

Video Violence: Cognitive and Cultural Implications Joe Grixti

'Violent publications and films... may be an expression, rather than a cause, of an undesirable state of society' - Bernard Williams (ed), *Obscenity and Film Censorship: The Williams Report* (Cambridge University Press, 1981, p.59)

Narrative, Medium and Culture

There is nothing unprecedented about the peak of popularity which is currently being enjoyed by horrific stories and films depicting violent situations. Given the fact that there is a tradition of this type of fiction, however, there are a number of significant changes in just what is today taken to constitute the horrific and shocking, as well as in the manners in which this subject is handled. In this essay I propose to place the phenomenon of contemporary horrific fiction within the context of a wider cultural debate. This will involve the alignment of some of this fiction's underlying assumptions and concerns with some of the theories, beliefs and anxieties which have dominated our century's attempts to understand itself, and with some of the images which contemporary society has found fit to express its conception of itself and of its habitat. The arguments developed here, therefore, build on the understanding that our perceptions of the environment both determine and are expressed in the myths of our times.

The understanding of horrific fictions which I adopt here includes all forms of narrative, irrespective of their medium of transmission. It should be stressed at the outset that this generalisation is not meant as a negation of the importance and implications of the medium through which fictions are transmitted. Indeed, much of what follows underlines the critical roles played by the nature of different media in relation to the methods in which we understand, experience and react to this type of fiction. Though the examples discussed here are taken from films and television programmes, it is important to remember that horrific fictions are transmitted through a variety of other channels — including everyday conversation, books, periodical publications (comics, popular magazines, etc.), paintings, photographs, radio, theatre, songs and recorded lyrics, and even computer video games.

It should be clear that each of these media brings its own set of connotations and cognitive requirements which will have very important implications for the variety of methods in which the stories which are told through them will be presented, interpreted and evaluated. But though the media of transmission vary in critical ways, they can be said to have in common the fact that they

transmit to a potentially large and diffuse audience redescriptions of reality and projected eventualities of a specific (horrific) nature. Partly because of the nature of specific media, and largely because of the orientations of the authors, these redescriptions and fictional projections also come loaded with evaluations which variously invite us to consider their subjects as disturbing, entertaining, nauseating, adventurous, threatening, humorous, etc. To take a fairly self-evident example, the playing of computer video games which involve us in galactic violations, or in helping Mr Pacman to evade or devour his would-be annihilators, can be seen as a form of traffic in fictional horrors. But it is a very specific form of traffic, and one which is very different from the types of cognitive, perceptual and emotional activities which are involved when we sit at the cinema to watch a horror movie, or when we switch over a television channel to watch a late night horror show, rent a video-recorded horror film, or curl up in bed to read a tale of terror on a cold winter night. And it is not just the media of transmission which become operative here: the conditions in each of those cases and the expectations which we bring to each of those exercises are of critical importance to our methods of decoding and responding to the narratives.

The eclectic approach adopted here is intended to underline the function and uses of these social products as institutionalised methods of contemplating experience and projected eventualities. Fiction (in whichever medium) is here understood to constitute what Harding¹ terms

'a social convention, an institutionalised technique of discussion, by means of which an author invites us to join him in discussing a possibility of experience that he regards as interesting and to share with him attitudes towards it, evaluations of it, that he claims to be appropriate'.

The satisfaction which millions of readers (or viewers) appear to derive from horror fiction is here therefore taken to indicate no more and no less than the nuances implied by the fact of this social convention. It is in terms of a constantly qualifying awareness that such satisfaction is experienced within an institutionalised convention that its implications are here contended to be of significance. As Harding notes of the relation between spectator and author:

'Implicitly we think of a work as being offered to us by someone, as having had significance for another person and not being an impersonal accident like the flickering of flames. Part of our own satisfaction is the sense that some other human being found it satisfying to contemplate such and such and such possibilities of experience and evaluate them in such and such a way, that when we share his satisfaction some mutual sanctioning of values is occurring, and that we have this quasi-social relation with him even if he is dead or totally inaccessible.'²

Horrific narratives propose the contemplation and evaluation of diverse areas of experience which are frequently found disturbing because they fit no easy categories. They invite us to consider situations which elaborate and conjecture about the fact that human beings at times act in horrifically destructive manners. They project images which have our vulnerability and superstitions as their points of focus — the discomfort we occasionally feel about our own psyche and what may lurk in its dark depths; our worries and qualms about our own creations and about the technological advances which might be turning us into helpless robots in a ruthless world; our anxieties about the ways in which our bodies can let us down, about pain, death and the dead, and about all forms of hostile forces which may at any moment (or so we are told) intrude into our uncertainly patched-up social and personal worlds. The roots and ramifications of such fears — both as they are revealed, explored or exploited in the social products themselves, and also in the reception such products are accorded by those who decode them — constitute an important component of contemporary reality, and of the tools we have developed for reading and dealing with it.

In this sense, there is much which an examination of fictional horrors can tell us about the workings of popular culture and about the types of significance ascribed to reality and fantasy in the habitual modes of discourse and consciousness which the popularity of such fictions implies. This does not mean that the texts of horror fiction (or any fiction, for that matter) can be taken as straight blueprints of such elusive and impossibly generalised notions as those described in terms like 'the collective unconscious', or the conglomerate (and often hazily and condescendingly discussed) 'mass culture' or 'mass consciousness'. For one thing, wide as is the appeal and following which this type of fiction appears to command, it cannot be claimed to cover anything like the majority, even of the so-called masses. Further, the reading and viewing of horror fictions, even among the most avid of fans, is but one of a large variety of cultural activities and influences which operate on a concurrent basis and

which form a broad and complex context of awareness, within the perspectives of which horror fiction usually plays a limited and constantly qualified role. This is one of the reasons why arguments and claims about a direct series of effects (corrupting or cathartic) ascribed to this type of product cannot but be inconclusive and of limited applicability.

Concerns and Claims

Narratives of terror have held a peculiar fascination from time immemorial. There is also nothing unprecedented about the claims which frequently appear in the press about, say, the 'video nasties' being the plague of society and the soul-soilers of the young. Very similar claims were made about horror comics before these were banned by Act of Parliament in Britain in the 1950s — often, as Barker³ points out, with little justification or proof beyond impassioned references to 'commonsense'. Popular concern about the possible bad effects which the cinema and (later) television might be having on the young were also given great prominence and paralleled by all types of experimental and field investigations when these particular media started to reach a wide audience⁴.

Recent concern about the consequences of 'mass media violence' and marketed horrors, however, is insistent that there are disturbing developments within the industry, and that the types of horrors to which the young are being exposed today have reached a level of nauseatingly graphic detail and putrifying corruption which is unprecedented. The proponents of this view appear convinced that the influence which such fare might have on impressionable children and corruptible adolescents is of a kind which calls for and justifies very grave, passionate and (to be effective) legislating and punitive concern. At the same time, the arguments and claims made in defence of the horror genre (by its exponents and producers, by 'horror buffs', and also by a number of social theorists) have kept pace with the moral crusaders and have attained a level of relative complexity which also manages to combine the assumptions of 'commonsense' with scientific-sounding and often subtly-worded assertions about (most frequently) the 'vicarious satisfaction' and the 'cathartic release' provided by the experience of violence and horror in synthetic forms.

Such claims (whether in favour or against the representation of horrific subjects on different media) and the fact that all manner of exercises in horrific fantasy continue to enjoy great popularity (though not, it should be stressed, exclusively

among the young) need to be placed in a coherent perspective. This is not only because these phenomena raise very pertinent questions about the way we live now, the ways in which we see ourselves, and about the type of future in which we would like to live, but also because the tones and thrust of the arguments surrounding contemporary horror fiction form part of a much broader cultural debate and are based on assumptions of wider resonance and implications.

Even though simple equations between cultural products and generalised consciousness can only stand their ground if they are willing to concede a host of qualifications, the reading of works of popular fiction as reflectors and affirmations of social and cultural realities remains valid and profitable. A work of horror fiction is (of its very nature) an exponent of genre — it works within a set of conventionalised parameters which constrain it towards a norm. As Tudor⁵ puts it,

'A genre is a relatively fixed culture pattern. It defines a moral and social world, as well as a physical and historical environment. By its nature, its very familiarity, it inclines towards reassurance'.

It bears noting that among the claims made for horror fiction by one of its foremost contemporary exponents (Stephen King) is the assertion that 'its main purpose is to reaffirm the virtues of the norm by showing us what awful things happen to people who venture into taboo lands', and that the finest representatives of the genre 'tell us truths about ourselves by telling us lies about people who never existed'⁶. Such claims embrace an assumed set of shared values and ideas about what constitutes the norm and about which 'truths' will apply within the conventions of that norm.

Signs of Humanity

If the fearful fantasies encoded in works of horror fiction are to be seen as forming part of a larger cultural reality, then an account of the modes of functioning associated with such fiction will need to take on a number of weighty considerations. According to Ricoeur, 'we understand ourselves only by the long detour of the signs of humanity deposited in cultural works'⁷. Horror fiction is one of these signs — its texts are social products packed with messages within which are encoded meanings related to human experience.

The task of unravelling the countless configurations assumed by the signs of humanity — whether one chooses to call this exercise one of deconstruction, analysis, practical criticism or interpretation — is (again in Ricoeur's terms) 'the reply to the fundamental distanciation constituted

by the objectification of man in works of discourse, an objectification comparable to that expressed in the products of his labour and his art'⁸. It is through following this hermeneutical detour that we can begin to form a clear understanding of some of the systems of meaning with which human thought and action are imbued. To adapt a phrase from Silverstone, these products both speak to and speak of 'the modes of thought and feeling that orient our actions in the daily round'⁹. In this important sense they are (like television, which is Silverstone's subject)

'not so much a guide to action, or a guide for the perplexed, but rather a commentary on the categories and boundaries of culture and an exploration of the ambiguities and uncertainties that are endemic to it'¹⁰.

The texts of horror fiction (as of other fiction), therefore, are commentaries — representations which explore and evaluate (and in this sense influence) a set of cultural and cognitive experiences. The texts themselves are made up of messages — coded meanings which constitute what Hall¹¹ calls a 'differentiated moment, in which the formal rules of discourse and language are in dominance':

'Before this message can have an "effect" (however defined), satisfy a "need" or be put to a "use", it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded. It is this set of decoded meanings which "have an effect", influence, entertain, instruct or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences'.

The methods in which the meanings encoded in such messages are appropriated and decoded are in their turn dependent on our culture's ways of seeing and on what Fiske and Hartley call 'our common experience, our culturally determined intersubjectivity'¹². Among the many complexities of contemporary common experience which influence our methods of decoding (and hence responding to) messages about violence and horror are the traditions of 'mass media violence' and horror fiction themselves, as well as the controversies which have surrounded them.

It bears stressing that the processes in operation here are manifestly more complex than is allowed for by the assumption that works of horror fiction exist exclusively to satisfy or encourage a sadistic or masochistic delight in basking in gore.

The shapes assumed by the fictions of the imagination are importantly influenced and structured by the context in which we live, by our perception and understanding of experienced reality, and by the modes of discourse (social

norms, political and moral/religious structures, the various systems of signs, symbols, language and gestures) which mediate and also give shape and meaning to our attempts at understanding and explanation. Viewed from this perspective, broadly phrased assertions about the 'intrinsic value' or 'instinctive need' of the pleasures, thrills or 'escape' provided by fantasy in themselves amount to little more than expressions of a complex set of presuppositions and ideological influences. Fantasy is known and experienced in terms of the shapes which it assumes. It is not an ethereal, mystical or magical quality which serves as a balm for the rigours of science and rationalism, or which belongs to an exclusive and isolateable realm of emotion — and this because such a realm does not exist.

We are more likely to make adequate and constructive sense of the ways in which human fantasies manifest themselves if we recognise their interconnections with common sense understanding as well as with political and scientific speculation. We need, in other words, to recognise human fantasies (fearful or otherwise) as an important index of the concerns, purposes and understandings of reality which predominate in a particular context and time. As Geertz puts it, 'ideation, subtle or otherwise, is a cultural artefact': like class or power it is something to be characterised by 'construing its expressions in terms of the activities that sustain them'¹³.

It is time to consider some specific examples.

Psychopathic Violators

Viewed from this perspective, the various themes which seem to predominate in the horror fiction of different periods, or the various cycles which have often been argued to mark the history of horror films¹⁴, reflect complex levels of connotation. To take a recent development, it is worth noting how in the late 'seventies and early 'eighties there has been a growth in the number of films which explore situations and project images involving liberated women being sexually violated by pathologically violent men. Hitchcock's *Frenzy* (1972) in many respects set the tone, and the tide has grown with films like *Looking for Mr Goodbar* (in which a confidently and aggressively promiscuous Diane Keaton is horrifically stabbed to death by a young man with sexual problems), *Halloween*, *Dressed to Kill*, *Lipstick*, *Friday the Thirteenth*, *He Knows You're Alone* and *I Spit on Your Grave*. According to Twitchell, this trend suggests a fear of women which 'may tell us more than we want to know about the sadistic misogyny engendered by the Women's Movement'¹⁵. At times of gradual cultural shifts,

Twitchell argues, 'people need some "object" toward which they can direct their anxieties'. The implications of this phenomenon when it expresses itself in works of horror fiction like the ones just mentioned are complex and potentially regressive — particularly when they endorse and compound stereotypical and ideologically motivated images like those of non-domesticated women being punished for transgressing traditionally established sexual boundaries (which is a recurring motif in many of these films).



TOBE HOOPER THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE (1974)

The theme of pathological violence as it is explored and evaluated in films like these also raises a number of questions about the manners in which contemporary society explains to itself the origins and nature of destructiveness and violation among humans. Violence is frequently equated with a streak of madness, an allegedly uncontrollable component of our inherited nature which in extreme cases is said to break down all culturally transmitted restraints and to give full vent to blood-lust and chaotic plunder.

The most noted images to which this notion has given rise are the werewolf and Mr Hyde, and it is no accident that the horror film industry has also produced countless renderings and variations of tales involving these figures. Such renderings include the first American film production of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1908 (a photographic record of a stage play); the differing portrayals of the

Jekyll-Hyde figure presented by John Barrymore, Frederic March and Spencer Tracy (in 1920, 1932 and 1941 respectively); Lon Chaney Jr's many appearances as the Wolf Man in the 1940s; and so on to more recent variations like the Hammer versions of the 'sixties (which included an early appearance by Oliver Reed as the lycanthropic protagonist in 1961), as well as little remembered efforts of the 'fifties like Herman Cohen's *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957) and Jack Arnold's *Monster of the Campus* (1958)¹⁶. Arnold's film it bears noting, rather clumsily elaborated on an aspect of the Jekyll-Hyde story which had been made explicit in Frederic March's 1932 portrayal of Hyde as prehistoric savage — a note which has underscored most of the versions made of this tale since then at least. In the opening scenes of *Monster of the Campus* the protagonist, a university professor interested in evolution, explains to his rather dim but pretty assistant that humans have inherited their violent nature from their ape antecedents. In the course of his experiments he is contaminated by one of his prize possessions — a prehistoric fish which has bypassed evolution and retained a grotesque appearance and adjuncts like clawy feet which allow it to walk on the sea bed. The rest of the film is taken up with the professor's transformations from civilised scientist to primate savage — until he is shot dead by the representatives of (civilised) law and order.

There are a number of culturally-based and ideologically-loaded assumptions underlying this as well as more subtle explorations of an allegedly primitive origin to violence and destructiveness. What I wish to stress here is the frequency with which contemporary works of horror fiction project and reinforce a set of presuppositions about the degenerative, diseased and compulsive characteristics of this 'primitive tendency'. Fearful fantasies about the psychopathological destructiveness which is assumed to derive from this tendency are also frequently juxtaposed against a set of stereotypical images of the reassuringly controlling (though equally ruthless) representatives of civilised law and order.

DeFleur and Dennis¹⁷ note that a study of popular American television dramas of the crime-adventure variety (*Starsky and Hutch*, *Kojack*, *Charlie's Angels*, etc.) suggests that the most dangerous offenders depicted in these stories tend to be presented as being 'criminally insane'. According to this study¹⁸, scenes portraying acts of horrific violation frequently showed murderers, rapists, slashers, snipers and bombers as having glassy eyes, grimacing strangely or giggling incongruously as they committed their crimes:

'Some laughed strangely and sobbed or cried. Others mumbled incoherently and screamed irrationally. Another bared his teeth and snarled as he jumped on his victims to suck blood from their jugular veins. Still another squeezed raw meat through his fingers and rubbed it on his gun as he prepared to kill his next victim'¹⁹.

According to DeFleur and Dennis, the trend of such presentations, and of the popular vocabulary of madness which goes with them, is to use the mentally ill to represent evil. Against this evil the forces for law and order fight and win to protect society. In other words, a culturally based fear of a stigmatised sector of the population is invoked and reinforced, while reassurance is provided about the efficiency and (sane) toughness of the guardians of the *status quo*. It is worth noting here how (in this type of popular fiction as in the early Gothic fictions of the eighteenth century)²⁰ a fascination with the wild and threateningly unorthodox has been transformed into an exercise in ideological reassurance.

Invading Demons

Titillation and ideological reassurance can also be argued to have been motivating forces in the making and viewing of the series of films about invasions from outer space which were made in the America of the 1950s — i.e. during the height of the Cold War. This trend was perhaps most effectively and memorably caught in Don Siegel's 1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, but there were other (less accomplished) products like *Invasion of the Saucer-Men* (1957), *Earth vs the Flying Saucers* (1957), *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (1958) and *The Blob* (a 1958 production in which a young Steve McQueen led a band of quick-witted teenagers in destroying the eponymous alien which had grown from a handful of glutinous substance by absorbing the citizens of an all-American town). As a number of critics have pointed out, such films reflected a growing concern about potential invasion or infiltration by dark forces coming from behind what had come to be known as 'the iron curtain'. It is also worth recalling that films like these were being produced and popularly patronised at a period when interest in space exploration was growing fast, and when the race for space (highlighted by the successful launching of the first Russian satellite in 1957) was on.

Similarly, the spate of films about demonic pregnancies and child monsters produced in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies (*Rosemary's Baby*, *The Omen*, *It's Alive*, to name the most famous) reflected a complex set of popular anxieties (superstitious as well as political) about possible

invasion by malevolent alien forces and about the vulnerability of helpless innocence in the face of evil. The successful marketing of these films also coincided with mounting awareness and concern over diminishing global resources and a growing public debate about the widespread availability of effective methods of birth control, the legalisation of abortion, and the long and short term effects of pregnancy-related drugs like Thalidomide and fertilisation pills. As Praver puts it, 'the gusto with which films like *The Omen* make the audience wish for the child's destruction has something deeply suspect about it'²¹. Yet this film grossed over four million dollars during its first three days' showing in the U.S.A., and eventually made over \$100 million at the box office.

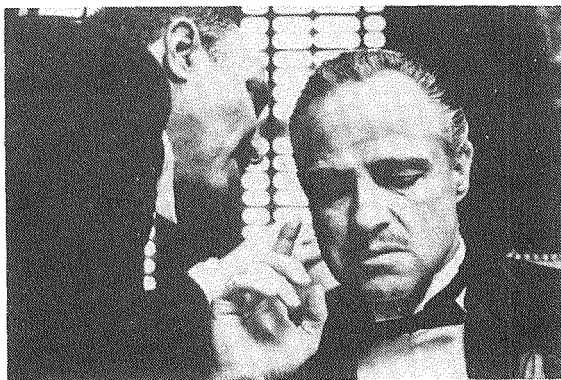
The contemplation of horrifically 'possessed' or pathologically violent youngsters was perhaps most influentially conducted in William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) and Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). It is worth recalling in this connection that most of the complaints and indignation directed against Kubrick's film at the period of its release involved claims about the horrifying and depraving effects it was alleged to be having on the young. The violating protagonists of *A Clockwork Orange* — in contrast to the staid, withdrawn and opulently self-regarding victims — were emphatically young, and they moved about in a psychedelic world which at times had the appearance of a global disco. It was this aspect of the film which projected a highly disturbing but also clearly cognisable vision of futuristic youth gone badly sour, callously alienated and rhythmically antisocial.

The young men in this film were as worrying in their violation of traditional social and ethical norms as was the blaspheming and horrifically transformed teenage girl in *The Exorcist*. Both films appeared at a period of much publicised student unrest, the flower movement, an allegedly growing drug generation intent on hedonistic pursuits, and frequently youthful protest against traditional (largely middle-class) values —

popularly caught in Bob Dylan's song 'The Times They Are A-Changing', which exhorted mothers and fathers to admit that their sons and daughters were beyond their command. In this general context, films like *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Exorcist* can be argued to have touched chords of alarm among audiences imbued with ambivalent conceptions of adolescence and the related vigilante anxieties, uncertainties and often beleaguered dreams which in the course of the present century have been increasingly and at times frantically projected onto the young²².

In this connection Fraser notes what he terms the paradox that it was Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* rather than Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* which did the most to set off complaints in the early 1970s about excessive violence in movies²³. Fraser lists the profusion of vividly realistic scenes of violence in *The Godfather* and contrasts them with the stylised and relatively restrained depiction of fewer such scenes in *A Clockwork Orange*. In Fraser's view, it was precisely the 'alienated and alienating style' of Kubrick's approach which was so disquieting, particularly in the much-commented-on rape scene in a secluded country house, in which the violation of the helpless couple was accompanied by the protagonist's chanting of 'Singin' in the Rain', while the hand-held camera appeared to provide stylistic support to the aggressiveness of the young invaders dressed in masquerade costume. Unlike the thoroughly familiar and 'almost respectable' moral ambiguousness of *The Godfather's* depiction of gangsters and mafiosi (of long acquaintance of their Hollywood garbs), the ambiguities of *A Clockwork Orange* were far from respectable.

Fraser notes that while film gangsters have often been ambivalently viewed as 'types of individualistic resistance fighters against society', the stylised presentation of violation in *A Clockwork Orange* appeared to reinforce and in a sense confirm the psycho-pathological vision of the violators, while the victims 'virtually disappeared as



FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA
THE GODFATHER

suffering consciousness²⁴. Kubrick's cinematic style, Fraser continues, converted life into artifice and the whole of the rape scene into 'cinema'. It thus later became difficult to believe that one of the victims had been killed and the other crippled after 'the burlesque-elegant snipping away of the wife's jumpsuit' (which 'began by making it seem as if she too were in fancy dress, a partner in a curious ritual, and ended by leaving her looking like a large denuded doll'), and after the punctuation of the kicking inflicted on the husband with distancing soft-shoe dancing and singing allusions to the Donen-Kelly musical classic. In Fraser's view, it was this 'aestheticising and distancing of violence' (which finds its cinematic sources in the earlier movies of Jean-Luc Godard and in *Bonnie and Clyde*) which made the film so emotionally ambiguous and aroused uneasiness about the psychopathic in 'what may be called the collective intellectual psyche of our time'²⁵.

Thus, to return to the implications of an argument which has threaded most of this essay, while the violence and horrific violations graphically depicted in films like *The Godfather* are well-padded in their (genre generated and maintained) frame of reassurance, the aestheticising and distancing of violence in exercises like *A Clockwork Orange* paradoxically

draws attention to the contours and implications of that frame by taking its licence to its logical ('artistic') conclusions. In both cases, to labour a point, the story's message and meaning, as well as the audience's response, have their roots firmly in the social and cultural concerns of the period of their making.

This is not to suggest that all exercises in horror fiction can be neatly classified as having been directly inspired or instigated by transparent sets of moral controversies, political concerns or public debates. What I have emphasised are some of the functions such fictions perform as institutionalised methods of contemplating experience and projected eventualities, and as commentaries on the categories and boundaries of culture. In this sense, popular horror fictions form part of a complex discursive process which is an integral component of the models deployed by contemporary society (often tacitly and uncritically) to understand itself. In examining and trying to explain a specific set of horrific fictions, this essay has thus been concerned with seeing this phenomenon as an important signifying component of the contemporary mind which, as Harré, Clarke and De Carlo²⁵ phrase it, 'is a shaping of the activities of the whole person by socio-linguistic influences'.

Notes:

1. Harding, D.W. (1967) 'Considered Experience: the invitation of the novel'. *English in Education*, 1, p.13.
2. Harding, D.W. (1971) 'The Bond with the Author' *The Use of English*, 22, p.311.
3. Barker, M. (1984) *A Haunt of Fears: the strange history of the British horror comic campaign* (London: Pluto Press).
4. See Tudor, A. (1974) *Image and Influence: studies in the sociology of film* (London: Allen and Unwin), pp.92-3; Pearson, G. (1984) 'Falling Standards: a short sharp history of moral decline', in M. Barker (ed) *The Video Nasties; freedom and censorship in the media* (London: Pluto Press), pp.88-103; and Grixti, J. (1985) 'The Controversy over Mass Media Violence and the Study of Behaviour', in *Educational Studies*, 11, pp. 61-76.
5. Tudor, A, *op.cit.*, p.180.
6. King, S. (1982) *Danse Macabre* (London: Futura) 442-3, 282.
7. Ricoeur, P. (1982) *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: essays on language, action and interpretation* (Cambridge: University Press), p.143.
8. *Ibid.*, p.138.
9. Silverstone, R. (1981) *The Message of Television* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul), p.6.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Hall, S. (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding'. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis (eds), *Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson), p.130.
12. Fiske, J. and Hartley, J. (1978) *Reading Television* (London: Methuen), p.38.
13. Geertz, C. (1983) *Local Knowledge: further essays in interpretive anthropology* (New York: Basic Books), p.152.
14. See, for instance, Clarens, C. (1968) *Horror Movies: an illustrated survey* (London: Secker and Warburg); Prawer, S.S. (1980) *Caligari's Children: the film as tale of terror* (Oxford University Press); Punter, D. (1980) *The Literature of Terror: a history of gothic fictions from 1765 to the present day* (London: Longman); and Twitchell, J.B. (1985) *Dreadful Pleasures: an anatomy of modern horror* (New York: Oxford University Press).
15. Twitchell, J.B. (1983) 'Frankenstein and the anatomy of horror'. *The Georgia Review*, 37, pp.41-2.
16. See Clarens, C., *op.cit.*; and Daniels, L. (1977) *Fear: a history of horror in the mass media* (London: Paladin).
17. DeFleur, M.L. and Dennis, E.E. (1985) *Understanding Mass Communication, 2nd edn* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), pp.395-400.
18. The study reported by DeFleur and Dennis was conducted by Brigitte Goldstein for her M.A. thesis on 'The Television's Portrayal of the Mentally Ill' at the University of New Mexico in 1980.
19. DeFleur, M.L. and Dennis, E.E., *op.cit.*, p.398.
20. See Butler, M. (1981) *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its background 1760-1830* (Oxford: University Press), p. 28; Daniels, L., *op.cit.*, p.8; and Barker, M. (1984) *A Haunt of Fears* (London: Pluto), pp.125-7.
21. Prawer, S.S., *op.cit.*, p.71.
22. See Gillis, J.R. (1974) *Youth and History: tradition and change in European age relations 1770-present* (New York: Academic Press), and Grixti, J. (1986) 'Images of Adolescence', in *Universities Quarterly*, 40, pp.171-189.
23. Fraser, J. (1976) *Violence in the Arts* (Cambridge: University Press), p.14.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 24-5.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.
26. Harré, R., Clarke, D. and De Carlo, N. (1985) *Motives and Mechanisms: an introduction to the psychology of action* (London: Methuen), p. viii.