

Science Fiction Genre

Semantic – various elements that make up a film genre/units of meaning
Descriptive approach

Syntactic – analysis (grammatical structure)
how elements of meaning are organized/reoccurring and familiar
pattern of development (including narrative elements)

Starwar's as western (semantic sci-fi/syntactic western)

Sci-fi as malleable/"leaky" genre (mixed with horror, western ,etc) Hybrid Genre.

Reoccurring themes/images from Sci-fi

Patterns of oppositions (dialectic- paired opposites)

Humanity Vs. Science/Tech/Rationality

Fate of humanity in face of science/rationality
Clash between "humanness" and "scientific"

Structuralist (French Social Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss)
analysis of cultural products (myths, popular films) as means by which
societies deal with difficult social questions/issues (directly or implicitly)
---DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL as liberally conscious reaction to
WWII, Cold war, etc.

Imaginary solutions to irresolvable problems (i.e. humanity vs.
technology)

Also source of emotional/psychological pleasure (erikson's adolescent
identification) for viewer, helping alleviate personal concerns with issue.

Mediated by commercial/industrial concerns?

Utopia Vs. Dystopia

Utopia and promise of technology as savior
Better tomorrow. Perfect (close to perfect) world-
DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL.

Scientist as visionaries, heroes- savior of humanity
Professor Barnhardt- brains over brawn/over heart.

Romantic subplots humanizing scientist- female as irrational “humanness”

Klatuu as surrogate husband/father for women Helen?? And Bobby?
Family???? Bad boyfriend.

Utopian dystopia...the Utopia as thinly veiled dystopian nightmare.
The failure of the perfect world/man playing god, etc.

Scientist as so rational, so driven he inadvertently becomes the villain-
leading to dystopia/man playing god- fall from grace.

Part of this is the building of the better man/brain that displaces us
(matrix/terminator) – Robot Utopia!!!

Star Trek as utopian patriarchal future (white western males dominate,
subordinate races – westward expansion, ---where no man has gone
before!!!--- syntactic western!)

Parody films (Spaceballs, Sleeper, Demolition man)

Most sci-fi produced after atom bomb- big cycle begins in 1950’s

Dystopia or hidden Dystopia is more popular theme – allows for greater
spectacle and conflict.

Utopian world conflicts focus on individual vs. conformist society, etc.

Science celebrated as long as it is in check-serving human needs.

Terminator time travel and dystopia and it’s the undoing of
dystopia

Matrix and Christ figure Neo.

Chaos theory/man playing god again!- Jurassic Park.

Time and Space travel

Spectacle, special effect, travel, etc. part of genre.

Realist and fantasy approach.