The movie The Terminator, opens with a brief glimpse of a horrific future, one in which machines have taken over the planet and driven humans almost to the point of extinction. From this future, two men have traveled back through time to 1984 – the Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger), a cyborg sent to kill Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton), whose unborn son will lead the human resistance against the machines; and Kyle Reese (Michael Biehn), a soldier who has to stop the Terminator from succeeding in his mission. At first, the movie is careful not to make you too sure which of them is the real bad guy or exactly what they’re up to, and part of its success lies in the slick exposition, which keeps the film tight and exciting.

Under the credits, the film Terminator 2: Judgment Day opens with a similar scene of Los Angeles on a hot, sunny, summer day. It is soon learned that it is August 29, 1997 – pre-Holocaust. Cars are moving along on the freeway. Children are playing on swings in a sun-lit playground – a destructive, apocalyptic, unholy white light suddenly envelopes the scene and vaporizes everything – hotter than many suns combined. As a title card fades in: Los Angeles 2029 A.D., the camera pans from left to right over desolate images of future death and destruction – blackened cars, skeletal drivers, a dark sky. The intense heat has dissolved and half-melted everything, including the bars of the jungle gym where the children were playing. In the smoking ruins, skulls lie on the ground amidst the ash-drifts – the camera lingers on the charred remains of toys, swings, and slides, and then pauses on one tiny skull, as a voice over of Sarah Connor.

When the Terminator is incarnated in 1984, he is first shown kneeling nude in front of a garbage truck with ominous music in the background. He dramatically walks to look over the city, where he turns and sees three punk-like men. The Terminator repeats what the men say. He then tells them to give him their clothes. A fight ensues, in which the Terminator violently rips the heart out of one of the men who try and resist. This is in stark contrast to how the Terminator obtained his clothing in Terminator 2: Judgment Day. Electrical arcs of blue-white light snap and spark behind two parked tractor-trailers in an all-night truck stop. A global time machine delivers the figure of a naked man, the Terminator. He is a replica of the Terminator model T-800 from the original film – with a muscle-bound frame and a perfect physique. Whether he is sent to protect or kill John Connor is left open to question. He scans his surroundings without any emotion, and his computerized brain registers the results of a digitized, electronic scan of the Harley-Davidson motorcycles sitting outside a bikers’ hangout called The Corral. In an amusing scene, he calmly strolls stark naked into the country-western cafe. The Terminator s alphanumeric readouts calculate body outlines to estimate and analyze which one of the customers is deemed suitable for leather clothing and boots. One of the tough-looking, cigar-smoking bikers is a “MATCH.” The Terminator walks up and demands his attire – and bike. Another fight breaks out, but no one dies unlike in The Terminator.

In the first movie, the slowly camera pans up revealing the Terminator s newly acquired studded boots, brown pants, black t-shirt with fluorescent pattern and studded gloves. In comparison to Terminator 2: Judgment Day, the song Bad To The Bone, is playing while we see Arnold dressed in biking boots, leather pants, and jacket. When another biker confronts him outside the bar, the Terminator takes out his shotgun and simply takes the man s sunglasses- something he would not have done in the first movie. This is a good moment in the film because it makes the audience chuckle at the Terminator; again this couldn t be done with the first film.

Lighting and camera angles also give the viewer an indication of good and evil. In the first Terminator movie, the majority of scenes in which Arnold Schwarzenegger is in, a lot of shadow effects are used to depict a dark character. In Terminator 2: Judgment Day, the night scenes in which the T1000 is present have a similar feel to them. The way in which both of the villainous characters turn their head or eyes to the camera is haunting.

In Terminator2: Judgment Day, I noticed when the T1000 rode off in the police car at the beginning of the film, it was a black police car- black usually the color for the villain or even death. When John, the Terminator and Sarah were escaping the mental institution, they left in a white security car, with white usually symbolizing good. To me this is a small but subtle symbolic reference in the film.

Arnold Schwarzenegger did not speak too often in The Terminator; usually it was before he was about to kill someone. In Terminator 2: Judgment Day, the director, James Cameron used Arnold s massive frame along with timely and catchy one-liners, to have the audience like the new protective Terminator.

In the first movie, the Terminator served as the ultimate killing machine. The Terminator felt no, pity, no pain, and no remorse. It s programmed to kill and that is what it did. The Terminator was dispatched to Los Angeles in the past with a mission of killing Sarah Connor, the mother of humanity’s greater leader against machine aggression in the future. The Terminator kills all the Sarah Connor’s in Los Angeles in alphabetical order. In Terminator2: Judgment Day, the Terminator returns with a mission of protecting young John Connor. The Terminator was actually reprogrammed and sent by John Connor in the future to protect a young John Connor in the past. With proximity to humans the Terminator becomes more human with time and learns the value of human life.

The control of mise-en-scene is often much stronger in science fiction- action films than other genres, primarily because they attempt to present images that do not or cannot exist in the real world. This control is evident in these movies especially in Terminator 2: Judgment Day with the digital manipulation of images. All of the physical things we see in the setting of Los Angeles 2028 are a mess, but Los Angeles in the present is also pretty interesting and the home to many machines. The texture of The Terminator, (the dirty, dark, but highly complex world we see) places this film and others showing a dark and littered future, as opposed to a future that is (for good or ill) white, shiny, neat and aesthetic. The Terminator films work because they take on a gritty tone, places the action in a realistic setting and is heartless with its characters.