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## Depiction Of Collective And Individual Ideologies In The Films Jaws And They Live

As discussed in Robert Ray's *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema*, during the 1960s and 70s, American cinema became more polarized ideologically, compared to the Classical Hollywood Cinema, the cinema of the left and right. Films like *Bonnie & Clyde*, *Midnight Cowboy*, and *Easy Rider* were on the left while films like *Dirty Harry*, *Patton*, and *Death Wish* were on the right. On the left, the protagonists were outside of the law and martyrs and on the right, the protagonists were the law. The protagonists were either for the collective (left) or the individual (right). Two films, *Jaws* and *They Live*, from the 70s and 80s show how these ideologies are apparent in Hollywood Cinema.

In 1975, Steven Spielberg made a film that left its mark on cinema. *Jaws* became the first major summer blockbuster. The film was released towards the end of the Vietnam War and the Watergate Scandal. One could argue that *Jaws* is a right-leaning film. Three men are sent out to sea to destroy a menace to small town America. This could be an allegory for the Vietnam War and the motivations behind it. The US felt that the spread of communism was a threat on the world, but really on their own interests. The three characters also embody middle-class American masculinity. What would problematize this reading would be the businessman mayor who seems to embody capitalist greed and bureaucracy. John Carpenter, who is known for both horror and sci-fi films, is no stranger to inject the sociopolitical into his films, intentional or unintentional. *The Thing* could be read as an allegory for the AIDS crisis, the blood-testing scene comes to mind as the most visually representative of this reading. *Escape from New York* eerily predicted the rise of private prisons and its sequel *Escape from LA* predicted the rise of an unpredictable and dangerous president who banishes anyone he deems as "un-American" within the walls of the private prison of Los Angeles. *Prince of Darkness* bizarrely concerns strange, zombifying broadcasts from a Satanic vat of green goo in the basement of a church which can be read as commentary on mass media and the "Religious Right".

Carpenter's 1988 film *They Live* is a scathing critique of Reagan Administration conservatism and the excessive materialism of capitalism. The film was released on the cusp of the Reagan Administration and the beginning of George H. W. Bush's Administration, which continued many of the same policies. The Reagan Administration was notorious in its treatment and neglect of marginalized people, from the disregard to the AIDS crisis, anti-abortion legislation, to the voodoo of the "trickle-down" economic system which led to a rise in poverty and homelessness. Carpenter's heroes Nada and Frank are working class and homeless. In *They Live*, a drifter named Nada finds work on a construction site where he befriends Frank and is

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given a place to stay in a shantytown near a church where there is no real choir, only a recording. After discovering scientific equipment and boxes of sunglasses in the church, the church is raided by police. Nada manages to save one of the boxes of sunglasses hides it safely in an alleyway. When he puts on the sunglasses he see the world for what it is, run by ghoulish aliens and subliminal messages to “obey”, “conform”, and “consume”. The “ghouls”, as Carpenter calls them, are the Reaganites who have taken over by lulling America to “sleep”, via a sinister transmission, which forces them to be a part of the capitalist system or they become collaborators blinded by wealth and power. The ghouls are imperialists who exploit the resources on other planets, like the United States, United Kingdom, and other imperialist powers so often do.

The character of Holly is an assistant director for Cable 54 who is taken hostage by Nada but does not believe Nada’s story about the ghouls taking over. Holly is later revealed to be a human collaborator. Holly’s occupation working at a cable news studio and her being a collaborator can be allegorical of the neoliberal mouthpieces in the media, like those today on Fox News or MSNBC (looking at you, Tucker Carlson). At the end of the film, Nada manages to destroy the satellite broadcasting the transmission which reveals to the humans that those in power were ghouls.

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