for the first time see the princess revealed as her true goddess-like self. The general commissions the "boy rebels" into the princess' special guard. After the ceremony is over, and the festivities have ended, the drunken bureaucrats stagger down an empty street arm in arm realizing that they have been adventuring with demigods.

THE END?

MAY 25, 1973
Refereed and Published Papers Since Ph.D. Commencement

Under my maiden name of Roz Berrystone:

Berrystone, R 2006, 'Does Power Kill the Fairytale in Film?' – refereed paper in on-line magazine: Film and Memory Quarterly, 1st International Conference on Film and Memorialisation, University of Applied Sciences, Fachhochschule Schwaebish Hall, Germany/School of Creative Media, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, November 2006.

Under my married name of Roz Williams:

Williams, R 2009, 'The End of Creation and Catastrophism in Film Stories?', refereed paper in Second Nature, issue 1, 2 April 2009, School of Creative Media, RMIT (Creative Commons Attribution 2.0), Melbourne.