**‘E.T’ and the Age of Reagan**

Reagan as president, 1980-88

Restore the greatness of America after Watergate and Vietnam

Rearmament; patriotism; declare a campaign against the ‘Evil Empire’; nostalgia for traditional American culture, family values, etc.

Hollywood in the Age of Reagan

Sklar: “Hollywood’s Age of Reagan appears almost as a repudiation of the 1970s “Golden Age” and its portrayals of social disorder and corrupt power.” (351) “Restoration of order”

Reprise of nostalgic pop culture adventures – Star Wars, Indiana Jones, etc.

Sylvester Stallone, ‘Rambo: First Blood Part II’ – patriotism and violence

Steven Spielberg, ‘E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial’ 1982

Huge success: gross receipts; positive reviews; popular culture phenomenon

Narrative suspense: the lost, friendly alien child; the lonely human child; they get to know one another; crises overcome; the alien child is returned to his parents.

Poetry: kid’s-eye perspective; mysterious, misty mise-en-scène; the new moon shining through the mist in the back yard; shot of the bicycle crossing over the moon; ET’s finger “phone home!”; nostalgic and sentimental without being saccharine

Message: anti-bigot (ET is not pretty!); tolerance, understanding, loyalty.

Exploits mythic elements: discovery, rescue, escape (‘Peter Pan’); death and resurrection (Jesus); help a stranger find his way home (‘The Wizard of Oz’).

Tribute to the American family: lives in LA suburbs (cf. ‘The Graduate’); celebrate Halloween, etc.; father missing; kids rambunctious and bicker; mother barely holding it together; everyone is loyal. The family endures. (Some critics say the film is sexist.)

John Williams score

After the widespread cynicism in movies in the early 1970s, Americans were delighted to see a film that made them feel good about themselves.